

Major Bible Themes

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CHAPTER IX

GOD THE SON: HIS RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

I. THE RESURRECTION

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). However, in John 5:25-29, wherein the universal resurrection is also mentioned, a sharp contrast is drawn between the resurrection which is unto life, and that which is unto condemnation (note Acts 24:15; Dan. 12:2). The order between these two aspects of resurrection and the resurrection of Christ is set forth as a procession (1 Cor. 15:20-24): (1) Christ in His resurrection is said to precede all others and to be the "firstfruits." None other has been raised as He was raised (1 Tim. 6:16; 2 Tim. 1:10). (2) "They that are Christ's at his coming." This group, it should be observed, is strictly limited to, and all-inclusive of, those who are Christ's, and in point of time their resurrection follows that of Christ by at least the present period which has already continued two thousand years. (3) "Then cometh the end," meaning the last resurrection in the order of procession, and is the resurrection unto condemnation which includes all the remainder of the human race.

The time of the resurrection is declared to be "when he [Christ] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he [Christ] shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." This kingdom reign of Christ, it is stated, will be for a period of one thousand years (Rev. 20:4, 6), and, in accordance with the above passages, will be followed by the resurrection of the dead, both small and great, who shall then be judged at the Great White Throne and there condemned for ever (Rev. 20:11-15). As added evidence that there will be a partial resurrection at the coming of Christ, it is stated that "the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thess. 4:16, 17), and Paul testified that he desired to attain to that particular resurrection which is out from among the dead (Phil. 3:11).

From the Scriptures which are cited above, it is seen that, in spite of the almost universal impression to the contrary, there is no so-called "general resurrection" including all the dead to be raised at one time.

The resurrection of Christ is unique. Others who were actually dead have been restored to life (2 Kings 4:32-35; 13:21; Matt. 9:25; Luke 7:12-15; John 11:43, 44; Acts 9:36-41); but all such were only returned to their former existence and were thus subject again to the first death. The resurrection of Christ was into a new sphere as the "last Adam," the Head of a new race or a new species. Christ came forth with the new, deathless, glorified body which is the pattern of that body which shall be given to every believer when Christ comes again (Phil. 3:20, 21). Though the soul and spirit are endless in their existence, it is only the resurrection body which is said to be immortal. Therefore, since Christ alone has received the resurrection body, it is written of Him that He only hath immortality, dwelling in light (1 Tim. 6:16).

The saints before the cross believed in the resurrection (Gen. 22:5; Psa. 16:9, 10; 17:15; Isa. 25:8; 26:19; Hos. 13:14), though the word does not appear in the Old Testament. We have also the testimony of Job (Job 14:14, 15; 19:25-27), and of Martha who voiced the conviction of the people of her day (John 11:24). So, also, the resurrection is mentioned as one of the major features of Judaism (Heb. 6:1, 2). The Old Testament revelation was incomplete, for it was Christ who "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10).

Since the import of the resurrection transcends all dispensational bounds and is eternal in its issues, it is to be classed as one of the seven greatest divine undertakings -- (1) the creation of the angelic hosts (Col. 1:16); (2) the creation of the material universe including the first Adam; (3) the incarnation; (4) the death of Christ; (5) the resurrection; (6) the second coming of Christ; and (7) the final bringing in of the new heavens and the new earth (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1; Isa. 66:22). Of these great undertakings, two are closely related to the resurrection of Christ:

First. -- His resurrection is related to His death as being the consummation of all that was undertaken and accomplished by the cross both in Heaven and on earth. He "was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

Second. -- His resurrection is related to the first creation, which was ruined by sin, only to the extent that He is the Head of a New Creation which came into being when He arose from the dead and which partakes of His infinite perfection. The New Creation is composed of all those who have believed and being regenerated are united to Christ by the baptism with the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Cor. 6:17; Gal. 3:26), and are, therefore, accepted before God as He is

accepted (Eph. 1:6), and destined to share His infinite glory (Col. 3:4; John 17:24). As the Sabbath was instituted to commemorate the accomplishment of the first creation (Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 16:29, 30; Neh. 9:13, 14), so the observance of the first day of the week commemorates the accomplishment of the New Creation. There is no commandment to observe, or any record of observance, of the seventh day after Christ rose from the dead (note Hos. 2:11; Col. 2:16).

There is but one general reason revealed for the death of Christ and that reason is because of sin; but there are at least seven reasons given for His resurrection: (1) He arose because of what He is -- being the Eternal Son, it is not possible for Him to be holden of death (Acts 2:24); (2) He arose because of who He is -- being the Son of David, He must yet sit upon David's throne (2 Sam. 7:16; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 2:25-31; Rom. 1:3, 4); (3) He arose to be Head over all things to the Church which is His body (Eph. 1:22, 23); (4) He arose to be the giver of resurrection life (John 12:24); (5) He arose to impart His resurrection power (Matt. 28:18; Rom. 6:4; Eph. 1:19, 20); (6) He arose that sinners might be justified (Rom. 4:25); and (7) He arose that He might appear in Heaven as the pattern, or first-fruits, of all who, being saved and conformed to Him, will yet appear with Him in glory (1 Cor. 15:20-23; Phil. 3:20, 21).

II. THE ASCENSION

The Scriptures indicate two ascensions of Christ into Heaven:

First. -- On the day of His resurrection, Christ ascended into Heaven as the "Wave Sheaf." In fulfilling this Old Testament type and the eternal purpose of God, it was necessary that He should appear in Heaven as the earnest of a mighty harvest of souls whom He had redeemed and who, in the divine purpose, came out of that tomb with Him to share His eternal glory. So, also, He, having accomplished the sacrifice for sin, must present His own blood in Heaven (Lev. 16:1-34; Heb. 9:16-28). Not having yet ascended, He said to Mary, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17). That He ascended on that same day is evident; for He said unto them at evening, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see" (Luke 24:39). He returned to earth from Heaven to accomplish His post-resurrection ministry.

Second. -- After forty days He ascended to Heaven and was seated on His Father's throne, and there took up His present heavenly ministry as Head over all things to the Church: (1) As the bestower of gifts (Eph. 4:8-11), (2) as Intercessor (Heb. 7:25), and (3) as Advocate (1 John 2:1, 2).

QUESTIONS

1. What proportion of those who die will experience resurrection?
2. a. What event stands first in the order of resurrection?
 - b. What time period falls between the first and the second events?
3. a. What event stands second in the order of resurrection?

- b. What time period stands between the second and the third events?
4. What event stands third and last in the order of resurrection?
5. a. Indicate the distinction that should be made between a resurrection and a restoration.
 - b. Have any, other than Christ, experienced a real resurrection?
6. a. What is immortality?
 - b. "Why is it yet limited to Christ?
7. What evidence have we that the Old Testament saints believed in a resurrection?
8. Name the seven greatest divine undertakings.
9. What relation does Christ's resurrection sustain to His death?
10. a. What relation does Christ's resurrection sustain to the New Creation and the recognition of the first day of the week?
 - b. How many celebrations of the resurrection of Christ has God appointed for each year?
11. Name the seven reasons indicated in the Scriptures for the resurrection of Christ.
12. What evidence have we that Christ twice ascended into heaven ?
13. State what was accomplished in the first ascension.
14. What ministries did Christ undertake at His final ascension?