

## **Foundations of Life, Part 12**

### **Eternity and the Resurrection of the Dead**

We have now studied four of the six doctrines listed in the foundational studies on the doctrine of Christ, from Hebrews 6:1-2. We now will discuss number five in the series which is on the Resurrection of the dead.

### **The Power of the Resurrection**

*Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. - **Romans 6:8-9***

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is among the most important of all biblical truths. It is foundational. It is bedrock. Many other aspects of the Christian faith depend and rest on the Resurrection. Let me share with you just three essential Christian truths that depend on the Resurrection. First of all, life beyond the grave depends on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As the Apostle Paul said, "For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (**1 Corinthians 15:21-22**, emphasis mine). Jesus' victory over death promises us that we too will overcome death. Second, God's future judgment of the world rests upon the Resurrection. As the Apostle Paul preached, "He [God] has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man [Christ] whom He has ordained. He [God] has given assurance of this to all by raising Him [Christ] from the dead" (**Acts 17:31**, emphasis mine). This promise reminds us that God will one day right every wrong. Lastly, the resurrection of Christ gives us power to live the Christian life. **Romans 8:11** says, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (emphasis mine). The Resurrection, therefore, promise us that God will not only give us life beyond the grave, but He will give us power to live the Christian life on earth.

The Resurrection is no peripheral issue. It provides power to Christianity, freedom from sin, and joy to followers of Christ. *Copyright (c) 2004 by Harvest Ministries. All rights reserved.*

### **Introduction**

Many people are confused by the word eternity. They think of eternity as being merely an immensely long period of time, beyond the power of the human mind to conceive. However, this is not correct. Eternity is not merely the endless extension of time. Eternity differs in its nature from time. Eternity is altogether different in realm, a different mode of being. Eternity is God's own mode of being, the realm in which God Himself dwells.

### **Genesis 21:33**

*33Abraham\* planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God.\**

### **Isaiah 40:28**

*28Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.*

God Himself also defines His own eternal nature and realm.

## **Isaiah 57:15**

*15For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.*

These scriptures reveal that eternity is an aspect of God's own nature, the realm in which God has His being. When Moses asked God by what name He wished to make Himself known to the children of Israel, God gave Moses the following reply.

## **Exodus 3:14**

*14God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.'\* He said further, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites, "I am has sent me to you." '*

Here God gives Moses two forms of His name: " I AM " and " I AM WHO I AM . " This reveals the eternal and unchanging nature of God. God is always " I AM. " He is not in any way changed or affected by the course of time, which is but a part of His own creation. For God, past, present and future are ever united in an eternal present- and eternal " I AM. "

Out of this revelation granted to Moses came the sacred form of God's name, consisting of four Hebrew consonants, represented in English as YHWH. Traditionally this has been rendered as " Jehovah. " Modern scholars suggest that I could more accurately be represented by the form YAHWEH- meaning " HE IS " or, alternatively, " HE WILL BE. " Some translators have sought to express the meaning of this name by the title " the Eternal. "

This Eternal God has a place and time in Eternity where He will raise the living and the dead, and we shall forever be with the Lord. Or, face an Eternity away from the presence of God. In the new testament the everlasting God is redefined as the Alpha and Omega. Still eternal, but a new emphasis;

## **Revelation 1:8**

*8'I am the Alpha and the Omega', says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.*

The Alpha and Omega describes that if there was a beginning and ending He fills it all. This Almighty God spoken of here in Rev. 1 is none other than El Shaddai the Hebrew definition of the title the Almighty.

All things have their origin in God. All things are kept in being by God. And all things find their end and completion in God. Humanity has a destination or appointment with God. It is the Judgement seat of Christ. Now we are not going to really discuss that here, for that is our next lesson. However, the Resurrection we speak of will sooner or later bring us to that place. Where eternity for us is decided upon in its totality by the creator of the Universe.

### **Two Universal Appointments**

## **1 Corinthians 15:22**

*22for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.*

Doubtless there are many mysteries and things unknown that await each departing soul, concerning which the Bible does not lift the veil separating time from eternity. However, beyond the immediate threshold of eternity the Bible reveals two things which are the ultimate destiny of all souls: resurrection of the dead and the eternal judgment.

Just as death is universal in fate of all, through their descent from Adam, so resurrection from the dead is the universal appointment of God for all; and this is made possible through the death and resurrection of Christ.

There will be those whom do not see death and will be caught up to meet Him in the air. Yet, for all there is an divine appointment with the Lord God through the power of the resurrection.

## **1 Corinthians 15:51-53**

*51 Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, \* but we will 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 will be changed.*

*53 For this perishable body must put on imperishably, and this mortal body must put on immortality.*

Whether by death and the grave or our meeting Him in the air. The promise of God is true, that even as Christ was raised from the dead, so shall we be. Satan has no hold on us who are believers in Christ Jesus. We shall be changed and take upon a new body, similar to the one Jesus had after His resurrection. We shall be able to recognize one another, and yet the imperfections of the flesh and the limitations of its persona will be no more.

### **Our Eternal Soul**

## **Genesis 2:7**

*7 then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, \* and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being [soul].*

Here we see that the total personality of man has its origin in two absolutely distinct and separate sources. The physical, material part of man-body-is formed out of the dust of the earth. The invisible, immaterial part of man has its origin in the breath of Almighty God. This invisible, immaterial part of man is here called " the soul ". However, as we have already said, in other passages of Scripture it is more fully defined as the combination of spirit and soul together.

The Bible indicates that the spirit and soul are not identical but are two distinct elements together making up the immaterial part of man. It is outside the scope of our present study, however, to attempt to draw a more precise line of demarcation between man's spirit and his soul. For our present purposes it is sufficient to say that the total personality of man has two different original sources: 1) The physical, material part of man ( the body ) is from below-the earth. 2) The invisible, immaterial part of man ( his spirit and soul ) is from above-from God Himself.

At death, the invisible, immaterial element of man ( his spirit and soul ) is released from the earthly vessel. Thereafter, by the process of burial, man's material part ( the body ) is restored again to the earth from which it came and decomposition returns it again to its natural origin. Even when there is no actual burial, man's body, after death, is always subjected to some process of disintegration or decomposition, which ultimately restores it to its original state. Consequently, it will be man's body also which, by resurrection, will be raised up again from the same materials.

### **The Righteous Separated From The Wicked.**

What is the condition of the departed spirits in this period that intervenes between death and the resurrection.

1. After death there is a complete and permanent separation between the departed spirits of the righteous and the wicked.
2. The condition of the departed spirits of the righteous was different in the period before the death and resurrection of Christ from their condition now, in this present dispensation.

Over and above these two clearly established facts, the Bible does from time to time lift a corner of the veil between this world and the next, giving us a momentary glimpse of that which lies beyond. An example of this is found in the biblical count of judgment upon an oppressing king of Babylon.

## **Isaiah 14:9-10**

*9Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come; it rouses the shades to greet you, all who were leaders of the earth; it raises from their thrones all who were kings of the nations.*

*10All of them will speak and say to you: 'You too have become as weak as we are! You have become like us!'*

This account reveals certain definite facts about the condition of departed spirits. It does not indicate that they have any awareness of events currently transpiring on earth. It does, however, reveal that there is at least some recollection of events that transpired during the earthly lifetimes of these departed spirits.

Beyond this, it is clear that personality remains intact after death; there is recognition of one person by another; there is communication between one person and another; and there is awareness of present conditions in this place of departed souls. Furthermore, there is a correspondence in some measure between man's state in this world and his state in the next. For those who were kings in this world are still recognized as kings in the next.

We are given a somewhat similar picture of the descent into Sheol of the departed spirit of the king of Egypt (Ezekiel 32:17-32)

## **Ezekiel 32:18-19**

*18Mortal, wail over the hordes of Egypt, and send them down, with Egypt\* and the daughters of majestic nations, to the world below, with those who go down to the Pit.*

*19'Whom do you surpass in beauty? Go down! Be laid to rest with the uncircumcised!'*

Now let's look at a New Testament passage and see if it verifies and collaborates the same conclusions as the Old Testament passages.

## **Luke 16:19-31**

*19*There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.

*20*And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,

*21*who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores.

*22*The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham.\* The rich man also died and was buried.

*23*In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.\*

*24*He called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames."

*25*But Abraham said, "Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony.

*26*Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us."

*27*He said, "Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house— *28*for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment."

*29*Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them."

*30*He said, "No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent."

*31*He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead." '

A careful examination of this passage shows that it reproduces the same features already noted in Isaiah. There is persistence of personality; recognition of one person by another; communication between one person and another; and awareness of present conditions in this place of departed spirits.

There is much in this passage that confirms the conclusions we had already formed from the Old Testament. At death the body by burial is returned to the earth, but the spirit moves out into a new kind of existence. In this existence after death there is persistence of personality; there is recognition of one person by another; there is consciousness of the present conditions. There is also some recollection of the previous life on earth. This is brought out by the words of Abraham to the rich man: " Son, remember....."

Both Lazarus and the rich man found themselves within the realm of departed spirits called in Hebrew " Sheol " and in Greek " Hades, " but their destinies there were quite different. The rich man's spirit was in a place of torment; the spirit of Lazarus was in a place of rest. Between these two places was fixed an impassable gulf that could not be crossed from either side.

The place of rest, set apart for the departed spirits of the righteous, is here called " Abraham's bosom. " This title would indicate that this place is ordained for the spirits of all those who in their earthly pilgrimage followed in the footsteps of faith and obedience marked out by Abraham, who for this reason is called " the father of all those who believe. "

### **Christ and the Resurrection**

## **Ephesians 4:9-10**

*9(When it says, 'He ascended', what does it mean but that he had also descended\* into the lower parts of the earth?*

*10He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.)*

## **1 Peter 3:18-20**

*18For Christ also suffered\* for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you\* to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit,*

*19in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison,*

*20who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water.*

Jesus spirit descended into Sheol , the place of departed spirits. On the day of His death upon the cross., He went first to the place of the spirits of the righteous , called " Paradise " or " Abraham's bosom. " since the Gospel record indicates that the death of Christ on the cross preceded the death of the two thieves, it seems natural to suppose that Christ was in Paradise to welcome the departed spirit of the penitent thief who followed Him there.

From Paradise Christ went further down into the area of Sheol reserved for the spirits of the wicked. It would appear that His descent into this place of torment was necessary for Him to complete the work of atonement for man's sin, since He had to endure in full not merely physical but also the spiritual consequences of sin.

At some point while in the lower realm of Sheol, Christ preached to the spirits of those who lived wickedly in the days of Noah-that is, the antediluvian age-and who had consequently been consigned to a special place of imprisonment in Sheol. He didn't preach the gospel he instead proclaimed some acclamation in their presence. What we do not know.

Then, at God's appointed moment, when all the divine purposes of atonement had been accomplished, the spirit of Christ ascended up again from the realm Sheol to this present temporal world. At the same time His Body, which had been lying lifeless in the tomb, was raised up from death, and spirit and body were once again reunited to form a complete personality.

## **1 Corinthians 15:20,22**

*20But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.\*  
22for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.*

**Only after the Coming of the Lord. Will Heaven and Hell in its fullness be revealed.**

## **1 Corinthians 15:51,52**

*51Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die,\* but we will all be changed,  
52in 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.*

Paul here unfolds " a mystery "-that is, a previously unrevealed secret of God's plan for the church. The secret thus revealed is this: All true believers will be caught up or meet him in the air. It will be this way for those living and those who had gone before and those whom had tasted of death.

Those who are alive at the Lord's coming will not die at all but will simply undergo an instantaneous and miraculous change in their bodies. By this change their bodies will be rendered exactly like those of the other believers who have been resurrected from the dead.