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The Uniqueness of the Resurrection

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THE UNIQUENESS OF THE RESURRECTION

In 1 Corinthians 15, the Apostle Paul overviews the glorious event, not only of Christ's resurrection, but also that of all believers in the future. However, it would seem that some in the Corinthian church had questions about this—even doubts—regarding the subject in general. To counteract this, Paul writes:

“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:12-20).

Some, however, have been confused regarding verse 20, where Christ is said to have been the first person experiencing the resurrection of the body. Here is the problem: In the Old Testament two young men were raised from the dead (see 1 Kings 17:17-22 and 2 Kings 4:18-20, 32-35). Furthermore, in the gospel accounts, Jesus Himself raises three from the dead. These are: Jairus' daughter (Mt. 9:18, 19, 23, 26); a widow's son (Lk. 7:11-15); and Lazarus (Jn. 11:39-44).

So, this is the problem: The resurrection of Jesus would seem to be number six, but Paul insists it was actually the very first! Herein is the glorious answer: Biblical resurrection carries with it a two-fold blessing:

- A new glorious body to be raised
- A body which will never die

This was decidedly not the case for the two Old Testament individuals or the three in the gospels or the two later in the book of Acts (see Acts 9:36-40; 20:7-12). The bottom line is they all died again! Question: Did you ever hear a sermon on the second death of Lazarus? He did, you know, die twice.

Finally, contrast this with the words of Jesus to a discouraged apostle who had been exiled for his preaching on the lonely isle of Patmos:

“I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death” (Rev. 1:18).