

Death and Resurrection #3

Eccl. 7:1-4 – “A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one’s birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. “

In the first lesson we looked at the inevitability of death, the fact that there will be a judgment after death, the immortality of the soul (i.e., that death does not end your conscious existence), the fear of death, and how the death of a believer is completely different than that of the unbeliever. Last week we saw how God sees death, and especially the death of one his own, what follows death (from Lk. 16, “Lazarus and the rich man”), and what is the difference between paradise and hades vs. “heaven” and “hell”.

Most people have an overly simplistic view of what follows death. “You die, you go to heaven or hell, and that is it”. But that ignores a very important issue: resurrection. If we go to an eternal heaven immediately upon death, what has resurrection got to do with it?

The resurrection of Christ is of utmost importance, but that is not really the major point of this lesson. Here we are looking, not just at the past resurrection of Christ, but at the future resurrections of mankind.

OT Expectations That There Will be a Resurrection

Resurrection is an idea that is much more fully developed in the NT, but the OT also gives some light on it. Of course there are many references to the resurrection of the Messiah, but again, we are looking at a general resurrection. They looked, not just for conscious existence after death, but for a time when they would be redeemed from death, awakened, and resurrected to everlasting life.

Job 19:25-27 – “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; ...”

Dan. 12:2 – “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake. Some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

Hos. 13:14 – “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.” This is even quoted in 1 Cor. 15, a whole chapter devoted to the topic of resurrection.

Belief in a resurrection is even cited as something that helped OT saints face cruel circumstances: Heb. 11:35 – “Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:”

Jesus Confirmed This Belief in a Future Resurrection

The Sadducees differed from the Pharisees in several points, but especially in that they denied that there would be a resurrection. They tried to trip Jesus up with a question of marriage in the resurrected state, and Jesus clearly let them know that they were wrong.

Lk. 20:35-38 – “But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him.”

He also said that those who have mercy on the poor, maimed, lame, and blind “shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just” (Lk. 14:14).

There Will be a Resurrection of the Righteous, “At the Last Day”

Jn. 6:39-40, 44, 54 – “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. ... No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. ... Then Jesus said unto them,

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Jn. 11:23-25 – “Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus saith unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”

There Will Also be a Resurrection of the Unrighteous

Jn. 5:25-29 – “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is. When the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.” Notice that this is sometime in the future, not the current state of the dead.

So there will be two resurrections – one unto life and one unto damnation.

Ac. 24:14-15 – (to the governor Felix) “But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”

This Was Included in the Teaching of the Early Church

2 Cor. 4:14 – “... he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.” This was in a chapter where Paul was encouraging them not to faint in times of persecution.

Heb. 6:1-2 says that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is one of the foundational doctrines that is so settled that they should have been moving on to deeper things. Those foundational principles need to be taught to all new believers though, and reinforced in the teaching of the church in all times and places.

When will It Occur?

Jesus already said repeatedly that it would be “at the last day”, but more specifically it will be at the time of Christ’s return, “at the last trump”:

1 Cor. 15:51-52 – “Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

1 Thess. 4:16-17 – “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

How Important is a Belief in Resurrection?

In the church of Corinth there were people who were denying that there would be a resurrection. Elsewhere were Hymeneus and Philetus, “Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.” (2 Tim. 2:18). Evidently Paul thought that the issue is vital.

In the whole chapter of 1 Cor. 15, Paul is quite incensed at these deniers. He goes to much effort to show that if there is no resurrection, then Christ is not raised, and our faith is vain (verses 12-34). He sees the two issues (Christ’s past resurrection and our future resurrection as inseparable.

In verses 35-50 he answers the objections of some who questioned what kind of body it would be. Then he finishes the chapter by showing the connection between the resurrection of the saints and the rapture of those who will be alive at the coming of Christ, and the great victory over death.

1 Cor. 15:54-58 – “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth is the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

Sunday school teaching notes are available at: <https://howardslackteachings.com>