

Volume 8: Two Destinies



Things to Come
and Why They Matter
An Introductory Study in Prophecy

Prophecy Series Sermons

Our sermon series for the summer of 2014 investigated the subject of prophecy. The response by the congregation at Vistoso Community Church was so encouraging, that we are publishing each of the sermons both in booklet form and online on our web site.

The first five sermons were released in booklet form in January of 2015. These are the final five booklets that complete our Prophecy series:

- Volume 6: When and Why Will the Believing be Leaving?
- Volume 7: The Signs of the Times
- **Volume 8: Two Destinies**
- Volume 9: Above the Fray
- Volume 10: Connecting the Pieces



In His grace,

Kevin Redig, Pastor
Vistoso Community Church

Volume 8: Two Destinies

An Introduction

If you recall, we began this study by looking at the single most important event remaining in human history, and that is the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. Using that as a reference point, we have worked our way both forwards and backwards in time. In this lesson, we are going to continue to work our way forward, looking at what follows after the Millennial Kingdom. There are two very important events that we want to talk about—you can see them listed on our Timeline below.



These two events are essential for us to understand because they encompass the two potential destinies of every human being who ever has, or ever will, live. The Great White Throne Judgment (GWT) is the *gateway* to one of these destinies and the ushering in of the Eternal State (New Heavens and New Earth) is the gateway to the other. Every human being, no exceptions, will pass into eternity via either the Great White Throne or the New Jerusalem. This alone should be reason enough for us to see what God has to say on the topic.

The Millennial Kingdom

Before we begin to discuss these two events, let me refresh your memory regarding the 1000-year earthly reign of Christ, which because of its length, is often referred to as the Millennial Kingdom.

What Is It Like? The Lord Jesus Christ, in the line of David, will reign over the entire world as King of kings and Lord of lords. His rule will be a rule of perfect justice; and His kingdom a transformed earth.

They (the nations) shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Isaiah

2:4

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat. . . and the little child shall lead them. . . the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the Knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 11: 6-9



In short, there will be universal peace, universal prosperity and radically transformed environment.

Who Starts the Kingdom? Actually, quite a collection of individuals start the Kingdom. To begin with, those believers who survive the Tribulation and make it out of it alive. In addition, resurrected church age saints, resurrected Old Testament and Tribulational saints, and angels will all have some kind of role as well.

There Is a Hint of Trouble! Consider carefully the following passages to see the hint of trouble.

Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. . . Revelation 19:15

This *rod of iron* is probably more appropriately a scepter of iron where iron speaks of the firmness of justice that will be administered.

Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. Isaiah 65:20

Notice there are going to be those who are accursed because of their premature death—could this have something to do with the swiftness and firmness of justice mentioned above?

If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain. . . This shall be the punishment for Egypt and all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

Zechariah 14:18-19

This final passage makes it clear that disobedience is still possible during the Millennial reign of Christ. Now the closing of the Millennial Kingdom almost defies understanding and goes well beyond just a hint of trouble! Consider the following passage from Revelation 20, which I have presented in three parts with comments.

Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations.

No surprise here. Satan continues as a rebel who has been a liar from the beginning.

...which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

This is the inexplicable part—where did Satan find all these willing followers when the Millennium began with only believers?

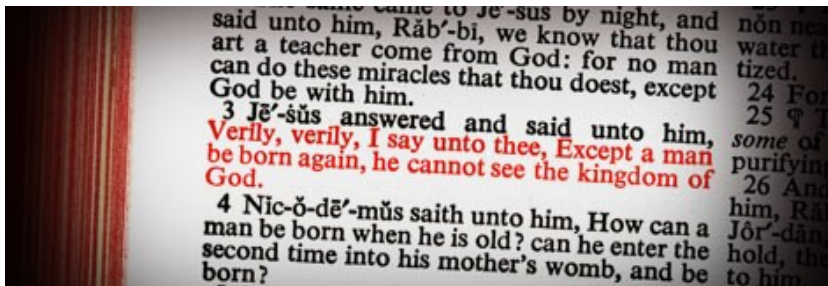
...They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Notice the result! No more patience, no more waiting.

What is the Source of This Trouble? The Bible does not give detail regarding how it is that Satan is able to co-opt so many to follow him against God out of a perfect world. However, let me give you something to consider. I have noticed that God makes statements of propositional truth—and then puts them on display for all to see. For example, He told the nation of Israel that if they turned from Him to idols, He would spit them out of the Land. They did, and He did. It is as if God allows certain things to run their course—making a public display of them—in order to prove the truth of His proclamations.

So how does this apply to the rebellion that occurs at the end of the Millennium? God has been telling man all along that unless a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. What does this mean, and why is it necessary? Every member of the human race is born in the *fallen* line of Adam, is spiritually dead as a result, and has a nature to sin. How does man respond to this? He balks at God's wisdom, and instead claims it has to do with environment, social injustice, unequal distribution of wealth, and a host of other problems.

So God, in effect, has run an experiment to show man the foolishness of his *wisdom*. Does this time of restored environment, individual prosperity, and universal justice *cure* what ails man. Apparently not! That's because mankind's problem is not one of environment—it is one of the heart! Man does not need to be rehabilitated, but re-created as God originally intended.



Read what one Bible-teacher has to say about this:

Apparently Satan is released at the end of the Millennium to reveal that the ideal conditions of the Kingdom under the personal reign of Christ do not change the human heart. . . Scripture is accurate when it describes the heart as “desperately wicked” and incurably so. Man is totally depraved. The loosing of Satan at the end of the 1,000 years proves it. (McGee)

Why Does This Matter? Let's consider the idea of depravity a bit further. I am not developing this idea so that we can nod in agreement and point our finger at some evil we are seeing. For we need to make sure that each of us holds our own personal internal dialogue on this matter. You see it is not about the evil that lurks elsewhere, it is about the evil that lurks in our own hearts. Many have opted to ignore this evil or make it relative—and by that I mean consider it to be okay because we don't think we are as bad as others. Listen! As Christians we dare not cover up the evil within.

Here is our answer directly from the book of Colossians:

When you were dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us our sins. He took the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and stood opposed to us and He took it away, nailing it to the cross. He triumphed over the powers and authorities, making a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Colossians 2:13-15

This is the cure for the sin within—the only cure, and it is a part of placing your faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Let me ask you a question, “Have you come to rest in the finished work of the cross? The work Christ accomplished there?” There is no other way to deal with the sin within, and no other way, as we shall see, to stand acceptably before God than to be “in Christ”. Remember, it is about being new creatures in Christ and not about trying to rehabilitate one’s life or turn over a new leaf! Let me show you this specific principle from the third chapter of Titus:

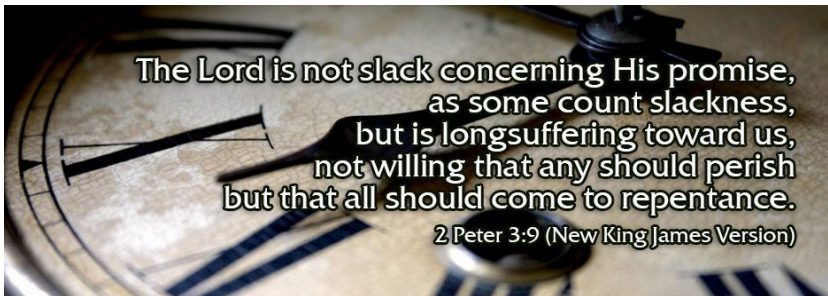
. . . not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. . .

Titus 3:5

Do you see it? It is the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. I must admit that, on the one hand, I deeply feel the *chains* of mankind. The only real *claim to fame* which mankind has is what remains of our being made in the image and likeness of God—it is still there for the discerning to see, but it is just a shadow of what it was intended to be. This is what the depravity of man is really about—what we were meant to be has instead been replaced by *lostness*.

You can see this in the actions of those, who, on so many fronts, shake their fists at God or simply ignore Him. As Tozer has said, mankind has a deep spiritual amnesia. He has forgotten who he is, what he was made for, and his purpose in life.

On the other hand, I also rejoice in that the plan of God rolls on. Everything is under His control. Praise God that He is not a holder of grudges for He is good and just—holding out a perfect salvation for as long as possible, that as many as possible, might come into the Kingdom of God. Nevertheless, the day of reckoning for the rebellion started by Satan, and in which man has so often been complicit—is coming!



Now what is left for mankind? One of two destinies, which is the title of this booklet. Let me put it back into our prophetic timeline. We have caught up the Church—all the saints from the day of Pentecost until the Rapture. The Old Testament saints have been resurrected and so have the Tribulational saints. And at some point those believers who come out of the Millennium will be resurrected as well. But what about those who have died as unbelievers? I refer to the dead of every age, from Cain until the close of human history, who died without Christ? They are mentioned in Revelation 20:5 as "*the rest of the dead*", that is, those who will not be resurrected until the very close of human history.

It is this group who are the focus of Revelation 20:11-f.

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and 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 sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they are judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15



Did you notice how this passage begins? It begins with the face of the earth and heaven fleeing from the face of Him who sits on the throne.

I think it likely this is a reference to the destruction of the present heavens and earth described in II Peter:

. . .the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

II Peter 3:10

This would mean the material universe is being cleansed while the unbelievers of all ages are before the Great White Throne of Judgment.



The Great White Throne

Let's continue by breaking this passage from Revelation down into manageable pieces. First, the Great White Throne of Judgment is the *Gateway* to one destiny. This is very much a legal setting. All the elements of courtroom activity are visible: judge, defendants, evidence, and the passing of sentence.

Elements of the Great White Throne

We should remember the following things about the throne of God.

It Is Great and White. It is great because God is sovereign over all things. It is white as a reference to God's holiness.

The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all.

Psalm 103:19

. . . I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. . . Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory.

Isaiah 6:1,3

This Throne Has a Foundation. This throne of God is one that is character based!

Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; righteousness and justice Psalm 97:2

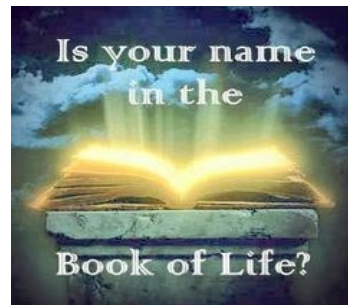
Jesus Is Sitting Upon this Throne.

For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. John 5:22

. . . the Lord Jesus Christ who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom. II Timothy 4:1

Notice the Courtroom Details.

In addition to the throne and the judge who sits upon it, there are two sets of books as well as *the dead*. The dead in this context are every human being who has not yet been resurrected, or stated another way, unbelievers of all ages.



The Real Issue of the Great White Throne

By now you should be asking yourself, "What is the real issue here? What is the point of this formal legal setting that has been established?"

Book of Works. Most immediately jump to the conclusion that the one set of books—I am going to label them the *Book of Works* contains a listing of the sins of each person. It is quite likely it does contain sin—but we need to be careful before we think it is nothing but a listing of sins, and thereby limit the impact of the text.

Carefully consider the following details:

- **Meaning of Works.** The word translated *works* is the Greek word *ergon*. It means: that which any one is occupied with; that which one undertakes to do; anything produced by hand, art, industry or mind; an act, deed or thing done. The word has no intrinsic connotation of either good or evil. As an example, when it says in Ephesians 2:8-9 that we are not saved by works—it is clearly referring to what would be considered the good that we might produce—even these *good works* are not enough to save us.
- **Christ's Payment.** Is it not true that Christ took all of our sins upon Himself on the cross? Did He not pronounce: "*Paid in full?*" Perhaps you are thinking that this only applies to those who believe—but then what about I John 2:2:

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

Many like to interpret this as the "whole world of believers," but that does not seem to be what the text implies.

- **What Sins?** What sin could possibly be listed in these books that a Christian hasn't committed? Adultery, murder and deceit—we need look no further than King David!

If, on the other hand, the listing in the books is simply a listing of the accomplishments—the things produced by one's life, then it would contain everything—good works, bad works and everything in between. Let me suggest a different emphasis at the Great White Throne than we instinctively tend to apply.

Since those queuing up at the Great White Throne have rejected the redemption, justification and reconciliation provided by God, what is at issue is the individual's ability to produce the kind of righteousness and the kind of life necessary to spend eternity in the presence of God. Specifically, a righteousness that is equivalent to God's and worthy of eternal life. You see people are in this line because they died in unbelief. They may have been told once or many times about the marvelous provision of the Gospel as the means to deal with their sins and thereby provide both righteousness and eternal life—but they rejected the way, the truth, and the life, they rejected the one gate through which they must pass and they ejected the one Mediator between God and man.

If so—there is nothing to fall back on but what they have produced themselves, and that's what happens in the courtroom of the Great White Throne. Every lost member is given one last chance to show that from the source of themselves they have produced what is necessary to spend eternity in the presence of God, and to the great dismay of all—no one will be found to have produced what's necessary.

Perhaps you are thinking—why won't any measure up? Let's start with the issue of righteousness. Who is going to meet the standard of heaven? Before we can answer that, we have to ask, "What is the standard of heaven?" It is the righteousness of God! Righteousness is a standard, and God's reaches to the heavens (Psalm 71:19). Furthermore, when He comes,

He is going to judge the world in righteousness.

Psalm 96:13

And the hard part for us to grasp is that it is going to be His righteousness that is used as the standard by which all else is judged. I can tell you based upon the authority of Scripture how that is going to turn out:

“There is no one who is righteous—not even one!”

Romans 3:10

Our righteousness is as filthy rags before the Lord.

Isaiah 64:6

Part of the message of the Old Testament is that God has been teaching this very lesson for centuries. The inner portion of the Tabernacle, and then the Temple, was a walled-off area called the Holy of Holies. This is where the very presence of God dwelt among His people. Who could enter the Holy of Holies? Virtually no one! Only the High Priest, and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement.



And it was then through the sacrifices prescribed by God that the sins of the people were covered by the blood of the offering and the righteousness and justice of God were satisfied.

So the Jews were taught for centuries that no one was righteous enough to come into the presence of God—He is holy (righteous and just) and we are not.

So then what happened when Christ died? The curtain that blocked man's entry into the Holy of Holies was torn in two from top to bottom, for Christ had opened a way into the presence of God—a way which included the imputation of His righteousness that we might be acceptable in the presence of God.

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known. . . even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. . . being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. . .

Romans 3:21-24

But here is the problem—those standing at the Great White Throne judgment have rejected the work of Christ. They do not have His righteousness! So all that is left is to sort through the sum total of their lives and see if there is any way to measure up to the demands of God's righteousness. I can tell you the answer ahead of time, because God has told us—

“. . . there is none who is righteous, not even one.”

Romans 3:10

Book of Life. Did you note we have not just the Book of Works, but also the Book of Life. There is only one way to get your name into the Book of Life:

“The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”

John 6:63

“You search the Scriptures, because by them you think you have eternal life. . . But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”

John 5:39-40

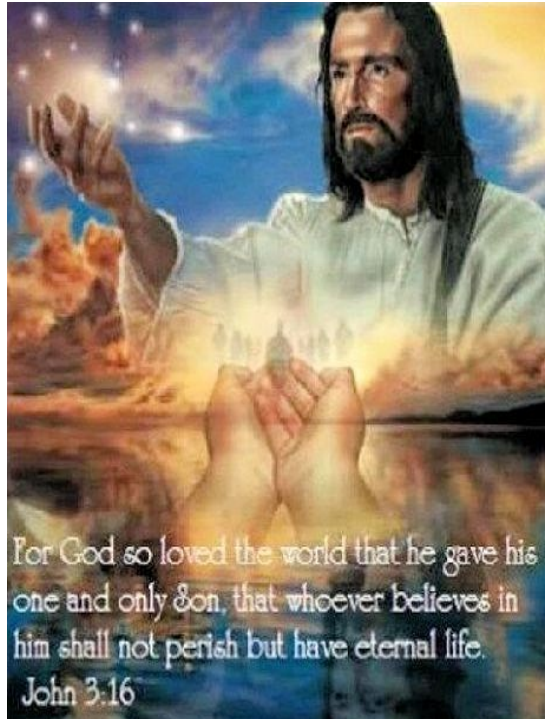
“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

John 14:6

Although we are born physically alive, we are at the same time spiritually dead. Eternal life is available as a *gift of God* (Ephesians 2:8) for all those who will accept that gift by faith. Those who do have a eternal future with God. Those who will not find themselves in the line-up at the Great White Throne Judgment without the righteousness necessary to enter God's presence and without the requisite kind of life. Both were available, but rejected.

Perhaps you are wondering why God goes through the charade of giving all these lost people a chance to prove themselves when there is no hope? The message of the Great White Throne is not about a heartless God—it is a call to mankind everywhere, and right now, regarding the absolute hopelessness that results from trying to stand before God on our own merits.

To try and prove your qualifications to enter heaven based upon the life lived is impossible. God has perfect records and there is no way to measure up!

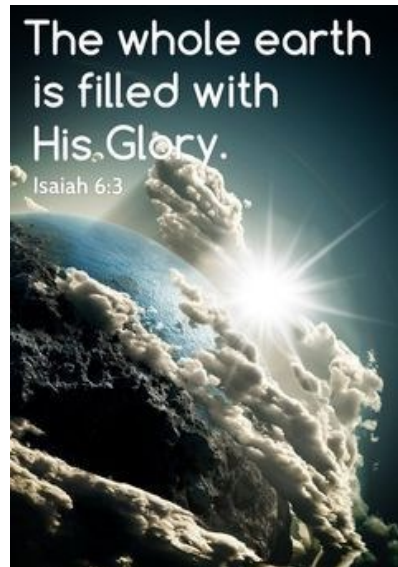


Praise God that should shock us into the reality of needing a Savior—someone who can provide the righteousness and life we so desperately need. And, that is exactly what we have in our Lord Jesus Christ. We have a Savior who can take away our sin, Who is willing to impute His righteousness to those who will believe, and Who is able to share His eternal life with all those who place their faith in Him. You do not want to stand before God on your own merits; rather, you want to do so on the merits of Christ, which we know the Father accepts and honors.

Is This Fair?

There are those who take Revelation Chapter 20, apart from any other context, and say, “A loving God would never do this. . . This is not fair. . .” This is what happens when you divorce your view of God, and His love, from an understanding of His full character, which includes His righteousness and justice.

Isaiah chapter 6 describes the awesomeness of God’s holiness to us—how could we possibly think we could twist the concept of love in such a way as to degrade the holiness of God? And how could we possibly accuse the One who went to the cross in our place of somehow being unloving?



God is simply giving us a choice that has consequences: We can either choose to receive a free pardon, or go through the trial at the Great White Throne. We can choose to receive the righteousness that is available through faith in Christ, or try to manufacture our own from the *Book of Works*. We can choose to receive life that comes via the Spirit, or life we somehow work for or manufacture on our own.

When it comes right down to it—there is really only one choice to make: to receive by faith what God has provided—specifically, pardon for sin, eternal life and the very righteousness of God—by believing that this is the free gift of God available to all who will trust in the person and work of the Son! In doing so, we will avoid ever getting ourselves into a Great White Throne predicament!

The Eternal State— Gateway to the Other Destiny

The Eternal State is the gateway to the other destiny. Let's begin by taking a look at the text from Revelation chapter 21.

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people.’ God Himself will be with them and be their God.”

Revelation 21:1-3

It is hard for us to know exactly what the reality of the above passage is going to be like, but it most certainly captures the ushering in of something very new and very different. I encourage you to continue reading the rest of chapter in order to begin to see the nature of our eternal state with God. Verse 4 tells us that there will be no more death, tears, mourning, crying, or pain. I appreciate the way Steve Lawson takes this description and makes application, which I have paraphrased:

This means: no more funeral homes, hospitals, abortion clinics. No divorce courts, assisted living centers, Alzheimer's care, cancer centers, or bankruptcy courts. No more pornography, Aids, rape, missing children, or suicides. No talk shows, drug problems, drive-by shootings, racial tension, prejudice. No emotional heartache, worry, emptiness or gossip. No heart monitors, no need for pain-killers, no locks, and no casseroles. No need to resist temptation, no sin nature, no confession, and no sin. Ever!

(Steve Lawson)



Let me give you a couple of additional verses from chapter 21 to ponder.

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. . . The city is laid out like a square; its length is as great as its breadth. . . Its length, breadth and height are all equal.

Revelation 21:10, 16

This great city is an almost unimaginable 1400 miles cubed. Skeptics ridicule the dimensions—I suggest you consider instead the message associated with the dimensions. For the Holy of Holies—the dwelling of God with men, first in the Tabernacle and then the temple, was itself a cube; and now the eternal home of man with God has the same dimensions. (And of course, since God is the creator of this great city—no size, no dimensions are any problem for Him.)

There is so much to meditate upon with regard to the idea of an eternity with God. As Christians, we are often moved by our ability to bring problems and concerns directly to our God. But just ponder for a moment one theologian's description of the kind of access to God we are going to have in eternity.

Small wonder, then, that the “new Jerusalem,” one of the images for the final abode of God's people (Revelation 21-22), is shaped like a perfect cube. Already Christians have access to the throne of God by the merit of Jesus Christ; in the consummation, however, we will stand unafraid and overwhelmed by joy and adoration in the unshielded splendor of His holiness.

(Carson)

In Closing

In closing this lesson, let me summarize. It can be said of every human being that the choices we make in this life lead to one of two destinies.

- **Great White Throne.** One destiny, the result of of righteousness and kind of life necessary for heaven—is to stand before the Great White Throne before being sentenced to eternal death in the Lake of Fire.
- **Eternity.** The other destiny—to stand unafraid and overwhelmed by joy and adoration in the unshielded splendor of His holiness—as the new Jerusalem, our eternal home, descends to the new earth.

And, as we have been very careful to develop in these pages—it is not so much about choices in the plural, but about one choice in the singular. That is, have we chosen to place our faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ because we have come to understand that He is God's provision for us to receive both the kind of life we need (eternal life) and the imputation of the very righteousness of God.

When we set aside trust in our good works, and instead trust in the One whom God has provided, we receive His life and His righteousness and thereby stand acceptable before the Creator God of the universe. Choose wisely and choose with your destiny in view! If you are trusting in your works, good deeds, religious affiliation. . .then you are going to have a chance to lay out all these things before God. The issue is—will our deeds, our lives, our works be enough before a holy God who is going to judge the world in righteousness—His righteousness? Will they measure up?

You see, if you are in the line queuing up for the Great White Throne, my advice is to get out of that line before it is too late! Trust not in your own righteousness, but receive Christ's righteousness by trusting in Him. This is God's provision for you. There is no other way to be able to stand and abide forever in His presence. In fact, you can take care of the problem right now by exercising faith as you read the closing lines of this lesson:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from Law has been known. . . This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:21-23





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