

Resurrection of the Dead

Introduction

It seems that in our churches today little teaching occurs concerning resurrection and its place and function in the purposes of God. There seems to be a number of basic foundational teaching that is ignored by many of our teachers and other leaders. The writer of Hebrews gives us the six basic foundational teachings which we need to lay in our lives and then move on to maturity.

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ([Hebrews 6:1-2 NKJV](#))

While I am not a big fan of the Contemporary English Version of the Bible, I do like the way they worded these verses:

We must try to become mature and start thinking about more than just the basic things we were taught about Christ. We shouldn't need to keep talking about why we ought to turn from deeds that bring death and why we ought to have faith in God. And we shouldn't need to keep teaching about baptisms or about the laying on of hands or about people being raised from death and the future judgment. ([Hebrews 6:1-2 CEV](#))

It would seem to me that we can't move on to maturity if we haven't laid the full foundation. How can we lay the full foundation if no one is teaching us the elementary principles of Christ? This is a real problem in our contemporary churches. This lesson will take a look at the resurrection of the dead.

Foundational Understanding

There is a progressive understanding in the Hebrews list of the six foundational teachings with some things coming before other things as is always the case when we build precept upon precept and line upon line. For example, “repentance from dead works” comes before and leads into “faith toward God”. The two are related and need to be understood together. The same is true of “resurrection of the dead” which is before but related to “eternal judgment”.

Resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment are bound together by the logic of the scriptures. Eternal judgment always follows resurrection of the dead. Resurrection always precedes eternal judgment. To properly address these we need to look first at two areas: time and eternity.

Time and Eternity

Eternity is not endless time, although that is the way that we tend to think of it. Eternity is the nature

and mode of God's own being—the uncreated realm in which God Himself exists.

Time was created by God as part of the creation of the Heavens and earth as mentioned in the first verse of Genesis. We refer to it today as the space-time continuum. Einstein's Theory of Relativity shows that space, matter, and time are related. Since time is part of creation and was created by God then God, Himself, exists outside of time unlike us.

While we live our lives by the clock, there comes a point in our life that the clock stops ticking. At death we step out of time and into eternity. When our life ends, time stops for us. When this happens two things are awaiting us on the other side of time:

1. resurrection of the dead, and
2. eternal judgment.

The Necessity of Resurrection

Our faith hinges on the fact that there is a resurrection of the dead because Jesus was raised from the dead.

For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. (Romans 14:9 NASB)

Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. (1 Corinthians 15:12-17 NASB)

So, we see that if there is no resurrection then our faith is worthless. The first born from the dead is Jesus and upon that fact our faith rests and we have the assurance that we too will be raised from the dead.

However, there is one class of exceptions to the resurrection of the dead and that is, naturally, those who never die.

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will 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 will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:51-53 NASB)

True Christians which are alive when Christ returns will not die but will be changed. They will skip the death process but will still receive their immortal bodies. As we can see from these scriptures, the resurrection of the dead (which means resurrection of the body) occurs at the time of Christ's return and before the judgment seat.

We can see a principle in this. Since resurrection precedes judgment in every case, man will not appear before God as disembodied souls but as a complete person--the complete human personality: spirit, soul, and body. Man has both a material and an immaterial component. The body is material and the soul and spirit are immaterial and as a result the body decomposes while there is no decomposition with the immaterial aspect of our being.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10 NASB)

"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31 NASB)

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. (Romans 14:10 NASB)

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to* sin, to those who eagerly await Him. (Hebrews 9:27-28 NASB)

The Order of Resurrection

In First Corinthians Paul gives us the order of resurrection; that is, the sequence of events that occur as it relates to the raising of the dead.

For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. (1 Corinthians 15:21-26 NASB)

Regardless of any particular belief that you might hold about the timing of various events or doctrines such as the "rapture", the order of resurrection will always be the same and it is a three step process.

Christ the first fruits: At the resurrection of Jesus many old testament saints were also raised from the dead and walked the streets of Jerusalem before ascending to heaven with Jesus.

The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. (Matthew 27:52-53 NASB)

Note: *There is a difference between begin raised from the dead as Lazarus was and being resurrected. Lazarus was made alive in his natural body and apparently lived out the rest of his life and died again. These that were resurrected with Jesus were apparently in their immortal*

bodies and didn't remain on earth but continued on with Jesus to heaven.

Christ was planted as a seed and rose in newness of Life. When you plant a seed, you don't just get one seed back but instead you get many. Jesus and the old testament saints were the wave offering of the first fruits to God.

"Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. 'He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. ([Leviticus 23:10-11 NASB](#))

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ([John 12:24 NASB](#))

They that are Christ's at His coming: True Christians will be resurrected in their new immortal bodies and those still alive when He comes will receive their new bodies also. This is the next event to occur in the resurrection process.

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will 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 will be changed. ([1 Corinthians 15:51-52 NASB](#))

Then comes the end: This occurs when the Kingdom is delivered to the Father. The timeline for this is after the 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth.

The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. ([Revelation 20:5-6 NASB](#))

After everything is completed at the end of the 1000 years, then the rest of the dead are raised for the Great White Throne judgment.

There is much argument among believers about the details of these phases of the Lord's return and the fulfillment of His purposes. Will all of these be a single event? Or, will there be definite time intervals between some of them?

Resurrection Body

When we are resurrected our spirits and souls are re-united with our bodies. It is the same body we had when we died only changed. God keeps track of all of our elemental components so that they can be assembled again at the right time.

The Psalmist records the original process that occurred before birth. A record was kept so that in the resurrection the process could be duplicated in a moment.

For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to

You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them. (Psalms 139:13-16 NASB)

When Jesus appeared to His disciples, He had the same body that was crucified as evidenced by the wounds on the hands and feet. They at first thought that He was a spirit but He quickly set them straight on that.

But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?" You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. 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. So also is the resurrection of the dead. 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. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. (1 Corinthians 15:35-44 NASB)

When our natural body is sown into the ground like seed, it is raised as a spiritual body. Notice in the Scriptures above that there are varying degrees of glory in the resurrection. Just as there is a different brightness to the sun, the moon, and the stars, there will be a different brightness to the ones who are resurrected.

Abilities that we can expect of our resurrected bodies (our example is Jesus):

1. appear and disappear at will
2. enter closed rooms
3. pass between heaven and earth.

The First Resurrection

The designation of the "first resurrection" comes from chapter 20 of the book of Revelation:

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over

these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4-6 NASB)

The fact that the Scriptures call this event the “first resurrection” implies that this is the first occasion of resurrection beyond the first fruits or wave offering [*Christ the first fruits—I Corinthians 15:23*]. The Corinthians' Scripture also indicates that in the order of things the next resurrection event is “those that are Christ's at His coming”, which tells us that the “first resurrection” as indicated above occurs at Christ's coming.

This is in keeping with what Paul said:

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will 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 will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:51-53 NASB)

Paul indicates in these verses that the time that the dead will be raised (the first resurrection) will be at the last trumpet. He gives further details in his letter to the Thessalonians.

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 will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 NASB)

These verses clearly link the trumpet of God, the resurrection of the dead (the first resurrection) with being caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. Based on the Scriptures from Revelation that are listed above the being “caught up” which is occurring at the raising of the dead is at the time of the establishment of the 1000 year reign of Christ on earth. There is no room in the time line for a “secret rapture” where we are caught up to meet the Lord and are taken to heaven. On the contrary, thrones are set up and judgment begins.

The Sounds Associated with Jesus' Return

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 will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 NASB)

There are 3 sounds associated with the Lord's return:

1. the shout of the Lord--only the Lord has the power to call the dead out of their graves;
2. the voice of the Archangel--possibly Gabriel (herald);
3. the trumpet of God--all through the bible, the trumpet call signaled the gathering together of God's people.

The return of the Lord will be a noisy event. Jesus said His return would be like this:

"For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. (Matthew 24:27 NASB)

Lightning is very visible and the thunder which accompanies it is very loud. How then could His return be a "secret rapture"?

The Last Resurrection—The Second Death

After the first resurrection we have the 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth. During this time the Devil has been locked up in the bottomless pit (abyss). After the 1000 years are completed the Devil is released from the abyss and goes forth to deceive the nations again. He succeeds and gathers them together and surrounds the camp of the saints and the beloved city. God destroys them with fire from heaven and throws the Devil into the lake of fire. [*this is detailed in Revelation chapter 20*]. After all of this the Great White Throne judgment occurs.

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15 NASB)

All of the dead who were not previously raised now stand before the throne of God and books are opened and another book is opened which is the Book of Life. From these books the dead are judged. There are several things that are thrown into the Lake of Fire:

1. death
2. Hades or Hell (notice that Hell is not the final destination of the wicked)
3. everyone whose name is not written in the book of life.

For everyone not written in the book of life, being thrown into the lake of fire is called the second death.

After these things are completed, we have a new heaven and a new earth. Our current heaven and earth pass away. Our future abode is on the new earth not heaven as is often taught. This is detailed in chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation.