

XIV. Timeless Truth for Timely Topics in Biblical Perspective

What Does the Bible Say?

“The Resurrection! Or The Resurrections?”

I Corinthians 15

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

May 17, 2015 – Evening Sermon

We are in our 14th study of *What Does the Bible Say*, a series we'll be in for an entire year. In this series we have looked at what the Bible says about the end times. In this study we'll look at the resurrection. This will be somewhat related to the date of the second coming for this is a very interesting subject, this matter of the resurrection. When you look at the religions of the world they all avoid this issue. When Paul went to Athens in Acts 20 to preach the resurrection there was nothing more ridiculous than those people had ever heard. These people had been fully inundated with Greek philosophy which was fully clear that the physical was evil and an encumbrance and the whole point of salvation was to escape from the physical. The physical was the lower story of life and the spiritual was the upper story of life. So if you're dead you get to escape and that's why you developed a method of burial and almost all pagan religions would burn the bodies. That's where the cremation practices began and they didn't want anything left of that body. So when Paul started talking about this people didn't know what he was talking about but they invited him back to talk more about it.

Yet it doesn't start with Paul or even Jesus. The resurrection is all over the Old Testament. Abraham goes up to Mount Moriah for he has been instructed to sacrifice his son yet he turns to his servants and tells them “My son and I are going up to make a sacrifice” and as far as Abraham knew, his son was the sacrifice. He also knew that his son had been promised to him and that the seed of redemption had been promised through his son, Isaac. He also said to his servants, “I and the boy will return.” Hebrews 11 tells us that Abraham said that not because he knew a ram would be caught in the thicket but because he believed in the resurrection. Hebrews 11 goes through all these that believed in the resurrection but one of my favorite moments is in Job 19.

It is where this one likely older than Abraham says in Job 19:23–27, [23] *“Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! [24] Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever! [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 believed in the resurrection, the bodily resurrection of the believer. He fully embraced it and understood it.

So how are we to understand it? Just how many resurrections are there? What does the Bible tell us about the resurrection? When will the resurrection occur? Who will the resurrection effect? What will the resurrection be and how will it occur? Let's start by looking at John 5 that deals with the question, what is the resurrection. There are many texts we could look at pertaining to this subject but I have chosen some to work our way around this matter of the resurrection. Jesus speaks to this matter of the resurrection in John 5.

John 5:25–29 says [25] *“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.*

[26] For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. [27] And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. [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.”

So here Jesus gives the doctrine of the resurrection. He gives it clearly, profoundly and simply. He tells us that because of the redeeming work of Christ there are two resurrections. I am going to explain this to you. If today you are reading this and you are a Christian you have experienced resurrection number one. That is the first one He is talking about in the text, in John 5:25–26. This first one is a spiritual resurrection. What is our condition when we’re born into this world? Ephesians 2:1 says that we are born dead in our trespasses and sins. We are not born into this world sin sick or sin disabled. We are born sin dead.

You’ll never understand grace or give glory to God the way He should receive it until you understand your condition. You are not in the sea of sin floundering. You are at the bottom of the sea of sin and there is a 230,000 pound rock on top of you. You are utterly incapacitated in sin. We were born dead in our sins. In I Peter 1:3 it says *[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...* and in Ephesians 2:5 it says *[5] even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.* I want you to see fullness of what is quoted in this text so let’s take a closer look at Ephesians 2.

Ephesians 2:1–7 says *[1] And you were dead in the trespasses and sins [2] in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—[3] among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. [4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive (resurrection) together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—[6] and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, [7] so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

You sin because you’re born a dead sinner. It’s not we’re born, we sin and become a sinner. We walk in our sin nature which is dead in sins, fully incapable of understanding the Gospel. According to this passage the door was opened to the Gospel but you were incapable of going into it. We were all incapable of going through it. Jesus said “Whosoever will may come.” Here is the opening permission but then He says in John 6:44a, *[44] No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.* He raises him up and brings him to life.

This resurrection is also identified as the new birth, being born again. Nicodemus said “You mean we have to go back in our mother’s womb” and Jesus said “No, you are born again by the Spirit” and Peter says you’re born again by the imperishable seed of the Word of God. Peter is playing off of what Jesus is saying here. We are dead in our sins and then the voice of God comes to us in the preaching of the Word and the Holy Spirit gives us eyes to see and ears to hear because He raises us up. We are born again of the

Spirit with the Word. The voice of Christ brought us out of the tomb of our sin nature for He raised us up to be with Him.

So that is the first resurrection that the Bible teaches. Christ has the authority from the Father. The Father has life. He has given the authority to the Son so by the decree and the voice of Christ, the preaching of His Word, and the power of the Spirit He raises up His people from death unto life. Because of the doctrine of regeneration and its understanding of the spiritual resurrection there are two things I can tell about you. Number one you have had heart surgery and it wasn't just a stint for you receive a new heart. The old heart was taken out and a new heart was given. You were born again and you are a new creation in Christ. That means you were raised up from spiritual death to spiritual life. You have officially, not actually, been seated in the heavenly places with Christ Jesus. You are resurrected in Him and resurrected by Him from spiritual death unto life. So you have left the boneyard of sin and been brought to Christ.

That's not the only resurrection for He goes to another resurrection. Let's go back to John 5. John 5:27–29 says *[27] And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. [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.* This resurrection won't come until He comes again. This is a future resurrection. All of humanity will be raised. Those who have a spiritual resurrection are the elect of God. This future resurrection will affect all the seed of humanity and all will be raised at this resurrection. All who have died will hear His voice but this is not the voice of salvation. This is the voice of the resurrection to condemnation for those who are not in Christ Jesus.

So what have we just learned? One is that there is a present spiritual resurrection taking place now. It is a spiritual resurrection with physical implications. Now that I have been reborn spiritually now I can with my body serve the Lord. Because I have been born again with a spiritual death raised to life now I can hear the Word of the Lord and whether I eat or drink or whatsoever I do, I do all to the glory of God. I can present my body as a living sacrifice because I have enjoyed the resurrection. It is a present resurrection that is now.

There is another resurrection that is in the future. This one is not a spiritual resurrection but a physical resurrection with spiritual implications in terms of two destinations. At this resurrection His voice will call all humanity out of the tombs and it's a physical resurrection where they will be given a body and they will be given two spiritually directed destinations. Those who have done good will go unto eternal life and those who have done evil, unto death. So one resurrection that is taking place now is spiritual and is only for the elect of God and the one that happens then will be physical and will be for everybody. The resurrection now is done singularly. In other words, when the Gospel is preached, people are brought to Christ one by one by one from the tomb of sin to life in Christ. The resurrection to come will not by one by one but will include everybody and we'll all be raised at that moment.

Here's another issue that is raised. We have had to deal with a system of theology called dispensationalism that says that God has two plans. It says the 69 weeks of Daniel were for Israel and that now we're in God's second plan which is Gentiles in the church. Then God will go back to the 70th week and pick up Israel again. In previous studies I tried to show from the text that there are not 69 weeks and then a gap and then a 70th week.

And there are not two plans but God has one plan. That plan is to bring His people from all the nations through the Seed of the Redeemer which He brought through the nation of Israel. He put His Kingdom in that kingdom until the Savior, the King came and now His Kingdom is being established from all the kingdoms of this world.

The second thing we looked at was that when Jesus comes back and in the dispensational view there are two and one half second comings of Christ. There is a coming of Christ that is secret that is only experienced by believers as they are raised up to be with the Lord. After seven years Jesus comes again and at that time it will be a general resurrection in that sense with this being a second coming of Christ. Then after a thousand years and another rebellion then Jesus will come again.

Yet I tried to make this case for you in previous studies that there is not two and a half, or two but there is just one second coming of Christ. The millennial Kingdom is that which is unfolding right now even though it is under assault by the kingdoms of this world yet it is unstoppable until the Gospel has gone to all the nations and all of the elect of God have been brought in. Then there will be a loosening of Satan and a worldwide rebellion against the church that would seemingly overcome it. Then Christ will come and He will bring to an end the two beasts and the antichrist and will usher in a new heavens and a new earth. When will that happen? It will happen at the last trumpet.

So of necessity dispensational theology believes in a spiritual resurrection that now is and also believes in a coming general resurrection but there will be two of them. There will be one to the church and then one later. I don't think the Bible teaches two resurrections. The Bible teaches that resurrection is a one-time resurrection where all will be raised, one and the same time. Jesus is saying that there is only one physical resurrection and not two. There are many spiritual resurrections because those happen one by one by one as God brings His people from death unto life, but in the physical resurrection there will only be one where all who are in the tombs are going to hear His voice, come out and stand before the judgment seat in the anticipation of the new heavens and the new earth for the believer and the lake of fire or Ghenna for the unbeliever. So there is this singular resurrection that takes place.

Who in that resurrection in that day will experience it and who will experience the spiritual resurrection? So who will experience the resurrection that is now is, meaning when the Gospel is preached as the Word and Spirit of God go forth? It will be those who are the elect of God from every tribe and nation. Who will experience the next resurrection, the physical one? It will be all of the seed of Adam, who are born under the curse of sin, where all will stand before Him. Who in that resurrection will go into eternal life and who will go to eternal condemnation? Let's see what Jesus says and then we'll understand it in the context of Scripture.

John 5:27–29 says [27] *And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. [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.* As soon as you read this what comes to your mind? It sounds like works salvation, doesn't it? You are saved by works but it's just not your works. It is through Jesus' works but here is the deal.

When Adam sinned, who else sinned? It is everybody who is in Adam. When Adam sinned you sinned. It is not Adam sinned and you get the inheritance of that. When

Adam sinned you sinned and we call that federal headship. You were there in Adam. So when he sinned you sinned. When the book of Hebrews is explaining how Jesus had done away with the Levitical priesthood, the question is how can Jesus do away with this when He is not a Levi? The writer of Hebrews says it is because He has a greater priesthood. He has an eternal priesthood. He is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek and Melchizedek is greater than Levi. The writer of Hebrews says this is how you know. When Abraham saw Melchizedek he bowed and worshipped. When Abraham bowed and worshipped, off of his seed within him bowed and worshipped, including Judah and Levi and all the twelve tribes.

So when Jesus did a perfect righteousness you were in Christ the Second Adam and when He obeyed you obeyed. When He did what He did for you, you participated in what He did for you. I think the text is also referring to not only justification through Christ's obedience but His perfect goodness becomes your goodness and it is imputed to you because you are in Him. Then when you come to Him you're not just in Him but He is now in you. So you have a perfect righteousness that brings you through the judgment in Christ and then you have evidence of that in sanctification because you have Christ in you. For some of us that evidence will be some thirty fold, some sixty fold and some a hundred fold but there will be fruit, that evidence.

That is why the Bible says that on the day of visitation according to Peter, they will have to glorify God because of the life that you lived that they now ridicule you for. Will it be a perfect life? No. Will it be an uneven life? Yes. Will it be life manifested? Yes, there will be evidence that Christ was in you at the judgment.

Another reason for the judgment is that on that day you'll find out just how saved you are. You don't know my heart and I don't know your heart and I'm really glad you don't know my heart. I'm pretty glad I don't know your heart. I know my heart better than you know my heart but I don't know my heart like God knows my heart. On that day I will find out just how saved I've been. On that day Jesus will make it clear to me just how much He has loved me. What will bring me through that judgment? In Christ I have a perfect righteousness. I am in Christ and His goodness will take me into glory. And there will be an evidence to the watching world where he not only was in Christ but Christ was in him. You can see the imperfectness all through his life but see the tracks of grace.

For the unbeliever who is not in Christ and Christ is not in them, will they have been as evil as they could have been? No. People look at Hitler and think how could there have possibly been a Hitler. How can people possibly be that way? Listen, everyone would be that way if God's common grace did not restrain them. You and I would have led the parade if God's common grace had not restrained us. Some of us think 'yeah I was born in sin but I really wasn't that bad and when I heard about Jesus I was ready to go with Him.' Nope. You weren't as bad as you could have been or would have been only by God's common grace and then if you know Jesus God's redeeming grace got a hold of you. So you are in Christ with His perfect righteousness and then Christ is in you by the Holy Spirit with a growing testimony of righteousness in your life in Christ.

So who is at that second judgment? It is believers and unbelievers and the evidence will reveal those who are in Christ. The perfect righteousness of Christ will take us into heaven. Those who are not in Christ, the evidence will convict them that they are not in Christ and stand under His judgment.

Why is there a resurrection? Think about this. If you die knowing Christ, then you will go be with the Lord, right? That intermediate state of a spiritual existence will be before the Lord. We won't have our new bodies but we'll have our soul and a perfect blessing. I don't think it's the ultimate perfect blessing but there is a perfect blessing there, so why not end it there? So why the resurrection of the body, and why do you resurrect the body of an unbeliever and give them a new body that is eternal? The obvious answer is that God gives us a body so that we might see Him and be with Him. Some of you are thinking that Jesus says we will have a body like His when He was raised. Right, but why was there a bodily resurrection of Jesus?

Why do we get the same bodily resurrection to be like Jesus? It will be different for there will be a spiritual dimension to it. You will eat but you don't have to. You'll open the door but you don't have to. Why would the unbeliever have a body? When the unbeliever dies they go to this intermediate state of torment and why don't they just stay there? Why is there a lake of fire and a new heavens and a new earth and body for the unbeliever and believer?

Here is the reason I think this will happen. When someone does not know Christ and they walk in the power of sin in self exaltation and self-reliance they make use of their mind, soul and body to sin against the Lord. Therefore the punishment fits the crime. So condemnation and judgment of our sins will be upon what we employed to sin against Him. We employed our mind so the worm dies not, for the mind will never die under the judgment of God. It will only be filled with rage and unmet rebellion under the judgment of God in torment. The soul will be under torment and a body is given so that when those who would use their bodies for self-worship, self-adulation and in rebellion against God, then the judgment of God is the sins against God.

When God saves you, He saves you to love Him and you love Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. When you don't love Him you love yourself with all of your heart, soul, mind and the strength of your body. So when the judgment comes the body is resurrected so that judgment not only comes upon the soul and the mind which is true in the intermediate judgment but now there will be a judgment upon the body also, the very thing employed in rebellion against God. When the love of God set you free and you began to serve Him, you were called to serve Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength therefore present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your reasonable service of worship. Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God for you are now employing your body not to sin, but to serve Him.

Are you perfect? No. Are you dealing with those areas? Yes. We still have indwelling sin but now God has set you free so this body is no longer employed in rebellion but it is increasingly employed as an act of worship. Present your bodies to the Lord as your reasonable act of worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove, live out that which is good and acceptable. So God is going to give you a new body. That new body will perfectly worship Him for all eternity in a new heavens and a new earth. For now your mind is getting renewed but in that day you'll have a new mind. For now your body is being renewed by the presence of the Holy Spirit yet it is still a fallen body but in that day you'll get a body that is renewed. So there is this glorious symmetry of God's judgment and God's salvation in the resurrection of the body.

The other reason is that God's redemption is full. When God made the heavens and the earth and made man in His image by the dust of the ground, when man sins that body returns back to the dust of the ground, but what did God call man when He breathed in him the breath of life? He said "It's good." Right now you have been resurrected spiritually because God made our spirit and soul good but God also made our bodies good. God is not only going to reclaim the old heavens and old earth into a new heavens and a new earth, but He's going to reclaim your body. What He created it to be will now be established for it was not made to die. You will be given a new body that will never die or never know the consequences of sin.

When will God do this? When will you be resurrected the first time? It will be when the sovereign grace of God takes you out of your sin nature and brings you to everlasting life. Some people know Jesus at an early age. Some have said to me that they didn't know a time when they didn't know Jesus but there was a time when you didn't know Jesus. Yet praise the Lord for His kind grace that you were raised in a situation where you can't remember the time you didn't know Him. Some came to know Him in their 20s, some in their 30s and some later. The reason I love children's ministries is because 75 percent of the people who come to know Christ, come to know Him under the age of 14. So I praise the Lord whenever He does that and however He does that.

Here is a side point. I was recently look at the pew research and this should be a little bit encouraging but it is also a warning. Do you know how the millennials are leaving the church and not coming to Christ? It is document and it is there and more than just the past. The evangelical church is actually gaining ground with the millennials. People say that is great for the church and I say that is great for families. That means there are families in churches but families are doing the job with their children. Not all but many are coming to Christ as God's covenant mercies are being seen there.

My point is that the spiritual resurrection happens at the sovereign hand of God one by one. This physical resurrection unto eternal life will happen after the elect of God have been saved, after Satan has been loosed, after Armageddon, after the rolling up of the heavens and the earth into a new heavens and a new earth and prior to judgment. The key is the last trumpet. So let's close by looking at I Corinthians 15. I could show many other passages on this but I'm just going to use this one for the sake of time.

I Corinthians 15:50–58 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* (what comes after this you would not know from general revelation but it takes special revelation to understand it – to be revealed in His Word). *We shall not all sleep* (some of us will be alive when Jesus comes back), *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."*

[55] *"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"*

[56] *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.* [57] *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

[58] Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

So when will this happen? It will happen at the last trumpet. The last question is how will it happen? It will happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. If Paul were alive he would have probably said “in a Nano second.” It will just be amazing how God will bring all of this to fruition in that moment. The bodies will be raised from the grave and given to the saints who are descending with Him. We will be raised with our bodies and they will be transformed. We will meet the Savior with the angels, not to go on up to heaven but to keep coming down to a new heavens and a new earth and then the judgment. Those in Christ and Christ in them, will go to the new heavens and the new earth. Those who are not in Christ will go to the lake of fire. I’m not going to say any more about that right now because it breaks my heart to even think about it. I will preach on it in the near future if I can muster the ability to do it.

Don’t let anyone tell you ‘that’s where I wanted to go anyway.’ The Bible says the devil, his angels and the unbelievers will be thrown for nobody is going willingly. They willingly will not have Christ but they will be thrown into the lake of fire. Today is the day of the Gospel dragnet and we will get to this in Matthew 13. Two times in the Kingdom parables He says at the close of the age He will bring all of humanity, not through multiple resurrections, will be separated at that moment during that physical resurrection. Those who are written in the book of life will go the new heavens and the new earth. Those written in the books will be judged by their deeds and stand under the judgment of God for all eternity but until that Day you and I have the privilege to take that Gospel to the world.

I’m not asking you to go to the world thinking that they are all looking for it. There is none who seek Him, no not one. We seek them and then the Lord uses us, the Holy Spirit and His Word to bring them from death unto life. So may God give us the ability to be steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in love and the work of the Lord, knowing it will not be in vain. He is coming and we will meet Him! Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for this Lord’s Day and all the blessings we’ve enjoyed in being in the Word and being with one another. There have been so many exciting things just on this Lord’s Day and every Lord’s Day but O that Day of the Lord when He returns! We look for that, we long for that and we pray You’ll come quickly but we’re not just going to sit around until that Day. We want to be steadfast, immoveable but we’re not going to be just standing around and not moving, we’re going to be abounding in the work of the Lord. So Satan will not move us off the Gospel because of Your Holy Spirit and we will take that Gospel to the world looking to the power of the Holy Spirit that men and women might see Christ, know the joy we have in Christ, and that our best days are always in front of us. To that Day, that glorious Day, come quickly Lord Jesus, Amen.