

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED

What God's Word teaches about

THE RESURRECTION

of Christ

And of the Righteous and the Unrighteous

Gordon Lyons

KJV Edition

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The Resurrection

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The Resurrection

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Part 1

Synopsis: The Resurrection

The resurrection of the dead is the restoration to physical life of both the righteous dead and the unrighteous dead at the glorious second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It involves the separation of the righteous from the unrighteous for final judgment. At his coming, the Lord Jesus will send forth his angels to gather his elect from among all nations, and from one end of heaven to the other. The dead in Christ will rise first; then those believers who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. The believer's newly resurrected body will be reunited with his immortal soul. The body will be changed or translated to an imperishable body, suitably adapted for eternal existence in glory. At his judgment seat, the Lord Jesus Christ will judge everyone according to his or her works. When the righteous stand before him, the Lord will reward them with the everlasting life and glory, which he promised them, together with the reward of their good works. When the unrighteous appear in his holy presence, he will punish them as their deeds deserve—with everlasting shame and contempt. The unrighteous will be excluded forever from the glorious presence of the Lord, enduring for all eternity the unremitting torments of hell and final separation from God. However, the righteous will dwell in the presence of God and of the Lamb forever and ever, enjoying his immediate and loving presence and joining with the holy angels in worship, praise and service to God.

Note 1

All Mankind Will be Raised

The resurrection of the dead is of paramount importance; for if there were no resurrection, then death, decay, and dissolution would be the final state or condition of the body. However, death, decay, and dissolution is not the final state or condition of the body. For, just as Christ has been raised from the dead by the almighty power of God, so also will all mankind be raised—by the almighty power of God. By a word of command, God created the world out of nothing. Again, by a word of command, God created Adam out the dust of the earth. Similarly, by a like word of command—represented by the trumpet call of God—the dead will rise at the coming of the Lord. Their dissolved bodies will be reconstituted and raised to life. To deny the resurrection of the body is to deny the omnipotence of God and the veracity of God's infallible word. (1 Cor. 15:12-23,45-52; Eph. 1:19-20)

Scripture References

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

⁽¹²⁾ Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? ⁽¹³⁾ But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: ⁽¹⁴⁾ And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain. ⁽¹⁵⁾ 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. ⁽¹⁶⁾ For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: ⁽¹⁷⁾ And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins. ⁽¹⁸⁾ Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. ⁽¹⁹⁾ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. (See vv. 1-11)

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

⁽²⁰⁾ But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept. ⁽²¹⁾ For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. ⁽²²⁾ For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. ⁽²³⁾ But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. (See vv.24-34)

1 Corinthians 15:45-49

⁽⁴⁵⁾ And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; {*Gen. 2:7*} the last Adam *was* made a quickening spirit. ⁽⁴⁶⁾ Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. ⁽⁴⁷⁾ The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from heaven. ⁽⁴⁸⁾ As *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly. ⁽⁴⁹⁾ And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

1 Corinthians 15:50-52

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. ⁽⁵¹⁾ Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁽⁵²⁾ 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.

Ephesians 1:19-20

⁽¹⁹⁾ And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, ⁽²⁰⁾ Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, (See vv.18-23)

Note 2

This Body will Become Immortal

Death is not the end of life, nor is it the cessation of existence. The soul, being spiritual and immortal, can never die. The body dies, decays, and dissolves—but only temporarily. That same earthly body which is laid in the grave, or consigned to the fire or to the sea, will be raised—permanently—at the coming of the Lord. Concerning the believer, his earthly body will be changed or translated into the likeness of Christ's glorious body. This mortal body will become immortal. This perishable body will become imperishable. This natural body will become a spiritual body—a tangible body that has been reunited with the soul, and that has been adapted to eternal life in the hallowed presence of God. (Job 19:25-27; 1 Cor. 15:35-44,53-55)

Scripture References

Job 19:25-27

⁽²⁵⁾ For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth:

⁽²⁶⁾ And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

⁽²⁷⁾ Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; *though* my reins be consumed within me. (See vv.23-29)

1 Corinthians 15:35-41

⁽³⁵⁾ But some *man* will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? ⁽³⁶⁾ *Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: ⁽³⁷⁾ 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*: ⁽³⁸⁾ But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. ⁽³⁹⁾ 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. ⁽⁴⁰⁾ *There are* also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another. ⁽⁴¹⁾ *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.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44

⁽⁴²⁾ So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: ⁽⁴³⁾ It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: ⁽⁴⁴⁾ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

1 Corinthians 15:53-55

⁽⁵³⁾ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. ⁽⁵⁴⁾ 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. {*Isaiah 25:8*}

⁽⁵⁵⁾ O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? {*Hosea 13:14*} (See 1 Cor. 15:56-58)

Note 3

'Every Eye Will See Him'

At his glorious second coming, the Lord Jesus will be accompanied by all his holy ones (i.e. the holy angels). The dead in Christ will rise first; then, together with those believers still alive at the Lord's appearing, they will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. This event is sometimes referred to as 'the rapture'. The Bible, however, does not teach a 'secret rapture'. When he appears, the whole world will be fully aware of the Lord's glorious presence. When Christ comes, every eye (i.e. everyone) will see him. At his glorious appearing, people of every ethnic group and nationality will call on the rocks and the mountains to fall on them and to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. For the Lord who comes in glory to gather his people home, also comes in judgment to separate the wicked from the righteous. He will award eternal life and glory to the righteous, and eternal death and punishment to the wicked. (Matt. 25:31-46; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 1:7)

Scripture References

Matthew 25:31-33

⁽³¹⁾ When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: ⁽³²⁾ And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: ⁽³³⁾ And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Matthew 25:34

⁽³⁴⁾ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (See vv.35-40)

Matthew 25:41

⁽⁴¹⁾ Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: (See vv.42-45)

Matthew 25:46

⁽⁴⁶⁾ And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

⁽¹³⁾ 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: ⁽¹⁴⁾ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ⁽¹⁵⁾ 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. ⁽¹⁶⁾ 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: ⁽¹⁷⁾ 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. ⁽¹⁸⁾ Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (See also 1 Thess. 5:1-3)

Revelation 1:7

⁽⁷⁾ Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. (See vv.4-8; cf. Rev. 6:15-17)

Note 4

The Righteous and the Wicked

The righteous are those who, by the grace of God in redemption, have had the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to their account. Only those whom God has effectually called to repentance and faith in Christ, and whom he has regenerated and justified, can be described as righteous. Those whom God has thus redeemed—and those alone—constitute the elect of God. The unrighteous (i.e. the wicked) are the remainder of fallen mankind whom God has justly left to suffer the due penalty of their own sin. This includes everyone who has not been called by the grace of God to participate in the redemption secured by Christ for all his elect people. (Matt. 24:30; Rom. 5:16-17; 2 Pet. 2:9)

Scripture References

Matthew 24:30-31

⁽³⁰⁾ And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ⁽³¹⁾ And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (See vv.26-29; cf. v.30 with Rev. 1:7; cf. v.31 with 1 Thess. 4:16-17).

Romans 5:15-17

⁽¹⁵⁾ But not as the offence, so also *is* the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. ⁽¹⁶⁾ And not as *it was* by one that sinned, so *is* the gift: for the judgment *was* by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification. ⁽¹⁷⁾ For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) (See vv.12-21)

2 Peter 2:9

⁽⁹⁾ The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: (See vv.4-10)

Note 5

Heaven or Hell

There are two states of eternal existence: (1) The eternal existence of the righteous will be in heaven—in that place prepared for them in glory, and in the presence of the Father and the Son. This state is one of blessedness and never-ending peace, joy and happiness in the presence of God. (2) The eternal existence of the wicked (i.e. all those outside of Christ) will be in hell. Hell is that place of everlasting separation from God, and from his grace, mercy and favour; and from all love and fellowship with his Son. This state is one of unending conscious torments of body, and of indescribable anguish and utter despair of soul. In hell, neither body nor soul can suffer annihilation. The soul is spiritual and immortal, therefore it cannot perish. God will change the present mortal body, adapting it to endure the torments of hell, and rendering it incapable of annihilation. (Matt. 10:28; 13:40-43,49-50; Rev. 21:1-8)

Scripture References

Matthew 10:28

⁽²⁸⁾ And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (See vv.26-31; cf. Luke 12:4-5)

Matthew 13:40-43

⁽⁴⁰⁾ As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. ⁽⁴¹⁾ The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; ⁽⁴²⁾ And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

⁽⁴³⁾ Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. (See vv.24-30,36-39; see esp. v.30)

Matthew 13:49-50

⁽⁴⁹⁾ So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, ⁽⁵⁰⁾ And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (See vv.47-48)

Revelation 21:1-4

⁽¹⁾ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. ⁽²⁾ And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ⁽³⁾ And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 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. ⁽⁴⁾ 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. (See v.5)

Revelation 21:7-8

⁽⁷⁾ He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. ⁽⁸⁾ But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (See v.6)

Related Bible Truths

The doctrinal notes that follow cover the resurrection of Christ, and the resurrection of the just and the unjust. The doctrine of the resurrection of Christ is the rock upon which every other doctrine in the Bible is founded. The truth of this doctrine is absolutely essential to the Christian's faith and salvation. Without this truth, there would be no Christian Gospel to proclaim and no hope for lost mankind. The doctrine of the resurrection of the just and of the unjust relates closely to the second coming of Christ in his glory. It also relates directly to the Last or Final Judgment, and to the final state of the righteous and the wicked.¹

¹ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: Divine Inspiration of The Bible; The Second Coming; The Last Judgment; Heaven; Hell*, by Gordon Lyons.

Part 2

Preliminary Remarks

Life After Death

Physical death—the death of the body—is not the permanent end of bodily life. It is merely the end of the physiological, biological and chemical processes required to sustain the body in its present earthly form.

The Dead Body Will Be Raised

The ending of these natural biological processes is followed by the decay and dissolution of our present mortal body—but only for a temporary period. At his glorious second coming, and by God's almighty power, the Lord will reconstitute this physical body as he raises it from the dead. As far as we know, however, the biological processes necessary to sustain the body's life on earth will no longer be required. The Lord will provide us with any processes that we may require to sustain the resurrected body in its glorified, spiritual, and heavenly condition. Concerning its identity and form, the body will remain substantially the same—although, of course, the Lord will perfect it in all respects. In its measure, the believer's resurrected and glorified body will be akin to Christ's resurrected and glorified body.

The Soul Lives Eternally

However, while the body dies and perishes temporarily, the soul neither dies nor perishes. The soul, being spiritual and immortal, is not subject to the chemical and physiological processes of the body that lead eventually to death, decay, and dissolution. At the death of the body, the living and immortal soul of the believer passes immediately into the presence of God. There, it awaits its reunion with the resurrected and glorified body.

Similarly, the soul of the unbeliever returns to God who gave it. The souls of the lost (the unbelievers) remain in perdition awaiting the final execution of the sentence of condemnation. The Lord will pronounce this sentence upon them at the Final Judgment. At this time, their souls will be reunited with their resurrected bodies. Their whole persons—body and soul—will then be cast into hell, where they will suffer the torments of an ever-accusing conscience and separation from God and his mercy forever and ever.

For the Christian, the resurrection of the body will be a joyous and glorious occasion. For the remainder of mankind, however, the resurrection will be a time of great foreboding and terror. Then, the Lord will summons the lost to appear before his throne for final judgment and consignment to hell—or, more specifically, to the 'lake of fire'. The lake of fire may be considered as a place or state where those who are consigned to it will endure sufferings equal to that endured in a physical lake of fire. Such is the destiny of all those who remain impenitent and unbelieving to the end.

False Doctrine (1)

Reincarnation

There are several false views regarding life after death. One old and widely held view is the belief in the reincarnation of the soul. Reincarnation is essentially a pantheistic belief, and is based on false theories of God that are associated with that philosophy.

In theology, the word 'incarnation' means 'to assume true human and bodily form'; i.e. to take upon oneself a literal human body with all its functions and faculties. Hence, to accomplish the work of re-

demption, the Son of God (the Eternal Logos) became incarnate; i.e. he assumed a true human body. (In the Son of God's case, his body remained entirely free from the contamination of sin.)

The word 'reincarnation' means 'to assume, or to occupy, a series of different bodily, physical or spiritual forms (not necessarily human). These different forms are said to be assumed at the beginning of each successive life cycle. Reincarnation, therefore, is a supposed change of life form. Death leads on—in almost endless succession—to another form of life, or to a different body (or other medium) for the soul. According to this belief, reincarnation of the soul can result in either a higher or a lower form of life than was previously experienced—depending on the merits, or lack of merits, of the person concerned. The person's successive life cycles continue until they finally attain 'perfection' or complete harmonisation with the Supreme Being.

Reincarnation Contradicts The Bible

The doctrine of reincarnation contradicts the teaching of God's infallible Word. Firstly, it contradicts God's Word by teaching that salvation is based on merit, and not on grace. Secondly, it contradicts God's Word by teaching that a person's soul assumes or occupies a different bodily form after death, and that this person's life continues in this different form. The Bible, however, declares that men die only once—and then face judgment. (Heb. 9:27)

We mention the doctrine of reincarnation here because it is being widely taught in schools throughout the land as part of 'religious education' or religious awareness programmes. However, to teach the doctrine of reincarnation in this manner, is to attempt to place it on an equal footing with the teaching of the Bible. It is also an attempt (perhaps unwittingly) to evade the Biblical doctrine of the Final Judgment. When any teaching is presented as an alternative to the teaching of the Bible, that teaching constitutes false doctrine. False doctrine—in any shape or form—is perverse, subversive, and dangerous misinformation. This is the kind of religious information that has the potential to lead many young people astray. As Christians, we must resist and oppose such false teaching by every appropriate and lawful means at our disposal.

False Doctrine (2)

Denial of a Bodily Resurrection

Without the actual physical or bodily resurrection of Christ, there would be no foundation for the Christian faith; no forgiveness of sins; no reconciliation of repentant sinners with God; no future life, and no hope for anyone. Yet, there are those within the visible church who deny the literal and physical resurrection of Christ from the dead, and who repudiate the doctrine of the resurrection regarding mankind in general.

To Deny the Resurrection is to Deny the Faith

To deny the resurrection, however, is to deny the faith. To deny the physical or bodily resurrection of Christ is to refuse to accept the testimony of those who saw Christ alive in human form after his resurrection. It is also the deny the testimony of those who ate and drank with him at that time. Again, to deny the physical or bodily resurrection of the dead is to deny the plain teaching of the Word of God. This in turn involves a clear denial of the plenary inspiration, authority, and infallibility of the Word of God. We must dissociate ourselves totally, therefore, from those who deny or repudiate the doctrine of the resurrection, or who attempt to spiritualise it, or to explain it away. Man must not presume to teach as doctrine what the Bible does not teach as doctrine. Nor must man affirm to be untrue what God has clearly affirmed to be true—in his holy Word.

Part 3

Doctrine of the Resurrection

For convenience, the Doctrine of the Resurrection may be sub-divided into the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ, and the doctrine of the resurrection of mankind. This second category includes both believers and unbelievers. On the pages that follow, we will consider the two main categories separately. Before doing so, however, we will look briefly at some fundamental truths concerning the resurrection.

The Literal Resurrection of the Body

The Bible teaches a literal and physical resurrection of the body. In other words, the body that dies, that is buried, and that decays, will be the same body that is resurrected at the second coming of the Lord. It matters not one iota that most or all the chemical elements (or DNA structure) which composed the original body have since been destroyed, or adsorbed by other forms of life. In the beginning—and by a word of command—God created Adam out of the dust of the earth, i.e. from some of the same chemical elements that are found in the earth; and God breathed into Adam the breath of life. On the last day—and by a like word of command (the trumpet call of God)—the Lord Jesus will call forth the dead. All those bodies that have perished in the grave, the flames, or the sea, will be reconstituted at that moment. If this were not possible, then God would not be omnipotent. Clearly, this very thought involves a gross absurdity.

Ultimate States of Righteous and Wicked

(Summary)

There will be two contrasting states or conditions, and two markedly different places, for those who will be resurrected at the second coming of the Lord. These are (1) the state and place of the righteous, and (2) the state and place of the wicked. (The wicked or unrighteous consist of all those who die finally impenitent; i.e. outside of Christ.)

We may outline these future states thus:

1. *The State and Place of the Righteous*

Following the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous, the bodies of the righteous (the believers in Christ) will be changed. They will be reunited with their souls, and equipped to live forever in the presence of God, in everlasting glory and honour.

2. *The State and Place of the Unrighteous*

Following the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous, the bodies of the unrighteous (the wicked or unbelievers) will be changed. They will be reunited with their souls, and equipped to exist forever in the torments of separation from God, in everlasting shame and contempt.

The Proof of a Physical Resurrection

The fact of a literal and physical resurrection of the body is clearly the teaching of the Bible. This can be seen from the following summary:²

² This section based on C. Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977 reprint), pp.772-774.

(Summary)

1. A literal and physical resurrection of the body is proved by the meaning of the word, 'resurrection'.

Resurrection signifies a rising again; a rising of that which was buried, or a restoration to life of that which was dead. That this resurrection refers to the body, and not to the soul, is clear from the fact that the Bible teaches that the soul is immortal, and therefore is not subject to death (except in the spiritual sense, which is not being considered here). Resurrection, therefore, can refer only to the body. (1 Cor. 15:12-23, 35-49; 1 Thess. 4:13-18)

(1) Scripture References

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

⁽¹²⁾ Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? ⁽¹³⁾ But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: ⁽¹⁴⁾ And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain. ⁽¹⁵⁾ 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. ⁽¹⁶⁾ For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: ⁽¹⁷⁾ And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins. ⁽¹⁸⁾ Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. ⁽¹⁹⁾ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. (See vv. 1-23)

1 Corinthians 15:35-41

⁽³⁵⁾ But some *man* will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? ⁽³⁶⁾ *Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: ⁽³⁷⁾ 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*: ⁽³⁸⁾ But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. ⁽³⁹⁾ 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. ⁽⁴⁰⁾ *There are* also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another. ⁽⁴¹⁾ *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.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44

⁽⁴²⁾ So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: ⁽⁴³⁾ It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: ⁽⁴⁴⁾ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

1 Corinthians 15:45-49

⁽⁴⁵⁾ And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; {*Gen. 2:7*} the last Adam *was* made a quickening spirit. ⁽⁴⁶⁾ Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. ⁽⁴⁷⁾ The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from heaven. ⁽⁴⁸⁾ As *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly. ⁽⁴⁹⁾ And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

⁽¹³⁾ 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. ⁽¹⁴⁾ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ⁽¹⁵⁾ 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. ⁽¹⁶⁾ 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: ⁽¹⁷⁾ 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. ⁽¹⁸⁾ Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (See also 1 Thess. 5:1-3)

2. A literal and physical resurrection of the body is proved by the express teaching of the Scriptures.

The Scriptures say that those who are in the dust of the earth, and those who are in the graves, shall arise. But this can refer only to the body. For it is the body—and the body alone—which is laid in the grave. These expressions refer, therefore, to the resurrection of the literal and physical body—the same body that is laid in the grave. (Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29; 11:23-24)

(2) Scripture References

Daniel 12:2

⁽²⁾ 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.

John 5:28-29

⁽²⁸⁾ Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, ⁽²⁹⁾ 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 11:23-24

⁽²³⁾ Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

⁽²⁴⁾ Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. (See vv.25-27)

3. A literal and physical resurrection of the body is proved by the forms of expression used in the Word of God.

That Word says that it is our 'mortal' bodies which are to rise again. And, '...He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.' Again, God's Word says, it is our 'vile [i.e. lowly or earthly] body' which is to be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. These forms of expression would have no meaning if they were not being used in contradistinction to the immortal and imperishable body which every believer will receive at the resurrection. (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:50-55; Phil. 3:21)

(3) Scripture References

Romans 8:11

⁽¹¹⁾ But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

1 Corinthians 15:50-55

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. ⁽⁵¹⁾ Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁽⁵²⁾ 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. ⁽⁵³⁾ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. ⁽⁵⁴⁾ 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. *{Isaiah 25:8}*

⁽⁵⁵⁾ O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? *{Hosea 13:14}*
(See 1 Cor. 15:56-58)

Philippians 3:21

⁽²¹⁾ 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. (Cf. Matt. 17:1)

4. A literal and physical resurrection of the body is proved by the resurrection of Christ.

The very fact that Christ himself arose from the grave with a literal and physical body is indisputable evidence of the resurrection of the body. The resurrection of Christ is an historical fact, founded on historical evidence. This fact cannot rationally be denied by anyone who is prepared to believe the testimony of independent and reliable witnesses; and the testimony of the infallible and inerrant Word of God. That Word asserts repeatedly, and in unambiguous terms, the literal and physical resurrection of Christ from the dead. But if Christ rose literally and physically from the dead, then so must all his people: for Christ is the firstfruits of all those who sleep in him. (John 20:19-31; Acts 1:3-11; 1 Cor. 15:3-8)

(4) Scripture References

John 20:19-20

⁽¹⁹⁾ Then the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you. ⁽²⁰⁾ And when he had so said, he showed unto them *his* hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. (See vv.21-23; see also Luke 24:36-43)

John 20:24-25

⁽²⁴⁾ But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. ⁽²⁵⁾ The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the

print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

John 20:26-29

⁽²⁶⁾ And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace, *be* unto you. ⁽²⁷⁾ Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

⁽²⁸⁾ And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

⁽²⁹⁾ Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed. (See vv.30-31)

Acts 1:3-4

⁽³⁾ To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: ⁽⁴⁾ And, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me. (See vv.1-8)

Acts 1:9-11

⁽⁹⁾ And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

⁽¹⁰⁾ And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; ⁽¹¹⁾ Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. (Cf. v.9 with Luke 24:50-53)

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

⁽³⁾ For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, ³ how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; ⁽⁴⁾ And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: ⁽⁵⁾ And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: ⁽⁶⁾ After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. ⁽⁷⁾ After that, he was seen of James; ⁴ then of all the apostles. ⁽⁸⁾ And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. (See vv.1-11)

5. A literal and physical resurrection of the body is proved by the analogy of Christ's bodily resurrection with the believer's bodily resurrection.

As we have indicated above, the certainty of the resurrection of our bodies is based on the certainty of the resurrection of Christ's body. The nature of our future glorified body is

³ *received*: i.e. by special revelation (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23).

⁴ *James*: i.e. James the Less; the half-brother of the Lord.

based on the nature of Christ's body in heaven. There would be no force in these arguments, if, in fact, the body did not rise again. (Rom. 6:5; 2 Cor. 4:14; 1 John 3:2)

(5) Scripture References

Romans 6:5

⁽⁵⁾ For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection:

1 Corinthians 4:14

⁽¹⁴⁾ I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn *you*.

1 John 3:2

⁽²⁾ 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.

6. A literal and physical resurrection of the body is proved by the faith of the Church in all ages.

Throughout its history, the Church has understood the resurrection to refer to the rising again of that body which is laid in the grave. In past times, and in every denomination, Christians have been taught to say:

"I believe:

- 'In the Holy Ghost;
- 'In the Holy Catholic [i.e., Universal] Church;
- 'The forgiveness of sins;
- 'The resurrection of the body, and;
- 'The life everlasting.'"

(From 'the Apostle's Creed')

The Resurrection Does Not Admit of Doubt

For those who accept the Bible as plenary inspired, authoritative, and inerrant, and who believe in the omnipotence of God, the resurrection of the dead is a fact that does not admit of any doubt. The resurrection is attested to by the witness of the Word of God—and God's Word is infallible.

Nature of the Resurrection Body

Regarding the exact nature of the body after the resurrection, we must be careful to avoid the fanciful ideas of some, and to abide closely by the information provided in the Word of God. The Bible provides sufficient information to enable us to establish some important points concerning the resurrection body.

Principal Differences from the Present Body

Respecting the resurrection body, there are two negative statements made in the Word of God. These are:

1. The declaration of Christ that—in the resurrection—people neither marry nor are they given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven.

Luke 20:34-36

⁽³⁴⁾ And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: ⁽³⁵⁾ But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: ⁽³⁶⁾ Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. (See vv.27-38)

2. The declaration of the apostle Paul that 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.'

1 Corinthians 15:50

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. (See vv.51-54)

Three things seem to be asserted or implied in these statements:

- That the bodies of men and women must be specially adapted to the state of existence in which they are to act and live.
- That our present bodies (i.e. our bodies as now organised, and consisting as they do of flesh and blood), are not suitably adapted to our future state of existence.
- That everything in the organisation and constitution of our bodies which is designed to meet our present necessities, will cease with the life that now is. For example, if blood is no longer the basis of our life, then the organs of respiration (heart and lungs) will no longer be required. If food be no longer necessary, then we shall no longer need organs of assimilation and digestion.

It is as vain to speculate on the exact constitution of the resurrection body as it is to speculate on the constitution of the human-like and glorious body assumed by angels when they appeared to the women at the tomb, and on many other occasions. Suffice it to say that—in their glorified state—the saints of God will not be encumbered by bodily organs which are no longer required. Nevertheless, the form of our present body will be preserved—albeit, in a perfected state. Again, the identity of our present body will be maintained. From this, it follows that we will be recognisable to others in heaven, and they to us.

We will consider this topic next.

Part 4

The Believer's Glorified Body⁵

After the resurrection, our bodies will retain their present **form**. A horse in the form of an eagle would cease to be a horse. A man in any other than human form, would cease to be a man. As Christ appeared in human form after his resurrection, so also will the believer appear.

Not only will our body retain its human form, but it will also retain its identity. The resurrected body will be a glorified likeness of what it was on earth. The individual characteristics will be retained in order to preserve identity; but these characteristics will be greatly enhanced when we see the Lord and are changed into his likeness.

The Bible clearly teaches that we shall retain all our **faculties** in the future life. One of the most important of these faculties is memory. If our memory were not retained, the past would cease to exist, and we would have no recollection of the loved ones we knew on earth. Again, our praise to God would have no meaning; for we would have no recollection of the great redemption Christ had wrought for us, and had bestowed upon us during our earthly life. Nor would we have any recollection of any of God's gracious dealings with us while in this life. All our faculties, therefore, will be retained—yet they will be retained in such a way as not to cause us sorrow, grief, or heartbreak. Thus, believers have the blessed and joyful assurance that they will meet, recognise, and have familiar intercourse with all their loved ones, who—like themselves—have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

The future body will be **incorruptible**. Not only will it never decay, but it will not be susceptible of decay. Unlike our present mortal body, the future glorified body will not be subject to any form of deterioration. Even so, our incorruptible body will be a real body—just as Christ possessed a real body after his resurrection. But it will be a body that is perfectly fitted for eternal existence. It will be a body that is no longer subject to the effects of sin, injury, disease, pain, or any other form of suffering.

The future body will be **immortal**. This is something different from, and higher than, incorruptible. The former is positive: the latter is negative. Incorruption implies immunity from decay. Immortality, however, implies not only immunity from decay and death, but also perpetuity of life: life in all its fullness. There will be no deterioration of mind and body due to age, for there will be no ageing process. Similarly, there will be no decay of faculties such as impairment of eyesight, speech, or hearing. There will be no loss of vigour. Instead, the future body will remain immortal or perpetually in its prime—in beauty, dignity, and honour—to the glory of God its Creator and Redeemer.

The present body is 'sown in weakness,' but it will be raised in **power**. It will be raised by the almighty power of God; and it will be raised as a powerful body. At the present time, we know only too well how weak we are; how few are our senses, and how limited is their range. We do not yet know in what ways, or in what measure, our present powers (or faculties) will be increased. But this body of weakness will become the body of power that God intended it to be, before the effects of sin took their toll.

The present body is 'sown in dishonour,' but it will be raised a **glorious** body. Glory is that which excites wonder, admiration, and delight. The bodies of believers are to be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. We shall be like him when we see him as he is. What this means exactly, is impossible for us to comprehend. However, we should bear in mind the glorious transformation that occurred to Christ's body on the Mount of Transfiguration. This glimpse of glory is a glimpse of the glory that will be reflected in the believer's resurrected and glorified body. For as we have borne the image of the earthy, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly.

⁵ This section based on C. Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, pp.780-785.

The present body is 'sown a natural body,' but it will be raised a **spiritual** body. This does not mean that the body will be made of spirit (for that would be a contradiction in terms). Although a spiritual body, the resurrection body will nevertheless be as real and tangible a body as that possessed by the Lord Jesus after his ascension, and when he appeared in his glory to the dying martyr, Stephen, and later to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road.

We will now leave our discussion of the nature of the believer's glorified resurrection body to consider in more detail the doctrine of the resurrection itself. Before dealing with the Scriptural doctrine of the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, we will consider firstly what the Bible teaches concerning the resurrection of Christ.

Part 5

The Resurrection of Christ⁶

The resurrection of Christ is fundamental to the truth of the gospel. It is essential to the resurrection of believers in particular, and of mankind in general. If Christ be not risen, then there is no resurrection. However, if there is no resurrection, then there is no forgiveness of sins, no final judgment, and no hope for anyone.

Christ, however, did rise from the grave; and numerous competent and reliable witnesses testified to this fact. This, therefore, is indisputable evidence of a resurrection. Since, by the power of Almighty God, Jesus rose from the dead, then it is certain that the Lord will raise everyone else from the dead.

Furthermore, and much to the dismay of its opponents, the resurrection of Christ is one of the best-attested and authenticated facts of history. Even so, our understanding of historical evidence must take second place to the express and authoritative statements of the Bible.

Ten Points Regarding Christ's Resurrection

Regarding the resurrection of Christ, the following important points should be noted:⁷

1. It was predicted in the Old Testament.
2. It was foretold by Christ himself.
3. It was a fact admitting of easy verification.
4. Abundant, suitable, and frequently repeated evidence was afforded of its actual occurrence.
5. The witnesses to the fact that Christ was seen alive after his death upon the cross were numerous, competent, and—and every account—worthy of confidence.
6. The witnesses' sincerity of conviction was proved by the sacrifices—even that of life itself—which their testimony entailed upon them.
7. Their testimony was confirmed by God bearing witness together with them in signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. (Heb. 2:4)
8. This testimony of the Holy Spirit is continued to the present time, and granted to all the true children of God; for the Spirit bears witness to the truth in the heart and conscience of every believer.
9. The fact of Christ's resurrection has been commemorated by a religious observance of the first day of the week from its occurrence until the present time.

[The Lord's Supper is commemorative of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection—until he come. Baptism is symbolic of the believer's death, burial, and resurrection with Christ.⁸]

10. The effects produced by the gospel, and the change which it has effected in those parts of the world where God's Word has been respected and honoured, admit of no other rational

⁶ This section based on C. Hodge, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.626.

⁷ This section quoted directly from C. Hodge, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp.626-627.

⁸ Sentences in brackets added to quotation from C. Hodge.

solution than the truth of Christ's death and subsequent resurrection. The Christian Church world wide is his monument. All true believers are his witnesses.

The Biblical Evidence

The gospel stands or falls on the truth of the resurrection of Christ. Those who, at the time, vigorously contested the fact of Christ's resurrection, and who strenuously objected to the preaching of the risen Christ by the apostles, were totally unable to substantiate their contentions. They could have silenced the apostles, and discredited the message of the apostles conclusively, by securing and producing the body of Christ. This, manifestly they failed to do.

Their failure is all the more apparent and surprising since it was well known by the Roman authorities that Christ's body had been laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. These same authorities had been careful to seal this tomb with Christ inside, lest it should be disturbed by anyone wishing to remove the body! In addition, the authorities had posted a 24-hour military guard on the tomb. It was utterly irrational, therefore, for the opponents of the resurrection to maintain that someone must have removed the body from the tomb and hidden it! The fact that they could not produce Christ's body—in spite of the importance of this body to their case—is ample evidence that there was no body to produce. Christ had risen—as he said.

The Witnesses of the Resurrected Christ

There were a number of competent and reliable witnesses who saw the Lord after his resurrection. Some of these witnesses met with the Lord while he was still on earth; i.e. before he ascended into heaven. Others saw the glorified Christ after his ascension. We shall consider what the Bible says about some of these incidents.

Jesus Seen by the Women

When, on the third day, Jesus arose from the dead, he was seen firstly by the angels; and, secondly, by the women who had come to the now-empty tomb. Concerning this event, the Scriptures say:

Matthew 28:5-7

⁽⁵⁾ And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. ⁽⁶⁾ He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. ⁽⁷⁾ And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

Matthew 28:9

⁽⁹⁾ And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshiped him. (See vv.1-10)

Jesus Seen by the Disciples

The women had met their risen Lord while on their way to tell his disciples about the empty tomb, and about the angel's message. The disciples themselves saw and met the Lord in Galilee, where Jesus had previously told them to go.

Thus, God's Word says:

Matthew 28:16-17

⁽¹⁶⁾ Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. ⁽¹⁷⁾ And when they saw him, they worshiped him: but some doubted. (See vv.18-20; cf. v.16 with Matt. 26:32)

On another occasion, when the risen Lord appeared to his disciples in the upper room, one of his disciples—Thomas—was not present. A week later, the Lord appeared again to the disciples. On this occasion, Thomas was present with the others. Concerning the Lord's appearance in the presence of Thomas, the Scripture says:

John 20:27-28

⁽²⁷⁾ Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

⁽²⁸⁾ And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. (See vv.24-29)

When he had seen the risen Christ, Thomas was convinced not only of the Lord Jesus' resurrection in bodily form, but also of his deity. Hence this disciple's confession *My Lord and my God!*

We should observe that, when he appeared to his disciples, the Lord's resurrection body still bore the marks of the nails and the spear. Many believe that these marks are still visible in Christ's now exalted and glorified body. However, we cannot determine this suggestion from the Scriptures with any degree of certainty.

The Disciples Witnessed Jesus' Ascension

Immediately before his ascension, the risen Lord was speaking to his disciples about the effusion or outpouring of the Holy Spirit in power. This was to take place on the day of Pentecost, as foretold by the OT prophets. Jesus told his followers that, after their empowering by the Holy Spirit, it would be their task to be witnesses of him and of his resurrection—from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the earth. When the Lord had concluded his instructions, he ascended into heaven in the sight of these witnesses. Concerning this momentous event, the Scripture says:

Acts 1:9-11

⁽⁹⁾ And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

⁽¹⁰⁾ And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; ⁽¹¹⁾ Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. (See vv.1-8)

If, in a court of law, two competent and reliable witnesses were to provide incontrovertible and uncontradicted evidence, their testimony would stand. How much more should the incontrovertible and uncontradicted evidence of at least eleven competent and reliable witnesses stand?

It is futile to say, as some do, that the Lord's followers were deceived or deluded *en masse*. This is an irrational, incredible, and totally unrealistic proposition. Furthermore, this proposition fails to take into account that the risen Lord Jesus was seen on a number of other separate occasions—and by many other witnesses—over a period of forty days. (Acts. 1:3.) To dismiss this evidence, or to attempt to ex-

plain it away, is to expect us to reject undeniably irrefutable evidence. This, however, would be contrary to all sound reasoning and common sense.

Other Appearances to His Followers

Other recorded appearances of the risen Lord Jesus to his followers include the following:

- On the road to Emmaus, the risen Lord Jesus appeared to two of his disciples, and spoke to them of the things concerning himself—as the Old Testament Scriptures had foretold. At first, these two disciples did not recognise Jesus. However, later they recognised their Lord when he gave thanks and broke bread in their presence. (Luke 24:13-35)
- As she stood weeping outside the tomb, the Lord Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene. Before this, however—and upon finding the tomb empty—Mary at first had supposed that someone had removed the Lord’s body. She then had gone to tell Peter and John about the empty tomb. However, on returning to the entrance to the tomb, Mary looked inside and saw two angels where Jesus had lain. The angels assured Mary that the Lord had risen. On turning around, Mary then saw Jesus standing there. However, she did not initially recognise the Lord—perhaps because of her many tears. However, when the Lord spoke to her, Mary Magdalene recognised his voice and cried out, *Rabboni!* (i.e. Teacher!). (John 20:1-18)
- By the Sea of Tiberias (i.e. the Sea of Galilee), the Lord Jesus appeared to some of his disciples. On this occasion, Jesus stood on the shore—but the disciples failed to recognise him. Following the Lord’s instructions, the disciples let down their nets into the lake, and hauled in a large catch of fish. At this point, they realised that it was their risen Lord who was standing on the shore. Later, Jesus proved the reality of his resurrection body by eating some of the fish with his disciples. Following his ascension, exaltation, and glorification, the Lord would have no further need of bodily sustenance, nor of the organs necessary for the maintenance of life on earth. Yet, in his glory, Christ is still truly God and also truly Man. (John 21:1-14)

One point to be observed from the above incidents is that the Lord was not initially recognised—even although he was in close proximity to at least some of these witnesses. There may be a perfectly reasonable explanation for this, of course. In Mary’s case, she was probably unable to distinguish the Lord clearly through her tears. She certainly recognised his voice. However, it is also possible that—even although, at this stage, Christ’s body still bore the marks of the crucifixion—his resurrection body may have been in some respects different. This difference would become more pronounced and more apparent after the Lord’s ascension and exaltation. However this may be, Jesus’ divinity and his human form and identity—truly God and yet truly Man—is fully preserved in heaven: albeit, in radiant glory.

The risen Lord continued to appear on different occasions to the apostles. As the Scripture says:

Acts 1:3

- ⁽³⁾ To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: (See vv.1-5)

So far, the evidence for the resurrection of Christ in bodily form is overwhelming. However, there are yet more witnesses to the risen and now exalted Lord Jesus.

Part 6

Other Witnesses of The Risen Christ

Jesus Seen by Stephen

The first martyr for the name of Christ was Stephen. Stephen had been witnessing boldly to the fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. When Stephen pressed God's message home to the hearts and consciences of his hearers, the Holy Spirit began to convict them of sin: especially the sin of putting to death the promised Messiah, and the Lord of glory. Instead, however, of repenting of their sin and confessing it to God, Stephen's preaching enraged the people. Turning on this faithful disciple of Jesus, they cruelly and viciously stoned him to death. One of those who witnessed and consented to Stephen's martyrdom was a young man named Saul of Tarsus. Concerning these events, the Scripture says:

Acts 7:54-56

⁽⁵⁴⁾ When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth. ⁽⁵⁵⁾ But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

⁽⁵⁶⁾ And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. (Cf. Matt. 26:64)

Acts 7:59

⁽⁵⁹⁾ And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. (See Acts 6:8 - 8:3)

Jesus Seen by Paul

One of the most zealous Pharisees of the time was the young Saul of Tarsus. Saul had been educated under Gamaliel—the much respected religious teacher, and perhaps the most honoured rabbi of his time. On his way to Damascus to arrest the followers of Jesus, Saul of Tarsus encountered the risen and glorified Lord Jesus. Concerning this event, God's Word says:

Acts 9:3-5

⁽³⁾ And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: ⁽⁴⁾ And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

⁽⁵⁾ And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks. (See vv. 1-19; cf. v. 3 with Acts 22:6 - 26:13; cf. v. 4 with Acts 26:14)

Those who persecute the church (Christ's body) are guilty of persecuting Christ himself. In hounding and persecuting the Christians, Saul believed earnestly that he had been serving God. Now, however, he realised the awesome truth; he had been fighting against God, and against the LORD's Anointed.

Saul knew he had seen the risen Christ, and that he had heard the exalted and glorified Lord Jesus speaking directly to him. Otherwise, this zealous Pharisee would never have abandoned his malicious intentions to persecute and destroy the Church of God. Humanly speaking, he would never have be-

come the apostle Paul and he would never have written those epistles that have been preserved for us in the pages of Holy Scripture. All these things happened, of course, according to the express will and purpose of Almighty God.

Although not one of the original Twelve, Paul was appointed an apostle by the will of God. Paul had witnessed the resurrected Christ: and this was one of the qualifications necessary for the apostolic office. Concerning these things, Paul himself testifies:

1 Corinthians 1:1a

^(1a) Paul called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God...

1 Corinthians 9:1-2

⁽¹⁾ Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? ⁽²⁾ If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. (See vv.3-27; cf. v.1 with Acts 9:17)

1 Corinthians 15:8

⁽⁸⁾ And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

Galatians 1:1

⁽¹⁾ Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)

Paul had seen the risen Lord independently of any other of the Lord's followers. His testimony, therefore, provides corroborative evidence to the resurrection of Christ—if any such evidence were needed.

Summary of Witnesses Who Saw The Lord

The apostle Paul provides us with a summary of those who saw the Lord after his resurrection. To this end, the Scripture says:

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

⁽³⁾ For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; ⁽⁴⁾ And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures:

1. ⁽⁵⁾ And that he was seen of *Cephas*, [i.e., Peter]
2. then of *the twelve*:
3. ⁽⁶⁾ After that, he was seen of above *five hundred brethren* at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.
4. ⁽⁷⁾ After that, he was seen of *James*;
5. then of *all the apostles*.
6. ⁽⁸⁾ And last of all he was *seen of me* [Paul] also, as of one born out of due time. (See vv.1-2, 9-11; italics added)

In 4 above (v.7), the James mentioned is James the Lord's brother—not either of the two James's who belonged with the Twelve. The Lord appeared separately to his (half-) brother. Before his resurrection,

the Lord's brothers had not believed on him. The fact that one of these brothers—James—was convinced that he had seen and identified the risen Jesus, is further proof of Christ's resurrection. These are only some of the appearances that the risen Christ made to his followers during the forty day period between his resurrection and ascension.

Christ's Resurrection Cannot be Explained Away

As we have suggested already, to dismiss the evidence of so many competent, reliable and trustworthy witnesses who saw the Lord over a period of six weeks is totally irrational and incomprehensible. From the time that the women saw their risen Saviour and Lord, until the time that he appeared to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road, cannot be explained away by plausible arguments or fanciful speculation. This is merely clutching at straws in a futile effort to evade or avoid the truth. Truth is truth; and no fact in history could be more firmly established than that Christ was seen on many occasions after his resurrection.

All Mankind Will be Raised

On the basis and certainty of Christ's resurrection, the believer possesses a sure and certain hope for this life, and also for the future life. By the same token—on the basis and certainty of Christ's resurrection—the unbeliever has a sure and certain prospect of his eternal doom and suffering. For since Christ has been raised by the almighty power of God, then it is certain that all mankind will be raised by that same almighty power of God. Then, they will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Concerning those who belong to Christ, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the firstfruits of the harvest to come. The harvest itself will be the resurrection of all God's people. The harvesters or reapers will be the holy angels. At his coming, Christ will send forth those angels to gather his elect from one end of heaven to the other. In the process, the angels will separate the righteous from the wicked.

We will consider some of these points below as we look now at what the Bible teaches about the resurrection of mankind. Sometimes, we refer to this (general) resurrection as *the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous* (or *the resurrection of the just and the wicked*).

Part 7

The Resurrection of Mankind

(Righteous and Unrighteous)

At Christ's second coming, the dead will be raised. Sometimes, we refer to this resurrection as the general resurrection, since it will involve the raising to life of both the righteous and the unrighteous, and the separation of these two groups. The general resurrection will be followed by the Last or Final Judgment, and the eternal separation of the righteous from the wicked. Thus, God's Word says:

Daniel 12:2

⁽²⁾ 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. (See vv.1-3)

At his glorious second coming, therefore, the Lord Jesus will raise all mankind from the dead. Those who have done good will rise to life. Those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. To this end, the Lord Jesus said:

John 5:28-29

⁽²⁸⁾ Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, ⁽²⁹⁾ 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. (See vv.19-30; see esp. v.25)

This will be in fulfilment of the Scripture that says of those who accept or reject the gospel:

Mark 16:16

⁽¹⁶⁾ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. (See vv.14-20)

Repentance and faith are essential to salvation—and both are the gifts of God. However, for both the righteous and the unrighteous, the Final Judgment (unlike salvation) will be based on works; i.e. on the deeds performed while in the body—or during this present earthly life.

Either Justified or Condemned

At present, the wicked (i.e. unbelievers) are abiding under the condemnation and wrath of God. (John 3:16,18) We too were once under that wrath, until—by the sovereign grace and undeserved mercy of God—the Holy Spirit brought us to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. However, concerning the wicked—i.e., all those who remain impenitent and unbelieving—the Lord will finally judge and publicly condemn them. Then, he will consign them to the torments of an eternal hell. In this place, they will be forever separated from God and his love, and from all hope of redemption.

By contrast, every truly regenerated believer has been justified by the grace of God. Since Christ suffered in their place, God has acquitted every believer of all charges against them, and credited righteousness to them as a gift. (Rom. 5:1-11.) However, they will appear before the judgment seat of

Christ. There, they will be finally judged, publicly acquitted in the sight of God, and granted possession of their promised inheritance in their Father's house. Although the righteous will be judged according to their works, the reason for this judgment will be to apportion rewards to the Lord's faithful servants. In some cases, however—where God's servants have proved unfaithful—this judgment will result in loss of part or all of their reward. The judgment of believers, however, will not result in the loss of their salvation.⁹

The Resurrection as Regards the Righteous

At the coming of the Lord Jesus in his glory, with the holy angels, the dead will be raised—both the righteous and the unrighteous. For the believer, this will be a resurrection to glory. By his word of command, the Lord Jesus will raise the bodies of believers from the grave, and will transform these resurrected bodies into heavenly, spiritual and glorified bodies. Concerning the fact of the resurrection, and God's power or ability to raise the dead, the Scripture says:

1 Corinthians 6:14

⁽¹⁴⁾ And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. (See vv.12-17)

Those believers whose loved ones are now in glory, will be reunited with them at the resurrection. Thus, the Scripture says:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-15

⁽¹³⁾ 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. ⁽¹⁴⁾ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ⁽¹⁵⁾ 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.

The Last Trump

The Lord's second coming will be immediately preceded by *the last trump*—or resounding shout of command; a cry that will resonate around the world. The last trump will signal the end of this age. At the coming of the Lord, the trump of God will sound to herald the arrival of Christ the King of glory and the King of kings. The Lord Jesus Christ will then immediately appear in all his majestic and radiant glory. Myriads of holy angels will attend him. (1 Thess. 3:13b)

At this point, the Lord will send forth his angels to gather his elect from among those still alive on earth at his coming. The elect (i.e. the members of the true or invisible Church world-wide) will be gathered from the ends of the earth. The angels will assemble them from one end to heaven to the other, to meet the Lord in the air. To this end, the Scripture says:

Matthew 24:31

⁽³¹⁾ And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (See vv.23-35)

⁹ See also on *Bible Truths Explained: The Second Coming; The Last Judgment*, by Gordon Lyons.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

⁽¹⁶⁾ 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: ⁽¹⁷⁾ 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.

The reverberating ‘shout’ referred to above (v.16), is the word of command. In the days of Moses, the trumpet call of God attended the descent of the LORD God Almighty to Mount Sinai. On that holy mount, God conversed with Moses, and delivered to him the Ten Words (or Ten Commandments). (Exodus 19:16-22.) A similar trumpet call of God will announce the imminent arrival and descent—or second coming—of the Lord Jesus Christ, and will initiate the resurrection of the dead.

Those who are alive at the Lord’s appearing (Gk., *παρουσία*, *parousia*), will be changed or translated. However, they will not precede those who have fallen asleep in Christ. Those who have died in Jesus will be raised at the sound of the trumpet. Their resurrected bodies will be changed and reunited with their immortal souls. Those still alive at the Lord’s coming, along with those raised from the dead, will arise together to meet the Lord in the air.

Concerning the change from a mortal and corruptible body, to an immortal and incorruptible body, the Scripture tells us:

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

⁽⁵¹⁾ Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁽⁵²⁾ 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.

This change, or translation, of the body will include the glorification of the body—after the likeness of our risen, glorified Redeemer.

Changed into Christ’s Likeness

The Scriptures tell us that we shall be changed into Christ’s likeness. Essentially, this means that—within the limitations assigned to us as created beings—something of Christ’s radiant glory will be reflected in us. To this end, God’s Word says:

Psalms 17:15

⁽¹⁵⁾ As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

Philippians 3:21

⁽²¹⁾ Who shall change our vile [i.e., lowly or humble] 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.

1 John 3:2

⁽²⁾ 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.

At his appearing (*parousia*), the Lord will change our lowly bodies (KJV, vile bodies)—i.e. the bodies of our humiliation—to be like his glorious body. This will coincide with the Holy Spirit’s work of sanctifica-

tion culminating in glorification. When we have been glorified, the Lord will present us faultless and blameless before the throne of God, with rejoicing.

Life in Heaven

For the believer, the resurrection of the body will mark the beginning of endless and abundant life in the presence of God. This will be the full realisation of life eternal; a life that will be filled to overflowing with everything that is good, pure, beautiful and true. No sin will ever enter heaven's glory, for only the redeemed of the Lord will dwell there. The believer's resurrected and glorified body will be totally free from all the effects of sin which—directly or indirectly—attend this present mortal body. The effects of the Fall—such as injury, pain, ageing, decay, and death—will no longer exist to plague and harm the glorified resurrection body. Likewise, the believer's soul will never again experience sorrow, suffering, anguish or grief—for all these things will have passed away.

As will be seen from studying *Bible Truths Explained: Heaven*,¹⁰ the believer's sphere of life may not be confined to the vast realms of heaven itself. Rather, God will create a new heaven and a new earth. In this new creation, the believer will live and reign with Christ, his Redeemer, Lord and King.

The Resurrection as Regards the Unrighteous or Wicked

As we have indicated above, both the righteous and the wicked will be raised at the Lord's second coming. The King will then separate the sheep from the goats. This will be followed by the Last or Final Judgment. (Matt. 25:31-46)

Existence in Hell

At the resurrection, the bodies of the wicked will be changed, and will be reunited with their immortal souls. Their bodies will be adapted to endure the endless sufferings, torment, sorrow, anguish and despair in the hell prepared for the devil and his angels. The wicked will be separated forever from God and his love, and they will be incapable of being annihilated in that lost eternity. Hell is no fiction. So great are the torments of hell that the Bible speaks of this dreadful place as '*a lake of fire*'. If a lake of fire is used to illustrate the terrors of hell, how terrible indeed must be the reality!

Sincere People Will Be Consigned to Hell

We cannot underestimate the torments of hell, nor can we overstate them. Yet, this is the place where everyone outside of Christ will be consigned for all eternity. Among them will be not only the grossly immoral and wicked, but also the good, the kind, the fair, the just, the upright, and even the most devoutly religious people. For, good and commendable as all these characteristics most certainly are, they cannot avail to make a person's inherently sinful nature acceptable to God. Nor can any or all of these virtues cancel or make atonement for one single sin. Nor can they remove the guilt and pollution of original sin. Sin—together with all its guilt and pollution—is cleansed only by the atoning blood of Christ. A sinner finds forgiveness only through repentance and faith in the Son of God. There is no other way under heaven whereby a sinner can experience salvation from sin and its penalty. (Acts 4:12; Rom. 3:24-25)

Many of the most sincere people on earth, therefore, will find themselves consigned to hell, because they have rejected the Son of God. Many of the most religious people will find themselves consigned to hell, because their religion was not the religion of the Bible. They too have rejected the Son of God. Many of the most upright people will find themselves consigned to hell. This will happen because they were depending on their own merits or good deeds to earn them a place in heaven, and have rejected the merits and work of God's one and only Son. Those, too, who refused to believe in the existence of God, or who endeavoured to explain him away, will find to their utter dismay that they had been grossly mistaken, deceived or deluded in their opinions and assertions. These, too, will find themselves stand-

¹⁰ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: Heaven*, by Gordon Lyons.

ing before God in judgment, and being condemned by him to the terrors of a very real and never-ending hell.

All these, and many more, are guilty of shedding the blood of God's Son. For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son as a substitute for sinners. These sinners, however, refused to repent and believe. They may have trusted in their own efforts or their own good deeds. However, by remaining impenitent and unbelieving in respect of God's Son, they were trampling underfoot the blood of Christ. This is why God will consign them to a lost eternity—because of their shameful treatment of his holy and righteous Son. However good these people may have been in this world, they will be forever separated from God in the next—unless the grace of God reaches them first.¹¹

The Believer's Responsibility Toward the Lost

Yet, although the most 'upright' person in the world is wicked in the sight of God, God is not willing that any should perish, but that they should be brought to repentance. Yet, how shall they come to repentance if they are not told what God requires of them? Again, how shall they know what God requires of them, if they do not know the teaching of God's Word? Similarly, how shall they learn to fear God and to dread hell—or, conversely, to love God and to look forward to heaven—if we do not open the Scriptures to them?

Faith is the gift of God—but faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Faith comes by hearing the preaching of Christ crucified, risen and coming again. But how many in hell will one day say of us:

'He knew—but he didn't tell *me*'.

¹¹ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: The Last Judgment; Hell*, by Gordon Lyons.