

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE V: THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

Hebrews 6:1-2

[1]Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

[2]of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and **the resurrection of the dead** and eternal judgment.

Introduction

The last two principles named in this passage, that is, the Resurrection of the Dead and Eternal Judgment are actually one principle because the two go together. But we will treat them here separately for the same reason that the Lord Jesus (Mt 22:23-32; Mk 12:18-27) and Paul (1 Cor 15:12-58) had to address resurrection as a separate issue on different occasions in their ministry.

There is still today very much reason to affirm the truth of Resurrection, not least because even those who believe in a Resurrection do not really know what it is. Still, as can be seen from the passage that we have been studying, the Resurrection is a fundamental principle, that is, it is "the milk of the Word" (1 Cor 3:2; 1 Pet 2:2), not "strong meat" (1 Cor 3:2; Heb 5:12,14). It is something that new Christians, baby Christians are supposed to know. It is not "wisdom [for] the mature" (1 Cor 2:6). Yet, as can be seen from Heb 5:12, even those who have reached maturity can fail to continue to press forward in spiritual progress and as a result start to lose their hold on truths that they have already learned. This is why the apostles made a practice of repeating their teachings as often as they could so that they would "stick" (Phil 3:1; 2 Pet 3:1-2). When we stop "cycling through" the things we have been taught, we begin to lose touch with them. This is bound to happen especially because it is the devil's practice to steal truth from our hearts and replace it with lies, given even a little chance (Mt 13:4, 19; Lk 8:5, 12; Jn 10:10; Eph 4:27). So, as Paul told Timothy, it is crucial that we spend as much time as possible refreshing ourselves in the Truth:

1 Timothy 4:16

[16]Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; **persevere in these things**, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

1 Timothy 6:20

[20]O Timothy, **guard what has been entrusted to you**, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "knowledge"

2 Timothy 1:6

[6]For this reason I remind you to **kindle afresh** the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

2 Timothy 1:13

[13]**Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me**, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:14

[14]You, however, **continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of**, knowing from whom you have learned them.

We should do as Paul instructed Timothy too and stay within the things that we have been taught and continually stir them up within ourselves. Otherwise, as it happened to the Hebrews, so it will happen to us as well and at the time that the Lord will be expecting the fruit of maturity from us we will be needing again to be taught fundamental principles of the Faith. This is not a desirable thing or even a safe thing to do with the Lord (Mt 21:19; Mk 11:12-14, Heb 6:7-8).

Main Scriptural Witnesses

Regarding the Resurrection, there are two bits of Scripture that would be good to compare here:

1 Corinthians 15:12-58

[12]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?

[13]But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised;

[14]and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.

[15]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.

[16]For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised;

[17]and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

[18]Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

[19]If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

[20]But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

[21]For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.

[22]For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

[23]But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

[24]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.

[25]For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

[26]The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

[27]For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.

[28]When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

[29]Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?

[30]Why are we also in danger every hour?

[31]I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

[32]If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.

[33]Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

[34]Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

[35]But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?"

[36]You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies;

[37]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.

[38]But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own.

[39]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.

[40]There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is 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 also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body;

[43]it is sown in dishonor, 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]So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

[46]However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.

[47]The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.

[48]As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.

[49]Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

[50]Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

[51]Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, 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 must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

[54]But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about 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 brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:1-4

[1]For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

[2]For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven,

**[3]inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked.

[4]For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.

The Bible is replete with teachings about the Resurrection. It would take a lot of space and time to post all the passages in the Bible that speak of it but one very useful verse that teaches how well understood and entrenched it was in the hope of even Old Testament believers is the following:

Job 19:26

[26]"Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God.

The Interim State

There are two questions that may be posed:

1. What happens after we die?

2. What does it mean to be resurrected?

Both of them are common enough although they may be asked in different ways. The two passages from the two letters of Paul to the Corinthians are where the answers are most directly addresses in the Bible.

There is an error in translation in verse 3 of Second Corinthians chapter 5. It should be immediately apparent to anyone who pays attention to that chapter. We groan in this body desiring a better one and we are told that should we ever put it off, we will not be found naked because we will be wearing one from heaven. That is to say that when we die, our spirits do not become disembodied. Rather they are given new bodies from heaven in which to wait until the Resurrection. Now that statement is what is not commonly taught in churches today. But it is the Truth.

To explain, as Paul said in the other text we are using here, that is, in 1 Cor 15:45, the human being is a composite of body and spirit, not body, soul and spirit. In Gen 2:7, Adam's body was formed out of the ground and then, God breathed a spirit into that body and in that way, he became something called a **soul**. That is, the soul is what resulted when God united the spirit He created with the body that He formed. It was not a separate element of man's makeup. This is the same way that God created everything human being. Eve's body was formed from Adam's rib and God breathed into it so that it became a living soul. The rest of us except for the Lord Jesus had our bodies formed from the seed of our earthly father and the egg of our earthly mother and when that body was fully formed and then birthed by our mother, God created our spirit and put it into that body and thus we came to be living souls as well. The Lord Jesus's Body was formed without a man's seed and so His conception was different. It is that absence of a man's seed that made certain of His lack of a sin nature which the rest of us have possessed since Adam sinned.

Our spirit is the real us. This is obvious from our reading in 2 Cor 5. Our body is what we wear or a house we live in. But "we" refers to our spirits. That is the real person. Our bodies are a tool we use either to serve God obediently and please Him or to rebel against Him and incur His Eternal Wrath. It is our bodies that weaken and die. Our spirits are indestructible. They will last for eternity. So when "we" die, it is only our bodies which actually die, like a worn-out garment that essentially falls off of us. But what happens when our bodies fall to ruins then?

This, as has been said before, is what 2 Corinthians 5:1-4 addresses. From that passage, it is clear that human beings were not created to be disembodied spirits. The angels are purely spirits although they possess some sort of corporeality that we cannot yet fully appreciate until the Second Advent and our Resurrection. But not humans. We are spirits who live in physical or material bodies. This was what God

made us to be. In death then, we are the same according to this passage. Although our earthly bodies fail and die, our spirits receive a new body with which to remain in an interim state until the Lord returns to resurrect the Church. The question does arise: where do those who die spend this interim existence?

The Old Testament is awash with references to Sheol (Greek: Hades) or the Grave or the Pit. See Gen 37:35; 42:38; 44:29, 31; Num 16:30, 33; 1 Sam 2:6; 2 Sam 22:6; 1 Ki 2:6, 9; Job 7:9; 17:16; 21:13; 24:19; 33:18; Ps 6:5; 9:17; 16:10; 30:3; 31:17; 49:14, 15; 55:15; 86:13; 88:3; 89:48; 116:3; 141:7; Pro 1:12; 5:5; 7:27; 9:18; Eccl 9:10; Is 14:9 and many more. Sheol is the place of the Dead. That was where until the Cross, everyone who died was taken. Even the great prophet Samuel went there when he died (1 Sam 28:12-19). Since the Cross, however, all believers who die have gone into the Third Heaven. Believers who died before the Cross, like Samuel, were taken to Sheol, but not to the same place as unbelievers. All unbelievers were (and still are) put in Torments in Sheol (Lk 16:23, 28; Is 50:11; Job 24:19; Ps 49:14; Is 14:11. But believers who died before the Cross went to Paradise although this Paradise was also in Sheol (Lk 16:22, 25; Eze 31: 16). When our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead, however, having perfectly fulfilled the Will of the Father to die for our sins, "captivity was led captive" (Eph 4:8-10, Ps 68:18) and believers who could not go home until then formed the Lord's entourage into the Third Heaven into the Presence of the Father having had the veil of our sin and consequent judgment torn open by the Great Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. These are those who in Revelation 6:9-11 are said to be at the foot of the Altar (the Altar is a symbol representing the Lord Jesus Christ just like the Seven Lamps before the Throne are a symbol of the Holy Spirit). So, believers who die today receive interim bodies and are taken into the Third Heaven to remain with the Lord Jesus in the Presence of the Father awaiting with our Lord the Day of His Return and the Resurrection of the Church.

The Resurrection

So, then, what does it mean to be resurrected since we have come full circle? Again, we must look at the verse in Job referenced before:

Job 19:26

[26]"Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God.

That is, even though we die, we know that we will still be raised up from the dead **in a real body** to see God. This is the hope of Resurrection which drives all of the believer's aspirations. We endure everything we do in this earth because we are confident that life does not end for us when we die but that one day we will have back our material existence only this time without death ever again being an issue.

a) Soul Sleep

There are many false ideas about what the Resurrection will be. There are those who believe that when we die, we are unconscious, in a sort of "soul sleep" until the Resurrection when our disembodied spirits are awakened. Some parts of the Bible are used to justify this idea like:

Daniel 12:2

[2]Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

Matthew 9:24

[24]He said, "Leave; for the girl has not died, but is asleep." And they began laughing at Him.

Matthew 27:52

[52]The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;

John 11:11

[11]This He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep."

Acts 7:60

[60]Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.

There are many more like those ones where death is described as sleep. But it is wrong to receive these passages and others like them to mean that those who die are unconscious. At the very least, this verse should call that thought immediately into question:

1 Thessalonians 5:10

[10]who died for us, so that **whether we are** awake or **asleep**, we will **live** together with Him.

That is, even in this "sleep", we "live" with the Lord. Obviously, Samuel was not unconscious when God sent him to speak to Saul at the séance of the Witch of Endor. If we say that he was woken from sleep, then, why was he not raised from the dead like the little girl and Lazarus when the Lord Jesus "woke" them up? Then, there was Abraham and Lazarus and even the rich man. None of these people are found to be unconscious. The souls gathered at our Lord's feet in Heaven are not unconscious either but are clearly speaking even though they are told to go on resting. So, "sleep" in these passages cannot mean "unconscious" or "unconsciousness". Rather, it means that these people are no longer engaged in the war of this life. They have been removed from the business of living and are only waiting for the time when they can go back to "living" again or to whatever eternal condemnation has in store for them.

b) The Resurrection Body

Then, there is the question of what body we will be resurrected in. That one has already been addressed in much of the foregoing but it does bear further attention. It should be noticed that Paul had to answer the same question from the Corinthians as well some of whom thought that it was a very smart question to ask since it, in their minds, proved that resurrection was a harebrained idea.

1 Corinthians 15:35-57

[35]But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?"

[36]You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies;

[37]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.

[38]But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own.

[39]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.

[40]There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is 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 also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body;

[43]it is sown in dishonor, 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]So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

[46]However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.

[47]The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.

[48]As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.

[49]Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly. The Mystery of Resurrection

[50]Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

[51]Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, 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 must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

[54]But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about 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.

Two things are pertinent here:

One, although Paul says quite clearly that it is not the body that is sown in death that will be raised to life, there is no doubt that it is still ourselves, recognizable as the people we have always been absent of all the troubles that come with this current body that will be raised to life and in real human bodies too.

That is, while our bodies will be changed and we will now truly reflect who Christ is, we will still be very much "us".

Two, in Resurrection, this body will be changed. While it will be this body, it will be different. For example, the perishability of this body will be changed into imperishability and its mortality to immortality. That is, this weak body will become powerful and this vulnerable body will become invulnerable. Paul also says that it will cease to be a "natural" body and become a "spiritual" one. That bears comment.

The adjective "spiritual" has led people to think that in Resurrection, we either get or become something called "spirit bodies". Whatever this may mean to any given reader, what Paul means is that our bodies will in Resurrection be made into perfect vessels for our spirits. In this world, our bodies provide an opposing influence to the influence of the Holy Spirit because of the sin in them. Additionally, they are suited to life in this world so that because of them we are severely limited in our ability to perceive and participate in spiritual realities. For example, we obviously cannot ascend into the Third Heaven in these bodies but our Lord Jesus could after He resurrected. For another example, all around us everyday, there is a great amount of spiritual activity with the elect angels fighting to defend and protect believers against the assault of the rebel angels (Dan 12:1) but we cannot perceive it much less participate in it. But in our Resurrection bodies, we will enter battle with the Lord Jesus against Satan and the rebel angels while our Lord annihilates the world's human armies massed against Jerusalem at Armageddon (Ps 110:3; Rev 19:14).

For another example, Paul teaches that this body will be raised in glory although it may be "sown in dishonor". Glory speaks of effulgent light. That is, our Resurrection bodies will shine just like literal stars but with the Glory of God Himself (Jn 17:22). However good-looking we may be said to be right now, these bodies of ours today are in dishonor. They are not glorious at all. But in Resurrection, for believers, our bodies will beam with a light more brilliant than seven suns (Is 30:26).

So, this body will be changed in some ways that can barely be imagined and in far more that we cannot conceive at all.

c) The Hope of Resurrection

This is what the hope of our calling is: that though we may die, we will live again and in an incomparably better existence than the very best that this life can afford. This hope is, as Paul said, why we are in

danger every hour (1 Cor 15:30). In fact, he says that if there is no resurrection, our faith is entirely pointless and that is without doubt since for the believer, life in this world is a war. We are constantly pressing toward and sacrificing for a world that is yet to come. We are depriving ourselves of the sinful pleasures of this life and many legitimate pleasures too as we fight for eternal rewards in a New Creation which would only be possible if we will be resurrected to share in it in the first place. This is our lot. Only those who do not count the world to come as a worthy aspiration and/or do not believe that there is such a thing as a resurrection who give themselves to this world's affairs and this world's pleasures without restraint or with minimal restraint. Otherwise, it would be madness to give up all of this world's allures and promises if we neither care for the world to come for believe in a resurrection.

d) Timing of The Resurrection

But when will this Resurrection happen? Again, we refer to our text in 1 Cor 15:

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

[20]But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

[21]For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.

[22]For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

[23]But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

[24]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.

[25]For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

[26]The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

Resurrection occurs in three echelons:

One, the Lord Jesus Christ Who was resurrected first, the Prince of Life Himself in Whom all who die will be made alive.

Two, the Church consisting of all believers from Adam and Eve to the last saint to believe in the Lord Jesus before the Second Advent, that is, "those who are Christ's at His Coming". These ones are

resurrected at the Second Advent when the Lord Jesus returns. This echelon includes all dead believers and those who will be alive at the point of our Lord Jesus's return.

Finally will be those who are resurrected at the End of the World. This is the last Resurrection which will occur at the end of our Lord's thousand-year reign over the Earth. After those thousand years and the rebellion which Satan, released from the Abyss for a short time, will immediately instigate, the entire Creation will be destroyed and all Millennial believers will be resurrected and after them all unbelievers from Cain all the way to the last unbeliever to live in human history. After this will follow the last Judgment, the Judgment of the White Throne.

e) Resurrection of the Unbelieving

Primarily, our concern has been with the resurrection of believers but resurrection will occur for everyone in the end although its specifics will be different for the believer and the unbeliever. For believers, Resurrection will result in an infinitely better state of existence with a Perfect Body with incredible abilities beyond imagining in the present moment. This will not be the case for unbelievers. All unbelievers will be resurrected for condemnation and their Resurrection bodies will accord with that. The Scriptures do not tell us as much about the state of unbelievers in their own resurrection as it does about believers but what it does say is unpleasant.

Daniel 12:2

[2]Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but **the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.**

Again, it must be said that there is so very much to say about all this. As we learn more in the Bible we will interact in a deeper and more comprehensive way with this issue and others.

May Grace remain with you.