

~Other Speakers A-F: Richard Baxter:

The hallway to heaven is not barricaded anymore. The flaming sword no longer bars the passage to Paradise, for Christ has provided the way in. The porch of this temple is magnificent, and the gate of it is called "Beautiful." Here are the four corners of this porch of Paradise.

1. The Second Coming of Christ

For our sake Christ came into the world, suffered, died, rose, ascended; and for our sake He will return. He will come again to receive us unto Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. We have His word, His many promises, His ordinances, which show forth His death until He come. We have His Spirit, to direct, sanctify, and comfort until He returns. He that would come to suffer, will surely come to triumph. He that would come to purchase, will surely come to possess.

O fellow-Christians, what a day that will be, when we, who have been kept prisoners by sin, shall be brought out by the Lord himself! He will not come, O careless world, to be slighted and neglected by you any more. Yet even His first coming, had its magnificence. If, when He was in the form of a servant, they cried out, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (Matt. 8:27), what will they say when they shall see Him coming in His glory, and the heavens and the earth obey Him?

The Resurrection of the Body

The second event that leads to Paradise is Christ's great work of raising the body from the dust and uniting it again with the soul. Unbelief may ask, "Shall all these scattered bones and dust become a man?" Let me with reverence answer for God. Is it not as easy to raise the dead as to make heaven and earth out of nothing? Look not on the dead bones and dust and difficulty, but at the promise. Contentedly commit these bodies to a prison that shall not long contain them. Let us lie down in peace and take our rest; it will not be an everlasting night, nor endless sleep. Lay down cheerfully this clod of mortality; you shall undoubtedly receive it again as immortal. Lay down freely this earthly body; you shall receive it again, a heavenly body. Though you be separated from it in weakness, it shall be raised again in mighty power; "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet—[^]for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:52). "The dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:16-17). Triumph now, O Christian, in these promises; you shall surely triumph in their performance. The grave that could not keep our Lord, cannot keep us. He arose for us, and by the same power will cause us to arise.

The Judgment

The third corner of this porch at the entrance to Paradise is the judgment, where the saints shall first be acquitted, and then with Christ judge the world. Then shall the world behold the goodness and severity of God—[^]on those who perish, severity; but to His chosen ones, goodness.

The sinners shall see the Lord Jesus, whom they neglected, whose Word they disobeyed, whose ministers they abused, whose servants they hated, now sitting to judge them. Their own consciences shall cry out against them, and call to their remembrance all their misdoings. Which way will the wretched sinner look? Who can imagine the terrible thoughts of his heart? Now the world cannot help him; his old companions cannot; the saints neither can nor will. Only the Lord Jesus can; but there is the misery—[^]He will not.

Time was, sinner, when Christ would have saved you, and you would not have Him; now you want Christ's help when it is too late. It is useless to cry "to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne" (Rev. 6:16); for you have the 'Lord of the mountains and rocks' for your enemy, and the mountains and rocks obey His voice, not yours. I charge you, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the living and the dead at His appearing, that you seriously ponder these things now.

But why are you trembling, O humble recipient of grace? He that would not lose one Noah in the flood, nor overlook one Lot in Sodom; will He forget you at that day? "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Pet. 2:9). He knows how to make the same day to be the greatest terror to His enemies—[^]and yet the greatest joy to His friends. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the

Spirit" (Rom. 8:1).

What wonderful joy, that our dear Lord, who loves us, and whom we love, shall be our Judge! Will a man fear to be judged by his dearest friend, or a wife by her own husband? Christian, did Christ come down and suffer, and weep, and bleed, and die for you, and will He now condemn you? Was He judged, condemned, and executed in your place, and now will He himself condemn you? Well, then, let the terror of Judgment Day be ever so great, surely our Lord can mean no harm to us at all. Let it make the devil and the wicked tremble—but it shall make us leap for joy.

Christ will take His people into commission with himself, and they shall sit and approve His righteous judgment. "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know you not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6:2, 3). Were it not for the Word of Christ that speaks it, this announcement would seem unbelievable. But thus shall the saints be honored according to Scripture.

The Coronation

The last preparation for the saints' everlasting rest is their royal coronation and receiving of the kingdom. Our Lord's own proper title is "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (1 Tim. 6:15). Our position is to be kings and to reign with Him (Rev. 1:6). We will not be flattered with empty titles, but dignified with real authority. The Lord himself will give us possession with this word of congratulation—"Well done, good and faithful servant—you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things—enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matt. 25:23). With this solemn and blessed proclamation our King of Kings shall enthrone us—"Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Thus we have seen the Christian safely entered into Paradise and received to his rest.