

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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A General Resurrection, Not a Multi-Staged Event

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.
(Acts 24:14–15, KJV 1900)

What do we mean by a "General" resurrection? The term historically refers to the belief that all humans who have ever lived shall be raised from the dead at one time. In contrast, the idea that one specific group might be raised, while others remain in the grave, would be described as a specific resurrection, specific to the group being raised. We find any number of passages in addition to our study verses that teach the same principle. When Paul wrote, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed," (1 Corinthians 15:51-52) the word that he used, translated in our King James Bible as "moment," is the Greek root for our English word "Atom." No surprise, it is defined as a moment of time so small that it cannot be further divided into a shorter moment. Our contemporary culture might refer to it as a "Nanosecond." To give practical insight to his point, Paul clarifies, "...in the twinkling of an eye." He didn't refer to our blinking the eyelid, but to the insightful twinkling that you see in a person's eye when they discover something new and exciting to them. The response is instantaneous, and that is Paul's point. The resurrection shall be an instantaneous event for all human beings, just one instant in which all who are in their graves, "...both of the just and unjust," shall arise.

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 12:2)

Do not misread the point. "Many" simply refers to a very large number. It does not in any way exclude the universal principle that includes all. The dominant point of the lesson affirms our primary focus in our present study. The final resurrection at the Lord's return shall include both righteous and wicked. Daniel describes the two classes based on the outcome of their judgment, "some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." As we saw in our last study, this passage also refutes the idea of annihilation of the wicked. Their

shame and contempt are everlasting, something that could not be if they were raised and shortly thereafter annihilated. Like his New Testament inspired counterparts, Daniel sees only two classes of people in his revelation of that Day.

Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. (Revelation 1:7, KJV 1900)

If we examine the literary structure of this context, this verse is the very first thought that John writes after his formal introduction of himself and the letter of Revelation. This truth should form the "Go-to" anchor with every step that we take through the Book of Revelation. As we confront one frightening and ominous appearing adversary after another, as we anticipate final deliverance only repeatedly to be shown that deliverance is repeatedly delayed for a time, we need to go back to this foundational thought. He is coming, and His coming shall be in glory and victory. Those who pierced Him shall see Him, but they shall no longer be able to inflict pain or ridicule upon Him. All kindreds of the earth shall see Him and wail because of Him. While those who lived and died "...of the earth" wail because of Him, those whom He redeemed shall immediately praise Him for redemption. They shall realize that they stand securely and joyfully in His presence and by His side!

And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. (Hebrews 2:13)

The idea that the final judgment shall go on interminably while every person who ever lived gives a boring and detailed account of every thought, word, or deed committed cannot be supported by Scripture. What man perceives as taking a symbolic "Eternity" shall be completed hastily, but thoroughly. True eternity for the family of God shall not suffer delay from a torturously long judgment.

Our inquisitive mindset may wonder why God did not provide redemption from sin for all humanity.

I offer a few thoughts as suggestions, I hope with Biblical reasons.

1. From Genesis the first chapter, Scripture reveals God as a moral being, not, like so many of the pagan imaginary deities, a self-indulgent amoral hedonist. While we might draw practical insights from the Hebrew word translated “good” in the first chapter of Genesis, the word also carries a distinctly moral quality of goodness. A morally good God would be expected to create a morally good universe, and so He did. This fact sheds insight into God’s wrath at Adam’s sin and the judgment that followed. It therefore stands to reason that a supremely righteous and moral God would choose to demonstrate both His mercy and His moral character.
2. All of these passages consistently reveal the same separation of humanity into two distinct groups, one that shall experience the merciful joys of God’s person and presence and the other than shall face His righteous judgment, resulting in “...shame and everlasting contempt.” This point rejects both errant doctrines; 1) the total annihilation of the wicked shortly after judgment, and 2) universalism, the soft-hearted, and unbiblical idea that God shall, in the end, bring all humanity into His favor and eternal life.
3. The sentence pronounced in both cases is a righteous, just sentence. The sentence of eternal joy is righteous based on the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ on their behalf, not based on their personal works. Jesus fully earned our eternal blessing based on God’s righteous judgment. The sentence against the wicked shall likewise be altogether righteous and just. We occasionally look at the severity of the penalty described in Scripture, and we tend to minimize the “Crime” committed. However, we must not forget that our judgment is wholly biased. We cannot possibly assess God’s judgment from a purely neutral or righteous perspective. How close do we lie in conduct and in sentiment to those who shall hear the grave sentence pronounced against them? How much impact touches us from the realization, “There, but for the grace of God, am I”? We cannot possibly grasp the righteous character and perspective of God who created man and gave man His moral law. We are obviously therefore incapable of passing judgment against the nature or severity of the sentence that Scripture describes against the wicked. Our inclination is likely to think of an imperceptible eternity of “Payment”

compared with such a minor, brief time of sin. Do you not see the bias in such a judgment? Can you, even remotely, grasp the depth of offense that man’s sinful disposition and actions charge against God? I say no. We cannot.

4. I offer the most obvious and glaring of testimonies to be considered in favor of God on this question of justice. The elect who shall praise God in glory for eternity were born into the world as sinners. We do not anticipate that glorious day based on our lack of sin, do we? Think long and carefully. On what basis did God remit the infectious moral weight of our sins? He would accept nothing less than the sinless offering of His own darling Son. In no way did God compromise or “Look the other way” and pretend that we didn’t commit any of the sins that stain each and every one of us. God remained faithful to His moral character, even in atoning for our sins. We could have no greater testimony to God’s moral character and to the propriety of His judgment than to think of His own Son, scourged and assaulted by sinful men, hanging on a tree, the most torturous death contrived by wicked men. And yet, to accomplish our redemption, God required far more than mortal man could do to His righteous Son. No wicked man, with all of his depraved torture against our Lord, contributed anything whatever to our redemption. Immediately upon His death on the cross, Jesus took His life, His sinless, righteous life to Paradise where He presented Himself to the Father as the one and only acceptable payment that would settle our moral debt of sin. I cannot imagine any deed that more commands and deserves the adoring worship and faithful-unto-death devotion and service, can you?

At the Second Coming, when the Lord returns, Scripture affirms that both His righteous judgment against sin—and sinners—as well as His unfathomable mercy shall be fully displayed in His final act of judgment.

Given the depth of mercy, we should not be surprised when we read the reaction that Jesus says the elect shall give to the knowledge that they were included. “When saw we thee...?” They are the most surprised of all people at the knowledge of their inclusion! Not a one of them smugly responded, “Well, of course; after all, look at all the good works that I did.” To a person, they react with amazement that they, of all people, are included. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor