

[**NB.** This is an archived article. The author no longer holds the view of Universal Salvation expressed herein, which is similar to the view of the renowned church father, Origen. See www.purposeoflife.org.uk for further information]

The First and Second Resurrections And the Judgment Day

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The Judgment of All Humanity

In this article, we are going to let the Scriptures do most of the talking, so please take careful note of these quoted texts if you wish to get the most out of this study. They will reveal very clearly that there is going to be two resurrections of humanity, which will occur in the event known as the Day of the Lord, followed by a Judgment Day that will result in two eonian (or age-abiding) destinies. We shall be quoting very clear Biblical texts, one step at a time, to establish the truth in this matter. I will emphasise again that these scriptures must be read and considered very carefully if you wish to get a clear understanding on this subject. We shall also be considering the principles of God's judging, the rewards or wages that will be given, and the real meaning of Eonian or 'Eternal' Life, and the Second Death.

Let us begin with the fact that there is going to be a judgment of all humanity before God. We will all be judged and repaid accordingly for every act (or work or deed, including our words) that we have done, whether good or evil. Every hidden thing of the heart will be revealed. No one is going to get away with anything.

"By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before Me every knee will bow; by Me every tongue will swear. They will say of Me, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.'
"All who have raged against Him will come to Him and be put to shame."

(Isaiah 45:23-24 NIV)

"Will He not repay each person according to what he has done?"

(Proverbs 24:12 NIV)

"Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment."

(Ecclesiastes 11:9 NIV)

"For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil."

(Ecclesiastes 12:14 NIV)

"...thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took His seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of His head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before Him. Thousands upon thousands attended Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. **The court was seated, and the books were opened.**"

(Daniel 7:9-10 NIV)

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another

book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

(Revelation 20:11-12 NIV)

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

(Jude 14-15 NIV)

"But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted (*justified CV*), and by your words you will be condemned (*convicted CV*)."

(Matthew 12:36-37 NIV)

"For all of us shall be presented at the dais (or Judgment Seat) of God, for it is written: I am living, the Lord is saying, for to Me shall bow every knee, and every tongue shall be acclaiming God! Consequently, then, each of us shall be giving account concerning himself to God."

(Romans 14:10-12)

"The word of God is living and active...it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to Whom we must give account."

(Hebrews 4:12-13 NIV)

Justified by Faith or Works?

Firstly, it is of the utmost importance when approaching this subject of Judgment to correctly cut (or rightly divide) the word of truth in relation to being saved and justified from sin on the one hand, and our works on the other. The above scriptures should rightly instill the fear of God and of Christ into us all, and that is a good thing, for 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge.' While we are yet in our mortal bodies of sin and death, we need the healthy fear and respect of God our Father, Who lovingly disciplines His children, and of Christ Jesus, Who is our Lord and Master, Who will reward those who are faithful servants, while others will be chastened and suffer loss.

This reverent fear helps to keep us focused on that which matters and helps us in our struggles with the flesh. We should not become complacent and lukewarm, for he who is confident that he stands should beware lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:12; Revelation 2:4-5). Yet as we grow into mature sons of God, the fear gives way to loving loyalty to our King and

Saviour as we become more and more like Him. Subsequently, perfect love drives out fear of chastening (1 John 4:17-18).

It is clearly evident from the writings of the New Testament, particularly Paul's letters, that no one can be justified or declared righteous before God by works or acts of law or religious ritual. Only faith in God and the Lord Jesus Christ can justify anyone before God and give them eonian life in the kingdom. This is the Gospel of God's Grace and there is no other gospel or foundation other than that which has been laid - Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and His resurrection from among the dead. We are called to repent and obey this gospel concerning God's Son (see [The Magnificent Message of Justification](#)).

If it wasn't for the Sacrifice of Jesus, whereby He became a curse and took upon Himself the initial sin of Adam, as well as the curse of the Law of Moses, paying the full price of redemption as a correspondent Ransom, no one at all would escape from Death. We would all be lost or destroyed under the wrath of God. Yet due to His resurrection, Christ now has the right as Saviour and Redeemer to save mankind from Sin and Death. The giving of age-abiding life to those who believe in Him is totally a gracious gift of God, for no one can save themselves. Ultimately, all is of God, for He is the One Who chooses us and gives us gifts, which includes even faith itself!

This is the level of the Absolute, the level of the Divine Will. On this level of truth, God alone is Supreme. He is Sovereign in all things. *He* makes the choices, *He* makes the decisions, and *He* determines the plan, and everything is in accord with *His* intention. Christ alone is exalted as Sovereign of the Universe and Saviour of ALL mankind (see [Almighty God versus Almighty Self](#)).

Yet on the other hand, there are many scriptures that appear to teach that we are justified and saved by our works. It is due to this seeming contradiction that many have had trouble with the letter of James, which says that we are justified by our works and not by faith alone (James 2:24). This appears to blatantly contradict Paul's words in Romans and Galatians that we are justified by faith alone and not by works of law!

Here are some other examples of seeming contradiction. In one of the above quotes, Jesus said that we will be either justified or convicted by our words (Matthew 12:36-37). Paul talks of working out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12), and he said to Timothy that he could save himself and his hearers (1 Timothy 4:16); Peter said to those in Jerusalem, 'save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' (Acts 2:40).

These examples, and many more like them, are to be viewed on **the level of the Human Will, the level of the Relative** rather than the Absolute. On this level of truth we are to believe and obey, and we need to make 'choices' in our walk of faith and to learn to be led by the Spirit. For all of these things we will be held accountable, and this is why there are so many warnings or admonishments in the NT. This includes all our works or acts towards others that we put into practice through our body. The good works of God, the fruit of the Spirit, reveals our faith in Him and therefore, in this sense, these acts of repentance and obedience will save us and justify us. We can also disbelieve and rebel against God in acts of disobedience and stubbornness. Even those who are not saved, shall still be judged in accordance with their acts.

Yet no one at all will be saved and given 'eternal' life because of the works themselves. The works determine the wages that will be given to each one for the ages to come, which will

result in various blessings for believers in the kingdom, yet it will also decide the severity of chastening for unbelievers and hypocrites in the Second Death. But ultimately, ALL mankind will be saved, justified and reconciled to God through Christ alone and His cross. Christ Jesus is the only Way to age-abiding life, and He alone is The Saviour of mankind. He is The Way, The Truth and The Resurrection and The Life. It is His Sacrifice alone that can take away sin and grant us forgiveness before God. It is totally due to the amazing grace and mercy of God that ANYONE is saved, and it is this same Grace and Mercy that will make sure that ALL will be saved eventually. These things should hopefully become clearer as we progress in this study.

Christ Jesus is the Judge

This Judgment will occur through Christ Jesus, for all judging has been entrusted to Him by His Father. This accounting of our acts applies to believers as well as to unbelievers, to the righteous as well as to the wicked.

"For neither is the Father judging anyone, but has given all judging to the Son, that all may be honoring the Son, according as they are honoring the Father. He who is not honoring the Son is not honoring the Father Who sends Him."

(John 5:22-23)

"For the Son of Mankind is about to be coming in the glory of His Father, with His messengers, and then He will be paying each in accord with his practice."

(Matthew 16:27)

"For all of us must be manifested in front of the Dais (or judgment seat) of Christ, that each should be requited (or repaid) for that which he puts into practice through the body, whether good or bad."

(2 Corinthians 5:10)

"...at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

(Philippians 2:10-11 NIV)

"In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent. For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the Man He has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead."

(Acts 17:30-31 NIV)

"So that, be not judging anything before the season, till the Lord should be coming, Who will also illuminate the hidden things of darkness and manifest the counsels of the hearts."

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(1 Corinthians 4:5)

"...slaving as to the Lord and not to men, being aware that, whatsoever good each one shall be doing, for this he will be requited (or repaid) by the Lord, whether slave or free."

(Ephesians 6:8)

"...For the Lord Christ are you slaving. For he who is injuring shall be requited (or repaid) for that which he injures, and there is no partiality."

(Colossians 3:25)

"Alexander the coppersmith displayed to me much evil: the Lord will be paying him in accord with his acts."

(2 Timothy 4:14)

"God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked..."

(Ecclesiastes 3:17 NIV)

The Living and the Dead

This Judgment will include both the living and the dead at the time of Christ's Return. (This phrase can also refer to believers, who are the living, and unbelievers, who are the dead).

"And He (*God*) charges us to herald to the people and to certify that this One (*i.e. Jesus*) is He Who is specified by God to be Judge of the living and the dead."

(Acts 10:42)

" I am conjuring (*or charging*) you in the sight of God and Christ Jesus, Who is about to be judging the living and the dead, in accord with His advent and His kingdom: Herald the word."

(2 Timothy 4:1-2)

"...who shall be rendering an account to Him Who is holding Himself in readiness to judge the living and the dead."

(1 Peter 4:5)

"...and the era for the dead to be judged, and to give wages to Thy slaves, the prophets, and to the saints and to those fearing Thy name, the small and the great,..."

(Revelation 11:18)

Two Destinies: Age-abiding Life or Chastening

The following Scripture, written by the Apostle Paul, clarifies what we have learned from the above concerning God's coming Judgment of the living and the dead. Yet this text is the most detailed one we have concerning the two fundamental principles of God's Judgment, and the subsequent destinies of the children of God and the children of Darkness.

'...the just judgment of God, Who will be paying each one in accord with his acts: to those, indeed, who **by endurance in good acts** are seeking glory and honor and incorruption, *(they will be given)* **eonian (or age-abiding) life**; yet to those of faction, and **stubborn, indeed, as to the truth, yet persuaded to injustice**, *(they will be given)* indignation and fury, affliction and distress, on every human soul which is effecting evil, both of the Jew first and of the Greek, yet glory and honor and peace to every worker of good, both to the Jew first, and to the Greek...

...in the day when God will be judging the hidden things of humanity, according to my evangel, through Jesus Christ.'

(Romans 2:6-10 and 16)

Now Paul is clearly saying here that those who show themselves to be children of God by endurance in good acts (or works), which is due to their faith in God, while they are seeking glory and honour and incorruption, they will be given **age-abiding Life**. That is, they will receive incorruptible and immortal spiritual bodies, just like Christ's, and they will 'find their souls' as opposed to losing them, as they are blessed in the kingdom of God with glory, honour and peace.

On the other hand, those who are stubborn as to the truth of the gospel of God, who have been persuaded to practice injustice, lawlessness, evil and wickedness, causing rebellious factions and divisions amongst humanity rather than unity and peace, they shall receive God's indignation and fury, resulting in affliction and distress. This is **age-abiding chastening**.

We shall be looking at the wreaths, wages or rewards for believers a little later. Firstly, here are some other scriptures that confirm the truth that those who are stubborn as to the gospel shall receive age-abiding chastening in the Second Death. That is, they will be being judged in mortal bodies of corruption and destruction, perishing in their sin, in torment and affliction, in weeping and gnashing of teeth, as they are repaid for their wicked acts, remaining in this 'prison' under the wrath of God until 'they have paid back every penny.' Yet even this chastening is due to the love that God has for each and every being whom He has created. All must learn righteousness under the Father's chastening hand.

The Sons of Stubbornness

Both Jesus, and Paul especially, make it clear that the unbelieving, unrighteous sons of stubbornness shall not enjoy the allotment of the kingdom - and this will include religious people and Christian hypocrites who do not truly follow and obey God through Jesus Christ, as well as those who have fallen away or apostatised. Instead, they shall experience the divine justice and indignation of God for age-abiding chastening in outer darkness. And take note that some of these scriptures are addressing Christians as a warning to them that they need to remain in the Vine, that is, in Christ, by obeying His commands, otherwise they too will be thrown into the fire of the Second Death. The true child of God cannot continue in open sin and lawlessness, however religious they appear to be.

"...God, Who will be paying each one in accord with his acts:...yet to those of faction, and stubborn, indeed, as to the truth, yet persuaded to injustice, indignation and fury, affliction and distress, on every human soul which is effecting evil..."

(Romans 2:8-9)

"...yet he who is stubborn as to the Son shall not be seeing life, but the indignation of God shall be remaining on him."

(John 3:36)

"...the Lord...is keeping the unjust for chastening in the day of judging, yet specially those going after the flesh in defiling lust and despising lordship (*or authority*)...Now these, as irrational animals, born naturally for capture and corruption, blaspheming that in which they are ignorant in their corruption, also shall be corrupted, being requited (*or repaid*) with the wages of injustice."

(2 Peter 2:9, 12-13)

"And these shall be coming away into eonian chastening (*usually mistranslated as 'everlasting punishment'*), yet the just into eonian life."

(Matthew 25:46)

"...And, being indignant, his lord gives him up to the tormentors (*jailers*) till he may pay all he is owing him. Thus shall My heavenly Father also be doing to you, if each one should not be pardoning his brother, from your hearts."

(Matthew 18:34-35)

"I am saying to you, 'I don't know you or where you come from! Withdraw from me, all workers of injustice!' There will be

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weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you are seeing Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out."

(Luke 13:27-28)

"And you, being dead to your offences and sins, in which once you walked, in accord with the eon of this world, in accord with the chief of the jurisdiction of the air (or atmosphere), the spirit now operating in the sons of stubbornness..."

(Ephesians 2:1-2)

"For this you perceive, knowing that no paramour (or male prostitute) at all or unclean or greedy person, who is an idolater, **has any enjoyment of the allotment in the kingdom of Christ and of God**. Let no one be seducing you with empty words, **for because of these things the indignation of God is coming on the sons of stubbornness**. Do not, then, become joint partakers with them, for you were once darkness, yet now you are light in the Lord."

(Ephesians 5:5-8)

"Deaden, then, your members that are on the earth: prostitution (or unlawful sexual acts), uncleanness, passion, evil desire and greed, which is idolatry, **because of which the indignation of God is coming on the sons of stubbornness** - among whom you also once walked, when you lived in these things."

(Colossians 3:5-7)

"Or are you not aware that the unjust shall not be enjoying the allotment of God's kingdom? Be not deceived. Neither paramours, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor catamites, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards; no revilers, no extortioners shall be enjoying the allotment of God's kingdom. And some of you were these, but you are bathed off, but you are hallowed, but you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

(1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

"To him who is thirsting I shall be giving of the spring of the water of life gratuitously. He who is conquering shall be enjoying this allotment, and I shall be a God to him and he shall be a son to Me. Yet the timid, and unbelievers, and the abominable, and murderers, and paramours, and enchanters, and

idolaters, and all the false (i.e. liars and hypocrites) - their part is in the lake burning with fire and sulphur, **which is the second death**...Outside (of the New Jerusalem, the kingdom of God) are curs, and enchanters, and paramours, and murderers, and idolaters, and everyone fabricating and fondling falsehood."

(Revelation 21:6-8; 22:15)

Jesus warned that there are two ways or roads that we can travel on: one leads into Life, and the other leads into Destruction, which is Death. (More on this topic later).

"And he who is not taking his cross and following after Me is not worthy of Me. He who is finding His soul will be destroying it, and he who destroys his soul on My account will be finding it."

(Matthew 10:38-39)

"Enter through the cramped gate, for broad is the gate and spacious is the way which is leading away into destruction, and many are those entering through it. Yet what a cramped gate and narrowed way is the one leading away into life, and few are those who are finding it."

(Matthew 7:13-14)

Only those who truly follow Christ are guaranteed to find Life - age-abiding, abundant Life. They must lose or destroy their own soul, that is, they must die to the flesh and live the way of the cross as redeemed slaves on account of Jesus, their true Master and Owner. This is the small, cramped gate and the narrow road that only a few are finding.

In contrast, those who cling on to their selfish, soulish way of living will end up destroying or losing their soul. This is the large, broad gate and spacious way that is leading to destruction - into the Second Death.

Two Resurrections

Now it is also revealed that there will be two resurrections in accord with these two destinies: A resurrection of the righteous, and a resurrection of the unrighteous.

"From those sleeping in the soil of the ground many shall awake, **these to eonian (or age-abiding) life** and **these to reproach for eonian (or age-abiding) repulsion.**"

(Daniel 12:2)

"And He gives Him authority to do judging, seeing that He is a son of mankind. Marvel not at this, for coming is the hour in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and those who do good shall go out into a resurrection of life, yet those who commit bad things, into a resurrection of judging."

(John 5:27-29)

"...that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked."

(Acts 24:15 NIV)

It is evident that these two resurrections both occur at the Return of Christ in the Day of the Lord, yet Paul and John tell us that believers will be raised first in **the First Resurrection**. So what should we make of this? Let us see.

The First Resurrection

It was the apostle John who was later given the details of the First Resurrection in the vision of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. In connection with the coming of Christ to establish His kingdom, we are told the following.

"And I perceived thrones, and they are seated on them, and judgment was granted to them. And the souls of those executed because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who do not worship the wild beast or its image, and did not get the emblem on their forehead and on their hand- **they also live and reign with Christ a thousand years.** (The rest of the dead do not live until the thousand years should be finished.) **This is the former (or first) resurrection.** Happy and holy is he who is having part in the former resurrection! Over these the Second Death has no jurisdiction, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will be reigning with Him the thousand years."

(Revelation 20:4-6)

So here we are told that there will be **a Former or First Resurrection** that will be out from among the rest of the dead. This is a special resurrection that is reserved for those who are blessed and holy, that is, they are the true saints (or holy ones) of God. They are the true disciples of Christ, the Body of Christ ecclesia (or church), who have served their Master faithfully by taking up their cross and following Him. They are Overcomers who have been faithful even to death, refusing to bow the knee to Satan, the world system, or their own flesh. (This kingdom of Darkness is represented by the Wild Beast and its image, that is, idolatry. It symbolises every aspect of the kingdom of darkness under the Adversary's control).

Notice here that thrones of judgment and rulership are given to those believers who are living, as well as to those who have been martyred for their faith. These will participate in this First Resurrection. They will live and reign with Christ as a Melchisedek company of royal priests. This company, along with the chosen messengers, are being referred to in Daniel 7 quoted earlier.

"...thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took His seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of His head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before Him. **Thousands upon thousands attended Him;.."**

(Daniel 7:9-10 NIV)

It is not my purpose to study Revelation 20 in detail right now. That is left for another study (see the section [The Great Prophetic Plan Revealed](#)). It is my present conviction that the 1000 years mentioned here is symbolic of the major portion of the Church Era. Even now, the Body of Christ is seated with Christ in heavenly places as part of His Reign. Satan has been bound by the spiritual power of Christ and God's Holy Spirit, yet even now the Dragon has been released for a short while to deceive the nations, by bringing them back to the roots of Babylonian worship, the Occult and Idolatry. This is all part of the final spiritual battle of Armageddon, Gog and Magog, which will see the people of God being surrounded by the kingdom of Darkness. Yet all of this will culminate in victory for the sons of God when Christ returns to save and to judge with fire from heaven.

For anyone who is familiar with the writings of the New Testament, you should be aware that many truths are applied to believers in this life NOW, as well as being applied more fully in the future. This is a matter of our Standing before God in faith, and the actual outworking or Walking of it, both now and in the future deliverance. We are learning to be what we already are in Christ.

For example, followers of Jesus are said to be raised from death and living in the resurrection life of Christ already, yet we are also waiting patiently for this to be manifested in all its fullness when Christ returns.

"Verily, verily, I am saying to you that he who is hearing My word and believing Him Who sends Me, has life eonian and is not coming into judging, but has proceeded out of death into life.
Verily, verily, I am saying to you that coming is an hour, and now is, when the dead shall be hearing the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear shall be living.

(John 5:24-25)

Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

(Romans 8:23-25 NIV)

In the same way, the Body of Christ Ecclesia is already partaking of the First Resurrection, in spirit, yet the fullness of the actual resurrection and transformation of the sons of God will occur at Christ's Return in the Day of the Lord. These things will become clearer as we progress. But if anyone teaches that the actual resurrection has already taken place before that glorious Day arrives, then they are teaching blatant error.

Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.

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(2 Timothy 2:16-18 NIV)

Returning to Revelation 20, when the mystical 1000 years (the Millennium) of Christ's rule on this present earth is finished, then the rest of the dead will be resurrected. **This is the Latter or Second Resurrection.** Then the Judgment of the Great White Throne shall occur - the Great Judgment Day, which we shall consider shortly.

Yet take note here that only those who are considered worthy of participating in this First Resurrection, the Resurrection of Firstfruits, are guaranteed to be saved from the Second Death! As we shall see, this doesn't mean that *everyone* who takes part in the Second Resurrection of the rest of mankind will enter the Second Death, but it *is* saying that only those who partake of the First Resurrection are guaranteed not to be injured by, or come under the jurisdiction of, the Second Death. They will be immortal, incorruptible humans, experiencing 'eternal' or age-abiding Life.

"The one who is conquering may under no circumstances be injured by the Second Death."

(Revelation 2:11)

Here are some scriptures that are referring to this company who belong to the First Resurrection.

"Verily, verily, I am saying to you that he who is hearing My word and believing Him Who sends Me, has eonian life and is not coming into judging, but has proceeded out of death into life. Verily, verily, I am saying to you that an hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall be hearing the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear shall be living."

(John 5:24-25)

"As for you (*i.e. Daniel*), go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance."

(Daniel 12:13 NIV)

For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal (*age-abiding*) life, and I will raise him up at the last day...No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day."

(John 6:40, 44 NIV)

"Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

(Luke 14:14 NIV)

"Yet those who are considered worthy to take part in that age and the resurrection from among the dead will be neither marrying nor being given in

marriage. And neither can they still be dying, for they are equal to the messengers (*angels*), and are the sons of God, being sons of the resurrection."

(Luke 20:35-36 FT)

"...to know Him (*Christ*), and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, conforming to His death, if somehow I should be attaining to the out-resurrection that is out from among the dead. Not that I already obtained, or am already perfected. Yet I am pursuing, if I may be grasping also that for which I was grasped also by Christ Jesus."

(Philippians 3:10-12)

In this last text, Paul is saying that to attain to this 'out-resurrection' or the First Resurrection one must endure to the end and keep pursuing the goal of becoming a son of God. Even Paul indicates here that even he was not fully perfected as a son of God, and he also appears to be saying that he didn't assume that he had already obtained this special privilege of the First Resurrection. Now that's a sobering thought! He was also saying that he was pursuing this resurrection experience in this life, but he wasn't fully there yet at the time he wrote this. Ultimately, he was talking about the spiritual Life of Christ within him being manifested more and more as he grew into spiritual maturity - going from glory to glory. This is on-going until the Day of Christ.

The True Life - Immortality

This is the ultimate allotment or inheritance of God - immortality and incorruption! **This is true eonian or age-abiding life: to know the Father and His Son intimately in the power of an immortal body that transcends the laws of this Old Creation of corruption and death! This is how we truly inherit the kingdom of God.**

"Now this is eternal (*eonian*) life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

(John 17:3 NIV)

"...treasuring up for themselves an ideal foundation for that which is impending, **that they may get hold of life really.**"

(1 Timothy 6:19)

"Now this I am averring, brethren, that flesh and blood is not able to enjoy an allotment in the kingdom of God, neither is corruption enjoying the allotment of incorruption...For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality...then shall come to pass the word which is written, Swallowed up was Death by Victory..."

(1 Corinthians 15:50, 53-54)

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"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, according to His vast mercy, regenerates us into a living expectation, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead, for the enjoyment of an allotment incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, kept in the heavens for you, who are garrisoned by the power of God, through faith, for salvation ready to be revealed in the last era, in which you are exulting."

(1 Peter 1:3-6)

"...through which have been presented to us **the precious and greatest promises**, that through these you may become participants of the divine nature, fleeing from the corruption which is in the world by lust."

(2 Peter 1:4)

"...Christ Jesus, Who, indeed, abolishes death, yet illuminates life and incorruption through the evangel of which I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher of the nations."

(2 Timothy 1:10-11)

"For our realm is inherent in the heavens, out of which we are awaiting a Saviour also, the Lord, Jesus Christ, Who will transfigure the body of our humiliation, to conform it to the body of His glory, in accord with the operation which enables Him even to subject all to Himself."

(Philippians 3:20-21)

"For we are aware that, if our terrestrial tabernacle house should be demolished, we have a building of God, a house not made by hands, eonian, in the heavens. For in this also we are groaning, longing to be dressed in our habitation which is out of heaven...that the mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now He Who produces us for this same longing is God, Who is also giving us the earnest of the Spirit."

(2 Corinthians 5:1-5)

"Now we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are reposing (*i.e. sleeping in death*), lest you may sorrow according as the rest, also, who have no expectation. For, if we are believing that Jesus died and rose, thus also, those who are put to repose, God will, through Jesus, lead forth together with Him.

For this we are saying to you **by the word of the Lord**, that we, the living, who are surviving to the presence of the Lord, should

by no means outstrip those who are put to repose, for the Lord Himself will be descending from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the Chief Messenger, and with the trumpet of God, **and the dead in Christ shall be rising first.** Thereupon we, the living who are surviving, shall **at the same time be snatched away together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.** And thus shall we always be together with the Lord. So that, console one another with these words."

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

The spiritual, immortal body, the true Temple of God, will not be encumbered by all of the limitations of our present soulish bodies. We shall be free from the laws and ways of this Old Creation, such as gravity, death and decay, the need for sustenance and shelter (though we will still be able to eat and drink), as well as other bodily functions that are necessary and natural at present (such as sleep and rest, relieving bodily waste, sexual needs, etc), no more sickness and infirmity, and most of all, there will be no distance from God and His Son, no sin and wrong-doing to hinder us. We shall be truly full of power and life, basking in the glory of the Sun of righteousness. We shall belong to another dimension (a spiritual, celestial, heavenly one) that can interact with the present world.

To find out more about this immortal body, just take a careful look at the details of the events after Jesus' resurrection (His appearances to the disciples in Mark 16, particularly Luke 24, John 20-21 and Acts 1).

This is the real blessing of salvation and eonian Life.

"...He saves us, through the bath of renascence and renewal of Holy Spirit, which He pours out on us richly through Jesus Christ, our Saviour, that, being justified in that One's grace, we may be becoming enjoyers, in expectation, of the allotment of life eonian."

(Titus 3:5-7)

"...that you should be enjoying the allotment of blessing..."

(1 Peter 3:9)

"Does not God choose the poor in the world, rich in faith and enjoyers of the allotment of the kingdom which He promises to those who are loving Him?"

(James 2:5)

"Are they (*angels or messengers*) not all ministering spirits commissioned for service because of those who are about to be enjoying the allotment of salvation?"

(Hebrews 1:14)

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In comparison, anything less than this allotment is death, and not true Life! Hence all those who are not saved shall have to endure the severe chastening of the Second Death on the New Earth until they are reconciled to God.

This blessing of age-abiding Life in Christ via resurrection is the Expectation (often translated as 'Hope') of the Faith. It is the '*better resurrection*' of Hebrews 11:35.

"...Concerning the expectation and resurrection of the dead am I being judged."

(Acts 23:6)

"...the deliverance of our body. For to expectation were we saved...we are awaiting it with endurance."

(Romans 8:23-25)

"...who are pre-expectant in the Christ...for you to perceive what is the expectation of His calling...His allotment among the saints...according as you were called also with one expectation of your calling..."

(Ephesians 1:12, 18; 4:4)

"...because of the expectation reserved for you in the heavens, which you hear before in the word of truth of the evangel...Christ among you, the expectation of glory..."

(Colossians 1:5, 27)

"...anticipating that happy expectation (or blessed hope)..."

(Titus 2:13)

Paul also reveals that the Body of Christ Ecclesia, the Sons of God, will share in Christ's universal Headship, ruling over all in the heavens (i.e. spirit beings) and all of mankind on the earth. This will ultimately occur in the New Creation when Christ and His Bride will restore and reconcile all things to God, as well as to each other. There will be a Restoration and Reconciliation of all things. This ultimate Age (which may contain further ages of time) is called by Paul '*the administration of the complement of the eras*,' which is more widely known as '*the dispensation of the fullness of times*.' (The NIV falls short on accuracy here and reads '*to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment*').

This Age of the New Creation will complement the whole of history, that is, the eras or times, whereby the Old Creation has brought all things down into sin and death. But through Christ and His administration or rule, the New Creation will eventually bring all things up to righteousness and Life, so that all things, including death, shall become subjected to God through Christ Jesus. In fact, Death shall eventually be abolished altogether, and this includes the Second Death itself (1 Corinthians 15:26).

"...the secret of His will...to have an administration of the complement of the eras, **to head up all in the Christ - both that**

in the heavens and that on the earth - in Him in Whom our lot was cast also, being designated beforehand according to the purpose of the One Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will, that we should be for the laud of His glory, **who are pre-expectant in the Christ**...His power...which is operative in the Christ, rousing Him from among the dead and seating Him at His right hand among the celestials, **up over every sovereignty and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named**, not only in this eon, but also in that which is impending: and subjects all under His feet, and gives Him, **as Head over all, to the ecclesia which is His body, the complement of the One completing the all in all.**"

(Ephesians 1:9-12, 20-23)

"...Jesus Christ, Who is at God's right hand, being gone into heaven, messengers and authorities and powers being subjected to Him."

(1 Peter 3:21-22)

"...God...vivifies us together in Christ (in grace are you saved!) and rouses us together and seats us together among the celestials, **in Christ Jesus**, that, **in the oncoming eons**, He should be displaying the transcendent riches of His grace in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus."

(Ephesians 2:6-7)

"And to the one who is conquering and keeping My acts until the consummation, **to him will I be giving authority over the nations; and he shall be shepherding them with an iron club**, as vessels of pottery are being crushed, **as I also have obtained from My Father**...The one who is conquering, to him will I be granting **to be seated with Me on My throne** as I, also, conquer, and **am seated with My Father on His throne.**"

(Revelation 2:26-28; 3:21)

Yet this expectation or sure hope can only be fully and continually experienced by those who endure affliction and who become tried and tested as children of God. This is the only way that we can become assured of salvation, of making our calling and election sure. We must remain in the Vine and bear fruit to God.

"Yet not only so, but we may be glorying also in afflictions, having perceived that **affliction is producing endurance**, yet **endurance (is producing) testedness**, yet testedness **expectation.**"

(Romans 5:3-4)

The whole of creation is awaiting the time when these Sons of God shall be revealed or manifested or unveiled at the return of Christ, Who will then take the reins of government and fully manifest His rule with all power and authority - so that the kingdom will come on earth, in the same way as it already is in the heavens.

"For you did not get slavery's spirit to fear again, but you got **the spirit of sonship**, in which we are crying, "Abba, Father!" The Spirit itself is testifying together with our spirit that **we are children of God**. Yet if children, enjoyers also of an allotment, enjoyers, indeed, of an allotment from God, yet joint enjoyers of Christ's allotment, if so be that we are suffering together, that we should be glorified together also.

For I am reckoning that the sufferings of the current era do not deserve the glory about to be revealed for us. **For the premonition of the creation is awaiting the unveiling of the sons of God**. For to vanity was the creation subjected, not voluntarily, but because of Him Who subjects it, in expectation that the creation itself, also, shall be freed from the slavery of corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God. For we are aware that the entire creation is groaning and travailing together until now.

Yet not only so, but we ourselves also, **who have the firstfruit of the Spirit**, we ourselves also, are groaning in ourselves, awaiting the sonship, the deliverance of our body. For to expectation were we saved. Now expectation, being observed, is not expectation, for what anyone is observing, why is he expecting it also? Now, if we are expecting what we are not observing, **we are awaiting it with endurance.**"

(Romans 8:15-25)

Yet notice here in this awesome and revealing portion of scripture that Paul states that the Sons of God will only enjoy the allotment of God's blessing, sharing in Christ's allotment of rulership, if we suffer together with Him. Only then will we be glorified together with Him. This means that only those who endure and conquer and overcome by the Spirit of God will be saved to enjoy this allotment of rulership with Christ, and will partake of the First Resurrection. These are the true Chosen Ones of God, the Saints or Holy Ones, the Body of Christ who have shown their worthiness by their faith and obedience. These are those who remain in the Vine, which is Christ Himself.

"If ever you should be remaining in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will be making you free."

(John 8:31-32)

"If anyone should be serving Me, let him be following Me, and where I am, there My servant also shall be."

(John 12:26)

"...according as He chooses us in Him before the disruption of the world (that is, before sin entered), we to be holy and flawless in His sight, in love designating us beforehand for the place of a son for Him through Christ Jesus."

(Ephesians 1:4-5)

"No one can come to Me if ever the Father Who sends Me should not be drawing him...And no one is recognising the Son except the Father; neither is anyone recognising the Father except the Son and he to whom the Son should be intending to unveil Him."

(John 6:44; Matthew 11:27)

"...for all that is begotten of God is conquering the world. And this is the conquest that conquers the world: our faith. Now who is he who is conquering the world if not he who is believing that Jesus is the Son of God?"

(1 John 5:4-5)

Wreaths and Wages

A number of the apostles speak of wreaths or crowns in relation to the promise of age-abiding life for believers. Paul gives us the clearest teaching on these 'wreaths,' which he also equates with 'the Prize.' The Greek word for wreath is *stephanos* which describes the kind of wreath of leaves one would wear as a winner of the Greek Olympic games or some other similar victory. This word is often translated as crown, but the Greek word *diadema* is more correctly a monarch's crown or diadem. Christ wore a wreath of thorns when He came the first time. This thorny wreath symbolises the curse that is upon this Old Creation, which Jesus took upon Himself (Genesis 3:17-19; Matthew 27:28-29; Galatians 3:13). When He returns He will be wearing many diadems, for He is truly the King of all kings (Revelation 19:12).

Here is what Paul says about the prize of the incorruptible wreath.

"Are you not aware that those racing in a stadium are, indeed, all racing, **yet one is obtaining the prize?** Thus be racing that you may be grasping it. Now every contender is controlling himself in all things; they, indeed, then, that they may be obtaining a corruptible wreath, yet we, an incorruptible one. Now then, thus am I racing, not as dubious, thus am I boxing, not as punching the air, but I am belaboring my body and leading it into slavery, lest somehow, when heralding to others, **I myself may become disqualified.**"

(1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

Notice here that even Paul said that he could somehow be disqualified for the prize if he did not continue to die to his flesh and follow Christ all the way - even while preaching to others!

There are other occasions when he talks about those who are *disqualified as to the faith* (2 Timothy 3:8), referring to false brethren, but in the above text he is talking about genuine believers running the race. Salvation in general is not the issue here, but that of partaking in the First Resurrection.

Now if anyone should be **competing in the games** also, he is not given **a wreath** if ever he should not be competing lawfully.

(2 Timothy 2:5)

Followers of Christ should compete with each other in the evangel in the sense of serving God with all you have, making your body a slave to Christ, so that we may gain the prize as a good and faithful servant. But if we don't compete according to the rules of Christ laid down in the Scriptures, in accordance with real love, righteousness and truth, then we will be disqualified and will forfeit our prize. It is possible that we could lose our wreath and be erased from the Book of Life if we fall away from following Christ or become a religious hypocrite.

I am coming swiftly! Hold on to what you have, that no one may be taking your wreath (of Life)."

(Revelation 3:11)

"He who overcomes...I will never erase his name from the book of life..."

(Revelation 3:5 NIV)

In relation to this Prize, Paul gives the following advice.

"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it (*i.e. full spiritual maturity*). But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus."

(Philippians 3:13-14 NIV)

This prize of the First Resurrection was Paul's goal which he pursued with great fervour, the goal of truly becoming a son of God ruling and reigning with Christ at His return.

Here are the other scriptures that speak of this wreath of age-abiding life for all those who love and follow Christ.

"Furthermore, there is reserved for me the wreath of righteousness, which the Lord, the just Judge, will be paying to me in that day; yet not to me only, but also to all who love His advent."

(2 Timothy 4:8)

"Happy is the man who is enduring trial, for, becoming qualified, he will be obtaining the wreath of life, which He promises to those loving Him."

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(James 1:12)

"Become faithful until death, and I shall be giving you the wreath of life."

(Revelation 2:10)

"The elders, then, among you I am entreating...Shepherd the flock of God among you...becoming models for the flock, and, when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you shall be requited (or repaid) with an unfading wreath of glory."

(1 Peter 5:4)

So we can see here that the wreaths of Righteousness, Life and Glory, which shall be repaid to those who are loving Christ, who are Overcomers, being faithful even unto death, is the prize and goal of age-abiding Life guaranteed in the First Resurrection: immortality and incorruption. In the meantime, this is the era of the Cross and of Affliction, hence the need for endurance, yet the time is soon coming when the era of the Crown and of Glory shall arrive.

Jesus, as well as the apostles, also talked about **wages** or rewards being paid out to the righteous.

"Yet each will be getting his own wages according to his own toil...Now if anyone is building on this foundation (*Jesus Christ*) gold and silver, precious stones, wood, grass, straw, **each one's work will become apparent**, for the Day will make it evident, for **it is being revealed by fire**. And the fire, it will be testing each one's work - what kind it is. If anyone's work will be remaining which he builds on it (*Christ the Foundation*), he will get wages. If anyone's work shall be burned up, he will forfeit it, yet he shall be saved, yet thus, as through fire."

(1 Corinthians 3:8, 12-15)

"Lo! I am coming swiftly, and My wage is with Me, to pay each one as his work is."

(Revelation 22:12)

"Be looking to yourselves, that you should not be destroying that for which you work, but you may be getting full wages."

(2 John 8)

John is saying here that it is possible for a believer to lose out and not get full wages if they do not continue in their obedience to Christ. It is possible to build something with great enthusiasm to begin with, and then, by losing your First Love, you begin to destroy that for which you originally worked for. But for those who truly love God, who are truly His children, His chosen ones, they will learn to be perfected in God's love and righteousness so that fear of loss or chastening is cast out. A mature believer welcomes the discipline of the Father NOW, being aware that it is all for our good and ultimate blessing.

"God is love, and he who is remaining in love is remaining in God, and God is remaining in him. In this is love perfected among us, that we may have boldness in the day of judging, seeing that, according as He is, so are we also in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love is casting out fear, for fear has to do with chastening. Now he who is fearing is not perfected in love."

(1 John 4:16-18 FT)

Yet ALL is of God. Even the wages for faithful service are being paid by Grace to saved sinners, who are only worthy because of Christ Jesus. All the fruit of our Harvest, for which we will get wages, is the fruit of the Spirit. It is God's bountiful supply of goodness, as all good gifts come from the Father.

The Second Resurrection and the Great White Throne

"And I perceived a great white throne, and Him Who is sitting upon it, from Whose face earth and heaven fled, and no place was found for them. **And I perceived the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne. And the scrolls were opened.** And another scroll was opened which is the scroll of life. **And the dead were judged by that which is written in the scrolls in accord with their acts.** And the sea gives up the dead in it, and death and the unseen (*hades*) give up the dead in them. **And they were condemned, each in accord with their acts.** And death and the unseen were cast into the lake of fire. **This is the second death-the lake of fire.** And if anyone was not found written in the scroll of life, he was cast into the lake of fire."

(Revelation 20:11-15)

So here we have the description of the Latter or Second Resurrection of the rest of humanity, who are termed 'the dead,' followed by the general Judgment Day for all humanity. The figurative language here describes ALL OF THE DEAD being resurrected to stand before the White Throne of God's Judgment. They are all judged by that which is recorded in the scrolls of judgment, in accord with their acts. And each one is subsequently condemned to the Lake of Fire, which *is* the Second Death.

Once upon a time, not too long ago, I used to believe, as many others do, that the Second Death is going to be a literal death of unconsciousness or annihilation...but I found that there were some details that didn't seem to fit this interpretation. After further study and much contemplation, I concluded that there are four primary reasons as to why I believe that this view is not a satisfactory interpretation of the Second Death.

1. The eonian or age-abiding Lake of Fire, which *is* the Second Death, is a spiritual fire that was originally prepared for the Adversary and his messengers (Matthew 25:41). Spirit beings cannot physically die, like humans do, yet they can still belong to the kingdom of Darkness, Sin and Death - in fact, Satan has been sinning from the beginning (1 John 3:8). So this 'Fire' or 'Second Death' is a spiritual fire that has nothing to do with the physical death of flesh and blood. Humans are also sinners, who, unless they are redeemed by Christ, are lost in Darkness and Death. So, therefore, humans will also experience this spiritual

'Lake of Fire' along with the wicked spirit beings, though for humans it will specifically be 'the Second Death.'

2. As we have seen above, Christ and His Body/Bride, the saints, will be ruling over the earth and the heavens for the ages of the ages. This means that they will need to be ruling over the rest of humanity on the New Earth, reigning from the New Jerusalem as Kings and Priests. This City is the Kingdom of God. (For further study, see [The Promise and Christ's Inheritance](#)). So if the rest of humanity were all literally dead, then who would the saints be reigning over?

3. As we have learned earlier, the eonian or age-abiding chastening will include weeping and gnashing of teeth; being repaid for wicked acts; being in a 'prison;' being on the outside of the kingdom, in darkness, looking on, etc. These things would not make any sense to people who are literally dead or unconscious. What would be the point of the Judgment and how would the sentence be carried out? People need to be alive in mortal bodies to experience this chastening of the wrath of God. The Second Death is evidently the sentence that is given at the White Throne Judgment, and it is not the accounting itself before the Heavenly Court. The chastening judging follows the accounting - and this chastening is the Second Death.

4. In the NT, the Greek words for Death, Destruction, Perishing, Corruption, and related words, are used not only for describing the complete cessation of life in the Old Creation, but they are also used to describe the process of sin and death working within the mortal body while a person is alive. **This is the First Death.** We all experience something of the First Death, which was passed on to us all through the first Adam. The Second Death will therefore be similar to the First Death, yet far worse - for everyone who is experiencing the Second Death will know that they are in Death, and they will know the deep reality of their sin, and of God. They will be aware of what they are missing (hence the weeping or mourning, and angry gnashing of teeth), and the chastening will certainly not be pleasant, even though it will ultimately work for their good. It is not a place of aimless torture or punishment, where they are tormented in literal fire forever and ever!

The following scriptures are an example of this continuing process of the state of Death and Corruption within living humans experiencing mortality.

"And he who is not taking his cross and following after Me is not worthy of Me. He who is finding His soul will be destroying it, and he who destroys his soul on My account will be finding it."

(Matthew 10:38-39)

In the above text we are told that one can destroy or lose their soul while living.

"...they will put some of you to death....But not a hair of your head will perish. By standing firm you will save yourselves (*'By your endurance shall you be acquiring your souls' CV*)."

(Luke 21:16-19)

In this text we are told that some believers will be put to death, that is, killed, yet we are also told that they will not perish (or more accurately, 'will not be perishing')! This sounds like a complete contradiction if we equate perishing here with being killed, but if we correctly cut the word there will be no contradiction.

From these two texts, we can establish that one can destroy their soul or soulish desires by following Christ (that is, dying to the flesh or carnal man), and be finding their soul in the kingdom. Though some may die or be killed, nevertheless, they shall receive life in the kingdom at the resurrection and shall not be perishing. They shall gain the blessings of life in the kingdom, that is, they shall save their souls, by enduring in the truth and remaining loyal to the King.

"We are aware that we have proceeded out of death into life, for we are loving our brethren. He who is not loving is remaining in death."

(1 John 3:14)

John is saying here that only believers have come out of death into life, even now, and this is proven by the acts of love, whereas those who are not loving their fellow man are remaining in death, though they are yet still alive.

This state of sin and death within our mortal flesh is exactly what Paul is talking about throughout Romans chapters 6-8, showing that believers still have to continually die to the flesh for them to be truly living. The following verses will suffice to show this.

"The mind of the flesh is death...But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is life because of righteousness...For if you live according to the flesh, you will be dying. Yet if by the Spirit you are putting the practices of the body to death, you will be living."

(Romans 8:6, 10, 13 FT)

These scriptures clearly show that death is the state of mortal flesh, even while we are yet alive. Even believers still have a fleshly body of sin and death until the day of deliverance, which is why we still die. Any physical healing or miracle is only temporary right now. And believers need to learn to put the flesh to death, for that is the only way to life. For the unbelievers and hypocrites, the Second Death awaits them, as they live out a cursed life in mortal bodies, being repaid for their acts under the chastening hand of God, until the King brings them to a place of humble obedience and submission to God, for only He can save them. This process shall be accomplished through Jesus Christ and the Sons of God ruling over the rest in righteousness.

For further study of the Lake of Fire, 'Hell' and Gehenna, and the subject of Fury and Torments, see [Is There Really a Hell?](#)

Will All be Condemned at this Judgment?

Going back to the White Throne Judgment, we see that the dead will be condemned to the Second Death. Will this include everyone at this judgment? The answer is 'No.' Even though the focus of this text in Revelation is primarily on 'the dead' who are condemned to the Second Death, nevertheless, it also indicates in the last verse that there will be some who *will* be found written in the Scroll of Life, and therefore, they will be saved. This is because all mankind will be judged at this time, including God's people, for it is the Great Judgment Day. Only Dispensationalist interpretations make a separation between the judgments of believers and unbelievers.

Ultimately, the Book of Life represents Christ Himself, and only those who are written on His heart will be saved from the Second Death.

"And if anyone was not found written in the scroll of life, he was cast into the lake of fire."

If this verse was all we had to go on to establish the possibility that some will be saved at this judgment, then this implication would be very weak. Yet there are many other scriptures that shed some more light on this issue. Here is the first example.

"The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now One greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now One greater than Solomon is here."

(Matthew 12:41-42 NIV)

Jesus is saying here that at the time when that generation of unbelieving Israel will be resurrected and judged, those of the nations shall also rise to be judged at the same time. Those of the nations who showed acts of repentance and faith before the time of Christ, such as the men of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba, shall condemn the unbelieving generation of Jesus' day by comparing their acts of faith with the unbelief of the Jews. This indicates that these 'righteous Gentiles' will be saved, while the ancient people of God, who were the original subjects of the kingdom, shall be condemned for their blatant unbelief of not believing in Jesus as the Messiah.

It is possible that the 'standing' or 'rising' is describing the standing up of a witness in a courtroom, in which case these gentiles may have been raised previously in the First Resurrection, and they will rise as judges and witnesses with Christ to condemn the unbelievers. Nevertheless, the context of 'rising in the judging' reveals that all will be resurrected to be judged at the same time, whether it be the righteous or the wicked.

A number of Jesus' parables reveal that His true servants will be judged at the same time as the unfaithful hypocrites. Here is one example.

"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another

two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey...

...After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'...

...Then the man who had received the one talent came...

'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

(Matthew 25:14-15, 19-21, 24a, 28-30 NIV)

In this parable of the Silver Talents, the good and faithful servants, who had used their Master's possessions wisely, are given their wages or rewards at the same time as the wicked, lazy servant receives his judgment of being sacked and thrown into the outer darkness. That is, their accounting before the judgment seat of Christ occurs at the same time. This judgment, and the subsequent separation into two distinct destinies, is revealed throughout the New Testament. See also the parables of the Weeds and the Net in Matthew 13. The resurrection and the Great Judgment Day are always associated with the Day of the Lord, the Return of Jesus Christ, at the end of this present age.

Judged by Works?

Here is another example, which is one of the most revealing texts on this subject. It is the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats.

"Now, whenever the Son of Mankind may be coming in His glory, and all the holy messengers with Him, then shall He be seated on the throne of His glory, and in front of Him shall be gathered all the nations. And He shall be severing them from one another even as a shepherd is severing the sheep from the kids. And He shall be standing **the sheep**, indeed, at His right, yet **the kids** at the left.

Then shall the King be declaring to those at His right, 'Hither, blessed of My Father! Enjoy the allotment of the kingdom made ready for you from the disruption of the world. For I hunger and you give Me to eat; I thirst and you give Me drink; a stranger was I and you took Me in; naked and you clothed Me; infirm am I and you visit Me; in jail was I and you come to Me.'

Then the just will be answering Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we perceive Thee hungering and nourish Thee, or thirsting and we give Thee drink? Now when did we perceive Thee a stranger and took Thee in, or naked and we clothed

Thee? Now when did we perceive Thee infirm, or in jail, and we came to Thee?' And, answering, the King shall be declaring to them, 'Verily, I am saying to you, In as much as you do it to one of these, the least of My brethren, you do it to Me.'

Then shall He be declaring to those also at His left, 'Go from Me, you cursed, into the fire eonian, made ready for the Adversary and his messengers. For I hunger and you do not give Me to eat; I thirst and you do not give Me drink; a stranger was I and you did not take Me in; naked and you did not clothe Me; infirm and in jail and you did not visit Me.'

Then shall they also be answering, saying, 'Lord, when did we perceive you hungering or thirsting, or a stranger, or naked, or infirm, or in jail, and we did not serve you?' Then shall He be answering them, saying, 'Verily, I am saying to you, In as much as you do it not to one of these, the least, neither do you it to Me.' And these shall be coming away into chastening eonian, yet the just into life eonian."

(Matthew 25:31-46)

This parable of the Sheep and the Goats has often been interpreted by many as describing the judgment of the living nations after Christ's return, whereby they are judged in accordance with how they have treated the Jews. I once held this 'dispensational' view for many years, but I came to realise that this parable is ultimately describing the general judgment of mankind. All of humanity are the nations when compared to the Body of Christ, the heavenly Israel of God, who are Christ's brethren.

We are told that after Christ has returned and He is ruling on His glorious throne in His kingdom, He will then judge all the nations. They will be judged in accordance with their acts, particularly as to how they treated Christ's brethren, the Body of Christ, who are the heavenly Israel, the true circumcision in spirit. Yet take note of these three things:

1. The people are separated into two groups, the righteous sheep on the right, and the unrighteous goats on the left. There is no middle ground here. The whole of mankind is either on one side or the other, just like the two thieves (muggers) who were crucified next to Jesus, one on His right and the other on His left; one repented and believed, while the other remained in his sin.
2. The people being judged are distinct from Christ's brethren, yet they are judged in accordance with how they've treated the disciples and servants of Christ, that is, His brothers.
3. Notice how ignorant both groups appear to be in relation to the King's words of judgment. They are not aware that they have done anything good or bad to the King Himself via His servants. Yet they are judged as to whether they have shown simple acts of loving kindness and compassion to the least of Christ's brethren, or not. (It is possible that this 'ignorance' or innocence may be exaggerated for the sake of clarity in the parable).

Love is the complement or fulfillment of the law. Real faith in God will produce righteous acts of love. There are many people who have shown acts of love, compassion and sacrifice for others, even though they may not have heard the real truth about Christ. And those who show kindness and mercy to the true followers of Christ will be rewarded. The righteous ones are those who will feed the hungry, give a drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the outcast, show active compassion to those who are sick, even visiting those who have been imprisoned unjustly. They are the ones whom the King delights to bless by giving them access to the kingdom of the Father, that is, age-abiding life. Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.

These acts, when done out of a heart of love and faith, fulfill the requirements of the Divine, Royal Law. The acts themselves will not save anyone, for only Christ can save and redeem, yet these acts reflect the heart of the King, and the kingdom belongs to such as these. Someone may be religious and have some knowledge of the Hebrew and/or Greek Scriptures, yet the hearers of the law are not the ones who shall be justified before God, but only the doers of the law shall be made righteous. There are, and have been, many amongst humanity who are fulfilling the law through righteous acts - and they would put religious Jews and Christians to shame. Do you think Christ would reject them once He is revealed to them?

Paul had this to say on the subject.

"...for whoever sinned without (*or outside of*) law, shall also perish without (*or outside of*) law, and whoever sinned under (*or in*) law, will be judged through the law. For it is not the listeners to the law who are righteous with God, but it is the doers of the law that shall be justified. For whenever they of the nations that have no law are by nature doing that which the law demands, these that are having no law are a law to themselves, who are displaying the action of the law written in their hearts, their conscience testifying together and their reckonings between one another, accusing or defending them, in the day when God will be judging the hidden things of humanity...through Jesus Christ."

(Romans 2:12-16 FT)

Paul is clearly saying here that those people who do not have the law of God, that is, nations without knowledge of the Bible, are often obeying the law of God that is written in their hearts, for man was made in the image of God. The conscience also bears witness to this law within and it guides us in our behavior towards others, and in the making of laws. These people can often be behaving more righteously than those who have the law of God in written form and who claim to know Him! But only the doers of the law shall be justified before God. All of these things shall be taken into account on the day of judging.

One more example of being judged by works is the case of Rahab the prostitute.

"In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous (*or justified*) for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?"

(James 2:25 NIV)

In Joshua chapter 2, we have the account of Rahab and the Israelite spies or messengers who were sent to check out the city of Jericho. Even though Rahab was a prostitute and was well known in Jericho, she was given the opportunity to repent and show her faith when the spies came to her. She put her life on the line by hiding the messengers on her roof and helping them to escape. Even though she lied to the king of Jericho, she did so for the sake of the Israelites to save their lives. In all of this, she was revealing that she believed in Yahweh, the One True God, and she was on the side of God's people. Rahab and her family were later spared at the battle of Jericho and they became a part of the people of Israel from that time on (Joshua 6:25).

So James is saying clearly here that righteous Gentiles like Rahab, who show evidence of faith by their works, are justified before God and can belong to the people of God. It would therefore appear that this principle will also apply at the Judgment.

The Principle of Graded Judgment

('The punishment fits the crime' or 'the reward fits the deed')

As we have already seen, it is evident from the teachings of Jesus and the apostles that everyone will be rewarded or repaid with wages in accordance with their acts, whether good or bad. This means that, in accordance with true justice, each one will get what they deserve in relation to their acts. This is the principle of graded judging, where 'the punishment fits the crime' for those in the Second Death, or 'the reward fits the deed' for those who are servants in the kingdom. The following words of Christ Himself reveals this basic principle.

"He who is receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet shall be obtaining a prophet's wages. And he who is receiving a just man in the name of a just man shall be obtaining a just man's wages. And whoever should be giving one of these little ones only a cool cup to drink, in the name of a disciple, verily, I am saying to you, by no means should he be losing his wages."

(Matthew 10:41-42)

Jesus is saying plainly here that if someone receives a true prophet of God because they know he is a prophet, they shall be given the equivalent of a prophet's wages, as though they were the prophet! That is, they shall be repaid according to their works of faith. The same is true of those who receive a righteous man knowing that he is a righteous man of God. And even those who simply offer a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ in genuine love and compassion, knowing that they are a disciple of Christ, shall certainly not lose his wages either.

This could possibly be understood as saying that even though someone doesn't openly claim to follow Christ as a disciple, nevertheless, if they show compassion to a disciple, they may not be guaranteed a place in the First Resurrection, nevertheless, at the Second Resurrection, they will be given wages for their acts of kindness, and they will be shown mercy by the King, for they showed mercy to others. With the measure we use, so will it be measured to us. If we do not judge others, using our own inaccurate assumptions, we will not be judged. If we do not condemn others, we will not be condemned. If we forgive others their debts or sins, we also will be forgiven (Luke 6:37-38). This is the principle of reaping what you sow.

Be not deceived, God is not to be sneered at, **for whatsoever a man may be sowing, this shall he be reaping also**, for he who is sowing for his own flesh, from the flesh shall be reaping corruption, yet he who is sowing for the spirit, from the spirit shall be reaping life eonian. Now we may not be despondent in ideal doing, for in due season we shall be reaping, if we do not faint. Consequently, then, as we have occasion, we are working for the good of all, yet specially for the family of faith.

(Galatians 6:7-10)

Here is another scripture showing this principle of graded judging.

"Whosoever, then, should be breaking one of the least of these commands, and should be teaching others to do the same, he shall be called least in the kingdom of the heavens. Yet whoever should be doing and teaching these commands, he shall be called great in the kingdom of the heavens. For I am saying to you that if your righteousness does not surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, then by no means may you be entering into the kingdom of the heavens."

(Matthew 5:19-20 FT)

Even amongst believers there will be various rewards or wages given out in the kingdom. Some will be higher in position than others, given a greater blessing than others. This is further confirmed in the Parable of the Minas, where some of the faithful servants are each given various numbers of cities to rule over depending on their calling and faithfulness (Luke 19:11-27). Jesus plainly says that those who obey His commands will be called great in the kingdom, but those who are less obedient and who remain immature will be called least in the kingdom. They are all in the kingdom, but with differing positions. Yet for those who think that religious works alone will get them into the kingdom, like the self-righteous attitude of the Pharisees and scribes, sadly they won't even *enter* the kingdom at all!

Yet for those in the kingdom, even the *least* among the Body/Bride of Christ shall be *greater* than the greatest prophet of all, who was the forerunner of the Messiah - John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11). John was only a Forerunner for Christ, but the Body of Christ will be kings and priests, reigning with Christ! So even the *least* among them will be greater than the position that John represented as a Forerunner or Herald. Yet even in all of this, the last shall be first and the first shall be last. God looks at the heart and He completely reverses the opinions and thoughts of man. God honours what man dishonours. "The greatest among you shall be your servant."

Here is another scripture.

"Moreover, I am saying to you, it shall be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judging than for you...Moreover, I am saying to you that it shall be more bearable for the land of Sodom in the day of judging than for you."

(Matthew 11:22, 24 FT)

Again, the principle of a graded sentence at the judging is seen here. It will be more bearable or tolerable for the people of Tyre and Sidon, and Sodom and Gomorrah, on that day, than for

the unbelievers of Jesus' day who were given more light. They will all be condemned to the Second Death at the Second Resurrection, yet the severity of the chastening that they will bear will vary.

This principle of being judged more severely for having greater light, blessing and knowledge, is revealed in this parable.

"That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows (*lashes CV*). But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment (*blows CV*) will be beaten with few blows (*lashes CV*). From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."

(Luke 12:47-48 NIV)

Again, it is evident here that the one who claims to be a servant of God and of Christ, but is disobedient and unfaithful, will be judged and chastened, and among these, those who have received greater light and knowledge will be chastened (or 'lashed') more severely than others with less knowledge and understanding. This is also confirmed by James, who says that those who are teachers of the Scriptures will be held more accountable than others and will receive greater judgment (James 3:1-2).

The text above is indicating that many Jews and Christians who claim to know God or Christ will in fact have to endure the Second Death, the Gehenna of Fire, receiving the chastening of God until they are set free. They will not have a place in the First Resurrection. This accords with the rest of Jesus' teaching that the subjects of the kingdom who are hypocritical liars shall be thrown out into outer darkness and death. So let us produce fruit worthy of repentance that we may be able to escape this fire to come. May the fire of righteousness and holiness purge us even now, that we may come forth as gold. This is what Paul was talking about in 1 Corinthians 3.

For other foundation can no one lay beside that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone is building on this foundation gold and silver, precious stones, wood, grass, straw, each one's work will become apparent, for the day will make it evident, for it is being revealed by fire. And the fire, it will be testing each one's work -- what kind it is. If anyone's work will be remaining which he builds on it, he will get wages. **If anyone's work shall be burned up, he will forfeit it, yet he shall be saved, yet thus, as through fire.**

(1 Corinthians 3:11-15)

Conclusion

It makes a change for me to end an article on a fairly serious note such as this, but this is a serious subject, one that is often overlooked or virtually ignored, particularly by those who believe in Universal Reconciliation. On the other hand, there are those who have caused great damage to the subject of God's Judgment through the teaching of Eternal Hell and Torment, which has often perverted the right ways of the Lord rather than revealing His true justice and righteousness.

I hope that this somewhat brief article (I say brief, taking into account the depth of the subject matter) has laid out something of the nature, and fact, of the coming Resurrection and Judgment. I hope and pray that all who read this will partake of the blessings of the First Resurrection. Yet even for those who have to endure the Second Death, ultimate restoration is assured, for God is the Saviour of ALL mankind.

"You may not be ashamed, then, of the testimony of our Lord, nor yet of me, His prisoner, but suffer evil with the evangel in accord with the power of God, Who saves us and calls us with a holy calling, not in accord with our acts, but in accord with His own purpose and the grace which is given to us in Christ Jesus before times eonian (*or age-abiding times*), yet now is being manifested through the advent of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, **Who, indeed, abolishes death, yet illuminates life and incorruption through the evangel** of which I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher of the nations.

For which cause I am suffering these things also, but I am not ashamed, for I am aware Whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard what is committed to me, for that day. Have a pattern of sound words, which you hear from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. The ideal thing committed to you, guard through the holy spirit which is making its home in us."

(2 Timothy 1:8-14)

All Scripture quotations are from the Concordant Version unless stated otherwise.

NIV = New International Version

FT = Free Translation based on the CV and NIV texts

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