

Relief or Retribution: For Which Are You Headed?

Dr. Michael A. Cox

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Text: 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

2 Thessalonians: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topic: The Judgment at Christ's Coming

Central Idea of Message: God's time of righteous judgment is rapidly approaching, when his justice will deliver relief for believers and retribution for unbelievers.

Introduction: The Return, Second Advent, Epiphany (shining forth), Revelation or Apocalypse (unveiling), Parousia (coming presence), or Second Coming of Jesus Christ is rapidly approaching. Plenty of terms, but all pointing to the return of Christ.

The future historicity of this event is a virtual certainty, as is evinced by the historicity of his first coming as the babe in the manger; however, unlike his first coming, Jesus Christ will arrive as the conquering King of the universe, doling out his righteous judgment upon the afflictors as retribution and his relief upon the afflicted. Relief or retribution, for which are you headed?

I. Afflictors and Afflicted (vv. 5-6)

A. Endurance in the midst of persecution and affliction demonstrates the power of God in life (v. 5)

1. Plainly indicates the righteous judgment of God in terms of his power and presence
 - a) Those who endure persecution for the cause of Christ are empowered to do so by almighty God
 - b) Endurance in the midst of persecution and affliction demonstrates the power of God in one's life
 - c) Those who endure such things are assured of emerging victorious at the time of the Revelation of Jesus Christ
2. Plainly indicates that God will judge and separate the righteous from the unrighteous
 - a) **Those who gave Christ lip service alone will be found ingenuine, unworthy of Christ's kingdom**

- (1) Suffering identifies the genuine from the ingenuine
- (2) God does not cause the persecution or affliction, but he uses each: suffering refines genuine believers, preparing them to inhabit Christ's kingdom
- (3) **Endurance in persecution and affliction does not earn salvation, it demonstrates salvation's validity**
- b) The suffering of the Christian is ongoing, as is evidenced by the present tense of the participle
- c) Unrepentant persecutors will become the persecuted at the coming of Christ
- B. **God will repay the afflictors with affliction (v. 6)**
 - 1. God will repay, not man will repay
 - 2. A reference to God's justice
 - 3. Apart from faith and repentance, God forgives no person's sin

II. **Relief and Retribution (vv. 7-10)**

- A. **Relief for believers is coming (v. 7)**
 - 1. Believers at Thessalonica were afflicted
 - 2. Paul and his missionary companions were afflicted
 - 3. Relief for believers arrives when Jesus returns
 - a) Relief: ease from stress and suffering
 - b) Revealed from heaven: the Revelation
 - c) Accompanied by angels of his power (cf. Hubbard 1362)
 - (1) Symbols of his might
 - (2) Ministers of his power
 - (3) Executors of his judgment
 - d) Flaming fire
 - (1) Represents God's glory (Isa. 66:15)
 - (2) Represents God's might
 - (3) Represents God's judgment
- B. **Retribution for unbelievers is coming (v. 8)**
 - 1. Those who do not know God
 - a) Recipients of General Revelation
 - b) Refuse to honor the one God as God (Rom. 1:21)
 - 2. Those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus
 - a) Recipients of Gospel Revelation
 - b) Refuse to honor Jesus as the Christ
 - c) Two definite articles ["the" in Greek] suggest two classes of people

- C. **Eternal destruction is the penalty for unbelief (v. 9)**
 - 1. Refusal to place faith in God as a result of General Revelation
 - 2. Refusal to place faith in Christ Jesus as a result of Gospel Revelation
 - 3. Eternal destruction
 - a) Paradox: two seemingly opposite truths held in tension [*eternal* and *destruction*]
 - b) Not annihilation
 - c) Away from the presence of the Lord
 - (1) Forever separated from the source of all that is good
 - (2) Always excluded from him who is love and life
 - d) Away from the glory of his power
 - (1) Banished to eternal darkness
 - (2) Excluded forever from him who is light
 - e) **The worst aspect of hell is not its fire but its separation from God**
- D. **Jesus is returning to be glorified in his saints (v. 10)**
 - 1. Glorified in his saints
 - a) Mirrored, reflected
 - b) "Holiness is glory in the bud; glory is holiness manifested" (Faussett)
 - 2. Adored among all who believed
 - a) Those who believed will then see: faith leads to sight
 - b) Had to believe already
 - c) No second chance after death
 - 3. Believe the apostolic testimony
 - 4. Our faith in Christ Jesus is not in vain

Conclusion: Relief or retribution: for which are you headed?