

44. Learning How We Should Live in View of the Resurrection

In our last topic, we saw that Paul answered some of the questions that new Christians ask about the resurrection. We saw that Paul gave us examples that will help us to explain to our physical and spiritual children the difference between the physical body that they now have and the spiritual body that they will have when Christ takes them to heaven. However, the resurrection does more than just prepare us for the future. The resurrection also gives meaning to our lives today and we see that as we grow in our understanding of the resurrection it will help us to understand how to live our lives with purpose as we wait for the coming of the Lord to give us resurrection bodies.

In the New Testament, the word “mystery” is used to explain something that was not previously revealed in the Old Testament. In Ephesians 3:4-6, Paul wrote, “By which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.” In the Old Testament, it was not revealed that the Gentiles would become fellow heirs with the Jews of the promises of Christ through the Gospel.

We see that Paul also writes about another mystery that was not revealed in the Old Testament. In 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, we read, “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.” Here, we see that Paul explains what will happen to all Christians when Christ comes for the church to take us to heaven at the rapture.

When Christ comes to take us to heaven at the rapture, some Christians will be alive on the earth. If we are among those Christians, we will not experience physical death (sleep). Instead, we will be changed. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 says, “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” Here, we see that Christ is going to come at the rapture and take all Christians to heaven. Those Christians who have died will return with Christ with their souls and spirits. Then, their bodies will be raised as new bodies (spiritual bodies) and rejoined with their souls and spirits.

We also see that if we are still alive and remain, we will also be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. However, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 says that at that very moment, our bodies will be changed. This change will happen very suddenly. In fact, it says it will happen in the twinkling of an eye. Since our eyes move faster than any other part of the body, it will happen

in the faction of a second. This will happen at the time that the trumpet sounds to call the church to heaven at the rapture. At the moment that the trumpet sounds, the dead will have their bodies raised back to life. These new spiritual bodies will be like the body of Christ because they will be bodies that are incorruptible. This means that they can never rot or decay but will be perfect bodies for all eternity. At the same time that the bodies of the dead in Christ are being raised, the bodies of all Christians that are still alive will also be changed. As a result, when we meet the Lord in the clouds we will all have incorruptible bodies.

In fact, we see that there will be two changes to our old natural body. 1 Corinthians 15:53-54 says, “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.’” This human body that now rots and decays will put on incorruption so that it will no longer rot or decay. This mortal body, or body that dies, must put on immortality. “Immortality” means that *our new body will never die* but will last forever because it is an everlasting body. The word that is translated “victory” means *to have complete victory*.

In Isaiah 25:8, we read, “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.” Here, we see that the words written by Isaiah will be carried out in the lives of the Christians at the moment of the rapture. The word translated “victory” is only used four times in the New Testament and three are here in verses 54-57. The other time is in Matthew 12:20 where we read, “A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends forth justice to victory.” A reed was used as a small musical instrument. Once it was cracked it was useless. However, Christ came to restore those whose lives had been useless into lives that became useful. He came to give the humble complete victory.

In 1 Corinthians 15:55-56, we read, “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law.” Verse 55 is based on Hosea 13:14 where we read, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes.” The statement from Hosea compared death to the sting of a bee. Here, we see that the sting of death is removed. We see that the grave has lost its power.

Then, verse 56 explains why the sting of death and the power of the grave have both been removed. Death is the result of sin. Romans 5:12 says, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” Here, we see that the resurrection defeats the sting of death. Since the strength of sin is the law, we see that the law no longer has an effect over us once we place our trust in Christ. Galatians 3:24-25 says, “Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” The law completed its purpose when it brought us to Christ and so we are no longer under the law.

As a result, as Christians, 1 Corinthians 15:57 tells us, “But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the

victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Here, we see that we can now give thanks to God because Christ has given us total victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. This victory is not just a future victory. Since this victory is given to us through our Lord Jesus Christ, it means that as Christians we are able to enjoy the practical benefits of that victory right now. This verse shows us that one of the things that this victory means is that we are now able to give thanks instead of complaining. Ephesians 5:20 says, “Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Here, we are reminded of one of the present benefits of the resurrection. We see that instead of being controlled by fear we can be filled with an attitude of thankfulness.

We also go on to see that the resurrection gives us the power to make an impact for the Lord while we remain on this earth. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” This verse points out several reasons why our lives are able to have an impact for the Lord.

First, we have become beloved brethren. Romans 8:14-17 says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.” As beloved brethren, we have direct access to the Father through Christ and we have become joint heirs with Christ.

Second, the word that is translated “steadfast” means that *we are able to stand firm in the strength that Christ gives us* as we yield to the Holy Spirit. Third, the word that is translated “unmovable” means *what cannot be moved from its place or firmly persistent*. This means that we can be persistent as we stand firm in Christ. Fourth, we see that we can always be abounding in the work of the Lord. The word that is translated “abounding” means *to exceed or overflow*. The resurrection means that Christ is able to give us His strength so that we can overflow in our work for the Lord. Ephesians 3:20-21 says, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” We can know ourselves and assure our children that Christ is able to do through our lives more than we could ever imagine. For that reason, we can know that our service for the Lord is not in vain. As we help our children to realize that the resurrection means that Christ is able to do more through their lives than they can ever imagine, they will realize why service for the Lord has such great value on this earth. They will see that service for the Lord gives them a purpose for life. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children understand the value of the resurrection for today.