

# SOTERIOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

## PART 61

### REWARDS & INHERITANCE, PART 13

How does any believer who has been part of the first resurrection, which includes all church age believers, fail to reign with Him? John wrote that all those who experience the first resurrection will reign with Him for the thousand years of the Messianic, Millennial Kingdom and John is referring to the saints of the church age and the saints of the Tribulation when he writes those words. Notice that Dillow said, "This is what I believe." He didn't say this what the Bible says. He can't; the Bible never says that some believers will be in the Kingdom but removed from reigning with the Lord for unfaithfulness in this age. Notice also that Dillow said we can "imagine" the Lord forgiving believers after the judgment seat. He has to resort to imagination because there is no Scriptural support for that position.

Revelation 20:6 <sup>6</sup>Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Dillow writes the Sermon on the Mount is teaching that one must surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (Mt. 5:20) as a requirement for entrance into greatness in the Kingdom. For him, if they fail to do that, that is, fail to become great by virtue of obedience, they will be in the Kingdom but "lacking the necessary surpassing righteousness;" therefore, they will not be ruling with the Lord [Joseph Dillow, *Final Destiny: The Future Reign of the Servant Kings*, p. 311]. He also imports into the Sermon on the Mount the doctrine that because Jesus is primarily speaking to His disciples, He is imparting church age believer truth in the Sermon. Dillow changes what the Lord said from righteousness that surpasses the scribes and the Pharisees to enter the Kingdom to mean not just entering but reigning with Him. The Lord didn't say anything about reigning with Him in Matthew 5:19-20. He is making a leap from being great in the Kingdom to ruling in the Kingdom and the Lord didn't say that. It is easy to see that misunderstanding what is actually going on in Matthew concerning the Kingdom offer Christ is making to the Jews leads to massive false interpretations of the Scriptures in that book.

Matthew 5:19–20 <sup>19</sup>“Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>20</sup>“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Dillow mischaracterizes the false charismatic, miracle workers of Matthew 7:21-23 as unfaithful believers.

Matthew 7:21–23 <sup>21</sup>“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. <sup>22</sup>“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ <sup>23</sup>“And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’

This Scripture is still part of the Sermon on the Mount. These people are charismatic, works oriented Jews who are relying on their works to get them into heaven. Dillow claims the will of God in verse 21 refers to obeying the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. The problem with that line of thought is the will of God is to believe in the Son and that is where the surpassing righteousness ultimately will come from. These people were never believers; therefore, they never knew Him. The Sermon is about the true righteousness of the Law which surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees who had perverted the true intent of the Law and without which no one could not enter the Kingdom. Ultimately, it is about believing in the One, the only One, who has that kind of righteousness and that was the King who was preaching to them. When Jesus said to them, “I never knew you,” He is saying they are unsaved. Even the most carnal, unfaithful believer is known by Him; therefore, these people cannot be among the born again.

John 6:28–29 <sup>28</sup>Therefore they said to Him, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?” <sup>29</sup>Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”

Dillow seems to have developed his doctrine and then used the Scriptures to justify his conclusion. That is exactly the opposite method we are to use to interpret the Bible and it is a departure from literal hermeneutics. Once literal hermeneutics are abandoned, then any conclusions and interpretations reached thereafter are suspect at best and totally incorrect at the worst. There are several exegetical avenues he took to arrive at this doctrine. The first is he misinterprets the book of Matthew by placing the church into it in the Sermon on the Mount, in the Olivet Discourse, and in other places as well. He claims the Sermon was preached to the Lord's disciples therefore making it not only applicable to the church but addressed to the church. The problem is the disciples weren't part of the church yet; it didn't exist. Another problem is that Jesus was offering the Israelites the Kingdom of Heaven. The Olivet Discourse concerns only Israel; Church

age believers are not part of the context at all. The Sermon on the Mount was delivered to those who were still living under the Law. The Kingdom was not in existence and it did not come into existence at that time.

The second major presupposition Dillow uses is that losing one's inheritance is a punitive aspect of the judgment seat of Christ. He bases this doctrine on the Old Testament Scriptures that inform us the Israelites of the Exodus lost their inheritance in the land of Canaan due to their unbelief. His reasoning seems to be that if it happened to them then it must happen to us.

He set forth these propositions that seemingly were used to guide his research. "1) There is a difference between inheriting the land of Canaan and living there. The former refers to ownership and the latter to mere residence. 2) While Israel was promised the inheritance as a nation, the condition for maintaining their inheritance-right to the land of Canaan was faith, obedience, and completion of their divine calling. The promise, while national, was applied only to the believing and obedient remnant. 3) The inheritance is not to be equated with heaven but with something in addition to heaven, promised to those believers who faithfully obey the Lord. 4) Just as Old Testament believers forfeited their earthly inheritance through disobedience, we can also forfeit our future reward (inheritance) by a similar failure. Loss of inheritance, however, does not mean loss of salvation. 5) Two kinds of inheritance were enjoyed in the Old Testament. All Israelites who had believed and were therefore regenerate had God as their inheritance, but not all inherited the land. This paves the way for the concept that the New Testament may also teach two inheritances. We are all heirs of God, but we are not all joint-heirs with Christ, unless we persevere to the end of life. The former refers to our salvation and the latter to our reward. 6) A child of Israel was both an heir of God and an heir of Canaan by virtue of faith in God. Yet only those believers in Israel who lived faithful lives would maintain their status as firstborn sons. These were the ones who would actually receive what had been promised to them as an inheritance" [Joseph Dillow, *Final Destiny: The Future Reign of the Servant Kings*, p. 57].

The major presupposition he makes here that derails his argument is the equivalence he makes between Israel and the Church. Israel's possession of the land depended on their fidelity to the Mosaic Covenant; the church's promises are totally based in grace. Even at that, the Israelites will one day inherit the land in fulfillment of all the promises and that will be based on grace and faith at the Second Coming of Christ. The promise to Israel was not fulfilled only in the faithful remnant of the Exodus. The faithful remnant went into the land in the original conquest but once in the land, Israel always had a mixture of believers and unbelievers and frequently the unbelievers far outnumbered the faithful remnant which was always present. Tying Israel's presence in the land with the judgment seat of Christ which is for members of the body of Christ only is not a

legitimate association. There is a national aspect to Israel's presence in the land that isn't applicable to the Church. Israel as a nation was removed from the land for unfaithfulness and they will only be finally restored to the land and receive their inheritance when they come to faith at the Second Coming. Dillow does not explain how the fact that a faithful remnant of Jews was removed from their land inheritance in both Israel and in Judah affects his theology that only faithful Jews inherited and possessed the land. In those instances, believers lost their land inheritance just as the unfaithful Israelites lost their inheritance. Daniel was certainly a faithful believer to the end of his life, but he didn't keep his inheritance in the land. Dillow suggested that only firstborn Israelites sons received the inheritance, but that is untrue. Firstborn sons received a double portion of the inheritance, but all sons, from the firstborn to the youngest, received an inheritance. Perhaps his correlation between believing Israelites and believing Christians breaks down more than just a little bit. The concept of inheritance isn't totally different between Israel and the church, but it isn't as solid a connection as Dillow wants to make it either. Dillow's presuppositions do not establish a solid foundation for the formulation of sound doctrine. Literal hermeneutics is sadly lacking in them, and the root of all this error is his departure from a consistent use of literal hermeneutics and his departure from dispensational distinctions. All faulty doctrines originate in this area. Dispensational theology and literal hermeneutics are the foundational keys to interpreting and understanding the Scriptures.

How do the Scriptures refute this punitive view of the judgment seat of Christ? It is noteworthy to understand these punitive views dismember the body of Christ; this doctrine tears apart the bride of Christ. Is it possible for any part of the bride of Christ to be removed from either the wedding ceremony or the Wedding Supper of the Lamb? It makes no sense to think that the bride, in whole or in part, can be separated from the Groom at the wedding. It's her wedding; how then can she be absent in any way? If any members of the bride and body of Christ are missing from the wedding ceremony, then the bride is incomplete. It is akin to saying that the work Jesus did on the cross to reconcile people to God is incomplete because they were carnal, unfaithful, and disobedient. Since when does Christ's finished work depend in any way on the performance of human beings before, during, and after the moment they come to faith? Jesus bought out of the slave market of sin every born again person and placed them into His body. Unity is a concept He taught for the Church in this age which is imperfect at best; the Church, the true Church, has not achieved perfect unity in this dispensation. Won't unity be perfected once the body of Christ is glorified and in His presence? Of course it will be perfect at that time. Therefore, it is serious error to suggest that any believer, from the first of them to the last, will be missing from the Wedding Supper of the Lamb and/or from the groom's side during His Millennial Kingdom reign.

John 17:20–23 <sup>20</sup>“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; <sup>21</sup>that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. <sup>22</sup>“The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; <sup>23</sup>I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

Christ Jesus purchased those who belong to Him on the cross; the sin debt has been completely paid in full. Neither the sin nature nor personal sins are an issue at the judgment seat of Christ. Dillow’s doctrine makes sin an issue there. Once believers are glorified, the church will have been completely perfected in unity and that is Christ’s work and not our work. When Jesus said on the cross, “It is finished!” He was saying He had completed all the work of redemption that would ever be necessary. No one will ever suffer loss of any kind for the completed work of the Savior on the cross. No one member of the body and bride of Christ will be removed from the others.

John 19:30 <sup>30</sup>Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

“When Jesus cried out on the cross in John 19:30, ‘It is finished,’ He testified that everything necessary to satisfy the infinite justice of God toward sin was fully accomplished. What did He leave unfinished which He or we still need to pay?” [Michael D. Halsey, *The Gospel of Grace and Truth: A Theology of Grace from the Gospel of John*, p. 213]. Of course, the answer is that nothing has been left unfinished.

Romans 5:1 <sup>1</sup>Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Stegall made an interesting observation concerning the peace with God that Christ made a reality for all who believe and he contrasted that with the temporal peace of God. “Having the peace of God can fluctuate from day to day based on the consistency of the believer’s spiritual *communion* with the Lord; but having peace with God never changes since it is based on the believer’s eternal, spiritual *union* with Christ” [Tom Stegall, “Are Disobedient Christians Under God’s Wrath? Part II: Position in Christ” in *Should Christians Fear Outer Darkness?*, p. 273]. Dillow wrote that some believers will suffer “rebuke, regret, reflection, and repentance” after the judgment seat of Christ and they will be consigned, for a time, to a place of outer darkness separated from the Lord where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Does that sound like peace in and with Christ Jesus? Does that sound like peace with God? Of course it doesn’t and it isn’t true either.

Romans 8:1 <sup>1</sup>Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus [NASB].

Romans 8:1 <sup>1</sup>There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit [NKJV].

“All condemnation in the matter of guilt is forever past for the Christian. He shall not come into judgment respecting his sin, therefore the judgment seat of Christ deals wholly with the matter of service and not with the question of sin” [Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, p. 7:269]. There is a textual problem with this verse. This verse may be referring to those who “do not walk in relation to the flesh but in relation to the spirit” which the NKJV has but the NASB omits and is therefore a temporal discipleship issue and not a justification salvation issue[Zane C. Hodges, *Romans: Deliverance From Wrath*, p. 207], but once we are in our glorified bodies, we will all be walking in relation to the Spirit and therefore this truth seems applicable at that time to all glorified believers which precludes any condemnation at the judgment seat of Christ as well.

It is also God's promise that He will remember our sins no more. If that is true, how is it possible that our sins can be judged in some way all over again at the judgment seat of Christ?

Psalms 103:12 <sup>12</sup>As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

“For the ancient reader...the span of east from west suggests the greatest imaginable distance. For the modern reader; the comparison is even more striking because we know that the distance between...east and west is actually infinity” [John Goldingay, *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms: Psalms: Psalms 90-150*, p. 172]. Our sins are removed from us to an infinite degree.

Isaiah 38:17 <sup>17</sup>“Lo, for my own welfare I had great bitterness; It is You who has kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back.

Micah 7:19 <sup>19</sup>He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea.

“God's faithfulness to Israel is a reminder for contemporary believers that they should exult in the astoundingly faithful nature of God who watches over them with loving discipline and grants forgiveness freely and fully to those who seek it” [Daniel Green, “Micah” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, p. 1377].

Jeremiah 31:34 <sup>34</sup>“They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

A prominent promise made in the New Covenant is that sin will be remembered no more. If God forgets sin at the moment of belief based on the person and work of Christ, then how can any theologian or Bible student possibly develop a doctrine that says sin will be part of the equation at the judgment seat of Christ? It is simply not a biblical concept.

Hebrews 8:12 <sup>12</sup>“FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE.”

Hebrews 10:17 <sup>17</sup>“AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.”

Dillow claims that God does remember our sins but to do this he resorts to Scriptures that are referring to temporal disobedience and sins that call for temporal discipline such as John 13:8 (“unless I wash you, you have no part with me”) and 1 John 1:9 which he says makes the claim unless we confess our sins, they are not forgiven. But he fails to account for the fact these are temporal fellowship issues that will no longer be an issue once we are in glorified bodies. Confusing and intertwining the temporal with the eternal is a serious exegetical/hermeneutical mistake depending on context, of course, but temporal discipline for a believer in this dispensation is a completely separate issue from the evaluation believers will undergo at the judgment seat of Christ.

We are credited with the perfect righteousness of Christ Jesus. This cannot be deficient or insufficient at the judgment seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:21 <sup>21</sup>He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Philippians 3:9 <sup>9</sup>and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,

We are perfected, not in and of ourselves, but in Christ. Once we are glorified and standing before the Lord there will be no deficiencies found in us. If we are perfected in the day of Christ Jesus, then we cannot be judged unworthy of the Kingdom.

1 Peter 5:10 <sup>10</sup>After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

Philippians 1:6 <sup>6</sup>For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

Christ purchased us out of the slave market of sin; His blood cannot be devalued by suggesting believers must be punished at the judgment seat for things that were already accounted for on the cross. Jesus paid the price for all sins for all time.

1 Corinthians 6:20 <sup>20</sup>For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Ephesians 1:7 <sup>7</sup>In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

Hebrews 9:12 <sup>12</sup>and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

Along these same lines, if God has been completely and satisfactorily propitiated at the cross, then how can personal sins enter back into the equation at glorification when sin is no longer present at all?

1 John 2:2 <sup>2</sup>and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

Romans 3:23–25 <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; <sup>25</sup>whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

Propitiation is the turning away of wrath by an offering; in this case, it means Christ satisfied the wrath of God through His sacrificial death on the cross on our behalf. If God is completely satisfied with us based on Christ's work on our behalf, why would Christ be less than satisfied with His work on our behalf? He wouldn't. The sin issue has been decisively settled once for all.

People are condemned because they do not believe in the Son of God; those who do believe do not come into judgment.



John 3:18 <sup>18</sup>“He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

The judgment spoken of here is a negative judgment. Unbelievers are judged because of their unbelief but believers do not experience a negative judgment because Christ has been judged in their place as their substitute. Sins do not condemn an unbeliever to the lake of fire; they go to the lake of fire because their sin nature was not dealt with through belief in the One who can remedy that problem. If the sins of an unbeliever do not condemn them to the lake of fire, then how can the personal sins of a believer condemn him in any way at the judgment seat of Christ? They cannot; they are simply no longer an issue at that time.

Having said that, there is one possible way our sins can come into consideration at the judgment seat of Christ. We will be rewarded based on how we served and glorified God during our life as believers. To the extent that some personal sins interfere with or prevent us from serving Him or shame Him in the eyes of the world, then rewards may be lost but that still is not a judgment for those sins. It is a loss of what could have been in terms of rewards but will not be. It is not punitive; it is simply an unrealized possibility. This is not a judgment for personal sins; it is an evaluation for rewards the basis for which may have been affected in time by personal sins committed.

I'm going to close out this section on rewards by reading the introduction to a work entitled "Rewards and the Judgment Seat of Christ" by Thomas L. Stegall in *Freely By His Grace: Classical Free Grace Theology*, pp. 419-420.

"The day has finally arrived. The trumpet sounds. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, Jesus Christ appears for you as a member of His bride, the church. You are caught up to be with Him forever. Every saint of the last two thousand years joins you, forming a vast company in the presence of the Savior. With unspeakable joy you realize that your body has just undergone an amazing transformation and it is now like His body—glorious, sinless, and immortal.

The scene suddenly shifts and you find yourself alone before the Lord of glory, standing face to face with the One who loved you and died for you. As you notice the distinctive marks in His hands, feet, and side, you are overwhelmed by the significance of His sacrificial death for you and His victorious resurrection. How can your soul ever thank and praise Him enough for all the redemptive work He has done for you?

Yet, amazingly, the King of kings now fixes His majestic gaze on you and concerns Himself not with His own work for you but with the works you have done for Him. The scope of your entire Christian life on earth comes under the searching judgment of His perfect and exhaustive knowledge. Your every thought, word, and

deed done in His name is put to the test and turned inside-out so that its true spiritual quality is revealed. He exposes many of your deeds as having emanated from a sinful, stubborn, self-reliant, and self-glorifying heart. They are deemed utterly worthless and consumed by the flames, incinerated, and lost forever as opportunities to glorify Him. You are overcome with a sense of shame before the presence of your Lord and Savior as you realize what a great, permanent loss has just occurred.

But wait! What's that? Shimmering in the pile of ashes, there are some things that catch your eye—some things that have passed through the fire test. These are genuinely good works that were wrought by the indwelling Holy Spirit as you walked by faith, serving and glorifying your Savior. For these, the Lord commends and rewards you with a special position of service in His kingdom that is commensurate with your degree of service for Him while on earth. Your shame and regret are turned to great joy at the glorious prospect of serving your Savior in His soon-to-be-established kingdom. You have just experienced the fateful event known in Scripture as 'the judgment seat of Christ.'