

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

What Will Your Resurrection Be Like?

I Corinthians 15:35-58

1 A British couple years ago once wrote: "On Christmas Eve, my wife had tucked our ten year old twins in their beds and had settled down for a quiet time with the Lord by the fire in the living room. Suddenly she was startled by the sound of music just outside our front door, followed almost immediately by the excited voice of our daughter Carol crying, 'Mommy, Mommy, Jesus is here!' The youngster came running down the stairs in her nightgown, her face alight with expectation as she awaited the joyous moment of meeting the Savior. My wife kissed her and gently ushered her back to bed, explaining that the clear sweet notes she had heard were not made by the 'trump of God'. Rather, they were part of a stirring horn fanfare being sounded out by the Salvation Army Band as they came down our garden path to play carols for us." ¹

This cute story illustrates the expectation Christian can have about an event that, someday, will actually

¹ "Our Daily Bread", December 24.

happen. Lord Jesus rose from the grave to pave the way for the rest of us! When you identify with Him, you can eagerly await the time when you will conquer death and enter triumphantly into heaven.

What will your resurrection be like? The Bible gives us an account in First Corinthians, chapter 15, verses 35 through 58. It reads . . . ²

But someone may ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another.

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There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one

² v35-39.

kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

³ ₄

So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly

³ v40-44.

man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.⁴ ⁵

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”⁵ ⁶

“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ v45-49.

⁵ v50-54.

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. ⁶

Before we get into this passage, though, you need to understand . . . ⁷

I. What the Non-Christian World Thought

What the non-Christian world thought about the concept of a bodily resurrection. ⁸

Let's look first at the ancient Jewish concept. Palestine was occupied by the Roman military but was allowed to keep their religion. The Jewish religious leaders of that day were divided into two sects. ⁹

The religious liberals were the Sadducees. They were the clergy. They were experts on how to conduct worship, lead in the religious festivals, care for the Temple and its property and relate to the Roman

⁶ v55-58.

government. They didn't have very many religious convictions.

They didn't believe in a bodily resurrection. When you're dead, you're dead. That's it. ¹⁰

The Pharisees were the religious conservatives. They were the Bible people of their day. They took everything in their Bible for what it literally said. Even the most insignificant words or phrases were important to them. Since they were considered the Bible scholars, their interpretations of what Bible concepts meant, or their "traditions", became religious law to the common person. They believed in a resurrection.

But the Old Testament idea of a resurrection was very vague. There are some scriptures that seem to mock the idea of a bodily resurrection of the dead. ¹¹ Psalm, chapter 6, verse 5, **No one remembers you when he is dead. Who praises you from the grave?** ¹² Or Psalm, chapter 30, verse 9, **What gain is there in my destruction, in my going down into the pit? Will the**

dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness? ¹³
Or Psalm, chapter 115, verse 17, **It is not the dead who
praise the LORD, those who go down to silence.** ¹⁴

The strongest Old Testament reference comes from what many believe is the oldest biblical book; Job. In chapter 19, verses 26 and 26 it reads, **I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.** ¹⁵ Another strong scripture might be Psalm, chapter 73, verse 24, **You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.**

That's about it in the Jewish circles. So even those who believed in a bodily resurrection had a rather foggy idea of what it was all about. ¹⁶

The ancient non-Jewish was even worse. The pagan world was filled with polytheism. There was a separate god for everything. There was a god for the ocean, a god for the earth, a weather god, a sex god; you name it and they had a god for it. Imagine trying to please all

these separate impersonal deities with their own special sacrifices and modes of worship! The resurrection to the pagan was that, when you die, you slip into unity with all the gods. Your body decays and you lose your identity and consciousness. It was something like the idea of Hindu Karma or the New Age philosophy.

Now that you know what ancient people thought when confronted with the idea of resurrection, we can look at our scripture today as we ask the question . . . 17

II. What Will Your Resurrection Be Like? -

v35-50

What will your resurrection be like? There will be an event prophesied in the Bible which our scripture today describes. Bible scholars call it "The Rapture".

But first we must add another scripture so you get the whole picture. ¹⁸ We find it in First Thessalonians, chapter 4, verses 13 through 17, **Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep,**

or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.⁷ ¹⁹

According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.⁸

What will your resurrection be like? We now add to the First Thessalonians scripture the first section of our passage today in First Corinthians, chapter 15, verses 35 through 50. ²⁰

⁷ Verses 13-14.

⁸ Verses 15-17.

The picture we find in verses 35 through 38 is that our resurrection bodies are like having a flower bloom after planting a seed. ²¹ The seed is planted and watered; but, then, it decays and dies. ⁹ ²² In verse 38 the flower looks a lot different than the seed that produced it. ¹⁰ ²³ But whatever these spiritual bodies we will have will be, they will be pleasing to God! ¹¹ ²⁴

We also know that whatever these spiritual bodies will be like, according to verses 40 through 42, they will be superior to what you have now! ¹² ²⁵ For instance, in verse 42, your physical body is perishable, corruptible. Your spiritual body will be imperishable. You know, that after you reach the age of 40, the Second Law of Thermodynamics takes place; these physical bodies begin wearing out. ²⁶ In verse 43 our

⁹ Verse 37 - What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

¹⁰ Verse 38 - When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.

¹¹ Verse 38 - But God gives it a body as he has determined.

¹² Verses 40-42 - There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead.

physical bodies are sown in dishonor; they are relatively dull and unattractive. But your spiritual body will be raised in glory; literally, brilliant!

In Matthew, chapter 17, ¹³ Lord Jesus was talking with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter, James and John saw Him in His "glory". ²⁷

Also in verse 43 our physical bodies are weak in contrast to our spiritual bodies which will be powerful. ²⁸ Verse 44 describes our physical bodies as natural; material, of the flesh. In contrast, our spiritual bodies are non material with no physical substance. ²⁹

Finally, in verses 45 through 50, our physical bodies are described like Adam's. It was created from the

¹³ Matthew 17:1-6 - After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters — one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.

dust of the earth. But our spiritual bodies will be like the Lord Jesus' post resurrection body. Remember, He could make it immaterial so He could walk through a closed and locked door, and then make it material at will so He could say to Thomas, **Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.** ¹⁴

So . . . ³⁰

III. How Will You Be Changed? - v51-58

How will you be changed? Our scripture today tells us. ³¹ Verses 51 through 52 ¹⁵ say it will be instantaneously, "in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye"! ³²

According to Second Corinthians, chapter 5, verses 6 through 8, when we die **we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we**

¹⁴ John 20:27.

¹⁵ Verses 51-52 - Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Dr. Raymond Moody, in his book, Life After Life, describes the testimony of many people who experienced what he labeled the "Clinical Death" experience. These people would actually leave their dead physical bodies, see the surroundings around their bodies (from an outside viewpoint) and, then, enter a tunnel with a bright light at the end of it. Medical authorities would pronounce them dead. Then, after a short period of time each would re-enter their bodies and come back to life!

My wife and I were visiting a friend and the conversation evolved into a discussion of life after death. After relating to her the Raymond Moody studies she breathed a sigh of relief. Our friend had actually experienced a clinical death years before but was ashamed to tell anyone. She feared people would think she was crazy. 33

If you remain alive until the Lord comes again and experience the Rapture it will also be instantaneous. You need not be afraid of death because God's word assures you of a resurrection. ³⁴

This scripture concludes with a final explanation. Resurrection is possible only because of what Jesus did for you on the cross! ³⁵

This resurrection is for those of you who stand firm in your faith. Verses 57 and 58 conclude, **But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.** ³⁶

The resurrection is for those who have not moved away from God. Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 14 warns, **Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.** ³⁷

The resurrection is for those who have given themselves fully to the Lord. Do you know what a wheelbarrow Christian is? He is someone who goes no further than he is pushed! Can you imagine heaven being filled with people like that? Here we are, praising the Lord and someone says, "Do we have to sing all the verses?" 38

Start now and give yourself fully to the Lord! You never have to fear death! Just be anxious to stand in God's holy presence!

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