



The Sword & The Plow

Newsletter of the Bimillennial Preterist Association

Vol. X, No. 3 – May 2008

A Preterist Exposition of I Corinthians 15

Kurt Simmons

Adapted from a lesson given at the 2nd Annual Carlsbad Eschatology Conference

I Cor. 15 is among the chief eschatological passages – any discussion of Christ’s second coming sooner or later will end up here. Not surprisingly, there is a fair amount of disagreement about its meaning among Preterists. This article will attempt to help clear things up.

I Cor. 15 is divided into three parts: vv. 1-34 deal with the *fact* of the resurrection and consequences of its denial. Verses 35-50 deal with the *nature* of the resurrection body – natural and corruptible vs. spiritual and incorruptible. Verses 50-57 deal with the “*mystery*” of the eschatological change. Let’s look briefly at each of these.

Fact of the Resurrection

I Cor. 15:1, 2 - Moreover brethren I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand, by which also ye are saved.

We think of I Cor. 15 as being predominantly eschatological, but we see here that soteriology and eschatology are inexorably bound together up. Last things grow out of first things, and first things are completed in last things. The gospel that begins with the birth of the savior, culminates in his resurrection from the dead. This resurrection – its authenticity, its historicity,

its gospel verity – is the message by which God has chosen to save man.

Rom. 1:16 – For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.

God chose the “foolishness” of preaching, the silliness, the absurdity of a message scorned by proud and worldly-minded men, to save those that believe. Faith is tied to man’s moral faculty. It is not as if men cannot believe, as if the evidence were wanting, were weak, or insubstantial; it is not that men cannot believe, but that they *will not* believe! Unregenerate man does not like the reality of God; the pride of the human heart rebels against God’s lordship over his life; man wants to be self-determinative, to choose *what* to do, *when* to do it, and *if* to do it. Unregenerate man despises his “creature-liness.” He rages against God; God is a reality he is unprepared to live with or submit to, and so thrusts the very knowledge and consciousness of God from his heart.

Rom. 1:19-21 - For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed [it] unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly

seen, being understood by the things that are made, [even] his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

And so God has chosen the *moral faculty of faith* as the measure by which to sift the hearts of men. Those that receive a love of the truth – who *own* to their creatureliness, who *own* to their sinfulness, who *own* to their utter helplessness in the face and inevitability of death – will find salvation in the gospel of Jesus Christ. But those that are contentious and do not obey the truth, indignation and wrath upon every soul of man that doeth evil – to the Jew first and also the Greek.

The point for purposes of Paul’s argument is that man’s salvation culminates in and is realized by his resurrection. What would the forgiveness of sins mean if there was no resurrection? What advantage, what profit, what point in Christ dying at all if it was only so that man could molder in his grave...forgiven? Resurrection is the essence of our salvation - the very thing that sustains us through our trials, our temptations, the long and weary days of our vain existence beneath the sun. And since it is the very essence of our faith, we must define the *nature* of this resurrection, for in understanding the nature of this resurrection we see and understand our *salvation*.

Definition of the Resurrection

I Cor. 15:19 – If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

This verse is central to our purpose. In fact, I wonder if the whole exposition of the chapter does not turn upon this one verse: If in *this life* only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. Resurrection is the hope and assurance of the *next life* – the life that awaits man in *heaven*. We do not receive, we do not experience, we do not partake of that resurrection here, but *here after*. As we will see, this is the major weakness of that view, which holds that the resurrection is justification and restored fellowship with God; which places the resurrection on the wrong side of eternity, making it something men enjoy in this life, rather than the next as taught by Paul and Christ. Jesus is very plain that resurrection belong to the next world, not this world:

*Lk. 20:35, 36 – 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.*

Matt. 22:30 adds the variation that those who attain to that world will be “*as as the angels of God in heaven.*”

Thus, we plainly see that the promise of resurrection is the promise of eternal life *in heaven*. *This* world is set over against *that* world; *this* life against *that* life. Unless and *until* we attain unto *that world*, we have not attained unto the resurrection from the dead. It is really just that simple.

Where and what is “that world?” Matthew says “*in heaven*” – children of the resurrection are as angels of God *in heaven*. Resurrection now therefore means *heaven now*. The notion that believers are in “heaven now” was circulating a few years ago. This is the basis of that error: if you believe we have resurrection now, you must affirm we are in heaven now, for the children of the resurrection are as angels in heaven. Therefore to be raised is to be in heaven; but if we are not in heaven, we have not yet been raised. This pretty much disposes of the “corporate body” view; it simply cannot get over the hurdle that Paul and Christ place the resurrection in the next life in heaven, not here on earth. This is why we say that v. 19 may be the most important verse in the passage, to wit: because it sets this earthly life over against the resurrection life in heaven. *I Cor. 15:19 – If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

Heb. 11:15, 16 - And truly, if they had been mindful of that [country] from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better [country], that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

If this is correct, if the resurrection Paul is here proclaiming is realized in the *next life*, then the resurrection he is discussing is chiefly *Hadean*. Jesus said “I have the keys of Hades and of death” – the gates of Hades shall *not* prevail against my church! (Matt. 16:18) Paul even

states as much in v. 55, saying “O Hades, where is thy victory?”

As I look at redemptive history, I see Hades as standing last in line of enemies to be destroyed. In Revelation, the harlot, dragon, beast, and false prophet all suffer defeat before the resurrection of the last day. In that resurrection we have the souls of the deceased coming forth from death and Hades.

Rev. 20:13, 14 – And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hades delivered up the dead which were in them...and death and hades were cast into the last of fire.

Here is the resurrection of the last day; the resurrection of the accumulated souls from Abel onward who had waited long millennia in Hades for salvation. Clearly Hades is the last named enemy. All the enemies in Revelation find their fate in the lake of fire. And the last to be cast in is Hades, or Hadean death; hence *Hades is the last enemy*.

*I Cor. 15:19 – “If in **this life** only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”*

Based upon this one statement of Paul, I think we have to say that the resurrection he has in view is not received in this life. Otherwise this statement has no meaning; for the whole of his argument turns upon a hinge that resurrection belongs to the next life.

Nature of the Resurrection Body

What we have said is confirmed by Paul’s discussion of the *nature* of the resurrection body. The whole discussion moves between the body suited to *this life*, versus the sort of body suited to *that life*.

I Cor. 15:35 – But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?

You would not think that this section was as difficult as it is for some. The dominate view among the Jews was that the resurrection would be *physical*. The hypothetical question propounded by the Sadducees about the woman who had seven husbands posits the resurrection of the flesh. The Greeks and Romans believed in reincarnation, not resurrection. They believed that souls were born again into earthly life after a

1000 yrs in Hades. To speak to them of resurrection must therefore also have conveyed the idea of physical bodies. Certainly, this was what had happened in the case of Jesus. Was not he the pattern for us all? Much of Christendom has traditionally thought, and even today thinks, in terms of the resurrection of *physical bodies*. Many graveyards are laid out so the bodies have their heads to the west, so that when they stand up on resurrection morning they are facing east, supposing this is the direction the Lord was descend from.

Numerous creeds affirm the resurrection of the *flesh* and of the *self-same* body the deceased had in life. Interrogatory Creed of Hippolytus (circa 215 A.D.) asks, “Do you believe...in the resurrection of the body?” Similarly, the Creed of Marcellus (340 A.D.) declares: “I believe in...the resurrection of the body.” The Creed of Rufinus (circa 404 A.D.) is more explicit and declares “I believe in the resurrection of the *flesh*.” The Apostles’ Creed proclaims belief in the resurrection of the body, but the Nicene Creed states only a belief in the resurrection of the “dead.” Other creeds and confessions holding to the resurrection of the flesh include the Athanasian Creed¹ and the second London Confession of 1689 (Baptist) which affirms that the “selfsame” body would be raised. Another example is the Westminster Confession:

XXXII of the Westminster Confession - Of the State of Men after Death, and of the Resurrection of the Dead:

1. The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption: but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: **the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies.** [stop] And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Beside these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.

¹ “At his coming all people shall rise bodily to give an account of their own deeds.”

2. At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and **all the dead shall be raised up, with the self-same bodies**, and none other (although with different qualities), which shall be united again to their souls for ever.

This is about as confused a statement about the state of the dead and the resurrection as you could hope to find. First, it affirms that the dead go to heaven, having been made perfect in holiness, where they behold the face of God, but are later forced to return to the earthly bodies. But if they are in perfect holiness in heaven, what conceivable purpose could there be for returning to their earthly bodies? Having begun in the spirit are they to be made perfect in the flesh? Second, it affirms that the dead are raised with the “self-same” bodies they had in earthly life! But Paul disallows this completely, expressly affirming instead: “the body that thou sowest, thou sowest NOT the body that shall be.” (v. 37) Could it be more plain? If you wanted to tell men that it was not the self-same body that was to be raised, what language would you use if not this? “*The body that thou sowest, thou sowest NOT the body that shall be.*” Paul likens the resurrection to sowing a seed.

I Cor. 15:36-38 - Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

I was a city kid and grew up in outside of Chicago; I knew nothing about wheat. But we lived for some years in Kansas, and they know a lot about wheat. And the seed you sow is not the body that is raised. You sow a dry, hard, grain of wheat, and a living green plant springs forth, having no likeness at all to what you planted. Paul declares that *this* is how it is in the resurrection; he analogizes the cycle of seed/plant to the human body and spirit. As the seed holds the germ of something greater, so the human body holds the germ of something greater. The hull of the seed is left behind and new life emerges from the old. Or as Shakespeare has Hamlet say, we “shuffle off this mortal coil,” leaving behind the tokens of earthly life, like a snake shedding its skin.

II Cor. 4:16 – For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

It is the inward man of the spirit that is the object of the resurrection, not the outward man of dissolution, corruption, and decay.

I Cor. 15:42-45 - So also [is] the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; 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. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [was made] a quickening spirit.

Here the case is plainly stated: natural bodies are tangible, material, visible, and corruptible: the spiritual body is intangible, immaterial, invisible, and incorruptible. Adam was made a living being with a physical body peculiarly suited to earthly life; but in his glorified state Jesus, the second Adam, became a quickening spirit. What is a spirit? Jesus said “a spirit hath not flesh and bones” (Lk. 24:39).

*I Cor. 15:46-50 - Howbeit that [was] not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man [is] of the earth, earthy: the second man [is] the Lord from heaven. As [is] the earthy, such [are] they also that are earthy: and as [is] the heavenly, such [are] they also that are heavenly. As [is] the earthy, such [are] they also that are earthy: and as [is] the heavenly, such [are] they also that are heavenly. **And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.** Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot **inherit** the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption **inherit** incorruption.*

The word “inherit” is very important here. Inherit points to the ultimate object of man’s salvation. A testament determines a man’s inheritance. A testament is a legal instrument or device; the inheritance is the actual thing bequeathed or bestowed.

*I Pet. 1:3, 4 - Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an **inheritance incorruptible,***

and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for yo.,

God has giving living men a lively and living hope of an inheritance incorruptible, in heaven. Notice that word ‘incorruptible’ – an incorruptible inheritance requires an incorruptible body. So, when Paul says flesh and blood – the tangible, corporeal, material, visible, and corruptible body of this earthly existence - cannot inherit the spiritual realm of above, he speaks to man’s ultimate home in heaven. Material bodies, by definition, are bounded by time and space; but spirit is not bound this way. Therefore, in order to even *enter* the realms above, man must shed his mortal body. This is the resurrection promised believers and the one discussed in I Corinthians 15. It is the resurrection that occurred in A.D. 70; the whole transaction took place on the other side of eternity, unseen by eye of man. As our article last month showed, as believers on this side of the eschaton die they are “caught up together” with saints that have gone before where they meet the Lord in the air and so are ever with the Lord.

Mystery of the Eschatological Change

*I Cor. 15:51-55 – Behold, I show you a **mystery**; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all **be changed**, in a moment, in a 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**. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 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 Hades where is thy victory?*

We have already seen the Westminster Confession’s approach: physical bodies raised; physical bodies of living changed. But if they are not physical bodies that are raised, then might we suggest it is *not* the physical bodies of the living that were to be changed? The resurrection of souls from Hades is fairly apparent and requires no elaboration, and is to our view the eschatological resurrection. It is the *eschatological change* that requires attention.

The first thing to notice about his section is Paul nominates the change a “mystery.” A mystery is

something *hidden*; something requiring spiritual discernment to understand. Mystery” Babylon requires discernment – the identity of the figure underlying this symbol requires study and contemplation to understand. The mind of wisdom needed to decipher the number of the beast requires discernment is also a mystery. In the same way, the eschatological change requires discernment. Certainly, it requires no spiritual discernment to take it literally. Any body and *every* body can do that. So, when Paul prefaces this section this way, saying it is a mystery, we must understand that he intends his meaning to stretch our comprehension.

We said before that the inheritance speaks to man’s ultimate home in heaven. Before a man can be an heir, he must first be *adopted*. We are Adam’s sons by nature, but sons of God by adoption. Adoption precedes inheritance and resurrection. Adoption is a *legal* condition or status. We are one thing *by nature*, we become another *by law*. The adoption of sonship was one of the things that would come at the eschaton, which Paul said the church was looking for.

*Rom. 8:22, 23 – For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **waiting for the – inheritance? No the – adoption**, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

If Paul had said here they were waiting for *the inheritance*, we would know exactly what he meant, and that our eternal inheritance in heaven was in view. But he didn’t say that; he said they were waiting for *the adoption*. Now he is either using adoption for inheritance, or adoption for adoption. If he is using adoption for adoption, then we are talking a *legal condition*, not our heavenly inheritance. Not coincidentally, the coming of Christ at the eschaton is portrayed under the imagery of bride and groom. (See Rev. 19, 21.) And Paul specifically calls it a *great mystery*.

Eph. 5:25 - Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Thus, the eschatological change is a mystery; and the return of Christ for his bride is a mystery. The adoption, redemption, marriage, change all speak to the *same events* under different language and imagery. The essence of each is *legal*: Redemption is a legal satisfaction; marriage is a legal covenant; adoption is a legal identification of someone as a child and heir. All are coventantal. In fact, even the resurrection, though actual and spatial, was predicated upon the legal satisfaction of Christ's blood.

I Cor. 15:56, 57 - The sting of death [is] sin; and the strength of sin [is] the law. But thanks [be] to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The law here is not the Mosaic law, but the *law of sin and death* which states "you sin, you die." The Mosaic law was merely superimposed upon this law; this law existed from the garden, and it exists today, and condemns every transgression of man. Christ's blood satisfied this law and purchased our redemption. It was that satisfaction that placed the keys of death and Hades under Christ's command; and it was that satisfaction that procured our adoption and the church's marriage to the Lamb as a bride without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. We would suggest that this was the eschatological change.

Conclusion

The eschatological change looked to the time when our legal standing before the throne changed from men stained and condemned by sin, to men washed and made pure by the blood of Christ. And it was in that change that death and Hades were defeated as a matter of law. *II Tim. 1:10 - Who has defeated death and brought light and immortality to light through the gospel.*

-oo0oo-



The Resurrection



The Ascension

What the Bible Says About the Resurrection And Immortality

Kurt Simmons

There is a lot of confusion concerning what the Bible says about the eschatological resurrection and immortality. In this article we want to resolve these issues simply and concisely.

Types of Life

Before we can arrive at a correct understanding of death, resurrection, and immortality, we must first gain an understanding of the kinds of life represented in the Bible. There are no fewer than five kinds or qualities of life may be identified. These are 1) Physical/sentient life; 2) Moral/spiritual life; 3) Juridical life; 4) Hadean life; and 5) Eternal life.

Physical and Sentient Life: Physical life is bare life; it may be of a cell, or a plant, mushroom, or lichen. It is life without the ability to perceive itself or its surroundings. Sentient life is life defined by the ability to perceive one's self or surroundings. A worm or shell fish has physical life, but also possesses physical sense and the ability to perceive and react to threat or danger and, therefore, possesses sentient life.

Moral and Spiritual Life: God elevated man above his other creatures, which possess mere physical and sentient life, adding moral and spiritual dimension to man's existence by breathing into him the *breath of life*. (Gen. 1:26; 2:7) The Hebrew word translated "breath of life" is "*neshamah*" and is also rendered "inspiration." Thus, Job states, "But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration ("*neshamah*") of the Almighty giveth them understanding." (Job 32:8) The inspiration God breathed into our first ancestor made him a partaker of the divine image and likeness, permitting him to possess the fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace,

longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. (Gal. 5:22, 23)

Juridical Life: In order for actions to have moral quality, the actor must possess reason, understanding, and the power of choice, which may be briefly comprehended in the *faculty of faith* – the ability to believe and choose the good. God concluded man under law and covenant when he gave him the commandment not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (Gen. 2:17) As long as man exercised his faculty of faith, choosing to believe and obey, he was just and acceptable before God and possessed what may be called "juridical life."

Hadean life: Hadean life is set over against earthly life. Unable to go to be with God in heaven until the blood of Christ purchased his redemption, at physical death man lived in the realm of Sheol or Hades. The lost were confined to Tartarus (II Pet. 2:4), the saved to Paradise or Abraham's bosom. (Lk. 16:22; 23:43; cf. II Cor. 12:4)

Eternal life: Eternal life is the life of the spirit or soul of man in heaven.² Eternal life is either actual or legal. Man possesses eternal life *in fact* ("actually") when he enters heaven personally and spatially; he possesses eternal life *in law* ("legally") when he is declared just before the throne of God. This is the same as juridical life. When John says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (Jno. 3:36), he speaks of juridical life. Because juridical life is merely legal it is also conditional, and depends upon man's continued obedience to the gospel of

² The notion that man will live forever on a new earth is erroneous. The home of the saved is heaven. (Matt. 6:20; Heb. 11:16; I Pet. 1:4)

Christ. Adam had juridical life, but lost it through disobedience, as may also we.³

Types of Death

For every type of life or being there is a corresponding type of death or “nonbeing.”

Physical and sentient death: Physical and sentient death entails the cessation of physical and sentient life by the death of the body. Physical death entered when access to the tree of life was taken away. (Gen. 3:22-24) The tree of life sustained man’s mortal existence indefinitely. But, with the withdrawal of access to this tree, physical decay and death set in.

Moral and spiritual death: Moral and spiritual death entail the cessation of moral and spiritual life by the entrance of sin. When sin entered, the image of God in man was lost and defaced; man irrevocably forfeited the inspiration (“*neshamah*”) that made him a partaker of the divine image and likeness; he became carnal, sold under sin. Adam’s sons and daughters were made in *his* image and likeness, not God’s, and, hence, were heirs of his “fallenness.” (Gen. 5:3; Rom. 5:19; 7:14)⁴

Juridical death: Moral and spiritual death brings juridical death. Juridical death is the judgment of God, giving sentence against the sin of man. All men that attain to moral accountability ultimately come under the power of juridical death. When St. Paul states, that “death reigned from Adam to Moses” (Rom. 5:14; *cf.* 17, 21) he speaks of juridical death. Juridical “death passed upon all men,” because all men violate the law of sin and death. (Rom. 5:12)⁵ The wages of sin is

eternal death. (Rom. 6:23) When God told Adam “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17), he spoke of eternal death. The fact man did not die eternally the day he transgressed should not trouble us; “in the day” speaks to the day of *transgression*, not execution of sentence. Several examples occur in the Old Testament where the identical phrase is used, even though the subject did not die the day he offended. (*Cf.* I Kings 2:37, 42; Ezek. 32:12-16) The moment man sins he comes under judgment and sentence of eternal death albeit sentence is not executed until he dies physically. Man must first die physically before he can die eternally. If he repents before he suffers physical death, the sentence of eternal death can be vacated and set aside. (Ezek. 18:20-23; 32:12-16)

Hadean Death: Hades is the realm of the physically dead. Hadean death is interposed between physical death and eternal death or eternal life. Without Hades, man would have passed from physical death to eternal death, because the blood of Christ was not available to save them. Hence, God confined the soul of man in Hades until the judgment of the last day.

Eternal Death: Eternal death is the second death or lake of fire (*Gehenna*). (Rev. 20:11-15; *cf.* Matt. 10:28) All that do not inherit eternal life suffer eternal death and destruction in the lake of fire.

Types of Resurrection

Given the different types of life and death that exist in scripture, it should come as no surprise that there are varied types and forms of resurrection. Let us survey these briefly.

Physical Resurrection: There are numerous examples of the resurrection of physical bodies in the scriptures. Elisha raised the Shunammite’s son. (II Kings 4:8-37) In another instance, when a man was being buried and his body touched the bones of Elisha, he revived. (II Kings 13:20, 21) Jesus thrice restored to physical life those

independently of the former. The law of Moses is now done away, but the law of sin and death remains in force.

³ This does not mean man can earn eternal life by merit; he cannot. It is the gift of God through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. However, the gift is not unconditional; man must receive it in faith, by repenting of his sins and obeying the gospel.

⁴ Jesus, because he had no earthly father, but was born of the virgin, did not inherit Adam’s “fallenness” and thus, was the second Adam, restoring the image of God to mankind. (I Cor. 15:45; Col. 1:15; II Cor. 4:4; Heb. 1:3)

⁵ The law of sin and death must be distinguished from the Mosaic law. The Mosaic law subsumed the law of sin and death, but the latter exists

that were dead. (Lk. 7:11-18; 8:49-56; Jno. 11:1-46) And Jesus himself was raised anew to physical life. (Jno.20) Peter and Paul also both raised the dead to physical life. (Acts 9:36-43; 20:9, 10) In all these cases, however, excepting Jesus, those that were raised had to experience physical death a second time. Jesus, because he was translated (ascended) to heaven similar to Enoch and Elijah (who, however, only went to Hades Paradise), did not die a second time. The eschatological resurrection of the last day did not involve physical bodies. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. (I Cor. 15:50) "That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be." (I Cor. 15:37) It is sown a natural, material, corporeal body, but is raised an intangible, immaterial, spiritual body. (I Cor. 15:42-44)

National, Political Resurrection: The image of resurrection is used metaphorically of Israel during its captivity in Babylon and Assyria. Ezekiel saw a vision of dead bones come together and stand upon their feet, a great army. The vision was interpreted for Ezekiel as prophesying the nation's political resurrection and restoration to its native land. (Ezek. 37) Some attempt to make an analogy and apply this vision to the church, saying there is a collective and corporate resurrection of the national to the spiritual and the political to the ecclesiastical. However tempting this analogy may seem, it is certain no New Testament writer ever speaks of the eschatological resurrection in such terms. It exists only by the invention of certain modern writers and therefore should not be received as the teaching of the scriptures on the subject.

Moral and Spiritual Resurrection: Repentance and conversion are sometimes described in terms of a resurrection. Thus, Paul says, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Eph. 5:14; cf. Rom. 13:11; I Cor. 15:34) The image here is a man in a state of moral death and estrangement from God by sin, coming to repentance and life in Christ. However, obviously, this is merely a literary use of simile and metaphor, and not the eschatological resurrection of the dead. When the scriptures speak of the resurrection of the last day they are not speaking of repentance and conversion.

Juridical Resurrection: In Ephesians, Paul writes "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in

trespasses and sins... Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:1, 5, 6) This is juridical resurrection; the image is that of those under judgment of death receiving pardon and figuratively being "raised up" from juridical death and made to sit in heavenly places through the agency and representative office of Christ, who stands before God on our behalf and in whom we stand also. (Cf. Col. 3:3, 4) As before, this is merely symbolic language adopted to describe a spiritual truth, and not an actual resurrection. The like image is used again by Paul in the context of baptism: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." (Rom. 6:3-5; cf. Col. 2:11, 12)

In baptism, the repentant believer is made a partaker of the saving effects of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and receives remission of sins. (Acts 2:38; 22:16; cf. Mk. 1:4) Hence, Paul speaks of baptism as a type of juridical resurrection by which the sentence of death pronounced against the sinner is vacated and set aside and he is raised anew to life. Tertullian put it this way: "Happy is our sacrament of water, in that, by washing away the sins of our early blindness, we are set free and admitted into eternal life."⁶

It is juridical resurrection that Jesus had in view when he said "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. 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." (Jno. 5:24, 25) Other similes and metaphors used to describe the relationship created by man's response to the gospel include marriage, adoption, and rebirth. (Jno. 3:3-5; Gal. 4:1-7;

⁶ Tertullian, *On Baptism, Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. III. pp. 669, 674, 676.

Eph. 22-32) However, in all of these examples the language is purely symbolic and not actual; it is adapted to describe one that was under sentence of death, receiving pardon unto life by responding to the gospel call. In no event should they be construed as the eschatological resurrection

Hadean Resurrection: Here we begin to approach the actual, eschatological resurrection of the dead. The spirit of man does not cease to exist at physical death. Prior to the resurrection of the last day, the spirit of man was preserved alive and conscious by God in Hades. The wicked were kept under “chains of darkness” in Tartarus, “reserved unto judgment.” (II Pet. 2:4; cf. Lk. 16:19-31) The righteous were kept in Paradise unto the resurrection of life. (Jno. 5:29; cf. Dan. 12:2) Those in Hades Paradise were described as participants of the “first resurrection.” (Rev. 20:3-6; cf. Mk. 12:26, 27) This “resurrection” consisted of the saved beginning with Abel and those forward until the eschatological resurrection of the last day.

Eschatological Resurrection: The promise of the resurrection was first made in the garden to Adam. “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (Gen. 3:15) The promise of resurrection here is couched in poetic terms in which the serpent is put for death, Eve is put for God’s people (the church), and the woman’s Seed is put for Christ. Death would strike at Christ, bruising his heel on Calvary, but Christ would crush death’s head by the power of his resurrection. The righteous were gathered by God into Hades Paradise at physical death to await the eschatological resurrection. In the last day of the former eon, Christ raised the dead out of Hades. The wicked were cast into Gehenna, the lake of fire, or second death; the righteous were taken to heaven. Hades Paradise has now been destroyed⁷ and the righteous now go directly to

heaven upon the death of the body. (II Cor. 5:1-10) Revelation 20:11-15 is the only picture provided by scripture of the eschatological resurrection and it makes clear that it consisted of *individual souls raised from Hades*.

The Eschatological Change

If the eschatological resurrection consisted in individuals raised from Hades, the eschatological “change” was corporate and covenantal. Hear Paul:

“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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 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 us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Cor. 15:51-57)

Paul indicates at the outset that what he is about to describe is a mystery requiring spiritual discernment to understand; thus we must expect our comprehension to be stretched by what he is about to impart. Two groups are treated of: the *living* and the *dead*. Paul states that not all the living would experience physical death (“sleep”) before the eschaton. Some would be alive at the Lord’s return. (Cf. Matt. 16:27, 28; Jno. 21:20-23) The dead would be raised incorruptible, but “we” (the living) would be “changed.” (v. 52) What was this change? Paul provides the answer in the next verse: “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” (v. 53)

The dead were raised incorruptible, the living were changed by the receipt of immortality. This is often mistaken to mean that the living would be “translated” to ethereal realms like Enoch or Elijah (cf. Jno. 21:20-23), but that is not Paul’s meaning. The mortal (living) putting on immortality (eternal life) spoke to the *covenantal change* by which the church received the

⁷ Whether Tartarus was destroyed may be questioned. There is room to argue that Tartarus still exists as a place of punishment before the lost suffer eternal death in Gehenna. (See Lk. 12:47, 48) According to this view, when John states that “death and Hades” were destroyed, it is understood he spoke only of Paradise; the “sea,” being symbolic of Tartarus (Rev. 20:13), was not destroyed

adoption of sonship and redemption from the dominion of sin and death.

Juridical death reigned from Adam to Moses; the law of sin and death could not be satisfied by the blood of bulls and goats. (Heb. 10:4) Prior to the eschaton, the whole creation (Jews and Gentiles) was under bondage of corruption and groaned in travail, waiting for the redemption of their collective body. (Rom. 8:19-23; cf. Mk. 16:15; Col. 1:23; Jam. 1:18 on use of the term "creature/creation.") In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul spoke of this as the "redemption of the purchased possession." (Eph. 1:14) At the cross, Christ purchased man's salvation. But the purchased possession (the church) remained to be redeemed; Christ had to return to receive his bride unto himself. (Cf. Eph. 5:27; cf. Rev. 19:7-9; 21:9) Thus, from the cross to the eschaton, the church continued under the dominion of sin and death, looking for the redemption, the time when the benefit of Christ's blood would come into full force and effect and they would receive the immortality of divine sonship.

Of course, this immortality is merely juridical and, therefore, conditional. As long as man is in the physical body, he is subject to temptation to sin and the possibility of apostasy. As John states "there is a sin unto death." (I Jno. 5:16, 17) However, for those who do not sin unto death, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us of all sin" and we remain heirs of eternal life.

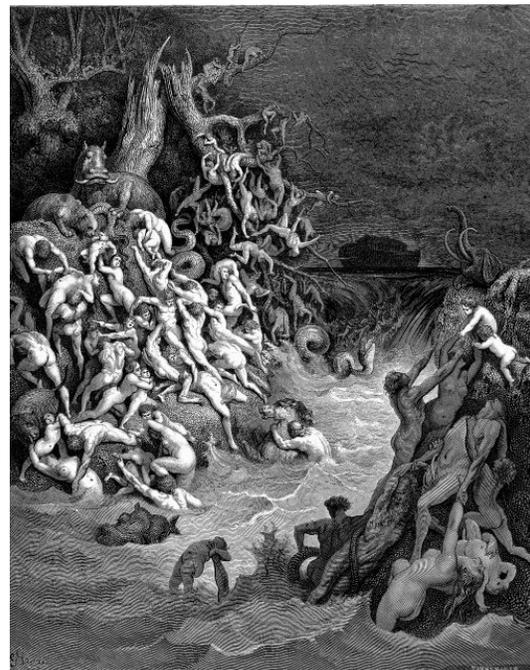
Heaven Now?

A strange teaching is afoot in recent times that men are in heaven even while on earth. This error comes from a misunderstanding of Revelation twenty-one and twenty-two, which describe the new Jerusalem (the church). The thinking is that this is a picture of "heaven on earth." Let it not be mistaken: heaven on earth is not the same as being in heaven above! Indeed, John states at the very outset that he saw a new "heavens and earth." (Rev. 21:1, 2) Thus, it is not heaven he describes, but earth under the government of Christ. Furthermore, John states that he saw the new Jerusalem descending "out of heaven" from God. (Rev. 21:10) Since it descended *out of* heaven, the new Jerusalem plainly is not an image of heaven itself. Instead, Revelation twenty-one and twenty-two portray

God coming down from heaven to tabernacle with man, not man ascending to heaven to dwell with God. They are a portrait of man in a *restored relationship to God* through Christ; a picture of the church where the barrier of sin is blotted out and man is admitted anew into God's presence. The picture described is juridical, not actual. There is no new earth in any physical sense; no actual city descended from heaven. But soteriologically all things have been made new. Man has obtained salvation in Jesus Christ and been brought anew into God's juridical presence by the blood of the Lamb!

Conclusion

By identifying the different types of life, death, and resurrection present in scripture, we quickly see that the eschatological resurrection consisted in raising individual souls from Hades. The eschatological change, on the other hand, was corporate and covenantal; it consisted in the church receiving immortal life. This change is portrayed in Revelation twenty-one and twenty-two in terms of a new heavens and earth where God's presence tabernacles with believers in the new Jerusalem, the church. The picture is legal and juridical, not actual; the believer has been restored to the presence of God in contemplation of law, but he cannot enter God's actual presence in heaven until the body's death



The Last Judgment

