

God's Reservations

To reserve is to set something apart for some future use, to keep for yourself, to lay away for a future time. In many places of the Bible it is said that God "reserves" men, either to judgment for their evil deeds, or to an everlasting life in glory with him. It even says that some angels are reserved for judgment.

God's Reservation for the Fallen Angels

2 P. 2:4 – "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved into judgment;"

The word here for hell is "tartarus", which is only used once in the Bible, but was common in Greek mythology, to denote, not just Hades (the place of the dead), but the very lowest, infernal regions of the earth, reserved for the basest and most wicked dead. We know that Satan, the "principalities and powers", and all lower demonic beings are still active in the earth and even to some extent in the heavens, yet always under God's control and authority. But it appears that there were some angels whose sins were so egregious that they have been kept in everlasting chains of darkness even until now. It is commonly supposed that these may be the "sons of God" in Gen. 6 who took wives of the daughters of men and bore children that became "mighty men of renown" (i.e., giants).

These fallen angels are also referenced in Jude 6 – "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

God's Reservation for the Unrighteous

Mt. 13:24-30 is the parable of the wheat and the tares. They were allowed to grow together until the harvest, when they would be separated. So also the wicked and the righteous in the earth now are allowed to be together, each bearing their own kind of fruit, mostly oblivious to the coming judgment at the last day.

God tolerates evil in men, and so they often think they are "getting away" with their sinful and careless lives. But in actuality, he is holding them in reserve, just waiting for the time of judgment. We do the same with brush piles and scrap steel – we temporarily pile them up and leave them alone until a convenient time to burn them or haul them away. While they are in the pile, they appear to be unaffected, but eventually their time will come. It is the same with God. He temporarily tolerates the wicked, like tares among the wheat, but eventually his judgment will come.

The Bible says that God is reserving the wicked, the unjust, the ungodly, and his enemies to a day of wrath, judgment and destruction.

Job 21:29-30 – "Have ye not asked them that go by the way? And do ye not know their tokens, That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? They shall be brought forth to the day of wrath."

2 P. 2:9 – "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:" Verses 7-8 speak of how God delivered the just man Lot from the overthrow of Sodom.

2 P. 3:7 – "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Jude 12-13 – "These [*men*] are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots: Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

Nahum 1:2 - "God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth: the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies."

2 P. 2:17 says God has a special judgment for false teachers and false prophets. "These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever." Perhaps this is because they pretended to be sources of light to God's people. Instead they prove themselves to be "angels of light" (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Many people do not like to hear what they call "hellfire and damnation" preaching, and I would agree that it needs to be tempered with the good news of the gospel, but I tend to think we don't hear enough of it. Many people have sugar-coated the gospel and presented it in such a "non-offending" manner that it loses its effectiveness. It is the fear of God

that leads to wisdom and knowledge, and if men are not told what awaits them, they have no real motivation to turn to God in repentance. What is to be saved from, if there is no punishment, no retribution, no judgment to come?

But for those of us who are new creatures in Christ, sons by adoption, whose sins have been cast into the depths of the sea by God's grace and through the cleansing power of the blood of Christ, God is preserving us, and has reserved a place in heaven with him, eternally to enjoy his presence and to glory in his holiness.

God's Reservation for the Righteous

Individual protection

Even in the midst of great national calamities and judgments, God reserves some to himself, and even promises them personal protection and deliverance. E.g., Ebed-melech in Jer. 39:15-18, and Baruch in Jer. 45

General promises of protection and preservation.

Jer. 50:20 – "In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none: and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

Rom. 11:4 – "But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal."

Promises specific to us as Christians

Jn. 14:1-3 – "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also."

1 P. 1:3-4 – "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Any inheritance in this world is corruptible and subject to theft by our government, as well as fire, rust, waste, inflation, etc. But we have an eternal inheritance waiting for us in heaven that is incorruptible, and will never decrease. It is waiting for us there, and we will experience it when we die, and even more fully at the resurrection.

Abraham was looking for that heavenly city, the city with foundations, his eternal reward. So are we.

2 Cor. 5:1 – "For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The "earthly house of this tabernacle" obviously means our mortal and physical bodies. When they are dissolved in death, we have another "house" which will never decay, our future resurrected bodies. Even before the resurrection, we will be in God's presence, like the saints in the book of Revelation.

It seems trite to ask "Do you have your reservation for heaven?", as if it is as simple as calling up a hotel. The real question is whether God has us reserved for glory or for fiery retribution.

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