

Resurrection of the Just and Unjust

Synopsis of I Corinthians 15

Jesus said, “*Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs 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 judgment*” (Jn. 5:28-29). Likewise, as the apostle Paul gave his defense before Felix, he said, “... *there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust*” (Acts 24:15).

Some brethren in Corinth were teaching that there would be no resurrection of the dead (I Cor. 15:12). These teachers apparently believed Jesus had been raised yet they rejected the general resurrection of mankind. Paul proves the general resurrection of the dead by proving Jesus’ resurrection, who is the “*firstfruits of them that are asleep*” (I Cor. 15:20). Paul’s reasoning is that if Christ was raised then so must all mankind be raised as well (I Cor. 15:20-23). The consequences of no resurrection would be disastrous. If there was not to be a general resurrection of the dead then it reasons that Christ never was raised (I Cor. 15:13). Secondly, the apostle’s preaching is void of reason (I Cor. 15:14) and they are found as “false witnesses” (I Cor. 15:15). Thirdly, the faith of the Corinthians is useless (I Cor. 15:14). Fourthly, all are still in their sins (I Cor. 15:17). Fifthly, those who have died have perished never to be alive again (I Cor. 15:18). Sixthly, the Christian therefore has no real hope (I Cor. 15:19) and we may as well “*eat and drink, for tomorrow we die*” (I Cor. 15:32).

The dead, however, will be raised as was Jesus. I Corinthians 15 gives answers to three questions:

How will the dead be raised?

Paul first compares the terrestrial body of corruption and dishonor to a seed that is planted in the ground. The seed decays and appears to be dead; however, in due time the seed produces a new plant (I Cor. 15:35-38). Likewise, the dead body will be resurrected.

What type of body will the resurrected have?

The terrestrial body will be raised incorruptible, full of glory and power (I Cor. 15:43). Paul terms this a “*spiritual body*” (I Cor. 15:44) because we will be just like Jesus in the resurrected state (I Jn. 3:2).

When will the resurrection occur?

Paul did not know when the resurrection would occur and neither has anyone else in the history of man (cf. Matt. 24:36-44). Rather than answering the question of when, Paul gives details as to what will transpire when the resurrection does happen. First, total victory over Satan and death will be achieved by Christ (I Cor. 15:24-28).

Secondly, the trumpet of the Lord shall sound (I Cor. 15:52; I Thess. 4:16) and all the dead shall rise (cf. I Thess. 4:13-18). Third, mankind will be changed to a state of immortality at the blink of an eye (I Cor. 15:51-53).

Conclusion

Paul's objective is now achieved. We must believe in the resurrection because this is our hope as Christians (I Cor. 15:33-34, 58; I Thess. 4:18).

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