

United Church of God, *an International Association*



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The Resurrections *Doctrinal Paper*

From the Council of Elders
August 2003

All scriptures are quoted from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version* (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee) unless otherwise noted.

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is fundamental to our understanding of Jesus Christ, His Church and His plan for every human being since the beginning of mankind. This doctrine is one of the “elementary principles of Christ” listed in Hebrews 6:1-2:

“Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of *resurrection of the dead*, and of eternal judgment” (emphasis added throughout).¹

This teaching is fundamental and one of the first things that a Christian should be taught.

Eternal life, through the resurrection is the hope of all mankind (Titus 1:2). Yet there is an order in which all the dead will be resurrected. The apostle Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15:22-24, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But *each in his own order*: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.”

Christ was the first to be resurrected to eternal life, but all who have lived will be resurrected in a certain order. Each resurrection is different and unique. Each has its own characteristics. We’ll begin by looking at the most important resurrection that ever has or will occur—the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the only one who has been resurrected from the dead to eternal life. As the following scriptures show, no one else has been resurrected to everlasting life—not Moses, Abraham, David, Elijah, Peter, Paul or anyone else.

Acts 26:22: “Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come—that the Christ would suffer, that He would be *the first to rise from the dead*, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.”

Colossians 1:18: “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, *the firstborn from the dead*, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”

¹ Paul, the author of Hebrews, didn’t want to go over these things “again,” meaning that they had already reviewed the six elementary principles of Christ that are listed.

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

Revelation 1:5: “And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, *the firstborn from the dead*, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.”

But how can Jesus be “the first to rise from the dead”? What about those in the Old Testament that God resurrected during the time of Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 17:17-23; 2 Kings 4:32-37; 13:21)? How about those in the New Testament that Christ resurrected during His ministry (Luke 7:12-15; 8:49-55; John 11:43-44)?

All of these individuals, as the following scriptures show, were only resurrected to a completion of their physical lives. Their lives were only extended a number of years, and since they were mortal, they eventually died.

John 3:13: “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of man who is in heaven.”

1 Corinthians 15:20: “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

1 Corinthians 15:22-23: “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.”

Hebrews 11:39: “And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.”

Therefore, Jesus Christ is “the first to rise from the dead” as an immortal spirit being. No one else has been resurrected to eternal life.

Regarding the term “firstfruits” that refers to Christ’s resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, the Greek word is *aparche*, which *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* defines as:

“Primarily, ‘an offering of firstfruits’ (akin to *aparchomai*, ‘to make a beginning’; in sacrifices, ‘to offer firstfruits’). ‘Though the English word is plural in each of its occurrences save Rom. 11:16, the Greek word is always singular. Two Hebrew words are thus translated, one meaning the ‘chief’ or ‘principal part,’ e.g., Num. 18:12; Prov. 3:9; the other, ‘the earliest ripe of the crop or of the tree,’ e.g., Ex. 23:16; Neh. 10:35; they are found together, e.g., in Ex. 23:19, ‘the first of the firstfruits.’”²

A firstfruit indicates that which is first in order or first in importance. For Christ, both applications apply. The resurrection of Jesus Christ makes it possible for others to be

² Vine, W.E., *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985).

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

included in the firstfruit harvest “at His coming” (1 Corinthians 15:23).³ The resurrection of human beings that are part of the firstfruit harvest is called in Revelation 20:6, “the first resurrection.”

The First Resurrection

The expression “first resurrection” proves that there has to be at least one more resurrection. You can’t say “first” if it is the only one. One would then only say “the resurrection.”

The first resurrection will be comprised of those who have died in the faith and those who are physically alive in the faith at Christ’s return. There are several descriptive passages of this resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:23: “But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.”

Philippians 3:8-11: “Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

Philippians 3:20-21: “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 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.”

Hebrews 11:32-35: “And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.”

Revelation 20:4-6: “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his

³ Regarding the term ‘order,’ *Robertson’s Word Pictures* mentions: “An old military term from *tasso*, to arrange, only here in N.T. Each in his own division, troop, rank” (note on 1 Corinthians 15:23). So the dead will arise in accordance with the group assigned by God.

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

Revelation 20:4-6 is a key passage from which several questions may arise due to the writing style of John. Some of these questions will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

Will the saints rule for only “a thousand years”? Though “a thousand years” is only mentioned here, this passage should be understood in light of all the scriptures concerning the reign of the saints. Those in the first resurrection will reign with Christ forever (Daniel 12:3; Revelation 22:5, et. al.). Therefore the reference to a “thousand years” does not limit the reign of the saints to that time period. The “thousand years” are part of a greater whole—eternity.

Who are the saints that will be seated on the thrones in Revelation 20:4 (i.e. “they sat on [the thrones] and judgment was committed to them”)? The identity of “they” and “them” is not easily detected in the grammar. Three options are considered below.

1. Are these saints, exclusively, those martyred in the end time by the beast power, i.e. “those who had been beheaded”? Grammatically speaking, the martyrs could be the subject of “they” and “them.”

The verse begins with, “And I saw” those seated on thrones. The next statement says, “Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded . . .” However, this second “*I saw*” is not in the Greek, as noted in some translations. The omission of this phrase could better identify these martyrs with those seated on thrones in the beginning of the verse. Notice *The Interlinear KJV-NIV*:

“And I saw thrones, and they that sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them and the souls of the [ones] having been beheaded because of the witness of Jesus and because of the word of God, and who did not worship the beast . . .” (Alfred Marshall, Zondervan, 1975).

Additionally, the expression, “and [*kai*] the souls of the [ones] having been beheaded,” could be rendered differently. The Greek word *kai* is translated differently, e.g. “and, even, indeed, then, but, also,” etc., according to the context in which it is used. Therefore, a possible reading of this verse is, “. . . I saw thrones, and they that sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them, even the souls of the [ones] having been beheaded . . .”

2. Does another group of saints join the martyrs upon the thrones of Revelation 20:4? The grammar can allow for an additional group of firstfruits—“and who

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

[*kai hoitines*] did not worship the beast . . .” (*Interlinear*). The Greek *hoitines* is the plural for *hostis*, meaning “anyone who, whoever, everyone who,” etc. So a possible rendering is “. . . even the souls of them that were beheaded . . . and everyone who did not worship the beast . . .”

This clause (*kai hoitines*) is discussed in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*: “It could simply introduce a further qualifying phrase to the identification of the martyrs . . . But it may also be understood to introduce a second group . . . This immediately alleviates a thorny problem, i.e., why only the martyrs should live and reign with Christ” (Zondervan Publishing House, 1992). *Expositor’s* also notes that this could be a second group of martyrs. Nevertheless, the grammar could include a second group of firstfruits, who had not been martyred, seated upon the thrones.

3. Lastly, does Revelation 20:4 include all the saints who have ever lived? This conclusion is according to the harmony of all the related scriptures, not just the grammar in this verse. Consequently, this would remove the “thorny problem” of excluding most of the firstfruits from the thrones in Revelation 20:4.

The first two options considered fit the symbolic theme of John’s vision, without necessarily excluding the rest of the saints in the first resurrection. The scriptures lead to the conclusion that all the saints in the first resurrection will be seated on the thrones of Revelation 20:4. All saints will be resurrected together and will rule during the Millennium, regardless of whether they were martyred by the Beast or not. The saints in Revelation 20:4 should be identified in light of all the scriptures pertaining to this resurrection.

Expositor’s Bible Commentary has this to say on Revelation 20:4: “A more difficult question concerns the identity of those who will rule with Christ. They are the ‘beheaded’ . . . martyrs who have previously occupied John’s attention . . . who did not worship the beast or his image . . . But this presents a problem because John has elsewhere indicated that the kingdom reign will be shared by every believer who overcomes (2:26-28; 3:12, 21) . . . Also, in 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, Paul clearly speaks of all believers—not just martyrs—exercising judgment in the future . . . Unless only those beheaded by the beast will reign in the Millennium, another explanation is demanded. The pastoral approach would explain John’s reference to only the martyrs as a piece of special encouragement to them, while not implying that others would be left out . . . **the martyrs represent the whole church that is faithful to Jesus whether or not they have actually been killed** . . . As such, the term is a **synonym for overcomers** (chs. 2-3). Thus John could count himself in this group, though he may never have suffered death by the axe of the beast . . . In fact, a number also of the other promises to overcomers in the letters to the seven churches find their fulfillment in chapter 20.”

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

Another scripture mentions that the saints will “judge the world” and “shall judge angels” (1 Corinthians 6:1-3). Therefore, the primary focus of judgment in the Millennium, with and under God, will be upon the saints, not the angels.

Now we’ll consider the chronology of events in the next verse, Revelation 20:5, “. . . the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.” This verse can be misinterpreted because the “thousand years” are mentioned before the “first resurrection,” as if the Millennium occurs before the first resurrection. However, other translations, such as the New Revised Standard Version and the New International Version, enclose the first sentence in parentheses, e.g. “(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.” Consequently, the parenthetical statement would not be part of the strict chronology of this verse. Understanding John’s writing style can help clear up the chronology here.⁴

The New Living Translation places the parenthetical statement at the end of the verse—“This is the first resurrection. (The rest of the dead did not come back to life until the thousand years had ended.)” This type of rendering better reflects the chronology from all the scriptures concerning the first resurrection and the Millennium.

As with verse 4 discussed earlier, verse 5 should not be interpreted independently of the rest of the Bible, which reveals that the first resurrection will actually occur before the thousand-year period. Verse 6 says that those in the first resurrection “shall reign with Him a thousand years,” meaning that they will be resurrected before the thousand-year period. Additional scriptures concerning the first resurrection are below.

Matthew 19:28: “So Jesus said to them, ‘Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’”

Matthew 24:31: “And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

Luke 20:34-36: “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.”

Revelation 2:11: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches [plural]. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.”

⁴John also used this method of summarizing events in John 19:14, “Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and **about the sixth hour**. And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King!’” It was about 6 a.m., according to the Roman time used in John’s gospel, when the official court hearings of Christ **began**, culminating in Pilate’s statement three hours later. In Darby’s Translation, the first sentence in John 19:14 is enclosed within parentheses.

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

Revelation 2:26-27: “And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’—as I also have received from My Father.”

Revelation 5:10: “And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”

The “sons of the [first] resurrection” will be like angels—they will not marry and they will not die anymore. When the “thousand years are finished,” the rest of the dead will be resurrected. And they will have the potential of either inheriting eternal life or dying a second death.

Summary: Characteristics of the First Resurrection

1. It takes place at the second coming of Christ, at the sound of the seventh trumpet.
2. It is a resurrection to immortality.
3. Physical bodies will be changed to spirit.
4. Only the dead in Christ and those in Christ who are alive at His coming are in the first resurrection.
5. The second death has no power over those in the first resurrection.
6. Those in this resurrection are called the “firstfruits” (Romans 8:23; James 1:18; Revelation 14:4).

The Second Resurrection

What about those who never had the opportunity to hear the truth? They clearly are not part of the first resurrection since they are not “in Christ” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). The Bible states, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). But are those who have never heard of Jesus then lost for all eternity? The following scriptures explain that many will be resurrected to a physical life after the thousand-year period is over and receive an opportunity to not only hear of Christ but to understand His message.

Revelation 20:7-12: “Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.”

Revelation 20:12 says that the “Book of Life” is opened—not the book of death. What is written in the Book of Life? Other scriptures help fill in the answer.

Luke 10:20: “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

Philippians 4:3: “And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.”

Revelation 3:5: “He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”

Revelation 13:8: “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

Revelation 21:27: “But there shall be no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”

The apostle Paul addressed the question of those who lived and died, but never had a chance to learn the truth of God, repent, receive the Holy Spirit and have an opportunity for salvation. In the verses below, Paul explains that physical Israel was blinded spiritually and never had an opportunity to receive salvation.

Romans 11:1-2, 5, 7, 11, 25-26, 30-31: “I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! . . . God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew . . . Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace . . . What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded . . . I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! . . . For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved . . . For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy.”

We should understand that while Paul’s focus is on Israel, the same principles apply to all of mankind, as God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). Paul then repeats his question in different words: “I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not!” (Romans 11:11). Paul then concludes by stating: “And so all Israel will be

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

saved” (Romans 11:26). Truly, God has revealed a wonderful plan whereby He will have mercy on all, including those who have lived at one time but never had an opportunity for salvation (Romans 11:28-36).

Those resurrected after the Millennium will then have a chance for their names to be written in the Book of Life that is opened to them, representing eternal life. But will this be a second chance? No, it isn't. This will be their first opportunity to learn who God is and what His message was all about.

They will be drawn to Christ for the first time. The giving of the Holy Spirit only occurs once. John 6:44 says: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him . . .” It should then be clearly understood that this is not a second opportunity for salvation. While those in this resurrection will have a second mortal life, it will be their first opportunity for salvation.

The second resurrection is reserved for those who never knowingly rejected God's offer to receive the Holy Spirit and endure to the end. Unlike the first resurrection, the second resurrection will be to a physical existence. Therefore, these will have an opportunity to inherit eternal life during the period following the Millennium, since “. . . flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50). This resurrection will result in their first opportunity to become inheritors of God's Kingdom.

A vivid description of the second resurrection to a physical existence is found in Ezekiel 37 regarding the Old Testament Israelites:

Ezekiel 37:5-6, 9-14: “‘Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live’ . . . ‘Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live’ . . . And breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel’ . . . ‘Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live . . .’”

The “whole house of Israel” (verse 11) will be resurrected to a physical existence because God never offered them an opportunity to receive His Spirit within their minds and hearts, toward eternal salvation. As the following scriptures show, God's dwelling was within their midst but not within their minds.

Deuteronomy 5:29: “Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!”

Deuteronomy 29:4: “Yet the LORD has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day.”

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

Ezekiel 36:26: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”

This prophecy has not yet been fulfilled. God did not place His Spirit within Old Testament Israel, except for the few prophets and righteous men and women identified in the Bible. When this prophecy is fulfilled, God will give all people a new heart and a new spirit, which will enable them to keep His commandments.

This will be the first time that they will be given an opportunity to receive God’s Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26-27). And if these physical human beings remain loyal to God during this judgment period, they will not experience the second death, from which there is no resurrection. These verses refute the erroneous assumption that God is trying to save the whole world before Jesus returns.

The gentiles who never received God’s Spirit will also be resurrected to a physical existence again. This will be a period of “judgment” when their ultimate fate will depend upon their response to God’s calling.

In this regard, understanding the Greek words for “judgment” can be helpful when studying the different resurrections. *Krisis*, used in John 5:29, refers to “the process of investigation” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985). *Krisis* is often held in contrast to *krima*, which refers to “the sentence pronounced, a verdict, a condemnation, the decision resulting from an investigation” (*Vine’s*).

A resurrection to “judgment” (*krisis*) is not necessarily a resurrection to “condemnation.” Most of mankind will be resurrected to a future time period of judgment or “process of investigation.” This process can lead to eternal life or to condemnation. In John 5:29, “judgment” is a better rendering of the word *krisis*, as noted in other translations (e.g. the New American Standard Bible, the Revised Standard Version and the New Living Translation).

Hebrews 9:27 states: “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment [*krisis*].”

So all of mankind will experience a judgment of some kind, but this doesn’t mean condemnation for everyone. Being “unjust” before the return of Christ doesn’t necessarily mean that one will die in the lake of fire. Billions of people who have done evil, but were never called by God, will be resurrected to a process of investigation. Below are a few examples.

Matthew 10:15: “Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment [*krisis*] than for that city!”

Few, if any, cities have done more evil than Sodom and Gomorrah. Jesus was not saying that certain portions of the lake of fire are “more tolerable” than others.

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

Nevertheless, it will be more tolerable for them in the day of judgment because during this period of time many will repent and will marvel that others did not previously listen to Christ in the flesh.

Matthew 12:41-42: “The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment [*krisis*] with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.”

The men of Nineveh and the queen of Sheba will be resurrected (“rise up”) at the same time as the Jews who lived during the time of Christ (“with this generation”). These gentiles will speak against those who rejected Christ while He was in the flesh. Obviously, if all in the second resurrection were immediately condemned to the lake of fire, then this contrast would be meaningless as it would not be “more tolerable” for anyone. God’s Spirit will be offered to those in the second resurrection (Ezekiel 36:26-28).

When Christ returns, God will offer His Spirit to “all flesh” during the Millennium (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). And He will continue to offer His Spirit during the time period of the second resurrection to those who were never given “eyes to see and ears to hear” (e.g. Old Testament Israel, Sodom, Gomorrah and billions of others).

How long will this second resurrection last? There is one possible mention of its duration in Isaiah 65:17-25.

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, says the LORD.”

This scripture has been associated with the time period for the Great White Throne Judgment, which is referenced in Revelation 20. However, it has not been clear whether the “one hundred years” denotes only the total time span of the Great White Throne Judgment or a subset of the Millennium. The Church has taught, but cannot be dogmatic

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

due to the limited evidence available, that this will be a total of one hundred years. There are different alternatives for interpreting this verse, while maintaining the teaching of three resurrections.

1. The Great White Throne Judgment will last for 100 years. The Church has taught that this will be a testing period of one hundred years, during which billions of children and adults would have an opportunity to become converted and inherit eternal life. Therefore the death of the “sinner being one hundred years old” has been considered to be the second death. God certainly could do things this way if He so chooses.
2. Life spans will *exceed* 100 years during the Great White Throne Judgment. This verse certainly conveys a time of longevity, though not necessarily an exact “one hundred years.” Isaiah 65:20 says, “No more shall an infant [*uwl*, ‘suckling’] from there live but a few days . . . For the child [*naar*, ‘young, youth, young man’] shall die one hundred years old” (*Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*, Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995). This would describe pre-Flood-type conditions where 100 years are a small portion of one’s life. If so, then those who are *only* 100 years old will be considered a “child, youth” or “young man” at 100 years old. And to die at this age would be analogous to a premature death.
3. Isaiah 65:20 describes a time during the Millennium. If so, then this would provide plenty of time for the pre-Flood-type extended life spans. Under this scenario, one might expect the same type of life spans during the Great White Throne Judgment time period.

Billions of people will be offered God’s Spirit for the first time, giving them “eyes to see and ears to hear” God’s written Word—“books were opened” (see references in Daniel 7:10; 9:2). They will be judged according to how they then live, “by the things which were written in the books,” God’s written Word (Hebrews 4:12-13). Consequently, people in this resurrection will have their first opportunity to have their names written in the Book of Life, which will be “opened” for this purpose. Sadly, some will reject their one and only opportunity.

Summary: Characteristics of the Second Resurrection

1. It does not take place until after the 1,000 years are over.
2. It is a resurrection to mortal life.
3. God will give those in this resurrection the opportunity to receive the Holy Spirit and receive eternal life.
4. Though they will have a second mortal life, they will have their first opportunity for salvation.

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

The Third Resurrection

The first resurrection is comprised of the firstfruit saints from the time of Adam and Eve to the return of Jesus Christ. The second resurrection is for those who were never “drawn by the Father,” therefore they were never offered an opportunity to inherit eternal life. There’s only one group of people left to be resurrected—those who utterly rejected God’s offer to inherit eternal life. Since it occurs after the second resurrection, it can properly be called the third resurrection.

Revelation 20:13: “The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.”

Revelation 20:13 records the resurrection of a different group of people than those in the second resurrection, who will have already been resurrected and “judged” according to their works (verse 12). The Book of Life is not “opened” to those in verse 13. Neither will books (plural) be “opened” again for them because they will have already totally rejected the instruction in these books. Therefore, they will be judged according to their unrepentant works. The dead of verse 13 are described as emerging from the sea and from earthly graves. Of course, those in the second resurrection, described in the previous verse, will also be resurrected from wherever they died, land or sea. But verse 13 describes the beginning of the complete emptying of the land, sea and death itself.⁵

Revelation 20:14-15: “Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Here John describes two inanimate objects—Death and Hades—as being cast into the lake of fire, signifying the termination of the grave (a holding place of inactivity, Ecclesiastes 9:10), as well as the destruction of death itself (1 Corinthians 15:26).

Scripture reveals all of mankind must appear before Christ to give an account. This applies to the wicked as well. They must appear before Christ to receive their final sentence, which is eternal death.

Matthew 25:31-32, 46: “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats . . . And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

⁵ A different reading of verse 13 places it as a continuation of verse 12 and the second resurrection. Consequently, the third resurrection would begin in verse 14. Though the evidence for this reading of the passage is less convincing, it nevertheless upholds the existence of three resurrections.

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

John 5:21-29: “For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. 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.”

Daniel 12:2: “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

Malachi 4:1-3: “‘For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘that will leave them neither root nor branch. But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this,’ says the LORD of hosts.”

Acts 24:14-15: “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.”

Romans 14:10: “For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”

2 Corinthians 5:10: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

2 Peter 3:9-12: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?”

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

As a review, the first resurrection is reserved for firstfruit Christians who endure to the end. The second resurrection is for those yet to be offered an opportunity for eternal life. The only people who are not accounted for in the first and second resurrections are those who utterly rejected God's offer of salvation while they were alive. The third resurrection is reserved for these individuals. What are some of its conditions?

Hebrews 6:4-6: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened . . . and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame."

Hebrews 10:26-27: "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries."

These verses tell us that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ no longer remains for those who refuse to repent—willful sinners. In this context, "willful" sinning reflects an attitude that is beyond repentance—an attitude that doesn't want to repent. When a person's attitude is beyond repentance, he commits the unpardonable sin because forgiveness requires repentance. The Bible refers to deliberate, willful rejection of the work of God as "blasphemy against the Spirit" (Matthew 12:31-32). There will not be a second opportunity for the willfully unrepentant. The only thing that remains is a "fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation" in the lake of fire.

The unpardonable sin results in a "worse punishment" than the death penalty of the Old Testament (Hebrews 2:1-3; 10:28-29). What can be worse than this? The second death from which there is no resurrection. Those who reject God's Spirit and "insult the Spirit of grace" (Hebrews 10:29) before Christ returns, will not have a second opportunity to do so in the second resurrection. Peter discusses the results of blatantly rejecting God.

2 Peter 2:9: "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment [*krisis*]."

Those described in 2 Peter 2:9 have already rejected God's Spirit—"denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction" (verse 1), "because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed" (verse 2), "carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you" (verse 13). "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome . . . it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness . . ." (verses 20-21).

God has begun a process of judgment leading to a final verdict for those He has now given the Holy Spirit. As 1 Peter 4:17 states, "For the time has come for judgment [*krima*] to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those [in the house of God] who do not obey the gospel of God?"

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

One might think that *krisis* would have been used in 1 Peter 4:17 but *krima* can also denote the “process of judgment leading to a decision” (*Vine’s*). Depending upon the context, both *krisis* and *krima* can denote a “process” and be “virtually equivalent” (*Vine’s*). We see in 1 Peter 4:17 a warning about the potential verdict for those in God’s Church, “who do not obey the gospel.”

So the third resurrection leads into a different kind of judgment. It will not be a lengthy process of judgment covering the span of a lifetime.

2 Peter 3:7: “But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word are reserved for fire until the day of judgment [*krisis*] and perdition of ungodly men.”

2 Peter 3:12-13: “Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

Most of mankind has not yet entered a judgment leading to a final decision regarding eternal life or condemnation. Ultimately, God is going to make an eternal decision concerning every human being that has ever lived. Part of the “elementary principles of Christ” listed in Hebrews 6:1-2 is “eternal judgment [*krima*].”

Summary: Characteristics of the Third Resurrection

1. It is a resurrection to death.
2. The unrepentant wicked are in this resurrection and they will be burned up.
3. This is the second death.

Everyone who has ever lived will experience a judgment process. Some will inherit eternal life in the first resurrection, “at His coming.” Then “after the thousand years are finished,” most of the unjust since the time of Adam and Eve will be in the second resurrection and receive their first opportunity to inherit eternal life. Lastly, those who reject God and therefore cannot be renewed again to repentance will be condemned in the third resurrection. This is a separate resurrection. The time involved will undoubtedly be very brief. It will be long enough only to carry out the death sentence for their evil life.

Moreover, if there is no third resurrection, then the incorrigibly wicked would have to be raised at the same time as those who never had a chance for salvation. They aren’t in the first resurrection, so they would have to be in the second. If this is so, then where will they be and what will they be doing during this period of time? They would have to be restrained for this period of time until the earth and they with it are consumed by fire. This does not make sense and there is nothing in the Bible to describe such a scenario.

Consequently, there are three distinct groups of people: the converted, the blinded and the wicked. The sequence described in Revelation 20 is that of three separate

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

resurrections. There is mention of a first resurrection, which implies at least one more resurrection. While there is no specific mention of a second or third resurrection, the sequence described certainly outlines three distinct resurrections, which involve the three distinct groups of people who have lived.

Summary of the Three Resurrections

1. The first resurrection is only for the dead in Christ. It is a resurrection to immortality. The wicked are not in this resurrection. Those who never had an opportunity for salvation are not in this resurrection.
2. There is another resurrection to mortal life; therefore, it cannot be the first resurrection. Since God offers His Holy Spirit to them, they will have an opportunity to receive salvation. The wicked cannot be in this resurrection, as God will not be giving His Holy Spirit to them.
3. The only time the wicked can come up in a resurrection is at a separate time. It cannot be in the first resurrection. Nor can it be in the one where God offers salvation to those who never had an opportunity. This resurrection is for the purpose of final judgment on the wicked who will be destroyed along with the earth.

Appendix A
Lazarus and the Rich Man

Luke 16 records a parable about the resurrection of “a beggar,” Lazarus, and a nameless “rich man” (verses 19-31). Does this parable illustrate that people go to heaven or to hell when they die? Does it describe one simultaneous resurrection for both the just and unjust? For many, this parable may seem to describe one simultaneous resurrection for the just and unjust. However, Christ was *not* giving a detailed chronology of each resurrection.

To understand this parable, we need to begin in verse 14. Here we read of a confrontation between Christ and the Pharisees.

Luke 16:14-16: “Now the Pharisees, **who were lovers of money**, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. And He said to them, ‘You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. **For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.**’”

This is the context for the parable. Christ accuses the Pharisees of having their hearts in the wrong place. We read that they were lovers of money. We also see them deriding Jesus Christ. This is the setting for the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. The parable describes the fate of those who have their hearts set on money (as the Pharisees did) and those who do not. The time setting of this parable, although clearly set in the cultural context of Jesus’ day, could apply to any time before the return of Jesus Christ.

Luke 16:19-21: “There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.”

Luke 16:22-23: “So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom.”

Does this mean that the Lazarus was instantaneously and consciously carried to heaven at the time that he died? Again, the Bible interprets itself, as noted earlier—“the dead know nothing” (Ecclesiastes 9:5) and “the dead do not praise the LORD, nor any who go down into silence” (Psalm 115:17). When Solomon and David wrote these scriptures, Abraham had been dead for hundreds of years. The Jews were well aware of this: “Abraham is dead, and the prophets” (John 8:52). And David “is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day . . . For David did not ascend into the heavens . . .” (Acts 2:29, 34). Given that Abraham is also still in the grave, one cannot literally go to “Abraham’s bosom” at the time of his death. Jesus was not contradicting any of the scriptures that show that the dead are not consciously with God, Abraham or anyone else.

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

What does it mean to be “in Abraham’s bosom”? In the Old Testament, this conveyed the close relationship between a husband and wife—“the wife of your bosom” (Deuteronomy 13:6, 28:54, 56; Micah 7:5-6). Israel was described as being carried in the bosom of Moses (Numbers 11:12). A prophecy of Christ, as our shepherd, describes Him carrying His flock in His “bosom” (Isaiah 40:11).

During the time of Christ, “bosom” could also appeal to a formal banquet setting for special occasions. It’s a term reflecting closeness, companionship and special favor. One would need to be seated next to the one upon whose bosom he is reclined—“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*” (John 1:18). The *New Geneva Study Bible* states, “The image of ‘bosom’ relates to being the guest of honor at a banquet” (Luder Whitlock, Jr., *Logos Library System*, 1997). This was also a common setting for the Passover meal—“Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23). Notice the following quote from the *Word Biblical Commentary*:

“The first thing said about him is not that Jesus loved him, but that he reclined ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ‘close to the breast of Jesus.’ This (to us) curious statement is explained by the situation of the company sharing in the meal. Instead of being seated about a table (*à la* Leonardo da Vinci!) the custom of reclining on cushions around a low table was being observed (this occurred only on special occasions, but it was mandatory for the Passover meal); the participants reclined *on their left sides, supporting themselves with their left arm, leaving the right arm free*; Jesus as the host would have been slightly forward of the rest; if the Beloved Disciple, who will have been on his right, leaned back to speak to Jesus he would literally have had his head at his breast. That he made such a movement at Peter’s behest is implied in v 25: ἀναπεσών (literally ‘falling up’) clearly means ‘leaning back.’ The use of the phrase ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ Ἰησοῦ, however, almost certainly is intended to recall the similar phrase in the prologue, where it is stated, ‘The only Son ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς (‘who is in the bosom of the Father’) has expounded him.’ The Evangelist introduces the Beloved Disciple as standing in an analogous relation to Jesus as Jesus to the Father with respect to the revelation he was sent to make known; behind this gospel is the testimony of one who was ‘close to the heart’ of Jesus” (George R. Beasley-Murray, *Volume 36: John*, Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1998).

After the Passover meal and ceremony Jesus said, “I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (Luke 22:18). Yet after Christ returns and establishes His kingdom here on earth, “. . . many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 8:11). The Greek for “sit down,” *anaklino*, means “to lean against, lean upon, to lay down, to make or bid to recline” (*Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*). Luke 13:28-29 says, “There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down [*anaklino*] in the kingdom of God.” The New

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

American Standard Bible says, “And will recline at the table in the kingdom of God” (1995 Update). It is not until after Christ returns and establishes His Kingdom that Lazarus or anyone else will recline (*anaklino*) upon the bosom of Abraham.

It’s significant that Lazarus “was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22). The “angels” will not do this until the end time—Matthew 24:29-31, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” This will be the beginning of many special occasions during which God’s people, the “sons of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7) will share together, as is depicted by the phrase “Abraham’s bosom.”

Now we’ll consider the meaning of “Hades,” the place from which the rich man looked up. *Easton’s Bible Dictionary* defines “Hades” as “that which is out of sight, a Greek word used to denote the state or place of the dead. All the dead alike go into this place. To be buried, to go down to the grave, to descend into hades, are equivalent expressions. In the LXX. this word is the usual rendering of the Hebrew *sheol*, the common receptacle of the departed (Gen. 42:38; Ps. 139:8; Hos. 13:14; Isa. 14:9)” (Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996). This is where the dead unconsciously reside and this is where they will regain consciousness—“The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice” (John 5:28). In the parable the rich man woke up in the grave.

Hades should not be confused with “gehenna,” the Greek word for “hell,” denoting the “valley of Hinnom,” which *Easton’s* defines—“This valley afterwards became the common receptacle for all the refuse of the city. Here the dead bodies of animals and of criminals, and all kinds of filth, were cast and consumed by fire kept always burning. It thus in process of time became the image of the place of everlasting destruction.” Another Greek word used for “hell,” *tartaroo*, indicates the place where fallen angels are restricted until their day of final judgment—“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell [*tartaroo*] and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment” (2 Peter 2:4). However, *tartaroo* is never used in association with humans that have died.

Some pagan religions viewed Hades as an intermediary or holding place, where the just are consciously in one compartment and the unjust in another compartment. The perspective seems to have influenced the mainstream Christian interpretation of the Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man.

New Unger’s Bible Dictionary: “HA’DES (Grk. hades, ‘unseen’) . . . The ancient Greek view of Hades, and the Roman view of Orcus, or Inferna, is that of a place for all the dead in the depth of the earth; dark, dreary, cheerless, shut up,

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

inaccessible to prayers and sacrifices, ruled over by Pluto. This presiding god was the enemy of all life, heartless, inexorable, and hated accordingly by gods and men.

“Luke 16:19-31, which sets forth the account of the rich man and Lazarus . . . , indicates a difference in Hades after the ascension of Christ. Before this far-reaching event it seems clear that Hades was in two compartments, the residence respectively of saved and unsaved spirits. ‘Paradise’ and ‘Abraham’s bosom,’ both common Jewish terms of the day, were adopted by Christ in Luke 16:22 and 23:43 to designate the condition of the righteous in the intermediate state. The blessed dead, being with Abraham, were conscious and ‘comforted’ (16:25) . . . The rich man, who is evidently still in Hades, is a representative case and describes the unjudged condition in the intermediate state of the wicked. As to his spirit, he was alive, fully conscious, in exercise of his mental faculties, and also tormented.”

Any interpretation of this parable cannot contradict what Scripture teaches elsewhere about death and the resurrection. The definition of “Hades” (grave) does not contradict Scripture. However an interpretation of “Hades” being a type of “purgatory” is a contradiction of Scripture (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Psalm 115:17; et. al). The rich man was resurrected from the “dead,” not life. The spirit is an unconscious entity that “returns to God,” not a conscious existence in a holding place.

Though this is a parable, the scriptures related to this subject help us to understand what is, and is not, intended by its illustration. The biblical implication is that Lazarus died and, at the return of Christ, was resurrected and entered into an eternal fellowship with Abraham. The rich man died “and was buried” and was resurrected (regained consciousness) shortly before facing the fate of those in the third resurrection—the lake of fire. Let’s return to the parable.

The rich man was in torment while looking up from his grave (hades). In verses 23 and 28, “torment” is rendered from *basanos*, meaning “torment, severe pain, severe suffering” (Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 1989). It was used in Matthew 4:24 where Jesus healed “various diseases and torments [*basanos*].” It’s a derivative of *basanizo*, “to vex with grievous pains (of body or mind), to torment.” Obviously the people healed had not sustained injuries from being in a literal “torture chamber.” Nevertheless, can we totally eliminate the existence of any physical pain or discomfort shortly before the unrepentant experiences the fiery second death? Have you ever been close to a large fire, perhaps a bonfire? The intense heat is intolerable if one is standing too close. “Therefore, because the king’s command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego” (Daniel 3:22).

The effect of the heat is what made the rich man thirsty. It’s safe to assume that a person standing before the lake of fire will experience some level of physical pain or discomfort, for a short while, before being thrown into the fire where the dead will know nothing for the rest of eternity.

THE RESURRECTIONS

Doctrinal Paper

In verses 24-25, the Greek for “tormented,” *adunao*, “involves torment and punishment. These aspects are important supplementary features of the word . . . but are *not* integral elements of the meaning” (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 1989). This Greek word can better emphasize a sense of “anguish” and “distress” (*Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*). The rich man was suffering the mental anguish and torment, which naturally will precede the second death. He was not yet in hellfire (gehenna) as the unrepentant wicked will be—“ashes under the soles of your feet” (Malachi 4:3).

Luke 16:24-26: “Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.’”

The “great gulf” is the separation between spirit and physical (eternal life and eternal death). The lake of fire cannot harm those who are immortal—“Over such the second death has no power” (Revelation 20:6). The rich man was resurrected to a mortal existence therefore he was subject to the fiery judgment.

Luke 16:27-31: “Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’”

The five brothers were to hear Moses and the prophets rather than one risen from the dead. Though “Moses and the prophets” will be alive at this time, this phrase is properly understood in the context of the Scriptures—“But Abraham said, ‘The Scriptures have warned them again and again. Your brothers can *read them* anytime they want to” (*The Living Bible*, 1997). Notice that the rich man thought his five brothers were still alive. He was probably not aware of the time setting, since his judgment will be quick.

In summary, Lazarus and the rich man died and they did not know anything while dead (Ecclesiastes 9:5, et. al.). Then Lazarus was resurrected at the return of Christ when the rest of the firstfruit saints will enter into a close fellowship with each other (“Abraham’s bosom”) for the rest of eternity (Matthew 24:29-31). The rich man will rise in the third resurrection and, because he utterly rejected God, the “books” of Scripture and the “Book of Life” will not be opened to him. Therefore he will simply be “judged . . . according to his works” (Revelation 20:13).