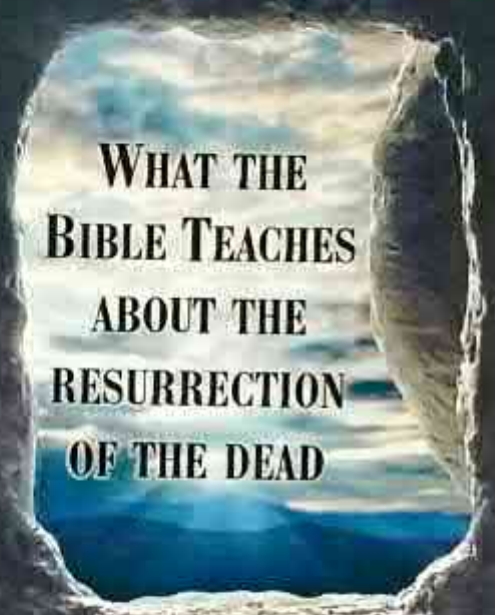


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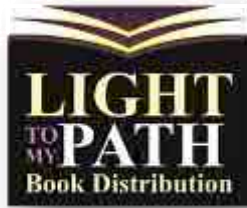


WHAT THE
BIBLE TEACHES
ABOUT THE
RESURRECTION
OF THE DEAD

F. WAYNE MAC LEOD

Resurrection Hope

*What the Bible Teaches about the
Resurrection of the Dead*



F. Wayne MacLeod

Light To My Path Book Distribution
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Resurrection Hope

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Table of Contents

Preface	1
Not a New Truth	3
What Jesus Taught About the Resurrection.....	9
The Importance of the Resurrection to the Apostles	17
Resurrection for All	25
A Brief Word Study	31
The Resurrection of the Body	37
The Resurrected Body	45
Resurrection Day	53
Awaiting the Resurrection	59
Resurrection Hope	67

PREFACE

The doctrine of the resurrection is one of the most precious hopes we have as believers. It is a truth we cling to both in life and death. Knowing there is life after death gives us comfort and assurance. The doctrine, however, brings with it many questions. The early believers struggled to understand this truth. Writing to the Corinthian church the apostle Paul would say:

35 But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come? (1 Corinthians 15:35)

The religious leaders of the New Testament had questions for Jesus as He taught on this topic as well:

25 Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to this brother, 26 So too the second and third, down to the seventh. 27 After them all, the woman died. 28 In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will she be? For they all had her. (Matthew 22)

This study will look at what the New Testament has to say about this important doctrinal truth. I will not answer all the questions about the resurrection, nor will I speculate about things we do not have answers for in the Scriptures. There are some details we must take by faith and leave in the Lord's capable hands.

I trust that by bringing together and discussing the various passages of Scripture that speak about this truth, we will be given a deeper understanding and appreciation of the hope we have in the Lord Jesus. May the Lord be pleased to use this simple study to bless and encourage each reader in this wonderful hope we have in Christ.

God bless,

F. Wayne MacLeod

CHAPTER 1

NOT A NEW TRUTH

Before beginning our study of the New Testament teaching about the resurrection, I would like to take a moment to show that what Jesus and the apostles taught was not new in their day. In fact, Old Testament believers had an understanding that life on this earth was not all there was. While the word “resurrection” does not occur in the Old Testament, there are a number of verses that indicate that these believers did indeed have a hope of life after death in the presence of the Lord.

One of the most powerful verses concerning the resurrection is found in the book of Job. Having suffered tremendously in this life, Job says:

25 For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. 26 And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh, I shall see God, 27 whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me! (Job 19)

Notice the hope of Job in his suffering. While it is hard to know how much Job understood the doctrine of the resurrection, what is clear is that he had confidence that he would see God when his body was destroyed. He knew that God would not abandon him in the end, and even if he perished, he would stand before God and see Him with his own eyes.

The psalmists wrote openly about the suffering and struggle in life. Hidden in the Psalms, however, was the understanding that despite pain and death in this life, the Lord God would not abandon them.

15 But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me. Selah (Psalm 49)

Sheol in the Old Testament understanding was the place of the dead. Notice that the psalmist tells his readers that even if his soul went to the place of the dead, God would ransom it and receive him in His presence. Death and Sheol was not the end for the psalmist. He had a hope of life after Sheol in the presence of his God.

Listen to the words of Asaph in Psalm 73:

24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. 25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. (Psalm 73)

Asaph reflects his hope in these verses. He tells us that God would guide him in this life and then receive him in glory. Notice how he speaks of heaven in verse 25. He had a hope of being with God in the glory of heaven. He also

believed in verse 26 that God would be his strength forever. He had a concept of eternity. His hope here is that God would receive him in heaven where he would know His strength and blessing for all eternity.

The prophets of the Old Testament also spoke of this hope. Listen to the words of Isaiah:

19 Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead. (Isaiah 26)

These words are very clear. Isaiah speaks about the dead being given life and their physical bodies being raised from the dust. Death was not the end. God was able to raise up dead bodies and give them life again.

Probably the clearest Old Testament passage about the resurrection is found in Daniel 12:

2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. (Daniel 12)

Daniel speaks of those who were asleep in the dust of the earth. This is a clear reference to those who have died and were buried in the ground. He tells us that these individuals would be raised to life again. Some would be raised to everlasting life while others would be raised to everlasting shame and contempt.

In Acts 2, Peter preached a message to the Jews gathered to celebrate Pentecost. In that message the apostle quoted from Psalm 16:8-11:

25 For David says concerning him, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; 26 therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. 27 For you will not abandon my soul in Hades or let your Holy One see corruption. 28 You have made known to me the path of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence. (Acts 2)

Listen to Peter's explanation of this passage in the next verses:

29 Brother, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Being, therefore, a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, 31 he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. 32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses. (Acts 2)

According to Peter, David spoke prophetically in Psalm 16 about the resurrection of the Messiah. This Messiah or "Holy One" would go to the grave but would rise up from death in victory. This fact was witnessed by the apostles themselves. They were eyewitnesses of this resurrection of Jesus.

In his defense before King Agrippa and Festus, the apostle Paul declared that he had never preached anything that was not already taught by Moses or the Jewish prophets. Paul was convinced that what He taught about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was not a new doctrine.

22 To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: 23 that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to raise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles. (Acts 26)

What is clear from these verses is that the writers of the Old Testament had an understanding that there was more to life than the years we live on this earth. They believed that God would raise them from the dead and bring them into His presence where they would live forever. The doctrine of the resurrection is not a New Testament teaching only. It is solidly rooted in the teaching of the prophets and writers of the Old Testament as well. What was understood by the Old Testament believers would be more clearly described in the teaching of the Lord Jesus and the apostles. In the following chapters, we will examine how the New Testament further expands on this important truth.

For Consideration:

- What did the Old Testament believers understand about the resurrection and final judgment? How was this an encouragement to them?

- What comfort do you find in the fact that there is life after death?
- Daniel taught that at the resurrection some would be raised to everlasting life and others to shame and contempt. How can we be sure we will be raised to everlasting life?
- How is Christ's resurrection a proof and guarantee that we too will be raised?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord for the hope we have in knowing that there is more to life than what we experience on this earth.
- Ask the Lord to give you the assurance that at the resurrection you will be raised to eternal life in the presence of the Father.
- Thank the Lord Jesus that He willingly laid down His life and rose again so that we could have a hope of life with the Father.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT

ABOUT THE RESURRECTION

In the previous chapter, we looked at what the Old Testament taught about the resurrection. While the word “resurrection” does not appear in the Old Testament, there was a clear understanding that this life was only temporary and that there was life after death in the presence of the Lord.

As we move now to the New Testament, we need to examine what the Lord Jesus taught about the resurrection. In the days of Jesus, there were different opinions on this matter. One of the Jewish religious sects of the day, known as the Sadducees, did not believe in a resurrection (Matthew 22:23). This distinguished them from the other significant sect known as the Pharisees, who did believe in the resurrection.

In Matthew 22:23-33 the Sadducees came to Jesus with a question about the resurrection. They presented Him with a case of a woman who had been married to seven brothers and asked Jesus who she would be married to at the time of the resurrection. The idea behind this question was

to make Jesus' teaching look foolish. Jesus responded to their question, speaking directly to this by saying:

31 "As for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: 32 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living."

Jesus reminded the Sadducees of the truth of the Scriptures they themselves believed. God declared in that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Notice that God did not say that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He used the present tense when He said: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob". The words, "I am" are significant. There is a difference between the phrase "I am the God of Abraham" and "I was the God of Abraham". God still is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus went on to remind the Pharisees that the only way God could say this would be because Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still alive. God is not the God of the dead but of the living. Jesus showed the Sadducees that the Scriptures they claimed to follow taught the resurrection of the dead.

On another occasion, Jesus was called to Bethany because a friend by the name of Lazarus was ill. As He delayed, Lazarus died. By the time Jesus arrived at his home, Lazarus had been buried. Lazarus' sister came out to meet Jesus when he arrived and said: "Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:21).

In response, the Lord told Martha that her brother would rise again (John 11:23). Martha agreed with Jesus saying: "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last

day" (John 11:24). This exchange between Martha and Jesus teaches us about the understanding of the day about the resurrection. It was an accepted fact in the mind of Martha that Lazarus would rise again. There was no question in her mind about the resurrection. Jesus' comments are also important. He told Martha that her brother would rise again. While Jesus has something more particular in mind than the resurrection of the last day, what is clear from His comment here is that for Him death would be defeated and life restored to Lazarus. He would be resurrected from the dead.

Jesus would go on in the passage to speak more fully about the resurrection when He said:

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believed in me though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believed in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11)

Jesus told Martha that day that He was the resurrection and the life. In other words, without Him and His work there would be no resurrection or life. This is a very significant statement from the lips of Jesus about the resurrection. He identifies Himself with the resurrection. He is the source and power behind the resurrection. In fact, he would go on to say that those who believed in him though they died, they would live again. Resurrecting the dead is the work of Christ. Let's take a moment to consider this more fully.

In Romans 6:23 we read:

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord

Death is the result of sin. It is not only a punishment but the natural fruit of sin on this earth. We are all subject to death. This is clear from Genesis 2 when God laid out the rules for living in the Garden of Eden. He told Adam and Eve that they could enjoy the fruit of the garden but they were not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. To disobey Him in this matter would have serious repercussions:

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2)

Notice the result of disobedience to God— "you shall surely die." Death is the fruit and evidence of sin in this world.

When the Lord Jesus came to this earth, He came to deal with sin. His death on the cross paid the legal penalty for sin and His cleansing and Holy Spirit enable us now to live in victory over that sin. In John 11:25 when Jesus calls Himself the resurrection, what is He saying? He is saying that He has conquered the power of sin. He has overcome the fruit of sin in our lives and in this world. He is the power of life and death. The proof of His payment of sin is in the fact that death no longer has a hold on those who come to Him and receive forgiveness.

What we need to understand here is that the doctrine of the resurrection is not just about God being compassionate toward us and giving us victory over death. It is about the powerful work of Christ on the cross that conquered sin

and death. The resurrection is proof of the victory of Christ over sin. It is proof that sin no longer has a hold on us. It is a confirmation of the work of Christ and proof that His work alone brings victory over sin. Jesus is the resurrection. He paid the legal penalty for sin and overcame the power of death over us.

To disbelieve the resurrection is to question the work of Christ over sin. If death still has victory over us than we are still in our sin and the work of Christ is not sufficient to give us victory. If, however, the Lord Jesus has conquered sin than we can have victory in Him over the fruit of sin which is death.

The proof of Jesus victory over sin is seen in what took place when He died on the cross. At that moment God showed the world the impact the death of His Son had. Listen to the words of Matthew 27 as they record for us the events that took place when the Lord Jesus died on the cross:

51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from the top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. 54 When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said: "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27)

Two very important things happened at the time of Jesus' the death. First, the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple was ripped in two from top

to bottom. This curtain separated the presence of God from the people who gathered for worship. That separation no longer existed. The death of the Son of God would restore the relationship between God and His people.

The second important sign that took place in those days was the fact the many saints were raised from the dead and appeared before people in the city of Jerusalem. What was God showing His people through this sign? He was showing them that the penalty for sin had been paid. Death, the fruit of sin, was now conquered. The resurrection of these saints was proof that the death of Christ had conquered the power of sin and its fruit.

Matthew 28 shares the account of what took place after the death of Christ. In this chapter, we see how Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to Mary and the disciples. The book of Acts begins with a powerful statement about the resurrection of Jesus:

3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.
(Acts 1)

The Jesus who died on the cross and was buried in a tomb guarded by Roman soldiers, presented Himself alive to the disciples. The writer to the book of Acts makes it clear that this resurrection of Jesus from the dead was validated by “many proofs”. Jesus spent forty days with His disciples after His death and taught them many things about the kingdom of God.

The resurrection of Christ was solid evidence of His victory over sin and death. It proved to the disciples and the people of His day, that death had been conquered. Because

He rose from the dead, we too have hope. He can give life to our mortal bodies as well. There is no question about what Jesus taught. He spoke of the resurrection from the dead. He demonstrated this by rising from the dead himself. To believe in the resurrection is to believe in the victory of Jesus over sin and its penalty.

For Consideration:

- How does Jesus answer the objections of the Sadducees to the resurrection? How does He prove from their own Scriptures the reality of the resurrection?
- What is the connection between sin and death? How does the resurrection prove the victory of Christ over sin and death?
- What signs did the Father give at the crucifixion of Jesus? How do those signs point us to the truth of the resurrection?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He taught and demonstrated while on this earth that there was a victory over death.
- Thank the Lord that He is the resurrection. Thank Him that He has the power over death.
- Thank the Lord for the hope you have knowing that sin and its fruit of death have been conquered by the work of Jesus on the cross.

- Ask the Lord to forgive your sin. Ask Him to give you victory over death through His resurrection power.

CHAPTER 3

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION TO THE APOSTLES

We have taken a brief look at the Lord Jesus and His teaching about the resurrection. In this chapter, I would like to examine the apostles' view of the resurrection. In further chapters, we will go into more detail about their teaching but in this chapter, I simply want to show how important the doctrine of the resurrection was to the apostles.

As we begin, let's take a moment to consider a passage in Acts 1. The context has to do with choosing a replacement for Judas. You will remember that Judas, who had been one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, had betrayed his Master and then hung himself. The apostles felt it was important to find someone to replace Judas on their team.

As they reflected and prayed about this we read:

21 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and

out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection. 23 And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen, 25 to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from Judas turned aside to go to his own place. (Acts 1)

Notice the qualifications that the new apostle needed. He needed to have accompanied them during the time the Lord was among them. He needed to have been a witness to the baptism of John until the day the Lord ascended to heaven. Notice particularly in verse 22 that the individual was also to be “a witness to His resurrection”. For the apostles, this truth of the resurrection was so vital that only those who had been a witness to it could be part of their group. There was no room for any doubt on this important truth. Their message depended on the truth of this resurrection.

This truth about the resurrection became a central focus of the apostles. In fact, they preached this truth so strongly that they came into conflict with the religious leaders of the day:

1 And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captains of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them. 2 greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. (Acts 4)

We see from this that the teaching of the apostles about the resurrection from the dead upset the religious leaders. In this case, the apostles were thrown into prison for teaching about the resurrection. The next day the apostles were brought before the religious leaders who commanded them to stop teaching these things about the Lord Jesus. The apostles responded, however:

19 But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than God, you must be the judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4)

Peter and John made it quite clear to their accusers that the message of Jesus and the resurrection was non-negotiable. In other words, they would not stop preaching of what they had seen. They were willing to be imprisoned and even die but they would not stop preaching this message. This again shows us just how significant the truth of the resurrection of Jesus was for these men.

The apostle Paul taught clearly on the resurrection. In Acts 17 we read how Paul went to Athens to preach. As Athens was an intellectual centre, many of the thinkers wondered who he was and what new teaching he brought.

18 Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also converses with him. And some said, "What does this babbler wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities" —because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" (Acts 17).

While these scholars were not quite clear on what teaching Paul was bringing, there were two clear points they did understand. The first was that he taught about a man named Jesus. The second was that he taught about the resurrection. From this, we understand that the focus of the preaching of Paul was on the work of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. He taught that Jesus came to die for our sin but that He rose victorious over death and sin. This was the apostle's hope. It was also his message to the world—sin and death have been conquered in the person of the Lord Jesus alone.

Like Peter and John in Acts 4, Paul would encounter much opposition to the message of the resurrection. We read in Acts 23 how he was brought before the Jewish chief priests and the council of that day because of the reaction of the crowd to his message. The council was comprised of members of both the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Listen to what Paul tells this council:

6 Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of a Pharisee. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial."

It was Paul's preaching about the resurrection of the dead that brought him this trouble. He preached strongly of his hope in this resurrection but people did not like what he said. He stood now before the Jewish ruling council to give an account of his doctrine and hope in the resurrection.

Later, as his trial proceeded to the next level, Paul would stand before the Roman governor Felix. He would again be called upon to offer a defence. Paul answered all the

accusations of his accusers and concluded with the following statement:

20 Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, 21 other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them: "It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day." (Acts 24)

Of all the accusations that were directed toward Paul, there was only one that he would confess to being true—he believed in and preached the resurrection of the dead. In particular, he preached about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead. He preached that because of the resurrection we will all stand before a holy God to give an account of our life. This was the message that riled up the crowd against him. Paul would not apologize for this message. He would willingly stand trial before Felix for his belief in the resurrection.

What do we learn here about how the apostles viewed the resurrection? We see first that an understanding and belief in the resurrection was a requirement for anyone to be an apostle. In fact, those who held the position of the apostles in the early church needed to have been a physical witness to this resurrection. There was no room for doubt on this point.

Secondly, we see that the preaching of the apostles was centred around the work of the Lord Jesus and His resurrection. Anyone who listened to them preach understood that Christ and the resurrection of the dead were very important truths for these leaders of the early church.

Finally, the apostles often found themselves in difficulty because of their preaching about the resurrection. In fact, they were put in prison for preaching this truth and warned to stop preaching it to the people. They would not be distracted from this message, however, and clearly told those in authority that they would risk everything to continue preaching this essential truth. The doctrine of the resurrection was one the apostles were willing to suffer and even die for if necessary. Clearly, the truth of the resurrection from the dead is a vital truth for us today as well. It is one that we cannot compromise but must hold onto with all our might for it is our hope and confidence.

For Consideration:

- Why was it so important that an apostle needed to be a physical witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus?
- Gives some examples of how the apostles suffered for preaching about the resurrection of the dead?
- Why do you suppose that the teaching about the resurrection of Christ and the dead was not a popular doctrine in the early days of the church?
- Why is the doctrine of the resurrection so important? What hope would we have today if there was no resurrection?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to help you to understand the implications of the truth about life after death.
- Ask the Lord to help you to live more in the reality that this life is not all there is. Ask Him to give you the grace to live with an eye to eternity.
- Ask God to help you to hold onto the truth of the resurrection as the apostles did. Ask Him to forgive the church of our day for compromising on this vital truth.

CHAPTER 4

RESURRECTION FOR ALL

We have seen in the previous chapter the importance the apostles placed on the doctrine of the resurrection. In the remainder of this study, we will examine the teaching of Jesus and the apostles in more detail. As we do so, let me advise you that there are many things about the resurrection that are not clearly explained in the Scriptures. At the end of this study, there will still be many questions. Our goal is to understand what God has given us in His Word and trust Him with the things He has not explained to Him.

Scripture seems to indicate that the resurrection is not just for the believer but also for the unbeliever. Speaking about the hardness of the hearts of the religious leaders at the time Jesus said in Matthew 12:

41 The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. 42 The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from

the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. (Matthew 12)

Notice what Jesus is saying here. He is telling His listeners that the men of Nineveh would rise up at the judgement. Nineveh was known as an evil city (Jonah 1:2). Jesus also said that the queen of the South would rise up at the judgement and condemn the generation that was alive in the days Jesus walked on the earth. The queen of the South is better known as the queen of Sheba who visited Solomon in 1 Kings 10 to test his wisdom. While she was impressed with the wisdom of Solomon there is no record of her ever coming to faith in the God of Israel. We gather from this that even pagan nations will rise from the dead at the judgement.

Jesus would make this point even more clear when He taught in John 5:

28 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. (John 5)

Jesus tells us that the day is coming when all who are in the grave will hear His voice. They will rise from the grave at the sound of that voice. Notice that Jesus speaks of the resurrection of those who have done good and the resurrection of those who have done evil. It is very clear from this that both the believer and the unbeliever will be raised from the dead.

For believers, the resurrection is a wonderful reality. It gives us hope because we know that we are in a right relationship with our Creator. We will enter the presence of our Creator and Saviour and be with Him forever. However, the doctrine of the resurrection is not a pleasant truth for the unbeliever. It means that he or she will have to face the God they have rejected and receive judgment. The doctrine of the resurrection ought to bring terror to the hearts of those who do not know the Lord Jesus and have rejected His offer of forgiveness.

As we move from the teaching of Jesus on this subject to the book of Acts we see how the apostles also taught a resurrection of the believer and the unbeliever. In his defence before Governor Felix, the apostle Paul said:

14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, 15 having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. (Acts 24)

Notice what Paul told Felix that day. He told him that he believed in a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. That is to say that there would be a resurrection of those who believed in Jesus and walked in His salvation and a resurrection of those who had rejected Him and His forgiveness. All people would experience this resurrection and stand before their Maker to give an account of their life.

Writing to the Corinthians the apostle Paul would say:

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body whether good or evil. (2 Corinthians 5)

Notice here that Paul told the Corinthians that we must “all” appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Notice that both those who have done good and those who have done evil will appear before this judgment seat. According to Paul the knowledge that I will one day be raised from the dead to stand before Christ was a powerful motivation to accept Him and to live a fully surrendered life.

Notice finally the words of Paul to Timothy:

1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead ... (1 Timothy 4)

Paul’s advice to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4 was to be faithful in preaching the Word of God. It was His responsibility to prepare those under his care to stand before the God who would judge both the living and the dead. Notice what the apostle told Timothy in verse 5:

5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry. (1 Timothy 4)

In light of the fact that God would judge the living and the dead, Paul commanded Timothy to do the work of an evangelist. As an evangelist, he was to lead people to Christ. He was to do this because God would raise the dead and call them to stand before Him to be judged.

What is clear from these verses is that there will be a resurrection of both the believer and the unbeliever. This resurrection, while experienced by both groups, will be very different. For the believer, the resurrection is a wonderful hope. It means that they will see their Saviour and stand before the one they love and serve. For the unbeliever, however, this resurrection will place them before the Saviour they have rejected. For them, it will be a resurrection of judgement. What will this meeting be like for you personally?

For Consideration:

- What evidence do we have in Scripture that both the believer and the unbeliever will be raised from the dead?
- What will be the difference between the resurrection of the believer and the resurrection of the unbeliever?
- Take a moment to consider what it will be like for the unbeliever to be raised to stand before the God he or she has rejected. How should this motivate us to share the message of salvation?
- How does knowing that we will be raised to stand before God our Maker change how we live our lives today?

For Prayer:

- Do you know someone who has never accepted the Lord? Take a moment to pray that this individual would come to Him.
- Ask the Lord to help you to live your life with the understanding that you will one day be raised to stand before your Maker. Ask God to help you to live in such a way that when you stand before Him you will have nothing to fear or be ashamed of.

CHAPTER 5

A BRIEF WORD STUDY

We move now to some more specific teaching of the Scriptures about the resurrection. Before we do this, however, let me take a moment to consider the words used to speak of the resurrection in the New Testament.

There are three Greek words translated “resurrection” in the New Testament. Let’s take a moment to consider them and what they teach us about the nature of the resurrection.

“Egersis”

The first word we will examine is the word “egersis”. This word is found only once in the New Testament. We read in Matthew 27:53:

53 And coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. (Matthew 27)

The word “resurrection” in verse 53 is the Greek word “egersis”. Egersis comes from the word “egeiro” which literally means to awaken. It is used to speak of someone who rises from sleep or who rises up from a sitting or lying position. It is also used to speak about a person who gets up from a period of inactivity.

A clear use of this word “egeiro” to speak of the resurrection is seen in Matthew 10:8 when Jesus sends out His disciples and says to them:

8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers,
cast out demons. You received without paying,
give without paying (Matthew 10)

The word raise, in this verse, is the Greek word egeiro. The idea is that those who had been asleep in death would be awakened and raise up on their feet again. This is nothing short of a miracle.

“Exanástasis”

The second word used in the New Testament to refer to the resurrection is used by the apostle Paul in Philippians 3:11:

11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3)

The word Paul uses for resurrection in this verse is the word exanástasis. The word literally means resurrection from the dead but what is interesting about the word is that it come from the word exanistemi which has the idea of rising up from among others. The picture here is one of

certain people being raised before others. They are selected out from others to experience this resurrection.

We have already seen that there is a resurrection of both the godly and the ungodly. Could it be that Paul is telling us that he is especially looking forward to the time when the dead in Christ will be raised and chosen from among all others to be raised to be with their Lord forever? In 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul would go on to tell us:

16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with the cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (1 Thessalonians 4)

Notice the reference to the dead in Christ rising first. They appear to be selected from among others to be the first to raised and brought into the presence of their Lord.

The apostle would go on to tell us the Corinthians:

21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and authority and power. (1 Corinthians 15)

Paul told the believers in Corinth that there was an order in the resurrection of the dead. First, Christ would rise and conquer the power of death. Second, at his coming, those who belonged to him would be raised before the end came and he destroyed the powers and authorities of this world.

Finally, in Revelation 20 the apostle John speaks of a period of one thousand years where certain believers were raised from the dead to reign with Christ.

4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also, I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God and those who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.
5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. (Revelation 20)

Revelation 20 speaks about the first resurrection where a select group of saints are raised from among others to reign with Christ for a period of one thousand years. The rest of the dead would not rise at this time.

What do we learn from this? We see that the resurrection may not occur all at once. We have evidence that the dead in Christ will be raised first. We also see evidence in Revelation 20 of what is known as the first resurrection where a select group is raised from among others for a period of time. We also know that there will be a resurrection of the godly to be with Christ and also a resurrection of the ungodly for judgment. There is a selection process taking place as God calls out the dead.

Anastasis and Anestemi

The final set of words we need to consider in this chapter are the words *anastasis* and *anestemi*. *Anastasis* occurs

forty times in the New Testament and is the word most frequently used to refer to the resurrection. Anastasis literally means to stand up. The idea is of someone who has laid down in death rising to their feet again. Life is given to what is lifeless and limp so that it walks again.

From these words, we learn that the resurrection refers to a waking up of those who have died. These individuals rise up and stand on their feet again. Life is given to those who have laid down in death. Only the power of Christ can accomplish this.

Writing to the Thessalonian church, the apostle Paul said:

16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with the cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4)

Notice the purpose of this resurrection—it is to be always with the Lord. There could be no greater joy or purpose in life than to be with the Lord Jesus. For the believer, the resurrection is an awakening of our consciousness and a raising up of our body for the purpose of being with the Lord and to serve Him forever.

Consideration:

- Take a moment to consider the power that could give life to a mind and body that has died. What kind of power is this that can raise the dead?
- Consider the God who can raise the dead. This is the power that is at your disposal if you know Him as your heavenly Father. Are you able to trust Him in the circumstances you face today?

For Prayer

- Do you know that when you rise again from the dead that you will enter the presence of the Lord? If not take a moment now to ask the Lord for His forgiveness and the assurance that you are His and will be with Him forever.
- Thank the Lord for the wonderful hope that we can have in Him that that day is coming with we will hear His voice calling us to rise from the dead.
- Thank the Lord that the power of the God who raises that dead is at your disposal today as you face the trials and struggles of life.

CHAPTER 6

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

In the previous chapter, we briefly examined the words used in Scripture to speak of the resurrection. These words speak of restoration, an awakening or a rising up. The implication is that there is something that needs to be restored or awakened. While this may go without saying, it is an important detail for us to keep in mind.

When we speak of the resurrection we speak of the awakening of our mind and body. There is something of me that rises up to stand before the Lord. It is not someone else who rises from the grave—it is me. It is my mind and body that is given life. Let me explain this more fully by looking at some examples from Scripture.

The Resurrection of Jesus

Let's begin by looking at the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as found in John 20 and Luke 24. After His death on the cross, the Lord Jesus was buried in a tomb. John 20 recounts the story of Mary Magdalene coming to the tomb

and finding the stone rolled away. She ran to tell the disciples of her discovery. Arriving at the tomb Peter and another disciple went inside. What they discovered shocked them.

6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there.
7 and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. (John 20)

What they did not see in that tomb was as important as what they did see. They did not find the body of Jesus in those cloths. This is significant and shows us something about the resurrection. Jesus had died on the cross. His body was wrapped in those grave cloths and was placed dead in the tomb. When Jesus rose from the dead, the body that was in the tomb was no longer there.

Jesus appeared to Mary in the garden. Initially, she mistook Him for a gardener. She recognized a man with a body that looked like any other (see John 20:11-18). Jesus also appeared to the disciples and showed them His hands and His side, proving that He had a physical body (John 20:19-20). He told Thomas to touch His hand and His side (John 20:27). Jesus walked side by side with believers travelling to Emmaus who did not see anything out of the ordinary about His body (Luke 24:13-35).

In Luke 24 Jesus makes it very clear that His resurrected body was a body of flesh and bones:

38 And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me,

and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have. (Luke 24)

When the disciples still had problems believing that this was really Jesus in flesh and bone, Jesus asked for food. Sitting in front of them that day, Jesus ate a piece of broiled fish (Luke 24:41-42).

There are two very important details we need to see in the resurrection of Jesus. First, it is quite clear that the body that was buried in the tomb was no longer there. It was that body that was raised. Second, the resurrected body of Jesus was a body of flesh and bones.

The Resurrection of Lazarus

Let's consider a second example in the Scriptures. John 11 recounts the story of the death of Lazarus. When Jesus arrived at the home of Mary and Martha after the death of their brother, Lazarus had been in the tomb for several days. Standing by the tomb, Jesus told Martha to have the stone rolled away. Martha's response was one of horror: "Lord, by this time there will be an odour, for his has been dead four days" (Luke 11:39). Only after Jesus insisted, was that stone rolled away. Jesus called out to Lazarus in the tomb: "Lazarus, come out" (Luke 11:43). That instant, life was given to the stinking body of Lazarus and he came out of the tomb still wrapped in his grave cloths. The dead body that went in was healed and stood now before the Lord full of life. There was no mistaking this. This man that stood before them that day was not a ghost or a spirit but Lazarus in flesh and bones.

Resurrections at the Time of Jesus' Death

After the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, a number of powerful things happened. The curtain of the temple was ripped from top to bottom, the earth shook, great rocks were broken and graves were opened. Of particular significance to us here is what we read in Matthew 27:

52 The tombs were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. (Matthew 27)

Matthew 27 tells us that the bodies of saints who had died were raised from the dead at the crucifixion of Christ. Notice particularly that Matthew is clear that the bodies of these saints were raised. These saints went into the city of Jerusalem and appeared to many. They were not spirits, they were resurrected saints in flesh and bones whose physical bodies had been given life again at the crucifixion of Jesus.

Speaking to the multitudes who had gathered to hear Him in Matthew 5 Jesus said:

29 If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. (Matthew 5)

He would repeat this same thought again in Matthew 18 when He said:

8 And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire.

Notice what Jesus is saying here. He is telling us that it would be better for us to lose a hand than to be thrown into hell with both hands. What we need to understand by these verses is that both the believer and the unbeliever will be raised to life in their physical bodies. Those who have rejected Christ will be cast into hell in those physical bodies with hands and feet.

The apostle Paul, writing to the Romans reminded them of how Christ would one day give life to their mortal bodies:

11 if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. (Romans 8)

The life we can expect to receive at the resurrection is a life given to our “mortal bodies”. We will be raised in body. We can expect to have a physical body with flesh and bones at the resurrection.

Paul encouraged the Philippians in their suffering by telling them:

20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it, we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Philippians 3)

According to Paul, God will transform our lowly bodies into a glorious body. While our bodies will still be flesh and blood they will be transformed from lowly to glorious. We will examine this in the next chapter.

Let me summarise what we discover from these verses about the resurrection. We see from the resurrection of Jesus that the body He rose with was a recognisable human body of flesh and bones that His disciples could literally touch and feel.

The second detail we understand from these verses is that somehow our earthly bodies are transformed at the resurrection. It is true that we will receive a new body, but what is interesting from the passages we have examined is that when Jesus took on His resurrected body His dead body was no longer in the tomb—it was given life. The same is true for Lazarus who was decomposing in the tomb. The decomposing body of Lazarus was given life. This is proven by the fact that when he came to the entrance of the tomb it was still wrapped in grave cloths. The bodies of the saints who rose at the resurrection of Jesus came out of the tombs. That implies that their bodies were no longer in the graves but had been transformed. There is an incredible mystery to this but this seems to be the clear teaching of the Scriptures in these passages.

The third detail we see from these passages is that even the body of the unbeliever appears to be raised from the dead. Jesus teaches that it is not just their souls that go to hell but their bodies with hands and feet.

Finally, we saw how Paul told the Philippians in Philippians 3:20 that God would transform their mortal bodies into glorious bodies. While it appears to be our earthly bodies that are transformed, they will be different from the bodies that

we presently live in today. In the next chapter we will examine this further.

For Consideration:

- What does the resurrection of Jesus teach us about the kind of body that we will have after the resurrection?
- What proof do we have in the gospels that the body of Jesus after the resurrection was a flesh and bones body?
- Is there evidence in Scripture that even the unbeliever will experience a bodily resurrection? Explain.
- Consider for a moment the power of God that was able to take the decaying remains of Lazarus and restore him to health in his grave cloths. What does this teach us about the bodies we will have in the resurrection? What does it teach us about God?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord for the wonderful power that is able to restore life and health to our dead and decaying bodies.
- Take a moment to consider the bodily resurrection of the unbeliever to stand before their Judge and Maker. Take the time now to pray for someone you know who continues to reject

the Lord Jesus. Ask Him to convict them and show them the reality of Christ and His truth.

- Thank the Lord that He will transform our lowly bodies into glorious bodies.

CHAPTER 7

THE RESURRECTED BODY

In chapter 6 we discussed some verses related to the resurrection of the body and showed that in a manner known only to God, our bodies are given life and raised to meet Him. What we need to understand is that our bodies will not be the same after the resurrection as they are now. In this chapter, we will consider several verses that speak to these differences. While Scripture does not go into great detail about these new resurrection bodies, the verses that speak to this are quite helpful.

In Matthew 22, when Jesus was approached by the Sadducees about the question of marriage in heaven, He responded:

29 But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven. (Matthew 22)

We will examine this verse again in another context, but for now, it is important that we note the comparison Jesus

makes. He told the Sadducees that in the resurrection we will be like angels. He does not say that we will be angels—He simply says that in our resurrected body will be like angels. There are many who seem to teach that we will be angels in heaven. This is not supported by Scripture. We will continue to be human beings but our resurrected bodies will be different from what we have today.

Jesus does not go on to explain what it means to be like angels in this passage. We are dependent on the rest of Scripture to describe what this angel-like body will be like. Probably the most important passage on this subject is found in 1 Corinthians 15.

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul attempts to answer the question of what the resurrected body will be like.

35 But some will ask, “How are the dead raised?
With what kind of body do they come? (1 Corinthians)

To answer this Paul uses an agricultural illustration. He speaks of the body as a seed planted in the ground. Consider this for a moment. What does a corn seed look like? What happens when you plant that seed? It goes in the ground and seems to decay, but in that death life is produced. It germinates below the soil and begins to sprout. Out of that small seed a stock begins to grow. From that tall stock ears of corn mature. The plant that is before you now is very different from what you put in the soil. If you look closely, however at the ears of corn, you will see the resemblance to the seed you put in the ground but this stock with its ears is still vastly different from what was buried in the soil. This says, Paul is what happens when our bodies are planted in the ground at death.

37 And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or some other grain. 38 But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. (1 Corinthians 15)

What is interesting about this illustration is that while life came out of the seed, if you dig up the ground around the stock of corn you will find that the seed has died and decomposed. It has died but its body was the source of life for the new stock. It died to give life to something greater. This seems to be what God does. Our old earthly body is the seed for a new body into which God pours out His life.

Paul would go on to tell the Corinthians that this new body that springs from the old body would be vastly different.

40 There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. 41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. (1 Corinthians 15)

While there is much we could say about these verses, what I want us to see here is that Paul says that there are different kinds of bodies and each reflects something of the glory of its Maker. Each of these bodies, whether the sun, moon or stars is unique from the other. The point he appears to be making here is that the earthly body we have now is different from the body we will have at the resurrection. Paul will go on in this passage to describe some of those differences.

First, Paul told the Corinthians that when our bodies are sown into the ground they are perishable. That is to say,

they will decompose in the soil. That perishable seed, however, when sown into the ground produces an imperishable fruit—it is raised imperishable. It is raised to live eternally. The resurrected body will not be subject to death (see 1 Corinthians 15:42).

Second, the earthly body is sown into the ground in dishonour. There is no real honour in death. We may certainly die an honourable death, but by its very nature death strips us of everything we have and have ever worked to achieve. It humbles us and we are powerless to stand against it. Paul told the Corinthians, however, that the body that was sown in dishonour into the ground will raise in glory (1 Corinthians 15:42; Philippians 3:20-21). It will rise to stand before God. It will rise victorious over death.

Third, this earthly body will die in weakness. Our bodies are subject to sickness and are often not strong enough to conquer the illnesses that come our way. In death, the body grows weaker and weaker until it is no longer able to keep up with the demands of oxygen and blood. The resurrected body said Paul will be a body that is raised in power (1 Corinthians 15:43). It will not be subject to the weaknesses of our present earthly body.

Fourth, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that the body we have now is a natural body. The word “natural” here literally means “of the earth”. That is to say that this body belongs to the earth and is dependent on the earth for survival. Paul tells us that at the resurrection, our bodies will be spiritual. We should not confuse this to mean that our bodies will not be physical. While physical in nature, these new bodies will no longer be subject to the effects of this sinful earth. They will be pure and holy bodies, separated from the effects of the sin, death, and sickness that ravage this earth.

Fifth, Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 15:49 that just as we bore the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven. Many commentators see the reference to “the man of heaven” to speak of the Lord Jesus. He returned to heaven with a glorified body. The apostle John speaks of this when he said:

2 Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3)

Notice that John tells us that we will be like Christ. That is to say, we will have a body like His. We will also have His heart and attitude.

In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul compares our earthly bodies to a tent.

1 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling. (2 Corinthians 5)

There is a great difference between a tent and a building. While we can live in both, the tent is a temporary and fragile shelter. A building is designed to be strong and permanent. Paul tells us that presently we are living in tents, waiting to take up residence in a building from God. Notice in verse 1 that this building was not made with hands but from God. It is also an eternal building. The building from God which will be our new resurrected body will be eternal. It will not be subject to the same frailties we live in today.

In his vision in the book of Revelation, the apostle John was told:

4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. (Revelation 21)

From this it is quite clear that in the resurrected body there will be no more death or pain, nor will there be any reason to weep our shed tears. All these things will be banished from our resurrected body.

How will all this take place?

51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. (1Corinthians 15)

The whole process of receiving a new resurrected body will take place “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” Even those who do not die before the resurrection will have their earthly bodies transformed to a new imperishable body. This will take place simply at the command of God.

I do not know how this will all take place. Scripture does not go into further details about the process of resurrecting the decaying remains of our dead bodies. What we do have in Scripture, however, is the promise that God will bring this to pass in His way and in His time.

What we know is that our earthly bodies perish and are sown into the ground like a seed. Out of that decaying seed, new life is born. The plant that results from the death of the seed is vastly different. The resurrected body will not die again. It is a powerful body that is no longer subject to the things of this sinful earth. It is victorious over sickness and death and it will live on forever in the presence of the Lord. The resurrected body will live victoriously over the weakness of our current flesh in complete happiness and joy.

For Consideration:

- How does Paul's illustration of a seed growing into a plant help us to understand that resurrection body? Compare the seed with the plant. What are the differences? What differences do you expect to see in your resurrected body?
- What are some of the limitations of this earthly body?
- What is the difference between a tent and a building? How does Paul use this illustration to show us what our resurrected body will be like?
- Consider the power of God that is able to "in the twinkling of an eye" change our mortal and weak earthly body into a heavenly one? What does this tell us about God?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that out of the decaying remains of our earthly remains, He will bring forth a beautiful and heavenly body, free from all the limitations of this present body.
- Take a moment to thank the Lord for the fact that all your limitations and sickness will one day be removed when you receive your resurrected body.
- If you do not know the Lord as your Saviour today, take a moment to open your heart to Him and ask for His forgiveness. Thank Him that all who accept Him will know eternal life in this new resurrected body.

CHAPTER 8

RESURRECTION DAY

To this point, we have examined what the Scriptures teach about the resurrection of the body. The question we want to address in this chapter relates to when the resurrection takes place.

Scripture speaks about a number of people who were raised from the dead. We have examined the case of Lazarus who was raised by Jesus. We have also seen how at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus, saints were raised to life and went into the city of Jerusalem. Other examples of this kind of resurrection can be seen in both the Old and the New Testament. God has the power to raise individuals from the dead at any time.

While we understand that God has the power to raise the dead on this earth, apart from the work of the Lord Jesus, all of these individuals would die again. Scripture speaks, however, about a specific day when the dead will rise in final victory over death. Let's take a moment to see what Scripture has to say about this.

First Resurrection

Let's begin in Revelation 20 where we read about what is known as the first resurrection.

4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also, I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.
5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. (Revelation 20)

The apostle John speaks here about a period of 1,000 years when a certain group of saints would be raised to life to reign with Christ. Those who would reign with Christ at this time are those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or its image or received its mark on their foreheads or hands (verse 4). He would go on to make it clear in this passage that this resurrection was not of all the dead. The rest of the dead would not be raised until after this one-thousand-year reign of Jesus and His saints (verse 5).

While it is not our purpose here to discuss the details of this one-thousand-year reign, suffice it to say that this period of time is called the first resurrection in Revelation 20:5. This implies that there will also be a second resurrection where the rest of humanity will be raised.

The General Resurrection

Having understood that there is a special resurrection of saints to reign with the Lord Jesus for a period of one thousand years, we now move on to a general resurrection of all people. Jesus spoke of this in John 5 when He said:

28 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. (John 5)

Notice here that Jesus was speaking of an hour that was to come when “all” who were in the tombs would hear His voice and come out. There are two details we need to see here. First, this resurrection had not taken place at the time of Jesus—He speaks here about an hour that was to come. Second, Jesus teaches here that at that hour, “all” who are in the tombs would respond to the voice of God and come out of the grave. This seems to indicate that there was a time set apart by the Father when everyone would rise. God would call out and all humanity would respond to this voice and be raised.

Jesus would go on in John 6 to speak further of this when He said:

44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. (John 6)

Jesus makes it clear that He would raise those who belonged to Him. That resurrection, however, would be on the last day. This indicates that we are not given a new body immediately after we die. Our souls must wait for the

last day to receive that new body. Only God knows when that last day will be.

The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians says:

50 I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall all be changed. (1 Corinthians 15)

What is important for us to notice here in this context is the fact that we shall be changed “at the last trumpet.” The dead will be raised, according to Paul at the sound of the last trumpet. What is this last trumpet? Listen to what Jesus says in Matthew 24:

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken. 30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matthew 24)

Jesus speaks about a time of great signs in the heaven when the Lord Jesus would return in the clouds of heaven. At this time a loud trumpet call would be heard and the elect from the four corners of the earth would be gathered

to Him. This shows us that the resurrection will take place at the return of Christ and the sounding of that last trumpet.

This was the understanding of the apostle Paul when he wrote to the Thessalonians:

16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

Paul makes it quite clear that when the Lord returns He will do so with the sound of a trumpet. At that time the dead in Christ will be the first to rise. In other words, the resurrection of our bodies will take place when the Lord returns.

There is a specific day set apart by the Father for the return of His Son to this earth in final victory over sin, Satan and death. At that time, the Lord Jesus will return with the sound of a great victory trumpet. He will call out to the dead and they will be given life and stand before Him. Some will rise to everlasting life in His presence. Others will rise to everlasting judgement, eternally separated from Him.

What we can understand from these verses is that there appears to be a day known only to God when He will call out to the dead and they will rise to stand before Him. At that point, we will all be changed. This resurrection has not yet taken place but it is a promise of Scripture.

For Consideration:

- What is the first resurrection? How is this different from the general resurrection of the dead?
- What is the difference between the raising of men and woman from the dead on this earth, as recorded in the Scriptures and the general resurrection?
- When does Scripture say the resurrection will take place?
- As you consider that day when you will be raised from the dead, what are your expectations? Will you be assured of your relationship with Christ and eternity in His presence? How can you be assured of this?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He has power over sin and death.
- Thank the Lord for the wonderful hope you have that the day is coming when you will be raised from the dead to be with Him forever.
- Ask the Lord to help you to live in the reality of this coming resurrection.

CHAPTER 9

AWAITING THE RESURRECTION

We have seen in the previous chapter that there appears to be a day, known only by God, when He will call out to those in the graves to awaken. On that day they will be given a new body and stand before Him. We know that at death our earthly bodies will decay and be no more. As human beings, however, we are more than a physical body. Scripture teaches that we also have a soul. The question we want to ask now is this: What happens to the human soul when the physical body dies?

There are several passages in Scripture that seem to speak to this question. Let's begin with the words of God to Moses in Exodus 3. As Moses stood before the burning bush he heard a voice calling out from it. God told him to take off his sandals for he stood on holy ground. That day God introduced Himself to Moses:

6 And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of

Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. (Exodus 3)

Jesus would use this passage to challenge the Sadducees of His day who did not believe in the resurrection. Listen to Jesus’ explanation of Exodus 3:6 in Matthew 22:

31 And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: 32 “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? He is not God of the dead, but of the living. (Matthew 22)

The point Jesus was making is that God declared Himself to be God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob even after they had died physically. While their physical bodies were decaying in the ground, God still declared Himself to be their God. Because He was not the God of the dead, the implication here is that they were still alive, though not in body. While their bodies were dead, their souls appear to be alive.

This seems to be the understanding of the apostle Paul as well when he writes:

8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (2 Corinthians)

Notice what the apostle is saying here. He speaks about being away from his physical body but in the presence of the Lord. In other words, while his body lay decaying in the ground, he would be in the presence of the Lord awaiting the resurrection of his body.

Writing to the Philippians, the apostle Paul expressed that he had no fear of dying for he knew that his death would bring him into the presence of the Lord:

21 For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. 24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. (Philippians 1)

Paul found himself in a dilemma. He could remain in his earthly body and serve the Lord or he could leave that body and be with the Lord. His expectation was that when he left his earthly body his soul would be in the presence of the Lord. This was a thought that seemed to delight him.

In Luke 16, Jesus tells a story about a rich man and a man named Lazarus. The rich man lived a luxurious life while Lazarus sat at his gate, a poor man covered with sores. The day came when both the rich man and Lazarus died. Notice what Jesus said happened to them:

22 The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, 23 and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. 24 And he called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame." (Luke 16)

After the death of these two men, Jesus speaks about Lazarus going to be by Abraham's side while the rich man went to the suffering of Hades. The indication here is that

while their bodies were in the graves, their souls were either in the presence of God or suffering in Hades. There appears here to be a conscious awareness of their surroundings in their souls. The rich man was aware of the sufferings he was experiencing.

Revelation 6 gives us a picture of the soul of those who had died for the Lord in the presence of the Lord.

9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. 10 They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 Then they were given a white robe and told to rest a little longer until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been. (Revelation 6)

In his vision of the opening of the scroll with seven seals, the apostle John saw the souls of those who had died for the Lord. Notice that these souls were under the altar in the presence of God in heaven. These souls were conscious and crying out for justice on the earth. There in the presence of God in heaven, these souls were told to rest until the remainder of their brothers and sisters who were to be martyred for their faith had joined them. John's vision shows us the conscious souls of believers resting in heaven.

We learn several things from these verses. Let me summarise what they teach us about the soul when the body dies.

First, the soul of the believer enters the presence of the Lord when the body dies. This was the expectation of the apostle Paul who believed that to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord. It appears to be the teaching of Jesus who told the story of the Lazarus whose soul went to be by Abraham's side. It is also seen in the vision of John who saw the souls of those who had been martyred under the altar in heaven.

Second, the soul of the unbeliever goes to Hades. Hades is the place of the dead but, by extension also refers to hell. This seems to be evident in Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus. After death, his soul entered Hades, a place of suffering.

The third detail we can glean from these passages is that the soul appears to be conscious without the body. In heaven, the souls of those whose body had been killed are seen crying out for justice. In Hades, the soul of the rich man is suffering torment. His soul is aware of this pain and consciously asks for relief.

Finally, there is a sense here that these souls are not complete without their body. These souls await the resurrection in the last day. It is important that we do not go beyond what the Scriptures say here. What is clear, however, is that in our new resurrected bodies there will be no more pain, tears, sorrow or death. In these new bodies, we will be able to fully experience and enjoy the presence of the Lord. I believe that the souls of heaven long for the day of resurrection.

For Consideration:

- Jesus taught that God was not the God of the dead but of the living. What does this teach us about the soul of the person who dies in the Lord?
- What was Paul's expectation after he shed his earthly body in death?
- Jesus told a story about a rich man and Lazarus. Where was Lazarus carried after his body died? Where was the rich man taken? What evidence do we have that they were consciously aware of their circumstances at that time?
- Where do we find the souls of those who had died during the great persecution on the earth in Revelation 6? What does this tell us about the destination of the soul of the believer after the body dies?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that after this body dies, we have a hope of entering His presence.
- Pray for a loved one who does not believe in the Lord Jesus. Ask God to work in their lives to bring them to faith in Him so that when they die, their soul will enter His presence awaiting their new body.
- Ask God to give you something of the excitement of the apostle Paul to be in the presence of the Lord God.

- Do you fear the death of your earthly body? Ask the Lord to encourage you with the verses we have examined in this chapter.

CHAPTER 10

RESURRECTION HOPE

In the course of this study, we have examined a number of verses related to the resurrection. This has not been an exhaustive study on the topic. The purpose, however, has been to summarise what the Scriptures teach us about this important truth. There is one more set of verses I would like to conclude with in this chapter. These verses relate to the hope this doctrine gave the New Testament writers.

The apostle Paul declares in Romans 1:

1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 1)

Notice what the apostle Paul tells us in verse 4. He tells us that Jesus Christ was declared to be the Son of God in power by His resurrection from the dead. What does the

resurrection of Jesus show us? It shows us that He was able to conquer death and the sin that brought death. If the Lord Jesus had not risen from the dead, we would have no hope of victory over sin. Death would overwhelm us and we would be forever separated from the Lord our Creator. Because Jesus has overcome death we too have hope. Because Jesus has overcome death, He has been proven to be the Son of God. We can have confidence in what He says. We can have confidence in His work. He has demonstrated this by His own resurrection.

Writing to the Corinthians Paul would go on to say:

13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God because we testified about God that he raised Christ, who he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. (1 Corinthians 15).

For the apostle Paul, the resurrection was not only proof of the claims of Christ but it also validated all that he did as an apostle. If Christ did not rise from the dead then Paul preached a lie, he believed a lie and lived a lie. Paul had confidence in his message because it was proven to be true by the resurrection of Christ. He knew by this fact that his ministry was not in vain.

Paul was not the only apostle to feel this way about the truth of the resurrection. The apostle Peter said:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to born again to a living hope through

the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1)

Peter makes it clear in these verses that the hope of an eternal inheritance and salvation was "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (verse 3). We have been born again through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. We have an inheritance that is imperishable because of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. All these wonderful gifts are guaranteed to us because Jesus rose victoriously over sin and death. None of these blessings could be ours apart from this resurrection of Jesus.

The power of the resurrection is not just for the life to come. It has implications for our life today. The truth of the resurrection of Christ gives us boldness to preach the gospel message with absolute conviction. The truth of the resurrection of Jesus emboldens us to preach. Our Lord has overcome and we will also in His name.

Writing to the Philippians Paul told them that he wanted to know the power of the resurrection of Christ in his life:

10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. (Philippians 3)

Let me say a few things about Paul's words here in Philippians 3:10. Notice that Paul wanted to know the power of Jesus' resurrection. To say that this only meant that Paul wanted to die and go to be with the Lord is to minimise what the apostle is saying here. Paul does not say that he

wanted to be resurrected here, but that he wanted to know the power of the resurrection.

What does it mean to know the power of the resurrection? Resurrection is the power to give life to what is dead. It is the power to break the bondage of sin and death. Sin and death are rampant all around us. Whole societies are entrapped in sin and death. Loved ones are enslaved by sin. Even the heart of the believer needs to be set free from strongholds of sin and death. Paul tells us that he wanted to know the power of Christ that could break this power in the lives of those around him. He wanted to see those held by sin set free by the resurrection power of Christ. He wanted to see his own heart set free by this same power to honour God and walk in His way.

How we need to see evidence of this resurrection power in the church today. How we need to see the prisoners set free from the bondage of sin. How we need to see the resurrection power of God restoring life to our churches and society. This resurrection power of God breaks the power of sin and releases life. Do we not need this in our ministries today? Without this power, how could we ever advance the cause of Christ on this earth?

When Paul told the Philippians that he wanted to know the power of Christ's resurrection, he was telling them that he wanted to be empowered with the very power of Christ to conquer sin and death in his own life and in the lives of those God put in his path. He was willing to suffer like Jesus as he went in this resurrection power. He was willing to lay down his life to demonstrate this power and restore men and women to life in Christ.

Notice in Philippians 3:10 that Paul wanted to be like Jesus in His death. How did Jesus die? He died having broken

the power of sin and death. He died having lived a life of victory over sin. He died having brought glory to the Father in all things. This is how Paul wanted to die. How can we die in this way? We can only die in this way if we are living in the resurrection power of Christ. We can only live in victory over sin through the resurrection power of Jesus. Our ministries can only be fruitful if they are enabled by the resurrection power of Christ. We can only die in hope because of the resurrection power of Christ. Whether we live or die, we need to know this power in our lives. This resurrection power is not only our hope in death but also in life. To know this power is not only to have assurance in death but to be victorious in life. What a difference it would make in our churches, personal lives, and ministries if we would like Paul cry out to God to know more of this resurrection power.

For Consideration:

- How does the resurrection prove the claims of Jesus?
- What confidence did the resurrection of Christ give Paul in his preaching? Would we have a message to preach if Christ had not been raised from the dead?
- How does our salvation depend on the resurrection?
- What is the power of the resurrection? Is this power necessary today? Are you walking in the power of the resurrection? What evidence is there of this in your life and ministry?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that the resurrection gives us assurance of the message of the gospel.
- Thank the Lord that the power of the resurrection is not just for the day of resurrection but also for today.
- Ask the Lord to empower you each day with the power of the resurrection so that you can live in victory over sin and death in your life.
- Ask God to move in resurrection power in your society and church, setting free those who are dead and captured by sin.

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