

## MAKING A CASE FOR TWO RESURRECTIONS

By Dennis Baldwin

### MAN DOES NOT “REMAIN”

Humanity observes birth, youth, old age, and death. Each succeeding generation experiences the same things: pain, sorrow, and death. It has not changed, nor does it change as the years roll along. Job observed: “*Man, who is born of a woman is short-lived and full of turmoil. Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain*” (Job 14:1-2). People do not *remain*, they are *transitory*. Perhaps it would be prudent to follow this thread of “being born of a woman” to get a good picture of this “man and his plight.” The thread goes back to the beginning:

For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve (1 Tim 2:13).

Due to transgression, sin entered the world and death then entered because of sin (Romans 5:12). This “man,” Job lamented, is “*short-lived and full of turmoil.*” Like a flower withers and as a shadow flees, this *man* does not remain. Job reasoned that because of this sin, God *determined* this man and woman’s days and set *limits* to the part of His creation which in His own image could have been *limitless*. “*Since his days are determined, the number of his months is with You; And his limits You have set so that he cannot pass*” (14:5). This realization prompted Moses to mourn:

As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, Or if due to strength, eighty years (Psalm 90:10).

Job further observed this man to be unlike a tree, which might be cut down leaving a stump which dies in dry ground but, because of what he called “*the scent of water,*” sprouts and flourishes (14:8-9). Since this man expires (*breathes his last breath*), he then lies prostrate and, like sea water, evaporates and, like river water, dries up (14:10-11). To sum up this process, Job concludes that this man lies down in Sheol (*gravedom*), goes to sleep, and does not rise or wake up until the heavens are no longer (14:12). Realizing himself to be a man, Job asked God to set a limit on how long he would sleep and not to forget him (14:13).

### GOOD KNOWLEDGE COMPELS ACCURATE INFORMATION

We do not want you to be uninformed (ignorant) about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve about them as so many of their friends did and were left without hope of living again after death (1Thess. 4:13).

God's message to Hosea the prophet lamented that his people were being destroyed for lack of *knowledge* (Hosea 4:6). Paul, in his last known letter to Timothy, expressed concerns regarding conditions in the "last days." After listing a litany of problems due to "*men being lovers of self,*" which he said would plague humanity in those days, he added to this list: "*Always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (3:7). Daniel also spoke of those same "*last days*" in which "*knowledge would increase*" (12:4). Knowledge seems to multiply daily in the last 150 years, but for many years of history break-throughs in knowledge came at a much slower pace, if at all. At least two things seem to be out of the reach of man's knowledge still today: How to cure the common cold and a good understanding about death. The primary reason is that mankind refuses to accept the Biblical definition of death. Isaiah put it so plain and simple in the message he was instructed by God to give to Hezekiah the King: "*You shall die and not live.*" This is a simple definition of death but it is the truth, "*To die is not to live.*"

Lou Holtz observed in a speech: "Life don't have to be complicated." He invited his listeners to consider what Michelangelo did with 7 colors, what Beethoven did with 7 notes, and what Bernie Madoff did with 10 numbers. I hasten also to add "look what God did in just six days." The Old Jerusalem Bible translates Ecclesiastes 7:29, "God made man simple, his complex problems are his own devising."

Genesis chapter 5 gives a list of the generations of Adam. Notice carefully what Moses (who is supposed to be responsible for the book of Genesis) said regarding Adam, Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, and Lamech (the father of Noah who also died, 9:29). After living out all their days each of these men died. They each one fulfilled the promised punishment for sin. (*Wages if you will . . . see Rom. 6:23*) They did not live any days beyond those of which Moses spoke: "all the days (Adam, Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, and Lamech) lived . . . and they died." Isn't it simple?

## WHAT'S NOT TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT SLEEP?

### Old Testament

Can we understand death without experiencing it first hand? Perhaps not in a manner of speaking, but it is possible to get the sense of it through thinking of it as "sleep." I found 186 times in the books of Kings and Chronicles where the record says all these men "slept with their fathers." Evidently the common understanding then was that death is best understood as sleep. Job concurred with this understanding in 14:12: "*So man lies down and does not rise . . . he will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep.*" Daniel the prophet also wrote of death as "*sleep*" in 12:2, "*Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake.*" This just gives a few of the Old Testament references for our consideration. Notice Daniel tells where these people are sleeping at the time of their awakening: "*the dust of the ground.*" It might help to remember

that God reminded Adam, *“By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken, for you are dust, and to dust you shall return”* (Gen. 3:19). It is also good to remember that Moses conveyed how *“the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground”* (Gen. 2:7).

## WHAT’S NOT TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT SLEEP?

### New Testament

The New Testament is replete with references regarding the sleep of death. When seeking to comfort his disciples over the death of their good friend Lazarus, Jesus said, *“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go, that I may awaken him out of sleep.”* It seems they thought Jesus was referring to *“sleep”* as if Lazarus were taking a nap. Jesus then said to them plainly, *“Lazarus is dead.”* Jesus would later say to the dead Lazarus, *“Lazarus, come forth.’ He who had died came forth”* (John 11:11, 14, 43-44).

Luke, in his treatise for Theophilus (for whom he researched and prepared the Luke and Acts accounts), reported that Stephen the Martyr said at his stoning, *“Lord, do not hold this sin against them!’ And having said this, (Luke said) he fell asleep”* (Acts 7:60). While in Pisidian Antioch, Luke reported Paul to have said, *“For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers, and underwent decay”* (Acts 13:36). It should not be forgotten that Peter said on the day of Pentecost that David had died and was buried, that his tomb was still around, making a point that *David did not go to heaven*. It was Jesus who ascended to heaven (Acts 2:26, 34). When writing about the proof positive that Jesus had been raised from the dead and had been seen alive, Paul mentioned various ones who could and did verify that they had in fact seen Jesus after his death and resurrection. In fact, he wrote that 500 people had seen him at one time but some of them he said had *“fallen asleep”* (1 Cor. 15:6). Eutychus actually fell asleep when he fell asleep and fell from a window because of Paul’s long sermon (Acts 20:9). Paul noted that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Jesus (1Thess. 4:14). So there is no need to be uninformed about those who are asleep. To be uninformed is to be lacking in hope.

## SOME PROPERTIES OF DEATH

How common it is to attend a funeral of an acquaintance to pay our respects and to be told by the officiant that our acquaintance is not there but has entered some mystical place of clouds and harps. Paul boldly said in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, *“There is no reason for us to be uninformed about those who are asleep.”* Much misinformation has been fed to assuage the grief which accompanies the death of our friends and loved ones and will someday attend our

death as well. Hopefully we will have someone who will comfort our mourners with those words which Paul further said: *“Comfort one another with these words”* (4:18).

The first *property* of death of which I will remind the reader is *“returning to the dust”* as God told Adam in Genesis (3:19). Another *property* is *“not living”* as Isaiah was instructed to tell Hezekiah the King when he told him about his impending death (38:1). David asked a rhetorical question in Psalm 6:5: *“in death/Sheol/the grave who will give Thee thanks?”* and the author of 145:4 concludes that *“in that very day his thoughts perish.”* David’s son Solomon adds to the inventory of information about death by establishing that *“the dead know not anything, they no longer have a reward and their memory is forgotten”* (Eccl. 9:5). Evidently that did not sum it up enough, so he said, *“There is no activity or planning or wisdom in Sheol (gravedom) where we are going”* when we die (9:10). Finally, Solomon answers the question of *“where we go when we die”* — in Sheol where we are going.

To again return to what God had said in the Garden of Eden, Solomon wrapped it up by saying, *“Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it”* (Eccl. 12:7). (Don’t forget Genesis 2:7 where God breathed into Adam’s nose the breath of life.) This is the same process Job mentioned: *“Man dies and lies prostrate. Man expires (breathes his last) and, where is he?”* (Good question: where exactly is man after he breathes his last and dies?) *“So, man lies down and does not rise until the heavens be no more, He will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep”* (14:10, 12). Isaiah was so thankful to have the prospect of *“playing his songs on stringed instruments all the days of our life at the house of the LORD”* (38:20). He knew, as he had previously said, *“Sheol (gravedom) cannot thank God, death cannot praise God, those who go down to the pit (die and are buried) cannot hope for God’s truth”* (38:18).

## **THE CASE FOR RESURRECTION**

### **New Testament**

When confusion among the Corinthians arose, Paul scolded them by making an analogy of death resembling gardening. When a grain is sown (covered up with dirt) in a garden it goes through a process not unlike death itself. It cannot come to life unless it dies first, he said (1 Cor. 15:36). We must not overlook the biblical approach to death.

The “case for resurrection” finds in its implication the *“resurrection of Jesus from the dead.”* First Corinthians 15:12-18 totally links the two. Without either/both ‘the resurrection of Christ’ and the “resurrection of the dead,” Paul argues:

- Christ has not been raised
- Our preaching is vain
- Our faith is vain
- We have given false witness of God

- Our faith is worthless
- We are still in our sins
- We are of all men most to be pitied

To minimize the resurrection of Christ is to diminish the resurrection of the dead, and to diminish the resurrection of the dead is to dismiss the resurrection of Christ. To lessen the need of the resurrection of the dead at a funeral by giving false witness that God has taken our dearly departed, is to dismiss the resurrection of Christ. However, it is done every day in the name of the Lord. How sad. As Paul said, *“There is no need to sorrow as others who have no hope by being misinformed about those who are asleep in death”* (1 Thess. 4:13).

On the positive side Paul said:

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming. (1 Cor. 15:20-23, NASB)

The Messiah has in fact been raised from the dead. He became the first in a long line of dead people who will live again. He is referred to as *“the first fruits of those who are asleep.”* Because of a man (*Adam*) came death —*“as in Adam all die.”* Because of a man (the Messiah) we are assured of our own resurrection. Because of the resurrection of the Messiah those who are asleep in death will not remain dead forever; they will live again. Jesus promised: *“Because I live you shall live also”* (John 14:19).

The Father, who gave life to Adam by breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, has *“life in himself”* and, Jesus said, *“He gave also to the Son to have life in himself”* together with the *“authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of man”* (John 5:26-27). That is why the writer to the Hebrews said: *“And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once (by one man death entered into the world, as in Adam all die, 1 Cor. 15:21-22) and after this comes judgment”* (Heb. 9:27). Jesus was given authority by the Father to execute judgment. Having received such life and authority Jesus prompted the disciples:

*“An hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God...Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming in the which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; those who did good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment”* (John 5:25-29).

Jesus comforted Mary and Martha by saying, *“Your brother shall rise again.”* Being a student of Rabbi Jesus herself, Martha replied, *“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day”* (John 11:23-24). Paul made it very plain in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15 that *resurrection* is not just a convenient *outcome* for the body which has been buried but is the only way for the person to live again.

## THE CASE FOR RESURRECTION

### Old Testament

If a man dies will he live again? (Job 14:14)

Job seems to be asking a rhetorical question. Conceding the inevitability of death, Job's logical question arises and hopefully is something in which the reader is interested: "*If a man dies, will he live again?*" The notion of "*resurrection*" has been mentioned in the Scriptures since Abraham and Moses. The writer in Hebrews noticed the following about Abraham:

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; *it was he* to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called." He considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type (Heb. 11:17-19).

Abraham realized that if he did offer Isaac, as instructed, God's promises would still find fulfillment, because God could and would raise Isaac from the dead. Jesus directed the Sadducees, who were questioning him regarding what he believed about "the resurrection of the dead." The Sadducees did not hold to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:8):

But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the *passage about the burning bush*, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now He is not the God of the dead but of the living; for all live to Him (Luke 20:37-38, NASB).

Concerning "the resurrection of the dead," Jesus directed their attention to Moses at the burning bush. "God is not the God of the dead," Jesus said, "*for all live to him.*" In God's plan for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they are already alive to God. It is plain in the scriptures that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob died in faith, not having received the promises which God had made to them (Hebrews 11:13). They were buried in the Cave of Machpelah, there to await the day of the fulfillment when people would come from all directions and sit down at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom (Matt. 8:11). Moses and Abraham were aware of that promise which the Sadducees failed to understand and believe. Resurrection of the dead was a promise which God's people shared.

Another example is also given in 1 Kings 17:22 of a widow's son in Zarephath who died and God raised him from the dead through Elijah. 2 Kings 4 records the death of a Shunammite woman's son who Elisha was empowered to raise from the dead. These are two of the women the writer of Hebrews mentioned in Hebrews 11:35 who received their dead raised to life but there were others "*who were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a*

*better resurrection.*" A better resurrection, meaning being raised to live under much better circumstances, in the kingdom of God.

As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake (Psalm 17:15, NASB).

David seems to offer an eschatological verse here in Psalm 17:15. John said, "we know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). Being made like him reminds us of the putting on of deathlessness at the appearing of Jesus when this mortal will put on immortality. This is the "life of the age to come" which we are promised and which God envisioned when he planted the "tree of life" in the midst of the paradise of God (Gen. 2:9, Rev. 2:7). Because of death and corruption, resurrection must occur for this to happen. How else could Job say, "in my flesh shall I see God . . . my eyes shall behold him and not another's" (Job 19:26-27)?

## THE CASE FOR TWO RESURRECTIONS

God gave a revelation to Jesus; Jesus passed the revelation along to his angel; his angel passed it along to John and John passed that revelation along to us in the book of Revelation. This Revelation has been rejected by some (Martin Luther for example). Repeatedly it is observed how many choose a symbolic interpretation, and others a literal understanding. Most of us are simply puzzled and have no idea what is meant. When should some point be clarified as figurative and when should it be read literally and often just how to understand much of it in either case. John tried to pass along to us what he saw, by the revelation given to him by the Lord's angel. We are left with the realization that it is God's revelation and has very much to do with Daniel's prophecies. We are also left with the warning:

To everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

What an awesome revelation with a remarkable warning. We therefore realize that these words of revelation in Revelation were very precious to Jesus and should therefore be very precious to us. With the warning and this realization, we tread carefully into a portion of its contents.

In Revelation, John saw an angel come down from heaven and take hold of "*the dragon, the serpent of old, who is Satan, and bound him for the period of 1,000 years.*" He also saw some who "*came to life (lived again) and reigned with Christ for 1,000 years.*" However, John said, "*the rest of the dead*" did not live again until the 1,000 years were completed. During that 1,000 years, the old serpent was bound "*so that he might not deceive the nations*" (Rev. 20:2-5)

(evidently referring to that serpent mentioned in Genesis 3:4: *“And the serpent said to the woman, you shall not die!”* Jesus said, *“He was a murderer from the beginning...he is a liar and the father of lies”* (John 8:44).) I am fearful to play with those words and make them mean something they do not say. We must remember Peter’s warning *“No prophecy of the scripture is of one’s own interpretation”* (1 Peter 1:21). God’s prophets spoke as God so instructed and their prophecies must be understood considering what God originally meant. Two resurrections are plainly presented here in the twentieth chapter of the revelation which God gave to Jesus; Jesus gave to his angel; his angel gave to John; and John saw and gave to us.

## **TWO RESURRECTIONS OUTSIDE OF REVELATION 20**

However, is Revelation 20 the only place where two resurrections are taught in the Bible? Jesus’s promise in John 5:28 does include: *“a resurrection of life and a resurrection of judgment”* (NASB). John did see *“thrones and those who were privileged to sit on those thrones were given the privilege of judging. Those who had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus did not love their lives even to death”* (Rev. 20:4). Remember that they lived and reigned with Christ for 1,000 years. Paul asked, *“Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?”* (1 Cor. 6:2). The idea of the saints assisting in judgment is not a foreign idea in the bible. Paul on Mars Hill explained that Jesus is the man God has appointed to, at the appointed time, judge the world (Acts 17:31). Remember also that Jesus promised the disciples that *“they would sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel”* (Luke 22:30). Daniel made this plain in 7:27-28: *“Then God’s holy people will rule over the kingdom and all the people from all the kingdoms of earth. This kingdom will last forever, and people from all the other kingdoms will respect and serve them”* (NRSV).

Paul wrote of his deep desire to know (*first-hand knowledge, experience, if you will*) of *“the power of his (Christ’s) resurrection”* (Phil. 3:10). He had not so experienced that power yet because he had not yet been *“raised from the dead and experienced the power of everlasting life”* (3:11). Being raised from the dead is different from the resurrection of the dead. (Please look at this closely.)

Jesus was raised from the dead. Jesus instructed Peter, James, and John as they descended from the Mount of Transfiguration, *“Tell the vision to no one until the Son of man has risen from the dead”* (Matt. 17:9). The idea is *“out from among the dead ones*. When Jesus was raised from the dead there were other “dead ones” remaining in their graves after he was raised.

Paul was saying in Philippians that he was ardently looking forward to being among some who would be raised from (*out from among the dead ones*) the dead as Jesus was. (*This group will be raised and some others will not be raised at that time.*) This is in agreement with Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 15:22-23: *“In Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made*



alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at his coming" (i.e. "those who did good deeds to a resurrection of life" (John 5:29)). Remember, God's revelation to Jesus-his angel-John-Us was "the rest of the dead did not come to life til the 1,000 years were completed. This is the first resurrection" (Rev. 20:5). Paul further said, "The trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable" (1Cor. 15:53). No mention is made here of anyone being raised when that trumpet sounds other than those who are to be raised imperishable. (*The rest of the dead will not come to life til the thousand years are completed.*) Paul also makes this point in 1 Thessalonians 4:16:

The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God (*the last trumpet-the seventh trumpet*) and the dead in Christ shall rise *first*.

He is not simply implying that the first order of business is to get those saints out of the ground but revealing that the dead in Christ will rise first before anyone else. Jesus addressed this issue as well. Jesus said all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth; some in a resurrection of life and others in a resurrection to judgment (John 5:28-29). Those who are asleep in Jesus will come forth from their graves first. Jesus also spoke of "the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:14). He also spoke of those who will be "considered worthy to attain that age and the resurrection from (see above) the dead" (Luke 20:35). The Sadducees were greatly disturbed at the preaching of Peter and John in Acts 4:1-2. Not only were they preaching that Jesus was raised from the dead but they were preaching the resurrection from (out from among the dead ones) as well. Dealing with both issues at one time must have been extremely difficult for those Sadducees who did not believe in a resurrection at all.

## IN CONCLUSION

Job had a good handle on this death issue. He knew that mankind is of few days, that he is not inherently immortal. He knew that mankind would expire (*breathe his last*) and would remain (*asleep*) in Sheol until, as Job put it, "the heavens be no more;" and in addition, Job had a good idea about the question he asked, "If a man dies, will he live again?" (Job 14:12, 14).

Job was so sure of what he believed that he desired that his words should be written in a book and even more permanently engraved in rock for future generations. "I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth." WOW! What a hope. He also believed that this hope would affect him personally as well. "Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; whom I shall behold, and whom my eyes shall see and not another" (Job 19:23-27). Job believed in a literal resurrection of the dead. He expected to see God with his own eyes which he knew would decay.

We often talk about a “new body.” It might be better understood by saying “a renewed body.” God said “*Behold, I am making all things new*” (Rev. 21:5). Not all new things but all things new. There must be a resurrection of the real decayed body for there to be, in any sense, a resurrection at all. Paul complicated our understanding by saying, “*Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*” (1 Cor. 15:50). Perishable people cannot inherit imperishable things such as the kingdom of God. They will not live long enough to gain the fullness of the promise.

“*How are the dead raised and with what kind of body do they come?*” (1 Cor. 15:35). How can God raise the dead who have been long dead and forgotten? He after all is God: “*is anything too hard for YHWH?*” (Genesis 18:14). That’s the rhetorical question God asked Abraham when Sarah laughed upon getting the message that she would have a child. How then can “spiritual bodies” be the order of the day at the last day? “*We shall be changed; this perishable must put on imperishable and this mortal must put on immortality*” (1 Cor. 15:54). Jesus was the *firstborn* among many brethren and we must be *conformed* to his image (we will be made like him) at resurrection day (Rom. 8:29). Paul told the Philippians that Jesus “*will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory since he has by right the power to subject all things to Himself*” (Phil. 3:21 and Psalm 110:1).

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