

The Resurrection From The Dead

By David Phillips

The resurrection from the dead is one of the most fundamental elements of the Christian faith. The Hebrew writer lists the resurrection from the dead as one of the “*elementary principles*” of Christ (Heb. 6:1-2). It is what every Christian should hope for. And we are told several times in the Scriptures that it is something that we should be continually preparing for. Therefore, in this lesson we will consider what the Bible says about the resurrection, what we can expect to happen, and how we can make ourselves ready for that day.

The Spirit and the Resurrection

There are some people who believe that men do not have an eternal spirit. God, on the other hand, teaches us that humans have two components: physical and spiritual. Eccl. 12:7 illustrates how when a person dies his/her physical body returns to the dust from which it was made, but the spirit returns to God who gave it. During His ministry Jesus reasoned with a group of Jews called the Sadducees who believed that man did not have a spirit, therefore they did not believe in a resurrection. In answer to that belief Jesus presented the following argument: “*But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*” (Matt. 22:31-33). Notice the point that Jesus made: Since God IS (present tense) the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, those men must still be alive since God is the God of the living, not the dead. If their bodies are dead, how then can they still be alive? They are alive because they have an eternal spirit. Therefore, since men have a spirit, God will at some point raise all men from the dead in the resurrection.

This truth is fundamental and essential for understanding eternal life. While on earth, our spirits are clothed in a physical body. How we live while in this body will affect what kind of life we will have in eternity—in the resurrection.

Jesus Is the Firstfruits

Every person who has faith in Jesus Christ must believe in the resurrection because Jesus Himself was raised from the dead. In fact, Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 15:17-19 that if Christ did not raise from the dead then all men are lost, we are still dead in our sins, and Christians are the most pitiable people alive. But we know that Jesus rose from the dead because it is recorded in the Bible, and He was seen by over 500 people at once (1 Cor. 15:3-8).

We are also told that Jesus is the “*firstfruits*” of those who have died (1 Cor. 15:20-23). What this means is that the resurrection of Jesus was the first of many more to come. When Jesus died He gained access for men into heaven, and when He rose from the dead He paved the way for those who follow Him. Therefore, when Christ comes again, everyone who attains salvation through Him while they are alive will be raised after they’ve died, just as He was, and will join Him in eternal life.

The Second Coming

Notice what it says in 1 Cor. 15:23, “*...afterward, those who are Christ’s at His coming.*” What Paul refers to is the second coming of Christ. Jesus came to the earth once when He was born and lived as a man and then died for our sins (Heb. 9:28). But when He comes the second time,

He will not be born as before, but He will descend from heaven in a cloud (Luke 21:27-28; Acts 1:9-11).

The event of Christ's second coming is what all Christians should be looking for and eagerly waiting for, because that is the moment when we will receive our hope of eternal life. "*To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation*" (Heb. 9:28).

Read John 5:28-29: Jesus will not raise some people and leave others behind. Rather, Jesus said that the "*hour is coming*" when these things take place. And when that hour comes, both the righteous and the wicked will be raised at the same time: the righteous will be raised to eternal life, the wicked will be raised to eternal condemnation. In 1 Thess. 4:16-17 Paul wrote that the dead will rise first, then those who are still alive on the earth will be taken up to join them in the sky and they will be with Christ forevermore.

We are also told in several passages that when we are raised we will be given new bodies—eternal, spiritual bodies that cannot die (1 Cor. 15:35-38, 42-44). We will be like Christ as He is now (1 John 3:1-3).

In The Twinkling Of An Eye

Over the centuries many doctrines have been created concerning the second coming of Christ which are not taught in the Bible. Some believe that Jesus is going to secretly take away the righteous while the wicked remain on the earth for seven years ("The Rapture"). Some people believe that they can foretell what day the Lord will come. But if we want to receive the promises of God, we must put our hope in what the Bible says, not in the dreams of men.

In the Bible, we are told that the second coming of Christ will take place day that no one knows—only the Father knows. Mark 13:32: "*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*" Paul describes that day as coming "*in the twinkling of an eye*" (1 Cor. 15:52), and "*as a thief in the night*" (1 Thess. 5:1-2). Many people will say that they know when the Lord is coming, but do not listen to them. Instead, we are told to be ready for He may come at any moment.

Be Ready

It is important for us to understand that we do not know the day nor the hour when these things will take place. Since we do not know, we will not be able to make ourselves ready at the last minute. Therefore, we are instructed many times to make ourselves ready now and to constantly be preparing ourselves. Jesus gave the parables of the *Ten Virgins* (Matt. 25:1-13) and *The Foolish Rich Man* (Luke 12:16-21) to teach us to be ready always for His coming. In 1 Thess. 5:3-10 Paul teaches us to "*not sleep*" but to "*watch and be sober.*" In other words, don't think that it is time to relax (as if it were night and time to rest), but always be working (as in the day time), always eagerly waiting and ready for when the Lord comes.

How do we make ourselves ready? Flee from sin and pursue godly things (1 Tim. 6:11-12). Be rich toward God through Good works (1 Tim. 6:18-19). Live godly and righteously as if you see the day of the Lord coming even now (2 Pet. 3:10-13). Strive with all diligence to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:17-18). Love your brethren (1 Pet. 1:22-23). Strive ever diligently to be like Christ that you may attain to the resurrection from the dead (as Paul did, Phil. 3:7-14).

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