

Eschatology Part 7 Section 4: Resurrection, Judgement and final state.

What happens at the very end?

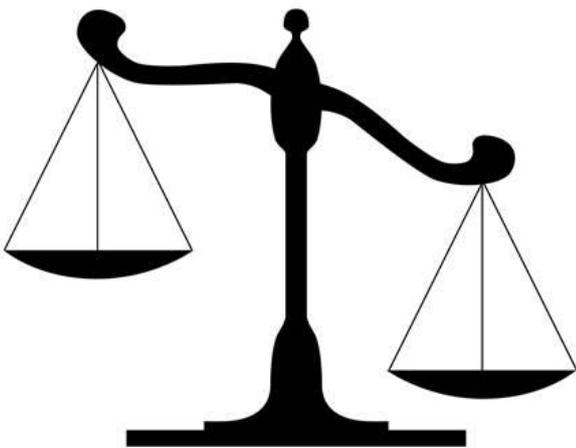
Introduction:

It's a great privilege and responsibility that as Christians we have been given an insight as to what will happen at the end of time as we know it. But while the scriptures tell us clearly about many things to do with what will be the final state of all men, there are several passages that are left for us to ponder. Many denominations and sects, such as Jehovah's witnesses and Mormons, hold tightly to various interpretations and lead others to think that only theirs is the correct one. In the case of the former, they have made many false predictions of the Second Coming, despite Jesus saying that "no man knows the day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" We need to hold lightly our own interpretations; otherwise we can become sectarian, divisive, or use it as an excuse not to mix with other churches. How things happen in the end times is not something we need to know to have eternal life. While obeying what Jesus requires for eternal life, we need to hold lightly to our interpretations of actual events and their order.

Final resurrection

That there will be a resurrection from the dead is definite. Jesus makes this clear when He says: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die." And: "When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in

marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven." Paul declares: "For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the first-fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him" and: "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation



in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, so that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."

The final Judgement:

Jesus and the whole Bible make it clear that there will be a final judgement of all mankind. But how this will happen is not so clear though there are several scriptures that give us a glimpse:

The first of these is Revelation 20:11-13: “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.” This tells us that Judgement will be made “According to our deeds”. But doesn’t the Bible say: “For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift — not from works, so that no one can boast.”? This is true, but as James 2 says: “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?” It is our faith that saves, but “faith without deeds is dead” (See also the conclusion in this leaflet).

In Athens Paul declared: “For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.” In Romans 2 it says there will be a day when “God judges people’s secrets through Jesus Christ”. I Corinthians 4 says “Judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.”

Matthew chapter 25 is one of the most serious chapters to read concerning the Judgement Day. Here Jesus says: “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 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. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.” We can’t avoid the fact that Jesus also tells us in Matthew 7 that few will be saved: “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it.” In Matthew 25 He spells out that those who will be saved are those who love “the least of these brothers and sisters of mine”, meaning His Church.

The final state of all men.

So Jesus makes some extremely serious statements about what will happen to man if he doesn't repent and turn over his life to God. What should be our attitude to others as a result? The answer to this is first to make sure that our own salvation is secure. Paul urges us to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling". Not that we should doubt our salvation, but that we should daily look for the signs: Do we aspire to love God with all our heart? Do we "love the brothers and sisters"? As we work out these things daily we are proving that we are saved and Jesus is in us. With this attitude we can then turn to pray in earnest for those around us, sharing the Gospel in the Power of the Spirit.

Conclusion:

That there is a resurrection from the dead is clear in scriptures, though exactly how it will happen is kept as a surprise. How can we be sure we will be among those who are "counted worthy to take part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead"? read on:

"All have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God" and the "wages" or consequence of sin is death. However, Jesus was sinless and overcame death on our behalf, so that "he who believes in Him" doesn't perish but "has eternal life".

But how can we be sure we've believed? The answer is in 1 John. John says that he wrote the letter "to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know you have eternal life." (1 John 5:13). So what does he say is proof?

- That we "'love the Father" and "keep His commandments" (5:1-3)"
- That we overcome the world "'For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world - our faith." (5:4).
- "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters." (3:14-16)

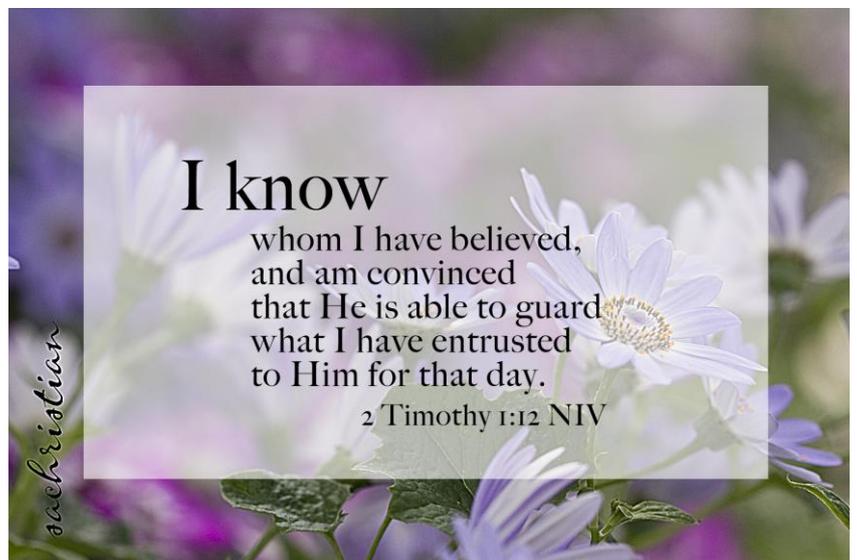
This assurance is not given to those who think in their heads that Jesus might be the Son of God; or even those who strongly think that He is, but rather to those that actively put their trust in Him by obeying Him as Lord. If this

describes you, then the good news is that you can know that you have eternal life!

The Bible says that there will be a “new heavens and a new earth”. Meanwhile “the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.” (Rom 8).

We are privileged as believers in Jesus Christ. History is His-Story. And He’s told us the ending! The Bible concludes with these positive words: ““Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First

and the Last, the Beginning and the End. “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life. He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.” (Revelation 22)



Songs: At the name of Jesus (The Source No.33) O Lord my God (396)

Acknowledgements and further reading: the Systematic Theologies of Wayne Grudem, Louis Berkhof and Fundación Rios de Vida.

Rivers of Life Church, Oxford. First published 27.6.13

NB For clearer reading most Bible references have been left out; these can easily be found easily online.