



"Our character is but the stamp on our souls of the free choices of good and evil we have made through life."

—John Cunningham Geikie

16-Apr-10

Death Is Not the End (Part Six)

In Part Five, we learned about the general resurrection, when tens of billions of people will rise from their graves to live as physical human beings under judgment, when they will have the opportunity for salvation. These people, from all ages and cultures that have existed on earth, will learn a great deal when they rise from their graves. Among the chief things that they will learn is the true way of life that [God](#) teaches in His Word, and they will be taught about God's mercy and grace. Unlike most of mankind today, they will have God's Spirit available to them so that they can believe, understand, and use the knowledge of God to grow and prepare to be members of His Family. They will be instructed to live as God meant man to live from the beginning. This time, they will have what it takes to lead successful, righteous lives.

What kind of life are they going to live? Speaking about this time through the prophet Isaiah, God helps us to see into the future:

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. . . . The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in [Jerusalem], nor the voice of crying. No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor

an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed. ([Isaiah 65:17](#), 19-20)

From verse 20 comes the speculation that the Great White Throne Judgment period may be one hundred years long. If so, each resurrected individual—whether he had died as an innocent infant or an aged reprobate—will have one hundred years of living to prove to God that he is worthy of salvation and eternal life or of condemnation and eternal death in the Lake of Fire. What will such people do during this time?

They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. ([Isaiah 65:21-23](#))

In essence, this judgment period will be an extension of the wonderful [peace](#), bounty, and prosperity that will mark the Millennium as humanity's true Golden Age. In [this world](#), people struggle throughout their lives to produce a living only to see it wiped out in calamity or taken by another to enjoy. In the age to come, windstorms will not hit just as the crops ripen; war will not erupt just as a person's house is finished; and a person on the brink of retirement will not have his nest egg stolen by a honey-tongued swindler. People will live long, fulfilling lives free of fear of disaster. They will truly be blessed.

"It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," says the LORD. ([Isaiah 65:24-25](#))

The people who rise in this resurrection will enjoy Millennial conditions with [Christ](#) and the firstfruits of God's Family living among them. Should a

problem arise, even before they call for help, they will be answered. It is reminiscent of the time when Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, prayed for God's help, and while he was still speaking, God provided the answer to his prayer ([Genesis 24:10-15](#)). Quick responses like this will happen frequently during this period, allowing the people to [see God](#) working in their behalf, helping them come to salvation.

Thus, in the very best of conditions, they will live full and abundant lives apart from Satan's influence (he will already have been cast into the Lake of Fire; [Revelation 20:10](#)). What is more, they will have God's Spirit available to them, just as the Tree of Life was available to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden ([Genesis 2:8-9](#), 16-17). There will be no better environment for them to live and accept God's offer of salvation.

Is this not a better way to regard the death of those whom God has not yet called? We all have relatives who do not know the truth, and should they die uncalled, we do not need to grieve for them bitterly, as if they were forever lost. We can still grieve, since we will miss their company for the time being, but because God has made provision in His plan to take care of this "problem," we can accept their deaths with consolation and hope.

We have no need to worry, as some professing [Christians](#) do, that the billions across Africa and Asia who have never heard the name of Christ are lost. Far more people have lived on the earth and not heard the name of Christ than who have. This should not even worry us, for God has these supposedly forsaken people in the palm of His hand (see [Isaiah 49:14-16](#)). When the most advantageous time comes, He will call them all, and if we know our God, the vast majority of them will be saved, because He finishes what He begins ([Isaiah 55:11](#)).

In [Psalm 68:20](#), David writes, "Our God is the God of salvation; and to God the LORD belong escapes from death." This verse can be understood to promise that He will help us "escape from death" if we are in a car accident. While it certainly covers that, *escapes* means "deliverances." In the context, it refers more to deliverance in terms of salvation than to saving us from physical harm.

Why do more people not believe this? He is the God of salvation; salvation is what He does! Notice [Psalm 74:12](#): "For God is my King from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth." He saves! He saves people from eternal death, and He is doing that and will continue to do so by helping, instructing, and shaping His character in them. Death, brought upon man because of [sin](#), is no barrier to the God of salvation. In fact, He makes use of sin and death to form the righteous character He desires His children to have.

Those who awake in the second resurrection will rise from their graves with new physical bodies of God's creation. They will awake without spot of disease, and they will be full of vigor. Those who have been lame or blind or retarded will no longer have such handicaps. Having rested in death and woken to a new life, they will take their first steps along the path to salvation.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Unleavened Bread and Pentecost](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

In observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread, emphasizing our initiative in putting out sin is wrong. Unleavened bread serves as a memorial of God's initiative of delivering us from the bondage of sin. Like our forebears, we have to realize that our part of the salvation process is to follow God's lead, cooperating with His will. When we metaphorically leave Egypt (a type of the world), we leave the location of our sin, leaving behind anything that will hinder us from reaching the Promised Land. Eating unleavened bread symbolizes following God's lead, doing righteousness, and imitating the righteousness of God.

From the Archives: Featured Article

Elijah and John the Baptist

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Despite the greatness of the Old Testament prophets, Jesus declares that none was greater than His cousin, John, known as "the Baptist." John Ritenbaugh explains that Jesus clearly says that John fulfilled Malachi 4:5-6 as the prophesied Elijah to come.

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