



THE RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH

INTRODUCTION:

The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ lies at the center of Christian doctrine. But before we can fully understand the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, we must first understand the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh. Why? Because St. Paul says it in this order, “But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen” (*1Cor.* 15:13) AND “For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen” (*1Cor.* 15:16). This doctrine is so basic and necessary that it is said and even chanted at the end of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed – “We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the coming age. Amen.” Furthermore, during the rites of baptism, the person being baptized states his/her faith in an abbreviated ancient Christian creed that includes a statement about the resurrection of the flesh. It was so basic and necessary that one of the Apostolic Fathers, St. Polycarpus, the bishop of Smyrna mentioned in the book of *Revelation*, has a famous saying about it: **“Whosoever... says that there is neither a resurrection nor a judgment, he is the first-born of Satan”** (*Epistle to the Philippians* 7:1, published in *ANF*, vol. 1, p. 34).

THE RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH IS A DOCTRINE THAT EXISTED BEFORE THE INCARNATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST:

This doctrine is not only clear from the New Testament, but also the Old Testament and is a part of Jewish doctrine. So it was not invented in Christianity, but rather understood and revealed by God from the very beginning and continued throughout the ages. That is why there are several clues in the New Testament that it was already understood and believed in among Jews:

- + Martha, in the story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead in *John* 11:23-24: “Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’ Martha said to Him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.’”
- + It is mentioned more than once that the Pharisees believed in spirits and the resurrection of the dead, but the Sadducees amongst whom were some of the chief priests, did not. It is written in the book of *Acts* about the instance St. Paul was in front of the Jewish council composed of both Pharisees and Sadducees, “But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, ‘Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged’” (*Acts* 23:6) which created a division where the Pharisees saw no fault in him. Later, when St. Paul came before Felix the governor, he said: “But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust” (*Acts* 24:14-15).
- + That is why in *Matthew* 22, when Christ was replying to the Sadducees’ story of the woman with seven brothers as successive husbands, He said, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (*Matt.* 22:29-32; compare *Mark* 12:24-27 and *Luke* 20:34-38).

There are some clear prophecies in the Old Testament and indications that there is a resurrection of the flesh. For example:

+ *Job* 19:25-27 – “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” It is known that Job lived at the time of the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

+ *Isaiah* 25:8 – “He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken.” The reason that death will be swallowed up forever and the tears wiped away from all faces is that no one will die anymore or remain dead. All will arise.

+ *Isaiah* 26:19-21 – “Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For behold, the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain.”

+ *Daniel* 12:2, 13 – “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt... But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.”

+ Also, the vision of Ezekiel in ch. 37 speaks about the resurrection of the flesh.

+ Also see multiple verses in *2Maccabees* that speak about the faith in the resurrection of the flesh and those who were willing to suffer and die as martyrs in the hope of that resurrection on the last day (*2Maccabees* 7:9, 11, 14, 23; 12:38-46; 14:46)

WHY IS THE RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH SO IMPORTANT?

- 1) **When God created man, He did so for the sake of man being with Him forever in the form that He created him, i.e. body, soul, and spirit.** He did not create Him for corruption, but rather for immortality. **“God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of His own eternity”** (*Wisdom* 2:23). That is why, in spite of different religions and creeds, people are seeking to understand what happens after death and ask themselves many different questions. In *Ecclesiastes* 3:11 (from Hebrew) it is written, **“Also He has set eternity in their heart, without which man cannot find out the work that God makes from the beginning and to the end.”** Nature itself, with different seasons, shows that there is life after death. Notice that the resurrection of Christ came at spring time when the flowers are blossoming and the leaves are coming back on the trees that appeared to be dead throughout the winter.
- 2) **“The last enemy that will be destroyed is death”** (*1Corinthians* 15:26). When Adam and Eve brought upon themselves the judgment of: “You will surely die” after eating from the tree, they did die – not just physically, but also morally and spiritually. The moral and spiritual resurrections occur through baptism and repentance (the first resurrection that we will discuss further below). But if God intended for man to be with him forever in incorruption, the way that He created him, then it was necessary for the body to rise from the dead to incorruption for eternity. Therefore, there will be no more death.
- 3) **The general resurrection of the flesh is associated with the judgment in the last day.** When we are judged, we will be judged according to the works that we have done (*1Pet.* 1:17; *Rev.* 20:12, 13). So if we are judged according to our works, then

we must be judged in a way that we have done those works. Whether someone does bad or good, that person does so as an entire human being: body, soul, and spirit. So God, being Just, judges us as an entire human being: body, soul, and spirit. So there must be a resurrection of the flesh.

TWO RESURRECTIONS:

The Holy Bible speaks about not one, but two resurrections for human beings. This is clear from the book of *Revelation 20* and the *Gospel* according to St. *John 5:24-29* which we will quote here:

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. **Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.** For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; **for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.**”

Here our Lord Jesus Christ speaks of two resurrections. The first resurrection has the characteristics of: 1) occurring now; and 2) only occurring for those who hear the voice of the Son of God. This first resurrection is a spiritual resurrection and is related to believing in Him in this life. On the other hand, the second resurrection has the characteristics of: 1) occurring at a later date; and 2) occurring to everyone, both to those who have done good and those who have done evil. The second resurrection is the general resurrection of the flesh in the last day which is for all who are in the graves, i.e. all people, both the good and evil. (Compare also *Daniel 12:2*).

WHAT IS THE FIRST RESURRECTION?

We have spoken about the second resurrection already – in the last day, all will rise from the dead and the judgment will occur. However, the question then comes to mind: “What is the first resurrection?” There are two meanings here that are related to each other:

- 1) **Baptism** – Baptism is dying, being buried, and rising with our Lord Jesus Christ (see *Rom. 6:3-8; Col. 2:12*). In order for me to be saved, I must die with Him and be risen with Him. He died for my sake and rose from the dead in order to grant me everlasting life. But then, how do I obtain the gift of everlasting life with Him? – by becoming one with Him in His death and His resurrection. I have to die with Him and be risen with Him in order to obtain what He granted to me freely of His own free will. This occurs in baptism as I am immersed in the baptismal font and come out of it a new creation (*2Cor. 5:17*).
- 2) **Repentance** – If the wages of sin is death (*Romans 6:23*), then when I repent from that sin, that is life for me.

Both are necessary to have life with our Lord Jesus Christ. As He said, “the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live” (*John 5:25*). Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us that both are necessary for our salvation. “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (*Mark 16:16*) and many other verses related both to baptism and repentance as necessary for salvation.

When is the first resurrection? – NOW. In order to have a part in the second resurrection for eternal life, we must live now in the first resurrection. **“Blessed and**

holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power...” (Rev. 20:6).

3) **Eucharist** – Along with baptism and repentance as being parts of the first resurrection, so also taking of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is necessary for the resurrection to eternal life in the last day. “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world... **Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day...** As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever” (*John* 6:51, 54, 57-58).

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION AND ASSURANCE OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD:

The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is associated with the resurrection of the dead. They are two essential truths of Christianity. So when one denies the resurrection of the flesh, then along with it comes the denial of our Lord’s Resurrection. The Resurrection of our Lord is the assurance of the resurrection of those who believe in Him with a body conformed to His at His coming (*Phil.* 3:21) in agreement with His saying: “Because I live, you will live also” (*John* 14:19); “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (*John* 11:25); “I will raise him up at the last day” (*John* 6:39, 40, 44, 54).

St. Paul also writes: “And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power” (*1Cor.* 6:14); “He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you” (*2Cor.* 4:14). He goes into further detail in *1Corinthians* 15 to reply to those who doubt the resurrection of the flesh: “Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming” (*1Cor.* 15:12-23).

The Difference Between the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead:

1) Those who were risen from the dead, whether in the Old or New Testaments, were risen with the corruptible body that is capable of death. Therefore they died again until they rise again in the last day with an incorruptible body. However, the body of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ “dies no more” (*Rom.* 6:9; see also *Rev.* 1:18). Therefore, He is “the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence” (*Col.* 1:18). He rose and became “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (*1Cor.* 15:20, 23).

2) Even though this weak and corruptible body will be changed in the resurrection to be conformed to the glorious body of Christ (*Phil. 3:21*), the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is still a unique event because He has become “the firstborn among many brethren” (*Rom. 8:29*) and, as in all things, He has the “preeminence” (*Col. 1:18*) over us. Furthermore, our being sons to God is different that His being the Only-Begotten Son of God. So there remains a difference in the body of our resurrection which we will rise in after the image of the glorious body of Christ and the unique body of Christ that is “life-giving”. We say this in the confession at the end of the Divine Liturgy: “given for us for salvation, remission of sins, and eternal life to those who shall partake of It”.

THE MEANING OF OUR LORD’S RESURRECTION TO THE BELIEVERS AT PRESENT:

I) The Lord of Glory Who was Crucified is the Same One Who Rose:

“It is the Lord” (*John 21:7*); “He is alive”; “The Lord is risen indeed” (*Luke 24:23, 34*). The disciples witnessed to this. He appeared to Mary Magdalene, then to the disciples of Emmaus, and then to the disciples in the Upper Room (*Mark 16:9-14*). The purpose for this was not just to show the properties of that body, but to take away any doubt and remove any argument against the resurrection and that He is the One Who was crucified, died, buried, and rose from the dead. **All of His appearances after His resurrection were to prove this by either His words** (*Matt. 28:9-10, 18-20; John 20:16-17, 19-23, 26-29*; compare *Acts 9:5; 22:6-10; 26:14-18*) or **His actions** (*Luke 24:30-31, 39-43; John 20:20, 22, 27; 21:6, 13*) by – **1) revealing His wounds** (*Luke 24:39; John 20:20, 27*); and **2) eating with them** (*Luke 24:30, 35, 41-43; John 21:9, 12-13; Acts 1:4; 10:41*).

Through His resurrection, He clarifies the relation that connects suffering with glory (*Luke 24:26, 46; Mark 10:37-38; Acts 17:3, 26:23; 1Peter 1:11*).

Christ will keep the places of the wounds of His love forever and will be revealed by them at His second coming (*Rev. 5:6*), and declare (*Rev. 1:17-18, 2:8*) that He is the One Who was dead and lives again. This was an essential part of all the teaching of the apostles (*Acts 5:30-31; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 2:9*).

II) The Resurrection of Christ is the Testimony of God to Him, and Revealing the Righteousness of God in Christ:

The Resurrection of Christ revealed the justice of God which raised Him to the life of glory to the extent of His humbling Himself and being obedient to the point of death. For Christ “who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation (Gk. “emptied Himself”), taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (*Phil. 2:6-11*).

The disciples witnessed that He: 1) is alive; 2) did not see corruption (*Acts 2:24-31; 13:34-37*; compare *Ps. 16:10*); **3) is the Lord** (*Luke 24:34; John 20:18, 20, 25*); **4) is exalted and reigns** (*Acts 4:11; 2:23-24*); and **5) completed the mystery of our salvation through His Resurrection** (*Rom. 4:24-25, 5:1*).

This is further revealed through not only His Resurrection, but also His Ascension to the heavens (*1Peter. 3:21-22; Acts 2:33, 5:31; Phil. 2:9*).

III) The Resurrection of Christ Gives the Believers Unity in the Life of Christ, and Citizenship in His Kingdom:

+ The Resurrection of Christ Consecrated the Way to the Kingdom. The books of the New Testament presented the Resurrection of Christ not only as the moment in which “we see Jesus...crowned with glory and honor” (*Heb.* 2:9) “who has passed through the heavens” (*Heb.* 4:14), but also as the moment in which He opened the kingdom to all of the believers by consecrating a new and living way through the veil, that is, His flesh (*Heb.* 10:20) – a way that reaches between man and God in which the power of the kingdom of God works (*Matt.* 12:28 = *Luke* 11:20). He Himself said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain... And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (*John* 12:24, 32).

+ The Resurrection of Christ Gave the Believers the Gift of the Resurrection and Life Through His Living in Them (*John* 11:25; 10:10; 1:4; *1John* 1:2; 5:11-12). In this way, He gives joy to the believers and no one would take that joy away (*John* 16:22; *Luke* 24:41, 52). This really occurs through His dwelling in the believers (*John* 14:16-21, 23; *Matt.* 18:20; *Rev.* 3:20; *Matt.* 28:20).

+ The Resurrection of Christ Gave the Believers the Gift of the Holy Spirit (*Acts* 2:32-33). There are several passages that show the connection between the Ascension of Christ to the Father and His sending the gifts of the Holy Spirit (*Eph.* 4:8-10; *John* 7:39; 16:7). The breath of the Spirit is the direct gift from the Christ risen from the dead (*John* 20:22) and as Christ will always be with His disciples always, even to the end of the age (*Matt.* 28:20), so also the Comforter, the Spirit of truth will be in them and with them forever (*John* 14:16-17) that the Father would grant to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith (*Eph.* 3:16-17).

+ The Resurrection of Christ Fulfilled for the Believers the New Life in the Fellowship of the Glory of His Resurrection through Faith and the Work of the Holy Spirit in Baptism and the Eucharist (*John* 14:19-20, 3 – also *2Cor.* 4:14 – *Eph.* 2:5-6; *Col.* 2:12; 3:1; *1Cor.* 6:14; *Rom.* 6:8, 13 – compare verse 11). The Resurrection of Christ gave us the new life, and enabled us for the forgiveness of sins (*Acts* 5:30-31; 13:37-38), because He “was raised for our justification” (*Rom.* 4:25).

This new life is obtained through faith (*Gal.* 2:20; *Rom.* 4:17 – compare *2Cor.* 1:9; 10:9-10), baptism (*Rom.* 6:3-5; *Col.* 2:12; *1Pet.* 3:21), and the Eucharist (*John* 6:53-57)

IV) The Resurrection of Christ is the Beginning of a New Era:

Through His Resurrection, the Messianic Era began. Therefore, “in Christ” the apostles were able to preach “the resurrection from the dead” (*Acts* 4:2). He is the firstfruits (*Acts* 26:23, *Col.* 1:18). The resurrection that is associated with the coming age (*Luke* 20:34-36) truly began in Him. Through Him, it does not remain confined only to “the last day” because He is the resurrection and the life.

Keeping in mind the difference between the Resurrection of Christ and those who have risen from the dead (e.g. those mentioned in *Matt.* 27:52-53) as discussed above, Christ Himself says “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die” (*John* 11:25-26). As a result of this “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (*2Cor.* 5:17). One could say about those who have been begotten again “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the

dead” (*1Pet.* 1:3) that He “glorified” them (*Rom.* 8:30), or more specifically, they became partakers of “the glory that will be revealed” (*1Pet.* 5:1) and that they “tasted...the powers of the age to come” (*Heb.* 6:5) and were transferred from death to life (*John* 5:24; *1John* 3:14).

In spite of all this, the style of all these verses is anticipatory and refers to the future. We must always put along side these verses the other verses that make a balance and use another style that leaves no place for doubt that what the believer obtains by the new birth on earth is really “a living hope...to an inheritance” (*1Pet.* 1:3-4). The “Holy Spirit of promise” becomes a guarantee for what we will receive (*Eph.* 1:13-14; compare *Rom.* 8:23; *2Cor.* 1:22; 5:5). If anyone teaches that these have happened fully already and say “that the resurrection is already past” then they will be judged (*2Tim.* 2:18).

THE MEANING OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD IN TERMS OF THE HOPE OF THE BELIEVERS FOR THE FUTURE:

+ **The Hope of the Resurrection:** The believer lives on the “hope of the resurrection of the dead” (*Acts* 23:6). This hope is founded on the Resurrection of Christ Himself: “But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.... And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.... For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (*1Cor.* 15:13, 17-20, 22). Christ is the second Adam, the new Man, through Whom humanity is restored (compare *Rom.* 5:15-21; *1Cor.* 15:45-49). It is He “who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (*2Tim.* 1:10). Not only this, but He personally is “the resurrection and the life” and whoever believes in Him, even though He dies, will live (*John* 11:25).

The connection between the Resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of those who are His in the life of the coming age is certain, with the same contentment that those who are “in Christ Jesus our Lord” are “alive to God” (*Rom.* 6:11). “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection” (*Rom.* 6:5). “And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power” (*1Cor.* 6:14). “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” (*Rom.* 8:11).

The words of this last verse make us aware of the vital role of the Holy Spirit, not only in the connection between the Resurrection of Christ and our resurrection, but also in the connection between our current state and our future state: “For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that **mortality may be swallowed up by life**. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has **given us the Spirit as a guarantee**” (*2Cor.* 5:4-5). Through the Holy Spirit, we will be changed now to His image and from glory to glory: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (*2Cor.* 3:18). This is because Christ “will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body” (*Phil.* 3:21). This power is the Holy Spirit by Whom our inner nature will be renewed day by day (*2Cor.* 4:16).

The way by which we will be changed in the end to the image of His glorious body (*Phil.* 3:21; compare *Rom.* 8:29) is none other than the way that “Christ is formed” in us (*Gal.* 4:19). It begins with baptism, then our becoming members in the Body of Christ “that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead”

(*Rom. 7:4*). Here St. Paul connects the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the resurrection at present and experienced through Christ and between the resurrection that is to come in the coming age.

+**The Resurrection and the Second Coming:** The center of focus in the hope is always the “*Parousia*” i.e. the “Appearance” or second “Coming” more than it is the resurrection of the dead.

In spite of the coming hope being, as St. Paul expresses it, “that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust” (*Acts 24:15*), the important point for him from the theological perspective is **the oneness between the resurrection of the Christians and Christ’s coming, not only from them being two events that occur together (*Phil. 3:20-21*), but strictly speaking because the believers will rise to be partakers in Christ’s victory.** Thus, Christ will come “to be glorified in His saints” (*2Thess. 1:10*; compare *Rom. 8:17*).

The *Parousia*, or coming, is a joint appearance: “When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (*Col. 3:4*). These words are “concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him” (*2Thess. 2:1*). Those who are dead in Christ are not excepted from this because they will rise: “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus” (*1Thess. 4:14*; compare *2Cor. 4:14*).

Just as Christ’s Resurrection is not only a return to life, but is glorified by victory, so also will be the resurrection of those who are His. The purpose of their return to life again is to reign with Christ (*Rev. 20:4*). The resurrection of Christians and Christ’s coming are two essentially connected events. The trumpet that characterizes one of them (*1Cor. 15:52*) characterizes the other (*Matt. 24:31*; *1Thess. 4:16*) because the trumpet of God’s victory in Christ is the reason for His death and resurrection “that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him” (*1Thess. 5:10*; compare *Rom. 14:8, 9*; *2Cor. 5:15*). Therefore, “those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (*Rom. 5:17*).

THE BODY OF THE RESURRECTION

1) Incorruptible:

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption” (*1Cor. 15:50*). “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (*1Cor. 15:53*).

+ The meaning of flesh and blood here is not our nature itself, but rather the passions and the evil deeds that are associated with them (i.e. flesh and blood).

2) The Body of the Resurrection is Related to the Body of Christ:

Putting on incorruption is closely related to putting on Christ: “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (*Rom. 13:14*). “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (*Gal. 3:27*). This means putting on a new nature, that is, “the new man” (*Eph. 4:24*; *Col. 3:10-11*), the “second” or “last” Adam (*1Cor. 15:45-47*). The body of the resurrection is the body of Christ which when united with Him – as members in Him – our bodies will rise and be glorified (compare *1Cor. 6:14-15*). The meaning of our being raised is that we will “bear the image of the heavenly Man” (*1Cor. 15:49*).

3) The Example of the Plant from the Seed Shows that the Body of the Resurrection is Changed and Different from the First Body in Its Appearance While Keeping the Same Nature:

“Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain--perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body” (*1Cor. 15:36-38*).

The comparison between the seed and the human body is that:

- a) Just as the seed does not spring up and grow until it is buried and decays, so also the human body does not rise until after it dies and decays.
- b) Just as the seed springs up after germinating in an appearance that is different than at first, so also the body after the resurrection will be different by means of the changes that will occur to it so it will be compatible with the way of life in the coming age.
- c) Just as the type of plant does not change from the seed it comes from in spite of the change in appearance, so also the risen body from the dead will not be different in its nature from the mortal body in spite of all of the new capabilities it is given.
- d) The seed when it germinates takes a body that it did not originally have, because God gives to each seed its own unique body. This is also the situation with the body of the resurrection.
- e) The assurance of St. Paul the Apostle that God is the One Who gives the seed the body that He desires for it means that it does not take it of its own desire, nor of the ground, nor from the water, wind, or light, nor from the person who plants it, but from God Who uses all of these factors which are required for its germination according to the laws which God put for it. So also God Who created humans with spirits and bodies that separate by death, is also the One Who will reunite these spirits with their bodies and raise them up to live anew. And as He gave to each one of the seeds its body so will He also give to every risen body the same nature of the body which died after it is developed to be harmonious to the needs of the eternal life.

4) Death is the Logical Preface to Resurrection:

Death is not contrary to resurrection and does not prevent its occurring. But death is the logical preface and natural prelude to the resurrection. It is impossible for there to be a resurrection unless death precedes it. This is the logic that St. Paul uses to answer those of the Corinthians who object that the body does not rise again because it died. Therefore he says: “Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies” (*1Cor. 15:36*). Our Lord Jesus Christ says the same: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain” (*John 12:24*).

An important point here is that the death of Christ on our behalf does not abolish the sentence of death which came upon every person beginning with Adam. It is clear that He allows the law to take its course on our fleshly nature “as it is appointed for men to die once” (*Heb. 9:27*). But He gives us from Himself life from death characterized by being spiritual, heavenly, and new.

5) Gender Differences are Preserved in the Body of the Resurrection While Abstaining from Intermarriage and Reproduction and the Abolition of Death:

Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke frankly about some of the changes that will occur to people in the resurrection. Thus, He said that they would be in a state of abstaining from intermarriage while being immortal. This means that the natural instinct will cease from the body of the resurrection and the impulse for intermarriage and reproduction will stop.

However, nowhere in the words of our Lord did He prohibit the rest of these gender differences between men and women from the point of their appearance alone. “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven” (*Matt. 22:30*; compare *Mark 12:25*). “And Jesus answered and said to them, The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection” (*Luke 20:34-36*).

+ This does not mean that their nature is changed into angels, but rather their way of life will become like that of angels.

They will not be embarrassed of their bodies and gender differences in the resurrection. They will be in a glorious state and full of purity, free of any blemish or feelings of embarrassment, pain, or sorrow. The righteous will not be bare because they will be covered with immortality and incorruptibility (*1Cor. 15:53*; *2Cor. 5:3-4*; compare *Rev. 16:15*); clothed with the garments of salvation, righteousness and virtue (*Isaiah 61:10*; compare *Jer. 23:6*; *2Pet. 1:3-4*); garments that are white washed and whitened in the blood of the Lamb (*Rev. 3:4, 5, 18, 6:11, 7:9, 13-14*). The garments are actually the glory of God that will cover them with the Holy Spirit Who is within them: “for the Spirit of God and of God rests upon you” (*1Pet. 4:14*).

6) The Body of the Resurrection is Not in Need of Food or Drink:

In the body of the resurrection, people will not be in need of earthly food or material drink. Consequently, their digestive mechanism will be changed to something else, or will become emaciated or vanish as St. Paul says: “Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them” (*1Cor. 6:13*). “For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (*Rom. 14:17*; compare *Col. 2:21-22*).

7) The Body of the Resurrection of the Righteous Does Not Become Grieved, Nor Suffers Pain, Nor Becomes Ill, has All of its Members, and is Free of Blemishes:

The dead will rise in the Second Coming with whole bodies that are incorruptible, are incapable of illness, death, decay, or destruction. Therefore, the bodies of the righteous will be free from any wrong, imperfection, or blemish and will be in perfect health, complete joy, and everlasting strength because it is incapable of weakness, grief, or pain. Through the resurrection, the body will obtain supernatural capabilities and will regain all of its necessary members complete, intact, and strong, even though in the earthly body some of these members may have been crippled, paralyzed, or incomplete.

So in the heavenly Jerusalem, the dwelling of God with the righteous, “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (*Rev. 21:4*). “They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (*Rev. 7:16-17*; compare *Isaiah 49:10*). “They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (*Isaiah 35:10*; compare *65:19*). “He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces” (*Isaiah 25:8*).

For if there are many prophecies about bodies becoming whole through the healing of sicknesses and infirmities which were fulfilled from the beginning of the preaching of the kingdom of Christ and its spreading throughout the whole world (see *Isaiah 29:18*; *32:3-4*; *35:5-6*; *42:7*; also compare the miracles of healing found in the

New Testament by the hand of Christ and His apostles), and what the Divine inspiration states has been fulfilled: “And the inhabitant will not say, I am sick; the people who dwell in it will be forgiven their iniquity” (*Isaiah* 33:24), how much more will be the perfection of the bodies in the resurrection while they are in a state of incorruption in the kingdom of heaven?

8) Why did Christ Keep the Wounds in His Body of the Resurrection, and He Ate and Drank With it With His disciples After His Resurrection?:

Our Lord Jesus Christ kept the marks of the wounds of the Cross and the spear in His body after the Resurrection (*Luke* 24:39; *John* 20:20, 27), and He will continue to keep these. For the victorious Lamb that was in the midst of the throne “stood...as though it had been slain” (*Rev.* 5:6, compare 1:7; 5:9, 12). This is because these are not signs of blemishes or infirmities, but rather the wounds of everlasting love (*1Pet.* 1:19-20; *Heb.* 9:12, 14).

Even though Christ ate and drank with His disciples after His Resurrection (*Luke* 24:41-43; *John* 21:9, 12-13; *Acts* 10:41), the body of His Resurrection was not in need of food or drink. He kept these properties temporarily until His ascension to the heavens to prove the reality of His resurrection to His disciples and to remove any doubt afterwards that what they saw was merely a ghost, especially after He entered the room when the doors were shut.

9) The Exaltedness of the Body of the Resurrection of the Righteous with its Spirituality and Glory:

St. Paul the Apostle writes about the spiritual characteristics that the body of the believer will obtain at his resurrection that will make him distinct from his first state on earth in order to adapt to the requirements of his new environment and the new state that he will be transferred to. St. Paul explains this saying: “So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. 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. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 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. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’” (*1Cor.* 15:42-55).

He likewise describes the body of the resurrection of the righteous as glorified because our Lord Jesus Christ is He “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” (*Phil.* 3:21; compare *1Cor.* 15:43, 48, 49; *Col.* 3:4). “When He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (*1John* 3:2).

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Cor. 3:18). “Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43).

KNOWN FACTS OF NATURE THAT SHOW US THE REALITY AND POSSIBILITY OF THE RESURRECTION:

1) The Possibility of Human Bodies Ascending to the Heavens:

In the early centuries of Christianity, one of the major objections against the resurrection of the flesh was that human bodies that are bound by gravity are incapable of ascending to the heavens. The early Fathers of the Church replied to this objection by giving the example of birds and other creatures that fly as well as other objects that although they sink in water can float if made into a structure like a boat amongst many other examples. Augustine, in his book *The City of God* (13:18; 22:4, 11) has given many replies like these to support the possibility of earthly bodies taking a form with which they can ascend to heaven. One nice saying he wrote in answer to this particular objection is: “Let not the philosophers, then, think to upset our faith with arguments from the weight of bodies; **for I don’t care to inquire why they cannot believe an earthly body can be in heaven, while the whole earth is suspended on nothing.** For perhaps the world keeps its central place by the same law that attracts to its centre all heavy bodies...” (*The City of God*, 13:18). Of course, today we have many other examples to show how human bodies can ascend to the sky with airplanes and spacecrafts.

2) The Metamorphosis of a Caterpillar into a Butterfly:

There are examples in nature itself that help us understand the transformation that occurs in the resurrection of the flesh. One such example is that of a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. The caterpillar goes through four life stages: egg – caterpillar (larva) – pupa (chrysalis, i.e. cocoon) – butterfly. When the caterpillar that crawls and eats leaves is in its cocoon, it appears to be dead. But what it is doing is actually undergoing a transformation into a butterfly that flies and sips nectar from flowers. It is that same caterpillar that became a beautiful butterfly.

3) DNA:

Modern science has also made discoveries that help us understand the resurrection of the flesh. DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) is the molecule that makes up the genetic code of every cell of every living being. In human beings, every cell, in general, has the exact same DNA code of every other cell. However, the DNA code in one person differs from the DNA code in another person which gives each person his or her unique identity. So God, Who created every person, and gave each one his or her unique DNA code, is able to resurrect the flesh of all creation, each person with their unique identity.

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- 3) *The Events of the Second Coming*, Ishak, E.M., Ar., second print, Cairo, 2006.

QUESTIONS:

- 1) **Why is the resurrection of the flesh a necessary doctrine for Christians?**
- 2) **What is the difference between the first and the second resurrection?**
- 3) **What are some examples from nature and science that help us understand the resurrection?**