

### **Predestination, III; Resurrection**

I would like to go on today to talk about Calvin's chapter on the final resurrection. Maybe after that I can return to a critique of Calvin's doctrine of election. If we do not do it in this lesson, however, we will do it in another lesson. Chapter 25 of Book III is the last chapter of Book III. It is called "The Final Resurrection." This is Calvin's treatment of eschatology.

Calvin is famous for his treatment of election. People identify him with that very quickly. He is not so famous for his treatment of eschatology. Calvin's eschatology is often overlooked, but it is important in the *Institutes* and in Calvin's thought. We will give it adequate attention today. It covers just one chapter in Book III, but it is an important chapter.

Let us look to the Lord in prayer, as we pray in the words of John Calvin.

*"Grant, Almighty God, since we have already entered in hope upon the threshold of our eternal inheritance and know that there is a mansion for us in heaven, since Christ our head and the firstfruits of our salvation has been received there; grant that we may proceed more and more in the way of Your holy calling until at length we reach the goal and so enjoy the eternal glory of which You have given us a taste in this world by the same Christ our Lord. Amen."*

Vondel, in his treatment of Calvin's theology, calls chapter 25 the "crowning act" of Book III. We could see it as the crowing act of the first three books. We have considered God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We have considered creation, providence, the coming of Christ, the work of Christ, and the application of redemption. This is the crowning act of all of that as we come to Calvin's eschatology.

In the first section of chapter 25, many of the themes that Calvin already talked about are mentioned again. It reminds me of the great west window of the Princeton University chapel, that beautiful neo-Gothic chapel, which was constructed in 1925. It has many impressive stained glass windows. The west window is the second coming of Christ. As you look around the chapel, you see different biblical and historical events in the stained glass windows of the chapel. Then when you turn to look at the west window, the second coming of Christ, you will see many of those themes and pictures presented again in the west window under the general idea of the second coming of Christ. As we look at the beginning of Calvin's chapter 25, many of the ideas that he already addressed are repeated very briefly in the words there.

For Calvin, eschatology is not simply the end of all things. The word "eschatology" means "last things." Calvin did not use that word. He used the term "final resurrection." In using that title, he was dealing with what we commonly call eschatology, the study of last things. For Calvin it was not merely the end of all things, but rather it was a kind of majestic summing up of all things. It is like the way the west window of the Princeton University chapel is a kind of majestic summing up of the whole biblical and post-biblical history that is depicted in the windows of the chapel. One writer has said, "For Calvin, a fruitful consideration of the eternal glory of the believer in Christ was the logical end and crown of an orderly theological discussion on God's grace." All of Book III is about God's grace. Book II and Book I were about God's grace as well. Certainly Book III is about God's grace, and in chapter 25 we have the logical end of God's grace and the crown of an orderly theological discussion of God's grace.

I think we can say that, despite the fact that people generally think that eschatology was not very important for Calvin—that he did not make much use of it—it was a topic that concerned Calvin. It has a place in the *Institutes*. Not only Book III, chapter 25 is about eschatology, but also Book III, chapter 9 is called “Meditation on the Future Life.” So there are two places that consider eschatology. Within Calvin’s practical description of the Christian life, one of those chapters tells us to focus our attention on heaven. That is a chapter that could be linked with Book III, chapter 25 as summing up Calvin’s eschatology.

You also find the importance of this doctrine for Calvin, not only by reading the *Institutes*, but also by reading Calvin’s letters. It is impressive when you read the letters of Calvin, in which he was often dealing with serious problems, facing difficulties, persecution, and even death, how often Calvin pointed them to heaven or the judgment. He pointed to the summing up of all things by God. It was a source of comfort and encouragement. Calvin said this doctrine is for those who are facing “hard military service,” which was Calvin’s description of what we face in this life. Yet there is an end to it, and not just an end, but a glorious consummation. There is a glorious summing up of all things. We can look forward to that end, even as we move through this life, with its problems and difficulties.

Another place that you can see Calvin’s interest in the end times, or in Calvin’s language, the final resurrection, is in his prayers. I do not know if you have noticed, but as I have begun each of these lessons with Calvin’s prayers, I believe that every prayer that I have used and almost every prayer that I have read from Calvin ends in heaven or ends in the second coming of Christ. The prayer that I used to begin the lesson on election ends this way, “...we may be led to Christ only as the fountain of Thy election, in whom also is set before us the certainty of our salvation through Thy Gospel until we shall at length be gathered with Him into that eternal glory, which He has procured for us by His own blood. Amen.” The prayer ends with heaven. The prayer I used in the lesson on justification ends this way, “Until at last we stand spotless before Thee, in that day when Christ shall appear for the salvation of all His people. Amen.” If you made a study of Calvin’s prayers, and we do have scores of his prayers, perhaps 100 or more, you would find that almost every single prayer leads us right up to the coming of Christ and to the glories of heaven. For Calvin, this doctrine is important, wonderful, strengthening, and something that Christians should turn their hearts to continually.

Another way to put Calvin’s chapter 25 in context is to think of it as his theology of hope. He began in Book III, chapter 25, section 1 by saying that we are “grievously exercised under hard military service, and we then must cling to what is elsewhere taught concerning the nature of hope.” Book III began with faith. There is a short chapter on the Holy Spirit and then a long section on faith. That is followed by repentance, then justification, then prayer, then election, and now the final resurrection. The movement has gone from faith to hope in Book III. Calvin’s catechism, which he created in 1537 for Geneva, is very beautiful and expresses this idea in a powerful way. Calvin wrote, “Thus faith believes that God is real. Hope awaits the opportune time for Him to demonstrate His reality. Faith believes that God is our Father. Hope believes that He will always act as such toward us. Faith believes that eternal life is given to us. Hope awaits the time when it will be revealed. Faith is the foundation on which hope is supported. Hope nourishes and entertains faith.” We have faith, but we have hope, too. As we come to the final resurrection, we move to Calvin’s theology of hope.

Another interesting and important point in Calvin’s chapter on the final resurrection is how Christocentric it is. Calvin said, “We must keep our eyes fixed upon Christ as we wait upon heaven.” Our focus is on Christ and not really on heaven. Our focus is on Christ even though we meditate on the future life and look forward to heaven. We do that by fixing our attention on Christ. Calvin was very concerned to warn us against undue curiosity, speculation, date setting, and those kinds of things. Calvin

had no use for any of that. He railed against undue speculation, useless questions, and trifling curiosity. The focus of our attention should be on Christ. Calvin pictured Christ in this chapter as the mirror in which we see our own resurrection. It is interesting that, in his treatment of election, Christ is the mirror in which we see our election. Remember that we cannot depend on our good works to give us total assurance in themselves, because those good works are weak and faltering. We also do not have access to the decree directly. We cannot go directly to God the Father and see our name in a book or have access to His mind. Christ is the mirror of our election. As we look at Christ, we see ourselves as elect. Christ is also the mirror of our resurrection. As we look at Christ, we see heaven assured for us. Thus He is the mirror of our election and the assurance of our hope. If we look to the past, to our election, we see Christ. If we look to the future, to heaven, we see Christ. Calvin encouraged us, both in his treatment of election and in his treatment of the final resurrection, to keep our eyes fixed on Christ.

Let me emphasize Calvin's warning against curiosity and speculation, because Calvin was so concerned about it. He said in Book III, chapter 25, section 11, "I not only refrain personally from superfluous investigation of useless matters [he was thinking particularly of details of the end times, heaven, and hell], but I also think I ought to guard against contributing to the levity of others by answering them." He would not entertain trifling questions. What we find in Book III, chapter 25, and elsewhere, is a cautious, restrained, and practical handling of the end times.

It is all the more remarkable because in the sixteenth century there was a rather feverish preoccupation with eschatology. There was much speculation. There was some in Luther. Even Melancthon, who was cautious and even overly cautious at times—as when he did not want to discuss election because of the questions it raised—but he did get into eschatological speculation. The English Protestants, who came to the continent during the reign of Mary Tudor in England, and who were the forerunners of the Puritans, were very much into eschatological writings. Above all, many of the radicals were involved in extreme ways in eschatological speculation, including setting dates and locating places where Christ would return to rule. It was not that there was no interest generally in these matters. What is remarkable is that, in a time when there was a feverish preoccupation with such matters, Calvin was so sober, restrained, and cautious. He said, "Let this then be our short way out, to be satisfied with the mirror and its dimness until we see Him face to face." He used the word mirror again there, but he was not referring to Christ. This time he was referring to the biblical expression that we see through a glass darkly. The term "mirror," by the way, can be both a mirror in which you see your reflection and a glass that you see through. Calvin's use of the word can be either.

Everyone knows that Calvin did not write a commentary on Revelation. One older writer has praised Calvin for that. Thomas Filpot said, "Calvin expounded all the books of Scripture except the Revelation." That overstates the case somewhat. He did not actually write a commentary on every book of the Bible; some of the shorter books do not have commentaries from Calvin. All the major books did receive commentaries. Filpot said, "Calvin expounded all the books of Scripture except the Revelation, which his not doing of was an excellent commentary." That was the opinion of this older writer. Calvin said that he did not write a commentary on Revelation because he did not understand it. People have praised him for that and some have blamed him for it. One writer has called him "O, most wise Calvin," for not writing a commentary on Revelation.

Andrew Davis made a good point in his doctoral dissertation at Southern Baptist Seminary in 1998, called "A New Assessment of John Calvin's Eschatology." It is by far the best treatment of Calvin's eschatology that we have. There are one or two older works that treat the topic as well, but Davis' work is superior. Davis said, "Calvin failed to go right up to the limits of what God had tendered to us, thus leaving some of the field of Scripture untilled and unfruitful." So Davis does not praise Calvin for not

writing a commentary on Revelation. Since Revelation is part of the Bible, it is of value. According to Davis, for Calvin not to write on Revelation was to leave part of Scripture untilled and unfruitful. I would still defend Calvin on this point, however, because he did not say that nobody should write a commentary on Revelation. He just said that he was not going to do it because he did not understand it. He encouraged others to do it. He did not say it was a useless book. Yet he did not feel that he had a grasp of the book. Undoubtedly he had to study the book in order to say that. He did not have a way of understanding the book that he thought would be valuable to the church. He restrained himself from doing something that he believed would not be of great use. At the same time, he encouraged others to do it.

Calvin did write a commentary on Daniel. He did consider the prophetic parts of that book. He seemed to have a handle on it. He seemed to understand how to apply it. His treatment of Daniel was more historical. As Daniel looked ahead, he saw the various empires that rose and fell until the Roman Empire. Calvin seemed to feel more comfortable with that than with Revelation, which could be futurist, preterist, or any number of possibilities. He also handled Ezekiel, which is not an easy book. Calvin did not complete it, however, because he died before he could complete his commentary on Ezekiel.

I am going to cover this chapter by taking some themes and going through them individually. I will begin with the idea of the last days. Calvin used this language to describe the whole New Testament period. That followed how the Bible, New and Old Testaments, used the language. The time from Christ coming until the Day of Judgment can be called the "last days." They can also be called the "end times." Or it can be called the "last hour." We are living in the last hour. Calvin also lived in the last hour. We are living in the end times. We are living in the last days. Calvin explained that the reason God chose to speak of the time between the coming of Christ and the Day of Judgment, this whole period, as the last days is "so that we would be content with the perfection of Christ's teaching." That quote is from Book IV, chapter 8, section 7. Calvin says there and elsewhere that we live between the comings of Christ, His first coming and His second coming, and we are satisfied with the last closing word of Christ. His emphasis is that the last word has come. God has given us the last word. He gave us many words leading up to the coming of Christ. Then the last word is the word of Christ. In Calvin's understanding, that word is the whole New Testament, not only the words of Christ but also the epistles that apply, explain, and elaborate on the words of Christ as written by the followers of Christ. Thus we do not expect another word. That is all there is. That is all there needs to be. So these days are called the last days. Presumably, if they were called something else, we might think another word was coming. Calvin's concern is to say that this language, which is so final and seems strange to us, is significant. After all, the last hour has been going on for a long time. The language reminds us, not of the duration of the time, but rather that God has finally spoken in His Son, and that is the last word. It is the closing word of the Gospel.

This period of the last days will be marked by the worldwide advance of the Gospel, internally and externally. In other words, the church will advance externally throughout the world. God's people will also advance internally through sanctification. That is happening now. The church is spreading, and God is working in the hearts of His people. Not only is God working in this period that we call the last days, but somebody else is also working. That is the anti-Christ. During this period, not only will there be the spreading of the Gospel and the deepening of commitment of Christians to the Lord, but there will also be constant opposition to both of these movements. There will be constant opposition to the spread of the Gospel. There will be constant opposition to personal, individual righteousness. The figure, or word, that is used by Calvin for that opposition is anti-Christ.

Calvin never saw anti-Christ as one person. He did not see anti-Christ as the pope. He did not apply that to an individual pope or to all of the popes. Calvin used that word as a summary word for whatever the source of opposition is to the advancement of the Christian faith, externally or internally. In his view, of course, Roman Catholicism of his day was one source of opposition. It was not, however, the only source of opposition. In his commentary on 2 Thessalonians 2:7, where you would go to find further information from Calvin on the anti-Christ, he said, "The name anti-Christ does not designate a single individual, but a single kingdom, which extends throughout many generations." So the anti-Christ is the force of evil, the work of the devil in its various expressions that operates during this entire period in opposition to the advancement of the Gospel externally and internally. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestant figures often identified the pope as anti-Christ. We do not see that in Calvin. Applying that expression only and specifically to the pope has largely been abandoned. The Westminster Confession of Faith in the form that we use does not identify the pope as anti-Christ.

This idea was probably not original with Calvin. I am sure that Augustine did not identify anti-Christ as one individual but rather as a force of evil. I suspect that, as he often did, Calvin derived his interpretation from Augustine. There were people prior to Calvin, however, who did hold to the idea that a single individual was anti-Christ. John Wycliffe believed that the pope was the anti-Christ. So did Dante. Even within the Catholic tradition, there was the idea that popes were anti-Christ. I suspect that Dante and Wycliffe would have said that there could have been more than one anti-Christ at the same time. Yet they did apply the title to individuals. We do not, however, see Calvin doing that. He did not say the pope was anti-Christ. He would not have said that Saddam Hussein or Adolph Hitler were anti-Christ. He saw anti-Christ as a force of evil and opposition to the good work that God is doing.

We can next consider the idea of millennium. In chapter 25, Calvin opposed the chiliasts, or the millenarians. Chiliast is the Greek form for people who believe in the 1000-year reign of Christ on earth. Millenarian is the Latin form for the same thing, believing in a literal 1000-year reign of Christ on earth. I do not think we should try to understand Calvin as a premillennialist, postmillennialist, or amillennialist. Those are more modern designations for different theories related to the millennium. In any case, it is difficult to see Calvin as espousing anything close to what is today known as premillennialism. Calvin opposed the idea of a 1000-year reign of Christ on earth primarily because He did not want to limit Christ's reign that way. In other words, Calvin wanted to say that Christ is reigning now. It is not that He is going to reign some day on earth, but He is reigning now. That makes him sound much more like an amillennialist.

He again followed Augustine in this. Augustine was the one who changed the history of interpretation from something that may have been more like modern premillennialism to something much more like modern amillennialism. Calvin, as Augustine, held that the 1000-year reference in Revelation 20 does not depict 1000 years to come at the end of the church age, but rather he identified the millennium as the reign of Christ during the church age. In other words, in the end times, the Gospel will advance both internally and externally through the work of the Holy Spirit and the reign of Christ. That is the millennium. It was taking place in the sixteenth century, and it is taking place now in the twenty-first century.

We should also consider the intermediate state. What happens to people when they die? Is there an intermediate state? Calvin was concerned about this. He gave it much more attention than almost any other question related to either the end times or the fate of the soul and the body. Calvin taught in Book III, chapter 25, section 6 that when a believer dies, that believer is taken directly to heaven and enters into "blessed rest." That rest is not soul sleep. It is rather conscious sharing of God's presence while

awaiting the enjoyment of promised glory. There is consciousness. There is rest. And here is something yet to come. There is rest, but not yet glory.

I recently read a book in which the writer was talking about his mother in the preface. She was a believer in England who had recently died. He said, "She has entered into the closer presence of Christ." I had not heard it expressed that way before. I responded to that idea. We are always in the presence of Christ. We are in the presence of Christ now. In heaven, however, we will be in the closer presence of Christ. That is in line with Calvin's thought. We are taken to heaven. We enter into blessed rest. There is conscious sharing of God's presence as we await the enjoyment of promised glory.

One place where Calvin dealt with this issue outside of the *Institutes* was in his book *Psychopannychia*. It was written in 1534. It was the first book of a theological nature that Calvin wrote. It was on soul sleep. The original title of *Psychopannychia* was "The Souls of the Saints Who Die in the Faith of Christ Do Not Sleep but Live in Christ." He wrote the book close to the date of his own conversion. Calvin said he was writing that first theological book, before the first edition of the *Institutes*, because he wanted to refute certain Anabaptists. It is not clear from sixteenth-century history that all Anabaptists believed in soul sleep. Apparently there were some radicals, or Anabaptists, who believed in soul sleep whom Calvin had encountered, and he was attempting to refute their idea. Their idea would have been that at death the soul is unconscious and awaits the resurrection.

In *Psychopannychia*, Calvin argued that the Scriptures state that the soul is capable of a separate existence apart from the body. He was saying that there is evidence that the soul can exist separate from the body. He also believed that Scripture teaches that after death there is a conscious blessedness for the soul. It does not exist in a comatose state, or a state of sleep. There is a state of conscious blessedness on the part of the righteous. When you consider the souls of the reprobate, Calvin said in Book III, chapter 25, section 6 that "they are held in chains and suffer such torments as they deserve, until given over to the full punishment appointed for them." In the intermediate state, the souls of the righteous rest consciously in the presence of Christ and await the future glory. The souls of the reprobate suffer, while held in chains. They too await something to come, which is the full punishment appointed for them.

Calvin was set against the teaching of purgatory as harmful and unbiblical. Calvin's most thorough refutation of purgatory was not in this section. He did not discuss purgatory at any length in Book III, chapter 25. In Book III, chapter 5, however, in the context of Calvin's treatment of repentance, Calvin refuted both indulgences and purgatory. Repentance is not buying indulgences, which implies purgatory. True repentance is something else. In Book III, chapter 5, section 6 through 10 is Calvin's refutation of purgatory. In that entire chapter, he argued first against indulgences and showed that indulgences are false. Then he said that purgatory also falls with the indulgences. Calvin said in Book III, chapter 5, section 6, "Since the blood of Christ is the sole satisfaction for the sins of believers, the sole expiation, the sole purgation, what remains but to say that purgatory is simply a dreadful blasphemy against Christ." So purgatory is not scriptural. It is harmful. It is blasphemous teaching because it undermines the idea that what Christ did on the cross is completely sufficient to take away our sins. We do not need an extended period of thousands or hundreds of thousands of years to purge away sins that remain, because Christ's expiation is sufficient. It is the sole purgation. There does not need to be another purgation, another cleansing.

Calvin was restrained and cautious concerning the second coming of Christ. He was certainly clear that he believed in a literal physical return of Christ. He had no interest, however, in trying to guess the date. Some of the Anabaptists were doing that. He shied away from describing it in detail, in terms of its

nature. For Calvin, the second coming of Christ will majestically display Christ's glory and will vindicate the church. That is the summation of his ideas on that topic.

There is a practical nature to Calvin's eschatology. He said that it serves to keep us alert and stimulate us to Christian living and to Christian service. There should be continual expectancy, but at the same time patience and diligence. We wait patiently, but we do not lose hope, and we are diligent as we wait.

Stephen Smallman preached in our chapel several years ago. He said that when he was preaching in his own church on a certain Sunday, his wife was not present in church that day. She was home waiting for her mother to arrive from out of town. He said that the way she was waiting was to be sure that the house was clean and there were fresh flowers in the vases and dinner was cooking and everything was ready. He applied that to the second coming of Christ. He said that we do not wait for the second coming of Christ as a man waits for a bus on the street corner. We wait like his wife was waiting, diligently working and preparing.

Calvin's concern for the practical nature of theology came into play. His teaching on the second coming of Christ was not just theoretical. It affects what we are doing today.

The next topic is the general resurrection. When Christ returns, there will be the resurrection of the just and the unjust. Calvin stated that even non-Christians in their burial rites witness to the resurrection. He looked at non-Christians, although he did not have many sources to use, and he knew that non-Christians respect the body of their dead, and they go through certain rites in terms of burial. More important than the non-Christian practice, however, is the burial rites of the patriarchs. If you read the Pentateuch, you find a sizable amount of material on burying people. I have been reading Genesis, particularly studying the life of Jacob. It is amazing how much of the Bible is about getting ready to bury somebody. There is consideration about where the person will be buried, how the person will be buried, and what words will be spoken. Calvin said that this is a rare and precious aid to faith. As we read those sections in the Old Testament, which may seem at first glance a little irrelevant, we see that the patriarchs were testifying to the resurrection in some early sense. There was not much direct teaching of the resurrection in the Old Testament. Yet Calvin thought that the care with which the patriarchs buried their dead was an indication of the beginning of faith in the general resurrection.

The doctrine is confirmed by two things for Calvin. One is the omnipotence of God. That answers the question of how this can be. How can a body be in the grave, decay, and then be raised again? Calvin's first answer is the omnipotence of God. If God is God, then it is a small thing. For the God who made the body in the first place, out of dust, to remake it and bring it once again to life is simple. That is Calvin's first argument.

The second argument is Christ's resurrection. Calvin did briefly describe evidences for the resurrection. Those included the empty tomb, the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, and especially the power of the Gospel. Those are the three traditional arguments that we would use for the resurrection of Christ. The tomb is empty. The living Christ appeared. The church advances. On that third point, Calvin said in Book III, chapter 25, section 3, "Truly it was not by a dead man's power that Paul was thrown prostrate on the road." Christ evidenced His resurrection by His action in the conversion of Paul.

Calvin's chief point was not to argue for the historicity of Christ's resurrection, although he did that briefly. He rather intended to point out that "Christ rose again that He might have us as companions in the life to come." In Christ's resurrection, we see our own. He is a mirror again. When we look at Christ, we see Him raised from the dead, and that is a proof and guarantee of our resurrection.

Calvin did find some importance in the references in the Gospels that when Christ rose there were bodies that came out of the tombs in Jerusalem. That was a strange event that took place. Some of the tombs broke open and bodies came forth. Calvin said that at Christ's resurrection "many bodies of the saints came out of the tombs as a prelude to and a pledge of our resurrection." It was a preview of what is coming. In Jerusalem, some of the tombs broke open and some of the dead came forth. That was just a tiny prelude to the worldwide resurrection of the dead that shall someday take place. Calvin again used the mirror image when he said, "In this mirror [meaning Christ's resurrection], the living image of our resurrection is visible to us." When we consider and celebrate the resurrection of Christ at Easter, we are seeing our own resurrection. It is a guarantee of the resurrection of our bodies as well.

Calvin did deal to a small extent with the nature of our resurrection bodies. As you would expect, he did so with a good deal of restraint. Basically he said that our resurrection bodies will be the same but different. The same bodies that we have here that die will be raised again. They are the same bodies, but they are different. He used some illustrations. He said that human flesh and animal flesh are the same in substance but not in quality. I am not sure if that is a valid illustration. Is human flesh really better than animal flesh in quality? Is my flesh better than my cat's flesh? His other illustration uses the stars. He said that the stars are all alike, but some are brighter than others. That may be a safer illustration to use. Calvin did not know much about astronomy, and I do not know much either. Some people know a great deal about it. Maybe stars are different in quality. I do not know. Calvin thought they were the same in material, but different in brilliance. What he was trying to say was that the resurrected body will be basically the same, but it will be something more glorious.

In chapter 25, as he did elsewhere in the *Institutes*, Calvin used expressions that seem to denigrate the body. He mentioned the "prison house of the flesh." He called the body a "hut." He balanced that, however, with more scriptural ideas. He said, "God has dedicated our bodies to Himself as temples." In one sense you might think of your body as a hut, but it is better to think of it as a temple that belongs to God. Calvin also said, in Book III, chapter 25, section 8, "In the Scripture, we see the Spirit no less attentive to the burial rites than to the chief mysteries of the faith." Calvin was again emphasizing that the Bible is full of stories about burial rites. It gives much attention to those. That shows the importance of the body. So we cannot say that Calvin completely denigrates the body and elevates the soul. There are biblical references that compare the body to clay. Calvin was following those references, but he certainly understood the significance of the body.

He also understood the future of the body. The bodies of both Christians and non-Christians will be raised at the general resurrection. Calvin said, "The main emphasis is on the resurrection of Christians." That is quite striking, because when we think of the general resurrection, in which both Christians and non-Christians are raised, we put much more emphasis and attention on the raising of the bodies of believers than on the raising of the bodies of the reprobate. Calvin said in Book III, chapter 25, section 9 that it is because "Properly speaking, Christ did not come to destroy but to save the world." We need to underscore those words and apply them to the section on election.

What Calvin was particularly concerned about in his discussion of the final judgment was balancing the idea of present, temporal judgment with judgment to come. Almost always, when Calvin talked about final judgment, it was in the light of the consummation of judgment, the finishing of judgment. There will be a final judgment day. Yet judgment goes on all the time. There is temporal, continual judgment. There is also a final judgment day. Calvin said that final judgment day is delayed by God, deferred in order to give time for repentance. The fact that we have not had the second coming yet, and the fact that we have not yet come to the final judgment day, should not be sources of concern for us. It should be a



source of gratitude to God because He is deferring judgment. When that comes, there will be no more opportunity for people to turn from their sins and turn to Christ. Now there is that opportunity.

The final judgment of believers will not occur in the sense that our sins will be judged. That has already taken place. The judgment for sin has already been borne by Christ. The wicked will receive the final judgment. Having been judged already, the completion of judgment will take place in the final judgment.

I will cover heaven and hell quickly to conclude. Heaven is real, literal, and eternal. The same is true for hell. Calvin said, "Avoid trifling and harmful questions." Calvin believed that all of the physical descriptions—including the streets of gold and pearly gates for heaven, and the fire, darkness, and weeping and gnashing of teeth for hell—are figurative. We should not try to understand heaven or hell according to those descriptions. Those descriptions are as far as language can go. Yet they do point to the reality that is beyond the language. The reality of heaven is that God is there. We will be in the presence of God. The reality of hell is that God is absent. Those who are in hell are separated from God forever.

As I close, let me read the last sentence of chapter 25. Calvin was talking about hell, but he did not end on that somber note. He said, "On this point, the 90th Psalm has a memorable statement. Although by His mere glance He scatters and brings to naught all mortal men, He urges His own worshipers on the more because they are timid in this world, that He may inspire them, burdened with the cross, to press forward until He Himself is all in all." That is one last challenge to us to look to the Lord, to not give up, and to press forward, whatever we might face in this world.

At the end of this chapter, we have come to the end times, to heaven and hell. Yet, although we have come to the end times, we have not come to the end of the *Institutes*. Book IV still remains. We will not study it in the detail that we have studied the first three books. That book will move us into the fellowship of the church, the work of the church and, in the last chapter, into the state and civil government. Even though we have reached the crown, in Calvin's treatment of eschatology, He does not let us go to heaven yet. We must do our work on earth now, as members of the church and as citizens of the state.