

Eternal Rule and Rewards

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon discusses the critical role of eternity in faith and the importance of understanding rewards that come after this life.

Scripture: Philippians 3:6-8, Hebrews 10:35-38, Hebrews 11:8-10, Hebrews 11:13-16, Hebrews 12:1-3, Revelation 20:4-6, Revelation 20:11-15

Topics: "Eternity", "Faith and Rewards"

Description

Art Katz emphasizes the significance of eternity in the Christian faith, arguing that modern believers often overlook the eternal rewards that come after this life. He highlights the biblical principle that true faith involves waiting for promises that may not be fulfilled in this life, using examples from Hebrews 11 to illustrate how the heroes of faith lived with an eternal perspective. Katz warns against the temptation of seeking immediate gratification and encourages believers to cultivate a faith that looks forward to heavenly rewards, which are proportional to one's service and character in this life. He concludes by urging the church to restore its understanding of eternal rewards, linking the past and future in the continuum of faith.

Transcript

Opening Prayer

We're very jealous over this time and it will be richly redeemed. So Lord, we just thank You again, what a privilege to serve the Living God. Thank You my God for that and we ask my God that You would give us every enablement and grace, wisdom from on high, understanding of the kind that You would have us to have that we will be more rightly related to You. We want to come into conformity with Your understanding and we're willing my God to be altered and changed. So shape us and form us at Your hand. We thank You that You're the God who knows the end from the beginning and that You're preparing us for an end to which we are progressively moving.

And we want to be fitted to stand in that hour and to serve You my God that when You appear we can be before You without blame and to hear that wonderful commendation: "Well done, good and faithful servant." So bless Your children my God whom You've brought out and fill their souls with delight and increase not only our knowledge about the things of God, but about God, the knowledge of God Himself, that pure and holy knowledge my God. Our foundation, the rock and just delight Your Own Soul in all that is expressed here. We thank you. Give you the praise again for a privileged time in Jesus name. Amen.

Eternity: A Missing Component from Modern Faith

Well if I would say I have anything on my heart this morning it would be that subject of eternity that we began to touch on yesterday, but we are far from adequately addressing that. And that this is a missing component from modern faith that somehow we have lost the sense of the things that are eternal or have never known them. And that is a very significant loss it disfigures the church, because the church is that remarkable entity that has an outstanding past and a brilliant future. And somewhere between the past and the future and are required to assimilate and take in the things that were before us and the things that our future to make us the significant presence that God intends.

So I think I just want to share with you something that came to me as revelation. You know the way it is that you read a familiar text many times then it comes a moment when all of a sudden an illumination from the Lord comes on those familiar things and you see them in a depth and a perception that was not yours until the light came. So I don't know that by sharing it will bring that light for you, but I think the Lord wants it shared and it's in Hebrews chapter 11. That great chapter on the giants of the faith. If there's anything that shows the continuum of the faith and that New Testament faith is not some innovation or radical departure from what came before, but a continuation and a fulfillment. It's interesting that I think every hero of the faith that is cited is an Old Testament saint. So I'm pleased for that.

Biblical Faith: The Key is "After"

I want to begin with verse 8 of chapter 11.

Hebrews 11:8-10 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

And then if we could skip down to verse 13.

Hebrews 11:13 - 16 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

So going back to where we began. God is defining Biblical faith and it's by that faith that Abraham when he was called to go "out into". Isn't that a wonderful conjunction of words, "out into". We're called "out" for something and called "into" something else, which he should "after" receive for an inheritance. And the key word for me there is the word "after". I think the thing that makes the church presently greedy and wanting all of its blessings now is that it has not understood that the genius and the distinctive of Biblical faith is that which comes after. That he would receive as an inheritance.

So by faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country. Have you ever thought of that? He was in the right place. It was the land of promise to which he had been called, but it was a strange country while he was there. How do you figure that? How can the land to which he had been called be strange?

And the answer is it was not time to inherit it that would come after. He was in the right place, but it was not yet the right time. The right time is after. As an inheritance that comes after you die. These all died in faith not having received the promise.

Now if a few of them had died not receiving I would say well that God in His dispensation has this reward for this one and that reward for that. I don't expect God to be necessarily consistent. He has His own reasons, but when these all died not having received the promise then I have to take a second thought and say it sounds like this is a pattern. And a pattern that is distinctive of Biblical faith and that none of us should expect to receive the promise in this life. And that the genius of the faith is that which comes after as an inheritance and that this life is merely preparation for that which comes after. That means that the whole premium of Biblical faith rests on the assurance of resurrection.

Am I losing you? That's why Paul says if there is no resurrection we of all men are most to be pitied. These all died not having received the promise though they had seen it afar off and I don't think one of them was bitterly disappointed, because they knew better than to expect it in this present life. That changes the whole complexion of things. That changes our whole expectation and saves us from unnecessary disappointment. And gives us a much more realistic understanding of what this present life is for and what the payoff is in the life to come so that we would be eternally minded.

You know what I say to the church in the West? You lack a millennial expectation. You have no sense of the things which are future. You are fixed in time, space, culture, you're too much of the world and with the world, because the thing that God gives in power to extricate us and loose us from the seduction of this present world is the assurance of the thing which comes after. A city whose maker and builder is God. This is absolutely revolutionary and I'm not speaking some new gospel or finding a little cute thing that can be made into a ministry. This is definitive normative Biblical faith from the patriarchs to this present hour. These all died not having received the promise, but having received a good report.

Now can you serve God in this life and not receive the reward now? This is much easier to preach in America, because in America we are the "now generation". The pepsi-cola generation is the "now generation". Instant everything, right from the freezer into the microwave. It's now. You don't wait, you have it now. Everything is now, immediate gratification, now, but the church is another kind of entity that knows how to wait. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall rise up with wings as eagles they shall run and not be weary they shall walk and not faint, teach me Lord teach me Lord.

An American brother who had just been to the American consulate that day to get his passport for travel, got up and threw his passport down on the ground and he announced that I am a citizen of heaven. He was liberated from the ties and a bondage of nationality. And I don't know how to say that, but I don't know that we can be a blessing to our people and to our own nation, except that we are freed from the idolatrous elements of identifying with nation, with nationality. Does that sound like a strange paradox? So this is a very liberating thing to those who confess that they are strangers and pilgrims and sojourners in the world, because they look for some future thing, a city whose builder and maker is God.

Now in chapter 10 of Hebrews we talked about those who took joyfully the spoiling of their goods knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and enduring substance. They had the same expectancy of future reward as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the great saints of old who died not having received the promise. So Paul says in verse 35 of chapter 10.

Hebrews 10:35,36 Cast not away therefore your confidence which has great recompense of reward. You have need of patience that after you have done the will of God you might receive the promise

There's that great word "after".

Hebrews 10:37 For yet a little while and he that shall come will come and will not tarry

So after has to do with the Lord's coming, for when He comes he brings his reward with Him. So don't throw away your confidence which has great recompense of reward for you have need of patience now so that after you have done the will of God you might receive the promise and the promise is fulfilled with the Lord in His coming. And it'll just take a little while and He that shall come will come and will not tarry. And then the next verse says:

Hebrews 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith.

Isn't that remarkable? After all of the talk about "after" and a tarry and a little while and the Lord will come, now the just shall live by faith. You have to catch the taste of this. There's an "after", there's a reward that comes later. Now the just shall live by faith. What is the faith by which the just shall live now? It's the faith that though they will not receive the reward now, they'll receive it later and that is your confidence that you should not throw away, because that gives you the incentive to serve God now. Now the just shall live by this faith that after their reward will come with the Lord who though He tarries He will come.

That is Biblical New Testament faith. Old Testament, New Testament it is the biblical faith of every saint who died not having received the reward, but did not die in bitterness of soul or dejection or disappointment or why me or how come, because they did not cast away their confidence of what would come after. That kind of faith needs to be cultivated, that kind of faith needs to be nurtured, because everything in the world wants to root you in the earth. To look down, to expect now, to make you impatient and edgy and want this to get your compensation now, but the church is of another kingdom and another kind whose reward comes "after" as an inheritance for those who have obtained a good report and yet died without having received a promise.

That requires faith. Maybe the greatest exemplar of that faith is Jesus Himself at the cross: stripped naked, tortured unto death, and left a dead piece of gangrenous humanity that was so pitiful to look at that the two disciples on the road to Emmaus were crestfallen and downhearted. That when Jesus appeared to them and they didn't recognize Him. He said to them "why are you looking so downcast, why are you so crestfallen?" Because we thought that He had been the hope of Israel would have restored the glory of Israel, but a lack in the last He was crucified and was left dead on the cross pitifully. And yet the reward comes later.

And I think it says in Isaiah 53 and He shall see you the fruit of His sufferings. Right till His last moments breath on the earth not only did He not see the fruit, but He saw His own disciples flee from Him disgracefully and the one who had leaned upon His bosom who was the greatest love left fled nakedly. It was not just Peter who betrayed Him they all betrayed Him and the one who was the most devoted and affectionate and who lay upon His bosom was the one who fled nakedly. These are the last things that Jesus sees before His death. Talk about disappointment and dejection and yet out of that thing being reduced to nothing in this life. Look at the reward that has come to the Lord Himself of which you sitting here this morning are not the least. You are His inheritance, you are the fruit of His sacrifice. He's going to see His nation restored and so all Israel shall be saved as it is written for the Deliverer will come out of

Zion.

What a lesson. What an example for us of a Man who died without a shred of present gratification or reward in this life and everything that was to come to Him came after. This restores the lost dimension, this restores the importance and the significance of eternity that needs to be taken now into our present consideration, because it makes all the difference. It provides an incentive for a quality of service and sacrifice that eclipses present reward, because eye have not seen and ear have not heard what God has laid up for them that love Him. There's a crown dear saints to be won and you know what I tell the saints when I get carried away sometimes I say, "look me up in heaven and I'll invite you to lunch in my mansion. I must be one of the wealthiest men in the world to come. I'm laying up treasure continually, but right now my bankbook is not that much to speak about, I own nothing, I don't even own my own house, but in heaven is a treasure being laid up."

And this is not pie in the sky when you die. This is not some airy make-believe thing that people can scoff at. This is the distinctive and definitive faith of every saint that has preceded us. This is the faith, this is the way of God, but we have allowed the world to draw us out and away from the things that are future and eternal and fix us solely in this life. And that's why we see so much religious ambition where men have to succeed now. They have to be rewarded now. It has to be acknowledged now, now, now, now, now. We don't see the hidden saints who can serve God without being recognized and known by men. Confident that they will receive the reward after "for when He comes he brings His reward with Him to give to every man according to his labor."

We will not all receive the same reward. We are not all going to the same place. Heaven is not some standard fixed thing, but that the rewards and a place in heaven and the relationship with the Lord in the millennium and the eternity and ruling and reigning with Him is proportional to the quality and kind of our labor and service in this life. Some will move over five cities and some over ten cities and some won't rule over any. The reward is proportionate to the service rendered in this life and the reward that comes after that is enduring and eternal.

Obtaining to the First Resurrection

I'm even so radical as to say we will not all rise at the same time. Some of us will rise with a first resurrection of a firstfruits kind who will rule and reign with Him in His Millennial Kingdom and others will sleep and rise with a general resurrection of the dead that is described in Revelation Chapter 20. When the books will be opened and the Book of Life to see if their name is written in it. It's remarkable I never heard this preached maybe it sounds heretical and maybe we're so democratic that we think that we all deserve the same reward, the same heaven, the same resurrection, but I think the Scripture shows that there is a an order, there is a hierarchy, there is at a scale of reward. Hmm that is proportional to our service in this life, because some of us will not be equipped to rule and reign with Christ, because we have ignored or forsaken and have had no stomach for the responsibilities that we could have obtained and served in this life.

I feel sorry for the great multitude of Christians who have been content to sit passively in pews their entire Christian life long, because they were assured quote "they're going to heaven." I'll tell you what I wouldn't want to miss the first resurrection, and that's why Paul is continually exhorting the saints to be found blameless in the Day of the Lord's Appearing. That there's a reward for those who strive, he says "I don't look back, I strive for the resurrection." What did Paul fear that he was not going to be resurrected? The

great apostle.

Let's look at that in Philippians in chapter 3 starting verse 6:

Philippians 3:6 - 8 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ

Well I don't know that I'm equipped to comment on these verses, but they seem to me self-explanatory. That there's something that is not automatic, it is not given to every saint. It's considered a prize or a reward of a particular kind for those who attain to it and strive for it and Paul was not assured that he had attained. But putting all things behind this one thing I do. You want to know what apostolic is? This is apostolic, this single eyed determination and jealousy to attain to the reward of this distinctive kind. That he would be assured that he would rise in that first resurrection to rule and reign with Christ, that privileged reward, that is the reward for which he strove to attain and that is not automatic.

And if the Apostle was not assured that he would attain it and strove to attain it that he might win the prize. What shall we say? And I would say that it's the absence of this consideration and the shallow and false assurance that has been promulgated widely in Christendom that everyone is going to the same heaven at the same time. That accounts for the low quality of Christian life to be found in our churches. We have lacked an apostolic incentive for attaining the reward. And if I'm wrong about this I want so much to be corrected. And I'm not preaching this in every place and I had no intention of speaking it this morning.

So we really need to examine this. Is this some overlooked thing? And if it is, what a serious omission. And what price have we paid for that neglect? And if the Apostle Paul is not confident that he has yet attained to this. Then with what confidence shall we expect who have not begun to do the kinds of good works that Paul himself has? And I want to say this saints, when we say the word "good works" we automatically recoil, because we think that somehow it is threatening the gospel of grace. But don't misunderstand this, salvation is a gift of God by grace, but what we do with the grace having obtained it as a gift that determines our eternal place and our eternal reward.

Can you understand that? Enormously important, if you understand this and take this to heart it will save you from mediocrity. It will save you from just being another saint in the pew. You have an eternal incentive to obtain a distinctive reward and a prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus that is not for everyone. And it says "and the rest sleep." Let's look at that in Revelation chapter 20. Good and this is not an opposition to works. We can almost say that what we do is the reflection of the expression of what we are. That our character and our labors are related. Your work is not going to exceed your place in Christ. So the two things are true and they're spoken of in different places. Here the emphasis is on works, but the works themselves are a reflection of our stature or place in Christ.

The Church Administering Righteous Judgment

So in chapter 20 of Revelation in verse 4, it says:

Revelation 20:4 I saw thrones and they sat upon them and judgment was given unto them

That is to say the right to judge, the right to perform righteous judgments. Ruling and reigning with Christ is meant here. And judgment isn't condemning, lowering the boom. Judgment is bringing the wisdom of God

to bear as it pertains to nations and even to angels. Remember in 1 Corinthians 6, Paul was shocked that two believers were taking their dispute to a world's court. He said "what are you doing and letting the world resolve your differences? Don't you know that you're going to judge angels, don't you know that you're going to judge nations?" It's the privilege of overcoming saints to rule and reign with Christ to administer in His kingdom righteous judgment over the nations and even over angels. But how do we come to a place of stature and maturity to exercise those judgments, except that that character and stature was obtained in this life.

Art's Testimony of Giving Someone over to satan for the Destruction of his Flesh

So we need to raise the question. Are we in a church situation that encourages that growth and that maturity? I don't know where I was sharing. Now I remember, it was at Brother Joe's Church and our conversation with the elders and wives after lunch on Sunday morning. When I shared with them one of the high points of my Christian life in community, when we had to judge a brother and give his flesh over to the devil for its destruction, his soul might be saved in the Day of the Lord. Have you ever done that? This is not kid stuff, this is a judicial council determining the things that pertain to eternity for a man and condemning him to a certain judgment that God will honor. That is performed in the body after the man had been confronted by one brother and confronted by two brothers and refused their counsel. It was brought before the entire church and judged. And indeed after three or four hours of the most serious, careful, and painstaking judicial operation that I had ever seen. His flesh was condemned to the devil and he was expelled from the community.

In the early church and particularly in the radical Anabaptist Church the thing that was practiced was called "shunning". Men were cast out of fellowship, they were forbidden to eat and to enjoy the sacraments and to be in communion with saints. When they had rejected the attempts within the body to receive discipline and correction. Where do we see that today? When our own pastors are fornicating like rabbits and getting away with it. Where the most world-famous evangelists can sin in the most unbelievably shameful ways and refuse the correction of their denominations and leave their denomination and thereby leave the correction. And within a matter of a week or two or however long their back on TV and back in business and receiving the support of the saints as if nothing had happened. And we are going to judge nations and angels? When we can't judge within the church itself righteous judgment.

Well I say that this is one of the high points of my Christian experience, because I saw housewives expressing such wisdom in God, such depth of insight and understanding weighing the issues for or against this brother with such seriousness by the Spirit that we were actually brought to a transcendent and heavenly place in the operation of that judicial procedure. So long as we're only considering questions like. Do we paint the church or should we have a building program or which evangelist shall we bring in? There's no way that we're being raised to a place of maturity and preparation for ruling and reigning with Christ millennially and eternally.

Preparation for the Life to Come

Listen dear saints, we have got to see this life as a preparation and not itself the reward, although it's not an exaggeration to say that the preparation and the sacrifice and the present labor is its own reward even now. Like I'm enjoying this tremendously. I love being here. I love being used. I love being circulated around the nations. It's a privilege. It's an honor. It's a reward in itself, but not yet that reward which will come. The fact that Jesus Himself could say that some will rule over five cities and some over ten shows

that there's nothing fixed. That He could condemn those wicked stewards who did not bring an increase of the talents that were given them. That there's an enormous emphasis on freedom of will to do and to serve. That men can bury their talent or they can multiply it and that there will be a proportionate reward and even a judgement for the failure to to bring increase that brings a wailing and a gnashing of teeth.

And I'm saying that the church is not the church until it has brought these perspectives into its present consideration, because these perspectives have the potential to transfigure the church to make it already a heavenly and eternal entity in time. To be free from the fear and the insecurities of men who live now for their rewards and can be seduced on that basis even in the religious world.

As a young brother whose life I have influenced who has now become an Assemblies of God Pastor and I did not see him for seven years. He just faded from view, no contact, no calls, finally we came at the contact, I said, "How come I've not heard from you? When you have said often that there's been no greater influence in my life than this Art Katz." I said "why haven't I heard from you in the last 7 years?" Well he said, "Frankly Art, I was embarrassed to be in contact with you, because I wanted to become successful within my denomination and an association with you would not promote that and I wanted to make a name for myself." The cancer is in the church itself of reward now of obtaining recognition from men, of being recognized. And why is that? Because the power to break that power is given by God in terms of that which comes after. And if you don't see it, if your spirit hasn't taken hold of it, if you're not looking for that city and for that reward, then of necessity you're going to be a victim now even to seduction through ambition in the religious realm.

Blessed, Holy, and Priestly

Okay so I saw thrones and verse 4 of chapter of Revelation 20:

Revelation 20:4,5 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: 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. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

What tremendous words! And I don't know that they could be any more clear. First implies that there's another resurrection to follow and those that did not resurrect at that time are the rest of the dead whose resurrection then will not be the same as this one nor have the same reward. And here's how these are described who rise the first time:

Revelation 20:6 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.

Let me ask you a question. In that distinct company, how did they become and when did they become blessed holy and priest? Before or after their resurrection? I believe before. And is that automatic? Is every saint blessed and holy and priestly? Is clearly not and that's what Paul strove for to attain and that we ought to be striving for and attaining also.

We have missed the greatest incentive to be distinctive in this life, because if you're going to be blessed and holy and priestly eternally and you've obtained those qualities here, then you're blessed, priestly, and holy here. And these are ultimate descriptions. You're not going to be blessed, holy, and priestly and not

know the cross. You're not going to be blessed, holy, and priestly and not know self-denial. You're not going to be blessed, holy, and priestly and give yourself to the gratifications of the flesh and of lust. It's going to take a disciplined life and a submitted life and one that is submitted to other brethren. One that will receive correction and not balk or react in resentment when it comes or stalk out.

I can tell you that the day after we had that judicial proceeding for that brother and gave his body, his flesh over for destruction. That the next morning in our prayer meeting we were together and I looked out the window of the house that we were in praying there was the brother leaving. He had been cast out of fellowship, and given over to the devil for the destruction of his flesh. He had his bundle over his shoulder, his belongings, and when I saw him leave and we all looked and saw him leave. Our spirits leaped. We rejoiced in Christ Jesus, the Spirit of God just lifted us, because it was a suffering to bring righteous judgment, it was not a picnic, it was painful to have to judge. He happened to be the son of a Pentecostal pastor whose family was famous in that movement. It was not some light snap thing that we did, it took the guts out of us. Oh I can tell you so much.

Participating in that judgment was not only righteous for him it was righteous for us. It cleanse our atmosphere, we had removed the evil thing, the unregenerate, the brother who would not receive correction and God honored that righteous act. And our whole atmosphere changed. Something came in of such an exulting lifting buoyant the kind that we couldn't suppress our worship and our rejoicing in the Lord. God honored righteous judgment, but it cost something, because it was weeks and months before we came to that decision with pleadings, within treaties, with conversation, with counsel again and again with his brother in the hope that he could be changed. It was a long period of anguish and trial for an entire community. But I'll tell you what it was a school and a preparation for priesthood and for being blessed and holy that would give us a place in the administration of God's kingdom in the Millennium and in that first resurrection.

The "Millennium" actually means "1,000", so there's a first 1,000 year rule, it's not ended after the thousand years. After the thousand years, the dragon that has been thrown into the pit is allowed up for one final rebellion against God and against Israel. So the kingdom of God continues, but I had the sense that the first thousand years is the formative time and that it is a remarkable privilege to be invited to participate in the establishing of God's theocratic rule over His creation. And I believe that these who rise are what Jesus referred to when He said to Nathaniel, "you're impressed I saw you under the fig tree, I'll show you a greater thing, angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." I believe these resurrected ones and glorified ones will ascend and descend. They'll be in heaven, they'll be on the earth, you'll move through fixed things just as Jesus did in his glorified body in their administration of the kingdom which is their privilege.

I shared this one time and some women shouted it out, "but I'm not interested in government, I don't see that as a reward." Well let me tell you dear saints, this is not government the way you have known it in the Philippines, this is heavenly, this is Divine rule, this is a beneficent goodness of God. This is the wisdom of God to teach men how to live in righteousness mediated in the meekness of the character of the Lamb. This isn't paper shuffling, this isn't bureaucracy, this isn't lining your profits and making a place for yourself. There's no higher honor than to rule and reign with Christ. That's the reward that was His that there was a throne prepared for Him. That God not only raised Him from the dead, but ascended Him up on high to a place of rule, where it says all authority is given You both in heaven and in earth.

So they shall reign with Him a thousand years. And then further down in the chapter in verse 11:

Revelation 20:11 - 15 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. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell 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. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

So just from a simple reading of that text, I would have to say that those who were not qualified to rise with saints who were blessed, holy, and priestly had to wait about a thousand years. They missed the initiation of God's kingdom and any participation in it, but they were going to be saved out of hell. Because in that second judgment of the general judgment of the dead they will be found in it. But they were saved from being thrown into the lake of fire with all the rest of the dead, because their names were found written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

I don't know about you, but I wouldn't want to wait to see if my name was written. Because there is a possibility that it might have been written and has since been blotted out. Revelation 3, I think chapter 3 verse 5 talks about names being blotted out of the Lamb's Book of Life. This is quite a joke with a kind of eternal security that many in the church have fought for themselves, but I think helps to explain why we have the kind of slack attitude that is to be found in churches around the world. Of people just waiting for heaven without any distinction in this life. Not willing for the sacrifice of overcoming or obtaining the priestly stature in God and thinking that somehow they'll have the same heaven, the same resurrection, the same reward as everyone else. Well I think that the Scriptures show God is not all that democratic. That God gives reward proportionate to the quality of character and service performed and obtained in this life. And if I'm mistaken about what I have been presenting this morning I welcome your correction, but I think that the plain evidence of the Scripture itself supports this view.

Great Cloud of Witnesses

So let's just take one final look at Hebrews and conclude and have a break. We can come back and raise questions. Just reading through the whole eleventh chapter, God describes all of the great heroes of the faith by name and then from verse 33 on God just talks about a nameless number.

Hebrews 11:33 - 12:3 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross,

despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him.

How many of us have the faith to believe this morning that we are circled about by a cloud of invisible witnesses? I want to tell you dear saints, that in the trying moments that are future when there will be real conflict, it's a great assurance and comfort to know that the saints who have preceded us, in this very same precious faith, who have not yet received their reward, because they not yet made perfect without us. Are waiting for us to come to the finish line and the conclusion and they are present in an invisible cloud and exert from that place a positive influence to help us on and through to the conclusion of the race that is set before us. We are in continuum with all of the saint that have preceded us and we are moving toward a glorious conclusion. And to see yourself now and presently in that faith and in that context is really seeing.

So I just want to pray for the restoration. What is it? Elijah must come first and restore all things. The restoration of the view of eternity and eternal reward that the church has lost to its own, what's the word, to its own detriment, it needs to be restored. That the church might be the church in keeping with all the saints who went before us who gave themselves and sacrificed and suffering for this great faith. And for this great kingdom that's coming, though they themselves did not obtain the reward and who not yet complete without us. We're in something together that links the past with the eternal future and we are in time looking to that end and are now very close to it.

Closing Prayer

So let's pray. Lord, everything that we have discussed this morning is new to us or contrary to us in what our understanding has till now been. We are acknowledging Lord that we do not have the sense of the things that are eternal in future that come after as it was understood by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the great saints who followed who looked for the inheritance that would come with their resurrection from the dead. That even being in the land of promise was strange until it would be received as an inheritance. Lord open our understanding, stir us in new ways, give us an incentive for overcoming, make us to understand that to be blessed holy and priestly is not automatic.

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