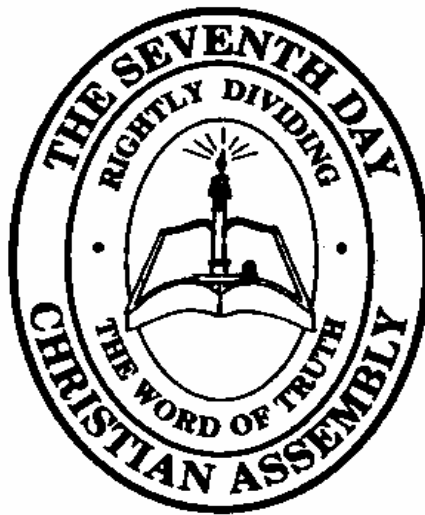


Rightly Dividing

THE
WORD OF TRUTH

Bible Study Course

Lesson Ten:
The Resurrections of the Dead



I f Christ is preached as [having been] raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. (1 Corinthians 15:12-15; RSV)

F or [Christ's] sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that...I may know Him and the power of His resurrection...that if possible I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:8-1; RSV)

A braham...offered up Isaac...[because] He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead.... (Hebrews 11:17-19; RSV)

an open letter from

The Pastor

Most professing Christians claim to believe that Jesus Christ was resurrected from the *dead*. You can see their proclamation of this faith in the church marquees and banners on Easter Sunday: “He is Risen!” However, because of their *additional* belief in the *immortality of the soul*, they render that belief in the resurrection from the dead for the Christian to a plane of *meaninglessness*. Perhaps you are wondering what I mean by that. Well, let me explain in a way that will provide the basis and foundation for the rest of the study.

Definition of terms is an important part of getting concepts across to people. If two people use the same term, but have differing definitions for the term, there is the surface appearance of a measure of agreement – yet, the existence of disagreement beneath the surface. It’s like the old Bill Cosby routine about having surgery using only a local anaesthetic. The doctor says: “Scalpel! Sponge! Clamp! Oops!” Cosby, at that point, says: “‘Oops?’ What do you mean ‘Oops!’ I know what *I* mean when *I* say ‘Oops!’ but I don’t know what *you* mean when *you* say ‘Oops!’” In this case, a *definition of terms* is needed to sort out the meaning.

The problem is simple – and summed up in this question: What does the *Bible* mean when it uses the term *dead*? I know what pagan philosophers who perpetuated the concept of the immortal soul meant when they used the term. Our problem is whether or not the *Bible* means the *same thing* when it uses the term. Let’s consider an example from a typical “Christian” doctrinal statement.

In his book, *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Convention Press, Nashville, 1971), which is based on the doctrinal platform adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1971, Herschel H. Hobbs set forth the statements of faith they agreed upon by consensus that year. In the introduction of the book, he clearly states that “Such statements have never been regarded as complete, infallible statements of faith, nor as official creeds carrying mandatory authority” (p. 4). Nevertheless, let’s consider what they generally agreed upon in their discussion about what *man* is. Because of sin, “man’s *animal principal of life* shall cease; his body shall return to the ground (Gen. 3:19). *But his soul, the real person, is immortal. It will never cease to be*” (p. 51; emphases added). What is his point? Since the human

body is the animating force for the immortal soul – based on Plato’s philosophy – it is the *animal principal of life* discussed in Hobbs’s definition of man.

Hobbs continued his definition of man by saying: “Man is twofold in nature. He is both *spirit* and *body*. *Man is not a body and has a soul. He is a soul and has a body*” (Ibid.; emphases added). So, according to this doctrinal statement, the *real person* is an *immortal soul*; the body is merely a place for it to dwell until the body dies from one cause or another. According to this doctrinal statement, the real person *never dies* because s/he is *immortal – incapable of dying!* And, according to Plato, *never has been capable of dying*. Does God’s word agree with that idea?

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:46: “*The spirit body did not come first; the physical body came first. The spirit body will come later.*” What Paul is discussing here is *when a person receives immortality*. Your next questions should be: Does this agree with the popular concept taught in Traditional Christianity and other world religions? If not, why not? Read Paul’s complete answer in verses 35-50, which begins with the analogy of a *dead* seed.

In a process, there is a sequence in time for each step to occur. So, Paul gave the answer in verses 46-50 about man bearing the earthly image *first* and *then* the spiritual image. But, notice in verses 35-54 how plainly he demonstrated the *process*:

- (a) a seed (the “body”) must “die” and be planted (buried) *in order for it to be made alive again*;
- (b) there is a difference between the natural, *corruptible* body that is “sown” (that is, buried in the grave) and the spiritual, *incorruptible* body that *will emerge from the grave*;
- (c) we are like Adam in that we have *earthly* bodies (that is, we are made of the dust of the earth like Adam – see Genesis 2:7 and 3:19; also, Psalm 103:13-18);
- (d) *we shall be* (future tense) like Jesus Christ was *after His resurrection* and have a *heavenly* (that is, a *spiritual*) body; (e) this will occur only *when Christ returns to set up the Kingdom of God*; and
- (f) since flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (that is, be in the God Family – see

(continued on p. 14)

The Resurrections of the Dead

As I told you in Lesson 1, any who have read Plato's work *Phaedrus* will understand that he is generally credited as being the author of the concept of *the immortality of the soul* – which actually came from the Egyptians and the Eleusinian and Orphic mystery religions that emanated out of the Babylonian Mystery Religions. Plato said that: (a) the soul *pre-exists* with God; (b) it is *uncreated* – which presupposes that it has existed for *eternity* alongside God; and, (c) when it “falls” from its heavenly heights, it needs a human body (preferably a philosopher or an artist) to help it regain its wings so it can soar back to its heavenly heights. This concept presupposes that the immortal soul exists *first* and is at some point put into a human body until that body dies and releases it. This, of course, creates numerous other questions about man and his supposed *inherent* immortality: going immediately to heaven or hell at death (the reward of the “saved” or “unsaved”), reincarnation, limbo, purgatory, et cetera. And...this affects the Traditional Christian definition of being *dead*. Now...why should this concern you?

Plato's concept is a key component in Traditional Christian theology. Why? Because much of the Greek and Roman religion, philosophy, government, and education have been inculcated into modern European-descended societies. “Christian” *Neoplatonists*, like Bishop Augustine of Hippo (who admitted in his work *Confessions* how deeply he was influenced by the works of notable Neoplatonists like Plotinus and Porphyry) and Origen, are largely responsible for syncretizing Plato's teachings with biblical concepts. This is an important point to understand. Pay attention to how this affects the Traditional Christian definition of *death*. Is it *biblical truth*? If not, why should any Christian use their concepts in spreading God's truth?

Lesson Ten

The Definition of Terms

In Job 18, Bildad the Shuhite is chiding Job about the malady in which he finds himself. Just in case Job is being punished for some wickedness he will not admit, Bildad decides to discuss the misery of the wicked with him. In doing so, he makes this interesting point: “[The wicked person] is torn from the tent in which he trusted, and brought to the king of terrors....” (v. 14; RSV). In this vivid description, Bildad casts *death* in the character of *the king of terrors*. Why? Because the fear of *death* exists among men – even though they might have a settled faith about what lies beyond. The mystery of the unknown can still inject an unsettling element into the strongest of faiths. Solomon added his wisdom to this by writing that : “The *living* at least *know* that they will *die*! But the *dead* know **nothing**; **they don't even have their memories**” (Ecclesiastes 9:5; *Living Bible*; emphases added). In Hebrew theology, *death* is a terminus point – there is *nothing* to be had in or beyond the grave: no work, no thought, no knowledge, no invention, no wisdom – **nothing** (v.

10)...unless *God* decides to intervene on behalf of the dead and raise him back to life – *by resurrection*

from the dead. As we have seen in the introductory remarks, Hebrew theology does not conceive of there being any such thing as an *immortal soul*. They did not conceive of man either *being* or *having* any such thing.

1. 2 Corinthians 5:1-5 – What is Paul calling “our *earthly house* of this *tabernacle*”? (Other translations use the term *tent* instead of *tabernacle*.) Does the True Christian long to have a *heavenly building* made by God? Do we *presently* have it, or do we long for it – groan for it – to be given to us? If we do not *presently* have it, what does Paul mean when he says that God has given us “the Spirit as a *guarantee*” (v. 5; emphasis added)? If you have God's *guarantee* that you will have it in the future, would you be overly concerned about going to the grave and lying there for a while without any consciousness?

Comment: Paul is speaking here of the *temporary* nature of the human body (tent) and the desire of the human to have a *permanent* body from God. He shows that God gives to the True Christian His own personal *guarantee* – the Holy Spirit – that he will

have that permanent body in the future. This indicates that there is nothing *inherently immortal* about the human being.

2. Ephesians 1:13, 14 – By what means does God *identify* us as His very own people? What does Paul mean that this identification seal is “the *guarantee* [earnest; down payment] of our inheritance *until* we acquire possession of it” (RSV; emphases added)?

Comment: True Christians are given God’s Holy Spirit, not only as an identification marker, but also as a down payment – a security deposit of sorts – toward the *redemption of the body in the future*. Our bodies must be *redeemed* if we are to inherit something for *eternity*. In other words, Christ is going to free us from the bondage of death – the grave. This is another indication that man is *mortal*, not *inherently immortal*. The preposition *until* is an important signal.

3. Romans 8:20-25 – To what was the creation subjected? Does that include mankind? What, exactly, is the *vanity* and *bondage to corruption* (KJV), *frustration* and *enslavement to decay* (Modern Language), and *futility* and *bondage to decay* (RSV) of which Paul speaks in vv. 20, 21? What is the *redemption of the body* of which he speaks in v. 23? Do vv. 23, 24 tell you that you *presently* have this *redemption*? Explain your answer.

Comment: Paul uses the Greek term *phthora* to describe the condition to which the creation has been subjected because of sin. In Romans 6:23, he says that “the wages of sin is *death*” (emphases added). Connecting the “dots,” we should understand that creation has a *death sentence* hanging over it because of sin. As Paul puts it, *all of creation* groans to be delivered from this condition. *Phthora* means “ruin, destruction, dissolution, deterioration, corruption” – all of which imply the ultimate *death* and *destruction* of all that presently exists. Paul positively asserts that there will be some who will be delivered from this death sentence: the Children of God. Everyone else will be destroyed and cast into utter oblivion – a state of non-existence in which they are totally erased from the mind and memory of God and all those who are ultimately *redeemed* out of it. We have not presently experienced that *redemption*; it is something for which we, in faith, still *hope*. Paul says that we do not have it if we are still hoping for it.

4. Romans 6:23 – What is the *gift* of God? Would you have *eternal life* if you continued to exist as an immortal soul that is burning, but not consumed, in

hellfire? Is this *eternal life* the opposite of the *death* that is brought by sin? Would it be necessary, therefore, for us to understand the difference between *life* and *death*?

Comment: Here is where the *definition of terms* is critical to our understanding of God’s word. Socrates traveled to Egypt to study their concept of the immortal soul. He taught this concept to his most famous student Plato. Plato, in turn, gave a definition of *death* in his book *The Phaedo*: “The soul whose inseparable attribute is *life* will never admit to life’s opposite, *death*. Thus the soul is shown to be *immortal*, and since immortal, *indestructible*....Do we believe there is such a thing as *death*? To be sure. *And is this anything but the separation of the soul and body*? And being *dead* is the attainment of this separation, when the soul exists in herself and separate from the body, and the body is parted from the soul. *That is death....Death is merely the separation of the soul and body*” (emphases added).

Note this definition by Hobbs: “The moment that [Adam and Eve] chose Satan’s will instead of God’s will, they *died spiritually*” (p. 54; emphases added). He based that concept on the fact that they did not immediately *physically die* when they ate the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil.

Is that the length and breadth and depth and height of what God meant in Genesis 2:17 when He told Adam that eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil would bring to him *death*? Is *spiritual separation from God* all that is involved with *death*? Did God mean only that his *soul* was going to be separated from his body? Or, that a *spiritual relationship* was not going to exist between God and man?

These definitions presuppose that an indestructible immortal soul can burn for ever and ever in hellfire and still be considered *dead* – by virtue of being *separated* from the body and *spiritually separated* from God! But, this is not *death* by God’s definition. And...we must understand *God’s* definition if we are to understand from what we are being delivered through Jesus Christ.

5. John 3:16 – What does Jesus mean when He says that those who believe on the Son of God shall not *perish*? How are *perishing* and *condemnation* spoken of in vv. 17, 18 connected?

Comment: The Greek term John uses for *perish* is *apollumi*, which means “to be destroyed, ruined.” When something is *destroyed*, it is put to an end. There is nothing left of it. When something is *ruined*, it is destroyed beyond recovery. To *perish* is to become destroyed or ruined beyond recovery.

To be *condemned*, in this case, means to be sentenced to destruction and ruin.

6. Genesis 2:17 – What does God mean by the term *die*? Does it mean to merely have a *limited life-span*? Would it be possible for Adam to live out his *natural* life-span and still die a death from which he could not, or would not, be recovered?

7. Genesis 3:19, 22-24 – What was God’s sentence upon Adam and Eve for their sin? Does *returning to the dust* imply only a *natural* death? What does casting them out of the Garden and guarding the Tree of Life imply? Would they have access to life *beyond the grave – the ability to be recovered from the dust to which they were to return* – if they did not have further access to *life*? What if God provided a means by which they could be *recovered* from that dust – even though they would still have to die the natural death and decay back to the dust?

8. Job 14:1-5 – Does mankind have a *limited life-span*? How does Job compare mankind to a flower and a shadow? Can mankind *automatically* live beyond the *limited life-span* God has given him? If he has a *limited life-span*, can he be *inherently immortal*? (Compare this to Genesis 6:3 and Psalm 103:14-16.)

9. Verse 10 – What happens to man when he *dies*?

Comment: *Gives up the ghost* means that he breathes out his last breath. The Hebrew term from which it is translated is *gava*, which means “to breathe out; to expire; to perish; to die.” It is not a reference to an *immortal soul*.

10. Verse 12 – How long will he lie in the grave in his *decaying* condition (“continues not” [KJV; RSV]; “does not remain” [Modern Language]; “quickly disappears” [Living Bible])? To what does Job compare *death*?

Comment: *Sleep* is a euphemism for *death*. If you have ever slept soundly through the night without dreaming, then you can understand the comparison. If you have ever been put under the influence of an anaesthetic prior to surgery, then you can understand the imagery. You are completely unaware of what is going on. You know absolutely nothing, nor are you aware of the passage of time until your next waking moment. The doctrine of the immortal soul presupposes, however, that you are *fully aware* and *active* immediately after the death of the body – that you are either having a wonderful time with Jesus in heaven or screaming yourself silly as you

roast in hellfire for eternity. *That is a contradiction of what God has revealed!*

11. Verses 13-15 – Where does Job wish to be put for his own protection? Why? What does he mean by expecting a *change* to come? How will he *know* that his time in the grave is over?

Comment: Job apparently knew that God was going to bring wrath upon His creation in one form or another because of the sinful ways of mankind. It is evident that he would prefer to be in the grave when this time of wrath was being prosecuted. In that way, God would “hide” him. His expectation and faith was that God would thereafter call him – and others like him – out of the grave when that time of wrath is over. That is not unlike the resurrection of the dead at the end of the tribulation period and the Day of God’s wrath spoken of in scripture (read Matthew 24:21, 22).

12. John 5:24-29 – How do these verses explain Jesus’ comment about *passing from death to life*? How will Jesus get people out of their graves (vv. 25, 28)? How many resurrections does He mention here? What is the difference between them? What would you expect a *resurrection to damnation* to be? How about a *resurrection to life*? Do these two concepts agree with Job’s concept?

13. Hebrews 9:27 – Is mankind expected to *die* at least once? Would you consider that to be his *natural death* – whether *timely* or *untimely*? What does Paul imply when he says “...but after this comes the *judgment*” (emphasis added)?

14. Revelation 20:6 – What do you suppose the *second death* would be? Do you think that such a condemnation would be a death from which that individual could not, or would not, be recovered?

Comment: If you have, or are, an immortal soul that leaves the body upon its death, why would a resurrection to pronounce a *second death* be necessary – especially if you have already gone to your eternal roasting in hellfire?

15. 1 Corinthians 15:25, 26 – What does Paul call *death*? What is Jesus going to do to *death*? Based on what you now know, what does that mean? Why would He want to do such a thing?

Comment: If the wages of sin is death, then Jesus will have to conquer all sin. If He does so, there will come a point in time when all that has separated us from God (see Isaiah 59:2) – and caused the *bondage to decay* to come upon us as a curse –

will be destroyed and never again allowed to exist. In fulfillment of Isaiah 9:7, humans can continue to exist on earth without the taint of sin. The Family of God can continue to expand as the humans are educated in righteousness and changed from flesh to spirit when they reach the point where that can be done. Death and decay will no longer be a problem. *Eternal life is given*; it is not something we have *inherently* (Romans 6:23). This is *God's revelation*.

16. Hebrews 2:16-18; 4:15 – Was Jesus fully human? Was He tempted in every way that the common, ordinary human is tempted? How was He different from us? If He was fully human, would you have expected Him to have an *immortal soul* – that is, if any such thing really exists? So, by Hobbs's definition, the *real Jesus* would have been that immortal soul? Do you see anything wrong with that idea?

17. 1 Peter 3:18-22 – Read this very carefully. Why did Jesus suffer for sins? What does Peter mean that He was “put to *death in the flesh*, but *quicken*ed by *the Spirit*” (emphases added)? Pay attention to the prepositions *in* and *by*. *By* what means did He go and preach to *the spirits in prison*? Who were these *spirits in prison*?

Comment: If you understand that there is no such thing as an immortal soul, then you will, no doubt, understand the ridiculous nature of the following discussion. Pay very close attention to the logic behind it.

Several years ago, a young theology student wrote a paper about these verses and asked me to critique it for him. His premise was that, after His crucifixion, Jesus went *in* the spirit to the realm of the dead to preach to the disembodied souls of the people wiped out by the Flood during Noah's time so that they could be saved and transferred to heaven. Similar concepts have been in Traditional Christian theology for centuries – some involving the salvation of the Old Testament patriarchs. He wanted me to put my stamp of approval on his premise – he thinking that he had discovered some great scriptural truth. Right away, I saw that he had a problem with his *definition of terms*.

This concept states that while the *body* of Jesus Christ hung on the cross and was subsequently placed into a sepulcher, the *real Jesus Christ* (His *soul*) was going about preaching to these disembodied souls! On its face, it was declaring that the *real Jesus* really did not *die* – only His *body* died.

Think about this in the context of Paul's discussion in 1 Corinthians 15:12-20 (re-read it). Peter

agrees with Paul because, like Paul, Peter says that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead *by the Spirit*. The preposition *by* is used in the *KJV*; whereas, the preposition *in* is used by many other translations. While it is true that He was raised *in a spirit body*, that resurrection from the dead was effected *by the power of God's Holy Spirit*.

Note this rendering from the *Living Bible*: “But though his *body* died, his *spirit lived on*, and it was *in the spirit* that he visited the spirits in prison, and preached to them – *spirits of those who, long before in the days of Noah, had refused to listen to God...*” (emphases added). I would not call this a *translation*; I would call it an *interpretation* suited to fit one's theological paradigm about the immortal soul. If this rendering is true, *how did Jesus Christ die for your sins*?

When did Jesus Christ go to these *spirits in prison*? Read Matthew 12:38-40. What sign did Jesus give these scribes and Pharisees? How many days and nights would He be in *the grave*? If you read Jonah 2:3-7, you will need to note the description Jonah gives of how he *died* by drowning and being swallowed by the great fish. His prayer, whether uttered *before* he died or *after* God resuscitated him, was answered by God three days and three nights after he died. Jonah was *dead* in the great fish's belly three days and three nights; Jesus was *dead in the grave* three days and three nights. Neither of them had any awareness of anything! No thoughts, no plans, no memories!

Now, who were these *spirits in prison*? There are two places in scripture where spirits are said to have been placed in prison: 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6. It is unfortunate that several translations refer to them as having been cast into *hell*. What Peter actually says is that God *confined* them to *Tartarus*. This is a place of confinement where the rebellious angels are kept until God's judgment comes upon them. Jude 6 says the same thing. The Greek word *pneuma* is translated *spirits* here. That word's definition is determined by the context in which it is used.

The *Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich Greek/English Lexicon* says that, in this context, it refers to an independent spirit-being that cannot be perceived by the physical senses – especially to a demonic power, evil spirit, or fallen angel (pp. 681, 682). So, we could at least see the possibility that Jesus did not go to visit *disembodied souls* during the three days and nights He was supposed to be *dead*. Perhaps during the 120 years before the Flood, He went in spirit to preach to the rebellious angels led astray by Lucifer – in an effort to reconcile them to God. No immortal soul here!

Adam Clarke has an interesting comment about this scripture that gives us another possibility. He refers to Genesis 6:3, where the Lord God (the One who became Jesus Christ – my thought, not Clarke’s) states emphatically that His spirit would not endlessly strive with rebellious mankind. He set a time limit for something to happen: 120 years. During the following 120 years, Noah – a preacher of righteousness (Hebrews 11:7; 2 Peter 2:5) – empowered by God’s Holy Spirit, preached to his neighbors about the coming judgment. Did they repent? No. They mercilessly mocked and ridiculed Noah.

Clarke considers this to be the basis for *their* spiritual imprisonment, which is yet to come to final judgment. He concludes by saying this: “There is no ground to believe that the text speaks of Christ’s going to hell to preach the gospel to the damned, or of His going to some feigned place where the souls of the patriarchs were detained, to whom He preached, and whom He delivered from that place, and took with Him to paradise” (*Adam Clarke’s Commentary: One Volume Edition*; Ralph Earle, ed.; Baker Book House: Grand Rapids; 1967; p. 1306). Clarke began writing his commentary around 1801 and finished it in 1826. If this concept Clarke discusses is true, why would Jesus Christ have said the following: “No man has ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven” (John 3:13)?

Either concept leads to the same conclusion: Jesus Christ did not have an immortal soul. He *died for our sins!* He was *dead* three days and three nights. As one once-famous minister used to say about the dead: “The *dead* are like old Rover – when they’re *dead*, they’re *dead* all over.”

Now that you understand what *dead* really means, let’s understand what God’s word reveals about the *resurrections from the dead*.

Resurrections (Plural)

We saw in John 5:24-29 an important definition and an important number: (a) *resurrection* has to do with recovering someone from *death* as defined in God’s word; and (b) Jesus Christ said that there will be at least *two* types of resurrection: (1) to *life* and (2) to *damnation* – to destruction and ruin. I do not intend to cover again the territory I covered in Lesson 3, “What is Man?”. It would be a good idea for you to review its contents, though, because understanding what man is helps to understand the con-

cept of resurrection from death. What I will do at this point is show you how many resurrections the Bible reveals. I will then explain each of them and what they entail. What God has revealed is interesting.

1. Matthew 25:31-46 – What is the setting of this scripture? What will He do with the nations that are gathered before Him? Does this appear to be a time of *judgment*? Which two groups are formed? Who will get what? Does this appear to happen during the same time frame? What happens to each group?

Comment: Because of other things revealed in scripture, we have to be careful about concluding that all of this takes place *immediately* when Jesus Christ returns – as though judgment is concluded in one fell swoop. Let’s see what Jesus was *summarizing* in a capsule form.

2. From our past discussions, write down the definition of *ordinal number*. If there is a *first*, must there be a *second*? How about a *third*, *fourth*, *etc.*? Now write down the definition of *cardinal number*. If there is a *one*, must there be a *two*?

Comment: Understanding the difference between an *ordinal number* and a *cardinal number* helps you to understand what the Bible reveals about the *plural* nature of *resurrections* we are going to discuss – considering the fact that Jesus said that there is one to *life* and one to *damnation*.

3. Revelation 20:4-6 – Of how many resurrections do these verses speak? How much time separates them? What is the difference between those who come up in the *first resurrection* and those who come up after the 1,000 years are finished?

Comment: *First* means that you must have at least a *second*. So, v. 5 says that “the *rest* [that is, the remainder] of the *dead* did not *live again* until the thousand years were finished” (emphases added). So, some are going to be resurrected at the return of Jesus Christ – who comes to reign for 1,000 years. If these *remaining dead live again*, then they, too, will have to be *resurrected from death*. But, is it apparent that they will have been given *eternal life*? Or, will they have been raised to *damnation*? Neither. What God’s word reveals is that those in the *first resurrection* will not be subject to the *second death* because they receive eternal life – which implies that those in the second resurrection *will be* subject to it! It also implies that the second resurrection is a resurrection to physical, flesh-and-blood life!

4. Verses 1-3 – For what purpose is the Devil locked up in the bottomless pit? For how long? Will he ever be released from it? If so, when? Does this suggest that God is concerned for a flesh-and-blood population on the earth during the 1,000 years after the return of Jesus Christ?

5. Verses 7-9 – Is Satan, in fact, *released* after the 1,000 years? What does he do? Are they a flesh-and-blood population? Is God's concern, therefore, validated?

6. Verses 11-13 – Does this appear to be a description of the *second resurrection*? Are they judged according to their *works*? Can you tell if they are judged for works *before their death* or for works they do *after their resurrection*? How many books were opened – at least three? Were some of the books opened in order that they might be *written* in? If so, what does this suggest?

Comment: When connected with other scriptures, it appears that they are going to be given a span of time to learn God's unvarnished truth. Once He is sure that they have been thoroughly taught, He will reward them according to how they have lived by His truth. If they refuse to repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit, they will be destroyed.

7. Ezekiel 37 – Does Ezekiel describe a resurrection here? To flesh-and-blood composition or to spirit composition? Who is resurrected? For what purpose? Would it make sense that this is to occur after the 1,000-year Kingdom of God has completely subdued the earth? So, would you conclude that God intends to give these people a span of time *in the flesh* to correct some mistakes that they made in their previous life? Would this constitute a period of *judgment*?

Comment: Let's review. There is a group called the *firstfruits* that is resurrected to eternal, spirit life at the return of Jesus Christ. They reign with Jesus Christ over the humans who are left alive after Christ's conquest of the nations (see Zechariah 14:16). So, the *remaining* human population gets an opportunity to correct mistakes they have made relative to God's plan and purpose and be *redeemed*. If successfully converted, they will become the *secondfruits* of God's plan of salvation. If not, they will die and await final judgment. The Devil will be confined to the bottomless pit during this time.

When the 1,000 years have passed, the Devil will be released and will deceive a portion of the human population called Gog and Magog (see Ezekiel 38). They are destroyed by fire from God – they will receive the *second death* because they will have

had time during the 1,000 years to repent. At the same time, or thereabout, there is a *second resurrection* of the remaining dead (who lived and died *before* the 1,000-year period) to flesh-and-blood life – in fact, this group consists of more than Israel. They, apparently, are given a span of time – some say at least 100 years – to be taught God's unadulterated truth and to repent so they, too, can be brought to salvation – that is, *redemption*. They would represent God's *third-fruits*. Do you get the idea yet? Is this a description of *gathering nations before Him* – although it occurs at disparate times?

8. Revelation 20:14, 15 – What two things are cast into the lake of fire (v. 14)? What else (v. 15)?

Comment: One Greek term translated as *hell* is *Hades*, which, simply put, means *the grave*. If *death* is going to be destroyed, then there will be no further need for the *grave*. If they are both destroyed, then there will eventually come a time when there is no further need for the lake of fire! This tells us two things: (a) the lake of fire does not presently exist, and (b) once the ungodly are destroyed out of existence, that fire will go out and nothing but its ashes will remain. It is a fire for eternal punishment (those who are destroyed in it are destroyed *forever*), not for eternal punishing (those who are put into it will not be punished incessantly forever). Those ashes will eventually be returned to the dust of the earth (see Malachi 4:1-3 and Ezekiel 28:18, 19, which refers to the fate of Satan the Devil).

Now, let's get more specific about each resurrection so we can understand the extent to which God really desires our repentance and salvation (2 Peter 3:9). As you might well have concluded by now, this is not what is typically taught in Traditional Christianity.

The First Resurrection

Remember the concept of *ordinal numbers*. It is very important in understanding what God is revealing to us about the resurrections of the dead.

1. 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 – What did Jesus Christ become when He was raised from the dead (v. 20)? What does Paul mean that *in Adam* all die, but *in Christ* all shall be made alive? How did *death* come upon mankind? How will mankind be recovered from death? If Christ was the *firstfruits* of the dead, had anyone *before* His experience been recovered from the dead to eternal life?

Comment: Adam, who – with Eve – brought death into the world by sin, represents the *forerunner* of corruption and death. *Mortality* became the lot of all of mankind from that time forward – but *not* because they were already *immortal*, as some claim. Make the connection to Genesis 3:22-24 where God placed a *continued limited life-span* upon mankind by denying him access to the Tree of Life. I say *continued limited life-span* because the original body made from dust had *earthly limitations*. Even if he had not sinned, man would have had a *probationary* life-span in the flesh until the Lord God had educated him in God’s thoughts and ways in order to prepare him for *eternal life*. Having been given an independent mind, man would have to *choose* God’s thoughts and ways instead of his own.

Jesus Christ, on the other hand, represents the *forerunner* of an eternal life as a *self-sustaining spirit-being* for those who, through faith in Jesus Christ, are recovered from the grave. When He came in the flesh, He was faced with every kind of decision with which an independent-minded human is faced (read Hebrews 2:9-18 and 4:15). He, too, had to bring His independent human mind into conformity with God’s thoughts and ways (see Isaiah 55:8, 9).

Also, here is where you have to make the connection to Romans 6 and 8:9. If you have not repented, been baptized, and received the Holy Spirit, then you are not *in Christ*. Also, make the connection to being a member of Christ’s body (His Church). Paul does not mean that Jesus has secured a resurrection to eternal life for *all of mankind*. That hope is possible only for those who are spiritually united with Him. All others remain *dead in trespasses and sin*. Learn to make use of all that you have learned so these connections make sense to you.

2. Acts 26:22, 23 – To which historic sources did Paul refer in order to validate his defense before King Agrippa? What did Moses and the prophets say about the Christ being *raised from the dead*? Which *ordinal number* did he use? Does that mean that *nobody* had that experience *before* Jesus Christ had it? So, Jesus was the *firstfruits* from the dead? What does it mean to be *first*?

3. John 3:3-8 – What must happen to a person in order for him/her to enter the Kingdom of God? Does being *born a second time* (born again) mean that s/he must be *born a second time of spirit* (v. 6)? Is that which is *born of spirit SPIRIT*? Now, make the connection: How did Jesus Christ become *spirit*

after His death? Was He *born a second time* (born again) from flesh to spirit?

Comment: Jesus is not telling Nicodemus that he must become *spiritually minded*. Nicodemus shows that he understands what Jesus means by being *born again* when he asks if he is supposed to enter a *second time into his mother’s womb*. This is not about a *spiritual rebirth*; it is about being *reborn* as a spirit being.

4. Romans 6:3-5 – What does our being *covered* with the baptismal waters represent? What does our being *brought up from* the baptismal waters represent? Are we expected to live a different quality of life as a result of this *symbolism*? What does the *symbolism* ultimately represent? That we shall be *raised from the dead* in the same way Jesus Christ was raised – as our *forerunner*?

Comment: Remember that your *definition of terms is important!* A *forerunner* is one who goes – or is sent – ahead to give notice of the approach of others. After baptism, we are to live as though we have already been changed by resurrection from the dead. We know, however, that the real change is yet future, but it is *guaranteed* by God as long as we remain faithful to His way of life (2 Corinthians 5:5; Ephesians 1:14).

Hebrews 6:4-8 tells us that we can lose our opportunity to be recovered from the grave if we turn back from our calling (see also Luke 9:62 and Hebrews 10:26, 27). Remember: until we are *born a second time*, we are merely converted – not yet *saved*. Once we are *redeemed* from the grave, that self-existing spirit life can never be taken from us (the real meaning of “once saved, always saved”). I know this contradicts what you have been typically taught in Traditional Christianity, but this is what God has revealed to us.

5. Job 19:25-27 – Did Job expect to be resurrected from the dead – even after his body had *rotted*? Did he expect to be saved from death by a *Redeemer*?

Comment: I like the *Living Bible* translation of these verses: “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he will stand upon the earth at last. And I know that after this *body* has decayed, this *body* shall see God! Then he will be on my side! Yes, I shall see him, not as a stranger, but as a friend! What a glorious hope!” (emphasis added). Other translations refer to *skin* and *flesh* – which sounds like Ezekiel 37. But the *Living Bible* seems to capture Job’s point better: Although his *body* has decayed – in effect, returned to its *dust* (see Psalm 22:29; 44:25; 104:29; 119:25; Ecclesiastes 3:20) – he will be re-

constituted in *his own body form* and brought out of the grave to stand face to face with the One who *redeems* him from death. I thoroughly agree with Job: **What a glorious hope!** This is something that God will do at a specific point in time, not something that happens as an *automatic consequence* of the body dying.

6. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Hebrews 11:39, 40 – Do the *dead* and the *living* receive the *change from flesh to spirit at the same time*? Since Paul has been discussing Old Testament people of faith in his letter to the Hebrews, would that include people of **true faith** from the time of Abel until the return of Christ? Does Paul assert that the *faithful living* will not receive the *reward of the saved* without the *faithful dead*? So, none of the *faithful* – living or dead – have presently received the eternal reward?

Comment: It is difficult for people who have been incessantly indoctrinated with the belief in the immortal soul to get it out of their minds so they can understand God's truth. That belief presupposes that the individual soul immediately *automatically* goes to heaven or hell upon the death of the body. In effect, it presupposes that the individual soul *immediately* receives its eternal reward. *That is a contradiction to God's revelation!* The fact that the dead and the living receive it *together* demonstrates that *none* has *preceded* the others. None has yet received it!

7. John 3:13; Acts 2:29-36 – Has anyone other than Jesus Christ ascended to heaven at any time? Even David, a man after God's own heart? Would that include *Enoch* and *Elijah* – of whom it is claimed that they ascended to heaven: Enoch was translated, and Elijah was taken by a fiery chariot? If Jesus and Peter are telling the truth, then something else happened to Enoch and Elijah? And – since there is no such thing as an immortal soul – that would exclude the possibility of *anyone* having already died and gone to heaven as their eternal reward? *All of the dead* are waiting to be brought back to life from the grave?

Comment: Some will play a game of semantics here and say: "No, no *human* has ascended to heaven, but their *souls* have." Do not fall victim to such a sleight-of-hand word play (see Ephesians 4:11-16). It is clear that Peter's focus was on a *dead* David. Peter says that the prophecies from Psalm 16:10 and Psalm 110 were not about *David*, but were about *Jesus Christ*. David did, in fact, *rot in the grave*. Jesus did not. David did not ascend to sit at God's right hand. Jesus did. As a matter of fact, the re-

mains of David's *rotted body* are still in the sepulcher where it was placed. They even had an opportunity to claim that David was at God's right hand by virtue of being an immortal soul – but, they did not. David will be resurrected with the *firstfruits*, as will Abel – and...Enoch and Elijah. I am pained that you have been told otherwise about your dead loved ones.

8. 1 Corinthians 15:23 – Is there an *order* in which the resurrections of the dead take place? Does Paul again state that Jesus Christ was *first*? When are the *firstfruits in Christ* going to be resurrected? So no true Christian will be *born a second time* until Jesus Christ returns?

Comment: The point at which the *first* group will receive it will be at the return of Jesus Christ to set up God's Kingdom on earth. Notice what Paul tells us in vv. 50-58: (a) flesh and blood cannot enter the Kingdom of God – it has to be *changed* from *corruptible material* to *incorruptible material*; (b) not everyone will be *in the grave* when the change comes; (c) the time called the *twinkling of an eye* will mark the **death** of the fleshly bodies of those who are living; so, the dead and the living will be *changed at the same time*; (d) when the *change* comes, it will be marked by the *mortal* (corruptible, perishable, earthly) being *changed* into the *immortal* (incorruptible, imperishable, heavenly); and, (e) this *must*, in fact, happen in order for **death** to be swallowed up in **victory**. This *change* constitutes the *second birth* – being *born again*. Your profession of faith in Jesus Christ does not mark the moment you are *born again*; it marks the point *from which* you can qualify to be *born again*.

I really like the *Living Bible's* translation of these verses. I think v. 53 captures the essence of what Paul is saying here: "For our *earthly bodies*, the ones we have now that can die, must be *transformed* into *heavenly bodies* that cannot perish but will live forever" (emphasis added). This is exactly the thought of Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:1-10. If we are to receive an *eternal inheritance*, then we have to have an *eternal body* that is capable of enjoying such a tremendous gift from God (Romans 6:23). ***This is what God has prepared for us! This is what we must pay attention to!***

Paul does not say that, when we are *absent from the body*, we are *present with the Lord* (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). That interpretation is cast in the mold of the doctrine of the immortal soul by Traditional Christianity. Read these verses carefully. He says that our preference would be to be *out of this present body of flesh* and *in the Lord's presence in our new*

heavenly bodies. Why? Because that would mark the time when *death* is swallowed up in *victory*.

9. James 1:18 – What does James call those of the true faith – converted by God’s *word of truth*? If they are the *firstfruits*, would you expect others to be *secondfruits* (remember the *ordinal number*)?

10. Revelation 20:4-6 – Would you expect these *firstfruits* to be in the *first resurrection*? What great honor is bestowed upon those who are in the *first resurrection*? So, they will be *priests, judges, and kings* ruling with Jesus Christ? And, the *second death* will not be a threat to them? What would such an honor mean to *you*?

Comment: You might well conclude, at this point, that God is not trying to save the entire world before the return of Jesus Christ. If He is, then He’s losing the battle so far – and...there will have to be a drastic change in strategy and results for Him to win this battle. What we see is that a small number will be “saved” out of this world to reign with Jesus Christ over the Kingdom of God. These *firstfruits* will be the only ones who will have that great honor. Any who are subsequently “saved” will have the honor of being in God’s family with their self-existing, eternal bodies – but they will not be in that intimate, inner-circle of rulers called the *Bride of Jesus Christ* (see Revelation 19:5-9).

11. Revelation 7:1-9 – Prior to Christ’s return, how many from the *nation* of Israel are *sealed* by God? How many from each tribe? Would you expect them to be *firstfruits*? Is there another group that is similarly sealed? From where do they come? Do you see *Judah* and *Joseph* named? How about *Manasseh*?

Comment: The number twelve (12) is the number of completeness; so, do not think that there will only be 12,000 from each tribe and only a total of 144,000. If you are familiar with the tribes of Israel, then you will notice that *Joseph* (Ephraim) and *Manasseh* are there as tribes of *Israel*. The tribe of Dan does not have any representatives. Why? There is no satisfactory definitive reason given. The list is what it is, apparently. This shows a *partial* fulfillment of Romans 11:26, which we will discuss more in another section. Remember Lesson 5 where I discussed the areas of the world to which the House of Israel were scattered. If you are descended from any of those national groups, then you might be from one of these tribes.

The *Secondfruits*

The secondfruits do not come as the result of a resurrection from the dead. They come as the result of the reign of Jesus Christ and His Saints over the human population that lives over into the 1,000-year Kingdom of God on the earth. I will now show you what God’s word reveals about this. This, most likely, is not what your present “Christian” faith teaches – simply because most teach that there is only one day of salvation, which occurs before Jesus Christ returns. When He returns, as they teach, all who have not been “saved” will go to hell. Be prepared to change your faith paradigm – if you want to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23, 24).

1. Revelation 20:4-6 – If the *firstfruits* are priests, judges, and kings, over whom do they have this authority? Read vv. 1-3 > Would they have authority over the *nations* that are being protected from the Devil by his being cast into the bottomless pit for 1,000 years?

2. 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 – Over whom does Paul say the saints will have the authority to be judges? Does he show this to be yet *future*? Does he conclude that we should show ourselves capable of proper judgment over things *in this present life* if we are to be judges *in the future*? Would he prefer that they suffer wrongdoing rather than to call upon the *ungodly* to judge *God’s* people? Does he fear that something is spiritually wrong with them? How can you tell?

3. Think about this carefully: If there are *humans* left on the earth after the return of Jesus Christ, why would they not have been changed from *flesh* to *spirit*? Did they not *qualify* by faith and conversion? Why weren’t they sent to hell?

4. Daniel 2:37-45 – What does God intend to do with the *stone cut out of the mountain without hands*? Of whom/what is this *stone* representative? What will it do to the earthly kingdoms? Will it establish an eternal kingdom in the place of the earthly kingdoms? Will it be ruled by *humans* – or, eternal beings?

Comment: This prophecy shows that the kingdoms of the earth are based on four models: Babylonian, Mede-Persian, Greco-Macedonian, and Roman. All of them have influenced all governments of the earth in one way or another. Jesus Christ is going to radically change the governing paradigm!

When He returns, there will never again be any such thing as a *human government* on the earth.

5. Daniel 7:13-27 – Who is brought before the Ancient of Days? For what purpose? Is this kingdom to rule over *humans* on the earth? Will His kingdom ever come to an end? Who will reign with the Son of Man over that kingdom on the earth?

6. Zechariah 14 – Who comes with His saints to battle the nations of the earth gathered against the Jews at Jerusalem? Will He assume a rulership position? Where (v. 9)? Will there be *human survivors* of that battle (v. 16)? Does it appear that they will receive instruction in God’s way of life? How can you tell? Will His saints rule with Him? So, it is indicated that He and His saints will be involved in bringing *salvation* to these human survivors? Are there *Israelites* among them?

Comment: This prophecy takes up where 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 left off – “...so shall we ever be with the Lord.” Jesus is not going to take the resurrected saints back to *heaven*. He is going to descend with them to the Mount of Olives to conquer the kingdoms of this earth and to set up God’s Kingdom. He will become the King of the earth and His saints will rule with Him over the survivors of the Day of the Lord (read Revelation 8-19 to get the idea of Christ’s great intervention against the kingdoms of this earth).

7. Revelation 11:15 – What becomes the *kingdoms of our Lord*? So this *seventh and last trumpet* marks the beginning of Jesus Christ’s reign over the kingdoms of the earth?

8. Revelation 5:8-10 – What has Jesus Christ made His saints to be? Out of what have they been *redeemed*? Where will they reign as kings and priests?

Comment: Over and over again, God’s word reveals that Christ and His saints will rule over a kingdom on the earth – over the nations and people of the earth. How could Traditional Christianity have gotten the message so messed up? How is this Kingdom going to operate?

9. Isaiah 2:1-5 – If the term *mountain* represents a *kingdom*, which kingdom will be the *dominant* kingdom on earth? Will *all nations* depend upon that Kingdom for instruction in God’s thoughts and ways and safety? Where will it be established? What will be the result of His *judgments* of the nations of the earth? Does it appear that they will be taught *righteousness* in order to come to *salvation*? And, that

would make them *secondfruits* of God’s salvation process? Do you suppose that some will refuse to cooperate? Why? (Refer back to Zechariah 14:16-19.)

Comment: We must not assume that Jesus Christ and the saints will rule over the earth for no purpose at all. If God is not willing that *any* should perish, then surely this 1,000-year period will be spent attempting to bring the survivors to repentance and salvation. Nor should we assume that all of them will willingly and cooperatively fall in line with Him just because they are thus instructed. Some won’t – and they will die and wait for their final judgment: the second death.

10. Jeremiah 31:1-9 – This is a prophecy relating to the “latter days.” It is not necessarily related to the post-Kingdom period known as the *second resurrection*. That being the case, consider the following questions. Are these Israelites “the ones who survived the sword”? How can you tell that these are the House of *Israel*, as opposed to the House of *Judah* (two clues: *Samaria* and *Ephraim*)? From where will the Lord God gather them? What is Ephraim called?

11. Verses 10-14 – Why would the Lord God want the *nations* and *coastlines afar off* to take note of what He is doing?

Comment: Apparently, these are survivors of the tribulation period and the Day of the Lord (a *year* of God’s vengeance that overlaps the last year of the tribulation period – see Isaiah 34:8). They will be gathered back to the land He promised Abraham. He wants the world to take note because He said exactly this in Hosea’s prophecy. It is a testimony that He is *God* indeed! He foretold it and will bring it to pass.

12. Verses 15-21 – Has the Lord God loved Israel in spite of her sins? Has He chastised her for them? Does it appear that Israel is repentant and ready to be reconciled to the Lord God? Has He longed for the day when He could bring her out of this “captivity”? (Read also Hosea 13 and 14.)

13. Verses 22-26 – To whom does He address this part of the prophecy? Will His action toward the House of Israel have an effect upon the House of Judah? Will the House of Judah also be returned to the land?

14. Verses 27-30 – Does it appear that Judah and Israel will be joined together again? Is it clear to

you that the Lord God is satisfied that they are ready to obey Him? How can you tell? Is it also clear that each individual will be responsible for his own sin and can yet suffer the *second death* for it?

15. Verses 31-37 – What does He plan to do with Israel and Judah that will be of permanent importance? What will the difference be between the old covenant and the new covenant? Will the new covenant be more of a *spiritual* relationship than the old one – which is typically called a *letter-of-the-law* relationship? What relationship will this covenant have to the *new covenant* established by Jesus Christ (see Matthew 26:17-29)? What two signs of permanence does He give?

Comment: When God sets His mind to save the nation of Israel (both houses), He will do so through Jesus Christ and the same covenant to which all true Christians have become a party. They will repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit so they can later be changed from flesh to spirit – that is, *saved*.

16. Now that you have seen God’s revelation, how would you react to the following concepts about the *Kingdom and the reward of the saints*? State what you think is right or wrong about each of them. Read them carefully because these are actual concepts taught by “Christian” groups:

- (a) *amillennialism* (there will not be a 1,000-year rule on the earth);
- (b) *post-millennialism* (earth’s population will enjoy a 1,000-year period of peace and righteousness *before* Jesus Christ returns to rule);
- (c) *pre-millennialism* (Jesus Christ will return in order to establish a 1,000-year kingdom on the earth).

11. Write out your reaction to the following statement based on what you now know from God’s word: “Jesus sought to guard against the idea of an earthly territorial kingdom...the thought is that the kingdom of God is not an observable political unit; it is the reign of God among/within men [in their hearts only]....One’s position [about a 1,000-year kingdom on earth] at this point is not a test of orthodoxy...” (Herschel H. Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*; Convention Press, 1971; p. 99). Is God’s *truth* a test of *orthodoxy* as far as *God* is concerned? Is the gospel of the Kingdom of God part of His revealed truth (read Mark 1:14, 15)? May we *really* take it or leave it?

Comment: *Orthodoxy* means that a belief or doctrine that conforms to the usual, approved, or conventional beliefs or doctrines. God’s orthodoxy is more important than man’s (see Matthew 15:7-9). The Apostles of Jesus Christ taught us that “...We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Whom do *you* choose to believe in this matter: *God’s* revelation or *man’s* interpretations?

The *Second* Resurrection

To recap: Christ will return and resurrect the *firstfruits* to reign and rule with Him over a 1,000-year Kingdom on the earth. During that 1,000-year span of time, He and the saints will work to bring surviving *humans* to salvation. We can tell by 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 and Ephesians 1:10 that they also will be working to reconcile all things in heaven and on earth to God the Father (remember: *judging the world and angels*). So, what happens when the 1,000 years are over? Let’s see what most “Christians” are not taught – but what God’s word most assuredly reveals.

1. Revelation 20:5, 6 – When does the *second resurrection* occur? How can you tell that this is a resurrection to a flesh-and-blood state?

Comment: Understand fully what John means when he writes: “But *the rest of the dead lived not again* until the thousand years were finished.” If the *rest of the dead* are to *live again*, then they are going to be *resurrected* out of their graves – just like the example we see in Ezekiel 37. We know it is to a flesh-and-blood state because v. 6 implies that they will be subject to the *second death* – the death from which there is no recovery. They have to be flesh-and-blood in order to be able to *die again*! Now, can you tell why these people were not raised in the *first* resurrection – yet not condemned to hellfire? Here is your clue: God is a fair, loving God.

2. Revelation 12:9 – What has Satan the Devil done to the *whole world*? Does a *deceived* person *know* he has been *deceived*?

Comment: What if someone studies this information and recognizes it as God’s truth? Could they decide to go ahead and live any way they want to and expect that God would bring them up in the second resurrection to offer them salvation? If they *know the truth*, are they *deceived* any longer? Read carefully Hebrews 10:26-31 and Galatians 6:7, 8.

3. 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4 – Who is the *god of this world*? (Think back to Genesis 3 and remember the term *usurpation*.) What has he done to the people who do not presently believe God’s truth? What is the result of his deception?

4. Romans 11:7-10 – Who caused the *spiritual blindness* of the rebellious Israelites? Satan? God? Did He do this to *condemn* them to eternal punishment?

Comment: If *God* causes their blindness, who is responsible for them being blind? While we could argue that God did it because of their rebellion, it remains that *God* chose to blind them instead of *cutting them off without remedy*.

This, in a sense, is very dangerous knowledge because of the consequences for ignoring it. That danger of the second death is one reason God blinded most of Israel. If they had understood His truth and continued in the same rebellious, idolatrous path, they would have sealed their own eternal fate in the second death.

5. Verses 11-15 – What will the salvation of the Gentiles provoke in Israel? Find a clue in these verses that God intends to *resurrect from the dead* these Israelites He has blinded.

6. Verses 16-24 – Is it possible for the Gentiles to lose their place in the *root*? How? What must happen for anyone to continue to be part of the *branches*? So, even though Israel was cut out, she can be re-grafted into the root?

7. Verses 24-26 – Does God intend to bring these Israelites to *salvation* in the future? Whether they are living or dead? Has *all* of Israel been blinded? How long shall those who have been blinded be in that condition? Why do you suppose that Paul calls this a *mystery*? What will the *Deliverer* do to them?

Comment: Notice two important things revealed here: (a) *Sion* is *Jerusalem* (remember Isaiah 2:1-5), and (b) *Jacob* is the *pre-conversion* name of *Israel* (see Genesis 32:22-30 and 35:9, 10) – it reflects the idea of dealing with others through schemes and trickery; therefore, it reveals that the Israelites are in need of conversion. Jesus Christ will make sure they get it.

This prophecy about the salvation of the nation of Israel does not differentiate between Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 37 (see #9 - #11 under *Secondfruits*). It is clear, however, that God has a plan to bring Israel to salvation because we have seen: (a) *portions* of Israel who have repented *before the return of Christ*,

(b) *portions* who are alive as humans *during the Kingdom*, and (c) *portions* raised from the dead *after the Kingdom period*. This should impress you of two things: (a) this is not the only day of salvation; and (b) God does not intend to lose very many humans to the lake of fire – He is not *prodigal* (look it up).

8. Matthew 13:10-17 – Why did Jesus speak to His disciples in parables? Was the *typical Jew* of His day capable of understanding His teachings? Why not? Did it depend upon who was *spiritually blinded* and who was not? (Read the entire prophecy in Isaiah 6.)

Comment: Why would God *allow* some to be *deceived* and *cause* some to be *blinded*? It is evident that He is not intent on trying to *save* the world before the return of Jesus Christ. He is only dealing with a select group known as *the elect*. This group is the *firstfruits*. We have seen that He will deal with some *during* the 1,000-year Kingdom; so, it is evident that He will deal with others by raising them from the dead *after* the 1,000-year Kingdom. They will be *thirdfruits*. Why would God seek to bring them to salvation?

Think about how mankind was judged after Adam and Eve sinned. They chose to *know* good and evil. Part of the *knowing* has as much to do with *experience* as it does with *academia*. In Romans 1:24, 26, 28, Paul makes it clear that God set out a judgment by which mankind would be subject to all of the natural cause/effect problems and penalties that arise from mankind’s acquisition of that kind of knowledge. Apparently, God never intended to lose the battle against the establishment of His Kingdom (remember Lessons 4 and 5). But...He did intend for mankind to learn that *their* types of *government* and *lifestyles* provide no power for eternal life. As a matter of fact, because of the *corrupting nature* of their governments and lifestyles, the ultimate result will be the total annihilation of mankind – and, therefore, the entirety of creation – *unless* God intervenes to save mankind from itself (see Matthew 24:21, 22). Meeting such a colossal failure will finally persuade mankind to eagerly seek *God’s* solution through His thoughts and ways (read again Isaiah 2:1-5 and 55:6-13).

It is significant that these people continued to be *religious* and to claim to worship God. They were divided into various religious groups that might be called Jewish *denominations* and had their own theological interpretations. That, however, did not change what God had decided to do about blinding them. Jesus states it very well in Matthew 7:21-23:

They did not obey **God's will**; therefore, they were God's enemies – no matter the kinds of *religious* concepts and deeds in which they were involved. Simply being *religious* does not impress God. *Obedience to His will* impresses Him.

God has, therefore, designed a plan by which He can teach mankind a vital lesson, reserve him for a time when He can get his undivided attention, and restore him to life in order to fix the problem of his being deceived and/or blinded. Think of all the people in the world who have *never even heard the name of Jesus Christ* – much less decided whether or not to accept Him as Lord and Savior. Such a problem deserves a solution – not the summary execution of the people thus affected. God is love, and God is fair.

9. Ezekiel 37:1-6 – What task did God assign Ezekiel at the valley of the dried bones? What is significant about it being *dried bones*? Would you expect any *life* in them at all? Does laying *sinews, skin, and flesh* on these bones suggest a resurrection to a flesh-and-blood life – or, a spirit life? What added element would cause them to *live*? (Remember what a *nephesh* is.)

10. Verses 7-14 – How many were raised from the dead? Who were they? Does this account represent something God is going to do in the *future*? Where will He place them when He has put His *spirit* (breath of life) in them? What great realization will they have once they have been raised from their graves? What does that say about God's power to *declare* a thing and wait thousands of years to *perform* it? (See Isaiah 44:6-8 and Romans 4:17.)

11. Verses 15-28 – What will happen to the two separate Houses of the nation of Israel? Who will be their king? Will God cleanse them and forgive them of their sins? What kind of covenant will He make with them? Will they walk in His *judgments*, observe His *statutes*, and *do them* (compare this to Genesis 26:5)? How would that be possible if He has *nailed them to the cross and done away with them* – as many erroneously teach?

Comment: You have to realize that the House of Israel, at this point, had been taken out of the land by the Assyrians over 100 years prior to this prophecy (B.C. 721-718). They were already scattered to the four winds with no hope of being returned. Only the House of Judah remained – which consisted of the tribes of Judah, Levi, and Benjamin. The *Israel* that occupies a small portion of the land today is still composed only of Judah, Levi, and Benjamin – col-

lectively referred to as *Jews*. Paul, for example, was not from the tribe of Judah (Jews); he was from the tribe of Benjamin (Benjamite). (See Romans 10:1 and Revelation 7:8.)

12. Now, focus carefully on the following questions: If God is no *respector of persons* (see Acts 10:34, 35 where Peter was speaking to Gentiles), would you expect Him to extend the same mercy and love toward **dead non-Israelites** after the 1,000-year Kingdom? How do you think He would go about *cleansing them of their sins*? Would that require a period of time to *re-educate* them and to show them the error of their former ways (remember: God does not magically *zap* anyone to make them righteous)? How would that relate to Revelation 20:11-13 with books being opened along with the book of *life*? If they are flesh-and-blood beings, would you expect that *some* could still be too stubborn to be brought to salvation – and, subsequently have to be destroyed (Revelation 20:6)?

Eternal Judgment: The *Third* Resurrection

Remember that Jesus said there will be two types of resurrection from the dead: (a) one to *life* and (b) one to *damnation* (John 5:29). Thus far, we have seen the resurrections that lead to *eternal life*. Those who remain incorrigibly wicked will face the *second death*. In both cases, there is involved what is called *eternal judgment: one to eternal life; the other to eternal death*. The *resurrection to damnation* is briefly mentioned in Revelation 20:13, 15 (second part: “and death and hell delivered up”). This is the third and final resurrection. Whom does this include?

There will have been the *incorrigibly wicked* in every step of God's attempt to redeem mankind from the total mess his sin has brought upon him. What to do with these *incorrigibly wicked* to keep them from tainting the human populations that arise in the eternity ahead (see Isaiah 65:17-25)?

Any who have died and remained in the grave will be raised to face their fate along with any who are still alive at this time. This is the situation faced by the Rich Man in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. There will be some who simply do not deserve to be given eternal life. Their sins will have been too shocking to the heart and mind of a just and righteous God. But...God will not roast them in the fires of hell forever and ever – as many teach.

Malachi 4:1-3 explains it very well: *They shall be burned to ashes and trodden under the feet of those who remain. Being left with “neither root nor branch” signals their total and utter destruction. They will not exist in any shape, form, or fashion – and will be erased from God’s memory forever. What a horrible fate!*

This is God’s revealed truth. But...it is not what is typically taught in Traditional Christian churches. I hope you thoroughly understand it.

an open letter from (continued from p. 2)

The Pastor

Hebrews 2), then *the mortal must put on immortality*, and *the corruptible must put on incorruption* at that time because it does not presently have it. It is self-evident that it must be *put on* if you do not presently have it. Consider this point very carefully because it is a key to understanding this important biblical truth – and this study.

Paul wrote that the physical body *ultimately* must be changed *from* flesh to spirit because “*at the last trumpet...the mortal must put on immortality...*” (v. 53). This is an echo of what Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:1-8: “Flesh gives birth to flesh; Spirit gives birth to spirit. You must be *born again*” (emphases added). If man is presently *flesh* (mortal) and will later be changed to *spirit*, could man *presently* be an *immortal soul*? No! Why? Because he is *mortal* and must *die* before he can be *made alive again* in a different form. Once you understand that man is *mortal* and *cannot* put on immortality *until Christ returns*, all other questions about the immortality of the soul and what happens immediately after you die are totally unnecessary. Knowing the *real issue* helps to cut straight through all of the arguments about the immortal soul and the accompanying issues. And, knowing what the Bible actually says makes a great deal of difference in the wisdom of your argument, too. So, where does this leave us with the definition of the term *dead*?

In Plato’s work “Gorgias,” he reveals his philosophy in a conversation Socrates is having with Callicles. Socrates explains that *death* occurs *when the soul is separated from the body*. In this concept, it is conceivable for a body to continue to live without a soul being lodged within it. The soul would not be

able to benefit any further from what that particular body might contribute to its efforts to regain the heavenly heights. At the same time, the soul is *automatically* ejected if the body *dies* – something the soul is incapable of doing *even if it wants very desperately to do so*. The body can and will disintegrate and go back to the natural elements from which it was created. Now, ask yourself what it would mean to Plato and So-crates for that *body* to *die*. Even Hobbs admits that when the *body* has served the purpose of housing the *real person – the soul* – *it will return to the dust of the ground from which it was created*. In this concept, it appears that the body’s only function is to provide the soul a vehicle in which to travel for a space of time – with “death” occurring when body and soul are separated.

But...what happens if man neither *is* an immortal soul nor *has* an immortal soul – something about himself that is inherently eternal and never *dies*? Well, it changes the entire paradigm constructed by most of Traditional Christianity about what the term *dead* means! If that paradigm is changed – and that change agrees with God’s revealed truth – then you set up the necessity for those who claim to be “Christians” to fall in line with God’s truth, as opposed to the “Christianity” that is mixed and mingled with pagan philosophy!

In his article “The Language of the Old Testament” in *The Interpreter’s Bible* (Vol. 1, 1952, p. 230), Norman H. Snaith discusses the fallacy of translating Hebrew thought with a Greek meaning. The Greek translation of the Old Testament (the *Septuagint* – LXX) used the word *psuche* as the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *nephesh* (Genesis 2:7 “...and man became a living *psuche*...” [Hebrew = *nephesh*]). In Greek thought, *psuche* stands for a *breath-soul* and describes that part of an individual that leaves the body upon death – that is, an immortal soul. However, Snaith says that *it has no such meaning in Hebrew*. Pay close attention to his argument.

Snaith concludes by saying: “Since the word ‘soul’ in the English translation stands for the Hebrew *nephesh*, *there is not one single instance in the Old Testament where the word ‘soul’ should be thought of as that which survives death*. When the Bible writer says...that ‘God breathed into [man’s] nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living *soul*,’...he does not mean that God thereby *gave* to man an *immortal soul*. He means [by the term *nephesh*] that God...breathed into him his own life-giving breath, so that this shape of dust became alive...*If, therefore, the belief in the immortality of the human soul is held to be a Christian doctrine, then it*

should be realized that it is not a biblical doctrine. The *biblical doctrine* is of a resurrection life for those who ‘have the spirit’ and are ‘in Christ...’ (see Romans 8:9-17; emphases added). Does it strike you as being a bit peculiar that something can be a “Christian” doctrine, yet not be a “biblical” doctrine? Such is the nature of the problem.

John Short, in his expository comments in *The Interpreter’s Bible* (Vol. 10, 1952, p. 253) about 1 Corinthians 15:51-58, wrote: “The Christian doctrine *is not one of immortality but of resurrection.* We shall do well to get this point clear. As expounded by the Apostle Paul...man’s hope of survival depends *not on the inherent immortality of his soul*, but on the act of God. His immortality is involved in his *resurrection* [that is, it is through the resurrection that man achieves immortality], not his resurrection in his immortality [that is, the body is not raised from the grave in order to reunite it with his immortal soul]. *There is nothing in Paul’s writings nor in the N.T. to suggest that the soul is inherently* [that is, in its very nature] *immortal*” (emphases added). You can see in Ezekiel 18:4, 20 that *souls* – that is, *nephesh*, the same word used in Genesis 2:7 – are *perishable, corruptible, mortal, and capable of becoming lifeless.*

I would like to point out the neither Snaith nor Short is associated with The Seventh Day Christian Assembly in any way whatsoever. I use quotes from highly respected theologians to demonstrate that I am not the only one who has knowledge of these things. Nor is this knowledge the peculiar possession of The Seventh Day Christian Assembly. I realize that God has been fulfilling an important prophecy from Amos 8:11, 12. There exists an absolute *famine* of hearing God’s *truth*. *Parts* of it are known – but *parts* are not enough when it is mixed with so much pagan trash that it is unrecognizable as *God’s* word. If you are going to worship God in spirit and in truth (see John 4:23, 24), then you must learn the difference. It is not enough to be *religious* or *good*. You must be obedient to God’s revealed truth and will.

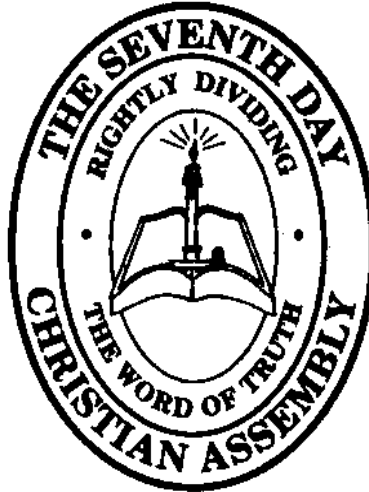
With that in mind, let’s discover God’s revealed truth about the resurrection of the *dead*.

In Christ’s Service,

Larry E. Ford, Pastor

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Straight Talk . . . Plain Truth

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