

Fisher's Foundations

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

Lesson 9

THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS CLASS:

Is to give the student a scriptural understanding of the crucial doctrine of the physical resurrection of the dead.

“If a man die, shall he live *again?*” (Job 14:14).

"So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: *'Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?'*" (1 Corinthians 15:54, 55).

INTRO:

About 400 years before the birth of Christ the renowned Greek Philosopher Socrates drank the poisoned hemlock and then he laid down to die. His followers asked him *"Shall we live again?"* He responded, *"I hope so, but no man can know."* Think about that! What a bleak outlook on life and on death! Man, I am so glad that in Christ we can know for sure that we have a bright future beyond the grave.

Apologist Norman Geisler avers that, *"It was always a part of orthodox belief to acknowledge that Jesus was raised immortal in the same physical body in which He died. That is, His resurrection body was numerically the same as His pre-resurrection body. Likewise our bodies are numerically identical to the bodies we now live in. They are not second bodies, rather they are present bodies transformed."*

Physical Resurrection is an essential of essentials—it is the capstone in the arch of Christianity. You can find a more cardinal doctrine in our faith. The lost and saved will both be physically resurrected. Some say, "Sure, you can be a Christian and not believe in the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ." I strongly disagree! This is radically foundational. There are many other things in our faith that we believe in that are literally founded upon this one belief.

Paul said, **"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. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied"** (1 Corinthians 15:12 nasb).

- ◆ To the modern materialist, “Death is the cessation of being.”
- ◆ The mythical ancients said, “When we die we devolve into a ghostly shadow of ourselves.”
- ◆ To a Reincarnationist, “Our souls repeatedly return dressed up in other bodies.”
- ◆ The followers of Plato contended that, “The body is a prison. At death the prisoner escapes as a mere individual human spirit.”
- ◆ Buddhists believe that “The body is merely an illusion in which the only thing that ultimately survives is a universal cosmic consciousness.”

But only in a biblical worldview do we become greater after death than we were before. Only in Jesus Christ will our lowly bodies be transformed into a glorious body like Christ's resurrection body! I get excited just thinking about it!

We don't have to buy into the stupid but popular *swoon theory* which says that Jesus didn't really die, He only swooned (or went into a deep comma) and then He woke up in the cool atmosphere of the tomb. How inane! A Roman spear was thrust into His heart and out came blood and water (from a ruptured heart) proving He was dead. They normally didn't even have to whip criminals 39 times as His body was. The Romans would normally hear some kind of confession. The purpose here was to procure a confession of guilt from the criminal (and many would make up something to confess otherwise they'd die before the 39 lash), but Jesus really didn't have anything to confess. Think about it, the Roman guards were the ones to first report the death of Jesus and they were skilled in this torture and trained executioners. If He didn't die the Roman soldiers themselves would be put to death. Also, Jesus would have had to be incredibly weakened to go 40 hours without food or water. He would have had to unwrap Himself, roll away the heavy stone, get out of the tomb, walk many miles quickly, and then somehow convince the eleven disciples that He'd risen from the dead, appearing to them over 40 days. Then He'd need to make them think he'd entered the room without using a door. Come on, swoon, my foot! They surely can't believe in this jive. People today just need an excuse so they can go on in their sin.

We don't have to buy into the retarded *no-burial theory* (they say Jesus wasn't really buried. He was thrown into a mass grave for criminals). But why then did they seal the tomb? Why didn't they just retrieve and display Jesus' body to disprove this?

We don't have to buy into the crazy *mass-hallucination theory* (unbelievers have said that because of the disciple's earnest desire to see Jesus fulfill Old Testament prophecies, they just imagined seeing Him after His death. But the eleven disciples never did expect to see him again after He was buried. And besides that, it is a fact of history that over 500 eyewitnesses saw Christ after He rose from the dead.

We don't have to buy into the idiotic theory that *the body of Jesus was stolen*. All but one of the eleven disciples died a violent death for their belief in Jesus' physical resurrection. You would think that at least one of them would have come clean before being martyred for this belief. But not one of them confessed to stealing the body of Jesus Christ, because they didn't.

Greg Laurie was once asked, “*What did Jesus' resurrected body look like?*” He responded, “*That's interesting, 'cause one day ours will somehow resemble His? I don't know if our glorified bodies will*

be completely like His. It consisted of flesh and bones—not some phantom body like a ghost. His body could be touched and felt, remember skeptical Thomas? Jesus ate with the Apostles. He could be recognized. There was, and I think there still are scars on His body from the Roman spear and spikes. And I believe they will be there for all eternity just to remind us how much He loves us and also to remind us that we weren't saved by our good works, religious efforts or our own morality. His resurrected body wasn't and isn't limited by time and space."

Norman Geisler stated, "The orthodox fathers unanimously confessed belief in the resurrection of the flesh. They believed that flesh was essential to human nature. And that Jesus being fully human was not only incarnated in but He was also resurrected in the same human flesh He had before His death. A resurrected body can be seen with the naked eye. If a picture were taken of it, the image would appear on film. As Mr. Ansel affirmed, 'It is just as material as Adam's body was and would have remained if Adam had not sinned. It is so physical that if you were to have observed an actual resurrection, yes someone arise from the tomb, the body coming to life would have caused dust to fall off the slab from which it arose. Christ's resurrection was an historical event that took place in our time-space continuum. Likewise our resurrection will be an historic event that takes place—how fast? In the twinkling of an eye—one sixth of a nano-second. Never forget that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the body of Christ that died and the body of Christ that rose. Jesus said destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days. The Apostle John clarifies that the temple He spoke of was His body."

I. JESUS CHRIST, THE RESSURRECTION

A. A New Concept

The concept of resurrection was not new to the people living in Christ's time. The Jews believed in a final, general resurrection that would happen some day in the future (John 11:24), but they could not relate the concept to a person in particular. Therefore, it was news when Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:25,26).

B. The Central Theme

Resurrection is the central theme of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is important to realize that the resurrection of Christ provided more than a historical and spiritual basis for the Christian faith. Actually, Christ's resurrection opened the way for countless resurrections to follow; for the Bible teaches that all believers, upon accepting Christ as Savior and Lord, experience the resurrection life. "And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us" (Colossians 2:13,14).

Q&A 1. In what way did Jesus change the whole concept of resurrection?

II. CHRISTIANS AND DEATH

For centuries, man has contemplated the meaning of death, the grave and eternity and often explored the subject in his literature and philosophy. Even today, the great question, "Is there life after death?", continues to be debated. But for the Christian, there is no reason to question or debate. The Bible clearly describes the believer's death as a glorious transfer from mortality to immortality.

A. What happens at "death?"

The external body does cease to function. It "dies," but the inner man, or spirit, does not die; it immediately enters into the presence of Jesus Christ. "They stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep." (Acts 7:59, 60).

B. The believer's attitude toward death

Christians have good reason to view death without fear or anxiety. Actually, we can look forward to being with the Lord as Paul did. He said, "So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent

from the body and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). He said, "For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain" (Philippians 1:21).

C. The Christian and grieving

Although we do grieve over loved ones who die in Christ, we grieve in a qualitatively different manner from unbelievers. Mixed with our sorrow is the joyous hope of being reunited at the feet of Jesus. "But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 4:13,14).

Q&A 2. If you are born again, what will happen to you when you die?

Q&A 3. What attitude should the Christian have toward death? Why?

“In a recent survey that was conducted in America with 35 percent of the people being “born again” Christians, over one in three answered that Jesus did not physically rise from the dead.” –Hank Hanagaph

Two decades ago about 23% of Americans believed in reincarnation. Today one out of four Americans believe in reincarnation, one out of three College students believe in reincarnation, and one out of five Churchgoers today believe in Reincarnation.

II. THE CHRISTIAN AND PHYSICAL RESURRECTION

The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ not only affected the minds and hearts of the people of that generation; it totally revolutionized the meaning of life for every human being born since that time. The power generated by His victory over death on the cross provides salvation and strength for today and a marvelous hope for tomorrow to all who accept him.

A. New birth

The Bible says that God loved us even when we were dead in our sins, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Romans 5:8,9a). God allowed His Son to be sacrificed on our behalf. Jesus took our sins to the cross and His body was crucified with us, so to speak. Yes, we were crucified with Christ and then “quickenened” to live forever with Him, i.e., made alive. Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). “Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (Ephesians 2:5). “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

B. Resurrection power for each day

Paul prayed that the believers at Ephesus would know “the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come” (Ephesians 1:19-21).

C. The final hope

In the first epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul addressed the believers on the resurrection of the dead and the second coming of Christ. He encouraged them not to sorrow as those who have no hope, for Jesus died, rose again on the third day, and is coming again. “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise

first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" [1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17].

At that moment, we will all undergo some very special changes in our bodies. These are described in 1 Corinthians 15.

- 1. *from corruptible to incorruptible***
- 2. *from mortal to immortal***
- 3. *from dishonor to honor***
- 4. *from dead to alive***
- 5. *from natural to supernatural***

Q&A 4. Because of Christ's resurrection from the dead, what "resurrections" are available to us Christians? Name and briefly explain each one in your own words.

III. THE GENERAL RESURRECTION

The Bible teaches that both the wicked (i.e., the unsaved) and the just (i.e., the real Christians) will experience a resurrection. The unsaved will receive bodies "fitted to destruction." "God has every right to exercise his judgment and his power, but he also has the right to be very patient with those who are the objects of his judgment and are fit only for destruction" (Romans 9:22 NLT). "Also there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. But the beauty of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the beauty of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of beauty, the moon has another beauty, and the stars have another. And each star is different in its beauty. It is the same with the dead who are raised to life. The body that is 'planted' will ruin and decay, but it is raised to a life that cannot be destroyed. When the body is 'planted,' it is without honor, but it is raised in glory. When the body is 'planted,' it is weak, but when it is raised, it is powerful. The body that is 'planted' is a physical body. When it is raised, it is a spiritual body" [1 Corinthians 15:40-44 NCV].

Here's an interesting letter to a columnist about the subject:

Dear Utticus,

Our preacher said that Jesus didn't really die on the cross. He just swooned and His disciples just nursed Him back to health. What do you think?

**Sincerely
Bewildered**

And the columnist named, Utticus, then responded with:

Dear Bewildered,

Beat your preacher with a cat of nine tails with 39 heavy strokes, nail Him to a cross, hang Him in the sun for 6 hours, run a spear through His gut and heart, embalm Him, and put him in an airless tomb for 36 hours and see what happens.

**Sincerely,
Utticus**