

# The Resurrection

AiF Level 2 - Unit 221



## Week 4 – Resurrection in Paul, Part 3

## Introduction - Ephesians and Colossians

Both these letters emphasize the present state and situation of the church rather than the future, however, in both there are clear signs that the writer was well aware of the future dimension.

### Ephesians

Eph. 1:14

Eph. 1:10-11, 19-23 and Matt 28:18

What is true of the Messiah is true of those who are 'in Christ'. (see Eph. 2:13)

Eph. 4:11-13 – resurrected humanity is humanity reaching its goal of full maturity.

Eph. 5:6-20

This idea of light echoes the Daniel 12 passage with the resurrected people shining like stars, that is shining with light. Because of the future resurrection we are to live lives that are an example of how we will live after the resurrection.

### Colossians

Col 1:5, 6 – the confident hope of the future is linked to the Gospel

The Gospel is the announcement, the declaration, the heralding that Jesus is Messiah and he is the point and goal and telos (the end of the story) of the narrative. He is the Messiah and he is the Redeemer and he is the Lord. He lived and he died and he was buried and he rose again into kingship, and he is coming again as the raised and ascended one and as the Lord of both Jews and Gentiles that is the whole earth. (Scot McKnight)

Col 2:13 – baptism is the present metaphor for resurrection

Col 3:1-4 - The 'appearing' of the Messiah, and the 'appearing' of believers with him, is a fresh way of referring to the same event that Paul described in Philippians 3:20–21. heaven and earth are at present opaque to one another, but the day will come when the reality at present hidden in the heavenly places—the reality of the Messiah,

reigning in glory, and of his people, presently ‘with him’—will be revealed.

Col 3:9-10 - The point of the resurrection, so far as Paul is concerned, is the reaffirmation of creation, not its denial.

In both, (Ephesians and Colossians) the resurrection of Jesus himself is the historical event through which the creator’s plan to rescue the world from sin and death has been decisively inaugurated, following the death whereby sin was itself dealt with. In both, the inheritance of the Messiah’s people lies still in the future. Yet, in both, the present life of Christians is already, metaphorically, one of ‘resurrection’, not now referring, as in second-Temple Judaism, to the restoration of ethnic Israel, but rather to forgiveness of sins and a new pattern of behaviour.<sup>1</sup>

## Resurrection in Corinthians 1&2

Paul’s two letters to the Corinthian church contain some of the most specific texts regarding resurrection. Both 1 Cor. 15 and 2 Cor. 4:7-5:10 have been the focus of much debate over the centuries and we will deal with these on their own.

### *1 Corinthians*

1 Cor. 1:1-9

The introductory prayer of thanksgiving (1:4–9), as so often a good indicator of what is in Paul’s mind, already locates the Corinthians in the now/not yet grid of characteristic Pauline eschatology.

1 Cor. 2:6-10

Paul introduces here once more the **Jewish idea of the two ages, the present age and the age to come**, and he declares that ‘the rulers of the present age’ are doomed to perish, whereas the wisdom which belongs to the age to come, the wisdom now available in the gospel, will provide all that a mature Christian could want. Notice that it is the Gospel that gives access to the ‘age to come’.

1 Cor. 2:14-15

This leads Paul to the fundamental contrast between two different types of people, a contrast which points all the way ahead to the

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<sup>1</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2003), 240.

central contrast between the two different types of ‘body’ in chapter 15: the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘soulish’, the *pneumatikos* and the *psychikos*.

The context for the distinction between ‘**soulish**’ and ‘**spiritual**’ has already been established: the overlap of the ‘two ages’ (2:6–8). The ‘**soulish**’ person, it seems, is one whose life is determined by the ‘**present age**’, animated merely by the ordinary ‘soul’ (psyche) that everyone has. The link is back to 2:6-8 where Paul describes the persons in ‘**this age**’ as not being able to understand the wisdom of God.

But when he describes someone as ‘**spiritual**’ (*pneumatikos*) he does not simply mean that they are more in touch with their own ‘spirit’ than the ‘soulish’ person is, but that the Spirit of the living god has opened their hearts and minds to receive, and be changed by, truth and power from the **age to come**.

1 Cor. 10:25-26, 30

In these passages creational monotheism is the overall guiding light, and it is precisely this that undergirds the theology of resurrection in chapter 15.

1 Cor. 11:6

This description of communion is placed squarely within the now/not yet framework developed by the reality of the resurrection.

1 Cor. 13:1-13

Where in this passage do we see Paul’s eschatology forming his instructions to the Corinthians?

- V8 – love lasts forever
- V10 – when the time of perfection comes
- V12 – but then we will see things clearly
- V12 – I will know everything completely
- V13 – 3 last forever

Paul has lost no opportunity, throughout the letter, to stress to the Corinthians the vital importance of living in the present on the basis not only of the past events of the gospel but also of the future events which those past events guarantee. The resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, and the consequent resurrection of all his people on the

day of his coming (15:23), are the themes which make sense of everything else he has been saying.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Resurrection in 2 Corinthians***

2 Cor. 1:3-11

Notice that Paul's ability to cope with the situation he has experienced firmly rests with his belief that God raises the dead.

## **What of the questions we asked about the text?**

These two letters, omitting for the moment their most important sections, have returned the same answer to our questions as the rest of the Pauline writings:

(1) In terms of the ancient spectrums of belief about life after death, Paul is with the Jews against the pagans, and with the Pharisees (and the majority of other Jews) against the Sadducees and against any who looked for a disembodied immortality.

(1a) He saw the Spirit in the present as the guarantee of the resurrection to come, in which believers would have new bodies.

(1b) These letters say nothing much about an intermediate state, but offer nothing to contradict the view we gleaned from the others.

(1c) The continuity and discontinuity between the present Christian life and the future resurrection life is all-important, though in subtly different ways, in both the Corinthian letters.

(1d) Several times he hints at the larger picture (new covenant, new creation) within which what he says about resurrection makes sense.

(2) He develops substantially the 'present' meaning of resurrection in both letters. The present life should be influenced, or driven by, the life to come. Resurrection plays backwards into how we live today.

(3) Since Paul uses Jesus' resurrection again and again as the model both for the ultimate future, and for the present anticipation of that future, we can conclude that, as far as he was concerned, Jesus' resurrection consisted in a new bodily life which was more than a mere resuscitation.

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<sup>2</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2003), 297.