

# 14

## THE RESURRECTION

The latter two of the “principles of the doctrine of Christ” enumerated in the Hebrew letter are “eschatological” principles, having to do with future life and final things. It is notable that in these six basic doctrines, the Master challenged men to find God personally and relate their lives to His purpose. He challenged them to receive of the power of godliness made manifest through participation in sacramental ordinances and to live with a sense of reality concerning immortality and God’s eternal plan for man’s good. While the principles of resurrection and eternal judgement will find their fulfillment in times that man cannot now know, their principles are actively at work within us now.

To every man who believes in life hereafter there comes a stream of questions, many of which are unanswerable, at least until our finite concepts are enlarged. We are prone to speculate and go beyond that which God has actually been able to reveal to us. Frequently our concern for that which we believe to be final (eternal judgment) has taken so much of our attention that we have lost the beauty and significance of the resurrection, which makes eternal life possible.

Many people refuse to believe in the resurrection at all. Others simply take it for granted and move on. Few men feel the real urgency of its proclamation or the deep consciousness that caused Job to proclaim: “Oh, that my words were now written! Oh, that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God” (Job 19:23-26).

Man cannot fully appreciate the Christ, our Redeemer, until there comes an appreciation of the resurrection and what it does for him.

The story is told of a missionary who went to deepest Africa to work among the tribes there. It was their custom to raid neighboring tribes and take prisoners, who became their slaves. As a symbol of bondage, the slaves were forced to wear metal bands around their necks. Only as someone of their own tribe would risk his life to rescue them from their captors would they be freed and have the bands from around their necks removed. The missionary tried to tell them of Jesus Christ and found that there was no word in their language to portray the meaning of “redeemer.” He tried to illustrate what he meant. After some time their faces lit up, and they said, “That’s the one who takes the neck out.”

To them “redeemer” meant the one who freed them from bondage. Simple as that may seem, it provides a vivid illustration of the importance of Christ and the resurrection. In this life we are under the bondage of sin and death. Christ, our Redeemer, paid the price of His own precious life, that through atonement and resurrection we might be free from this bondage. He breaks the bonds of sin and death, and He sets the prisoner free! Because of his sense of reality, his conviction of resurrection, Paul triumphantly challenged, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Great is the hope and endless the challenge that comes to us with the knowledge of the sureness and significance of the resurrection. There is the assurance that death does not end life but that, through the power of God revealed in Christ, man’s life will be eternal! It is no marvel that the apostles and disciples of that early day went forth to preach a new and vibrant message. The resurrection of Christ guarantees that man shall not always be bound either by mortal flesh and concept or by death. In the hope of resurrection, there shines forth the challenge of life beyond our fondest dreams. In this spirit, Paul called attention to the promise of old: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

### THE RESURRECTION—A REALITY

The resurrection is not a dream nor is it a hypothetical idea; through Jesus Christ it becomes a

reality. He became “the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20). Though the fact of Jesus’ resurrection is questioned by some today, there was no question in the minds of the early Saints, for many had seen Him (see 1 Corinthians 15:6). Such evidence as this left no room for doubt. This fact of His resurrection deepened their conviction of His divinity and increased their appreciation of His power.

## **THE RESURRECTION IN MORTAL LIFE**

Through baptism, Christ has made possible the function of the principle of resurrection in our mortal lives. We can experience it! Paul wrote of some, who had been “dead in trespasses and sin,” “you hath he quickened” (Ephesians 2:1). He also wrote, “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection, knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:5-6). It is His power that raises us through baptism to a “newness of life,” making it possible for us to be free from the bondage of sin. It is also His power that shall raise us through the resurrection to immortality and eternal life.

## **TESTIMONY OF THE RESURRECTION**

Old Testament prophets, by the power of God, saw and bore witness of the resurrection centuries before it became a reality through Christ. We have noted the moving testimony of Job. Hosea, speaking in God’s name said, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction” (Hosea 13:14). Ezekiel was commanded to “prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, O my people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves” (Ezekiel 37:12).

So sure was the witness of Paul that resurrection was a reality that he proclaimed, “But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen? And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain . . . . If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept . . . . For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:13-22). With assurance he taught, “For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:52-53).

The Book of Mormon also witnesses of the resurrection. Abinadi affirms, “There is a resurrection; therefore, the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ. He is the light and the life of the world, yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened, yea, and also a life which is endless, that there can be no more death” (Mosiah 8:81-82). Amulek, in discussion with the unbelieving Zeezrom, said, “For behold, the day cometh that all shall rise from the dead, and stand before God, and be judged according to their works. Now there is a death which is called a temporal death; and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death; the spirit and the body shall be reunited again, in its perfect form” (Alma 8:98-100). Indeed, there is an abundance of testimony of the resurrection.

## **WITH WHAT BODY SHALL WE COME?**

This is a question that has concerned some ever since the concept of resurrection was recognized. Paul answered the question this way: “Thou fool! That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be, but grain—it may be of wheat, or some other; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body” (1 Corinthians 15:36-38). It really doesn’t matter what body we shall have in the resurrection. Let us be assured that God will provide us with a body perfect for whatever condition we may be in. It just isn’t important what body it will be as long as that body meets the need of that condition. Paul’s analogy of seed indicates a variety of possibilities; while the grain of wheat produces other grains like it, the tulip bulb shoots forth a new and glorious body.

In another realm of life, the fuzzy, creeping caterpillar emerges from apparent death in the form

of a beautiful butterfly. While argument cannot settle the question, we can be sure ours will be wonderful bodies. Through Paul comes the promise that Christ, “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Philippians 3:21).

## **TWO RESURRECTIONS**

Thus far we have spoken of the glory of the resurrection. However, the fact of resurrection brings two possibilities since the life we now live shall have effect on the life that is to come.

We find that there will be two resurrections. Jesus said, “The hour is coming in the which all who are in their graves shall hear his voice [speaking of Himself] and shall come forth —they who have done good, in the resurrection of the just; and they who have done evil, in the resurrection of the unjust” (John 5:28-29).

The first will be one of everlasting joy for those who die in Christ. We read, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Abinadi taught, “All those that have kept the commandments of God shall come forth in the first resurrection” (Mosiah 8:56).

The second resurrection will be that of the unjust. Speaking of this, Daniel prophesied, “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting shame and contempt” (Daniel 12:2). Abinadi, speaking of some who come forth in this second resurrection, said, “All those that have perished in their sins ever since the world began, that have willfully rebelled against God, that have known the commandments of God and would not keep them— these are they that have no part in the first resurrection . . . . salvation cometh to none such; for the Lord hath redeemed none such” (Mosiah 8:62, 64).

We ought to be challenged to so live as to merit a place in the first resurrection, for on such as these, “the second death hath no power” (Revelation 20:6). We need, likewise, to be warned of the danger that faces those who come forth in the second resurrection.

The principle of resurrection is proven. By the power of Christ, through resurrection, all men shall be raised to the possibility of eternal life with God or to eternal suffering. To some it will mean salvation, but to others it will mean damnation. With the apostles and men of old, let us fervently proclaim this principle of the doctrine of Christ.

## **Questions for Discussion**

1. Why are resurrection and eternal judgment called the “eschatological principles”?
2. What scriptural proof do we have that resurrection is a reality?
3. How does the principle of resurrection function in our mortal life?
4. What are the two resurrections?
5. How did Christ teach and fulfill the principle of resurrection?
6. Is it possible to be a good Christian and not believe in the principle of resurrection? Explain.