

# THE FIRST RESURRECTION

## Chapter One

### The Promise of the Resurrection

There are a number of swift moving events that will take place when the Lord returns to set up His Kingdom. One of these events will be the final resurrection of the Believers. Because of the importance of this event, we will devote all four lessons in this series to this subject; what the Bible calls “the first resurrection.” These lessons will begin with Christ, the firstfruits, they that are Christ’s at His coming, and the final part of the first resurrection that takes place at the end of the Tribulation.

Very little is revealed in the Old Testament concerning the resurrection. For that matter, I cannot find the word “resurrection” used in the Old Testament. In spite of the lack of Old Testament Scripture on this subject, Martha (in the New Testament) believed in the resurrection.

**“Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.  
Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again  
in the resurrection at the last day.” (John 11:23, 24)**

The reason the doctrine of the resurrection was obscure in the Old Testament, taught only in type and shadow, is because the Old Testament deals primarily with an earthly people and earthly promises. The covenants were earthly covenants, pertaining to a people here and now. However, Job did have something to say concerning this matter.

**“Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were  
printed in a book!  
That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the  
rock for ever!  
For 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.” (Job 19:23-26)**

The New Testament contains many, many promises that are future. There is a considerable amount of information revealed on the subject of the resurrection.

In this series of lessons on “the first resurrection” we will be studying five well documented facts.

- (1) The fact of the resurrection.
- (2) The order of the resurrection.
- (3) Our resurrection bodies.
- (4) The time of the first resurrection.
- (5) The difference between the first and the final resurrection.

First, we consider the fact of the resurrection. To deny the resurrection is to deny the Gospel. The resurrection is the very cornerstone, or foundation of the Gospel message.

**“Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead,  
how say some among you that there is no resurrection  
of the dead?  
But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ  
not risen.” (I Corinthians 15:12, 13)**

The Gospel means “good news;” however, without the resurrection there is no “good news.” This is what Paul says:

**“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain,  
and your faith is also vain.  
Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because  
we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom  
he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.  
For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:  
And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are  
yet in your sins.  
Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are  
perished.  
If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all  
men most miserable.” (I Corinthians 15:14-19)**

To preach only the death and burial of Christ there would be no Gospel at all. The Gospel cannot be preached without preaching the resurrection. Notice how the resurrection is connected with the Gospel of salvation.

**“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, if ye keep in memory what  
I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.  
For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also  
received, how that Christ died for our sins according to  
the scriptures:  
And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third  
day according to the scriptures.” (I Corinthians 15:1-4)**

Paul makes the resurrection a vital part of the Gospel. We turn to another familiar Bible passage that tells us what a person must do to be saved. We see from this Scripture that one cannot be saved apart from a belief in the resurrection.

**“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,  
and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him  
from the dead, thou shalt be saved.  
For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and  
with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”  
(Romans 10:9, 10)**

Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, makes it plain as to what one must believe to go in the Rapture.

**“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”  
(I Thessalonians 4:14)**

There is no salvation apart from believing in the resurrection. Salvation stands or falls with a belief in the resurrection. The importance of believing in the resurrection becomes clear when we understand the necessity of the resurrection. Remove the resurrection and you remove all hope of the future, and Paul says “We are found false witnesses.” The importance of the resurrection to salvation may be seen in the time spent by the God-hating, Christ rejecting unbelievers doing their best to disprove the resurrection.

Secondly, we see the importance of the resurrection in the atonement for sin. Had one single sin been left unpaid, Christ would still be in the grave; we would still be in our sins and under condemnation of death. But by the resurrection of Christ we are assured that every sin was atoned. Sin’s debt was paid. It is because of the resurrection that we will one day stand before God as though we had never sinned.

It is by the resurrection that we will one day be presented “faultless” (unblemished, without blame) before God.

**“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” (Jude 24)**

By the resurrection this will be accomplished.

**“Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.” (Romans 4:25)**

Is it not strange that the dictionary has no definition of “justification,” but only repeats that mentioned in the Bible, which is “the act, process or state of being justified by God.” The reason for this is simple. There are no words in the human language to adequately describe or define the word “justification” as used in the Word of God.

There is nothing in our culture of jurisprudence that will even come close to justification. If a person is charged with a crime, tried and found guilty, the sentence may be carried out, or they may be paroled or even pardoned; however, it is impossible for our justice system to take that person and place them in a state of never having committed the crime with which they were charged and found guilty. But this is exactly what God does with a guilty, un-deserving sinner, under the sentence of death. There is no doubt about the sinners guilt. **“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)** **“For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecclesiastes 7:20)**

**“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1)**

When a person receives the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, God then places them in a state of never having committed any sin in the first place. This is done by imparting to us the divine nature of Christ “who hath no sin.”

**“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:**

**Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (II Peter 1:3, 4)**

When we receive the Lord as Saviour the Holy Spirit places the divine nature alongside the old nature. God does not change, alter or make over the old nature. This is shown in Paul’s instructions to the Galatians.

**“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:16)**

To show that the old nature is still with the believer I John 1:8 says, **“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”** No theological two-step can side-step the plain teaching of this verse. The writer uses the inclusive words “we,” “ourselves,” and “us” five times in this verse. The writer includes himself and all those to whom this epistle was written, as well as all those who would read this epistle. This tells us that the old nature is still present within every believer.

The following verse tells us that the divine nature indwells the Believer alongside the old nature.

**“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because his is born of God” (I John 3:9)**

The following verse tells us what part of the Believer that does not sin. It is the seed that remaineth in him.

**“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.” (I Peter 1:23)**

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Order of the Resurrection

Before the resurrection of our Lord there were those in the Old Testament who were “translated,” not resurrected from the dead. And there were those who were restored to life, who would subsequently die again.

The Lord Jesus was the first person in History to die, was buried in the grave for three days, and was raised from the dead, with a body not subject to the laws that govern natural man. By His resurrection we are assured that:

- (1) Every sin was paid in full.
- (2) The believer stands before God perfect.

- (3) One day all believers will be raised from the dead, and receive the same glorified body as our Lord, never to die again.

**“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)**

In these verses we see a number of interesting facts.

- (1) There will be a resurrection.
- (2) It will be a resurrection of every person, “all that are in the graves.”
- (3) It will be a bodily resurrection.
- (4) The resurrection includes both the saved and the unsaved.

If this was the only revelation concerning the resurrection we would naturally assume, as many do, that one day there will be a general resurrection of both the saved and the unsaved, and all will appear at the same time at the “Great White Throne Judgment.” However, this is not the case at all. This Scripture (John 5:28, 29) states only that there will be a resurrection of both the saved and unsaved, but gives no details or information as to the order in which this resurrection will take place. For an understanding of this we must turn to another portion of Scripture. The “order of the resurrection.” is recorded in I Corinthians 15:22,-24.

**“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.”  
(I Corinthians 15:22-24)**

- (1) There was a resurrection of the saints when Jesus was raised from the dead.
- (2) There will be a resurrection of the saints at the Rapture of the Church.
- (3) Some seven years after the Rapture, when the Lord returns to set up His Kingdom, there will be a resurrection of the saints that have been martyred during the Tribulation.

(These three resurrections of the saints make up what the Bible calls the “first resurrection.”)

- (4) One thousand years later all unbelievers of all ages will be raised to face the awesome Great White Throne Judgment.

**“But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.”  
(Revelation 20:5)**

**“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there**

**was found no place for them.  
And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and  
the books were opened: and another book was opened, which  
is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things  
which were written in the books, according to their works.”  
(Revelation 20:11, 12)**

The Scriptures record in plain language the order of the resurrections. Not all the saints will be raised at the same time. The Bible teaches three separate resurrections of the saints. However, these three resurrections will take place at different periods of time in history. Paul gives the order in which they will take place. He says, “Christ, the firstfruits.” The word “firstfruits” holds the key to the correct interpretation of the resurrection that Paul is referring to in this verse. **“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” (I Corinthians 15:20)** The same word is repeated in verse 23. **“But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits.”** The word “firstfruits” means more than one. Christ was not the only one to be resurrected at this time, although He was first.

**“And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain  
from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake,  
and the rocks rent;  
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.”  
(Matthew 27:51-53)**

The resurrection (the firstfruits) of the saints is in perfect harmony with what the Bible teaches concerning the feast of firstfruits, observed by Israel centuries ago. The firstfruits of the harvest were brought to the Priest to be waved before the Lord as an expression of gratitude, and were only a token of the expectation of a full harvest to come. The celebration of this event is recorded in Leviticus chapter 23; 9-11.

**“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,  
Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them,  
When ye be come into the land which I give unto you,  
and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring  
a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:  
And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be  
accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the  
priest shall wave it.” (Leviticus 23:9-11)**

The fulfillment of this event is history. It took place some 2000 years ago, when the Lord Jesus arose from the dead, followed by the resurrection of “many of the saints.”

Some believe these saints that arose from the dead were only restored to life, as was Lazarus, and therefore died again. However, there is not one shred of evidence to support this claim.

The wave-sheaf of Leviticus chapter twenty three is not only a picture or type, but more specifically a prophecy of the resurrection of Christ. A sheaf, of course, implies plurality. We see, then, that this would include the saints who were raised following the resurrection of our Lord.

The saints who were resurrected, following the resurrection of Christ, became the “firstfruits;” therefore assuring a future resurrection. Keep in mind, only believers were raised at this time. No unsaved are among the firstfruits. The Holy Spirit is careful to point out “and many bodies of the saints that slept arose.”

The second group to be raised from the dead are “afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming.” “Afterward” means that some time after the resurrection of the firstfruits another resurrection will take place. This future resurrection will take place at the end of the Church age, with the Rapture of the Church. The details of this resurrection are found in the following Scriptures.

**“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”  
(I Thessalonians 4:13-17)**

In these Scriptures we see only believers resurrected. This wonderful truth is confirmed again in I Corinthians.

**“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.”  
(I Corinthians 15:51, 52)**

All of those who are part of this resurrection are believers, identified by terms that only apply to the saved---- “...they that are Christ’s at his coming” (I Cor.15:23b), and “...the dead in Christ shall rise first” (I Thess. 4:16b).

So far in our study we have seen the “resurrection of the firstfruits” that took place some 2000 years ago, and “the resurrection of they that are Christ’s at His coming,” which will take place at the Rapture of the Church.

There is one more resurrection of believers which will take place some seven years after the Rapture of the Church, at the end of the Tribulation.

**“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” (Revelation 20:4-6)**

This resurrection consists of those who will be martyred during the Tribulation period. Here again we see that only believers are raised.

In these three resurrections we see that not one single unsaved person has been, or will be resurrected, only those who have put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This completes what the Bible calls “the first resurrection.”

There is a One Thousand year separation between the final resurrection of the saints and the last final resurrection, the unsaved. You can be sure that you will be at one of these resurrections. **“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27)** The question, then, must be settled in this life. **“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” (Hebrews 2:3a)**

## CHAPTER THREE

### Redemption of the Body

**“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” (Romans 8:23)**

What will our glorified, resurrected body be like? Will our new body retain the personal characteristics it had in this life? Will our new body be physical in nature? Will our new body resemble our old body and therefore be recognizable? These are interesting questions indeed, but they are by no means new questions. Paul anticipated such questions even before he revealed the great doctrine of the resurrection.

**“But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? (I Corinthians 15:35)**

By use of illustrations and comparison teaching we have answers to some of these questions in the Scriptures. Paul begins by using the illustration of a “planted seed.”

**“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 Corinthians 15:36-38)**

By the death of the seed there will be a new crop that will resemble that which was planted. The Believer’s new body, too, will resemble that which is planted, but it will not have the imperfections and infirmities that are present here below. All believers will have perfect bodies. Our new bodies will not all look alike, but will be as different in appearance as we are in this life. We will also be able to recognize others; perhaps even more so than we do now. Paul continues his illustration in verses 39 through 42a.

**“All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of  
flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes,  
and another of birds.  
There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial:  
but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of  
the terrestrial is another.  
There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the  
moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star  
differeth from another star in glory.  
So also is the resurrection of the dead.”  
(I Corinthians 15:39-42a)**

Paul calls attention to the differences among things on earth and things among the heavenly bodies. As there is a difference between the stars (no two stars are alike) there, too, will be differences in appearance of the resurrected bodies of the saints. By physical characteristics we will be able to recognize one another the same way we recognize different stars.

Our new, glorified body will be far different and infinitely better than the natural body. The new body will resemble the old, and I believe we will retain our individuality and personality. But here the similarity ends. We see, in the following Scriptures, the vast differences between the natural and the glorified body.

**“...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.”  
(I Corinthians 15: 42-44)**

(1) “Sown in corruption, raised in incorruption.” The new body will have no sin, sickness or pain. It will never grow old and it will never die.

(2) “Sown in dishonour, raised in glory.” These old bodies are so corrupt, so dishonorable that even God will not make them over, but He must prepare a new body; one raised in glory.

(3) “Sown in weakness, raised in power.” I do not have to mention the limitations of the old body. As the days pass the body becomes even weaker until one day it will cease to function at all. The new body will be a powerful body, not subject to time or matter.

(4) “Sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body.” Our natural body, made from the dust, will return to dust. It will be raised a spiritual body, not subject to the laws of nature as is the case of the natural body. The spiritual body will be subject only to the laws of the Spirit. The spiritual body will be visible and tangible. The new body will not be subject to the laws of time and space. Our natural bodies are subject to the laws of this earth; held here by the law of gravity which will not permit us, without some help, to get very far off the ground. If we get off the ground any distance we must use special equipment to survive. The new body will be able to travel great distances in moments. Moreover, the new body will be able to pass through closed doors. All of this is revealed in the following verses of Scripture.

**“And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. (I Corinthians 15:45)**

**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. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”**

**(I Corinthians 15: 47-49)**

We received our natural body from Adam, made of the same substance (dust) and like Adam’s body, subject to the earth.

Our new body will be like the resurrected body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our new body will be of the same substance as the Lord’s body, and subject to the heavenly.

**“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”**  
**(Philippians 3:20, 21)**

There is a great deal we do not know about our new bodies, but we know “we shall be like Him.”

**“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”**  
**(I John 3:2)**

We note some very interesting things about this spiritual body.

(1) It will be a physical body.

**“And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye**

see me have.” (Luke 24:38, 39)

(2) This body will be able to partake of food.

**“Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? Knowing that it was the Lord.**

**Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.” (John 21: 12, 13)**

(3) The new body will be able to move swiftly and disappear at will.

**“And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.” (Luke 24:31)**

There is a great deal we do not know about our new bodies. There are, I am sure, a number of questions still unanswered because **“it doth not yet appear what we shall be...” (I John 3:2).**

If we spend a lifetime preaching on the subject there would still be questions left unanswered. We are, however, given enough information to rejoice in hope and anticipation of the future. It was this truth that so stirred the Apostle Paul and caused him to write, under inspiration, “rejoice evermore.”

We, too, can rejoice when we have put the future in its proper perspective. **“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” (I Corinthians 15:19)**

Think for a moment, in this life to what do we have to look forward? Even at best we can look forward to nothing but old age and death. Death may even overtake us before old age. The joys we have in this life are only for a very short time.

Jesus spoke of the perils of this life. An investment in this life only is a poor investment compared to what Jesus offers us. He says for us to **“...lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt...” (Matthew 6:20)** This is sound reasoning. We are here but for a short time----there forever!

The greatest expectation of the Christian life is that one day we will meet our Lord face to face and receive our new, glorified body. This is the hope of all believers; not because we understand, but because God, who cannot lie, has promised.

You, too, my friend, can have this same hope, based on the Word of God. This new glorified body has been purchased for all who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

**“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”  
(I Peter 2:24)**

Any healing we may receive in this life will never be complete as long as we are in our sinful body, inherited from Adam. There will never be perfect healing in the body we have now. As evidence of this, take a look at the graveyards. This old corruptible body may be repaired from time to time; however, it will never be perfect. For a perfect body we must wait for our complete redemption.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Complete Redemption

This is our final lesson in this series on “The First Resurrection.” We realize that we have only touched the surface on this important subject. I am sure there are many questions still unanswered. We would remind you of the words in I John, chapter three.

**“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”  
(I John 3:2)**

As we pointed out in the previous lessons “the first resurrection” is comprised of three separate resurrections of the saints.

(1) Christ, the firstfruits, which took place some 2000 years ago, when the Lord was raised from the dead and many of the saints followed.

(2) The next group, “they that are Christ’s at His coming,” will be raised at the Rapture of the Church, which may take place at any moment.

(3) The third group to be raised is “the martyred saints” of the Tribulation. This will take place some seven years after the Rapture.

All three of these make up what the Bible calls “the first resurrection.” The first resurrection, when we receive our new glorified bodies, brings to completion God’s plan of redemption. We will then be in possession of what God has promised. At the present we have only the “promise” of a complete redemption. It is true that complete redemption is just as sure as the Word of God; however, we must wait for the fulfillment of all that is promised.

**“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 adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” (Romans 8:22, 23)**

We, as believers, possess at this very moment many elements of a complete salvation. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit we experience fruits of salvation just as real today as they will be in eternity.

**“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” (Romans 8:15, 16)**

Galatians, chapter four, verses six and seven records for us a present possession of redemption.

**“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” (Galatians 4:6, 7)**

Regardless of how much, or what part of a complete redemption we possess at the present, there is one element of redemption that awaits fulfillment. Let me repeat:

**“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” (Romans 8:23)**

Paul says we are “waiting the redemption of our body.” We are not at present in possession of the perfect glorified body, purchased for us by the blood of the Lord Jesus.

Right here is where many make a grave error in teaching what is referred to as “divine healing.” I believe the confusion comes from confusing Scriptures relating to the resurrected body with that of the present.

This brings us to the heart of this lesson, “healing in the atonement.” I realize this is a sensitive and very controversial subject. Yet, when it is understood in the light of scriptural revelation, it can be most reassuring.

Before we go further into this subject let me say, first of all, I know absolutely nothing about medicine, and even less about the human body. Therefore, I am not talking about doctors and medicine, but simply stating some Bible truths so that we may better understand God’s plan for us now, and in the future.

I believe it shows pride, and a lack of consideration, for anyone to ask a believer if they believe that God heals. Any person who has believed God for salvation will certainly know God is all powerful. If God can provide salvation, He can certainly heal the body. The question, then, is not “is God able to heal?” or even “will God heal?” It takes very little knowledge of the Word of God to know the answers to these questions.

What has divided believers on this subject is another matter entirely. The confusion comes, I believe because of a failure on the part of some to distinguish between two lines of revelation concerning healing.

We can best approach this subject by answering two leading questions.

- (1) Has God promised perfect healing?
- (2) Has God promised perfect healing for this present body?

The answer to the first question is YES. The answer to the second question is NO. When you meet God’s conditions, He answers prayer for healing, the same as He answers our other prayers. God has not, however, promised perfect healing for this old body, but on the contrary. No matter how many times you are healed, or how many prayers are offered, one day this body is going to die.

**“Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. (Job 14:1)**

**“Seeing his days are determined, the number of his**

**months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds  
that he cannot pass.” (Job 14:5)**

There will come a time when God will not answer your prayers for healing of this old corruptible body. There will come a time when this body will draw its last breath, and must be put away; or as Paul says, “planted a corruptible body.” However, until God is finished with us let us follow God’s instructions on praying for healing as given in the book of James.

**“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of  
the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him  
with oil in the name of the Lord:  
And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord  
shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they  
shall be forgiven him.” (James 5:14, 15)**

To cling stubbornly to the belief that God will heal this body in every instance, or that this body will be made perfect in this life will sooner or later lead to disappointment. We are to treat prayer requests for healing the same as we do prayer requests for other matters. We are to take all requests to God, in faith, believing He will answer.

Praying for healing is a proper prayer request, and we ought to pray for one another. This does not mean that this body will ever be perfect. But by God’s mercy we are able, by answered prayer, to keep going; hopefully serving the Lord for a few more days. However, we all know that one of these days the “wages of sin” will overtake us one way or another. It is then we will understand more fully the “Gift of God,” which is “eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Has God promised perfect healing for this body? The answer is NO. Is there perfect healing in the atonement? Has God promised perfect healing? The answer is YES. When will this be? The Bible has the answer.

**“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 Corinthians 15:53-57)**

Yes, thanks be unto God for a new, perfect body that will never know sin, sickness, or death; purchased for us with the blood of the Lamb.

**“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree,  
that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness:  
by whose stripes ye were healed.” (I Peter 2:24)**

I realize that when this body is sick and wracked with pain we want to be healed. No one enjoys suffering and pain. My friend, do not be deceived. Turn to the Word of God for the answers.

Let me mention at least two things that I believe are far better than healing.

(1) To be kept from sickness.

**“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” (III John, v.2)**

I had rather not be sick in the first place. I had rather not have cancer, than to have cancer and be healed.

Some believe that healing increases faith, but the purpose of healing is not to strengthen faith. As I understand the Bible, faith comes before answered prayer. One must have faith BEFORE having prayers answered. Faith comes by “HEARING,” not “healing!” **“and hearing by the WORD OF GOD.” (Romans 10:17)**

(2) The second thing that I believe is more important than healing is the abundant grace of God.

**“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.**

**For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.**

**And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (II Corinthians 12:7-9)**

Paul, who healed others, prayed three times to be healed, and he was not healed. We find also that Paul, instead of healing Timothy instructed him (I Timothy 5:23) to **“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.”**

It is interesting to note that that the infirmities Paul spoke of having was “A thorn in the flesh.”

(1) A “thorn” from the Strong’s Greek dictionary of the New Testament means a bodily annoyance or disability, withered at the joint.

(2) The word “buffet” means to chastise.

(3) The word “infirmities” means feebleness of the mind or body; a malady, disease, sickness or weakness.

What is more important is not what Paul’s infirmity was, but the reason for his infirmity. Paul gives the reason **“lest I should be exalted above measure.”** This infirmity that Paul had was so he would not become haughty, or exalt himself.

God used Paul to write more about the weakness of the flesh than any other writer. Paul understood that a person was not to think of themselves more highly than they should. **“...for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” (Luke 16:15b)** The following Scriptures also pronounce “woe” upon those who would seek popularity.

**“Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”**

**(Luke 6:26)**

**“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Romans 12:3)**

We are not saying this to be critical of any religious beliefs, only to show that the body was cursed along with the ground and the vegetation; as well as the animal kingdom.

Everything that Adam lost was redeemed in the sacrifice of our Lord, including complete redemption of our body; however, we must wait with the rest of creation for the fulfillment of this wonderful promise.

**“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 adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” (Romans 8:22, 23)**

The grace of God is “all sufficient.” He promises to “supply all our needs in Christ Jesus.”

If you are to be in the “first resurrection” you must be “in Christ.” If you are not saved, you can be by receiving Jesus Christ as your Saviour.

**“But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” (Galatians 3:22)**

**“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” (Ephesians 1:7)**

**“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8,9)**

**“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” (John 1:12)**