

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

AND many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

but also the resurrection of the body. All will be resurrected. Jesus declared it. "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28,29). There is a "resurrection of life" and there is a "resurrection of damnation."

The Word clearly teaches of the First Resurrection, which is the resurrection of the "blessed and holy," and the resurrection a thousand years later, at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:4-6). Those who have part in the First Resurrection will live and reign with Christ a thousand years. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished" (Revelation 20:5).

The First Resurrection

"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on in-corruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (I Corinthians 15:51-53). This will take place at the Rapture of the Church. Then will follow the Great Tribulation on earth and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in the heavens.

Some will never taste of death, but will be translated as Enoch was. Others, who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with Him. The spotless Bride of Christ who has suffered on earth and gone through the humiliation with Him, bearing the cross, will be ushered in to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9). The prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and saints of all ages will have part in this glorious resurrection. "They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6). They will have part in the "new song," and will "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," and will stand with Him on Mount Zion, "having his Father's name written in their foreheads" (Revelation 14:1-4).

The Last Trump

When the trumpet sounds, the Lord will descend in midair, and the graves of the saints will be opened. "The dead in Christ shall rise first" (I Thessalonians 4:16). God has power to bring forth the body that sleeps in the dust of the earth; and it will have spirit, soul, and body, and will come forth, just as the body of Christ came forth from the grave. Not only the bodies in the graves, but the bodies of those who have been torn to atoms and scattered to the four winds (perhaps on battlefields or burned at the stake), will be raised at the sound of the trumpet.

Jesus ate and drank with His disciples after He rose from the dead, and was seen of them forty days, speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, "Until the day in which he was taken up." He appeared unto His disciples in the room where they were gathered for fear of the Jews, and said, "Peace be unto you." He showed them His hands and feet and His side, and said, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke. 24:39).

He had power to go and come through closed doors. Though the doors were locked, He appeared in the room. Still He was not a spirit.

If there is anything that should put confidence and consecration into the heart, to pay the utmost

farthing to obtain this great salvation, it is to know the mighty resurrecting power of God that is to be manifested at the coming of Jesus.

The change will be like a flash of lightning, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." We are here today, flesh and blood; we eat and drink, wake and sleep, suffer and labor — and then suddenly, without a moment's warning, changed in the twinkling of an eye, made like unto the Son of God! Truly, had we not better hold the things of this earth with a loose hand?

Absent from the Body

Death has lost its sting, for the "sting of death is sin." Death is but the separation of the soul from the body. The soul and body will be united again, and will stand before the Throne of God (Revelation 11:17-19), and return with Christ to reign a thousand years.

The soul does not sleep in the grave. The soul is "absent from the body" at death. Paul says, "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: . . . Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him" (II Corinthians 5:6-9). Paul knew what it would mean to be with the Lord. He would rather be "absent from the body" (that is death), that he might be present with the Lord. In another place he says, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Philippians 1:23).

Preparation

Paul was willing to suffer. He said, "I die daily." "I press toward the mark." "I keep under my body." "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, . . . if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." He was striving for the prize of the first resurrection. It means a preparation. The Bride "hath made herself ready." It surely means walking in the light, putting on the whole armor of God, obeying the whole Word of God, and living a life of deep consecration up to the moment when the trumpet shall sound.

The overcomers are the Bride of Christ. They will be nearest to the Son of God. They are the "firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" (Revelation 14:4). They will be translated and caught away and will have part in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Others who will be martyred for Christ during the reign of the Antichrist, in the Great Tribulation, will be raised at the close of the Great Tribulation, but will miss the Rapture and the Marriage Supper. Many will be beheaded for Christ's sake, rather than take the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:15,16), and will come "out of great tribulation" (Revelation 7:9-14; 20:4,5).

Job spoke of the First Resurrection: "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25,26). Isaiah spoke of that great day: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead" (Isaiah 26:19).

The Final Resurrection

The last resurrection — that of the wicked dead — will be at the time of the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). The ungodly of all ages will come forth in their bodies to meet their earthly record before God. "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works" (Revelation 20:13).

Forever

There is no annihilation in the Word of God. The wicked will not cease to exist. The same words that describe the duration of Heaven also describe the duration of hell — "eternal," "everlasting" (Matthew 25:46). God formed man out of the dust of the earth, He breathed into him the breath of life, and he became "a living soul."

After death, dust returns to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7). There is no medium place, no place of purgation after death. As the tree falleth, so shall it lie. It is a vain thought that death will put an end to the soul or the body. It will not end either one.

"The second death" is a fearful thing. "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." This is the second death (Revelation 20:14,15). Jesus said, "I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him" (Luke 12:5). To be forever lost, to have your portion in "the lake of fire," and wail throughout an endless eternity — that is the second death (Mark 9:48; Luke 16:24; Matthew 25:41).

Glorious Hope

There is a crown of life to be gained. This life below is not the hope of God's people. Paul counted it as nothing, that he might win Christ. This life to him was as a dressing room, that he might robe himself in righteousness and be ready when God should call him. So with every follower of Christ — we look for a "city which hath foundations, whose building and maker is God."

We have that blessed hope planted deep in our hearts, the hope of living through the countless ages of eternity with God. The things of the world become very trifling to the one in whose heart is that hope of meeting Jesus Christ in the skies.