

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#02-0839

JUNE 13, 2008

ALL WHO ARE IN THE TOMBS WILL HEAR

Eve believed the lie of the serpent in the garden when he said, **“You surely will not die!”** (Genesis 3.4); and many believers today have fallen for the same deception, for they believe that *in* death they enter immortality, which means life beyond death. But we need to be reminded that we must put off mortality and put on immortality, and this comes in the resurrection of the saints at the last trump (1 Corinthians 15.50-57; 2 Corinthians 5.4; 1 Timothy 6.14b-16). It is never presented as a verity when we die. **In Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive** (1 Corinthians 15.22 NASB). We all start out in Adam and we all die. Even so, we all end in Christ and we all will live. As Christ was resurrected, so we all must be resurrected (unless He comes while we are alive and remain).

Now, in two issues, I want to take up this matter of the two major resurrections. All mankind will be in one or the other. There is a general resurrection that follows the millennial reign of Christ and precedes the day of God, and there is a first resurrection or, as Paul called it, the out-resurrection that occurs at the end of our present eon that leads into the millennial reign of Christ.

In Genesis, the book of beginnings, the fact of resurrection is presented in type, for we see the tree of life in the midst of the garden. Although the Lord kept His word that Adam would die, He also made provision for Adam and Eve by covering them with the skin of an animal, which signified that redemption through the sacrifice of the Son of God was on the horizon. They were destined to die, but they were also destined to live. We have proof of this with the tree of life in the holy city, Jerusalem, that comes down out of heaven, having the glory of God. What was lost in the garden is regained in the new creation.

There are many indications of resurrection in the Hebrew Scriptures. Job saw his resurrection: **“Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God”** (Job 19.26 NASB). The sons of Korah wrote: **But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me.** (Psalm 49.15 NASB). David declared: **As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake** (Psalm 17.15 NASB). Daniel was told: **“But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age”** (Daniel 12.13 NASB).

Let us consider the general resurrection first. Many acknowledge that there are two resurrections separated by about 1,000 years. However, many also see the general resurrection for only the unbeliever or the wicked, based on Jesus’ words in the gospel of John.

“Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.” (John 5.28-29 NASB)

It is often assumed that this refers to the two resurrections, separated by the millennial reign. But Jesus clearly referred to an hour, which in Scripture refers to a specific point in time; and at that hour, all who are in the tombs, meaning they are dead, which is a state of unconsciousness, will be awakened from their sleep. Those who have done the good deeds will be resurrected to life and those who have done the evil deeds will be resurrected to judgment. This was in keeping with what the Jews of Jesus’ day believed. Jesus was not trying to correct them but confirming what they already knew.

The Jews believed that there was one general resurrection in which both the righteous and the wicked will be resurrected at the same time but with different outcomes. We see this in the conversation between Jesus and Martha when Jesus said Lazarus would rise again. **Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day"** (John 11.23-24 NASB). Paul, in defense of his evangel, referred to the general resurrection.

"But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked." (Acts 24.14-15 NASB)

To Paul, it was **a** resurrection, which means he referred to only one resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. Both Daniel and John saw this resurrection.

"I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, its wheels were a burning fire. A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; the court sat, and the books were opened." (Daniel 7.9-10 NASB)

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ... And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20.11-12, 15 NASB)

The first resurrection, which is taken up in the next issue, is only for those who have conquered; they will come to life and reign with Christ, with the second death having no power over them. But the resurrection Daniel and John saw was unto judgment, judgment by the fiery law of God. Some of those before the great white throne, ablaze with flames and with a river of fire flowing forth into a lake, were seen as destined for judgment through the second death. For them, it is a resurrection of judgment. But there obviously are others standing before the throne whose names are recorded in the book of life. For them, it is a resurrection of life, immortal life for all who believe.

It is safe to state that many pastor-teachers do not believe that any of the righteous can or will appear before the great white throne because all the righteous must rise in the first resurrection. But they fail to see that believers are not promised eonian life in the millennial kingdom of Christ. Entering the coming kingdom and reigning with Christ for 1,000 years is a reward to all who conquer through Christ, but not all who believe in Jesus in this eon will conquer (see Luke 12.45-59; 14.13-14). Everyone is promised immortal life, but this does not mean that all will receive it at the same time. Some will have to wait *in* death until the end of the oncoming eon when the great and small are resurrected. As Paul wrote, they **will be saved, yet so as through fire** (1 Corinthians 3.15 NASB). All their evil works will be burned up, but they will be saved to enter the day of God and the holy city because their names are recorded in the book of life; they are accounted as righteous because of Christ, but they were not counted worthy to enter the kingdom of Christ 1,000 years before. They will receive immortal life as promised and enter the eon of the eons, the last eon revealed to us in Scripture; thus, they too will experience eonian life. This is not the better resurrection!

Dear beloved, if by the spirit of God you are convinced this is the truth, then set your heart to overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loves us. Let us seek for the better resurrection.