

Judgment of Believers



Victory Over Death (Part 12)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue to share together the rich and wonderful theme of Victory Over Death.

In my talk yesterday, I explained the kind of body with which believers will be resurrected at the return of Christ. I said that the Bible indicates five specific changes that will take place:

1. Perishable to Imperishable

2. Mortal to Immortal

3. Dishonor to Glory

4. Weakness to Power

5. Natural or "soulish" body to a spiritual body

I summed it up by saying that our resurrection body will be similar in kind to the resurrection body of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Today, I'm going to speak about the next main event which will follow the resurrection of believers – and that is the Judgment of Believers. Now that phrase may surprise some of you. You may say "will there really be a judgment of believers?" Yes, indeed there will! The Scriptures are very clear about that. Let's look in 1 Peter 4:17-18:

> "For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, 'if it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?'" (NIV)

Those words are very clear – judgment begins with the family of God. Then Peter goes on and says, "It begins with us, the Christians." You may say, "Well, why do Christians get resurrected first and then have to face judgment?" The answer is that we are going to answer to God at the resurrection judgment for the things we have done in our body; and it's according to God's scheme of things that because we are going to answer for what we did in our body, we are going to appear in our body. This is clearly indicated in many passages of Scripture. The place where the Judgment of Believers will take place is called – in the New

Testament – the Judgment Seat or the bema of Christ. Bema is a Greek word. It was a word that was common in the culture of that time. It was normally used for the seat on which a Roman Magistrate or Ruler sat to try a case. For instance, when Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate it says, "Sat on His bema – His judgment seat. Let's look now in Romans 14:10-12:

> "'You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. [That's bema] It is written: 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.' So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God." (NIV)

We are all going to stand before that bema on which Christ will sit as the Judge and we will be receiving – in judgment – for the things done while in the body, and because it was for things done while in the body, we will appear in the body. Notice Paul leaves room only for two kinds of things: good or bad.

In the spiritual realm there is no neutrality. What we do is either good or it's bad. There is nothing in between. It's either done in obedience and for the glory of God or it's not good. However, it is most important to understand that this judgment of believers will not be a judgment that will result in condemnation. Condemnation is past for the true believer in Christ. In John 5:24, Jesus says:

> "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. So, whoever hears the Word of God and believes in Jesus, will not be condemned. He has already crossed over from death to life." (NAS)

And again in Romans 8:1:

> "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (NAS)

If we are in Christ Jesus we will never have to face final condemnation. That is past. We have crossed over from death to life, but we will have to face a judgment – not for condemnation – but to assess our service and to allot our rewards. Paul gives one picture of this judgment of believers in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15: [Bear in mind, as I said, it is not a judgment for condemnation, but a judgment to assess and reward service.]

> "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames." (NIV)

Now we are speaking here about a man or a woman, a person who has built his life on the only foundation acceptable to God, which is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, so he will never come into condemnation, because his righteousness is the righteousness of Christ. What is being judged here is not his soul but his work. It speaks about what he has built on that foundation and it speaks about the quality of his work. So, this is a judgment of work or of service, but not a judgment for condemnation.

As we look at the principles upon which work or service is assessed, we notice certain very important things. First of all, God is more interested in quality than quantity. The things which are burned up are all things which we can easily assemble in large quantities: wood, hay or straw. But the problem is, they all perish in the fire. The things that will stand the test of fire are things that it is difficult to produce in large quantities: gold, silver and costly stones. So it is much more important to concentrate on the quality of what we produce rather than quantity. It's very clear that some ministers and servants of the Lord who amassed great quantities, as a result of their service, will have the bitter experience of seeing it all perish in the fire of Christ's final judgment and assessment of their work. If we are to escape this, what should we aim at? I suggest there are three things we should keep in mind, if our service, what we build, is to stand the test of fire. The three things are: motives, obedience and power.

1. First of all, what are our motives in service? Are we motivated by selfish ambition, the desire to appear successful before men, to build the biggest church, to call in the largest amount of money, to preach the most famous sermon? Or is it our desire, sincerely, to do that which will glorify God, and perhaps ourselves. To remain almost unnoticed and insignificant.

2. The second issue, obedience. Are we serving God according to God's Word, according to His commandments and His principles, or are we building on human theories – our own ideas – theologies that do not accord with the truth of Scripture? We are going to be tested in points of obedience.

3. Thirdly, the issue of power. Are we serving God in the power of the Holy Spirit or simply in our own fleshly willpower? It is my personal conviction that whatever is done in the flesh will perish like the flesh. Only that which is done in the fire of the Holy Spirit will stand the test of the fire of judgment. So we have to look at those three things: motives, obedience and power.

Some other pictures of the Judgment of Believers are given in various parables. In Matthew 25, the parable of the talents, which Jesus tells, we notice certain things in this parable. There were three servants – each received a different number of talents – one received five; one received two; one received one. The one who received five, gained five more. The one who received two, gained two more. Each had a hundred percent gain and it would appear that each was equally approved by his lord. The words of approval are the same. In other words, it's not so much the quantity we start with, but the faithfulness with which we employ what has been allotted to us. The first two servants were rewarded, but the third who did nothing whatever with his talent but bury it in the earth was rejected and his motivation was that he was afraid. He said, "I was afraid." God requires faithfulness but, on the other hand, fear and laziness will bring God's judgment. I suggest to you, one day you read the Bible through and see what it has to say about laziness. It never has one good word to say about laziness. It's far more condemnatory about laziness, than for instance of drunkenness.

Again, there is the parable of the pounds in Luke 19:12-27. In this parable, each servant received one pound – same amount, but their gains were different. One gained ten pounds, one gained five pounds, and again one did nothing with his pound and was rejected. The one who gained ten pounds was rewarded with authority over ten cities. The one who gained five pounds with authority over five cities. So we see again two principles that emerge. First, God looks primarily for faithfulness rather than for ability. It's not the actual gross gain; but if I may say so, the percentage gain. Each one that gained a hundred percent was equally approved.

The second principle is, that reward for faithful service in this life is increased responsibility and opportunities of service in eternity. In other words, the greatest thing that anyone could ever do in this universe is serve the true and living God. If we serve Him faithfully in this life, our reward will be greater opportunities of service in the next life. So remember, as a believer, you are going to have to answer for your life and remember these two principles – God looks for faithfulness rather than ability – the reward for faithful service is increased responsibility.

Our time is up for today, but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time and I'll be dealing with what I may call the opposite side of the coin; that is, the "Resurrection and Judgment of Unbelievers."

Radio Program

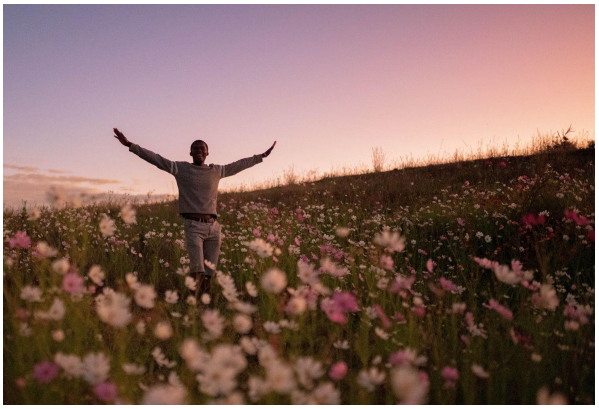
Transcript: TS-R017-102-ENG
Last Updated: 13 Apr 2023
Website: derekprince.com

Bible Teaching Resources



Books

Illuminate and expand your understanding of the Bible with the Derek Prince collection of Christian books.



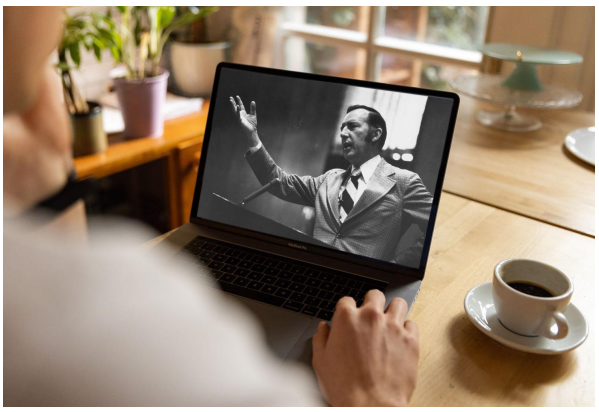
Daily Devotionals

Browse free biblically inspired daily devotionals by Derek Prince for practical teachings to uplift your Christian faith.



Legacy Radio

Listen to inspiring 10-minute messages and connect faith to life with the Derek Prince Legacy Radio podcast.



Sermons

Watch original and digitally remastered sermons by Derek Prince. Includes full message transcripts (free download).



Official App

Available free, download the official Derek Prince Ministries app and equip your faith, anywhere, anytime.



Proclamations

Declare life and experience the transformative power of God's Word with our bible-based Proclamations.

Copyright © Derek Prince Ministries