

## The Resurrection of Judgment

Scripture: John 5

Code: BQ061512

**“those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.” (5:29b)**

The final resurrection will usher believers into the glories and joys of eternal **life**, and bring unbelievers to the endless suffering of eternal **judgment**. By characterizing believers as **those who did the good deeds** and unbelievers as **those who committed the evil deeds** Jesus was not teaching that salvation is by works. Throughout His ministry, Jesus clearly taught that salvation “is the work of God, that [people] believe in Him whom He has sent” (6:29; cf. Isa. 64:6; Rom. 4:2–4; 9:11; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8–9; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5). Good works are simply the evidence of salvation; Jesus called them “fruit” in Luke 6:43–45. Those who believe in the Son will as a result do **good deeds** (3:21; Eph. 2:10; James 2:14–20), while those who reject the Son will be characterized by **evil deeds** (3:18–19).

While works do not save, they do provide the basis for divine judgment. Scripture teaches that God judges people based on their deeds (Ps. 62:12; Isa. 3:10–11; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; Gal. 6:7–9; Rev. 20:12; 22:12), because those deeds manifest the condition of the heart. Thus Jesus said, “The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart” (Matt. 12:34). Later in Matthew’s gospel He taught that “the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders” (15:18–19). In Luke 6:45 Jesus told His hearers, “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil.” The apostle Paul also taught that people’s actions reflect their inner nature. To the Romans he wrote,

[God] will render to each person according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Rom. 2:6–10)

A few chapters later, Paul made it clear that those who attain to the resurrection of the righteous do not do so by their own merits, but by means of their union with Jesus Christ through faith:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection. (Rom. 6:3–5)

Thus good deeds reveal the presence or absence of salvation, but do not produce it. They are its effect, not its cause.

The importance of the doctrine of the resurrection cannot be overstated: without it, there is no Christian faith. Writing to the Corinthians, who were wavering on the doctrine of the resurrection, Paul made it clear that

if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. (1 Cor. 15:16–19)

The apostle's great hope, as it is of all believers, was to "attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. 3:11), a reference to the resurrection of the righteous. He understood the truth that "blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years" (Rev. 20:6). And he knew that such a resurrection was attainable only through faith in Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 6:4–5).

Concluding his magnificent chapter on the resurrection, Paul wrote, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). The doctrine of the resurrection provides hope for the future that energizes the Christian's life and service to God in the present.

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