

The Judgments

Last Great Day

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I have had to make a decision on whether I would finish what I started with the book of Deuteronomy—and I will do it, but not until the Sabbath. The Bible tells me that I have to give meat in due season. And the meat for this season is different than the book of Deuteronomy, and that series I have been going through. I did try to formulate a message for the Last Great Day out of the book of Deuteronomy, and there might be one in there, but it was not in me. One of these days, I am sure it will come out.

Turn with me to the book of Acts, chapter 4, a scripture that ought to be in our memory banks. And it says there:

Acts 4:12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Very briefly, this means that salvation is not to be found except through Jesus Christ, and yet there have been millions of people down through the ages who have never even heard the name of Jesus Christ. I am sure that you are well aware of that, but we are going to begin this sermon by recounting certain classes of people who, I am sure, have never heard of the name of Jesus Christ in terms that would be suitable for salvation.

I think we have to begin with the countless children who have been born and died before ever reaching adulthood; before ever reaching a place where they have had enough education and experience where they could fully understand, at least in terms of beginning their conversion, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and what it means to be a sinner, and what it means to be able to repent, not just of what we have done, but what we are. This is why we generally do not baptize somebody who is merely a teenager, because they just do not have the background to be able to understand those concepts even though they may be sincere to the depths of their being. But there is something about the way of Christianity that requires a person to be an adult; a person with experience that they can understand those concepts.

So, we have countless children who have been born, maybe lived to the age of 3, 4, 5, 15, maybe 20, and they have never heard the name of Jesus Christ.

In addition to that, we have how many who have been born mentally handicapped—incompetent—in some way. Right now, one of the favorite movies of the time is about Forrest Gump. And if I understand correctly, this character has an IQ of only 75, which according to the way men rate things, that qualifies him to be an “idiot.” This does not mean that he is completely void of any understanding, but he is right on the edge of where being able to function in an adult society is within his grasp, but yet, it is not quite there. And so, Forrest Gump is a person with child-like simplicity who goes around seemingly doing the right thing at the right time, because he is not caught up in all the sophistication of the world.

But how many people are there who have been born, to whom Forrest Gump is a genius? Where their mental capacity is such that they are virtually empty of a brain (mind) at all. They are living, and they

can do the functions of breathing, eating, and maybe using the bathroom, maybe clothing themselves, but they never seem to get beyond the place where they are independent, mentally beyond 3, 4, or 5 years old. How many people have been born with that kind of incapacity?

And so, the gospel of Jesus Christ means nothing to them. Jesus Christ being their personal Savior means nothing to them at all. They might recognize the name, even as they recognize their own name. But that is as far as it goes.

Then, there are other people who have gone insane at some point of their life. They have become so focused on themselves—that is what insanity is, an intense focus on the self—so encompassed by their fears that they cannot function normally, even though their Intelligence Quotient (IQ) might be very high.

I imagine that there are people with IQs of 140, 150, 160 (I do not know how high the scale goes) but some might become insane, because they have completely turned in on themselves and their fears. In that case, the words that you and I understand and love so well, mean nothing to them, because they are lost in the caverns of their own thoughts—there is no room for the kind of thing that is necessary for salvation.

And there are other people who went through life never hearing, because they were someplace that is remote, away from where the Word of Life came. What can you do about those people? Again, they may have been people who are of normal intelligence, maybe an IQ of 100, 110, 115 which is good enough to function well and hold down a good job for a person to be very successful in life. And yet these people might have been born in New Guinea, and so these things just never got to them. Maybe it was never preached to them in any way, shape, or form.

Then, there were still other people who lived in areas where they could have had access to the gospel, in fact they were religious people, and maybe they went to one of the Christian churches of this world, and they really studied into the things of life that were in the Bible, but they were so deceived and caught up in their religion that they were taught since they were a child, that they simply could not understand the truth, and they reject the simplicity of the true gospel.

Now, this last point is quite important, because the Western world that we are a part of falls mainly in this last category. And, much of this world's Christianity pictures God's plan as involving a gift of salvation merely on the profession of belief in Jesus Christ. But that "grace" so cheapens God and true salvation as to make it into nothing more than a Cracker Jack prize.

It is as though they have found a magic formula, a word to say, a mantra to repeat or chant, that would clear life's path of all its impediments. And so personal problems, they are told, will disappear, when in reality, Christianity is a way of life that teaches one how to deal with the problems of life; to overcome them. It is through these things, and the knowledge that comes from God's Word that develops the whole personality into being someone like God is.

So, the whole package has to be there at the beginning of a person's conversion to a degree so that they are able to see what they are, and what they have to do. They have to see, even though it may not be as clear as it will be, because as they go along, and as they grow, the vision will become clearer of what they are, and who God is, and what the reality of what lies before them is. So, as that becomes clearer, they become more developed, and more deeply converted.

The bible does, indeed, show that the only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ. It shows that in many places, sometimes with different wording like in Acts 4, but it is there.

In John 15 is another one of these places where Jesus Himself says:

John 15:1 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.”

That word “true,” means, “genuine.” If you will remember the sermonette, he talked about things that were counterfeit. Jesus is alluding to the fact that there are other vines, but they are not the genuine, they are not the real. There is only one that is real.

John 15:1-2 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”

Have you ever pruned a tree? Most of us have, at least a little bit. We have apple trees in our back yard, and Richard is pretty good at pruning trees, something that is really practical and useful that they taught him at Ambassador College. And so, one time we needed to be gone for a trip of some kind, and I asked him to prune the trees while we were gone. When we came back, they were not pruned, they were scalped! He really did a job on them. They did not die.

After we came back, and I saw the trees, I sort of gasped, not because I was afraid they were going to die, but for some reason I put myself into the place of one of those trees, and got to thinking, “How would I like to be hacked away like that, having my limbs chopped off here and there?” Well he had to do that in order to shape the tree back up, which had been growing wild all over the place. They did well afterwards.

We knew it was not going to produce the amount of fruit this year that it had last year, because oftentimes when something is pruned hard, it produces less for a while, until it gets over the damage of the pruning. But then, it begins to burst forth and really grow again.

When we get pruned back once in a while, it hurts. You see? He is doing it in order to produce more fruit later on. God always has His eye on the long-range goal. He knows what He is creating in us, and how He is going to bring it about.

Now He says to them:

John 15:3-5 “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

Is there salvation in any other? We have to be attached to Him.

John 15:6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

Now, this is just another way of saying that unless we are attached to Christ, there is no salvation, in spite of that man who said that Christ and Buddha were both saviors. That is a lie! There is only the One Savior. And if we are not attached to Him, there is no salvation. And so, we have to be that way.

You can also look in John 10:1-9. Here you will find another way of saying that. He says that, "I am the Door. Anybody who tries to get in any other way is a thief and a robber." What do you do to thieves and robbers? They get thrown out!

The way to salvation, though, entails that a person comes to know Jesus Christ in a personal way, as a personal Savior, repenting of sin, and willingly giving oneself to Him in total surrender.

Now we might show some of that through the keeping of the commandments, which is certainly evidence that a person has given himself over. This way involves a person who has not merely been told about the only Savior, but has been taught to the extent that they have a clear understanding of God's purpose that they are not giving themselves in another act of self-centeredness to get something for the self.

We heard this morning about, "What's in it for me?" That is not entirely wrong. We should desire to get something if God offers it. He wants us to take advantage of the opportunity He has made to us in calling us, giving us understanding so we can repent, taking advantage of the New Covenant. He wants us to be there, and so there is something in it for us!

If we have the wrong approach, and are merely trying to get something for the self, then we do not really know Jesus Christ. We do not know the way.

So, the giving of ourselves to God is not merely to escape the death penalty, but we are giving ourselves to a great cause—a new creation—to a loving Creator, who has a personal interest in you and me—the object of His love. Now when people get baptized, that should be understood at least in its elementary ramifications. And I think it is in most every case.

There must be billions of people who have never had a Bible to read. How about the Israelites? How many Bibles or collections of Scripture did they have access to from Moses onward? It just was not all that accessible for them. Add to this the billions who have lived apart from Israel. Did they (Israel?) have an advantage in those things? No they did not. So, there are multiple billions of people who fit into this category.

Turn to Matthew 13 to add another thing that will clarify things a bit.

Matthew 13:10-11 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given."

Could anything be more plain? If any of you have access to commentaries, it is very interesting to look at this verse, as well as John 6:44, in them. They see what it says, but you should see some of the explanations that they give in trying to understand—God purposely withholds news of His salvation? Oh how they have to go into some strange explanations to get around these! Usually they tend to then write them off, or ignore them. But, that IS what it says.

Matthew 13:12 “For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”

So, in addition to those people who have never even had a Bible to read, others who have never been taught the true gospel, there are others that it has come to, and what does this parable say? Satan snatches away the truth of even what they do have. We also find, if you think about the sower going out with the seed, He throws the seed out, and it hits the ground. Does that not imply that there is ground where the seed does not fall? And if it does not fall there, how could it possibly grow? And so, the field is the world, and the world is people. Even though the gospel is preached, maybe in major population centers, it only goes out in a scattered fashion. So, not everybody gets it. There are places where the seed does not fall.

There are other untold millions who have had some knowledge of Jesus Christ as a Savior, but there is little to no understanding of the laws and commandments of God. So, how could they truly repent? How can they truly understand and know what they were doing is wrong?

So these people were born without salvation, live for scores of years, even hundreds of years (as in the early pages of the Bible), yet they died without salvation. We understand that they are not lost, and have not had a fair shot at salvation in their lifetime.

Turn to John 3:17. This passage immediately follows this world’s Christianity’s best-known verse in the whole Bible, “That God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.”

John 3:17 “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

Now people read that, and think, “Well, saved all at once!”

John 3:18-21 “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

The Bible pictures that what one is saved from is slavery to the evil one, ultimately from eternal death, while still in prison, chains, and captivity by him. It shows that when one is under his domination, that self-centeredness and sin dominate the conduct of the person’s life. And it shows that when a person’s life is dominated by Satan, that dominion is expressed by competitiveness, rather than cooperation; by idolatry rather than devotion to the Great God; by adultery and fornication; by hatred; by anger; by deceitfulness, jealousy, envy, bitterness, murder, violence, and drunkenness, just to name a few things.

When John wrote this, he was referring to the world at his time. But others besides John reported before him in the prophets, that the world was the same during their day! And those people killed the prophets. We can certainly say from our own experience in the world, from the reading of our

newspapers, looking at television, personal experiences, that things have not changed one bit. In fact, if anything, they have gotten worse, because more people are doing these things on a more consistent basis. And the Bible says that evil men shall wax (or grow) worse and worse.

This world's Christianity teaches that there is a battle going on for men's souls between God and Satan. If that is so, then Satan is clearly winning! Hands down winning! It is not even close!

But does that sound like the God of the Bible? Does it sound like He is as powerful as the Bible says that He is? If this were to be so, if there truly is a war going on—a battle for men's souls—then “Katie, bar the door!” It is all over.

There has to be some other answer. When Lucifer, who became Satan (who is of God's creation), was he created more powerful than the Creator? That does not make sense!

On the surface of history, it would appear that Satan is more powerful than God. But appearances are sometimes deceiving, are they not? And because Satan has deceived the whole world, many are left with the depressing sense of hopelessness that there really is no future.

In II Peter 3, you find another scripture that should be in our memory banks:

II Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise [to save mankind through Jesus Christ; to provide for the children of Abraham], as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

So, that is a pre-condition to salvation—that people repent first. If they cannot repent, there is no need for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Repentance levels the playing field and gives them a shot at the Kingdom of God, a very good shot, because it is an attitude adjustment. And without the attitude adjustment, so that our relationship with God is on the right basis, we cannot be saved!

So the first thing that has to come about as God begins to reveal Himself is that we not only have somewhat of a vision of God, as vague as it is, but we have a much clearer vision of ourselves and what we are. Once that begins to be seen, then God can begin the process of salvation! Because until that point is reached, we are going to fight Him, we are going to resist Him—the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither can be.

The individual and the world, eventually, has to be brought to a stage—a place—of repentance. I think that you understand that the judgments, represented by the Day of Trumpets, is going to be used by God to bring Israel to a place of repentance so they come before Him on their way back to the holy land, weeping! A combination of weeping and joy at the same time, then they can be saved, because the right foundation has been laid.

So, God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. When we begin to catch this vision of what is necessary here, we can begin to see why God has counted all these people as sinners for the time being, written them off, because the circumstances were not yet right to lead them to repentance. But they will be right later on.

Let us look at a few scriptures that we all have to come to understand in the sense that really gives us a jump start in the right direction. Turn to II Chronicles 20. This passage involves Jehoshaphat, who

was a pretty good king. He knew a thing or two. But Israel was about to be invaded and attacked, and so we read,

II Chronicles 20:4-6 So Judah gathered together to ask help from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, and said: "O LORD God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?"

Is God stronger than Satan? Is God able to bring people to repentance? Surely His is! Nobody can stand before God. And yet, the world is not being saved.

So, either this is right, or the world's judgments of what is going on, is right, with Satan winning the battle.

Look at another one. Turn to Job 9.

Job 9:1-4 Then Job answered and said: "Truly I know it is so, but how can a man be righteous before God? If one wished to contend with Him, he could not answer Him one time out of a thousand. [God can ask questions we cannot answer.] God is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who has hardened himself against Him and prospered?"

Nobody can do that! Is God all powerful? Can Satan stand before God? Is Satan winning the battle for men's souls?

Job 9:8-12 "He alone spreads out the heavens, and treads on the waves of the sea; He made the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south; He does great things past finding out, yes, wonders without number. If He goes by me, I do not see Him; if He moves past, I do not perceive Him; if He takes away, who can hinder Him? Who can say to Him, 'What are You doing?'"

Nobody can call God into question! Job understood that. And yet, in reality, this world's Christianity is calling God into question. "Why are you losing, God?" They refuse to own up to the fact that their understanding of Matthew 13:10-12 is wrong. And that John 6:44 means exactly what it says. So does Romans chapters 9 through 11 mean exactly what it says! All Israel shall be saved—from Abraham down to the last Israelite ever born, because the Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will save them.

Their conception of heaven, hell, and of God's judgment periods is so far off base, I do not see how anybody reading the Bible with an open mind—unconverted people—can fail to question whether that doctrine is correct? It certainly does not picture the God of mercy, the God of love, the God who is not willing that any should perish; a God that nobody can stand before; a God who brings people back weeping; a God who chastens every son He loves; and a God who says that He finishes what He starts; a God who can save to the uttermost.

Those things just do not fit. But it is just one of those little things, is part of their makeup, part of their doctrine that is not there.

But there are things in the Bible that have a tendency to make God look weak—isolated verses. And, if they do not make Him look weak, they make Him appear with some other negative characteristic. So, they think of God as being harsh, vindictive, war-like, or cruel.

Jeremiah 7:16 is one of those places where people can draw wrong conclusions from.

Jeremiah 7:16 “Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you.”

Three times God says this in Jeremiah alone! So, people can pick up on a verse like this, and say that God is ineffective, is angry, is impatient, petulant, fretful, hateful, and without answers as to how to win men’s allegiance and cooperation.

It tells us in Mark 12 and several other places as well, that the Stone which was to be the Cornerstone, was rejected by the builders.

Now, can you think of an ordinary construction project where the builders would reject a stone that is as important as *the* cornerstone? Men just do not do those things! It does not jive. It would be like leaving the keystone out of an arch! No builder would do such a thing! You see, there must be another answer!

When men reject the Cornerstone of God's spiritual purpose, it must be because they just do not know what they are doing. And you see that is the truth of the matter! God is exercising control over the size of His Family—the number that He is saving at this time. So, He lets us know that His church is always going to be a little flock.

Do you think that word was put in there on purpose? He knew it was going to be little! God does not waste words, even though there is a million of them, every one of them counts. In the church age, the church is going to be small, which tells us that He is not trying to save everybody right now. I am telling you, brethren, there is information from Genesis to Revelation that not many people are going to be saved during the church age.

In fact, if the writers of commentaries would just get their thoughts together in the right order, they have what they call, “Remnant Theology.” This is that the church is going to be little. That is basically what it is. But they do not put that together in a practical way with other parts of the Bible. And so it is like a doctrine that hangs out here all by itself, and those people who go to the Methodist church, or Presbyterian church, etc., if they do any thinking about that, I wonder if they think, “Now how does this fit?” Well, it does not.

What we are looking at, here, is found in Hebrews 6:2 as a main, foundational doctrine.

Hebrews 6:2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

A foundational doctrine of the church of God, of God's plan, is the doctrine of Eternal Judgment. It simply means, “a judgment whose ramification is eternal—age lasting.” We might even say, never-ending. This is a doctrine which truly does have to have all the scriptures bearing on it searched out, thought upon, and then arranged in the correct order. This is one that is especially difficult for them and that is because the word judgment has quite a number of different applications. By and large,

because of their concepts of heaven and hell, the immortality of the soul, and God and His purpose, they have gotten this thing jumbled up; leaping to a wrong conclusion about eternal judgment.

I think it is interesting because the word is defined right in Webster's Dictionary. I mean its biblical application is right there. There are at least three different applications of the word, judgment and all three of them are in *Webster's New Ninth Collegiate Dictionary*. We are only going to look at one of them, and that is the one that applies to Eternal Judgment. It is, "The process of forming an opinion or evaluation by discerning and comparing."

Now this process of judging takes time; observing people under set standards and regulations, under a variety of circumstances; then making a decision, which is another application of the word, judgment.

I Peter 4:17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

This verse helps to explain why God appears to be inept to some. Notice that it says that the time has come for the household of God to be judged. Does that not imply that there might be a time—or times—when others who are not now being judged, will be judged? If there is a time for the household of God to be judged, it seems like there is good evidence that there is going to be a time when others will be judged, or there was a time when others were judged. But now is the time for the household of God to be judged!

I mean, right in the sentence, there is pretty strong evidence that there is more than one time for judgment.

Isaiah 49 is the chapter that has that wonderful series of verses which tells us that God has us written on the palms of His hands. Here in verse 8, just a bit before that,

Isaiah 49:8 Thus says the Lord: "In an acceptable time I have heard You; and [an interesting mistranslation] in the day of salvation, I have helped You."

In the Hebrew, it says, "*a* day of salvation." And, the Old King James has it correct. It is *a* day of salvation, not *the* day. This definite article means a definite time limited to one, as if there is only one. The Hebrew does not say that. It says, *a* day, which implies very definitely that there is more than one. "A" is general and implies others.

So now, if you put this together with I Peter 4:17, our time is now. To us God does not seem so inept at all! There were/are times for others.

Now the world picks up a little bit on this. The way they do it is to say, "Under the Old Covenant people were saved by keeping the law." That sounds okay until you begin to understand that nobody had the law, except Israel. And the Bible itself says that Israel was the least of the nations.

So the world does not really have an explanation at all how the multiple billions of people who were not Israelites, and who did not have the law, who did not have access to the Old Covenant—what about them? "Well, uh, tough buddy!" They have no explanation.

So they make God look somewhat monstrous in their eyes; or inept; or unable to do what He says He will do.

But we can understand, and God does not look inept to us, because the pieces of the puzzle have been put together in the right order for us by God through Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. We now see that this is not the only day of salvation; it is a day of salvation; it is the church age; it is the time that the household of God is under judgment.

We are having our opportunity now. Of course, there were others who came before us, who, indeed, are going to be in the Kingdom of God, but the great bulk of mankind never had that opportunity.

Hebrews 9:26-27 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.

There is an interesting fact hidden in the word that is translated into the English word, judgment. That word has come into the English language with only one significant change and you probably say the word that is here translated “judgment” very frequently. You do not even know that it came from the Greek into the English with only one minor change; one letter was changed. A “K” was changed into a “C”. In the Greek, they pronounce it as Kresis (Krisis). In English, we pronounce it as, Cr-eye-sis (Crisis).

Look at that. “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the crisis.”

What does the word, crisis, mean? It means a turning point. It literally means judgment, but it also means a turning point.

Most of the time, we use crisis in the sense of a calamity. But it does not have to be, not at all.

So, what He is saying is that it is given to man once to die, but then a turning point. Something is going to happen in their lives. It is a turning point. It does not have to be bad. It can be very good. And for the great bulk of mankind, it is going to be wonderful, that turning point, because then, they are going to be offered salvation.

They are not dead for all eternity! But a process of judgment lies before them. And that will be good.

John 5:25-29 “Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. [He does not define it at this point. Live for what purpose?] For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all [everybody] who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of [eternal, endless, quality of God] life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation [judgment, crisis; it is the same word!]”

What is going to happen in the second resurrection? Are those people going to hear the voice of the Son of God? Yes they will. It will be 1000 years after those who were given life. And so, these people are going to come up out of their graves when they hear the voice of the Son of God, and they are going to be given life, but it is simply not going to be eternal life. They are going to face crisis—the process of judgment; a turning point.

Christ did not necessarily mean that people were to be condemned at all. If they are being condemned, it is to go through the process of judgment, if we can even use it that way.

They are being simply resurrected to a different circumstance.

Now, when we look back into Old Testament scriptures on the time element on rising from the dead, we are not given a great deal of help. In the book of Job, chapter 14, there is not a great deal of help regarding time. This is what is missing from the Old Testament. Job undoubtedly knew that men were going to be resurrected, because,

Job 14:13-15 “Oh, that You would hide me in the grave, that You would conceal me until Your wrath is past, that You would appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes. You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands.”

So, Job knew that He was going to be resurrected. I think it is entirely possible that He might have known that all men were going to be resurrected, because he said, “set me a time.” This implies that others might have a set time, too, but different from Job’s. I do not know. We can only speculate.

Psalms 17:15 As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.

Did David know that the glory of God was before him? Sure he did! “When I awake in Your likeness.” Think of Genesis 1:26-27. Of course, we are not in the image of God anymore.

How about Daniel 12—another reference to the resurrection in the Old Testament. Do you understand in the “born again” chapter in John 3, that this is what Jesus chided Nicodemus about? He said, “You mean you are a teacher in Israel, and you do not understand these things?” “Understand what?” “Understand the resurrection! [It is] About being born again!”

So in Daniel 12,

Daniel 12:2-3 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

Again, there is not a great deal of help, there, unless one understands how the New Testament amplifies these things, especially in the book of Revelation, 20th chapter. And so, there is a 1100 years difference, at least, between two lines of the same verse. Some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

So, the time elements are really what is missing there.

We find in Acts 24 that the Pharisees believed in the resurrection. So, the Jews of Paul's day had some understanding of it, but there is no time element. Verse 15 alludes to the just, another word of wide application, applied to both God and man. It is applied to those who are unconverted as well as converted. It is a synonym for "righteous."

So, it shows that a person can be carnally just; righteous of the law; godly righteous; or just as God is just. So we have to pay very careful attention to the context as we are reading along. Especially in regard to this: because as the Bible calls some people "just" who are not just in the sense of they are going to be in a resurrection of the dead.

Now, people who are going to be resurrected as Christ was resurrected qualify as being just.

Luke 14:14 "And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

With that thought in mind, turn to Romans 1.

Romans 1:17 For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Those who are like Christ are just because God has imputed it to them, and they are just because they are living the way of life that is in harmony with those who are going to be in the resurrection of the just.

Galatians 3:11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."

Now if we put together again a number of scriptures, it will become obvious to you that those who are truly just are those who are the called and chosen of God—they have repented, they have given their lives to God, they have received His Spirit, they are living by faith, and they are growing in God's image. They are going to be resurrected at a time different from others.

Turn to Revelation 20, because this is the chapter that separates the resurrections into their proper time element. (For the lack of time, I did not go into this thing about being "just" a great deal.)

Revelation 20:4-6 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

The first thing to notice is that there is a first resurrection. Now, if there is a first, just like I Peter 4: 17, it implies that there must be others—other judgments. Here in Revelation 20, there are other resurrections. It implies that there is at least a second one, and possibly more. It only says, here, that that there is a first.

Secondly, we find that those who are in that first resurrection, are described by the Bible as being blessed and holy; holy because God has put them in that state; holy because they have worked at achieving it in their lives.

This also implies that anybody who comes up in a subsequent resurrection, is not blessed and holy as these people are.

So, it is showing clear distinctions between these people.

Thirdly, these verses state that those who are in the first resurrection, death has no power over them. Again, the other side of the coin, it is telling us that those who come up in any other resurrection that they still may face death.

Fourth: It tells us that any subsequent resurrection is going to be at least 1000 years after this first one. Now there is just one verse I want to turn to, because the world has this doctrine that people were saved by law keeping. Turn to Hebrews 10. Again, this is another series of scriptures that the world does not have an adequate explanation for. I do not mean to say that they never come up with the right answer, because sometimes they do. But it is few and far between.

Hebrews 10:1-4 For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? [Notice the reasoning based on the sacrifice of Christ, which was only for one time.] For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

That is a staggering statement! There was no forgiveness by that method. If sins are not forgiven, the people die in their sins—they had no salvation. The truth of the matter was that they were never offered it either. They never had the opportunity for it. And so all those Israelites were used by God as a means of providing examples, illustrations, recorded history for the heirs of salvation, so that we would have illustrations to bounce life-giving spiritual principles from; to be able to learn the bad and the good.

But there was no salvation. I do not mean to say that these people never had sins forgiven. They did. But, sins were forgiven by the same means as sins are forgiven today, only in their case, they were looking forward to that sacrifice of Christ, and therefore repentance was truly from the heart, and not merely because there was the faith exhibited in the blood of a bull or goat. And so, without forgiveness, there was no atonement; without atonement, there was no reconciliation to God, the people remained estranged, until their own death paid the penalty for their sins. By that time, it was too late, they are dead, and God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

And so, we find in the book of Hebrews, that the blood of bulls and goats had no power to change—no power to purify the heart. We find in Deuteronomy 5:29 that God did not give them a heart that they should repent and submit; and God never changed that. Deuteronomy 29:4 says, “I have not given you a heart that you should understand.” So the conclusion has to be that even with those people, with whom He was working, that He never saved but only a few. And if He did not save them, He certainly did not save the other people out in the world either.

Is God writing them off? Of course not. Even under the New Covenant, it is obvious—apparent to you and me—that God has called only a few at this time. Romans 9 through 11 is especially cogent in regard to this. Paul even asks the question, is there unrighteousness with God that He has done this, to have called so few, and allowed so many to die? Of course not! God is working out a purpose. Then He uses Israel and God's relationship with them through Romans 9 through 11 to show what is ultimately going to be God's relationship with all of mankind. God counted them in Romans 11 as being blind and deaf. We know that God is not done with Israel yet.

Now, we may fail to comprehend fully why God is doing it this way, but He is doing it, and He has not forgotten them. Romans 11:26-27 pins this down so beautifully. I want you to see it:

Romans 11:26-27 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

Is not that obvious? He never took their sins away. Without taking away their sins, there is no salvation.

Look at the time element. It is going to be some time after the Deliverer comes out of Zion. Has the Deliverer come out of Zion? Not yet. When does He come? At the seventh trumpet. When, then, does the salvation of Israel begin? We have hit the time element right on the head. It will begin at the seventh trumpet. Is that not easy? Once you start to get the pieces, they start falling together one right after the other, and it is so logical we wonder why we never saw it before!

We could explore multitudes of verses that show once God gets Israel on the right track, then the Gentiles begin to flow into Jerusalem and their salvation begins! God will begin to use Israel as the means, as the magnet, as the example; finally they will be living His ways, and giving evidence that it is good to trust God. The Gentiles will want that! They will begin to turn at that time to Him.

Luke 11:29-31 And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, "This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation [a definite judgment—a process of evaluation—that the Gentiles will rise up in] and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here."

Now, who are the Gentiles who are going to come up in the judgment—the queen of the South, queen of Sheba—who is she going to condemn? The people of Jesus' generation.

How else could she do this, unless she was resurrected at exactly the same time they were? It shows that she is going to accept Christ when she is resurrected, and then condemn those of Jesus' generation.

Luke 11:32 "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here."

And so the people of Nineveh are going to come up at the same time as the people of Jesus' generation, they are going to come up at the same time as the Queen of the South, and they are both going to condemn the people of Jesus' generation. And so, being resurrected at the same time, when is that time?

Turn back to Revelation 20.

Revelation 20:11-12 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

The dead do not stand. They are typically in a prone position. But these were standing.

Books, here is plural. Then another singular book was opened, which is named the Book of Life, which we find in 5 or 6 different places. It was a book that has names entered into it, the names of God's children. So that book was opened, to add new names to.

The people then were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books, plural. Those people are going to be judged against the same standards as we are being judged against right now—the books of the Bible—the Word of God.

Obviously, they are being judged in exactly the same way we are. The judgment is upon the House of God, and the House of God is being judged over a period of time against the standards that are written in this book.

So, this rising from the dead will take place at the end of the 1000 years; they will then be judged over a period of time; their names will be entered into the book; they will be given life.

Let us look at one typical example. Turn to Ezekiel 37. This is typical because God uses Israel as the model, and what He does for them, since He loves all men, and He is not willing that any should perish; that all should come to repentance, that all men are going to be treated in this way.

Ezekiel 37:1-4 The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know." Again He said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!'"

Here Ezekiel is given a vision that takes place in a graveyard, and he sees multiple multitudes of people rising from the dead, bones coming together, and then flesh on top of that, and so they are breathed upon and given life; but we find in verse 12,

Ezekiel 37:12 Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.'

Well, they obviously did not know before. They will not know until He has opened their graves.

That is what we saw in a very encapsulated form in Revelation 20:11-12. The rising from the dead of all those who had died without being offered salvation, we see in Ezekiel a scene that is typical of what is going to take place with all of mankind.

Ezekiel 37:13 Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves.

Remember that the Deliverer shall come up out of Zion; the salvation of Israel will begin then. We will go all the way through the 1000-year period; and salvation will be given to the Israelites who live during that period of time. They will be prepared as you and I are being prepared for the next judgment, because in that one, billions of people are going to come up, and God is going to add more to His Family during the Millennium, to assist even as we have been trained to assist during the Millennium.

So, they will be added to that group who will then assist when the billions of people who have ever lived from the time of Adam and Eve onward, who never had an opportunity for salvation, are going to have their graves opened, they are going to come out; then they are going to know God; and they are going to be given His Spirit.

Ezekiel 37:14 "I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it," says the LORD.' "

Not physical life. Man shall not live—quality He is talking about—by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

So that time is coming. But we are having our opportunity right now. We can look forward with joy of what is going to be coming on the rest of the world. But we have to take care of first things first, which is our judgment. First things first, is taking care of the things that will lend themselves to assisting the purpose that God is working out right now.

Life can really be good at times, and this earth shows forth some of the awesome beauty of God's creation. I am talking about in areas where we have not corrupted it. And I know that those are few and far between. But every once in a while, we catch a little glimpse of what is possible. It is here now in a small extent, but it is coming and going to be much greater. And it is going to be our responsibility to put the entire earth into a state of beauty, not just physically in terms of landscape, but spiritually in terms of people's character and personality.

God's original purpose is going to be carried out. What He starts He finishes. He uttered those simple words back in the book of Genesis 2, putting man into the Garden to tend it and keep it. That is what we are being prepared for, to carry through on what He originally gave us. This is our inheritance.

When that happens, we will tend it, and we will keep it, the way that He intended, and we will help those who will then be part of His spiritual purpose toward the same end for which we are now being drawn.

Look again in Romans 11,

Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.