

Fundamentals of Belief #19B: The Order of the Resurrections

Edited Sermon Transcript
Jon W. Brisby; 8-31-2002

We're going to continue this series on the Fundamentals of Belief of the Church of God, The Eternal. Today, we hope to finish fundamental number nineteen which we began last time concerning the resurrections of the dead. Last time we saw that it is by means of the resurrection that God is going to save humanity, and that man does not currently have an immortal soul. God created us flesh and blood. Immortality, eternal life, is a gift which is given by God only to those who prove and will prove over the course of their opportunity of understanding the Truth, that they will love and respect God, desire to obey Him and be willing to make the sacrifices necessary to put Him first. Those are the only ones who are going to receive the gift of eternal life.

The concepts of the world and all of these worldly religions, which we understand to be false, have some element of a belief that man already possesses an immortal soul. That is the thing that separates us from the world, and that is why, regardless of anything else, we could never fit in and be accepted by any of them. If you reject a belief that man already has an immortal soul, you separate yourself, by that one doctrine, from the majority of those worldly religions. The reality of a resurrection of the dead is a concept that Satan has worked diligently to hide from the minds, the understanding, of humankind. He does not want humankind to understand why they are put on this earth, what their real purpose is, and how God is going to carry forward and fulfill His Master Plan for the salvation of mankind. He has absolutely hidden that knowledge from the world. And so, you understand that flesh and blood can never inherit the Kingdom. There has to be a miraculous change, a birth that happens of Spirit, before a human being will ever fulfill their purpose in life and receive that salvation in the Kingdom of God.

We went through and looked at that overall plan—that it is through the resurrection of the dead. We also noted the different classifications of people that God is now dealing with and will be dealing with in the future. If we understand the

distinctions in the groups of people that God is dealing with in His plan, then we set the stage to understand the timeline of how the resurrection process is going to be carried out. We did that for a reason last time.

Let's read again fundamental number nineteen of Church of God, The Eternal, which is a direct quote from the original fundamentals that Mr. Armstrong wrote decades ago:

We believe the only hope of eternal life for mortal man lies in the resurrection; thru the indwelling (now) of the Holy Spirit; and that there shall be a bodily resurrection of the just and unjust—the just to eternal life as spirit beings upon earth, the unjust to receive the second and final death in hell (Gehenna) fire in which they shall perish in eternal punishment.

That is the fundamental of belief as it is worded in the statement. So now, we've seen that life eternal comes only through the resurrection of the dead, and we have identified the classifications of those who will be involved in a resurrection process. What were they? The firstfruits are those whom God has called out with a special calling now, or in previous generations, to understand and be responsible and accountable for that Way of Life. These are those denoted by the firstfruits, the picture of that smaller spring harvest that we note in the keeping of Pentecost every year. Christ is the first of the firstfruits, but all of those who are called now and given that responsibility, their one opportunity for salvation, are a part of that firstfruits harvest. They are going to be involved in a resurrection of some kind. We're going to find out today where, when, and how that's going to be fulfilled.

Then we have a different classification—classification number two. Actually, we talked about number two being those who live into and are born in the Millennium. We're not going to say nearly as much about those, because we will cover more on that at the Feast of Tabernacles this year. And also, God gives us very little information to understand exactly how eternal life will be imparted to those who are born in the thousand-year reign of Christ. We simply don't know. Will they live out a normal seventy to one hundred-year lifespan, and then if they're successful with the fruits of their life, be changed in a twinkling of an eye and made immortal all through the course of this thousand-year period; or will God handle that in a different way? Obviously, there are innumerable ways that God, in His

perfect wisdom, could handle that. The most creative of human minds could spend all of their time trying to figure it out and maybe not even touch on the perfect plan that God has in mind for that. We'll talk about a couple of potential aspects of that at the Feast of Tabernacles. So, the second classification are these who are not given a chance to understand the Truth today, but they are going to live in the flesh through the horrendous circumstances that are going to befall this earth in preparation for the return of Jesus Christ. They are going to be the first inhabitants under the very rule of Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And so, they are going to be given an opportunity for the process of conversion and salvation.

The third classification is all of those who lived and died at some time in the last 6,000 years from the time of Adam and Eve, and never had a knowledge of God's Truth at all. In that classification, we're talking about billions. We're talking about a huge classification of people. God has to have a plan for them in which He is going to bring forward and provide a calling and an opportunity for qualification for salvation for this group of people. How is He going to do it? Where does it fit into the overall plan? That, we're going to see.

What was the fourth classification of people involved in God's plan? They are those who had their opportunity and failed. They had their one chance, either in a past generation, the current generation, during the thousand-year reign of Christ, or after the thousand years. All of those who have their chance and fail, is a classification of people that God also has to deal with. They are also involved in a resurrection process.

That's four classifications of people, and they have very unique circumstances related to them, which means that the idea that God can handle or has chosen to handle all of those at one time, in one place, just doesn't make sense. When you understand that these people are very unique by virtue of what God has given to them or not given to them, and the timing of when He gives it to them, obviously, then, He must have a different plan for their process of salvation. That is what we learned for years within the Church, and we called it the differing times of salvation. There is not a single time of salvation; there are many times of salvation, according to the calling and the gifts of God for these different and separate classifications of people.

So, today, we want to see the order of the resurrection process which accommodates all of these different classifications throughout man's history. What is the order? Well, let's begin in 1 Corinthians 15—the resurrection chapter. We're going to read something concerning the first resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 19: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"—one of the classic statements by Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, which answers the question of those who say, "Well, is it really right for me to want to obey God just because I'm looking forward to getting a reward later on? Shouldn't I want to obey God just for its own sake, because I love Him? Even if I don't get any reward in the future, shouldn't I want to just simply love God in this lifetime, for the sake of proving that I have a right orientation of mind without the expectation of a reward?" I know that can certainly be a common question because I've heard it from a number of individuals, and some who are new to the Truth have asked the question very legitimately. And yet, this is one of the classic statements, here in the resurrection chapter, which certifies that God created man with the hope, and wanted us to have the hope, of something much greater than just this life. That is why he said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ . . ." If all of our hope is tied up into just being good Christians today, living out the rest of our few short years that God has given to us right now, and then that's the end—we die, we're in the grave, and that's all she wrote—if that's all that God had in mind, it is God Himself who said, ". . . we are of all men most miserable."

Certainly, Jesus Christ knows that He created us for a totally different purpose—not just to live out these physical lives and be good Christians. No, our purpose, as I mentioned to you last time, is to qualify to be members of the God Family; and brethren, if we fail to achieve that end goal, we have failed our very reason for existence. If we are not resurrected and if we are not born into the very Family of God, our entire existence will have been futile. God did create us with the purpose of looking forward, and a part of the calling to the knowledge of His Truth is to be able to see the end result—the end that God has in mind, why you're here. If we have that kind of focus, that is what's going to help drive us and carry us through all of the difficulties and trials that many of us are already experiencing and, certainly, the things that are ahead before the return of Jesus Christ. If we don't have something in mind, brethren, that is worth that much to us—that pearl of great price—then it's very unlikely that any of us will be willing to make the ultimate sacrifice in the heat of battle. It is the knowledge of why you were born and what God has offered in the future that He wants us to focus on in order to give us the certitude in our purpose, in our determination to hold fast to the very end.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

It means that the very sacrifice of Christ was not just something for us today in the flesh. The very significance of His sacrifice—His death, burial and resurrection—is that it opens up an opportunity for us in the future which is beyond the wildest imagination of human beings.

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order . . .

And here comes the order, because this tells us that it's not a single moment of salvation for all humanity. There are different times in the plan of God for the salvation of each classification of those with whom He is dealing. "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." So, this begins to tell us about that first resurrection and when precisely that first opportunity for immortality will be experienced by humankind. In verse 24, it actually skips through to the very end because Paul doesn't make comments about everything that comes in between. We're going to see that in the book of Revelation in just a moment.

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

Then, continuing in verse 51: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." There are some who are going to be alive at the very return of Christ. When these events happen, they're not going to be dead in the grave; they're going to be alive. Their resurrection is not actually coming up out of the ground from a state of being dead, but they are going to be changed. And so it is considered a part of that same first resurrection.

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 [When is this going to happen?], at the last trump . . .

And so, we will go into this further on the Feast of Trumpets. We'll go through more of the details about this plan of Christ's literal return—all that is pictured by the very keeping of the Feast of Trumpets.

. . . for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

So, we are talking about a transition, a miracle, that is going to happen at that time pictured by the Feast of Trumpets. When Christ returns, those who are a part of the very Body of Christ in whom His Holy Spirit is dwelling and working, will be changed in a twinkling of an eye. Verse 54:

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

That's at the point when all of you—all of you who have been fighting so hard within your lives right now against your own carnal natures, against the temptations of a Devil who tries to trip us up at every turn of the road—will no longer be bullied and compelled by a carnal nature which seeks to derail you and pull you away from the perfect obedience to God's laws. That's the moment, brethren—this which Paul is describing here, when that change happens in the first resurrection. This is the moment—when you are changed into immortal beings—that you are going to have self-existent life. You're going to be an immortal, spirit being. You're going to be born into the very Family of God with all of the power and authority of that Family. And then, you're not going to have a natural, human, carnal nature. You're not going to be flesh and blood anymore. You're not going to have the pain, misery and difficulties we encounter in the flesh. Instead, you are going to have the perfect mind of that Father and that Elder Brother, Jesus Christ. Think about the glorious transition that's going to take place then, and what an incredible miracle that is going to be.

It's hard to go through these things year after year, brethren, and not have the tendency to think that it gets old and dull because you've read the scriptures so many times, but we're going to read them some more. We're going to read some of these same scriptures on the Feast of Trumpets, and you're going to read some of

them again during the Feast of Tabernacles and on the Last Great Day. That repetition is good, and it's for a reason. We're talking about the very circumstances that we all should be hoping for, regardless of what our problems are in life, regardless of the heartache, regardless of the physical setbacks, the disappointments, the fear, whatever it is that we have experienced in this life, the mistakes we have made—all of that, brethren, if we're successful in keeping our eyes focused on God and that plan—is going to be wiped away at the moment of this resurrection.

Jesus Christ has been the only one so far who has gone through this process of living in the flesh and being resurrected to immortal life. All of you have an opportunity now to be a part of the next group that will make that transition to follow Christ and join that very God Family. It is through the first resurrection that this occurs.

1 Thessalonians 4 and verse 13. Let's see some more details.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

Many of you have loved ones who are now peacefully sleeping in the grave, and those who were converted are awaiting their opportunity to hopefully be a part of that first resurrection.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

Christ set the example as the forerunner. He was dead in the grave three days and three nights. The very Savior of mankind was dead, no thought or activity in a brain and a mind. Think about what that must have been like for the very God who created the heavens and the earth and brought the first human man out of the dust and created a wife for him from which all humanity has been populated. That very God divested Himself of His divinity, His eternal life, and was born of a human mother. And when He was crucified and when He died on that stake, He became dead because He was wholly man. He did not have an immortal soul that wafted up to heaven back to His Father as soon as He died on

the stake. And I guess that's what most other religions would have us believe. Those that believe in the immortality of the soul must believe that Jesus Christ had an immortal soul. So why was it that He went through this process of dying, being in the grave three days and three nights, and having a resurrection if He already had an immortal soul that went straight up to heaven? It doesn't make any sense, does it?

No, brethren, your Savior and mine was dead, literally dead, three days and three nights—a full 72-hour period—in the grave. The very Creator God was dead. And as I've heard Mr. Raymond Cole say in years past, it was probably the darkest three days in the history of humanity—a 72-hour period in which your only link with the God Family was dead—because, remember, the Father has no interaction with rebellious humankind. Everything was done through the Mediator, who was God of the second part. That Being who dealt with all of the patriarchs of old was none other than that Being who became Jesus Christ. No man ever had any direct dealings with the Father, except through Christ, as you now have that ability through the Holy Spirit and through Jesus Christ as our High Priest; but until He qualified as High Priest and while He was dead in the grave, 72 hours, we had no Mediator with the Father. Man was absolutely cut off from God during that time—the darkest time in human history. Why was that done? Because Christ was the forerunner of something that pictures what each one of us has to look forward to. As He came up out of that grave 72 hours later on a Saturday night, right at sunset, He foreshadowed that which we have an opportunity to partake of—a transition of dying in the flesh to being raised as immortal beings, members of that Family. That's what we're here for, brethren.

Verse 15:

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep.

No, there are those who died in Christ and are in the grave, waiting for that time of resurrection, as well as those who will be alive, members of the Body of Christ, being led and motivated by the Holy Spirit, who will be alive at the time Christ returns. Paul explains that both of those are going to be a part of that first resurrection.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God [We're going to read this again on the Feast of Trumpets.]: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

The first thing that's going to happen is that those who have died, who are in their graves, waiting for that return of Jesus Christ, are going to be the first ones that come up out of those graves as immortal, spirit beings, even as Jesus Christ came up out of that grave as an immortal, spirit being again. Verse 17:

Then we which are alive [the ones who live to see the very coming of Jesus Christ] and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Those are going to be changed, as we already read in 1 Corinthians 15, in the twinkling of an eye, and rise as immortal beings with those immortal beings that came up out of the grave. That great army of the firstfruits harvest is going to meet Christ in the air.

Now let's turn to Revelation 20 and verse 1, and we see the synoptic picture of the order of those resurrections, beginning with that first resurrection.

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

So, we find that a critical part of the Master Plan involves Satan, as God is using him for His particular will and purpose—not as an antagonist to God, an equal, opposite, offsetting balance in some yin and yang relationship. Not at all. Satan definitely has been used by God as a part of His Master Plan for the purification of humankind in this overall plan for our birth into the Family of God. Even though Satan absolutely hates the plan of God and is trying everything he can

to destroy it, he doesn't realize, or maybe he does realize it, yet he can't help himself from continuing his nefarious ways, even though he's playing precisely into the very hands of God, being allowed to do only that which God permits him to accomplish. And so, for a thousand-year period of time during the reign of Jesus Christ, he's going to be bound and he's not going to be the god of this world anymore. He's not going to sit on that throne which God has allowed him to have for almost 6,000 years. He is going to be put out of the way, and he's not going to deceive any human being during that time. Then, for a particular purpose and reason of God, he is going to be released after that thousand-year period.

Verse 4:

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them [There's a judgment that's going on for someone. Who is being judged at this time?]: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Who is this speaking of? Those who were called out of the world and made a part of the firstfruits—those who were given an opportunity to receive the down payment of the Holy Spirit. These are the ones who have passed this period of judgment in their lives and resisted turning from God and worshiping Baal, becoming a part of this Babylonian system, and who did not accept that mark of the beast, which is compared to the unpardonable sin. The mark of the beast is something that causes us to reject God's laws, whatever that is. It's not as simplistic as many human beings want to make it. When we're talking about that mark, we are talking about something that causes us to reject the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is that which will absolutely cause us to fail in this judgment. But those who make it through these trials, this tribulation, the persecution, and who refuse to put themselves or any carnal, physical thing above their God and that Truth which they were taught, are the ones that are going to live and reign with Christ a thousand years during His Millennial government.

". . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." And now verse 5: "But the rest of the dead . . ."—those that are not a part of this

comparatively small first harvest group. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Here, we see that specific demarcation of this other classification of people—those who lived and died without saving knowledge. They're going to be talked about later.

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. [And then, the final statement:] This is the first resurrection.

The last statement is not referring to the first part of verse 5, but refers back to verse 4. The first sentence in verse 5 is a parenthetical statement. If you don't have it marked in parentheses, you can and should do so. This is an inset statement which is referring to that which is going to be talked about in verse 7 and beyond. The end of verse 5 is referring back to those who will live and reign with Christ a thousand years, who didn't accept the mark of the beast and who passed their time of judgment. "This is the first resurrection." Verse 6:

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

They're going to be reigning. They are going to be kings and priests, and the only ones who rule with those offices are part of the God Family. That's precisely who these are going to become. They're going to be part of the very Family government that is going to reign under the auspices of Jesus Christ over all of this earth. This is a resurrection to immortality. The first resurrection is a resurrection to immortality, even as Jesus Christ was resurrected to immortality.

The next resurrection that we're going to see is not a resurrection to immortality, but a resurrection to flesh and blood once again. This is not unique from the standpoint that God has resurrected human beings in the past. We know the stories of those in the Old Testament that God brought people back to life, even through the work of His holy prophets. We know that Jesus Christ Himself raised Lazarus from the dead after he was dead three or four days in the tomb. We also know that there was a magnificent resurrection to physical life that occurred at the very death of Jesus Christ when that great earthquake occurred and many in the graves came up out of the ground and stood on their feet and walked into the city. We know that those were resurrections to flesh and blood, not to immortality.

They were resurrected back to flesh and blood, and then, after some period of time, they obviously died again. And guess what? They're all back in the grave. That was a resurrection to flesh and blood, so there was a precedent that was set already. What is going to be different about that which we call the second resurrection? It's going to be the distinction in sheer numbers because you're not talking about just one or two or even a few hundred people being resurrected. We're talking about billions coming up out of the grave and standing on their feet at one time. It's just mind-boggling to think about it. And they're not going to be new human beings that were never created. It's not like God will create human beings all of a sudden that have never lived before. No, we're talking about people who have lived a lifetime before, and they're dead and have been in the grave over the last 6,000 years. All of these people now, the entire population of the world from every past generation for the last 6,000 years, are all going to stand on their feet at the same time on the face of the earth. How monumental is that?

Let's read the story. Verse 7: "And when the thousand years are expired . . ." The time setting is after that thousand-year reign of Christ, which we're going to picture very soon in the keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles. "And when the thousand years are expired . . ." They're ended. This resurrection doesn't happen until that thousand years are completed. And then, ". . . Satan shall be loosed out of his prison." This tells you he will be let loose for that little season.

And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

God is going to allow him to do his nefarious activity again. Why? To prove and to test those who are going to be a part of this second resurrection. I'm going to go through more of this in detail at the Feast and on the Last Great Day for that meat in due season, but just to give you a taste of it. The important thing to understand, brethren, is that these are people who have lived their lives under the influence of Satan before. This isn't going to be new to them. Having Satan loosed in the world is precisely what they're used to. That's going to feel normal and natural to them.

During the thousand-year reign of Christ, it's going to be a totally different environment. Those who are born in the Millennium will not experience the

influence of Satan the Devil during that thousand years; but for those who come up in the second resurrection, Satan is going to be loosed, and it's going to feel just like it always did before. The only difference is that they're going to be resurrected to a totally different earth. They're not going to be resurrected to an earth governed by Satan. He is not going to be the king of the earth as he is now. It's going to be Christ ruling as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and over that thousand-year period, this earth will have been remade into a perfect and glorious Garden of Eden—a perfectly run and managed society.

It will be an incredible shock for these who are going to stand on their feet for the first time, and they're going to say, "What happened? Look at what is around me." They're going to get to learn firsthand and compare what it's like to live according to the perfect laws of God in that perfect society that will have now been totally reformed over a thousand years. They're going to compare that with their past life in the world they lived in, whether it was in one of the first generations way back in antiquity or whether it was in the last days when they died. They're going to get to compare the stark reality of the difference between Satan's world and God's world. That is the time when they're all going to be called and given their opportunity to have that knowledge of God. Let's notice it. Verse 10:

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet [not are, but were cast], and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

When Satan's purpose is fulfilled, he is going to be symbolically cast into that lake of fire. The physical lake of fire does not hurt a spirit being, so he's not tormented by burning. A spirit being can't burn up. A spirit being can't feel pain the way you and I do in the flesh, so we're talking about a psychological torment by a being who is so rebellious and refuses to change, and he is basically the author of his own torment because he is so rebellious. God is not going to allow him to carry out his nefarious work any longer. Verse 11:

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened . . .

What books are these? The very books of the Holy Scripture that you have before you right now—the very Word of God that was preserved and carried forward all of these generations for our admonition in these last days. These very books of the Word of God, giving His perfect laws, statutes and judgments, are going to be opened for the first time to the understanding of all of these billions, and they, too, are going to be able to understand that which you have been given to know today. That's what it means by the books being opened. It means that their minds are opened for the first time to understand what's in the books. The Bible has been around and has been available for many of these people who were born in the last several centuries, so they had the Bible. They had access to it, but they didn't understand it. They couldn't comprehend it. This is the first time for all of them that those books will make sense. The Bible is going to be opened to them to understand, and they're going to be called and given their chance for salvation.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened [It means they're called and given a knowledge of the Truth for the first time.]: and another book was opened, which is the book of life . . .

It means God offers them salvation, even as you have your opportunity for salvation now. Why? Because God wrote your name in that very Book of Life from the foundation of the world. That's how long your name has been in there. God knew whom He was going to call as a part of the firstfruits harvest, and you, my dear brethren, had your name in that Book. God knew He was going to call you and give you this opportunity, and so your name has been in there a long time.

At this time, this great multitude, these billions, will stand up in the second resurrection, and they're going to have their names written in that same Book, which means that God is going to offer them salvation. And through a period of testing and proving, they're going to have a chance to keep their names in that Book if they make the right choices.

. . . the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Not according to their profession by mouth. Not because they say, "I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior." No, Christ is going to say, "Prove it. Prove to me that you love me more than anything else. Prove to me by the decisions that you make that there is not anything you love, respect or value more than to be a member of the God Family." Right now, He is saying, "Prove it," to you and me. That's what we're doing. We are living our time of salvation right now—our opportunity to qualify for that salvation. This is our judgment time, brethren. God is watching now. That judgment does take time because God has to be able to weigh and see the fruits. There is this idea that when Jesus Christ returns to become King—and I think this is still one of those tricky false concepts that we can very easily get stuck in our heads—then He is going to have a judgment. And we're going to stand before a court where evidence is going to be weighed, and then God is going to determine, "Okay, either you make it or you don't." Not at all. For you and me, the judgment is going on right now. We're going to see that.

1 Peter 4:17. Let's turn to it.

For the time is come [That means now.] that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

We're in that judgment period. It's not a judgment day, brethren. It's a judgment period. This is the time of judgment for the firstfruits—those alive in this age who have been given that Truth and that opportunity. We are being judged now by the level of overcoming that we are accomplishing in our lives because when Christ returns, the opportunity is over. The only thing left at that point is the final verdict. You understand that by understanding the way our court system works. There is a period of time that's used for the judgment, which is the hearing of evidence. The prosecution gets up, and they make their case of why the defendant is guilty. Depending on how big the case is and how detailed and complex it is, it might take weeks or even months to complete a trial. The defense gets up and gives all of their evidence to try and convince a jury of why their client is innocent. In the final analysis, either a jury or the judge makes the decision. That's the verdict process. That's where, having weighed all of the evidence, pro and con, the decision is made, innocent or guilty.

That's the only thing left to do when Christ returns. The judgment is going on right now for the firstfruits. When Christ comes back, the verdict is going to be announced. Those that are changed in the twinkling of an eye will have received their verdict. If you're changed in the twinkling of an eye, it means you've already been judged worthy of eternal life; and those that are in the grave, who are going to receive immortality, will have been judged at that moment to be worthy of eternal life.

And so, those that are a part of the second resurrection are also going to have a time period. This White Throne Judgment is a judgment period, not a judgment day, but a period of time in which they are also going to have to certify their character through works.

The firstfruits are being judged now. That judgment covers a period of time, and by the time Christ returns, all evidence for us will have been introduced and weighed. Only the verdict will be left to complete.

Notice again 1 Thessalonians 4:16:

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

God is not going to change us and give us immortality if we haven't already been judged worthy of salvation. The fact that we're changed and we rise to meet Christ in the air means that judgment is over. There is no more opportunity. Our time is going to be up until that very return of Jesus Christ, which is why, brethren, if you read the story thread through the Book of Revelation, the seven seals that Christ is going to carry out and the warning that is going to happen to this earth, it makes perfect sense. It shows you, time after time, by plague after plague, by circumstance after circumstance, by warning after warning, that God is going to give every opportunity for those whom He has called to repent and turn back to Him and make their robes white. Just read it from that context and look at the number of signs, miracles and warning witnesses there will be—whether by the two witnesses or by an angel who's going to stand with one foot on the land and one

foot on the sea. God is speaking; He's going to be crying out, in essence, to humankind, "Pay attention to what I'm telling you. I'm bringing these things to pass. The end is near. Christ is about to take possession of the Kingdom and if you wait that long, you've waited too long." It's too late for the firstfruits, if you wait until the moment of His return.

For the deceived masses of the world, with whom He's not dealing now, they have their opportunity in the future; but for the firstfruits, those are the last warnings they're going to get. We also take comfort in knowing that there are thousands who are going to make their robes white, even through tribulation. They are going to turn back to God. But for those who refuse to repent, who grit their teeth and set their jaw at the appearing of Jesus Christ, their opportunity is over. That's all she wrote. There will be no more second chances. God will have given every opportunity, everything that He can do, to give them a chance to make the right choice. Brethren, we can save ourselves a lot of problems, heartache and misery if we're willing to submit now. If we're willing to take the bull by the horns and take responsibility for these spiritual lives, and get on the stick and start applying ourselves in those things that are most important, how much we can save ourselves between now and then.

So, as the firstfruits are being judged during the course of our lifetimes right now, there will also be a period after the Millennium in which those of the second resurrection will be judged. How long is that period going to be? Years ago, one evangelist speculated that it was going to be a 100-year period, referring to Isaiah 65:19–22, which we won't take time to turn to. I'll go through that one on the Last Great Day. But we don't know for sure precisely how long that judgment period for those of the second resurrection is going to be. It might be a 100-year period. It might be 50, 70, or 120 years, but it's very logical and certainly fits with what we know that it could be a 100-year period. They will have to live again in the flesh as they did the first time, only this time with the revelation of Jesus Christ. They will be tempted by Satan because God is going to let Satan loose during this period. So, they will be dogged by Satan who will be trying to deceive them, just as he did in their first lives, yet now they're going to have the power to fight. For the first time, they're going to have the Holy Spirit like you have now, and they're going to have their opportunity to prove through that number of years, however long it is, whether or not they're going to put God first, now that they've been given their opportunity. Those who arrive at the end of that judgment period and make the

right choices are also going to be born into the very Family of God. They're going to be changed and made immortal.

Now, what about the third resurrection? As we went through last time, Mr. Armstrong taught that there would be a third or a final resurrection of the incorrigible and that it is a resurrection which is very separate and distinct from the first and second resurrections. I went through and showed you some of the articles of former members who proclaim their scholarly abilities and take exception with what Mr. Armstrong first taught us. They try to make Mr. Armstrong look like an idiot or a fool by saying that the Bible nowhere shows three resurrections. The Bible only shows two resurrections, so they claim; and so, the clear teaching of the Bible is that there are only two resurrections.

If you understand what I've given you in the last two sermons concerning these classifications of people that God is dealing with, it helps answer the fact that God needs another resurrection, the way that He has designed the plan, in order to bring this entire plan to a completion. We've already read about the second death. If those who fail are going to suffer a second death, how can that be possible unless they are resurrected? What if there have been (and I'm sure there have been, hopefully very few) those who had their opportunity in past generations, either at the time of the original apostles in the first century, or today—those who were called, who were members of the Church, who accepted that Way of Life—but who turned from it and died in absolute, utter rebellion against God? If there is no third resurrection, when are they going to come up? Well, these other people will say, "No, they're not going to come up. God is just going to leave them in the grave, and they're not going to be resurrected. They're going to stay dead." Well, if that's true, then they've only died one time. They have not suffered the second death. There is no second death for them unless they are first brought back to physical life in the flesh and sentenced to pay the death penalty. There is no such thing as a second death for them if they're not resurrected.

And so, they will argue, "Well, see, they will come up at the time of the second resurrection." But does that make sense? What's the difference between these two classifications of people? The one, all those billions that never understood the Truth before, are not ready to be judged. Are they ready, when they're resurrected, to have a sentence passed on them? Not at all. They're only going to begin to walk in that Way for the first time, to prove by their works and by

their fruits whether or not they're going to be successful. All of those billions of the second resurrection are going to come up and the books of the Bible are going to be opened to them for the first time. They're going to be called and have a chance to be baptized, receive the Holy Spirit, and then to walk for a number of years to prove whether or not they're going to accept God and His ways. They're not ready to have a verdict, are they?

These others who died in rebellion, who already received their chance in their first lives—the only thing left for them is a sentence, the sentence of guilt, and to carry out that sentence by death. Does it make sense that they come up at the very same time as these others who aren't ready to be sentenced at all? That doesn't make any sense. One major group is not ready for a verdict, and the others are ready for a verdict. They are two different classifications of people at different points in time on this Master Plan for salvation.

That's why Mr. Armstrong's explanation makes perfect sense and is totally harmonious with what we read in the Bible. After all of this plan is completed, there is going to be a final or third resurrection, when all of those who died in rebellion are going to stand on their feet again in the flesh in order to hear the sentence of death—to find out they were wrong. Many of them right now, maybe most of them, have died absolutely believing they were right. You could say, "Well, that doesn't sound like a merciful and a loving God who would raise somebody up just to tell them they're wrong and throw them into a lake of fire." Who are we to question the veracity of that God who created us? It makes perfect sense, brethren, for closure, that God is going to make every human being account for himself. That's precisely what we read is going to happen. They are going to account for their decisions; and if they have made the wrong choices and rebelled against God and rejected Him, they're going to have to stand and hear that God who they claim to worship and love, tell them, "No, I gave you the way, but you decided to pervert it and do something else with it. You were wrong. And no matter how many human beings you convinced you were right, I'm here to tell you, you were wrong. And therefore, you're going to pay." There is going to be closure.

Revelation 20 and verse 11. We see it all come together.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

They're going to have a judgment period in which to qualify.

Then verse 13, and this is the verse that Mr. Armstrong said represented a totally separate resurrection, not the same as that depicted in verses 11–12.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [just meaning the grave] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Mr. Armstrong said that verses 13 and 14 depicted a final resurrection which was separate from the second resurrection depicted in verses 11 and 12. Of course this, because it's one of the hardest things to prove, is the one that many of these naysayers and former members who used to believe this, attack and they say, "Verse 13 doesn't say it's a separate resurrection; this is all a part of the same singular resurrection that's talked about in verses 11 and 12. There's no third resurrection distinct from the second; it's all the same resurrection and all of this happens at the same time." But that's not what Mr. Armstrong taught. Ultimately, brethren, we can argue back and forth on the technicalities of what the Bible provides, but I went through and showed you last time the resurrections of the just and the unjust in Daniel. There is going to be a resurrection of those who are going to face contempt. That is different from a resurrection of those who are being given their first opportunity to learn about God. Very distinct indeed.

Verse 15: "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Someone is going to die the second death. And brethren, if those who have failed in their first lives are not resurrected to receive a sentencing, then they're not going to die a second death. They just die one death and are never resurrected again. That's not what God says is going to happen. He says there is going to be a second death for those who fail to live up to their responsibilities.

One author says that because verse 12 reads, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God . . .", then Mr. Armstrong's interpretation was "some of the dead," because it was only those who lived and died in the first 6,000 years and who didn't have an opportunity. They say it says "the dead," not just some of the dead. Of course, in their interpretation, they superimpose "all of the dead." It doesn't say that either. They would have you to believe that it reads, "And I saw [all of] the dead, small and great, stand before God . . ."—meaning, everyone who died in the past stands up at that same time.

And so, they criticize Mr. Armstrong for saying that it's not all of the dead; it's just some of the dead. Well, brethren, it just says "the dead." It says neither some nor all. You, or any other human being, can wrangle over that, and you're still just using your human speculation.

Ultimately, it comes down to whether or not we believe that Mr. Armstrong was inspired by God in unfolding this Master Plan. You know what? There was no one else in this age who taught it. It's amazing to me that some of these men who learned their knowledge about the meaning of the Sabbath and the Holy Days in this Master Plan, the times of salvation, the proper understanding of immortality, of the resurrections and the opportunity to be born into the Family of God, and they never would have understood any of those things had it not been for the ministry of Mr. Armstrong. But now they want to turn around and criticize him for those things they think were weak in his substantiation from the Bible. Well, brethren, how did we learn it? How did we come to a knowledge of this Truth that we keep every year through the annual Holy Days? It was through the ministry of Mr. Armstrong that we received that, and not from any other man. No one else understood those things. They simply did not understand them. If it hadn't been for Mr. Armstrong's ministry, none of us would have had it. Why? He is the one that God chose to use—not because he was better as a man, more gifted, more talented, and he certainly was not a scholar. It was because God chose to use him, and He called him for that purpose. Through his ministry, we came to understand these things. Well, a part of that Master Plan that we were taught from the beginning, brethren, was a third resurrection. It was part of it. That was the explanation, and it's certified in the *Correspondence Course* from the early years, all the way back.

Daniel 12 and verse 1—my last certification for that:

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

This is a reference to that first resurrection and to those who make it through the tribulation and the terrible circumstances leading up to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and those who are resurrected out of the graves, who are waiting even now for that glorious transition.

. . . every one that shall be found written in the book. [Verse 2:] And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake [We're talking about the same "dead" mentioned in Revelation 20, verse 12.], some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

As I showed you, that Hebrew word for "contempt" is the word *deraown*, and it doesn't mean anything but bad. It means an object of abhorrence or aversion. It doesn't mean a general awakening to a judgment, which might be either positive or negative; it means an awakening to a guilty verdict. Some, therefore, are going to be resurrected for no other purpose than to receive their guilty verdict. We hope that is as few as possible. We hope that the majority of those given their opportunity will submit to God, even if it takes a lot of hard circumstances in their lives before they repent and turn; but there are some who are going to pay this price. Otherwise, Christ is one who makes empty threats. He made these determinations, and He wrote them in parables. He spoke them to His disciples; they were recorded in the gospels—what was going to happen to those who turned away and made the wrong decisions. Christ did not make those things up. There is no such thing as universal salvation. We're going to have to choose life over death. Those who come up in that second resurrection and who choose life through the course of their judgment period—whether it's 100 years or whatever period of time it is—are going to also receive their reward in the Family of God.

Those who reject it in the final analysis will be those who are still swayed by Satan the Devil, who is going to be loose during that time period. They're going to give in again to his deception, even though they've now been given the tools to avoid it—they've been given the power of the Holy Spirit, but they refuse to use it.

They refuse to put on the armor of God, and they give in instead to the natural tendencies of flesh and to their god whom they've chosen, which is Satan. Those are the ones, as it shows in the earlier part of Revelation 20, that are going to come up against Jerusalem. Think about the brashness, the arrogance, of those who are going to come up and think they're going to fight against Christ. They're going to come and assail Him at His throne in Jerusalem.

God will have laid out all of those lessons to show them. They're going to have an opportunity to learn from their past mistakes in their former lives. Having been resurrected now, they see the glorious, newly fashioned earth, a perfect government of peace and harmony, and all the good things, physically and spiritually, that come from life in that world under the reign of Jesus Christ. It will be a perfect government with a perfect, benevolent, loving Ruler; and yet, at the end of all of that time, there are going to be some who will be swayed by Satan to go and fight again against Christ. They may be some of the ones who fought against Him the first time. It may be some of these who died in the battle of Armageddon, who were uncalled at the time, and so they're going to be raised in the second resurrection. They're going to have their chance to be converted, but given that opportunity—receiving the Holy Spirit, the opening of their minds to the books of the Bible—in the final analysis, they're still going to default to their god, Satan. It's hard to understand how that could happen, and yet we accept the Bible at face value. It will happen.

Brethren, without the power of that Holy Spirit, we are especially vulnerable to fall because we are fighting that battle against those wicked spirits in high places, and we need evermore the very Spirit of God if we're going to hold fast unto the end. It doesn't matter how much we've accomplished up to now, brethren. If we lose it in the eleventh hour, we still fail. We've got to be able to hold on and make it through to the very end, and not let anything offend us, turn our eyes or cause us to give up, to become discouraged and take the easy way out. We've got to make it to the very end.

Let's look at Luke 16 and verse 19 very quickly. This is the parable of Lazarus and the rich man—one of those that speaks about that final resurrection.

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain

beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom . . .

Of course, this is one of those scriptures that those who believe in the immortality of the soul will jump on as evidence. They say, "See, the beggar died, and immediately, his immortal soul went up to heaven where Abraham is; and he was with God and Abraham." But if we understand the fabric of what we've already gone through to show the order of the resurrections and the way God is actually working out His Master Plan, then we have a basis for interpreting this parable in the proper way.

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell . . .

Now, is he down in the middle of the earth, on fire, his immortal soul burning and burning and being tormented? Is that where he is?

And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

What is the proper interpretation? This is a parable that absolutely supports the context of what Mr. Armstrong taught us concerning a final resurrection. How else do you apply this parable? Here is a man who is being resurrected. We know that the only way that this man who died is living again, is through a resurrection from the dead. This rich man is compared to one who was given the opportunity

to know God's Truth, and he blew his opportunity. He failed. Now he's living again because he's thinking; he's conscious. The dead have no thoughts. The dead are dead, so the fact that he is having this conversation, in essence, shows you that he was resurrected. That's the only way that he could have thought and consciousness back in his mind again. He was resurrected from the dead. And yet he was resurrected for what? To be told that he failed and to pay with his life. Let's go back up and read through it again with the explanation.

Verse 22: "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom . . ." Was this an immortal soul that wafted up, from the time he drew his last breath in the flesh, and went up to heaven? No. We know the dead are not in heaven. Those who are resurrected, who are faithful, are going to rule with Jesus Christ on the earth, not up in heaven. So, we know that this beggar is one who must have been a part of the first resurrection. We also know that Abraham is going to be a part of that first resurrection. If we understand that it's going to be more than 1,000 years prior to the second and the third resurrections when all of these others are resurrected, then those that are already born into the Family of God are going to be there for them to see, aren't they? There is indication that there is going to be direct interaction between spirit beings in the God Family and human beings. How else is Christ, as a spirit being, going to rule over a physical body of people on the earth? The Bible tells us that they're going to see their teachers, and they're going to hear that voice behind them that will tell them which way to go. There is going to be interaction between the spirit world and the physical world of those subjects who are resurrected.

So, now, if Abraham is one of those who is resurrected in the first resurrection, as he will be, that means when Christ returns, Abraham is going to be born as one of those members of the God Family. All of you who are successful are going to be a part of that very God Family with Abraham and the other patriarchs who are going to be resurrected. You're all going to be together with God in His Family. And so, those who come up in the second and even the third resurrections, more than 1,000 years later, are going to see you and recognize you as God beings—spirit beings with immortality. They will be those who knew you. They may be some of your unconverted family members who are going to come up in that second resurrection. That may be the first time that they're finally going to understand who you really were in the plan of God. They didn't understand it while they were alive. They thought you had a weird religion. They couldn't understand

why you were a member of this cult. This is going to be the first opportunity for those unconverted family members to know that you were special in the plan of God. You were a part of a firstfruits harvest that was a down payment on that which was being offered to all of humanity in a proper time of salvation. You're going to be in the Family of God. They're going to see you as a part of that God Family. This is the same thing, in this parable, that this rich man is seeing when he comes up.

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom . . ." When did that happen? This is just a parable, but theoretically, depending on when he died, maybe thousands of years later when that first resurrection takes place at the return of Christ. Abraham, this theoretical beggar, and all else who are a part of the firstfruits harvest are resurrected together. So, in this case, that beggar is in Abraham's bosom. He is a close family member with Abraham. We're all going to be members of that same Family.

". . . the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell [That word just means the grave.] he lift up his eyes . . ." This tells you that he was resurrected. He is going to come up out of the ground. In the grave, he lifts up his eyes. He becomes conscious again for the first time in however many years since he drew his last breath and died and was buried. Now, for the first time, he has his first conscious thought, and he realizes he is alive. He has just come up out of the ground where he has been buried for all of these years, and what does he see?

". . . being in torments . . ." Why is he in torments? I know it's very easy to look at it and say, "Oh, it's because he's burning." No, he's not burning. He has just been resurrected. He's not on fire. He's not down in the middle of the earth. Why is he in torment? Because he sees the God Family members, even those that he knew, like this beggar, who have received a reward—spirit beings with all of this power and glory. And he looks at himself and says, "Wait a minute, I'm flesh and blood." He may even still have the dirt on him from the grave. "Why am I not like the beggar? Why am I not with Abraham? Why am I not in the God Family? I thought I did everything right; and here I am flesh and blood, and there's this Gehenna fire nearby. It's hot; I can feel it." That's when he's going to be in torment because he understands that there's something amiss here. This is not the way he thought it was going to turn out. He expected that when he was resurrected, he was going to be resurrected to immortality. That's what he

expected, and when, instead, he is resurrected to flesh and blood, that's the first signal. "Uh-oh. That's not supposed to happen." The only ones that are supposed to be resurrected a second time to flesh and blood are the ones who didn't have their opportunity and who are going to have their first chance to understand God's way. So, if you were a part of the firstfruits and you had your chance, and you die and you're resurrected again to flesh and blood, you would say, "Uh-oh, something didn't happen right. If I were successful, I wouldn't have been resurrected again to flesh and blood; I would have been resurrected to immortality." That's what this rich man is understanding. That's why he's in torment.

". . . being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off . . ." Why? Because Abraham is a spirit being and he's not. There's this great gulf, as we're going to see, between the realm of the spiritual and the physical. There is no way to cross over except for the miraculous intervention, the miracle of God, to turn a human being into a spirit being. Otherwise, there's a gulf that cannot be breached by the world of the flesh.

. . . seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue . . .

Why is it that the tongue needs cooling? It's not because it's on fire. What happens when you're in stress, mental turmoil and anguish? What's the first thing that gets dry? The mouth, the tongue. That's why he wants water on his tongue. The torment is from his own knowledge that he failed and he's not going to receive eternal life.

. . . for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed . . .

What is that gulf? The distinction between the spiritual world and the physical world. A physical human being cannot of himself cross over and partake of eternal life in that spiritual realm. It has got to be a gift from God.

. . . so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

Well, by the time of the final resurrection, brethren, it's too late. The time of judgments has already taken place, and now all we're seeing is the final sentencing of those who made the wrong choice in the final analysis.

"Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets . . . " Oh yes, they had the Word of God too. If they were a part of those who were called and given their chance the first time around, like you and I are right now, they had Moses and the prophets. They had the words of God. They had the books opened up to their understanding. They had their chance to understand God's Truth, and ultimately, they decided to choose their own thinking instead. That's why, in this parable, Abraham says, ". . . They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." Oh yes, we're not going to have any excuse if we fail. God will have spoken to us loud and long; and if ultimately, we make the wrong decision, it's because we failed—we stopped our own ears and we turned away from that which He taught us.

And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. [Oh, if you'll just do a great miracle for them, that will turn them around!] And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

That's how hardened the minds of those are who ultimately turn away from God and refuse to repent. We know that many of them have not committed that unpardonable sin. There are many today who are in a state of separation, but we know that through tribulation and difficult circumstances, God is going to be able to soften their hearts and they're going to make the right choice in the final analysis. They're going to have to go through a lot of heartache and misery, but they are going to soften their hearts and make their robes white in the blood of the Lamb.

But these, hopefully few, are among those who ultimately are going to harden their hearts. They're going to refuse to do it God's way. And they are going to come up. Otherwise, this whole parable has no meaning. Why would Christ even give this parable if there is no such thing as accountability for those that fail? If there is no final resurrection, when those who make the wrong choices are going to have to come up out of the grave to hear the fact that they were wrong—even to be thrown into the lake of fire and be destroyed—if that's not going to happen, why even have this parable? Why did Christ speak it from His own lips? No, it tells you that there is going to be a final reckoning for all of us. There is going to be a verdict passed, even upon those who died not having heard, understood or recognized that they were wrong.

Those seeking to repudiate Mr. Armstrong's teaching about a final resurrection are those who reject the concept of divine revelation. I've given you most of the scriptures which help substantiate the consistency of what Mr. Armstrong taught us on that topic. It fits in perfectly. When you recognize that there are all of these classifications of people that God is dealing with, then it makes sense that there is a need for multiple resurrections in order to deal with their judgment and their final verdicts. If you understand the different classifications of people, it helps put all of those things into perspective. It doesn't make sense that the incorrigible are resurrected at the same time as the ones who will be given their first opportunity to understand the Truth, because they're not in the same category. They're not both ready to be sentenced. One is only beginning his walk with God, and the other is ready to receive condemnation. So it doesn't make sense at all that God would resurrect them at the same time.

Those seeking to repudiate Mr. Armstrong's teaching of the final resurrection are those who reject the concept of divine revelation. They do not believe Jesus Christ revealed Himself through a chosen servant of the last days. And so, in essence, brethren, those that reject the final resurrection are those that reject all kinds of other fundamental doctrines that we adhere to.

The times of salvation, as we were taught, is the key to understanding God's Master Plan for saving mankind. When you understand that God is saving man through a process of work, calling, qualification and judgment, ending in a resurrection, then you understand that which very few people on the face of this earth understand at this time. You are most privileged to have this plan in your

knowledge and thinking. It is this teaching on the times of salvation, the hope of being born into the very God Family, which is the bedrock of the faith once delivered. Everything that you're keeping with the Sabbath and the Holy Days pictures the very fulfillment of that Master Plan. What a glorious plan it is that God has put together, and how fantastic it is that we understand the importance of the resurrection of the dead.