

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #81

5/07/2008

Following Armageddon Comes the Millennium: Part 17

The Resurrection

19:21-20:10

The doctrine of the Resurrection is the most precious and powerful doctrine of our faith. The proclamation of the Resurrection was integral to the early Apostolic preaching that God used to “turn the world upside down.” The enemies of the cross had no answer for it then nor do they have one today, and Satan has never been able to duplicate it or annul its power. Indeed, it is at the heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He conquered death and His victory is then given to all who trust Him as Lord and Savior. Revelation 20:5-6 brings us to this glorious subject, and, as we come to verse five we realize that we will be studying the resurrection, or to be more accurate, about more than one resurrection for the expression **“first resurrection”** catches our attention. Indeed, there is more than one resurrection and we will search the Scriptures to learn the amazing things God wants to tell us about these resurrections.

We should begin by noting that the word “first” does not mean the “first” in a numerical order of several or many, but rather the “first” of two categories of resurrections. Following this line of thinking we recognize that God wants us to consider those who are part of the “first resurrection” and we will do this by reading what He says in other places in His Word.

The resurrection of the dead has been a matter of great interest over the years, as it well should be, and, even though man does not seem to have much understanding of it, various attitudes ranging from a certain and sure confidence that man shall be resurrected to a cynical rejection of the idea has existed in the minds of men. As far back as the book of Job, considered by many to be the oldest book in the Bible, we find Job first asking the question; **“If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come,”** (Job 14:14), and then giving a confident answer to his own question; **“...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; though my reins be consumed within me”** (Job 19:25-27).

To Job, in the midst of his horrible suffering when he had lost everything he had in this life, he had an expectancy and surety that there is more to be had than just what is experienced in this life. His confident belief in life beyond this one energized him and enabled him to continue to face the trials which he endured.

The startling thing about Job is not that he asked the question. Rather, it is that he knew so much about life after death. He eloquently stated this deep understanding in a time so ancient that it is usually identified as being prior to the time of Noah’s flood which is thought by many to be characterized by a barbaric lack of knowledge. Yet, he actually exhibited a very ma-

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #81
5/07/2008

Following Armageddon Comes the Millennium: Part 17
The Resurrection
19:21-20:10

ture comprehension of life after death and a deep faith in God's plans and abilities to do something that is even still beyond the understanding of most men. Job knew that (1) His redeemer was and continues to be alive; (2) That his redeemer would will one day stand upon the earth; (3) Though he expected his body to decay after his death, he believed that he would receive a resurrected body and, in that body, would actually be able to see God. It is amazing, that, though Job lived in the time of the Patriarchs, he knew so much about the resurrection. Of course, Job knew these things because God had revealed them to him.

In addition to Job, it is clear that Abraham also believed in God's power to resurrect His own from the dead. This is clear from what he said just before he took his son Isaac up on the mountain to sacrifice him to God. Fully intending to kill his son as a sacrifice, as God had commanded him to do, he nevertheless told his servant that they would both return from the mountain because he expected God to raise Isaac from the dead: ***“And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you”*** Genesis 22:5).

Not only did God reveal to the Old Testament saints that there is to be a resurrection, but He also revealed to them that there is to be more than one type of resurrection. When God was telling Daniel about ***“the last days,”*** He spoke of these two types of resurrections, one that would lead to everlasting life and one that would lead to shame and contempt:

“ And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. 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. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever” (Daniel 12:1-3).

Then, Jesus, when speaking with the Jewish leaders and telling them that God the Father had given to Him, Jesus ***“the Son,”*** the authority to execute judgment, further explained this matter of two types of resurrections when He said: ***“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”*** (John 5:28-29).

Also, Paul, in responding to the spurious charges brought by the high priest to the Roman governor Felix, among other things, said: ***“But this I***

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #81
5/07/2008

Following Armageddon Comes the Millennium: Part 17
The Resurrection
19:21-20:10

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” (Acts 24:14-15).

THE PURPOSES OF RESURRECTION

Each of these passages clearly indicate that there are two different types or categories of resurrections: 1) A resurrection for **“the just”** or believers, and 2) A resurrection for the unjust or unbelievers. This is critical, not only to understand what we read in Revelation 20:5-6, but also to understand the nature of the resurrection and the resurrected body that issues forth from being resurrected. One of the key and critical purposes of the resurrection is to give to a person a body that is properly designed for fully experiencing life beyond this world. While there is surely more that we don’t know and understand than there is that we do, we do understand some very important things about the different things which await **“the just and the unjust.”**

“The just” are promised a blissful, peaceful, joyful, fulfilling eternity with the Lord in heaven. The body that a believer lives in on this earth is not designed for life in heaven. It is not **“fit”** for heaven and does not have the capacity to experience the things the Lord has prepared for him in heaven. Besides this, the body a believer lives in on this earth has been affected, both directly and indirectly, by sin and its effects. It gets sick and, in its weakness, having been affected by the presence of sin, is vulnerable to not only sickness, but also to suffering of all kinds. It ages. It is subject to death and, in fact, is actually on the way to death even while the person lives in it. It is imperfect in every conceivable way. And, it is composed of **“flesh and blood”** which **“cannot inherit the kingdom of God”** because **“corruption does not inherit incorruption”** (1 Cor. 15:50).

Regarding the eternal future of **“the just”** we are told: **“... Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away”** (Rev. 21:3-4). Not only does **“the just”** live in a body that is affected by the savage results of sin, but both he and his body are tainted with the presence of sin. While the blood of Jesus Christ washes away sin from the sinner and changes him from being **“unjust into being just,”** the only way he can be freed from his sin-affected body is to leave it behind on this earth, through either death or the rapture, and receive a new resurrected body that is not only **“fit”** for being in the sinless presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, but is also **“fit”** for living in heaven.

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #81
5/07/2008

Following Armageddon Comes the Millennium: Part 17
The Resurrection
19:21-20:10

Even as it is necessary for *“the just”* to be resurrected and receive new bodies designed for living in and enjoying the presence of God and the bliss and peaceful joy of heaven, it is also necessary for *“the unjust”* to be resurrected and receive bodies designed to experience to the fullest extent the punishment, sufferings and terror that they deserve and have waiting for them in the *“lake of fire that burns with brimstone for ever and ever”* without ever ending or being consumed by the fire. More consideration will be given to this matter at a later time.

THE TIME AND ORDER OF THE FIRST RESURRECTION

The first thing we need to note here is that in Rev. 20:5 God tells us that *“the resurrection of the just”* comes first, before, and precedes the other resurrection, which is *“the resurrection of the unjust.”*

The order of the stages of this *“first resurrection”* are: *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power”* (1 Cor. 15:22-24).

Carefully note the order of the stages God has described regarding *“the first resurrection”* and as you see that *“every man is in his own order”* you will notice the following:

1. Christ

It was necessary for Christ to conquer death before anyone could be resurrected and victorious over death. This He came to do and did as not only the Word of God affirms in numerous places, but also is known by all mankind (Hebrews 2:14). Therefore, Christ’s resurrection occurred before any other person could be resurrected.

2. The firstfruits

These are those of whom we read in Matthew 27:52-53: *“And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.”* Those who were resurrected following our Lord’s own resurrection were only a few of the many thousands of saints who had been dead for some time, but were now resurrected, as visible proof of His power, to join with the resurrected Lord in glory. This was an Old Testament prophetic portrayal, celebrated as a harvest feast day celebration, of the future victory of the Lord over death.

3. They that are Christ’s at His coming

These would be all of the church, those whose sins were washed away by His blood shed on the cross and were therefore saved from

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #81
5/07/2008

Following Armageddon Comes the Millennium: Part 17
The Resurrection
19:21-20:10

Satan's dominion when they became members of the body of Christ. **"At His coming"** would include those who are raptured, or caught up away from the earth, at His coming for them **"to meet the Lord in the air"** (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). According to 1 Thessalonians 4:15, **"the dead in Christ,"** those who have already departed their earthly bodies in death, will **"rise first"** and join those **"caught up"** as all will be resurrected and joined with their resurrected and living Lord **"to ever be with Him."**

4. Then cometh the end

"End" is a translation of the Greek word, **telos** (5056), which means **"fulfillment"** though it is often translated **"end."** Here the basic idea of the word should be read as **"fulfillment"** instead of **"end,"** which fails to communicate the proper meaning.

To properly understand this statement we must see it as telling us that all those others who belong to the Lord, specifically Old Testament saints and Tribulation martyrs, are included in the Lord's resurrection work to bring to **"fulfillment"** His victory over death by resurrecting all that are His. This is clearly the meaning since they must be resurrected in order for them to **"reign with Christ in His Millennial Kingdom"** and be **"a kingdom of priests"** (Exodus 19:6) representing His throne as was promised to them. This inclusion of all of His saints, including (1) the New Testament Church, (2) the Old Testament saints, and (3) the Tribulation saints, in His work of victory over death and application of resurrection power, is what brings everything to the point where Christ shall **"have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power"** (1 Cor. 15:24).

THE RESURRECTED BODIES OF THE JUST

From the resurrected body of our Lord we learn what the resurrected bodies of **"the just"** will be like. Jesus was able to conceal His identity when He desired (Luke 24:13-32) or to allow Himself to be known if He wished. He could walk through a wall into a room without disturbing it (John 20:19). He could eat food. His body could be touched. He could then depart the room the same way He had entered (Luke 24:37-43; John 20:19-29). He left His disciples by walking or flying through the air according to His desires (Luke 24:50-51). In other words, His resurrection body was different from an earthly body, as different as He wanted it to be, and not subject to earthly laws that govern the physical bodies of men on this earth. From what we know of His body, we can learn what to expect from our resurrected bodies. The very molecules that made up His body were heavenly, not earthly. We can expect the same. Hallelujah!