***The Joy of Death

RV239-01***

While we're off to summer camp, we're out of touch with what is going on in the world about us. We glance at a headline occasionally when we are in town at a store. But one of the first things that we become aware of when we get home is the intense turmoil that is now taking place in Israel as people are rising up in holy indignation about the concept of giving in more accommodations to the Arabs, who want Jerusalem to be handed over to them as their capital city. This is unthinkable. The Jew will never do this. The Jew will fight to the death with his atom bombs and whatever else he has to do. He will never give up Jerusalem now that he has possession of it. That is his rightful place by God's gift; by God's choice; and, by his heritage.

However, he is in a world where he is out-numbered. He is in a world where he can be overwhelmed. So once more, we as Christians should be alerted how short our time is, because the Jew is increasingly looking for a protector. He is increasingly open to someone who will assure him that he will keep the city of Jerusalem; that he will keep control of his land; and, that he will be able to proceed with the rebuilding of his temple and his worship rituals. The Jew is looking for help and the antichrist is going to come into the picture. He will come on the scene, and he will be that helper.

So, we are in some very significant territory here in Revelation 20, and particularly now as we look at the subject of "The First Resurrection." This is segment number five. We are talking about the time when all of what is now being put together in the world will have its explosive finish, and it will end in the first resurrection and the return of Jesus Christ.

**Martyrs**

We have seen that tribulation believers will experience martyrdom because of their testimony about Jesus Christ as Savior, and as the Lord Supreme, and because of their faithful obedience to Bible doctrine as the Word of God. The antichrist is a false God who demands the worship of all. The false prophet is a false teacher, propagating the doctrines of Jesus. The born-again believers in the tribulation will understand this. They will understand the deceptions that are being propagated upon society worldwide through the antichrist and the false prophet. They will say so publicly. The result will be that they will refuse to take the mark of the beast, and so identify themselves as opponents of the whole system.

**Thrones**

The government policy at that time will prescribe decapitation for tribulation saints who will not recant, and who will not submit to the authority of the world government. These faithful tribulation martyrs are resurrected at the end of the tribulation at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. They are among those believers who will have proven themselves worthy of the reward of a throne and a jurisdiction in the Kingdom of Christ.

We've been talking about that for the last three or four sessions. One of the most critical areas of Scripture for you to understand is that it's not going to be the same in heaven for everyone. Some of you will have thrones, and this is what John sees in verse 4, and those thrones are something that you earn, and you will have jurisdiction over an area of the kingdom of God, the Millennial Kingdom. And your life now is ticking off your merit and your worthiness for being given that kind of authority. These martyrs of the tribulation have proven themselves faithful. We are told that they will receive thrones and have an area of jurisdiction. These thrones of authority are also earned by church-age believers and certain Old Testament saints. The rewarded royalty will reign with Jesus Christ for 1,000 years in His kingdom on this earth.

**The First Resurrection**

The believers of all ages are part of what is called the first resurrection. The first resurrection includes Jesus Christ; the church; Old Testament believers; tribulation martyrs; and, millennial believers who died during that 1,000-year period. They will be resurrected at the end of the millennium. All of that, in various stages, constitutes the first resurrection. The first resurrection includes only believers. The unbelieving dead of all ages, we have seen, are not resurrected until the end of 1,000 years of the Millennial Kingdom.

**Two Resurrections**

In John 5:28-29, the Lord pointed out two resurrections, but there's a piece of information missing in that verse: Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice." Everybody who has ever lived, from Adam on down, and all those aborted babies whose lives were snuffed out before they had a chance to enter this world, but nevertheless are persons with souls, and so are in heaven. Every human being is going to have his body resurrected, whether he is lost or saved.

Verse 29 then says, "And shall come forth." Those who did good deeds, as a result of being born-again and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, shall come forth to a resurrection of life. Those who committed evil deeds, not being born-again, and only capable of operating in the sin nature, shall come forth to a resurrection of judgment. There is a resurrection of life; and, a resurrection of judgment. What the verse doesn't tell us, that we find here in Revelation 20, is that there is 1,000-year period separating that resurrection to life and the resurrection to judgment. That's an important separation.

Furthermore, I want to stress again that the Greek word for "resurrection," which is used in Revelation 20:55, when it says, "The rest of the dead did not come to life until the 1,000 years were completed," this is the first resurrection. That word "resurrection," which is used in the New Testament some 40 times, always refers to the physically dead being raised to life. You should remember that. The word "resurrection" refers to physically being raised to life. It is the word "anastasis." It is never used to refer to spiritual regeneration at salvation.

I stress this to you because the amillennial viewpoint of Scripture is the predominant view among churches, and the amillennial view teaches a single, universal resurrection day. And those of us who were reared in denominational structures of the millennial frame of reference were taught as children of some great resurrection day. We're all going to file by God, one-by-one, and we're going to see who is a sheep and who is a goat; and, who goes to heaven, and who goes to hell. We were taught we would never know which way we're going until we stand at that great universal resurrection day.

The amillennials, since they had that one universal resurrection day of saved and unsaved, apply the word "resurrection" to spiritual regeneration of salvation as the first resurrection. Then they apply the same word to physical restoration of the dead as the second resurrection. So, they take the same word, and in one place, they give it a spiritual meaning of regeneration; and, in another place, they give it its true meaning of physical resurrection.

The truth of the matter is that there are two different physical resurrections: a first resurrection; and, a second resurrection. The first is for the saved; and, the second for the unsaved, and they are separated by 1,000 years. There are two different physical resurrections, and that 1,000 years is the Millennial Kingdom of Christ on this earth.

We pointed out that these two resurrections may be viewed as a grand parade which is passing in review before God in two battalions. The first battalion represents the first resurrection. The first battalion also is made up of several companies, as the first resurrection has several groups of saints. The order of the units of the first resurrection is introduced to us in 1 Corinthians 15:20: "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who sleep."

Drop down to verse 23. It expands that resurrection (Christ, the first unit), but each in his own order. This Greek word "tagma" there means a military unit. Each is in his own military unit as it comes by: "But each in his own order, Christ, the firstfruits. After that, those that are in Christ at His coming."

So, these two verses tell us that the first resurrection is broken up into different segments of different believers. The first is Jesus Christ Himself, and He is presented as the firstfruits of that resurrection. The fact that He is resurrected, of course, proves to us that we too will experience resurrection.

That is what Romans 4:25 stresses: "He who was delivered up because of our transgressions." Christ was put on the cross because of our sins, and He was raised because of our justification. If we had not been justified in the eyes of God, and if the death of Christ had not satisfied the covering of our sins, He would never been raised from the dead. What that person Romans is telling you is that He died because of our sins, and when He was raised to life, it was the evidence of God the Father was satisfied; His justice had been met; and, now He could send people to heaven.

So, because Christ is raised, we, in our humanity, also will be raised. He is the firstfruits. As the firstfruits of the resurrection of believers, He is a token, first of all, of many more who are to be raised. He is just the first one. Furthermore, He is a sample of the kind of glorified bodies that they will be raised in: free from the sin nature; and, free from death. This was the meaning of the sacrifice of the firstfruits in the Old Testament. When a farmer brought a portion of his grain, before he cut anything in the field, he cut this swath out and brought it to the priest at the temple. The priest then held it up and waved it before God. It was a wave offering. It testified that there was more to come from the field, and that what came would be exactly like this sample. That's what it means when it says "Christ, the firstfruits."

A lot more of us are going to be raised to go to eternal life in heaven. More of us will be occupying the heaven that He occupies. And we will be there in the same glorified bodies that He has. We will have no more defects; no more illness; and, no more breakdowns. Everything will be corrected. Everything will be brought back in order. All those little aborted babies will be brought into their physical bodies, into a state of maturity. All of those children who never grew up will be moving on into the prime of life (adulthood). Everything will be restored once more in the pattern of Jesus Christ. He's just the first in line. That is great and good news.

So, the units of the first resurrection begin with Jesus Christ. We have first battalion of the first resurrection (of the saved). And the first unit is Alpha Company. Alpha Company is Jesus Christ as the resurrection. That is the first that comes by the reviewing stand. As you know, in the military service, when you have a parade, and you go by the reviewing stand, the reviewing officer is on the stand. As the unit comes by, the soldier who is carrying the guidon lowers it, and the officer in charge commands, "Eyes right." And all units turn right. He salutes, and they march past the reviewing stand. And the officer on the stand returns a salute: "Eyes front." And they go on. The next unit comes along, and in the same way, performs that ritual.

So, first has come Jesus Christ. He has gone by the reviewing stand where God the Father has been pleased to reveal what His Son has done. He is Alpha Company of the first resurrection battalion.

It is possible that the saints who were raised at the crucifixion of Christ may be a token handful that God threw out there of what is going to come later along with Christ. They're not the firstfruits, but they are a token of what is going to follow. They really belong in the second unit, or maybe at the end of that first Alpha Company.

**Matthew 27:50-53**

If you're still in Matthew 27:50-53, I'll show you what we're talking about: "Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His Spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." You notices that His physical death was required as the final provision for sin. It isn't that He just died spiritually. He also had to die physically to cover our sins. And it was at that moment that God ripped the temple curtain open, so now (of all things) it that was open to public view: the holy of holies, which nobody could look upon previously without dying.

Now the temple veil is torn to the holy of holies: "The earth shook; the rocks were split; and, the tombs were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised." But notice verse 53: "Coming out of the tombs after His resurrection. Then they entered the holy city, and appeared to many. They were not raised while Christ was dead. Their graves were open. That was scary enough. People could look in there, and they could see the bodies wrapped in those cloths, maybe in certain kinds of coffin containers. And the graves were opened. Then on resurrection day, out of those graves come a handful of believers who are born again, and who probably were taken to heaven at a subsequent time.

That's all conjecture. We don't know. It is also possible that those people were raised after Christ, and then they died again, and went back into the grave. But in any case, the main element of Alpha Company is Jesus Christ.

Then a second unit comes by the reviewing stand. This is Bravo Company (using the military phonetic terminology). In Bravo Company, we have the church believers. 1 Corinthians 15:23: "But each, in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; then, those who were His at His coming (the believers of the church age). This is the age in which you and I now live. It is the age from Pentecost to the rapture of the church. It's a long period of time before the next company passes in review after Alpha Company. Alpha Company has passed in review: Christ, the firstfruits; and, possibly those believers raised at His resurrection. 2,000 years has passed, and the second company has not yet come past the reviewing stand. But it is getting very, very near now, I can assure you. God is now forming this Bravo Company Himself, of those who believe in Christ for their salvation on a free grace gift.

Now, only God knows when He will have this company ready to be read in review in the first resurrection battalion. They will move out at the rapture. The dead in Christ will be raised, and they will be joined by the living believers, and they will both meet the Lord in the air. That's the great passage in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. That passage is a big problem area to the amillennials who don't quite know what to do with it, with their theory of a single universal judgment day, because this is a very distinct kind of resurrection: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. The dead in Christ arise."

Please remember that in the Bible, the term "dead in Christ" is a technical term used only of Christians. It is never used of tribulation saints. It is never used of Old Testament saints. So, we're talking clearly about the church here: "The dead in Christ shall rise first, then we who are alive (we Christians who are alive at the time of the rapture) and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

The problem is that if you're going to have a resurrection day of saved and unsaved, then Jesus Christ has to come down to this earth. But this passage says, "We meet Him in the air."

John 14:6 tells us that He takes us from the air into heaven to those apartments (those mansions) that He has prepared for us.

So, this is clearly a distinct phase of the resurrection. It's the Bravo Company's resurrection day of meeting the Lord in the air. It includes all believers of the church, and it will, of course, include every one of you. Every Christian at this time will receive a resurrection body. That means that it will be free of the nature. It will be perfect in the pattern of the body of Christ. You cannot have fellowship with God in the present body that you have. You must have a resurrected body that is free of the sin nature – the glorified body that Christ has.

Please notice in 1 Corinthians 15:50: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold. I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep. (Not all Christians will die before the rapture), but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality."

The word "perishable" here the Greek means "corruptible." The body of the dead believer is corruptible. It decays once it is put in the grave. The word "imperishable" means "incorruptible." That is the resurrection body of the believer.

So, the mystery that he reveals is that not everybody is going to die before the return of Christ, but that in the sudden twinkling of an eye (a moment), the dead will be raised, and they will be raised from their perishable corruptible state to the imperishable, incorruptible state. We will be changed. And that mortal (which is Christians who are living at the rapture) will put on immortality. They will get a resurrection body as well.

I think that this is probably the most exciting company in this parade. This is the most exciting company to be a part of. In Philippians 3:11, the apostle Paul says, "In order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead." And what he is referring to is the out-resurrection from the dead. This is the resurrection from that graveyard that leaves all the unsaved dead before. But He comes up as one of the saved ones here to become part of Bravo Company in this parade before God the Father.

Because you are in Christ, you will be part of this company. This happened because you were placed in Christ by an act of God the Holy Spirit at the point of your salvation. We find this in 1 Corinthians 12:13: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body (that is, the body of Christ), whether Jews or Greeks; whether slaves or free. And we were all made to drink of one Spirit;" that is, to be indwelt by one Holy Spirit.

So, that's why we say the technical term "in Christ" refers only to Christians. Without a changed body through resurrection, you can have no eternal relationship with Christ. And only those who possess glorified bodies, which are not subject to death, can earn a throne to be a ruler in the kingdom.

Some of you are the administrative type. Some of you are leader types. You like to be out there in front conducting things. If you want to do that in the Millennial Kingdom, you better evaluate all those things that we have talked about in the last three or four sessions, that constitute qualifying for a throne. It will be the most important thing you've ever done with your life.

Following other company comes another group of believers in this parade before God the Father. Here comes Charlie Company. Charlie Company is made up of Old Testament and tribulation saints. Everything in the Bible separates what applies to Christians from that which applies to the Jews. Therefore, it is clear by a logical inference that Old Testament and tribulation saints are not part of our resurrection. They are not part of the church resurrection. The church is a unique, distinct special group. It is closer to the heart of Jesus Christ than any other group of believers. Their resurrection is part of Bravo Company only.

Charlie Company now comes along, and that includes the Old Testament promise to the saints of the Old Testament. That would include the martyred modern tribulation saints, because that is Old Testament ground again. They will be raised. We have this in one place, for example, in Isaiah 26:19-21. God says to the Jewish people, "But your dead will live. Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust awake and shout for joy. For your dew is as the dew of the dawn. This is a refreshing coming back to life like the dew refreshes the vegetation upon which it falls: "And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits. Come, My people. Enter into your rooms, and close your doors behind you. Hide for a little while until indignation runs its course. For, behold, the Lord is about to come out from His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. And the earth will reveal her bloodshed, and will no longer cover for her slain."

**Aborted Babies**

One of the things that angers God, above all else, is the shedding of innocent blood. Can you imagine what God's feeling is toward the United States, with the multiplied millions upon millions of children we have slaughtered (we have murdered) by the practice of abortion, because of the decision of a group of evil men on the Supreme Court? The blood of these children cries out to the living God for vengeance, and it's coming. It's coming. We now have a government in the United States that is devoted to everything that is abominable; everything that is anti-God; and, everything that is anti-Scripture, and it makes no bones about it. The things of shame are publicly discussed and are publicly honored. God says, "The time is going to come. Christians, hang in there." That's what He means: "Go into your rooms; close your doors behind you; and, hide for a little while until the indignation runs its course, because believers are hated. Those who are the people of God are despised in our society today. They're the ones who are made fun of. They're the ones who are treated like the garbage pile.

But God, the Lord, is going to wreak His vengeance. So, the happy word here to the Jewish people is: "You're going to go through some tough times, but those of you who are trusting in the coming Messiah Savior are going to be raised to life.

Ephesians 4:8-10 tell us that when Jesus Christ was in Hades, upon His resurrection, He returned the believers who were in Hades to heaven at that time. Before that, they were in the saved compartment of Hades, which is called Abraham's Bosom, or Paradise. This Charlie Company may also include the two witnesses of the Revelation which are raised to life, so they probably belong to Charlie Company in this parade.

We know that the Charlie Company resurrection comes seven years after Bravo Company, each in his own order (1 Corinthians 15:23). This is the tribulation period of God's timetable. Jesus Christ returns to earth after the tribulation to rule for 1,000 years. The Old Testament and the tribulation saints are raised at Christ's return to this earth. When He comes at the Second Coming, that's when these people are raised. As I say, this is a logical conclusion. Their resurrection is separate from ours.

Finally, there's a fourth company of the first battalion, and that is Delta Company. Delta Company are the millennial saints who died. While people will live to be hundreds of years old during the millennium: some of them born in the millennium; and, some of them coming out of the tribulation), yet some will die. Some will die as a judgment of God, but others will die just as the normal course of the progression of their lives. But these who die during the millennium, we will conclude, will be raised to life at the end of the millennium. And that forms Delta Company.

So, the point is this: These four companies make up the first resurrection battalion spoken of in Revelation 20. This first resurrection battalion is made up of these four companies. If you, as a Christian, die, your body is asleep in the grave, awaiting the rapture. Knowing and believing in the resurrection gives us a right attitude toward death. Death is a sad moment, but it is encased in eternal joy. That's why these resurrection doctrines are so important for us to understand. You have a place in this parade. It is inevitable. You will be raised. There's no question about it.

**The Joy of Death**

That is why, at the moment of death, when it enters our experience, we have to stress the joy. The joy has to be stressed. The sadness is there on the human level, but there's no sadness for the person who has died. The joy that is to follow for all of us is inevitable. Knowing and believing the doctrine of the resurrections is so important.

What happens is that you will be unafraid to die. You won't be eager to do so, but you will not be fearful of this enemy. You will know that it means turning in an old body for a new model at the resurrection. I don't think I need to ask for a raising of hands of those of you who would like to turn in the old body for a new one. I know that everyone who was in summer camp is ready for a new model. But I'm happy to say that in your future – a new model for the old one.

**The Second Resurrection**

Then we come to what is not so happy. The parade continues, and along comes second battalion. Second battalion is the second resurrection. Second battalion is made up of unbelievers only. This includes all of humanity, which is not in the first resurrection, and the various companies of unbelievers through the ages, as they are in the group of Jews or of gentiles. As they march past, they are raised in these bodies that were given to them at birth. Everybody who is an unbeliever (since Adam) will march in the second battalion. It is probably doubtful that Adolph Hitler will be in the first battalion resurrection. He'll be in the second battalion resurrection. The irony of that is that all those multiplied millions of Jews that he slaughtered, who rejected Jesus Christ just like he did, are going to be marching with him in the second battalion. How's that for irony? How's that for a sense of the justice of God? The people who suffered such terrible things at Hitler's hand didn't realize that the worst suffering was yet ahead for them. The worst suffering that a person can experience is to find himself in the second battalion resurrection.

They pass in review at the end of the millennium, as Revelation 20:5 tells us. This second battalion is the one that is the battalion that is referred to in John 5:29 as "unto condemnation." And they are sentenced to eternal punishment. The basis of their condemnation is the fact that they rejected faith in Jesus Christ as the bearer of their sins.

John 3:18 puts it this way: "He who believes in Him (in Christ) is not judged. But he believes has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He who believes in Christ is not judged. He believes that He died, and that He paid for your sins, and God the Father is satisfied. If you believe that, you will never be judged. You will not be perfect. You will commit sin, but you will be never be judged relative to your eternal destiny. But the person who does not believe – he's already judged. He's here in the second battalion. But those of us who are saved are always up there in first battalion.

The basis of the condemnation if that they rejected Christ. And they are assigned to this battalion because they called God a liar. When it came to this issue of humans and salvation, they called God a liar. 1 John 5:9: "If we received the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. For the witness of God is this: that He has borne witness concerning His Son. The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself. The one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness of God which He has borne concerning His Son."

This is very clear that when God the Father says, "Believe in My Son (accept Him as your Savior), and I'll take you to heaven, and I'll give you God the Holy Spirit, who will give you peace within your heart," and tell you, "Yep, that's true." You will know that your destiny is heaven, because you're accepting a gift from God, and not offering some work that you hope will be accepted.

**Free Grace Salvation**

Verse 11 says, "And the witness is this: that God has given us eternal life, and His life is in His Son." The Bible teaches only one kind of salvation. It is called free grace salvation.

**Lordship**

The Bible never teaches lordship salvation – that if you behave yourself, you will go to heaven. That's a terrible, terrible distortion.

Verse 12 says, "He who has the Son has the life. He who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

So, these people are in the second battalion because of their rejection of Christ as Savior. Their final judgment is one that we will look at in more detail coming up here in Revelation 20:11-15 shortly.

When Phil Donahue, on one program that I mentioned to you, talked about everybody standing before God someday day, he was speaking indeed of a biblical concept. But he also said that God is going to walk in; look all of humanity over; and say, "Ah, come on in. Open the doors to heaven." He is saying that as if God were just going to forget it all, and violate His justice. That was a horrible thing for him to say on the air, because there are millions of foolish people who believe that. What is going to happen is that that crowd is going to stand there. And finally, the great curtain will open. And there will be the throne. And this time, Christ is seated upon that throne, looking down upon this mass of unsaved humanity.

**The Great White Throne**

Revelation 20:11: "And 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." Everything having to do with this life just scoots, as this brilliant, glowing great white upon which Christ is seated: "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and the 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."

These books are opened, and they say, "God, here are my good works." And there are the good works, and there are the good works. But is it all created by the sin nature. Therefore, it's a *human* good work, and that's held against you: "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." Do you want to stand before God on your good works? Fine. If you do, you'll stand before the great white throne. That's where it's going to get you: "And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death" – the lake of fire: "And if anyone's name was not found written in that other book (the Lamb's book of life), he was thrown into the lake of fire."

The Bible makes no bones about the fact that there is a destiny for the second battalion, which is called the second death – eternal separation from God. And at the great white throne, it all comes out in the open. People will see that they are not good enough, and people will discover that they must now pay the price of having to refuse Christ who was good enough to cover their sins. And they must enter the lake of fire where forever they will be in pain.

There is no need for anyone to march in the second battalion of doom. The Bible is explicit on the fact: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31). This second battalion marches in review in the second resurrection – the lost of all ages.

So, like the apostle Paul says, "We beseech you." All of you here today are mostly believers, and all those of you who will hear this tape later, we do beseech – that you consider the tragedy of marching in the second battalion of the second resurrection. Romans 10:13 says, "For whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." Trust in Christ. Accept Him as your Savior.

**The Effects of the First Resurrection**

In Revelation 20:6, we have to the effects of the first resurrection.

1. **Euphoric Joy**

First of all, he says, "Blessed." This is the same word that we find in Matthew in the so-called Beatitudes. It's the Greek word "makarios" "Makarios" is a word that indicates happiness. And sometimes it is translated as "happy." It indicates the condition of happiness of the first resurrection. It is an experience of euphoric joy which drives out all the memory of the pain of dying, and all the memories that have been associated with people who have died that have been dear to you. You're never even going to remember it, because you're going to be in a state of "makarios" (euphoric joy).

1. **Holy**

Secondly, the people are the first resurrection are described as being "hagios," which means "holy." Holiness means that they possess absolute righteousness, and they possess the perfect justice of God. That's what makes a holy person. You have God's absolute righteousness, and God's justice against your sin has been satisfied. Possessing the righteousness and the justice of God makes you a holy person. You will have total freedom, then, from sin and death, and this too is the work of God's grace.

So: "Euphorically happy, and absolutely free of any moral guilt (holy) is the one who has a part in the first resurrection. There again we have this Greek word for resurrection. I want to stress it again, so that you don't fall into the trap of thinking that that has to do with spiritual regeneration. It is the Greek word "anastasis." That's the word in the Greek for "resurrection," and it always refers to physical bodily resurrection, never to spiritual regeneration. It always refers to a dead body being brought back to life.

This blessed and holy condition is the future of every saved person – to be raised to life in the first resurrection. You and I cannot begin to enter into the meaning of the joy of being separated from evil. This is what we've lived with all our lives. We cannot imagine what it will be – the euphoric joy that overwhelm us when we are a holy people. We get a little sense of it when we walk with God; when we're obedient to the Spirit of God; and, when we function on doctrine. We do get a sense of the euphoric joy of the holy God that works in us. But to be free of sin, that is going to be an experience.

We should remember that this is our future someday: joy beyond our fondest comprehension; and, to be absolutely perfect in every way. If we will remember that that is our future, we might live a little differently now. We might live compatible to our destiny. We'd be looking to eternity. As much as I know about the nature of man (and I know a lot), it still appalls me when it breaks out. I still have a problem comprehending why anybody would operate on the sin nature by deliberate choice. We are victims from time to time such that we are just overwhelmed, but by deliberate choice? As a Christian, this is my destiny. My destiny is to be absolutely euphoric with happiness, and to be as perfect as God. Why do I want to act like a pig now?

That is the power of the person who does not stay in temporal fellowship. That is the power of the sin nature of the person who does not keep these seats warm during the services when we are open for instruction. That's what makes the difference.

**Death and Hades**

"Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection." And here comes the believer's freedom. "Over these, the second death has no power. We read in Revelation 20:4 a moment ago: "And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death: the lake of fire. There is the interpretation. In Revelation 20:14, the interpretation of the term "second death" is the lake of fire. And for those who are in the first resurrection, the second death has no power over you.

**The Security of the Believer**

Here again, we have a statement of the security of the believer. You can never lose your salvation. The second death, which is spending eternity in the lake of fire, is never a threat to you.

**Death is Separation**

Death basically is separation. When you think about the word "death," think about the word "separation." The first step is the separation of the soul and the spirit from the body. The second death is the separation forever from God in the lake of fire. That is a terrible separation indeed. The second death will be the lot of all unsaved people. It is imposed at the second resurrection. At the second resurrection, the unsaved stand before the great white throne, and they see that they are doomed to judgment. And I'll tell you one thing: there's not going to be a lot of murmuring and talking at that great white throne judgment.

The book of Romans tells us that God has so dealt with the issue of sin that every man's guilt will be so evidenced such that all mouths will be closed. It's going to be an eerie sight to see billions of human beings standing there before God, and not a rustle of a voice whispering or saying anything, because they all know that their doom is coming in. And the fear is mounting by the second, instead of the euphoric joy as for those in the first resurrection.

This terrible condition follows the great white throne judgment. And the second resurrection of the separation from God (the lake of fire) is imposed.

**Assurance of Salvation**

So, over these in the first resurrection, the second death has no power. The word "power" is the Greek word "exousia," and that means "authority." For the believer, there can never again be the threat of the second death in hell. Here again is assurance of salvation. Death can never have authority over you again. The second death (the threat of being in hell) can never be a threat to you again. It has no authority over you. But instead, in the case of the unsaved, they are irrevocably and fully under the control of the second death destiny.

**A Kingdom of Priests**

On the other hand, for those of you who are part of that first resurrection (in your particular company in that first resurrection battalion), God says that He has this in store for you: You're going to be His priest. That means that you will be a representative of God and of Christ in the Millennial Kingdom – to be a priest in millennial society under the High Priest Jesus Christ.

At the very beginning of the book of Revelation, we were told about that. Revelation 1:6: "He has made us to be a kingdom of priests to his God and Father." We are going to be a kingdom of priests. The first resurrection saints are going to serve as the spiritual leaders of the kingdom. The first resurrection saints are going to serve as the spiritual leaders in the Millennial Kingdom. You are going to be the people whose words will be listened to, and whose words will be significant.

Then comes this word: "And priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign ('basileuo')." "Basileuo" means to have a throne with royal authority over a certain realm. This is in the future tense. This is future, for some of you. Some of you who prove worth; some of you who invest your life in such a way that it counts for the fulfilling of your mission. You have not frittered away your time. You have not starved yourself spiritually. You have not chewed on the corn husks, but you went to the kernel of the meat of the Word of God where you were instructed.

**Civil Rulers**

The result will be that you'll be part of a glorious body of believers who are given a throne and a realm of authority. And you will, in effect, be the civil rulers of the Millennial Kingdom. And those parables that we looked at in detail demonstrated just that. We will be the civil rulers under Christ in His world government. There will be a hierarchy of authority among believers: a hierarchy in civil authority; and, a hierarchy in religious authority. But you will be the priests of God in that kingdom, and you will be those who run the government with Him. And it tells specifically for 1,000 years.

God's saints will be the spiritual leaders who will be setting the standards of the kingdom society. They will be the opinion-makers. Oh my. What is Jennings going to do? What is Donahue going to do? What is Brokaw going to do? All these people appear every night with their heads, and then they begin talking, and these talking heads convey all kinds of human viewpoint falsehoods to us. And we listen, and we accept it, and we take it on ourselves. They are the opinion-makers.

Can you imagine (can you conceive for one moment) that Bob Short will be there as the opinion-maker of the world? He will be speaking, and they will be hanging on his every word – let alone Bonnie McSwain. These people will be the all-time greats in the kingdom of God. You got it? That's what we're talking about here. We are not going to be rinky-tink people anymore. We will be the authorities because we're part of the first resurrection battalion. And we will reign. We will exercise that authority. God's saints will run the government, and Christ will conduct it in such a way that everybody's freedom is preserved. God's saints will be the spiritual leaders who will set the standards. For 1,000 years, between the first and second resurrection, man will have his golden age. He is trying to create it now without Christ. But it's a bust. Then there will be a golden age.

So, when you get down in the mouth; when you're blue; when you're worn out; when you're tired; and, when you wonder what you should do next – whether you go on doing the things of the Lord, or whether you should just chuck it all, please remember your future. You have a high and noble calling. You are going to be the spiritual leaders of this whole world. You are going to be the civil authorities for this whole world. You are going to be the people who are on the inside. But how far on the inside? That depends on how well you have been taught in the Word of God, and how well you have responded to what you have learned, and how sensitive you are then to the leading of the Holy Spirit and to all the things that constitute godly living. Godliness is the answer to it all. God will reward according to your faithfulness. That's all He asks of us as stewards: "Just don't fritter away your time. Don't fritter away the gift I've given you. Don't fritter away your money. Don't fritter away your physical capacity. Use it where it counts – for eternity. The result will be euphoria for you and an eternity of great peace.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1993

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