

Resurrection and Judgment of Unbelievers



Victory Over Death (Part 13)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again. Yesterday I spoke about the judgment of true believers that will take place after resurrection; before the judgment seat of Christ. I explained that this will not be a judgment of condemnation but a judgment to assess service and allot rewards.

Today I am going to speak about the opposite side of the coin – the resurrection and judgment of the unbelievers.

There are two main ways that we can distinguish between these two judgments in Scripture. That is, the judgment of believers before the judgment seat of Christ and then the judgment of unbelievers. One is a difference of place, the other is a difference of time. First of all, let us look at the judgment of believers:

1. The place will be before the judgment seat or bema of Christ, as I explained yesterday.

2. The time – before the setting up of Christ's millennial kingdom.

Now, let's look at the judgment of unbelievers:

1. The place will be before a great white throne. Not just a magistrate seat of judgment, but a great white throne – a king's throne.

2. The time will not be at the beginning of the millennial kingdom, but at the close of the millennial kingdom. So bear those differences in mind: The judgment of believers – before the judgment seat of Christ and before the millennial kingdom. The judgment of unbelievers – before a great white throne and at the close of the millennial kingdom.

Now, the description of this latter judgment – the judgment of unbelievers; those who were not resurrected in the resurrection of the righteous – is found in Revelation 20:11-15. John the revelator, paints a most awesome and vivid picture of what this final and great judgment will be like. He says:

> "And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. [Think how terrible to appear before the one from whom earth and heaven have to flee, when He is in His majesty and in His wrath against sinners. John continues:] And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. [In other words, the book contains the records of all they had done in this life; and this was the most complete and universal judgment. All human beings from every corner of this earth were assembled before this throne. This is how John describes it:] And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades [that's Sheol, the place of departed spirits] gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. [You remember, that is irrevocable, eternal banishment from the presence of Almighty God, but it is not cessation of consciousness. Once we become beings, consciousness continues forever and ever. And then John sums it up this way:] And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (NAS)

We need to pick out certain salient features of this. First of all, these people now resurrected, even after resurrection, are still called "the dead." John says, "I saw the dead, the great and small, standing before the throne." Even after resurrection they were still dead. Their bodies had been restored to them, but they were still dead. Dead in trespasses and sins; alienated and cut off from the life of God; resurrected in their bodies to receive judgment for what they had done in their bodies. Then note that there are universal records kept of everything that every one of us has ever done. It's all recorded. Note again that there is universal accountability. Every one of us will be required to answer for what we have done. That word "accountability "is most unpleasant in the ears of modern culture. There are many different religions and philosophies current today of which the supreme objective is to declare to man that he is not really accountable for anybody but himself. I want to serve notice on you, that is a lie! Man is accountable to his Creator, who will one day be his judge. All of us are accountable.

The final point that I wish to make here is there is only one way of escape: through the Book of Life. Everyone whose name was not written in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire. Now who, or what kind of person, has his name written in the Book of Life? Obviously, this is a vital question for each one of us. In Revelation 21:7-8, John goes on to describe the kind of person whose name is written in the Book of Life, and also the kind of person who will be thrown into the lake of fire. He says:

> "He who overcomes shall inherit these things, [that's all the glories of heaven] and I will be his God and he will be My son. [Notice, the primary requirement is to overcome – not to be defeated by sin and by the world – and by ungodliness and by Satan. 'He who overcomes shall inherit these things, I will be his God and he will be My son.' The alternative is stated in verse 8:] But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (NAS)

So those are the kinds of persons who will end in the lake of fire. You could say, "Well, I could understand that immoral persons and murderers and sorcerers and liars will be there," but would you note that the first two in the list are the cowardly and unbelieving. Those are the first two categories of people who are lost. The cowardly, the unbelieving. You know, I believe one thing: I believe a person can get to heaven without theology, but I doubt whether a person will ever get to heaven without courage.

John goes on about this also in his first epistle. Let me read these words to you: 1 John 5:4-5:

> "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (NAS)

What is the requirement then? It's to be born of God – through faith. What are we required to believe? That Jesus is the Son of God. He who believes that Jesus is the Son of God and is born again through that faith, has the faith to overcome the world; and that overcoming faith will cause him to inherit all things. God will be his God and he will be the Son

of God.

As we contemplate this scene of final judgment before the Great White Throne, certain thoughts always come to me. I'd like to share one of them with you now. Some years ago I was in the state of Colorado, in the Rockies, and someone pointed a little west of where we were and said, "That ridge there is the watershed of the continental United States, and they explained that rain that fell on one side went down into the Pacific area, rain that fell on the other side probably, ultimately, flowed down into the Gulf of Mexico. Even though there might only be just the difference of two inches between the raindrops that fell, the ultimate destiny was thousands of miles apart. And as I was picturing that in my mind I said to myself, "Jesus is the watershed of human souls." Their destiny in eternity is determined by which side of Jesus they are on. Two souls can be so close together – even husband and wife – or parent and child – or brother and sister – yet one is on the one side of Jesus; having received Him and believed in Him – the other is on the other side; not having believed and not having received; and though they are so close in this life, their ultimate destiny is immeasurable distance apart. One will end in the eternal glory of heaven – the other will end in the lake of fire, the place of eternal judgment and punishment for unbelievers. But that tiny little difference of two inches in where a raindrop falls in the Rockies determines its ultimate destination. And so it is with you and me, just a tiny little difference in this life – one on one side of Jesus, the other on the other – will determine our eternal destiny. On which side of Jesus are you?

And then, I am reminded of the responsibility of preachers in the light of these facts, and I think of the words of Paul in Acts 20:20-21 and 26-27. He says to the people he preached to there:

> "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. [And a little further on in the same chapter, to the same people, he says again:] Therefore I testify to you this day, that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God." (NAS)

Notice that twice Paul says, "I did not shrink from telling you the whole truth – everything that God has said that you need to know." But why does he use the words, "I did not shrink"? I think because there is a kind of pressure against the preacher that tells the whole truth. The devil doesn't mind sermons, as long as they don't contain the vital truths. But there is tremendous pressures, social pressure, financial pressure, prestige, all sorts of pressures against the man who will stand up and declare the whole truth. How many of us today could say, "I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God"?

What are the decisive requirements of God? Paul states them very simply: repentance toward God, faith in Jesus Christ. That is the essential to save us from that awful destination, the lake of fire, and to take us into eternal glory with Jesus.

Well, my time is up for today, but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow, I'll be giving a very personal and practical application to my talks. My subject will be, "How to Face Death."

Radio Program

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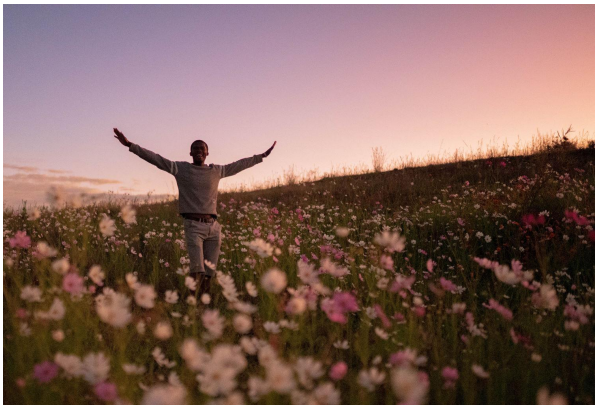

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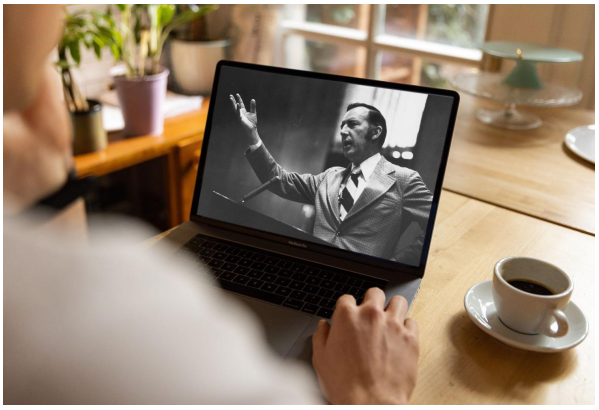

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