

Jonathan Draper

Walking the Way of Life or the Way of Death in the present existence as the beginning of eschatological life or death in the renewed earthly kingdom: The rationale for the limitation of the resurrection to the righteous departed in *Didache* 16:6-8.

Abstract:

One of the striking features of resurrection in *Didache* 16:6-8 is that it is limited to the “holy ones”: the righteous departed, citing Zechariah 14:5. In a previous article (“Resurrection and Zechariah 14.5 in the Didache Apocalypse”, *J ECS* 5:2 (1997) 155-179) I demonstrated that this stands in continuity with a Jewish interpretive tradition evidenced also by the Rabbis. However, I did not explore the connection with the Two Ways teaching in the *Didache*, which appears also in 16:1-2. Faithfulness in the Way of Life already determines one’s fate in the eschatological time. In other words, the use of “life” and “death” in the “Way of Life” is understood as more than metaphorical when viewed from the perspective of the Last Days. A similar understanding is found in the *Manual of Discipline* and also in John’s Gospel. It draws on the covenant tradition of Deuteronomy 29: 19-1; 30:15-20; Jeremiah 21:8, but develops it in terms of a person’s position in the eschatological age. In *Didache*, then, those who are walking on the Way of Life need no resurrection since the life they have will be confirmed and rewarded with blessing in the renewed kingdom on earth. Those walking on the Way of Death living or departed will simply be cut off and punished for ever, so that no resurrection is necessary for them either. Only the “holy ones”, the righteous departed, will be raised to join the Lord as he comes on the clouds to inaugurate the kingdom on earth with those walking faithfully on the Way of Life.