Will There Be a General Resurrection Part 2
By Charles Feinberg

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This is part two of the message: Will there be a general resurrection? By Dr. Charles Lee Feinberg, Professor of Old Testament and Dean of Talbot Theological Seminary.

In the first part of this study, or message, on the question, "Will there be a general resurrection?" We consider the fact of resurrection and the claim that some make for just one resurrection or a general resurrection in the Bible. Now we turn to the important section on distinctions in resurrection. Those who believe Christ will come before a time of glory on Earth and usher in that time, pre-millennialists, who interpret the Bible literally, pre-millennialists believe that there are two distinct and separate resurrections. One of the just, and the other of the unjust. Now that cannot stand just on a mere claim. That's based upon careful analysis of all the passages of scripture. It harmonizes not just a few of them, but all of the passages. All passages of Scripture must be given the proper weight in order to get the full testimony and teaching of the Scripture. Now I'm choosing several of these passages; the more important one, or distinct ones on the matter of distinctions in the resurrection, separate resurrection.

First we turn to Daniel chapter 12 verse 2, you'll remember that this was one of the passages that some claim teach one resurrection. Let's look at it. Daniel 12:2 we find, "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". Now the Old Testament mentions the fact of resurrection, we saw that in Isaiah 26:19, but this is the first mention of a twofold resurrection. You'll notice from verse 1, that it is after Israel's time of trouble or tribulation that there is a resurrection. The Old Testament saints are raised after a time of trouble such as never was, since that it was a nation,
even to that same time we read in, "at that time thy people shall be delivered every one that shall be found written in the book", and then verse two that we have just read. Now the words. Some, some, "some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt", these words happen to be the very common demonstrative pronoun so often translated, 'these'. Now some here, and some would be better translated, 'these', or some on this one hand, and some others on the other hand, these and those. The translation, actually of the New American Standard is quite good and quite true of the original. In new American Standard in Daniel 12:2 reads, "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt". So you see it makes a distinction. How can you do that, you ask? Well, the pronoun [sp?] is never used in Hebrew in the sense of dealing distributively with a general class formally mentioned. It's these over against those, or some here over against some others just as you have it here in this good translation. "These to everlasting life, but the others". No time element is noted here, of course, and no period to elapse between the two events. God does not give us all the material in one place. But we must build block upon block, passage upon passage, and that is a very, very important passage in this matter of more than one resurrection. Great deal hinges on it. Daniel 12:2 then, talks about a distinction in physical resurrection.

Another vital passage on this matter of distinctions in Resurrection is found in Luke 20 verse 35. Let me speak now concerning the context in Luke 20:35. It was at that time when the scribes and Pharisees were coming and asking him questions. There were those Herodians, royalists, who are asking him questions, the Pharisees had a question to ask, and the Sadducees are going to have a question, and the Herodians have a question also. They wanted to know about tribute money. But the Sadducees asked a question that they thought would certainly silence our Lord. For one thing, they asked a question about resurrection and they did not believe
in resurrection. We read in Acts they didn't believe in resurrection, they didn't believe in spirit, they didn't believe in Angel. They were the rationalists of their day. So they asked a question about a lady who married a gentleman and he died. He predeceased her and left no children, and the brother of that deceased one took her to wife and so on, thinking that they would have an offspring that they could name after the brother so the brother's name would not be blotted out. That was their way of seeking immortality, seeking for the name to go on in remembrance. And finally, all of them died. Then they're asking the Lord the question, "In the resurrection, therefore", verse 33, "whose wife for them shall she be, for the seven had her to wife".

Now notice the wonderful answer of our Lord that more than silence them. "And Jesus said unto them, the sons of this world marry and are given in marriage". Marriage is a fact of life in our present earthly pilgrimage. Watch, verse 35 now, "But they that are accounted worthy, accounted worthy to attain to that world, which means to that coming age, and the resurrection from the dead, "neither marry nor are given in marriage". Now the New Testament gives us more full information on the truth of distinctions. Why this expression, "worthy to attain, "accounted worthy to attain"? Why use of the phrase from the dead, the resurrection, not of the dead. Oh don't misunderstand that; it doesn't say resurrection of the dead. That would be Anastasias [sp?], but this is [sp?]. It's from the dead, not of the dead. There's a vast difference between a resurrection from dead ones out from among them or just a resurrection of dead ones. In the second case, all is comprehensive. Resurrection of the dead, that's a very general way of speaking. But to say a resurrection from dead ones, that implies a resurrection in which some were raised and others are not. And, very interestingly, the first expression we're speaking of a resurrection from the dead, is used of Christ. And when he was raised as first fruits, why all the dead of all the ages had remained dead. He was literally raised from among dead ones, meaning
the others were not. And that first expression that used of Christ, and now here are the saints. And you cannot, I repeat, you cannot find its usage anywhere else. Of the unsaved, it is never used of the unsaved. Of Christ and the Saints, it means that believers are raised and others, specifically unbelievers, are not raised at that particular time indicated.

Now in John 5, verses 28 and 29, our Lord Jesus is speaking of having life in himself and how he has it inherent in him. It is his not derived, but belongs to him just as it belongs to God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Now, in John 5:28: and 29, we've had this before us already, on the part of those who believe just one resurrection, we repeat this passage John 5:28 and 29. We don't want to slur any of these important arguments, want to be fair. "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment. Now the one resurrection advocates make a great deal out of this verse. They say it's all in the same hour, the hour cometh; but my dear friends, the word hour in the Bible is used in more than one way. Our Lord Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, the hour is coming and now is when they will not be worshipping in this mountain, Mount Garrison, or Mount Jerusalem, Mount Moriah, but they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. Well that hour, my dear friends, is over nineteen hundred years now, the hour when we don't worship at any physical, tangible place as an end in itself. Oh no no no, that's impossible. The hour means a long period of time.

In John 5 Verse 25, "Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour cometh and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live". Oh yes, hour come, it means an extended period of time. Even the word day, we say this is the day of violence. We don't mean just one day on the calendar. "And this day is called a day of salvation", 2
Corinthians 6:2, "Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold now is the day of salvation". Thank God it's lasted over nineteen hundred years. So, you see, a word is capable of prophetic extension even in Isaiah 61, it's the day of vengeance of our God and the year of his redeemed. Age of grace, and the age of judgment in Isaiah 61 are seen together although they're far apart in fulfillment. How do you know? Why, in Luke 4 our Lord Jesus closed the book and he said, These too, though they are on the same page, though they are in the same sentence, they are in fulfilment quite a long way, the one from another. There's quite a gap between the fulfilment of both parts. And it was Saint Augustine who quaintly said that when the Lord raised Lazarus he said, "Lazarus, come forth". If he had not said that, if he had not said Lazarus, the whole graveyard would have come forth. My friends, the hour draws on apace, when he will call forth from the graves at one time to the just, and another time to the unjust.

Now in Acts 24:15, we have yet another passage. This passage's language can mean anything. Number 24:15, Paul in his defense he says he has "hope toward God which these", these accusers of his among Israel, "also themselves look for, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust." That language can mean, by no less an authority than the great Greek grammarian and commentator. H.A.W. Meyer M-E-Y-E-R, that language could mean a resurrection of the dead, one of the just and one of the unjust. This passage then cannot contradict the ones we've already seen in Daniel 12:2, Luke 20:35. Scripture must be made to harmonize. The Bible does not make nonsense. It makes sense and I've often said to students, if your interpretation of a passage makes nonsense, you may be absolutely certain that it is not the correct understanding of a passage. The Bible never makes nonsense except when it is misunderstood and misinterpreted.
Now the third important, rather the fifth important passage, is first Corinthians 15:21-28, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all died, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But", watch this, "But each in his own order:", that is of surpassing importance that is emphatic, "each in his own order: Christ the first fruits; then they are Christ's at his coming". Not all at one time, "then cometh the end", and resurrection, "when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father". And he pinpoints that end resurrection when he's delivered up the kingdom to the father, "When he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign". When he delivers that up, he's reigning, "till he has 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", God the Father did. And then, when everything has been put under him, God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are going to be all in all. This whole passage relates resurrection directly to the rule of Christ. And it's what we call a norm, or standard, passage on the doctrine of the Resurrection. In verse 22 we read all, "for as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive". Well, I said, well there it is! Everybody died at one time and in Adam and everyone is going to be made alive at one time.

My dear friends, watch it. The all in each case is limited by the phrase that follows. All who are in Adam die. Just as all who are in Adam die, so also all who are in Christ shall be made alive. Resurrection is distinctly said to be in different orders. The word in the Greek is tag ma, T-A-G M-A. It's a military term. It means band, rank, company; showing that there will be divisions in the resurrection just as there are phalanxes and ranks and companies in an army. Immediate succession is not meant. That's clear from the time already elapsed between Christ, who's the first fruits, and then they that are Christ's at his coming, his own church. Why, there’s been quite a rise, quite a time since the rising of the Lord Jesus Christ. Time has elapsed between
the Lord Jesus and his resurrection and the company that rise at his coming. So then, in Verse 24, "Then cometh the end", is to be interpreted as the then in verse 23, you see. "Each in his own order: Christ the first fruits; then", there is succession spoken of here, but not immediate succession. The end refers to the end resurrection; the passage speaking of resurrection. The end resurrection takes place when Christ has delivered up the kingdom to his father. In other words, the time of the kingdom elapses between the resurrection of believers and unbelievers. This passage does not tell us yet how long a time that kingdom rule will be. A later passage in the New Testament will.

The incident is told, of a brutal warrior, who after he had taken a city announced his intentions of burning it. Well, the surviving soldiers of the garrison were thrust into prison where they lay expecting a horrible death. But their king whom they thought was dead had wonderfully escaped the conquerors clutches. He was gathering forces for the deliverance. One day sounds of a fierce conflict penetrated the prison walls. Silence followed, then the sound of marching. Then the prisoners heard the townsfolk shouting, “God save the king, God save the king”, Imagine their joy. The King Lived, he was entering the city in triumph. That meant life for them and the Bible tells us, in Romans, "Because Christ lives, we shall live also".

A very vital passage along this very theme is found in Philippians 3:11 where Paul is recounting his spiritual autobiography. He says if anybody could boast in what they were naturally, as naturally born, in the nationality from which they've come, he says, “If any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more”. I can heap up more points, more plusses, more merits than they can. “Circumcised the eighth day”, means he was one who came by way of Israel and his parents followed carefully the Law of Moses. He says “Of the stalk of Israel”, not a proselyte. “Of the tribe of Benjamin”, that meant the tribe that gave the first king,
namely Saul. Of the tribe of Benjamin, incidentally the only tribe that was faithful to the Davidic dynasty. You see, there were ten tribes in the north; what was the other tribe in the south beyond Judah? Benjamin. Benjamin and Judah. “Of the tribe of Benjamin”, he was proud of it. “A Hebrew of Hebrews”, one of his parents wasn’t a Hebrew and the other not a Hebrew. No no, “A Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal,” and so on. He tells all that he was before. But what “things were gain to me”, before I was saved, “these have I counted loss for Christ”. I counted the cost, I counted what I had then, over against what I could have in Christ. I counted all things, I still have the same evaluation, “I count them all loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things”, and I still think the same way of them, “I do count them but refuse”. Why? “That I may gain Christ”. What are you going to have when you gain Christ? He wants to “be found in him”, not with a righteousness of his own making that’s after the law, but one through faith in Christ, “the righteousness from God by faith”. I want to know him more intimately than ever before, “and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death”. Now watch it, here is the important verse, Philippians 3:11, "If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead". The word here is ex-Anastasias. If by any means I may attain unto the out resurrection from among dead ones, Paul is making his resurrection dependent upon his Christian life and service. Not a bit of it is before he was saved. He was counting the relative values of the life in Judaism over against a life in Christ. Now if there were only, soberly may I ask, if there were only one resurrection, why is Paul concerned about missing it? He talks about attaining, just as in Luke we read 20:35, "Those accounted worthy to attain"; "if by any means I may attain". Why is Paul concerned about missing it? If there's only one resurrection, everybody's going to be in it. He wanted to attain to the out, here it is literally, out resurrection.
from among dead ones. That's for believers only. It is selective. It is separated. Yes, it is distinctive

Now there's yet one passage, and that's in the last book of the Bible, in the Revelation. I want to read from Revelation 20:4-6, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them," there were sitters, there were occupants of these thrones. "And judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead", mark you, “lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." That's a remarkable passage. Now those who hold to one resurrection, a general resurrection, the general resurrection advocates say that the first resurrection here is spiritual. The lived again, "and they lived", verse 4, "and reigned with Christ a thousand years." That's a spiritual resurrection. And that saints are now reigning with Christ in a spiritual sense. However, they go on to say when it says, "over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ". They say that the second resurrection, that’s the first resurrection, but the second resurrection when it says, "the rest of the dead lived not", the words lived not, they take that resurrection to be a resurrection of all the dead. The first resurrection is spiritual and the Second Resurrection is of all the dead. Now it's amazing that it should be called the rest of the dead, isn't it, if everybody's going to be there? They claim that the word soul, "saw the souls", that soul means spiritual resurrection. But that means the whole person. Acts 2:41 isn't speaking of disembodied spirits when it says about 3000 souls were saved. We even speak today,
the poor dear soul, and we don't mean a disembodied spirit. Not at all, we mean the whole personality. You see, both resurrections must be literal or both spiritual. The word Anastasias, which means resurrection, is used 42 times in the New Testament and only once, Luke 2:34, is the usage derived from the etymology of the word where we read that this child, Mary is told, is set for the falling and the rising again of many in Israel. That's derived from the basic meaning of the word. But in the 41 cases in the New Testament, never does the New Testament depart from meaning resurrection of the body. The word is never used, mark it, the word is never used in the New Testament of spiritual awakening. In Ephesians 2:1-7, we've been quickened, we've been made alive in Christ. Ah, that word is not used there. Anastasias is not used there. Anti-literalists admit the second resurrection is literal in view of the judgment that follows. How then can the same phraseology be used in the same setting? How can it mean a spiritual resurrection once and a physical resurrection later? And frankly, it just defies all explanation. How, When he's talking about souls in the first part, how that can mean a spiritual resurrection when it talks about these souls being beheaded? It means, according to the original Greek, they had their heads struck off. Well souls, just disembodied spirits, don't have heads. That's a concept that is very physical in nature. No, the same physiology cannot be used, Mark you, in the same context meaning a spiritual resurrection once and a physical resurrection later. The language cannot be so treated. Language is important.

And another thing, you notice he mentions a, this is the first resurrection, verse 5, "over these the second death hath no power". And then verse 6, "blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection". It has been my privilege to be studying language, and the philosophy of language, and the meaning of language, the significance of language for over a half a century. And I don't recognize in any language that I've studied that you speak of first, that's an ordinal,
that's not just one, first is order. I don't remember where first means no more, you just say one. When you say first, there must be at least another if not a number of others. Oh no. How can the same phraseology, I repeat, be used in the same context to mean a spiritual resurrection once and a physical resurrection later? No, that type of an explanation will not down. It will not carry. It will not hold water. It's untenable.

The only conclusion possible, and friends, in view of the testimony of the scriptures is, that there will be two resurrections. The first with its stages: Christ, the church, Old Testament Saints just before the millennium, and those that have suffered martyrdom in the tribulation time for the testimony to God, all these stages constitute the first. They come to a close before the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, I mean the earthly reign of our Lord. The second resurrection takes place after the reign of Christ and before the Great White Throne. The Revelation passage adds this important item. It makes clear that the kingdom of Christ in Millennial glory, for a thousand years, will separate the two resurrections. Isn't it gracious of God to give such a long period of time so that we do not telescope push those two resurrections together? God has placed a whole period of time, one thousand years. Even Methuselah didn't live that long, he just lived 969 years. He fell short of it 31 years. God puts a thousand years between those two resurrections so that in our interpretation of the Bible will not place them together. God will not judge believers and unbelievers at the same time in that end day. And not only so, God will allow us to see him reigning, and we reigning with him. To the question, "will there be a general resurrection?" There is a clear, unquestioned answer, an undoubted answer, and that is no. There will not be a general resurrection. The Bible teaches two resurrections: a resurrection of the righteous in certain stages, one part of it already gone (the resurrection of Christ), and a second resurrection which is of the ungodly. May God see that you and I have
trusted Christ in our heart of heart. Have you done it? If you have, you are destined, you are headed directly for the resurrection of the righteous. The resurrection of the godly. Blessed and holy are they that have part in the first resurrection. May the Lord abundantly bless you.