

# Will There Be a General Resurrection? Part 1

By Charles Feinberg

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This is a message on the subject: Will There be a General Resurrection? By Dr. Charles Lee Feinberg, Dean and Professor of Old Testament at Talbot Theological Seminary. The subject of this study is, "Will there be a general resurrection?" Passage that we want to turn to for this important theme, very important prophetic theme, much more so than many may realize, it's found in First Corinthians 15:20-28, the great chapter on resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, I'm reading those nine verses. After Paul has been speaking of the centrality of the work of our Lord Jesus on the cross, how he was delivered up for our sins according to the scriptures, was buried, raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and then his appearances. And then he tells how central the resurrection is to our faith. If we do not have that, we have nothing. Our faith is vain we are in our sins. Now he turns to the glad assurance, those were all considerations all hypothetical conditions. That was just conditions where we were supposing the resurrection had not taken place. Verse 20, "But now", here's the certainty, "has Christ been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all dies, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits; then they that are Christ's, at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The Last Enemy that shall be abolished is death. For, He put all things in

subjection under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put in subjection, it's evident that he is excepted", there's an exception here. If God puts all persons under Christ's feet, he must be an exception. "He is excepted who did subject all things unto him". Not only is Christ an exception but of course God the Father is an exception who did the subjecting of all things unto him. "And when all things have been subjected unto him", unto Christ, "then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all".

There is no Christian system of Bible interpretation that would dare for a moment believe it to omit the vital subject of the resurrection. Either the resurrection of Christ or that of the believer. The theme is absolutely essential not only in the doctrines of salvation, soteriology, but also in the teachings and the doctrines of future things that we call eschatology. This is a central area of the Christian faith. We cannot make too much of it. Now our subject, "Will there be a general resurrection?" someone may say, "Well of course there's going to be a general resurrection; nobody's going to be left out". That's not quite the problem that's before us. But let me repeat it, "There will be what type of resurrection?" Will it be a single resurrection or will it be one that is differentiated? Will there be more than one resurrection? Well let's see, first of all, in a logical fashion let's divide this subject, first of all, into the first logical part. The fact of resurrection. Now no matter how much has been written on the resurrection, neither secular nor religious works in the last analysis, nothing, I repeat, nothing can be known authoritatively apart from the Bible. Nature may very weakly illustrate this wonderful doctrine but that doctrine itself must be found in the Bible and there alone. It's not just enough to say, well nature dies in the winter and then it's resurrected in the spring and summer. That is not a very good parallel. It may weakly illustrate the doctrine of the resurrection but the doctrine itself has to be founded, it has to be based fairly and squarely on the scripture alone.

It alone, the Bible, answers the question, "Will there be a resurrection?" far back as the time of godly Job. We read in Job 14:14, he was thinking along this line, asked the question, "If a man die shall he live again? All the days of my warfare", his struggle on earth, "would I wait till my release should come". "If a man dies, shall he live again?" His heart was intent on knowing the answer to that question. And by a great leap of faith granted him of God, we read in Job 19 verses 23 to 27, "Oh that my words were now written, oh that they were inscribed in a book, that with an iron pen and lead they were graven in the rock forever. But as for me, I know that my redeemer liveth and at last he will stand up upon the earth. And after my skin, even this body, is destroyed then without my flesh shall I see God; who I, even I, shall see on my side". In other words, for myself, "And mine eyes shall be whole and not as a stranger. My heart", he says, "is consumed within me." That's Job chapter 19 verses 23 to 27.

Now, I'm not speaking here, please make this differentiation, we're not speaking here of spiritual resurrection as in Ephesians 2:1, "You hath he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins", and so on. That's a spiritual resurrection. We're talking now about the resurrection of the physical body. So from Job 14:14, Job 19:25-27 where the question is answered from 14:14. And then in numbers of other passages, for instance, 1 Corinthians 15 we've just been reading, it is unmistakable, it is incontrovertible, it cannot be denied that there is going to be a resurrection. Doesn't mean that we have to go on our own experience. You say, well I've never seen a resurrection; I've never heard of a person, I've never heard in my experience, of a certain person living in a certain town who died and was buried and has now been resurrected. That may be true but there is going to be a resurrection.

In a certain cemetery in Hanover Germany, they tell us, there is a grave with large slabs of granite and marble piled on it, cemented together, and of all things fastened with steel clasps.

You might ask about it, what does that mean? Well friends, it's the grave of a woman who didn't believe Jesus rose from the dead, nor that she, nor anybody else, would live again after death. So in her will, very foolishly we feel, she ordered her grave to be made so secure, think of it, that if there were a resurrection of the dead, it could not reach her. On the stone were engraved the words, "This burial place must never be opened". A little seed, however, happened to be covered over by the stones. And beginning to grow, tried to find its way to the light. Well you know what happened? One might not believe it, but a little growing plant wrenched those steel clasps from their sockets and burst the cemented stone slabs. Though you may not think it could happen, it did. That little seed became a full grown tree and the great stones have fallen over to give it room.

The fact of the resurrection is a tenet. It is a doctrine believed by all denominations of the traditional faith no matter what denomination one belongs to. If that denomination believes the Bible is the word of God, it believes in the fact of the resurrection. There will be a resurrection because the Bible states so. Now that's just one of the divisions of our subject. Now there is a claim for one, or general, resurrection. A great number of Christians, taught and untaught, and otherwise, believe that somehow or other the world is going to go on and on and on as it has for so many centuries, it will go on beyond us. And then at a certain time unknown to us, but definitely known to God, there's going to be one general resurrection for all that have died and gone on. It will be one for believer and unbeliever alike, sinner and saint alike.

Now this belief is common to all those who do not believe that Christ will literally reign on Earth. We call them a-, which means non, millennialist. They do not believe in a millennium on Earth. That's only a spiritual reign of Christ. That belief of the one resurrection, a general resurrection is common to all amillennialists. They claim the Bible teaches one resurrection in a

single period of time in the future. The resurrection will be in one stage. On the other hand, those who believe Christ will come to write the rules of earth and then he will reign in righteousness and equity on the earth. On the other hand, all who are called Pre-millennialist, that he comes before the millennium, that's a pivotal part of their interpretation of Bible prophecy, all pre-millennialists teach that the resurrection is going to be in two stages. In other words, what's called a first resurrection, and the other one, a second resurrection. The first is in more than one phase. There's more than one contingent in that first resurrection which will be concluded at the beginning of the reign of Christ on the earth. Then, the second resurrection will be all the rest all together at the end of the millennium. After those several phases in the first resurrection before the millennium a second resurrection will be of all the remaining ones, the unsaved by the way, at the end of the millennium. In the first then, are only believers of all ages. In the second are only unbelievers of all ages. That makes a clear division. The first resurrection: believers of whatever age, whatever century they've lived in, whatever era or epoch of world history, believers and believers only. Then when that's cut off, Christ rules on earth for a thousand years. Then in the second resurrection, there are included only unbelievers of all the ages from cane on.

Now those who hold to one resurrection are honest enough to admit that a general resurrection would somehow disrupt internally that resurrection and that Pauline doctrine, the doctrine of the apostle Paul, is against it. For one thing, the resurrection of believers takes place along different lines than that of unbelievers because the resurrection of believers is apt to the norm of Christ's resurrection. How so? We're told in Philippians 3: 20 and 21, "Our citizenship is in heaven from hence also we look for the savior who shall change the body of our humiliation and fashion it like unto the body of his glory by the power whereby he is able to subdue even all things unto himself". Our resurrection takes place according to the norm and pattern and model

of Christ's resurrection. And if we to learn anything from 1 Corinthians 11, we learn there that when the believers comes to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, he is to see that sin in his life is judged, otherwise God will judge him. Certain ones in this city of Corinth, in the Corinthian church, were weak and sickly and some even died. Why did God cause that to happen to them as with Ananias and Sapphira who lied, read of them in the book of Acts? Because he did not want to judge them with the world. If God will not judge believers in a general judgment, he will not resurrect believers with unbelievers. The two are totally different. The only thing they have in common is that there is a reversal of death and they are now brought back to life. But oh, entirely different.

Now there are some arguments that are advanced for general resurrection. Those who say that feel that they have scripture and they turn very clearly, and I hope you have your Bible before you, that's the way to get most out of these studies. It's in the prophecy of Isaiah, the 26th chapter. Isaiah 26 and verse 19 we read, this is supposed to be proof now of one general resurrection of all, saved and unsaved, who died. Isaiah 26:19, "Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs and the earth shall cast forth the dead". Admittedly, there is no indication in that passage of dead bodies that are bodies of believers or dead bodies that are the bodies of unbelievers. So the teaching is that here is one resurrection. Just one single group, a totality of all. Another passage that the ones who teach a general resurrection turn to is in Daniel chapter 12 and verse 2. That's the last chapter of Daniel where he's been speaking of a time of agony such as there never was since there was a nation, the nation Israel, and at that time Michael, who stands for the people of Israel, shall espouse their cause, and at that time, thy people shall be delivered every one that shall be found written in the book.

Now it's the second verse, Daniel 12:2 that general resurrection advocates take as a basis for one resurrection. We're going to see how erroneous this is on the basis of Hebrew usage. But let's read Daniel 12:2, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt". You see, here it is. You have believers and unbelievers. Those that are going to have everlasting life. Others who are going to have everlasting contempt, or abhorrence. All of them at one and the same resurrection. And they say this is not just the Old Testament, but even our Lord who, in John 5, when he told how he has life in himself and he is the one to whom God has committed all judgment. For as much as he's the son of man, he himself tells us in John 5, verse 28 to 29. Those two verses in John 5, "Marvel not at this:" don't be surprised, "for the hour cometh, in which all", A-L-L, "that are in the tomb shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; as they have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." And notice, the hour is coming; the resurrection period. All of it, they say, in the same hour. It seems as if these passages, Isaiah 26:19, Daniel 12:2, John 5:28 and 29 are determinative. They are certainly very, very cogent. They are certainly much to the point of one general resurrection. One reading them will say, "Well I don't see any distinction. There's not a thing stated concerning one being at one time and another resurrection at a later time". Then secondly, the resurrection according to John 6 and that great address of our Lord after he fed the five thousand, when he gave the wonderful address on the bread of life, he said again and again in John 6, "And I will raise him up at the last day", "and I will raise him up at the last day". Resurrection takes place at the end of time, we're told. It excludes all other days or seasons after it. It's the last day. There can only be resurrection then, not before it, not after it, just at that particularly appointed time. So there's only one time.

And then a passage that is often referred to, in fact it is sometimes indicated as one of the strongest passages on one resurrection, is in Acts 24. Acts 24 and verse 15, where Paul is giving his defense for his faith. Acts 24: 15, the apostle says, we should begin with verse 14, "But this I confess unto thee, that after", he's talking to the king excellent Felix, making his defense, "this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call a sect so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets", now here's the verse, "having hope toward God, which these also themselves", my accusers, these unbelieving Jews, they themselves are looking for that hope toward God. What? "That there shall be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust", "both of the just and unjust". They say that passage knows nothing but one resurrection, no more, no less, a general resurrection

And then a fourth argument is the resurrection of saints takes place at the Day of Judgment. The rejection of the ungodly is at the same time. They point to Matthew 25 verse 31 all the way through to the end of the chapter. In Matthew 25 when he sits on the throne of his glory, the Lord Jesus Christ, and judges the sheep nations and the goat nations, Matthew 25:31-, 46. It's quite clear they say, that there is a resurrection of the sheep, that's the godly, believing ones, and there is a rejection of the ungodly and it's in that same, precisely that same time when he sits on the throne of his glory because in the same operation of putting sheep on the right hand, he puts the goats on the left. And that's not, they say, in that passage at a much, much later time, but these take place at the same judgment.

And then a final argument which they feel is quite impelling, is that Christ's coming itself is called The End, "And then cometh the end", 1 Corinthians 15. Well, I said, the end must be when resurrection and judgment take place. That is the conclusion. That's at the end of history, the consummation of it. That's the conclusion. That's when, as in modern speech, you write



'Finis', or thirty. Resurrection and judgment, then, are going to take place, there is no other such coming of Christ in glory. It must happen at that time when Christ comes to finish off, to conclude all things.

Now, on the very surface of it, those are very telling arguments. Those five arguments for a general resurrection, Isaiah's passage, 29, or 26 rather, verse 19, Daniel 12:2, John 5:28- 29; indicating no differentiation according to them, who hold this one general resurrection view. And then, in John 6, the resurrection is at, the end of time, last day, "raise him up at the last day". And Acts 24:15, a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust. Then Matthew 25, the sheep and the goats, they say, had judgment there is at exactly the same time. That I may point out a little ahead of time on that, that there's not a word stated in Matthew 25:31-46 of any resurrection. That's a judgment of individuals still living in the body they've had on earth. There is no resurrection there, it's just talking about judgment, judgment it is. But, of course, it's because so many have indicated one resurrection to one judgment. But that, we are going to see, is not possible if we take into consideration all of the testimony of scripture. And then the final argument is that Christ's coming is called The End; just entitled that very thing, the end, telos, when resurrection and judgment take place. There's no other such coming of Christ in Glory. Now we're going to see in our further study the very important scriptures, and they're going to be closely knit, we must go on the basis of scripture; taking these very scriptures that have been given to see whether Isaiah, and Daniel, and John, and Acts, and Matthew, whether they all indicate what has been said of them. We shall see whether there is going to be a general resurrection or not.