

RULING THE NATIONS IS A REWARD

Last week I talked about the concept of Christian rewards. I said that ever since the Reformation, Christians have been taught that salvation is a package deal whereby one gets all the promises and rewards laid out in the Scripture. The concept of the package deal came into existence because of a misunderstanding of the Scriptural doctrine of salvation by grace *through* faith (*Eph. 2:8*). It's very important that the clause "through faith" remains part of our concept of what it means to be saved by grace because once you delete it—which is what has happened—the grace referred to, removes every bit of responsibility from the shoulders of the individual for redemption, and puts it all on God. "Through faith" means that we do our part, for you see, the definition of faith, according to chapter eleven of the book of Hebrews, is not belief or confession but *obedience*.

The writer of Hebrews goes through the list of all the heroes of the faith and says, "by faith" they did this and "by faith" they did that. What all of them did by faith was *obey* God. Noah obeyed God and built an Ark; Abraham obeyed God and became a sojourner, etc. So the definition of faith is a trust *in* God that produces obedience *to* God. Faith produces works. Faith produces obedience. Faith causes us to do our part. It causes us to carry out the responsibility that has been placed on our shoulders by God. Faith causes us to make the right choices and decisions as we go through life.

Grace has to do with *God's responsibility* in the salvation process. It is God's grace (ie: His unmerited favor) that causes Him to offer us salvation in the first place. It is also His grace (ie: His enabling power) that causes us to partake of that salvation. Faith has to do with *our responsibility* in the salvation process. Faith is our response to God's grace. Faith is what causes us to obey God. Without faith, without us doing our part, God cannot possibly save us.

Whenever you hear preachers talk about salvation, you will notice that for the most part, they never say we are saved "by grace through faith". They only say we are saved "by grace". There is a reason for this. Being saved by grace and being saved by grace *through* faith are two completely different gospels. One says God carries all the responsibility for our salvation. The other one says the responsibility for salvation is *shared* between God and the individual.

The same difference between the ideas of being saved "by grace" or being saved "by grace through faith" carries over to the realm of rewards. Those who believe we are *saved* by grace also believe we will be *rewarded* by grace. They believe that just as God bears all the responsibility for our salvation, so He bears all the responsibility for us giving us the rewards that go with salvation. In practical terms, this has been translated into the "package deal" concept of salvation. It lumps all of God's people together and says they will all come forth on the same spiritual level, enjoy the same closeness to the Lord, and receive the same rewards and glory in heaven.

As I said last week, this whole idea stands in direct opposition to what is clearly stated throughout the Bible, which is that every person will be judged and rewarded according to his or her works. In the very last chapter of the Bible, one of the last things Jesus says to John is: "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (*Rev. 22:12*). To give every man **ACCORDING AS HIS WORKS SHALL BE!** So anyone who says we are going to be rewarded by grace is simply deceived.

We also looked at the passage about the marriage of the Lamb, where it says the Lamb's wife hath made herself ready. I said the majority of Christians are being taught that they don't have to make themselves ready for this marriage. Instead, they are being taught that they are *already* ready to enter the marriage by grace. They are being told that they have already been made ready for the marriage as the result of being justified and forgiven and having the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Of course this view is exactly the opposite of what is clearly stated in the passage itself—which is that the Lamb's wife made herself ready—but nobody seems to notice or care. But whether they notice or not or believe it or not, they will never change or obscure the truth such a statement reveals. It means that: (1) just being saved doesn't make a person ready for the wedding. There is a preparation that must take place *after* we have become a child of God; and (2) it's the WIFE who makes herself ready. The responsibility for being prepared is clearly on the wife, and she will carry out that responsibility.

If the responsibility for the wife being ready rested on Jesus, then the voices from heaven would have said something much different. They would have said: "*Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and the Lamb has made his wife ready*". But they didn't say the Lamb made His wife ready. They said the wife made herself ready. Big difference. In order to partake of the marriage, the wife must make herself ready. She makes herself ready by how she lives in this world. She makes herself ready by submitting to the Lord, by walking in obedience to the Lord, and by allowing God to change her *nature* from one that is *incompatible* with her future husband to one that is *compatible* with her future husband. Since she is the one who must choose to yield to that work of transformation, she is the one who bears the responsibility for making herself ready.

Then I asked what would happen to Christians who, as a result of listening to preachers who tell them they don't have to do anything to make themselves ready for the marriage, *fail* to make themselves ready for the marriage? Will they enter that marriage anyway, will they be cast into Hell, or what? You see, in package deal Christianity, there's no room for such a discussion because every person who is a genuine believer will *automatically* participate in the marriage. Participation in that marriage is part of the salvation package. If you don't participate in that marriage, it means you are *not* a genuine believer.

Well, what about the guy in First Corinthians 3:15, who loses his rewards, but is still saved by fire? Can anyone *seriously* maintain that this guy made himself ready for the marriage? If he didn't make himself ready for the marriage, he's not going to partake of that marriage—that's all there is to it. Yet, according to Paul, he will still be saved. What this means is that partaking of the marriage is not part of the "package deal" of salvation. Partaking of the marriage is a REWARD for those who have paid the price that is required to partake in the wedding.

So we are faced with a choice. Either we can conclude that people like this guy will be eternally lost; or we can conclude that they will still be in God's kingdom, but that they will *not* enjoy all the things that go along with being married to the Lamb at that time. If they end up in the kingdom, you'll have a situation where *some* Christians will marry Jesus and rule the nations with Him, but *others* will not. Then I asked what the relationship between the *Christians* who entered the marriage and who are now ruling the nations, and the *Christians* who didn't enter that marriage and are not ruling the nations, might look like. The only answer I can see is that some Christians will be ruling over *other* Christians, as well as over the unsaved nations.

The guy in First Corinthians three is a problem for all those who propagate package deal salvation because, not only does this guy NOT fit into their theology, he's constantly demonstrating the fallacy of their assumptions. He *really* becomes a problem when you start talking about the rewards laid out of Revelation chapters two and three, which virtually everyone assumes to be part of the package deal. It's easy to go through Revelation and see what we will receive if we overcome. It's all there in black and white. The real issue and the hard question is: what will happen to us if we don't overcome? For package deal Christians, there is only one answer—those who *fail* to overcome will be cast into Hell. Either you overcome and *get* the whole package, or you don't and you *lose* the whole package.

So then, what about this guy who loses his reward but is still saved? Where does he fit in? Is anyone going to *seriously* maintain that he is an “overcomer”? If he's not an overcomer, will he receive the rewards of Revelation anyway? Absolutely not! Well then, since he's not an overcomer and he won't receive those rewards, will he be cast into Hell? Again, the answer is absolutely not. Paul clearly said he will be *saved* as by fire. Well then, what the heck are you going to do with this guy!?

If you believe salvation is a package and the rewards of Revelation are all part of that package, and if you also believe that you must overcome to get that package, then you have no choice but to either cast this guy into Hell—because he clearly is NOT an overcomer—or you must assume that since he is still saved, he must *still get* the package (ie: the rewards in Revelation) which automatically come with salvation—even though Paul clearly said he lost his rewards! In both instances, you end up *denying* what Paul clearly said about this guy. Can you begin to see how unscriptural “package deal” salvation is?

Jesus taught this same truth about the marriage in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. Unfortunately, most people *miss* the whole point of that teaching because they force it into to their package deal view of salvation. They also like to tie this parable to the one where Jesus said the only people who will enter the kingdom of heaven are those who do the will of the Father, and they say that Jesus is teaching the same basic thing in *both* parables—which is absolutely untrue.

*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.***

Matthew 7:21-23

Please notice that in this parable, the issue was doing the will of the Father. The people in this story did all kinds of things in the name of Jesus in order to enter the kingdom. They prophesied, cast out devils, and did many wonderful works. But all these works were full of iniquity because even though they were doing them in Jesus' name, they were not springing from a relationship with Jesus or the Father. These people were doing their own religious works in order to *earn* salvation. That's called self-righteousness. That's why Jesus said they were working “iniquity”. Their religious works, which were all being done in the name of Jesus, were *self righteous* works. Jesus tells these people He never knew them. In other words, this is not a case where true Christians somehow ended up involved in dead religious works. Jesus *never* knew

them. He *never* had any intimate relationship with them. If they had been genuine believers at one time, then they would be like the guy who loses his reward because all *his* works are burned up, not being the works of Jesus. Now compare what is said to these people with what is said to the five foolish virgins:

*Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and **they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut**. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, **I know you not**. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*

Matthew 25:1-13

In this parable, the issue is “marriage”. A marriage is going to take place and the ten virgins have all been invited to that marriage. Please notice the difference between the people in *this* parable and the people in the *previous* parable. First of all, all ten of them are plainly said to be “virgins”. The term “virgin” is clearly meant to imply “believer”. It’s not a case where half of them were *saved* and half of them were *lost*. The point is, half of them were wise and half of them were foolish. The wise ones were prepared to enter the marriage, but the foolish ones were *not* prepared to enter the marriage. Sound familiar?

It is pointless to argue that the foolish virgins were not really Christians because not only are they referred to as virgins—which is a term that is clearly symbolic of those who have been washed in the blood and made pure in God’s eyes—they had everything the wise virgins had. They had lamps; they had oil; they were invited to the wedding; and they were waiting for the call of the bridegroom. The only difference between the two groups was the *level of preparation* each one had made for the wedding. That’s what this parable is about. It’s not about some Christians going to Heaven and some ending up in Hell. It’s a warning from Jesus that some Christians will be fully prepared to enter the marriage when it arrives, and some won’t. The ones who are ready will go in. The ones who aren’t ready won’t go in.

Jesus said all the virgins “slept” while the bridegroom tarried. Sleep represents *rest*. They were all at rest. They were all sure that they were ready to enter the wedding. But they were in two different kinds of rest. The wise virgins were in the true rest of God because they were truly prepared and ready for the marriage. The foolish virgins were in a false rest because they were *not* prepared and ready for the marriage. When the cry came to go out and meet the bridegroom, all of them *recognized* the call. All of them *got ready* to go meet the bridegroom. Once again, this is *not* a picture of saved and lost people. The lost aren’t going to recognize the call when it comes. The lost aren’t going to get ready to go into the marriage when they

hear that call. *These were all God's people!* At that moment, the foolish virgins realized they were not prepared to go into the marriage. The virgins (believers) who were prepared went into the marriage but the rest were shut out. Were they cast into hell? I don't think so.

Please notice what Jesus said to them. He didn't say: "...*I never knew you; depart from me ye who work iniquity*"—as He did the ones in the previous parable. The issue here was not sin and iniquity. The issue was not that the foolish virgins were running around doing all kinds of religious works in Jesus name, while never submitting to His will. The issue was *inadequate preparation* for the marriage! All Jesus said to them was: "*I know you not*". That's a present tense statement. It doesn't mean that he never knew them. It means that presently, He doesn't know them *the way* He must know them in order for them to enter the marriage. The foolish virgins weren't walking *close enough* to the Lord to know what preparations they would need to actually enter the marriage.

The whole point of Jesus here is to let us know that it's *our* responsibility to prepare for the wedding. No preparation—no wedding! This parable is not about salvation verses damnation. It's not about going to Heaven verses going to Hell. It's about *the marriage* John was shown in Revelation chapter 20. The reason Jesus taught this parable was to let us know it's possible for a believer to miss *that* marriage. He wasn't saying half of us are going to end up in Hell! He was warning us that it's possible to be a child of God, to possess spiritual light (a lamp), to walk in a certain amount of spiritual life (oil), and be waiting for the Lord's return, yet not be ready for the marriage that will take place when He returns.

But this whole point is lost when you insist that the foolish virgins end up in Hell because what that says is, all the *real* Christians will go into the marriage. The only ones who *won't* go into the marriage are ones who are lost. It's the whole package deal thing again. The point Jesus was trying to get across—which is that some *Christians* will enter the marriage but other *Christians* won't—is turned on it's head to mean that *all* Christians will enter the marriage! Well, just as participating in the marriage is a reward for those who have made themselves ready, so ruling the nations with Jesus is a reward for those who have paid the price that's *required* to rule.

And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

Revelation 2:26-27

The promise to rule the nations is interesting because in all of the letters to the seven churches of Asia—except one—Jesus ends with the phrase: "*To him that overcometh, I will...*" or "*He that overcometh, shall not...*". But when it comes to the church Thyatira, He gives an additional stipulation for those who would rule and reign with Him. He says: "...*he that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations*". When you see what seems to be a little difference like that in the book of Revelation, don't just blow over it. Those little things are there for a reason. Jesus is letting us know that ruling over the nations is something special. Of all the promises laid out in those chapters, only *this one* has an additional stipulation added to the requirement of overcoming. The promise to rule the nations goes to the ones who not only overcome, but who *also* keep Jesus' works until the end.

Once again, the guy in First Corinthians 3:15 becomes a *major* problem because 99.5% of today's Christians assume that every true believer will rule and reign with Jesus when He returns. Actually, they don't just assume it, they are *utterly convinced* of it, so much so, there is no room for discussion. Those who would even suggest the possibility that not all Christians will rule and reign over the nations with Christ in the next age are viewed as extremely unorthodox—maybe even heretics.

Well, who is going to *seriously* suggest that the guy who lost his rewards and has to be saved by fire is an overcomer *and* has kept the works of Jesus till the end? If this guy would have kept Jesus's works, then his works wouldn't have been burnt up—would they? He wouldn't have suffered loss because Jesus' works will stand the fire. Clearly, this guy did not keep the works of Jesus to the end, so there's no way you can honestly maintain that he meets either of the two *criteria* for ruling over the nations—and those who say he'll rule anyway are revealing how *intellectually dishonest* they are.

Also, as I said last week, Paul said: "...*If we suffer, we shall also reign with him*" (II. Tim. 2:12). Under normal circumstances, we all know what the word "if" means—don't we? It's a conditional term. If we suffer, we will reign with Christ. If we do not suffer, we will *not* reign with Christ. So we have Paul telling us that we must suffer if we want to reign with Christ and we have Jesus telling us we must overcome and keep His works till the end if we want to rule over the nations with Him. The meaning of these statements are clear—unless you've already been brainwashed by the religious traditions of the Church System—in which case what Jesus and Paul said means absolutely nothing. We will all reign with Jesus whether we overcome or not; we will all reign with Jesus whether we keep His works unto the end or not; and we will all reign with Jesus whether we suffer or not!

You see, you will have to make a decision as to whether or not you believe the package deal concept of salvation. If that's what you choose to believe, then none of the questions I've presented in the last two chat sessions will be of any consequence because none of the issues I'm raising are even possible. We will *all* participate in the marriage of the Lamb; we will *all* rule and reign with Christ in the next age; we will *all* get the whole package whether we overcome or not, whether we suffer or not, and whether we keep Jesus' works until the end or not. We get it all by grace and that's it —end of discussion.

But if there's anything in you that suspects the package deal concept may be wrong, then you have to come to grips with the *implications* of all these passages which won't fit that view. And unless someone can come up with a different answer, the only way to understand what we have looked at so far is that in the next age, there will be *two distinct classes* of believers. One class will be those who are ruling and reigning with Christ; the other class will be those who are not ruling and reigning with Christ.

It won't be a situation where *all* the Christians are ruling but in different ways or capacities. It won't be a situation where the Christians who overcame *less* in this life will end up ruling *less people* in the kingdom; while the Christians who overcame *more* in this life end up ruling *more people* in the kingdom. It will be a case where some Christians are ruling over *both* the nations and other Christians—and those other Christians will be ruling over *nothing*. They will be on the same level as the nations. As I said last week, the idea of ruling over other Christians in the kingdom doesn't appeal to me at all. I could be wrong in feeling this way. Maybe it's just a carry-over from the strong aversion I have to ruling over other believers in this *present* age. Anyway, some years ago, I believe the Lord started showing me an alternative to the above scenario—and it began with something Paul said in Philippians:

*Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, **that I may win Christ**, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means **I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.***

Philippians 3:8-11

Few people really stop to consider what Paul is saying here. He is talking about “winning” Christ, which will make absolutely *no sense* to the average Christian because they assume they have already won Christ by grace—just like they assume they have been given everything else by grace. Yet, it’s clear that Paul didn’t think he had won Christ by grace because he said he was striving to win Christ through death to self, through obedience, and through being conformed to the image of Christ.

Then he goes on to say something very strange. He says he wants to know Christ’s sufferings, in order to be conformed to His death, so that he might experience the power of His resurrection life—“*...if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead*”. When Paul talks about knowing the “power of his resurrection”, he is talking about walking in a measure of *spiritual* (resurrection) life in the here and now. But when he says he wants to attain the resurrection from the dead, he is talking about something else. He is talking about the *future event* of the physical resurrection of *the body*.

It’s important that you see the two separate ideas being put forth here. One idea has to do with walking in *spiritual* life here and now, through laying down our self life. As we die daily, as we allow God to put us through suffering, the spiritual life or resurrection life of Jesus begins to come forth in us. The other idea has to do with attaining to “the resurrection of the dead”. This is a whole *different* issue. That’s a reference to a future event which has to do with the resurrection of the physical body.

Paul plainly said he is trying to *attain* the resurrection from the dead. Now if he was trying to attain the resurrection from the dead, that means he viewed physical resurrection is a reward which can be gained or lost—else he wouldn’t have been trying to “attain” it. It sure seems as if he’s trying to attain a bodily resurrection; but the idea that the resurrection of the body is a *reward* which can be gained or lost has never bore witness with me because the Scripture says over and over again that everyone—the wicked and the righteous—are going to be raised from the dead at some point.

*And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. **And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.***

Daniel 12:1-2

*Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto **the resurrection of life**; and they that have done evil, unto the **resurrection of damnation**.*

John 5:28-29

Both Daniel and Jesus state very clearly that everyone who has ever lived physically will be resurrected physically at some point. The righteous will come forth unto “the resurrection of life” and the wicked will come forth unto the “resurrection of damnation”. Nobody has to attain a *physical* resurrection. A physical resurrection is automatic. All you have to do to be resurrected physically is *die* physically. Yet it seems very clear that Paul was trying to “attain” the resurrection of the body. The seeming contradiction is instantly cleared up when you look at the original Greek of that verse. This is one of those times when the Greek sheds important additional light on the English translation, for the term that is translated “resurrection” in that passage is a very unusual Greek term.

If you look at the Greek definition of this term in any Greek dictionary, like Vines Expository Dictionary for instance, you’ll find that nearly every reference to resurrection in the New Testament is the Greek term *anastasis* (an-as'-tas-is), which means “a standing up again” or “a rasing up” (ie., from physical death). But the term Paul uses here is *exanastasis* (ex-an-as'-tas-is). It is the same Greek word, except that he adds the prefix “ek”—which means “from” or “out of”. The meaning of the term is: “the out-resurrection from the dead”. The literal translation of what he said there is: “*If somehow I should be attaining to the resurrection that is out from among the dead*”.

This is the *only* place in the entire New Testament that the term *exanastasis* is used. That means it’s very significant. Paul had a reason for using that particular term instead of the one that’s always used to describe the idea of general physical resurrection. He deliberately choose to use a term that means a resurrection out from among the dead, or a resurrection out from the *general* resurrection of the dead because Paul was not seeking to be conformed to Christ’s death in order to apprehend a *general* physical resurrection. He was doing it to apprehend a *special* physical resurrection called the “out-resurrection”.

So the question is: what is this “out resurrection”? I believe the out-resurrection is the first Resurrection. It’s the resurrection that is out from among the general resurrection. It’s the resurrection that is *ahead of* the general resurrection,. The general resurrection is the second resurrection. It’s my view that while everyone will automatically experience a physical resurrection of some kind, not everyone will automatically attain the “out-resurrection” because this resurrection is a REWARD. It is not attained through physical death but through *Adamic* death.

This is the resurrection Paul was trying to attain. Qualifying for the *first* resurrection has nothing to do with being saved or lost. The resurrection that will determine the eternal fate of all mankind (except those who came forth at the first resurrection) is the *second* resurrection, which takes place at the *end* of the Millennium. At this resurrection *both* Christians and non-Christians will come forth and be rewarded as God sees fit. The “out-resurrection” has to do with bringing together God’s firstfruits from all generations in order to rule and reign with Jesus for a thousand years. *Rotharham's Emphasized Bible* brings out the meaning of what Paul said a little more clearly.

*To get to know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death - **if by any means I may advance to the earlier resurrection**, which is from among the dead. Not that I have already received or have already reached perfection, but I am pressing on - if I may even lay hold of that for which I have also been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 3:10-12

I don't believe all Christians will come forth at the "earlier" resurrection. Only those who have paid the required price will come forth at this resurrection. The rest will come forth at the general (ie: second) resurrection, where they will have to be judged because they did not allow God to fully judge them while alive in the flesh. I realize that such a concept will be totally foreign—and even heretical—to those who have been taught that every Christian will come forth at the first resurrection and rule with Christ.

In order to understand this, we need to look at what the Scripture says about the two resurrections. The *first* resurrection is the resurrection that happens when the last trumpet sounds and the Lord descends from heaven. This resurrection is described in Revelation 20:1-6

*And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and **bound him a thousand years**, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, **till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.** And I saw thrones, and **they sat upon them**, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived [were raised from the dead] and **reigned with Christ a thousand years.** But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. **This is the first resurrection.** Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

Revelation 20:1-6

Notice what is said of those who have a part in this resurrection. John says they will: "...*be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years*". But as I have tried to show, there are at least three requirements the New Testament believer must meet before a person can "reign" with Christ. He must: (1) be an overcomer; (2) keep the works of Christ until the end; and (3) suffer with Christ.

So we have a choice as to how we view what's happening at the first resurrection. We can hold to the traditional view which says *all* Christians will be raised at this resurrection; or we can believe that the only ones who will have a part in this resurrection are those who have met the requirements. If the passages we

have looked at mean what they seem to imply—which is that there are certain requirements which must be met before we can reign with Christ—and if all who have part in the first resurrection are going to reign with Christ, then in my simple understanding, what that means is that only the one's who have met those requirements will come forth at the first resurrection. Therefore, I believe that having a part in the first resurrection, like entering the marriage, is a REWARD. It's not part of the package deal.

Before you draw up list of objections and questions, let me share something with you that may help you to better understand all this. The next age, which will be the kingdom age, is not the climax of God's program for the human race. It's not even the climax of God's plan to bring forth a *wife* for His son. The climax of God's plan, for both mankind in general and the church in particular, doesn't come until *after* the kingdom age, when the New Jerusalem comes down to dwell on the New Earth, among the saved nations.

The kingdom age is a distinct period of only one thousand years. That's half the length of the Church age. It's not the New Heaven and Earth, which will last forever. It's the third division of the seven thousand year program God has designed for this *present* Earth—4000 years for the Old Testament; 2000 years for the New Testament; 1000 years for the Kingdom or Millennium.

There are several reasons why God designed His plan so that we don't go straight from this present age and this present Earth into the Eternal age and the New Earth. The main reason is because ruling over the nations in the next age is part of *Messiah's* reward for overcoming while walking in the flesh. He will receive a *earthly* kingdom and sit on David's throne, and rule over the nations of this present earth with a rod of iron for the time allotted by the Father. Those who overcome as He overcame, will partake of that same reward with Him. They will rule the nations with a rod of iron.

After this one-thousand year period, Messiah's rule over the nations on this *present* earth will end. Then comes the Great White Throne judgment. Then we all go into the final, eternal age (or kingdom), which will be established by God on the New Earth. Paul speaks about the transition from Messiah's kingdom to the Eternal kingdom in First Corinthians chapter fifteen. After discussing the different aspects of the resurrection of the body, he says:

Then cometh the end, when he [the Son] shall have delivered up the [Millennial] kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he [the Son] must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he [the Father] hath put all things under his [the Son's] feet. But when he [the Father] saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he [the Father] is excepted, which did put all things under him [the Son]. And when all things shall be subdued unto him [the Son], then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

I. Corinthians 15:24-28

Jesus will reign over an earthly kingdom as God's Messiah on this present earth, *until* a certain point in time. When is that certain point? That certain point is when the "last enemy" (death) is finally destroyed. And when does the Bible say death is finally destroyed? It says death is destroyed *after* the Great White

Throne judgement—”*And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death*” (Rev. 20:13-14).

So according to what Paul said there, in some way that I don’t claim to fully understand, there will be a certain period of time in which the Father exalts the Son to such a degree, He will not be *completely* subject to the Father. Then, at some later point, the Son will voluntarily place Himself back under the complete subjection of the Father again.

I believe all this has to do with the Son’s Messianic kingdom and His absolute dominion and rule over it. The Messianic kingdom will be particularly and peculiarly the Son’s kingdom; and during this time, death will still be operating. Paul says that when this particular aspect of God’s program has been completed—that is, when the thousand years expires—“...*the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him*. At that point, the Great White Throne judgement takes place and we move into the next age, which is the eternal age of the New Heaven and the New Earth.

In other words, the age that will be particularly and peculiarly MESSIAH’S age, comes to an end and we all go into the next age, which will *not be* particularly and peculiarly Messiah’s age. At that point, the Son will be completely subject to the Father again. The New World age will be the kingdom of the entire Trinity, not just the kingdom of Messiah, specifically.

My point in sharing all this is to expand your vision of what the coming kingdom is all about. I’m not trying to deny the *rest* of the church the joy of being raised physically and being with the Lord. Every true believer will experience these things. It’s just a matter of TIMING. Those who miss the first resurrection are only going to miss the REWARD of entering into the marriage and ruling and reigning with Christ during the thousand years that will belong peculiarly to Him. Those who don’t qualify to rule will still be raised physically at the *second* resurrection; they will be given glorified bodies (based on their works); and they will go into the Eternal age along with the ones who attained to the first resurrection.

In a minute I’m going to go through the four main reasons people will reject this view. Hopefully, this will answer most of the questions you might have. But first, you may be thinking, if what I am sharing is true, how is God is going to work it so *only* the ones who qualify to rule with Jesus are *around* when He returns? This will be easy for those who are dead—God can just leave them in the ground. But what about the ones who are still alive?

Well, my view is that the only ones who will *be* alive when the Lord returns are the ones who will be qualified to rule with Him. I’m not sure most of us realize just what’s coming upon this earth. Do you know Jesus said it will get so bad in the final hours of this age, if God didn’t intervene, every single person on this planet would perish? He said: “*And except those days should be shortened, there should **no flesh be saved**: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened* (Matt. 24:22 & Mk. 13:20). It’s going to get pretty bad, folks. I mean, *really* bad. The combination of all nations hating us and wanting to see us dead, and not being able to buy or sell without taking the mark of the beast, and the almost total destruction of the planet that’s coming, will put us in a position where the only Christians who will survive will be the ones who are kept alive by the supernatural power of God. Under these circumstances, it will be pretty easy for God to “weed out” so to speak, the ones who aren’t fit to rule in the next age.

When the reality of what's coming on this planet finally sinks in, Paul's words to the believers in Thessalonica about being caught up in the air to meet the Lord will be seen in a little different light:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

I. Thessalonians 4:17-18

It will be no small matter to be alive and remaining when the Lord returns. Indeed, I believe it will take a supernatural miracle to remain alive through what's coming—and those who do will be *fit* to rule with Jesus when He returns in glory. Now, I will answer the four basic objections I've come across, regarding the view I have presented tonight. I'm sure there is more than four. Probably someone in this room will come up with some other ones. But these are the ones I run into the most. They are:

- ~ The passages which seem to indicate that *every* Christian will be raised at the Lord's return.
- ~ The ones *not* at the first resurrection can/will be "*hurt*" by the second death.
- ~ It's seems like everyone at the second resurrection is eternally lost.
- ~ What about Old Testament saints? They couldn't possibly meet the NT requirements.

The first objection regards the passages that seem to indicate that every Christian will be at the first resurrection, let me first point you to one of them that is very interesting.

*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, **who is our life**, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

Colossians 3:1-4

I'd like you to notice that Paul didn't just say when Christ appears, we shall also appear with Him. He said: when Christ "*who is our life*" shall appear, then shall we appear with Him. Christ being "*our life*" is a stipulation that nobody seems to take notice of. I can tell you that for the majority of those who are truly born again, Christ is *not* their life. Christ has been *added* to their life. There is a big difference.

As for the others, all I can say is that not every mention of the resurrection in the Bible will contain the *whole picture* that's presented on the subject. Individual passages must be determined by the overall teaching on the subject. Let me give you an example from two of passages we already looked at. Both Daniel and Jesus referred to the resurrection. But if you look at those passages, both of them ignore the fact that there are two separate resurrections. Daniel said: "*And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt*" (Dan. 12:2); and Jesus said: "...*the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*" (Jn. 5:28-29).

Even according to the traditional view, the righteous and the wicked are *not* raised together. The righteous are raised at the first resurrection. Then, one-thousand years later, the wicked are raised at the second resurrection. So why would Daniel and Jesus talk as if both the righteous and the wicked are raised at the *same* time? Should we conclude that Jesus *didn't know* the righteous and the wicked would be raised at different times? That would be a pretty haughty assumption in my view.

A more plausible answer is that Jesus was simply trying to make a point—the point being that we will all be raised from the dead at some point and be judged according to what we have done. He wasn't necessarily trying to explain all the *details* about the two different resurrections, since He ignored a major truth concerning them. You see this same thing when Peter talks about the end of the world.

*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But **the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.** Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?** Nevertheless we, according to his promise, **look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.** Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, **be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.***

II. Peter 3:9-14

Please notice Peter's description of "the Day of the Lord". He mentions twice how the heavens will pass away with a great noise and the elements will melt with fervent heat. Then he says we are looking for a "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness". Nobody seems to notice that Peter completely ignored the whole kingdom age in this passage. He jumps directly from this present age to the New Heaven and Earth age and he calls *it* the day of the Lord.

Some have speculated that Peter skipped the Millennium because he didn't realize there would be an age between this one and the New Heaven and Earth. I think that's a bit of a stretch. Do you really think that after walking with the Lord for 3½ years, and being taught by Him all that time, and after being taught about "the kingdom" for 40 days after the Lord's resurrection, that Peter didn't realize there would be a Messianic kingdom *before* the New World?

I believe he knew very well there would be a Messianic kingdom between this age and the New World. Well, then, why did he ignore it? Probably for the same reason Jesus ignored the details of the two different resurrections. Peter was simply trying to make a point—the point being that life as we know it on this Earth will soon end. Therefore, in view of this reality, we should pursue holiness and godliness, and be diligent to be found by God in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Peter wasn't necessarily trying to explain all the details about the next two ages, anymore than Jesus was trying to explain all the details about the two different resurrections. So my answer to the question about the verses that seem to indicate that all believer will rise at the first resurrection is that the apostles could have been speaking in very general terms in those passages, rather than explaining all the various details surrounding the resurrections every time they mentioned the subject.

The second objection has to do with the fact that John said the ones who partake of the first resurrection will not be "*hurt*" of the second death. The implication there is that the ones who are *not* part of the first resurrection *could* be hurt of the second death. But please notice carefully that John *didn't* say about those who missed the first resurrection. He didn't say they would be THROWN INTO the second death, which is the Lake of Fire. He said the second death "hath no power" over them. This seemingly unimportant distinction is actually very important, for it's assumed that this verse places Christians at the first resurrection and the unsaved at the second one.

But this is not what the verse states. If such were the point John was trying to convey he would have phrased it more like this: "*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection for such shall not be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death*". But that's not what John said because it's not what he meant—though this is how we interpret it.

Is being *hurt* by something the same as being *destroyed* by it?

Is being *hurt* by something the same as being *thrown into* it?

For me, the answer is, No. There is a big difference between being *hurt* by the second death and being *destroyed* by it—which is what will happen to any person that is "thrown into" it. Think of it this way. If your house was on fire and fully engulfed in flames, there is a big difference between you getting hurt by that fire and you getting destroyed by that fire. If you got too close to it, you would get burnt. But if an angel came down and grabbed you by the nap of the neck and threw you into that house, you would be totally destroyed. It's the same way with the second death. The concept seems to be that it is possible to be *hurt* by it, yet not be thrown into it or destroyed by it. The vast majority of Christians interpret being hurt by the second death as identical to being thrown into the second death because this is what their view of salvation demands. But that is not what the verse actually states.

As I said previously, you have to pay close attention to the little things and the little details in the book of Revelation because they are all very significant. We must be careful not to bend and contort what is spoken just because it doesn't fit our traditional, Evangelical view of salvation. The second death can have authority over a Christian in some way that I cannot fully explain. It can hurt a Christian, but not totally destroy him. How can this be possible? For one thing, in the book of Revelation, you are not just looking at what is happening in the spirit realm, and you are not just looking at what is happening in the natural realm. You are looking at *the convergence* of these two realms. The veil that now separates the spirit realm from the natural realm is not there in most of that book.

There is a spiritual counterpart to many things in this natural realm. For instance, "Zion" is a literal, geographical place in the State of Israel. But Zion has a spiritual counterpart—the people of God. "Jerusalem" is a literal, geographical place in the State of Israel. But Jerusalem also has a spiritual

counterpart—again, the people of God. The literal Old Testament Tabernacle and all its furniture has a spiritual counterpart in the book of Revelation. It could be the same thing with the second death. The second death is a literal place into which the literal, resurrected bodies of the wicked will be cast. But maybe there is a spiritual counterpart to the second death; and maybe it's that spiritual counterpart that has the ability to hurt people *without* destroying them. I'm just throwing that out as a possibility.

So my answer to the question of those not partaking of the first resurrection being hurt by the second death is: (1) What's said there does not necessarily mean they will *definitely* be hurt by the second death. It just means there is *a possibility* they will be hurt by the second death; and (2) being hurt by the second death is not necessarily the same as being *destroyed* by it.

The third objection to what I shared tonight has to do with the fact that everyone assumes the people at the second resurrection will be eternally lost. But again, if you look carefully at what the passage says, you will see that it doesn't actually say every person who's raised at this resurrection is lost. That's the assumption that is read into the passage.

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that 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, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:7-15

The passage does not say everyone at this resurrection is lost. It says the ones who *cannot be found* in the Book of Life will be lost. It's important that we accept what is actually said about this resurrection and not force our own theological interpretations on it. The assumption that nobody's name will be found in the Book of Life is a product of people's (mis) understanding of salvation, which is that it's not possible to be saved "by works". Since these people are being judged according to their works, everyone just naturally assumes they can't possibly be saved.

The term “whosoever was not found” denotes a *separation*. Some names will not be found and those people will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. But some names will be found and those people will go into the New World. It’s also clear that the term implies someone is *looking* for the names of the defendants in that book. They are looking for the names, but in many cases the names will not be found. Why bother to *look* for the names of people who have *no chance* of being there? God is not a ritualist. He would never have Gabriel or Michael look repeatedly, over and over again, billions and billions of times, for the names of those who cannot possibly be there.

Some suggest that the reason the Book of Life is at the second resurrection but not at the first one is because some from the nations who enter the Millennium will get saved, and the ones who are saved during that time will have their names written in that Book of Life. So those are the names the angel will be looking for. That sounds good, but it won’t work according to the traditional view of salvation because the people at this resurrection are being judged by their “works”. If a Christian from the *Church age* can’t possibly be saved by their works, then a Christian from the *Kingdom age* cannot be saved that way either.

There will be *Christians* at the second resurrection. Which Christians? Those who did not overcome. Those who didn’t purge themselves from iniquity. Those who didn’t keep the works of Jesus, but clung to their own works of wood, hay and stubble. Those who refused to suffer with Christ in this life.

The *first* resurrection has to do with God’s people receiving their reward for their faithfulness to Him. It is the resurrection of God’s first-fruits, of His Royal Priesthood. It is the resurrection of those who were *utterly* faithful to the Lord while living in on this Earth. The *second* resurrection has to do with deciding the eternal fate of the people who are raised at that time. At this resurrection some will come forth and go into eternal damnation and some will come forth and go into the New World with the rest of the saints.

The fourth objection has to do with the fact that the saints of the Old Testament could not possibly meet the requirements that are laid out in the New Testament. My answer to that is, our God is first and foremost a God of justice and equity. Those living in Old Testament had their own particular requirements for attaining the first resurrection and God knows who met them and who didn’t. The ones who met whatever requirements God laid down at that time will have their part in the first resurrection with the saints of the New Testament who met the requirements God laid down for them.