

Becky Bereans – Death and Resurrection – Session 5

Session 5

Review

Last time, we examined resurrection making a distinction between the resurrection of Christ followers unto eternal life and the resurrection of unbelievers unto judgement and eternal torment. We saw that the resurrection of believers is actually a series of resurrections some of which have already happened – beginning with Jesus’ own resurrection called by Paul the “firstfruits,” and some which remain for the future. We saw that much of what we can say Biblically about the resurrections of believers hinges on how we interpret a number of passages in Revelation. By contrast, we saw that the resurrection of unbelievers will be a single event at the very end of time when God carries out His final judgement at the Great White Throne.

Our discussions raised a number of interesting questions, many of which we simply couldn’t answer with any certainty – the answers once again hinging on how we interpret Revelation and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 – Paul’s wonderful encouragement about Jesus’ gathering of His Church to Himself which we await patiently with great anticipation.

The Resurrection Body

In previous sessions, we saw that upon our inevitable bodily death our immortal souls are temporarily separated from our mortal and corruptible physical bodies. The Bible clearly teaches that this separation is only temporary. Paul’s great encouragement to believers in Romans 8 attests to this great hope of resurrection.

¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. Romans 8:11 [ESV]

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²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Romans 8:22-25 [ESV]

Unlike some of the other topics we have discussed in this series, our beliefs concerning resurrection – particularly Jesus’ own resurrection – are essentials of our Christian faith and key to our salvation. Paul states this quite clearly later in his letter to the Romans.

⁸But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one

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believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Romans 10:8-10 [ESV]

As we have seen in previous sessions, Jesus also clearly taught that we who believe in His resurrection will also share in it.

For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” John 6:40 [ESV]

But certainly, our resurrection bodies cannot be the same as our mortal bodies. They must have a fundamentally different nature. Otherwise, they would be subject to decline and death just as our current mortal bodies are. In his great treatise on resurrection – 1 Corinthians 15 – Paul writes about this in great detail using the sowing of seeds as an illustration.

35But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” 36You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. 38But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. 39For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. 40There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. 41There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

42So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 43It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 44It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam [Jesus] became a life-giving spirit. 46But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. 47The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man [Jesus] is from heaven. 48As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven [Jesus], so also are those who are of heaven. 49Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

50I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 54When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

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“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

55“O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?” **1 Corinthians 15:35-55 [ESV]**

Jesus Himself exemplified this change of our bodies from the mortal to the immortal. At the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17 & Mark 9), Jesus’ physical appearance was drastically changed right before His disciples’ eyes. The Greek word translated as “transfigured” in these two passages is **μεταμορφώω metamorphoō** – to change into another form, to transform, to transfigure. Later following His resurrection from the grave, Jesus’ body was apparently so different from the flesh He had assumed in the stable of Bethlehem that even those who were intimately close to Him daily for many months did not recognize Him until He did something that brought His character to their remembrance as when He called Mary Magdalene by name (John 20:11-18), or His sharing of breakfast with His disciples along the shore of the sea of Galilee (John 21:1-14). Yet somehow this resurrection body – although quite different in nature from our earthly bodies – does still possess some physical form. It is not purely spiritual as some have suggested. This is clear from the stories of Thomas touching Jesus’ crucifixion wounds (John 20:24-29) and Him eating physical food with His disciples.

But exactly how will God perform this great resurrection miracle? To be perfectly honest, I find this topic a little boring. I understand and believe that bodily death and resurrection is most certainly in store for all of us unless we are still alive and remain when He returns to gather His Church to Himself, but I really don’t care much about the details. I’m much more interested in the when and where than the how. The future state of my soul and spirit is much more interesting to me than the details of my resurrection body. But as Dr. Strauss points out, the details of bodily resurrection have been the subject of much skepticism and even ridicule by unbelievers ever since Jesus Himself ascended back to His Father with the promise that He will one day return for us.

3b ...scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. 4They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” **2 Peter 3:3b-4 [ESV]**

So, it is worthwhile for us to examine the subject if only so we may be ready to give an answer justifying our hope in our resurrection.

One of the concerns many have is what God will use as “raw materials” for our resurrection bodies. They rightly point out that the material bodily elements of those who died long ago have literally returned to the dust from which their bodies were formed. When my wife’s mother learned that my wife and I intend to have our bodies cremated, she was very concerned saying, “You’re going to need that body at the resurrection,” to which my wife retorted, “I don’t want *this* body at the resurrection. I’m holding Him to His promise of a new one.” What about those whose bodies were utterly vaporized in catastrophic events like the atomic bombings of Japan? Even the very atoms of their bodies were destroyed.

But does God need to have material feedstocks to manufacture our new incorruptible bodies? When He formed the body of the first man, He did so using the dust of the Earth. But God created that very dust Himself out of nothing except the power of His own Word. If our unchanging God was able to do that then, He is certainly able to do it again.

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Discussion Questions

I can't really think of any specific discussion questions on this topic that we haven't already talked about.