

## What We Believe Lesson 14 – The Resurrection and Eternal Life

Article 14 of the Church of God Declaration of Faith:

**We believe in the bodily resurrection: eternal life for the righteous, and eternal punishment for the wicked.**

### I. **Bodily Resurrection:**

#### A. First Assurance –

The first assurance that is given to the believer for the hope in personal resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. “But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. – 1 Cor 15:20-21 “First fruits” is the beginning of a harvest. The sacrifice of first fruits required the bringing of the earliest fruit of the harvest season in dedication to God. It was a sampling and dedication of the rest of the harvest that was to come. Christ’s resurrection became the first example of bodily resurrection and the guarantee of the resurrection of all those who are in Him.

#### B. Second Assurance –

The second assurance of the resurrection of the body is the earnest of the Holy Spirit.

The term “earnest” refers to a portion of a pledge that is given in an agreed upon purchase.

Spiritually, it is applied to the Holy Spirit who is God’s personal pledge to raise the believer from the dead: “For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now He that has wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also has given to us the earnest of the Spirit.” – 2 Cor 5:4-5

- Both of these assurances – the resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit are combined in the promise of Rom. 8:11 – “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 dwells in you.”

#### C. Bodily Immortality –

The promise of transformation into the state of bodily immortality is the same to all believers – the living and the dead: “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of her 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 – 1 Thess 4:16-17

In this redemption of the bodies of believers, Christ applies the conquest of His own resurrection.

As His resurrection conquered death in the providing of redemption, the believer's resurrection conquers death for them in the experience of resurrection.

1 Cor 15:22-26 – For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming. <sup>24</sup> Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death.

## II. **Eternal Life for the Righteous**

### A. Transition to immortality –

The transformation that God accomplished in the resurrection and in the rapture of living saints is the same; it is translation to immortality, incorruptibleness, and eternal glory.

It must be first established that the resurrection is in the body; it is a body of flesh -

But someone will say, “How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?” <sup>36</sup> Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. <sup>37</sup> And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other *grain*. <sup>38</sup> But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. <sup>39</sup> All flesh *is* not the same flesh, but *there is one kind of* flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, *and* another of birds. <sup>40</sup> *There are* also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another. – 1 Cor 15:35-40.

Christ in His coming, will “change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body,” – Phil 3:21

- The nature of this body is that it is incapable of death [immortal], and it is incapable of decay [incorruptible].

1 Cor 15:51-54 – Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—<sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.<sup>53</sup> For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.<sup>54</sup> So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

## B. Spiritual body –

The resurrected body is a spiritual body; its life principle is the Holy Spirit. Christ was raised up by the Holy Spirit – He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Rom 1:4

The body of resurrection stands in contrast to the body of mortality, which Paul calls a “natural body.”

It is natural in the fact that its processes of life are those associated with human procreation, birth, and living; such a body exists in process of dying. The resurrected body is called a spiritual body; its life principle is Holy Spirit. Rom 8:11 – But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

The living processes of this body are the processes of eternal life – Paul describes these contrasts of the two states of existence in 1 Cor 15:44-45 – It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.<sup>45</sup> And so it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit.

1 Cor 15:48-49 – As *was* the *man* of dust, so also *are* those *who are made* of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *Man*, so also *are* those *who are* heavenly.<sup>49</sup> And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*.

Believers will be raised up in the likeness of Christ’s resurrected and glorious body: 1 John 3:2 – Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been

revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

This is the promise to those whose citizenship is in heaven: Phil 3:20-21 – For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

The translation of believers [living and dead] is translation into everlasting blessedness.

Paul gives the promise: 1 Thess 4:17-18 – Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Therefore comfort one another with these words.

This is the perspective in which believers look for and expect the return of Jesus Christ:

Heb 9:28 – So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

### C. Character of Heaven – the place of reward

The character of heaven is described and being “new heavens and a new earth.”

John saw the holy city descending out of heaven, as well as streets of gold, gates of pearl, and foundations of precious stones.

These descriptions help believers to understand the character of heaven.

The glory of heaven does not consist in just these figures of speech; the glory of heaven consists of the fact that it is the dwelling place of God.

It represents His presence, His holiness, His power, and His reign.

Daniel describes God as the “Ancient of Days, sitting upon a throne” (Dan 7:13-14)

Jesus taught His disciples to pray: “Our Father in heaven,” teaching that heaven is God’s dwelling place.

Heaven is also the place where the will of God is being supremely fulfilled.

Heaven is the realm in which worship is realized – the angels crying Holy, Holy, Holy and redeemed mankind also worships God.

Heaven is the home of those who have God as their Father.

Heaven is the place to which Christ ascended – the right hand of the Father.

Heaven is the realm where John saw the souls under the altar as they praised Him.

Heaven is the realm where believers move ultimately to their full identity in Jesus Christ.

Heaven is a spiritual place, but also a place of reality. John 14:1-3 – Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup>In My Father’s house are many mansions/dwellings; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

### III. **Eternal Punishment for the Wicked**

#### A. Eternal Punishment

The scriptures teach there is eternal punishment, as death finds an individual, so will the judgment.

There is a judgment for all.

For the righteous, it will be a judgment of works.

Eternal punishment is described as:

1. Eternal Fire – Matt 18:8 – “If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire.
2. Eternal Destruction – 2 Thess 1:9 – These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.
3. Eternal Judgment – Mark 3:29 – “but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness but is subject to eternal condemnation.”
4. Where the worm dies not – Isa 66:24 “And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”

Mark 9:48 – where ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ – does not mean that there are literal worms in hell or that there are worms that live forever; rather, Jesus is teaching the fact of unending suffering in hell—the “worm” never stops causing torment. Notice that the worm is personal. Both Isaiah 66:24 and Mark 9:48 use the word *their* to identify the worm’s owner. The sources of torment are attached each to its own host.

Some Bible scholars believe the “worm” refers to a man’s conscience. Those in hell, being completely cut off from God, exist with a nagging, guilty conscience that, like a persistent worm, gnaws away at its victim with a remorse that can never be mitigated. No matter what the word *worm* refers to, the most important thing to be gained from these words of Christ is that we should do everything in our power to escape the horrors of hell, and there is only one thing to that end—receiving Jesus as the Lord of our lives (John 3:16).

Christ died for all to receive Him and escape this horrible fate; but not all of humankind will accept the mercy and grace of God.

**PEOPLE DO NOT GO TO HELL BECAUSE OF VARIOUS SINS.  
THEY GO TO HELL BECAUSE THEY CHOOSE NOT TO BELIEVE UPON AND  
ACCEPT THE GRACIOUS GIFT OF LIFE OFFERED BY GOD THROUGH JESUS  
CHRIST!**

Hell is not just a future reality; it is a present reality that enlarges itself daily – Isa 14:14-24 –

Therefore, **hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoices, shall descend into it.** <sup>15</sup> And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled: <sup>16</sup> But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness. <sup>17</sup> Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat. <sup>18</sup> Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope: <sup>19</sup> That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it! <sup>20</sup> Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! <sup>21</sup> Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! <sup>22</sup> Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: <sup>23</sup> Which justify the wicked for reward and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! <sup>24</sup> Therefore as the fire devoured the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

- Hell is alienation, a hardness of heart, the wrath of God being revealed now against those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

## B. Unjust Dead –

The unjust will be raised from the dead – John 5:28-29 – 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.

Acts 24:15 – And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

Dan. 12:2 – 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.

## C. The Great White Throne Judgment –

The time of resurrection of unbelievers is placed after the millennial reign and in relationship to the judgment of the Great White Throne.

- The resurrection of the righteous is the “first resurrection” and the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished – Rev. 20:5 – But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.
- Rev 20:13 – And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

The Lord brings out the Book of Deeds and the Lamb’s Book of Life:

People will be judged by two standards:

1. By the works found in the Book of Deeds.
2. Whether their names are found in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

**The judgment of the Great White Throne is a defining point – either heaven or hell!**

Very little is said in scripture of the resurrected body of the unbeliever.

It is immediately observable that this resurrection will partake of none of the blessedness of the resurrection of believers; there is no promise of coming forth in the image of the resurrected Lord.

It seems the bodies of the resurrected unbelievers do not have the glory and image of the heavenly; they are corruptible.

#### D. Second Death –

1. The second death is first a **resurrection judgment** –

Rev 20:5-6 – But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup>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. Rev 20:12-15 – 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. <sup>13</sup>And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. <sup>14</sup>And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. <sup>15</sup>And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

2. It is called the **resurrection of damnation** –

John 5:29 – 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.

3. It is called a **resurrection to shame and everlasting contempt** –

Dan 12:2 – 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.

4. It is called **the second death** –

Rev 20:14-15 – And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. <sup>15</sup>And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Rev 21:8 – But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the 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.

#### IV. **Time of the Resurrection of the Righteous**

John 6:39-40 – And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing but should raise it up again on the last day.

<sup>40</sup> And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up on the last day.  
John 6:44 – No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

“The Last Day” = a period of time

1 Cor 15:23 – But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward, they that are Christ's at his coming.

1 Thess 4:14-17 – For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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: <sup>17</sup> 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.

Phil 3:11 – If by any means I might attain the resurrection of the dead.

Paul was not simply saying he was assured he would experience resurrection; he knew all would be resurrected. He was striving to be counted worthy to be in the first resurrection of the righteous separate from the wicked.

Luke 21:36 – Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.

**You and I should have the same desire to live godly in this present evil world to be counted worthy to escape!**