

Bomb Shelters Aren't Enough

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TEXT: REVELATION 6:16

With the threat of nuclear war hanging over our heads like the sword of Damocles, the building of fallout shelters is much in the news. Many questions are being debated. Should mass shelters be built, at government expense, or should it be a matter of private responsibility and enterprise? Would it be morally right for one to stand before his bomb shelter armed with a shotgun to keep unprepared neighbors out of the protection which he built for his family alone? This is a heart-searching question indeed.

But a far more searching question has to do with your ultimate security. Opinions are divided as to the efficacy of bomb shelters in saving human life. But the Bible is quite positive in its warnings about the shelter for the soul. No man-made device can effect its security. This is to be found not in a bomb shelter but "in Christ."

Eventually, either by physical death or by the return of the Lord, you will be brought face to face with this truth. The Bible teaches that those "in Christ" will rejoice in either case. But those outside of Christ are picturesquely described in their reaction to this rendezvous with judgment. The author of Revelation says that they shall cry to the mountains and rocks, "*Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*" (6:16)

Many years ago, Orson Welles created a mass hysteria throughout the United States when on a Sunday night he broadcast a radio program purportedly reporting an invasion of the earth by men from Mars. Switchboards in newspapers, radio stations, and police departments were jammed with anxious inquiries regarding it. In some cities people stood on the streets and prayed. It seemed that the end of the world had come. When it was learned that it was only a drama and not reality, an indignant nation vigorously protested against the broadcast.

But the Bible teaches that there will come a time at the end of the age when men will be faced with an event of serious import; namely, the final judgment. And it will not be a figment of an enterprising imagination. It will be a righteous God calling all men of every age in history to give an account before Him. It will be for real. It will be, so to speak, for keeps. And when it happens, what then? Where will you stand?

As we consider this let us note, first, judgment; second, justice; third, justification.

JUDGMENT

The fact of judgment is written on every page of life. It is abundantly taught throughout the Bible. Across every page is written the words, "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for*

whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7.)

If you accept the fact of judgment in time, is it not reasonable to admit to the Biblical teaching that God has set a judgment at the end of time? This truth is involved in our scripture lesson. It pictures those at every social level who are unprepared for the judgment hiding in caves and praying for the rocks to hide them from the wrath of Him who sits on the throne of judgment.

The judgment is certain. In II Corinthians 5:10 Paul says, "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*" While these words were written to Christian people, the words "all must appear" imply both the saved and the unsaved.

This is more clearly seen in Revelation 20:11-15. "*And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it . . . 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 whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*" Note the distinction between the "books" and the "book of life." Now what does this mean?

In the judgment the small and the great stand before God. Those whose names are written in the "book of life" go into heaven. They have already been judged in Christ as to redemption. Those not written in this book go into hell or the lake of fire, along with the devil (v. 10), death, and hell or Hades, the abode of the dead. There they will "*be tormented day and night for ever and ever*" (v. 10).

But what of the judgment out of

the "books?" According to that written in the "books" both the saved and the lost will be judged according to their works to determine the degrees of reward and punishment, the reward of the saved in heaven and the punishment of the lost in hell (cf. Luke 47-48; I Cor. 3:11-15). This is a mystery, to be sure. The fact is certain. The details we can leave to a righteous and merciful God.

JUSTICE

Whatever the mystery, you may be sure that it will be a just judgment. The scriptures teach that Christ will be the Judge. In John 5:22 Jesus said, "*For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.*" But His judgment is the judgment of the Father. For in John 5:30 Jesus adds, "*I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.*" And we can say with Abraham, "*Shall not the God of all the earth do right?*" (Gen. 18:25). Now from this fact at least three great truths evolve.

In the first place, the judgment will not be to determine character, but to reveal and declare it. The judgment will only open the books to reveal their contents.

In a finite manner, is not this the procedure in man's courts of justice? The judge does not arbitrarily find some guilty and others not guilty. Along with the jury he weighs the evidence as to the character of the person involved.

In the infinite degree this is what is involved in God's final judgment. Those who by faith in Jesus Christ have their names written in the book of life go into heaven. All others shall go into hell. Likewise, according to the "books" degrees of reward or punishment are revealed. The decision

is not an arbitrary one on the part of God. He renders a just judgment on the basis of the evidence of character shown by the record. This is also the explanation as to why the final judgment is rendered not at the moment of death but at the end of time. You cannot render a just judgment until all of the evidence is in. Of course, the verdict as to heaven or hell is fixed respectively at the moment of acceptance of Christ for the saved and at the moment of death for the lost when one's rejection of Christ is final. The Bible does not teach the doctrine of a second chance after death. But the evidence as to degrees of reward or punishment must await the end of time, until the final and full fruit of one's righteous or evil deeds in the lives of others is complete. This should cause concern for both the saved and the unsaved as to the deeds done in the flesh.

In the second place, this judgment shall be according to law. Across the entrance to a judicial building are the words "Government by law and not by men." Even a perfect God does not judge us by capricious decree, but by the fixed laws of His moral and spiritual universe. In the latter case God has a law which says, "*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Rom. 6:23). If you flaunt the law of God's grace, then you must pay the penalty of death.

Perhaps you say that you do not believe in hell because you believe in a just God. Well, you should change your terminology. If God were just and only just, there would be no hope for any of us. It is because God is merciful that we have hope. Perhaps you pray, "God, give me justice." No, what you must pray is "God, have mercy on me." The basic difference between a saved and a lost man is God's grace. The Christian is just a sinner saved by grace. The lost person

is a sinner outside of the grace of God. It is according to God's law of salvation which may be summarized, "In grace no condemnation; outside of grace no salvation." As to how you relate yourself to this simple law is your decision. God has done His part. The decision is up to you.

In the third place, it will be a judgment of love. This may sound strange, but it is nevertheless true. Revelation 6:16 speaks of the "*wrath of the Lamb.*" The Lamb is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world and crucified in time as the expression of God's infinite love for you. The Judge at the judgment will be the One who is the gift of God's infinite love. The judgment will hinge upon this love accepted or rejected. The degree of punishment for the lost will be in direct proportion to the degree of love which prompted God's gift of His love.

God is love. Yes. But it is not a sentimental love which ignores sin. It is a righteous, holy love which cannot ignore sin. If God granted heaven to rebellious sinners, they would make it into a hell. So God expresses His love in terms of moral and righteous principles. On any other basis God would cease to be love, and that would be contrary to His very nature.

JUSTIFICATION

In Romans 1:16-18 Paul declares the twofold facet of the gospel: God's righteousness and God's wrath. God's wrath is not an emotion of God. It is God's law in operation. And if left to law only, there is no hope for you. For "*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men . . .*" And since "*all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:32), there is no hope. But this latter verse is followed by others. "*Being justified freely by his grace through the re-*

demption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past . . . to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus" (vv. 24-26). Here, then, is the other facet of the gospel, the righteousness of God. In this sense God's righteousness is not an attribute of God. It is His activity of grace whereby He picks you up out of unrighteousness and places you down in His righteousness as though you had not sinned.

In his own righteousness no man can stand justified before God's judgment seat. For that reason God revealed a righteousness which is not according to law but according to grace (Rom. 10:3-11). It is the righteousness or justification which is in Christ Jesus. In Christ God is "just" in that He condemned sin. But He is the "justifier" in that He bore your sins on the cross. It becomes your righteousness "*through faith in his blood*" (Rom. 3:25).

The Greek word for "righteousness" belongs to a family of words which depicts not what one is but what one is declared to be. Thus when you believe in Christ it does not mean that you are not a sinner or never have sinned. It means that by His sovereign decree God declares that you are justified before Him as though you had never sinned. God sees you not for what you are but for what Christ is.

He sees you "in Christ." The righteousness of Christ becomes your righteousness, not through your merit but by God's grace.

When you believe in Christ as your Saviour Paul says in Romans 4:3 that your faith is put down in God's book as "righteousness." Across your record He writes the word "righteousness" or "justified." In this sense your name is written in the "book of life." Hell did its worst to Christ on the cross. Nevermore can it touch Him. Nor can it touch those who are "in Christ."

Yes, the judgment is sure. Its penalty is just. But God's justification through Christ is available to you and to all men.

The Bible says, "*. . . it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*" (Heb. 9:27). Death is not the end. The judgment awaits. How will you stand in the judgment?

In conclusion let me remind you again. You may build a bomb shelter against the wrath of wicked men. But it will not save you from the wrath of a righteous God. Your only security in that hour is "in Christ" who said, "*And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*" (Matt. 10:28).

God in infinite love has prepared for you a shelter from such in the person of His beloved Son. Trust in Him as your Saviour. Thus you can look forward to the judgment with joy.

It's a Fact . . .

The average woman in the U. S. walks 10 miles a day, one mile more than the average man 21 to 65 years old, according to the National Geographic Society. High school students average 16 miles daily, waiters 13, and policemen 18.—From G-1-G
