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PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA  
www.schultze.org**

"And, behold, I come quickly" —Revelation 22:12

## **The Great Convergence**

**By Reimar Schultze**

**"...and the books were opened...and they were judged every man according to their works"**

—Revelation 20:12–13

The day of the Great Judgment will be the day of the great convergence of all humankind. John, in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, says that on that day all men will stand before the throne, small and great, the men alive and all men who have died. All men from Adam to the last man born shall stand before that Great White Throne to be judged.

We can excuse ourselves from all meetings on earth—be it worship services, prayer meetings, business meetings, ball games, parties and club meetings—but there is one meeting in our eternal existence that no one will be able to excuse himself from: the Great Judgment. All men, whether they like it or not, will be there: the atheists, the Hindus, the Muslims, the Buddhists, the Baptists, the Methodists, the Catholics, the Independents, the rich, the poor, the feeble-minded, the intellectuals, the senators, the governors, the presidents, the teen-agers, the children, the old, the strong, the feeble, and so on. People from all nations of all time shall converge on that day to be found in that one place at the one time: the Great White Throne.

Further, let us consider that on that Judgment Day, no excuses will be accepted and no sins will be forgiven. On that day, all judgment will solely be based on the works that we have done. Every man—believer or unbeliever—will be judged according to his works.

Modern professing Christianity has tilted dangerously close to a doctrine of faith without works. Works have been relegated to an optional status, and the church as a whole has declared that all our salvation is in believing in the Lord Jesus.

Although, ultimately, this is correct, the false interpretation of this doctrine deeply concerns this writer. If we mean by "all our salvation is Christ" and that therefore it does not matter how we live, then our salvation doctrine is wrong. If, however, we mean by "all our salvation being of Christ," that it is he who saves us, sanctifies us and empowers us to live godly to do the works Jesus called us to do, then, indeed, we have the correct revelation of the doctrine of salvation.

Since faith is preached at the beginning of the New Testament and works becomes the final criterion on Judgment Day, let me begin to explain the relationship.

### **Faith and Works**

Prior to our salvation, there is nothing we can bring to Jesus to save ourselves. Nothing! All our righteous deeds are as filthy rags (Is. 64:6). It can be said of all of us that we "are all gone out of the way," that we have "become unprofitable" servants, that "there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. 3:12)! We bring nothing to Jesus of any value. All we bring to him is our sin, our filthy rags, our pride, our jealousy, our selfishness, our greed and our rebellion. Consequently, if we want to be reconciled to God, our only hope is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ's mercies and a will to repent and go with God.

Jesus will accept us under these terms as his children, and nowhere is this made more plain than by the words of Paul in Ephesians 2, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and

that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast" (vv. 8–9). Absolutely no works are involved in our reconciliation with God!

But here is a great danger zone. The greatest danger zone in evangelical thinking is that most believe that because no works are required to reconcile us to God, no works are necessary to get us to heaven!

My friend, the apostle Paul does not believe that, and so to combat this great fatal doctrinal error, he immediately proceeds to stress works in the next verse, "For we are his workmanship..." (v. 10). In other words, although works meant nothing to get us to Jesus, now as children of God, we need to roll up our sleeves and get to work! We need to begin to do the work of God: "For we are...created in Christ Jesus UNTO GOOD WORKS" (emphasis added). Everyone born of God is created to be a WORKER for him.

Works meant nothing prior to our conversion. But now, works means everything—for John says that at the Judgment, we shall be judged by our works.

Now, the works we are to do as Jesus' disciples are not religious works of our choosing—works our flesh is particularly suited to do—but works that God has "before ordained that we should walk in them." These are works that nail us to the cross. These works are works for which we have no earthly talent. These are works we can only do by faith, by absolute dependence on Jesus so that he will receive all the glory.

This whole doctrine conforms to Jesus' teachings in the judgment parables of Matthew 25: the Parable of the Ten Virgins, the Parable of the Talents and the Parable of the Sheep and Goats. In each case, the parables end with Christians, believers, servants of God being shut out of heaven for laziness and neglect in the works of God. Two of the parables end with believers being cast into everlasting punishment, and this is implied in the third parable where believers are said to be shut out of the Great Wedding Feast. For example, the man who buried his talent was called by Jesus a servant of God. But because he had no works to show at the time of reckoning, because he was an "unprofitable servant," he was cast into outer darkness (v. 30).

When Jesus saves us, he invests us with power to do the works of God, and he expects a return from his investment. And if this does not show up in our books on Judgment Day, we shall be lost forever.

Many believe in God and in Jesus and all he did. So does the devil. What distinguishes devilish faith from godly faith is that the devil's faith produces nothing for God, but godly faith is always busy with his assigned works.

Every time we talk about believing, we must mean "believing as the Scriptures say." Jesus said, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38).

Scriptural faith is always very productive. It produces rivers! If your faith does not produce rivers, it is not scriptural faith; it is dead faith or devilish faith.

So now Jesus has given you new life. He has given you the work that he had planned for you to do before the creation of the world. What is next?

### **The Body and Works**

Jesus then places you into his body. Jesus never puts a convert into any other place but his body. Christians cannot live outside Christ's body. All born of God are born into his body. It is only from here, from within Christ's body that we can abide in Jesus. And in his body, we begin to fulfill our body ministry. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?..." (1 Cor. 12:13–15).

Our ministry begins in the body and remains in the body. We can never step out of the body and expect to have a ministry. The body also needs us, and we need the body. The body

always needs the foot, the hand and the eye, and these three also always need the body. Hence, we all are called to minister to the body of Christ, to strengthen and equip the body so that that body can become a vehicle of salvation for the lost world. When the body comes to oneness; when there are no longer schisms in the body; when the body is free of spots, wrinkles and blemishes, and when the body is full of love toward God and one another, the power of the Holy Spirit will fall upon that body to change whole communities.

Now, getting back to Judgment Day, we shall be judged every man according to the works we have done. It does not say that we shall be judged according to our faith. Faith is fluid. It is an abstract term. Works is a concrete word. There can be no arguing whether you have done works or not. It will show. If there has been faith—as the Scriptures say—there will be works abundantly. Even as John says, if we do his will, if we have crucified our will to do his will, that is, his works, we shall abide forever (1 John 2:17).

Remember the judgment parables of Matthew 25? Jesus invested in you and expects a return. If it is not there, you are to be pitied.

When we come to the Judgment, we will not be asked about our faith. We will not be asked about our conversion experience. We will not be asked about our religious activities or about baptism. Our excuses will not stand, and we will not be able to receive mercy.

On this side of the grave, we have a merciful Lamb who will forgive us seven times seventy if we are serious. On the other side of the grave, we shall find an unmerciful Judge—not a meek Lamb. His hair will be white as snow, his eyes as a flame of fire, his feet like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace, his voice will be like many waters, and out of his mouth will proceed a sharp, two-edged sword (Rev. 1:14–15)! This is not a picture of a compassionate, forgiving Lamb!

No one will find mercy at the Judgment seat of Christ. No one! Jesus will point to our book with our name on it, and an angel will bring it to him. And then each of us will be judged according to the works recorded in our book.

Yes, the evil we have done—if we have repented of it, if we have asked for forgiveness—will not be found in these books. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Forgiven sins will not be in the book—they are blotted out. Jesus only deals with our sins once, not twice. We either let him deal with them on this side of the Judgment as a merciful Savior or on the other side as an unmerciful Judge.

Today is the day of salvation; now is the accepted time! If we arrive at the Judgment empty-handed and filthy, we will be filthy and unprofitable servants forever. If we come to the Judgment holy as profitable servants, we will be holy and will profit forever. "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:11–12).

Saved by faith? Yes! Judged by works? Yes! Did I make myself perfectly clear? I hope I did, for "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20).