

"The Resurrection from the Dead"
(John 5:28-29)

Introduction: Death is something that all people everywhere will have someday to face because of the Fall. But we learned last week that God uses even something as unnatural as death for good in the life of the Christian. You will recall that God allows His children to fall asleep in order to remove them from any more sin, which is a grief to the heart of the Christian, and from the consequences of that sin, which are pain and suffering. He also takes us out of this world in order that we might enjoy more perfect and complete communion with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. As long as we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord. But to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, which, as Paul tells us, is very much better (Phil. 1:23). Our bodies, once we are absent from them, remain in the tomb until the day when Christ returns to raise them from the dead. They are still our bodies; we are still united to them in the sense that they belong to us. But they rest in their graves, as though they were asleep in their beds, until the Lord comes again. Those, on the other hand, who did not choose Christ for their whole portion in this life, die, their souls are immediately sent to hell to be tormented, and their bodies, with which they are still united, are, as it were, encased in a prison, until they are raised at Christ's return. Aside from these two places, the Scripture acknowledges none. But it is Christ's return that we want to look at particularly this evening. What does the Bible tell us about the Second Coming and the resurrection of the dead? Does the Bible in fact teach us that there are two, or three, or even four resurrections? Will the righteous and the unrighteous all be raised at the same time, or at different times? And what exactly will happen to our souls and our bodies when once that time has fully come? What this passage teaches us about this subject tonight is,

At Christ's Second Coming, all of the dead shall be raised at the same time, but to two different destinations.

First, I want you to see that the resurrection will take place when Christ comes again; secondly, that there will only be one such resurrection, when all of the dead shall be raised; and lastly, that the righteous shall be raised unto life, but the unrighteous shall be raised unto judgment.

I *There Is Coming a Time When Christ Will Return to Bring About the Resurrection.*

A. *The Scriptures Plainly Say that Christ Is Coming Again.*

1. *When He was on the earth, He told His disciples that He would come again and receive them to Himself.*
 - a. *He was leaving to prepare a place for them (John 14:2).*
 - b. *And He was intending to come and take them to be with Him, so that, as He said, "WHERE I AM, THERE YOU MAY BE ALSO" (14:3).*
 - c. *Therefore He told them not to be afraid, "LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED" (14:1).*
 - d. *Rather they were to continue to labor and use what He had given them, until He would come again for*

them. He said to those in the parable to whom He had entrusted the ten minas, "DO BUSINESS WITH THIS UNTIL I COME BACK" (Luke 19:13).

2. He also told them that they would not know exactly when He would return.
 - a. Jesus said, "BUT OF THAT DAY AND HOUR NO ONE KNOWS, NOT EVEN THE ANGELS OF HEAVEN, NOR THE SON, BUT THE FATHER ALONE" (Matt. 24:36).
 - b. And so they should be ready at all times, "BE ON THE ALERT THEN, FOR YOU DO NOT KNOW THE DAY NOR THE HOUR (Matt. 25:13).

B. And When He Returns, He Will Bring About the Resurrection.

1. There are many things which will happen on the day that Christ returns.
 - a. The Bible tells us that when He returns, human history will end, and the eternal kingdom of God will be set up (Rev. 21).
 - b. The judgment of all the dead shall take place (Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20).
 - c. And the present heavens and earth will be destroyed and the new heavens and earth will be brought in (2 Peter 3:10-13).
2. And it is at this time that the dead will be raised.
 - a. Paul tells us very clearly when the dead are resurrected, "FOR THE LORD HIMSELF WILL DESCEND FROM HEAVEN WITH A SHOUT, WITH THE VOICE OF THE ARCHANGEL, AND WITH THE TRUMPET OF GOD; AND THE DEAD IN CHRIST SHALL RISE FIRST" (1 Thes. 4:16).
 - b. When He comes, our text tells us, "ALL WHO ARE IN THE TOMBS SHALL HEAR HIS VOICE, AND SHALL COME FORTH." This is the resurrection.

II. There Is Only One Resurrection Mentioned in Scripture, At Which Time All of the Dead Shall Be Raised. "THOSE WHO DID THE GOOD DEEDS TO A RESURRECTION OF LIFE, THOSE WHO COMMITTED THE EVIL DEEDS TO A RESURRECTION OF JUDGMENT."

A. There Are Those Who Teach that There Shall Be Many Resurrections.

1. As you probably know, most Christians are divided into two major schools on how to understand the Scriptures.
 - a. Covenant Theology seeks to show the unity that exists between God's gracious covenants in the Covenant of Grace, and the unity of God's covenant people throughout the ages.
 - b. But Dispensational Theology seeks to show that all of the covenants are not really related, and the people of God are separated as well.
 - (i) They believe that there are two peoples of God: the Jews and the church.
 - (ii) They believe that all of the covenants are only for Israel, and not for the church, except, perhaps, for a blessing which comes to the church through the Abrahamic Covenant.
 - (iii) Therefore, God has a different plan for each of these two groups of people.

2. On the basis of this distinction, the dispensationalist

sees many different resurrections.

- a. They believe that all who are in Christ, that is, the church, will be resurrected at the first of the two Second Comings of Christ. Their belief on what the Bible teaches leads them to conclude that Christ comes a Second time twice. At this time the church is judged.
- b. Then comes the Tribulation period of some seven years which is primarily for the Jews, to fulfill for them the seventieth week of Daniel, and to get the Jews to turn to their Messiah.
- c. At the end of the Tribulation, there is another Second Coming of Christ to set up His kingdom.
 - (i) There will be a battle between the Antichrist and the beast, on the one hand, and Christ and His army on the other. Christ will defeat them, imprison the devil, and bring in His kingdom.
 - (ii) At this time, those who were converted during the Tribulation, the Jews who died during the Tribulation and those Jews that died prior to the church being established will be raised.
 - (iii) Those who were raised shall be judged, and those who are judged worthy shall be allowed to enter into the Millennial Kingdom which will then be set up.
 - (iv) All of those who are left alive after the Tribulation will also be judged as to who is worthy to enter into the kingdom.
- d. Then after the thousand years is over, there will be another battle as Satan is released and gathers the nations together one last time to try and overthrow Christ.
 - (i) But he will again be defeated by Christ and thrown into the lake of fire.
 - (ii) Then there will be the resurrection of all of the wicked of all times, and they will be judged and thrown into the lake of fire.
 - (iii) At that time the old creation will be destroyed, and the new heavens and the new earth will be set up.
- e. So you can see from this interpretation of Scripture that they believe in three or four resurrections.

B. But the Bible Is Actually Much Simpler than This. It Really Recognizes Only One Resurrection in Which All of the Dead Shall Be Raised.

1. The Scripture plainly teaches that there is only one resurrection.
 - a. Our text tonight tells us, "DO NOT MARVEL AT THIS; FOR AN HOUR IS COMING, IN WHICH ALL WHO ARE IN THE TOMBS SHALL HEAR HIS VOICE, AND SHALL COME FORTH; THOSE WHO DID THE GOOD DEEDS TO A RESURRECTION OF LIFE, THOSE WHO COMMITTED THE EVIL DEEDS TO A RESURRECTION OF JUDGMENT" (John 5:28-29).

- b. The New Testament gives to us a unified witness on this point. Paul says to Felix, in Acts 24:15, "BUT THIS I ADMIT TO YOU, THAT ACCORDING TO THE WAY WHICH THEY CALL A SECT I DO SERVE THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS, BELIEVING EVERYTHING THAT IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAW, AND THAT IS WRITTEN IN THE PROPHEYS; HAVING A HOPE IN GOD, WHICH THESE MEN CHERISH THEMSELVES, THAT THERE SHALL CERTAINLY BE A RESURRECTION OF BOTH THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED."
 - c. It is also plain from the fact that both the righteous and the wicked are to be judged at the same time. John says in Revelation 11:18, "AND THE NATIONS WERE ENRAGED, AND THY WRATH CAME, AND THE TIME CAME FOR THE DEAD TO BE JUDGED, AND THE TIME TO GIVE THEIR REWARD TO THY BONDservants THE PROPHEYS AND TO THE SAINTS AND TO THOSE WHO FEAR THY NAME, THE SMALL AND THE GREAT, AND TO DESTROY THOSE WHO DESTROY THE EARTH."
 - d. We need but think of the judgment of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 to see that both the righteous and the wicked will all be judged at once.
 - e. And also, in the parables of the talents and of the stewards, it is when the Master returns that they are rewarded or punished accordingly (Luke 19:12-27; Matt. 25:14-30).
2. This is called the general resurrection from the dead because all shall be raised at that time.
- a. There are not partial resurrections of only some groups, but one, in which all who are in the tombs shall be raised.
 - b. There is, by the way, also only one Second Coming of Christ, one final battle between the devil and Christ, and one final judgment of the just and the unjust. all of which will happen when Christ comes again.
- III. Those Who Are in Christ Will Be Reunited with Their Bodies and Gloriously Transformed into Christ's Image, But Those Who Are Outside of Christ Will Be Raised Only for Judgment.
- A. The Righteous Shall Be Raised to a Resurrection of Life.
- 1. The Bible tells us that those who are alive shall be changed in a moment. "BEHOLD, I TELL YOU A MYSTERY; WE SHALL NOT ALL SLEEP, BUT WE SHALL ALL BE CHANGED, 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" (1 Cor. 15:51-52).
 - 2. But those who are dead, will be raised unto life.
 - a. The self-same bodies, which they had in life, shall be raised again by Christ.
 - (i) Don't worry about such things as what if the body was cremated and the ashes scattered over the sea, or decomposed and absorbed by the surrounding plants and eaten by other creatures, or whether the body was eaten by a wild beast such as when the Christians were thrown to the lions in Rome.
 - (ii) The Lord is able to raise His children again

to life, and to transform them.

(iii) And transform them He will, for He will make them like unto His own resurrected and glorious humanity. Paul says, "IT IS SOWN A PERISHABLE BODY, IT IS RAISED AN IMPERISHABLE BODY; IT IS SOWN IN DISHONOR, IT IS RAISED IN GLORY; IT IS SOWN IN WEAKNESS, IT IS RAISED IN POWER; IT IS SOWN A NATURAL BODY, IT IS RAISED A SPIRITUAL BODY" (1 Cor. 15:42-44). And this will happen, he says, when Jesus comes, who will "TRANSFORM THE BODY OF OUR HUMBLE STATE INTO CONFORMITY WITH THE BODY OF HIS GLORY, BY THE EXERTION OF THE POWER THAT HE HAS EVEN TO SUBJECT ALL THINGS TO HIMSELF" (Phil. 3:21).

b. Their bodies will be raised, and their souls, which are with Christ, shall be reunited to their bodies forever.

(i) We know that the Bible tells us that the perfected souls of the saints go to be with Christ once they have departed from the body.

(ii) And Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:14 that "GOD WILL BRING WITH HIM", that is, with Christ, "THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP IN JESUS."

(iii) So the righteous will be raised to a resurrection of life.

B. But the Unrighteous Shall Be Raised to Everlasting Contempt and Dishonor.

1. It will not be a resurrection by a loving God to receive them to Himself.

2. Rather, it will be a resurrection to the very terrible judgment that they will face at the hands of a most just and terrible Judge. John tells us it is a resurrection unto damnation.

IV. Uses.

A. Do You Believe that Christ Is Coming Again?

1. Is your heart troubled by what is going on all around you, and do you sometimes worry about what will happen to you after death?

a. The devil is always trying to get us to doubt the promises of God, and to make us fear what will happen to us after our time is finished.

b. But are you willing to lay aside what the devil says, and listen to the what the Lord says to you?

c. He has told us what will in fact take place. And you must believe Him if you are to derive any benefit from His promises.

d. You must not listen to the lies of Satan, for he is the father of all lies and deception.

2. And so do you find comfort in the fact that Christ has prepared a place for you and that He is coming again to

take you to Himself?

- a. If there is true belief in your heart in the promises of Christ, then there must also be true comfort.
 - b. Jesus said these things to comfort His disciples because He was going away. But He said He would return to take them again to Himself. And He is coming again to take you to Himself as well.
 - c. Doesn't this bring you comfort in the midst of the worst of your situations? Trust what Jesus says is true and see how it will calm your heart.
3. And since you know that Christ is coming again, are you doing the work of the kingdom, occupying your life with diligent service until He returns for you?
- a. Jesus said that we would not know the day nor the hour. But He did tell us that we were to labor until the time that He comes for us.
 - b. Notice in the parable of the talents that all of His servants were given something to trade with, none were empty handed.
 - c. They differed in the fact that they were each given something according to their abilities. They were not all as gifted, and they were not all expected to bear as much return on their Lord's investment.
 - d. But they all had to bear some fruit; they all had to have some measure of return. And so must you, and so will you if you are Christ's.
- B. Are You Certain that When He Comes that You Will Attain to the Resurrection of Life?
1. The foolish virgins, after they went away to get what they needed, came again to where the bridegroom was, and said, "LORD, LORD, OPEN FOR US," but it was too late. He said, "TRULY I SAY TO YOU, I DO NOT KNOW YOU" (Matt. 25:10-13).
 2. These who thought that they had a relationship with the Lord were only fooling themselves, for as Jesus said, many will come to Him and say, "LORD, LORD, DID WE NOT PROPHECY IN YOUR NAME, AND IN YOUR NAME CAST OUT DEMONS, AND IN YOUR NAME PERFORM MANY MIRACLES?" Jesus said, "AND THEN I WILL DECLARE TO THEM, 'I NEVER KNEW YOU; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'" "NOT EVERYONE WHO SAYS TO ME 'LORD, LORD,' WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN; BUT HE WHO DOES THE WILL OF MY FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN" (Matt. 7:21-23).
 3. Are you doing the will of the Father? Are you doing all that Jesus requires of you?
 - a. You are not saved by your works, but you will abound in works if you are saved.
 - b. Are your lives bearing much fruit and good fruit for the honor of the Father, and Christ's glory?
 - c. You must bear fruit! You cannot afford to be idle!
 - d. There is coming a day when all of your works will be judged as to what quality they are.
 - e. They will not be judged by your standards or by

- your ideas, but by the Word of God.
- f. There will be many who thought that they were the servants of Christ, many who even did miracles, but they will be turned away.
 - g. Examine carefully what kind of a house you are building, for only those founded upon Christ Jesus will stand in the day of His scrutiny!
 - h. People of God, this text reminds you that Christ is surely coming, and when He does the door will be shut after Him. Make sure that you are on the inside of the door. Make sure that you have answered Christ's call to faith and repentance. If any of you here tonight have not, then you must call on Him now, for He is rich in mercy to all who call upon Him in truth. Jesus says to you, "THEREFORE BE ON THE ALERT, FOR YOU DO NOT KNOW WHICH DAY YOUR LORD IS COMING" (Matt. 24:42).
Amen.