



Adelaide College

Fear the Lord and be wise

End Times Prophecy

Lecture 9: Resurrection and Judgment

In this lecture we look at the future resurrection and the judgment, but first we consider briefly the so-called intermediate state of the dead.

The Intermediate State of the Dead

The usual position of evangelical Christians is that at physical death the souls of believers go immediately into the presence of the Lord, where they wait for the resurrection –

2 Cor. 5:7 “We live by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

Phil. 1:23 “I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.”

This implies that the believer is conscious in this period of waiting and so enjoys the presence of the Lord. But there have been a few in the Church down the centuries who have taught “soul sleep” – that we go into the presence of the Lord but are in a state of unconsciousness until revived at the resurrection. This has no Scriptural support, but Jehovah’s Witnesses teach soul sleep, and also annihilation of the souls of unbelievers, which is a denial of the immortality of the soul.

Roman Catholics have the doctrine of purgatory, which teaches that the souls of most believers need to be cleansed before they can enter the presence of the Lord. The length of stay in purgatory and the intensity of sufferings there depends on how much cleansing is needed for each individual soul. This is the basis of praying for the dead, that prayer will help those in purgatory to bear their sufferings and that their time there might be lessened. It is taught that only a few choice believers go immediately to heaven.

There is no Scriptural basis for this belief, but since Roman Catholics accept the Apocrypha as being on a par with Scripture they quote 2 Macc. 12:42-45, where praying for the dead is mentioned where Judas Maccabeus sends money to the temple in Jerusalem to propitiate for the sins of Jews who had died in battle.

Paul mentions in 1 Cor. 15:29 that some at Corinth practised vicarious baptism for the dead, as though the sins of the dead can be forgiven by this practice. He mentions this as part of his argument about the reality of the future resurrection, otherwise there would be

no point in those believers carrying out baptism for the dead, but there is no indication that he approved of the practice.

Resurrection in the Old Testament

The word “resurrection” is used more than 40 times in the New Testament to denote the raising up of the dead. But belief in the resurrection is not confined to the New Testament.

In the Old Testament both Job and David declare their belief in the resurrection of the body –

Job 19:25 “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. 26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; 27 I myself will see him with my own eyes – I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”

Ps. 16:10 “...you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.” – a prophecy concerning the resurrection of Jesus.

Ps. 17:15 “And I – in righteousness I will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness.”

Isaiah and Daniel also prophesied concerning the future resurrection –

Isa. 26:19 “But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.”

Dan. 12:12 “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake; some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”

The letter to the Hebrews tells us that Abraham believed in the resurrection –

Heb. 11:17 “By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” 19 Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.”

Two Kings of Resurrection

The Scriptures speak of two kinds of resurrection: the resurrection of the good or believers in Jesus Christ, known as the resurrection to life; and the resurrection of the evil or unbelievers, known as the resurrection to condemnation.

Jn. 5:28 “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and come out – those who have done good will rise to life, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”

The Order of the Resurrections

The Bible presents us with a definite order of resurrections –

1. Christ, the firstfruits, when He rose on the third day;
2. Believers in Christ, when He comes again;
3. Unbelievers, when Christ judges the world.

1 Cor. 15:22 “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the Kingdom of God to the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.”

Part of Christ putting “all his enemies under his feet” is the judgment of unbelievers.

The apostle John tells us that there will be an interval of 1000 years between the resurrection of believers and unbelievers:

Rev. 20:4 “I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.”

Many Christians take the 1000 years figuratively and so do not accept that there will be a literal 1000 years between the resurrection of believers and unbelievers but both will be resurrected (and judged) at the same time. But the word “resurrection” is not used figuratively in this way anywhere else.

The Judgment

Both Testaments tell us that there will be a final future judgment of believers and unbelievers. This will happen at the end of the age when Jesus returns –

Ps. 96:13 “...they will sing before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth.”

Ecc. 12:14 “For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”

Mt. 25:31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.”

Heb. 9:27 “Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.”

Those who accept a literal 1000 years reign of Christ believe that there will be two judgments, one for believers preceding the millennium (1000 years of rule of Christ on earth) at the first resurrection, and one for unbelievers following the millennium at the great white throne –

The resurrection and judgment of believers before the millennium –

Rev. 20:4 “I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.”

2 Cor. 5:10 “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”

The resurrection and judgment of unbelievers after the millennium –

Rev. 20:5 “(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.)”

Rev. 20:11 “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

Satan and the fallen angels will also be judged –

“And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.”

Rev. 20:7 “When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison 8

and will give out to deceive the nations... But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

Jesus Christ will be the Judge

Jn. 5:22 “Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son... 26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. 27 And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.”

Acts 10:42 “He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.”

The Lord Jesus will delegate at least some judgment to believers –

Mt. 19:28 “Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’”

1 Cor 6:2 “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!”

The Issues on which Judgment will Rest

1. All will be judged according to what they have done as written in God’s records –

Rev. 20:12 “And saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”

2. All will be judged according to what they have said –

Mt. 12:36 “But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

3. All will be judged according to their attitudes, particularly standing in judgment on others –

Mt. 7:1 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured you.”

4. Unbelievers will be judged by God’s law written on their hearts, i.e. they will be judged by their God-given moral conscience –

Rom. 2:15 “...since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts,

their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.”

Their consciences, however, will not excuse them on the day of judgment –

Rom. 3:22 “There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

5. But the main principle of judgment will rest on the individual person’s trust in God and commitment to His way of salvation in Jesus Christ –

Jn. 3:18 “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

6. Some believe that the judgment of Israel will be a special case because they are God’s ancient covenant people. It is said they will be judged and cleansed at the Lord’s return –

Mal. 3:3 “He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver... 4 and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD... 5 So I will come near to you for judgment...”

The Sentence and Rewards of Judgment

All true believers are saved and will be saved at the judgment, but some will be rewarded and some will suffer loss –

1 Cor. 3:13 “...fire will test the quality of each man’s work. 14 If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. 15 If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.”

Crowns will be given at the judgment seat of Christ –

1 Cor. 9:25 “Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.”

2 Tim. 4:8 “Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

Rev. 2:10 “Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Conclusion

The truth of the future resurrection and the judgment have been constantly denied both in and outside the Church. But the plain statements of both the Old and New Testaments certify the truth of the future resurrection and the future judgment. It is not possible to deny these truths by an appeal to the Scriptures but only by an appeal to human reasoning. The human mind, however, is at enmity with God and His truth. Human reasoning needs the guidance and enlightenment of the Spirit of God –

1 Cor. 2:10 “The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. 14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned... 16 For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”



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