

Foundations Principles: Resurrection of the Dead



Slice D1.5

Resurrection of the Dead

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1 The Resurrection of the Dead

1.1 *What is Death?*



Death is the irreversible cessation of brain function and consequently, all biological activities that sustain the body. The spirit leaves the body and appears before God who determines where the spirit will go:

2 Corinthians 5:8 (KJV)

“8 Absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

Before we can deal with the fifth foundation stone, it is important to understand why a resurrection is needed! The Rebellion against God in the Garden of Eden resulted in Adam and Eve losing their lives, the penalty for their sin was death (Genesis 3:17-19). This is the only possible result, as God is “the source of life” (Psalm 36:9), and “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

Mankind is not being punished for Adam’s and Eve’s sins; it is theirs alone. But we inherited our fallen nature from Adam; which means we are born with a sinful nature, based on the original sin of pride, a focus on self.

Romans 5:12 (ESV)

“12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”

The result of the sin then is that all people die (Romans 3:23). The resurrection is evidence that death is not what God intended for mankind, He wants us to have an opportunity to live in resurrected bodies for eternity.

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1.2 Do the Scriptures Teach a Resurrection?

The resurrection of the dead is a fundamental teaching that runs through both the Old and the New Testaments. The Patriarchs believed that they would be "gathered to their fathers" in death (Genesis 49:29; Judges 2:10), but there was no widespread understanding of eternal life beyond the grave. King David gave a glimpse of the resurrection, with a prophecy pointing to Jesus, the first resurrected of the dead:

Psalm 16:10 (ESV)

"**10** For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol or let your holy one see corruption."

Job had a remarkable understanding of physical life after death:

Job 19:25-27 (ESV).

"**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!"

However, Daniel has by far the clearest vision of resurrection in the Old Testament.

Daniel 12:2-3 (ESV)

"**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."

The explanation then is given that multitudes will be resurrected in body, "some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt." There is a clear teaching that there will be two types of resurrection, one for the saved and another for the condemned (John 5:29; Revelation 20:4-6).

Jesus confirms that there will be two contrasting resurrections:

John 5:28-29 (ESV)

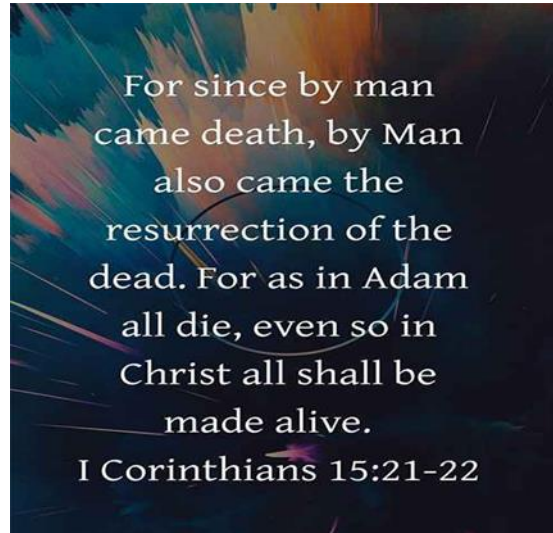
"**28** Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice **29** and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgement."

The righteous are referred to as "those who are wise" as in Daniel 11:33, 35. They will eternally shine with God's glory, "forever and ever." And they will be a powerful influence on others who will turn to God.

By Jesus' day, many Jews believed in the resurrection of the dead on the Last Day. The Pharisees dogmatically affirmed resurrection in opposition to the Sadducees, who emphatically denied that there was a resurrection to come. Jesus publicly took the Pharisees' position on the truth of the resurrection (Matthew 22:23-34; Luke 14:14). Indeed, Jesus affirmed that He personally would raise believers up on the Last Day (John 6:39-40). This expectation of the resurrection on the Last Day is the understanding of the early church as well (Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; and others).

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Jesus publicly rebuked the Sadducees for their rejection of a future resurrection, as their belief was not based on scripture, but on man's reasoning. This showed their lack of knowledge of scripture, which explains their lack of faith in an Omnipotent God, who has the power to raise the dead.



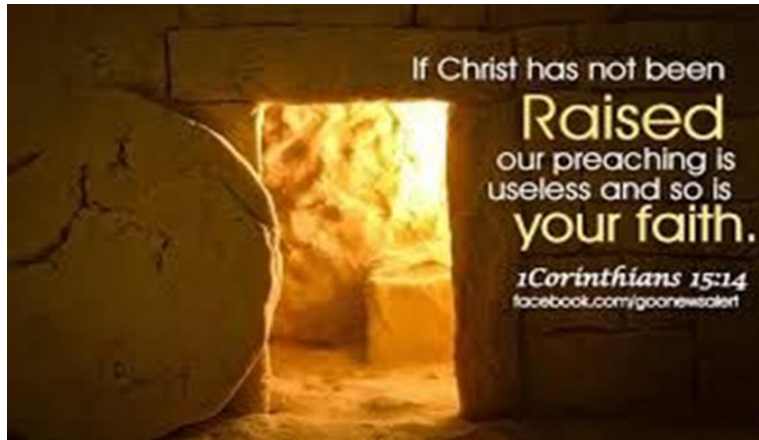
2 Corinth and the Resurrection of the Dead

Paul covered the resurrection debate in his first letter to the Corinthians, as some in that church did not believe in a resurrection of the dead. Paul reasoned that if there is no resurrection, then Jesus could not have risen from the dead, and if Jesus had not been raised from the dead then we are not justified, and our sins are not forgiven. If Jesus has not been raised from the dead our faith and our hope are futile:

1 Corinthians 15:12-14 (ESV)

“**12** Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? **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.”

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The problem Paul was dealing with in the Corinthian church had its roots in Greek philosophy (Plutonium dualism). Some of the Corinthians still held to the Greek belief that the spiritual world was pure, but the physical realm corrupt, so the human soul was good, but the body was sinful. The Corinthians responded to this belief in two ways:

- Believing the body to be bad some became ascetic, denying themselves all bodily pleasures.
- Being hedonistic, believing that since the body is temporary and the spirit is everlasting, it did not matter what a person did in the body.

So, when the apostle Paul taught that there would be a resurrection of the body, the Corinthians were dumbfounded. Why would God resurrect a corrupted body for life in the spiritual realm of heaven? It made no sense!

We see Paul's angry, frustrated response to the Corinthians on the matter in **1 Corinthians 15:35-49 (ESV)**

35 But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" **36** You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. **37** And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. **38** But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. **39** For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. **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. **42** So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. **43** It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. **44** It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. **45** Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. **46** But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. **47** The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. **48** As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the

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man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. **49** Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.”

Paul identifies the earthly body as a seed. For the heavenly body to live the seed must die, so the new body will be energised by the spirit. Adam the first man had a mortal body, while Jesus the first resurrected man had an eternal heavenly body.

Paul writes that the spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. Adam came first; Jesus came later: “The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven.” While the flesh of Adam started as dust from the earth; The flesh of Jesus had a spiritual uncontaminated origin.

As believer in Jesus, we are resurrected in Him. While we have the appearance of Adam now, in resurrection we will have the appearance of Jesus! Our body as it is now, is inadequate for heaven, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” Our perishable bodies must be replaced by imperishable ones; we will have eternal bodies empowered by the Spirit.

3 Two Contrasting Resurrection

3.1 *The Resurrection of the Righteous*

John refers to the resurrection of the righteous is referred to as “the first resurrection” in Revelation 20:

Revelation 20:4-5 (ESV)

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... 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**” (emphasis added).

The Greek word used by John for “first” is *protos*, which is not first in number, but rather, chief, principal or most important. This resurrection is the resurrection of the righteous, the second is the resurrection of the damned. The resurrection of the righteous follows the Jewish harvest, which took place over three phases. The first stage was the harvest of the first fruits, which were presented to the Lord in the Temple. Then the main harvest would follow, and finally, the gleaning which was done by the poor and downtrodden. God required harvesters to leave the corners of their fields for the poor and hard done by to glean, so they had food for themselves (Lev. 23:22). The act of gleaning is seen in the book of Ruth where Boaz, a landowner, instructed his workers to leave plenty of grain for Ruth to find (Ruth 2:3-9).

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3.1.1 First Fruits

The first of the righteous resurrections, therefore, took place on the day of First Fruits, on the last day of the feast of Passover, with the resurrection of Jesus. The instructions the Lord gave to the Jews regarding their harvest are a pointer to the harvest that salvation introduced to mankind, through the death and resurrection of Jesus. The harvest of the first fruits of souls is recorded in Matthew 27:52-53 when on the day Jesus rose from the dead, there was a resurrection of believers who had died before the crucifixion of Jesus. These people entered the city of Jerusalem and were seen by many people. The resurrection of these saints proved that Christ's power over death was not limited to Himself. These people are the first fruits wave offering before God. The resurrection of Jesus is the reality of the First Fruits, the fulfilment of the feast took place when the first fruits of the work of the Lord Jesus were seen in the Temple in heaven.



3.1.2 The Rapture

The main harvest, or second righteous resurrection, will take place at the rapture of the Church. The rapture is an amazing revelation of the great love Jesus has for His bride, the Church. The rapture needs to be understood from this perspective: A bride is being called out to be with her bridegroom for the marriage ceremony. The word "Rapture" is derived from the Greek word explaining the act of being "Caught up," (harpazo), which means to be grasped hastily, to be snatched up. The Greek word harpazo translated into Latin is raptus, which eventually became the term used today – rapture. The term signifies the believer being caught up in the air to be with Jesus, for the marriage supper and the union of Jesus with His Church.

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The event is described in detail in both 1 Corinthians 15:50-57 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18:

1 Corinthians 15:51-54 (ESV)

“**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 be changed. **53** For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. **54** When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.””

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (ESV).

“**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. **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.”

The two scriptures combined give a clear picture of the events that make up the rapture.

The rapture begins with Jesus descending from heaven to the clouds above the earth. Then, at the sound of a trumpet, a loud command will be given, calling those who believe in Him as their Lord and Saviour, to join Him in the air above the earth. Paul makes it clear that the rapture is for the Church only when he writes “the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thess. 4:16). Jesus is only returning for His Church, the Bride of Christ. The saints of the Old Testament could not enter heaven until the price for their redemption was paid for by Jesus on the cross. Their bodily resurrection will only take place when everyone is resurrected just before the Great White Throne of Judgement – “some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2).”

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The rapture occurs in a flash, the human eye will not be able to capture the event. It will occur "in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15:51)." One moment the person will be on earth the next they will have vanished.

The first to arise at the call will be the saints who have died since the crucifixion of Jesus. As their corrupted bodies are raised from the grave they will be changed into immortal bodies. Then those believers in Jesus who are alive at the time of the rapture will be raised from the earth to heaven, escaping death. Their bodies will be changed from mortal to immortal bodies, that will live for eternity. As these believers do not die, but are translated into the presence of God, death has had no hold on them and they will truly be able to say, "Where O death is your victory? Where O death is your sting?"

Paul clearly teaches that the raptured saints will receive heavenly bodies, much the same as the resurrected body of Jesus; this is the primary purpose of the rapture. In our eternal bodies, we will be able to think about being at a destination and will appear there (Luke 24:31; John 20:19). We will be able to pass through solid objects (John 20:19, 26). Although we will not require food as an energy resource, we will be able to eat (Luke 24:41-43). These are just some of the marvels our immortal bodies will be able to perform. The resurrected saints, when gathered to be with the Lord in the air, are referred to in scripture as the Bride of Christ, who will journey with Jesus to heaven where the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place, "and so [they] will be with the Lord forever."

The certainty of the rapture is made clear by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:14 where he writes "We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep (have died) in him." Paul is assuring the Thessalonians that the belief in the rapture was just as certain as their belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Thus, Paul is elevating the rapture to a very important doctrinal position. The Church needs to take cognizance of the significance of the rapture in scripture.

3.1.3 The Gleaning

The gleaning will be the believers who die or are martyred during the Tribulation period - the Tribulation saints (Rev. 7:14; 20:4). The great multitude standing before the throne in heaven are those who "Came out of the Great Tribulation" (Rev. 7:14). They are dressed in white robes and holding palms, which are symbols of justification, holiness, and victory. They do not have crowns or sit on thrones as promised to the Church in Revelation 2:10 and 3:21. So these believers are not the Church, they are instead the poor and needy, who had to experience the hardships and suffering of the Tribulation period. Many of these saints will be killed for their faith in Jesus, and because of that faith, they are included in the harvest.

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3.2 The Resurrection of the Unrighteous

Scripture says far less about the resurrection of the unrighteous, than is recorded for the rapture of the Church. John writes of the resurrection of the unrighteous, when he details the White Throne judgement at the end of the book of Revelation:

“The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:13-15).

The distinction John draws between “death” and “Hades” reveals that both the bodies and spirits of every person were present at the White Throne. Also, John’s reference to the Lake of Fire as the second death, emphasizes the catchphrase “born twice die once – born once die twice.” The Dead are resurrected in body for the White Throne judgement, so when they are cast into the Lake of Fire, the body is destroyed leaving the spirit in torment.

The Second Resurrection will occur at the end of the thousand-year Millennial Kingdom of God. This is when the rest of the dead (those who did not rise in the First Resurrection), who are ‘sleeping,’ will be resurrected in body to live again. The Second Resurrection will consist of two very large groups of people. The first group will be the Old Testament Saints, who will not stand before the White Throne of Judgement (“Some to everlasting life” [Dan. 12:2]). While all who have died in their sins throughout the ages, will be

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resurrected for judgement in the flesh (“others to shame and everlasting contempt” [Dan. 12:3]).

Blessed And Holy Are Those
Who Have Part In The First
Resurrection. The Second Death
Has No Power Over Them, But
They Will Be Priests Of God And
Of Christ And Will Reign With
Him For A Thousand Years.

Revelation 20-6

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4 How Many Resurrections are there?

The resurrection issue can become confusing for some as the Bible records several resurrections.

According to the Bible, both Enoch and Elijah were resurrected to heaven without them dying. Genesis 5:24 tells us, "Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away...". We must understand these two resurrections in the light of a God who is not limited by time. These two men are included in the rapture!

The rapture was a “mystery” to Daniel, and Old Testament writers, as Paul only reveals it after the death and resurrection of Jesus, “Listen, I will tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we will all be changed...” (1 Corinthians 15:51). The rapture is exclusively for the Church. Paul refers to this in the book of Romans writing “when the fulness of the Gentiles has come in” (Romans 11:25), meaning as many “as will believe,” or “the complete number.”

There is therefore more than one resurrection of the righteous, as there is the First Fruits translation to heaven, the rapture of the Church, the resurrection of the two witnesses, and the resurrection of the Tribulation saints (at the return of Jesus to earth). The resurrection of the unrighteous will take place at the final resurrection, after the Millennial Kingdom. The Old Testament believers and the righteous of the Millennial Kingdom will be resurrected at the time of the Great White Throne of judgement in heaven.

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5 Proclamation

I recognise that I am an alien in a foreign land and that my citizenship is not of this world. I have been made co-heirs of the King of Glory by faith, and my home is in heaven. As part of the new creation in Jesus, I have a blessed hope, which is looking for the glorious appearance of my great God and Saviour, Jesus. With this knowledge, I will actively watch and pray for the soon return of my Lord Jesus.

6 Prayer

Lord Jesus thank you for the wonderful promise of your return for your Bride the Church, and that I will dwell with you in an imperishable eternal body in heaven. I recognise that I am an eternal being and you have eternal plans for my life. In the short time I have before your return, may I be a vessel of honour in your Hands.

7 Assignments

The Resurrection of the Dead

1. One coming but two returns: A Pre-Tribulation rapture with its two distinct “returns” of Jesus as part of the second coming, can give a clear and ordered process for the Church and the prophetic events at the end of the age. In point form, list the events that have been prophesied to occur between the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming. **(6)**
2. Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-23 and then answer the questions below:
 - a. What were some people saying about the resurrection (vs. 12)? **(1)**
 - b. How can we be sure that there is a resurrection of the dead? **(2)**
 - c. Why is Christ called the first fruits in this section of scripture? **(1)****Total (10)**