

Resurrection: Then, Now, and Future

Scripture Reading: I Corinthians 15:1-22

The apostle Paul says that if Christ did not rise from the dead, then we will not rise from the dead and are, of all men, most miserable. To have hope only **in** this life and **for** this life is a philosophy that isn't much better than the one which says, "*eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die!*"

Some try to live with the idea that death ends all; that we are like animals who are given just a short while to exist and then it is all over. That kind of a philosophy can harden people's minds to the gospel, but it cannot help the heart, which is yearning for eternal life. Like one old song says, "*I can swear there ain't no heaven, but I pray there ain't no hell.*" (American Rock Group: Blood, Sweat, & Tears – "And When I Die").

Some try to live with the philosophy of reincarnation – cycle after cycle of coming back in different forms, both animal and human, until we get our karma right, and then we can graduate and go on to another higher existence. In Hinduism, the cycles are almost endless. Even those who attain to "godhood," might descend and come back to this world. If we follow the Buddhist teaching, this "higher existence" (*Nirvana*) is to basically lose your personal identity, to cease to exist as an individual, and become one with a higher life-force. We would be like a drop of water added to the sea.

Some try to live with the idea that, no matter what you do in this life, everybody goes on to heavenly bliss – the light at the end of a dark tunnel. There, everybody gets a nice house or log cabin by a lake. All their pets will be there. There will always good fishing and lots of parties. Some mistakenly use I Corinthians 15:22 to try and prove this. "*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*" Please note: "*In Adam*" refers to all of us. Our original parent, Adam chose to sin and thereby moved all the human family into the status of sinners. "*In Christ*" designates only those who have received Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior and follow Him. The Old Testament saints did not know His name, but they believed God and His promises, following God with the light that they were given. "*In Christ shall all be made alive*" does not mean that all human beings have eternal life automatically. Salvation comes through the transaction of God's grace mingled with faith – faith in the promises of God through the gospel of Christ.

Please see Romans 5:12,17; 3:19-26; 10:9-13; John 8:21-24; 14:6; **I Corinthians 15:1-4.**

Well, just looking at all those theories about life, death and the afterlife – you can see how miserable it can be to live in this world, without the blessed hope of the resurrection! Then consider that, within the Corinthian church, a strange doctrine had begun to emerge which stated that being a Christian was only a better way of life for now, not the beginning of eternal life. How could you comfort Christians, who were suffering so much for their faith, if there was no hope of the resurrection? Indeed, Paul said, of all the hopeless people in the world, with all their various philosophies, we Christians would be the most miserable! See I Corinthians 15:12-19. The entire fifteenth chapter is a powerful discussion about the resurrection. However, we cannot fully develop all of that in this lesson.

Rather, let us consider three things about resurrection: **Then, Now, and Future!**

Then – The resurrection of Christ is an actual historic event!

Christ's resurrection is not something made up by sad people who had wishful thoughts. What many saw, they saw for forty days! (Acts 1:1-3) Once, he was seen by over 500 people at one time! (I Corinthians 15:5-8). This could not be mass hysteria! What they saw, they told others. They did not change their story, even though they were often persecuted for it. No one got rich and famous, who testified of the risen Christ. Many died for telling the story. They did not change their story, even when it cost them their lives. These facts are hard evidence of the truth of the resurrection of Christ. See II Timothy 1:7-12; 2:8-13.

Now – The resurrection of Christ is more than an historical event. It is a person , whose work in our lives is an on-going event!

Jesus went to the funeral of one of His friends, Lazarus. He came to really bust up the funeral. When he told Lazarus' sister, Martha, that Lazarus would rise again, she thought that He was talking about the future resurrection, some day. But Jesus took the moment to instruct her, and all of us, that **Jesus IS the resurrection and the life!** It is in Him, not an event, that we are to believe (John 11:17-26 cp. II Timothy 1:12 "... *whom I have believed...*" – not "*what*"). The same power that raised Christ from the dead is still working today in the lives of those who have called upon the Lord and have received Him as their personal Lord and Savior. It is that resurrection power that gives us faith and causes us to be able to walk by faith. See John 5:24-25 ("*the dead*" = spiritually dead in sin cp. Ephesians 2:1); I Peter 1:3; Ephesians 1:15-20; Galatians 2:20 cp. Philippians 1:11.

Future – The resurrection of Christ points us to a future event!

The bodies of all people will be resurrected, but not all will have the same resurrection (Daniel 12:2-3; John 5:28-29; Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:11 – 21:8). Keeping the future of unbelievers in mind, let us now focus on the blessed hope of all those who, by grace through faith, are in Christ and will experience a wonderful resurrection – a glorious new body in a perfect and sinless world – a life in a world that will have no end! See John 14:19; Philippians 3:20-21; I Corinthians 15:21-28,51-58; I Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:11; II Peter 3:13; Jeremiah 29:11.