

Fundamentals of Belief #19A: Eternal Life Through The Resurrections

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Jon W. Brisby; 8-24-2002

Well, brethren, we're going to continue now with this series on the Fundamentals of Belief of Church of God, The Eternal. We have completed the first eighteen of those original fundamentals that Mr. Armstrong wrote decades ago. Now we're ready to begin what should be a two-sermon coverage of fundamental number nineteen. I've specifically planned it to be two sermons. Many of you will not hear these until after the Feast of Tabernacles this year, and yet I have scheduled these to try and complete number nineteen on the subject of the resurrection of the dead, in anticipation of fundamental number twenty concerning the return of Christ, and to merge that in, timewise, with the very keeping of the Feast of Trumpets this year. Many of you will actually hear this tape after the Feast, and you will have already heard fundamental number twenty because it's part of the Holy Day sermon that all of you are going to hear. So, some of you will actually be hearing these out of order; but for those of you in Eugene, you're getting these in order, starting with these two sermons on fundamental number nineteen concerning the resurrection of the dead. Let's read fundamental number nineteen as Mr. Armstrong originally penned it:

We believe the only hope of eternal life for mortal man lies in the resurrection; thru the indwelling (now) of the Holy Spirit; and that there shall be a bodily resurrection of the just and unjust—the just to eternal life as spirit beings upon earth, the unjust to receive the second and final death in hell (Gehenna) fire in which they shall perish in eternal punishment.

That is fundamental nineteen concerning the resurrection of the dead. And when we're speaking of the resurrections, we are speaking of one of the doctrines which sets apart this Way of Life that we have embraced, and makes it most distinct from the religions of the rest of this world. This that we're going to go through in the next two sermons on the resurrections of the dead—including the times of salvation,

the order of the first, second and third resurrections—is that which answers so many of the questions that plague human beings. It answers the question of life after death. And if there's life after death, what is that life like? What is the constitution of human beings today? Why were we created? What is our purpose? If there is a God, and if that God is purposeful, then what is this plan that He is working out? So much of all of those questions which plague mankind are answered in our understanding of the resurrections of the dead.

It is that fundamental teaching, then, from so many decades ago, which made that message from Mr. Herbert Armstrong absolutely unparalleled and unequaled. There was no one else, brethren, who taught that Way of Life. For all of those who are out there today denigrating Mr. Armstrong and claiming that he had nothing new or unusual or exceptional to preach, that he borrowed or stole all of his teachings from a hodge-podge of other men and just pieced them together into a package, I can tell you, brethren, that this is one of those doctrines which was absolutely unique—the understanding of the mortality of human beings today, that we were created flesh and blood, that we do not have an immortal soul, that the only hope for our ever having life after death is going to come through a resurrection, and that there's not only one resurrection, but more than one. All of those pieces are absolutely essential for the fulfillment of this perfect, harmonious plan that God is working out.

Let's take it piece by piece, and see how we can understand the basis, Biblically, for what we were originally taught, and how you can prove and verify to anyone else who might ask why you believe what you do in opposition to the world's religions about life after death. "We believe the only hope of eternal life for mortal man lies in the resurrection . . ." And so, Mr. Armstrong states very clearly, first, that we are mortal. We are mortal, and not eternal, in these flesh bodies. Man does not now possess eternal life. That is a fundamental distinction between what you believe and the religions of this world. It is the thing that keeps us from being able to have any real affiliation or comfort level with the people in the world. They have a totally false sense about the mortality of human beings, and they believe that they have immortality. I don't care if it's the Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, or so-called Christians—invariably, they all have some concept involving the immortality of the human soul, and that is the thing that makes us totally unique.

I think it's one of those things that may account for the fact that—even if you were raised in the Church like I was, but if from the time you were an adult, you were one of those who wasn't really called or didn't stay with the Truth, so to speak, and never carried forward with it—most of those children who were raised in the Church can never really find a comfort level in the churches of the world, whether it be Catholic or Protestant. And one of the major reasons is that the compelling thing that they were taught growing up concerning the real truth about life after death, is one of those things that sticks with you. Even if you forget everything else about the Holy Days and what they mean, one of those things that typically sticks with those young people is the fact that we do not now have an immortal soul and that life after death is going to come through a resurrection from the dead, and not by going up to heaven or burning in hell. It is something, if you want to say, that poisons our children against ever truly being able to fit in. They may not decide to continue to obey God and seek His Way of Life, but it sure makes it hard for them to embrace any of these other ideas that most children grow up believing.

Man does not now possess eternal life. That is the key. It goes back to the very first lie that Satan the Devil told to Adam and Eve in the Garden, when he asked them, "Has God told you that you're not going to die?" That was the very first thing that Satan lied about and used to deceive Adam and Eve. He told them, "God told you that you're going to die, but you're not going to die; you're already a god." It is the same lie that human beings have believed and furthered for the last 6,000 years—this idea that man has an immortal soul. If man has an immortal soul, there is no need for a resurrection. Doesn't that make sense? If your flesh body is simply a shell encasing your immortal soul and when that body dies, you immortal soul wafts up to heaven or goes to wherever it goes, then why do you need a resurrection at all? If man has an immortal soul, the whole concept of a resurrection is fruitless. It's redundant; it makes no sense, and yet the Bible is replete with passages concerning the resurrection of the dead. We have a whole chapter that we're going to go through in time—1 Corinthians 15—which the Church has called "the resurrection chapter" for decades.

These so-called Christian churches in the world can't ignore the fact that there is going to be a resurrection. They have to account for it because it's all throughout the New Testament and the Old Testament as well. So, they have to account for it, but it's one of the toughest things they have to do—to try and mesh

together their false concept of a current immortal soul within man, with the idea of the need for a resurrection from the dead. Those who are already possessing eternal life do not need to be resurrected.

Let's notice Genesis 2 and verse 7:

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

As we were always taught, this doesn't say that man has a living, immortal soul. It says, "man *became* a living soul." We understand that this word "soul" is the Hebrew word *nephesh*. What is a *nephesh*? Is a *nephesh* an eternal spirit? What is this thing that was translated as "soul"? Well, we find out by context that it is not speaking of any immortal, eternal element whatsoever. Notice Ezekiel 18 and verse 4: "Behold, all souls are mine . . ." So, whatever this *nephesh* is, God says that He owns it; it belongs to Him. "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine . . ." Now, what does God say about these souls, these—whatever the plural of *nephesh* is—*nepheshes*? ". . . the soul [the *nephesh*] that sinneth, it shall [live forever in hell fire, being tormented by Satan the Devil down in the middle of the earth.]" Is that what it says? No, ". . . the [*nephesh*] that sinneth, it shall die." How much clearer can that be, brethren? Yet, the deceived masses of the world reject it categorically. They cannot understand it, and they will not accept it. The *nephesh* that sins shall not live forever and ever; it shall not waft around in the ethereal atmosphere; it shall not become a part of the Ein Sof, the great spirit world; it shall not go up to heaven, sit on a cloud and play a harp. The soul that sins, it shall die. It seems very clear.

Notice also Proverbs 19 and verse 16: "He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul [*nephesh*] . . ." So, in other words, maintaining that life has something to do with obedience to God, commandment-keeping. "He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his ways shall die." It doesn't say that the sinner, who is rebellious against God's way and refuses to change and to embrace Jesus Christ, is going to be tormented forever and ever in hell fire. It says "that soul"—that being is what it means. God created man, and he became a living *being*, which is the meaning of *nephesh*—a living, breathing, animated being dependent upon oxygen in order to sustain that life. ". . . he that

despise his ways shall die." We are serving a God, my dear brethren, who is a loving and a merciful Being, who has not willed that any human being should suffer eternal torment in a hell fire. It is totally inconsistent with the idea of a loving God.

How about a couple examples of a dead *nephesh*. Are there such examples? They are all through the Old Testament. Let's notice just two of them.

Numbers 19 and verse 11: "He that toucheth the dead [*nephesh*] . . ." "He that toucheth the dead body . . ." See, it is not translated, in this case, as "soul." That very word *nephesh* is translated here as "body." That is what God created. He made man a living body, a living being. We don't have a problem using the word "soul," if we understand what that soul really is. "He that toucheth the dead [soul, in essence] of any man shall be unclean seven days." So, here is an example in which that *nephesh*, which the rest of the world claims to be an immortal essence, is actually called dead. Whether it's animal or man, we're talking about both categories as being those animated physical beings, flesh and blood, which live and die.

Ecclesiastes 9 and verse 5: "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing . . ." This is one of the classic confirmations that we were taught for years as a certification that, outside of the resurrection of the dead, there is no life after we cease to breathe and after our hearts stop pumping blood. These bodies cease to live. There is no more thought; there is no more memory—nothing.

For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

This doesn't just mean, brethren, that other people's memories of them disappear—which certainly happens over eons of time—but more specifically, it's telling us that their very own memories, the function of mind, the functions of their brain, cease when they die. There are no more thoughts. There is no further essence of the mind of this being which continues to think, feel and operate. Dead is dead. There is no feeling—no more thoughts, no more memories, no more nothing. The lights go out in the grave. That's the way God made it.

No, brethren, eternal life is not something with which we were born. Eternal life is a gift that is only going to be given to those who are successful in this endeavor. Eternal life is a gift; and if a gift, then man does not inherently possess it at all. Let's notice that eternal life is a gift. 1 John chapter 5 and verse 11: "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." How did God give eternal life to human beings? Through His holy Son, Jesus Christ. And that's the only way that man has access to eternal life.

. . . God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

This is a little bit different than the lie that Satan told to Adam and Eve in the Garden, isn't it? He told them that, irregardless of God or what God told them or commanded them, they already possessed eternal life as gods. That is not the truth. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." There is no eternal life, my dear brethren, except we come to receive it as a gift, as a reward, through Jesus Christ. Verse 13:

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

There are very strict conditions that are going to be required in order for any human being to receive that eternal gift of inherent life forever.

Notice Job 14 and verse 12, which is one of the key texts in the Old Testament that speaks of, alludes to, the very means by which God is going to give life. It is through a resurrection. "So man lieth down, and riseth not . . ." That's what happens when he dies. It didn't say that he lies down and his dead body stays in the dirt, but then his immortal soul comes up out of the ground through the freshly dug dirt on top of the grave, passes the gravestone, wafts up past the trees in the cemetery, and floats on up to heaven. That's not what he said happens.

So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake [How long is that? That's a long time.], nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret . . .

Yes, Job was experiencing some serious trials at this time, and he actually wished to die to be saved from the pain and suffering in the flesh that he was enduring. He understood that if God had just mercifully granted him to die, he would be at peace. No, he would not be an immortal soul that was wafting around in agony like a disembodied soul of some kind, floating. No, he knew that if he died, he would simply have peace, sleep, rest, with no thoughts, nothing at all to cause him pain.

O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! [So, he looked forward to something. Job looked forward to life after death, but he understood that he did not possess it at that time in the form of an immortal soul. Verse 14:] If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.

You see, Job understood. And in this prophecy recorded in this Book for us, is a reference, an allusion, to the very means by which God was going to grant life after death for humanity—even through the resurrection.

. . . till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.

Yes, God's intent is that humankind be resurrected to receive eternal life, to be with Him forever in that very God Family, to partake of the unity of the mind of that Family. And so, it is His will. Those who are dead right now, who have lived and died in the last 6,000 years, are yet in their graves, and they are waiting for that very call. They have not received that call yet. All humanity who has died in the past is yet in the grave. They are waiting patiently—with no thought, no idea, no mind left to think, no pain, no suffering, no nothing—for the time of the resurrection.

Isaiah 26 and verse 19: "Thy dead men shall live . . ." Yes, there is going to be life after death. "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise." Now, if they're already an immortal soul that has floated up to heaven, from where are they going to arise? If they've already received their reward at the very time of their death and if they're up in heaven with God, what are they going to have

to do? Rush back down and get back in the grave again in time for the resurrection? I have never made sense of that. And yet, these churches will talk about a resurrection because it says very clearly that there is going to be a resurrection at the return of Christ. So, I guess all of these immortal souls are going to have to run back down and get back in the ground again so that they can go through the motions of being resurrected. How else do you explain it?

Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.
Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of
herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

Oh, there is an incredible time coming—actually more than one time. There are two very phenomenal times when the earth is going to cast out the dead in magnificent form. There's also a third time that we will talk about later when the earth is going to cast out the dead. That one is not going to be very pleasant, but two of those times are going to be monumental in the scope of what God is working out on earth through a resurrection of the dead. Those people are going to literally come out of their graves. One set of them is going to be spiritual; another set will be physical, but we'll get to that in time as well.

Now let's turn to the resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15. Today, we're only going to read some small excerpts from it because we're going to go into much more detail in the next sermon when we get into the actual order of the resurrections, but today we're just laying the groundwork for it.

1 Corinthians 15 and verse 20: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." Here is a certification of that which we already know. Christ is the forerunner, and if we keep that one fact in mind, so much of the Bible makes sense. Christ was the first to do. If we see what Christ did and what He accomplished, and recognize that He was the firstfruits, the first of many to follow, then we have a very clear roadmap of exactly what is in store for humanity. Just look at the path that Christ took according to the will of the Father, and you will see precisely what He has in mind for those whom He is calling and giving that opportunity.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of
them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the
resurrection of the dead.

Yes, by men's sins—by the sin of Adam and Eve, and by your sin and my sin, brethren—we have incurred the death penalty. That death is assured for us in this flesh. We have earned it. We brought it upon ourselves; and yet, at the very same time, God made provision from the foundation of the world for a Savior for humankind. Through His perfect life in the flesh, experiencing all of the temptations and the trials that you and I do in this flesh, and through His perfect obedience to the Law—never sinning because He had a full measure of God's Spirit because God was His Father—He became qualified to be your Savior and mine, and thereby to pay that death penalty so that we have an opportunity for life after death. If we did not have a Savior, we would pay the penalty of death and be in the grave forever and ever. That would be our end. "For since by man came death [yes, by our sins against the perfect Law], by man came also the resurrection of the dead." This is referring to the fact that Jesus Christ, our Savior, was born as a human being. By man, came that Christ.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive [Verse 35]. But some man will say, How are the dead raised up?

The Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is going to answer precisely how God is going to do it.

. . . How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? [Then, skipping down to verse 40.] There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial . . .

Meaning, there are spirit bodies, and there are physical, mortal, flesh and blood bodies—two different strata that are incompatible totally, the physical and the spiritual.

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon . . .

We understand that one of the symbols that God created in the relationship between the sun and the moon is that of the celestial and the terrestrial. The sun represents the very power of God and His glory. The sun generates its own energy and power inherently, even as God is self-existent and generates His own power

and glory from within. The moon, however, is a dead planet of itself, and it generates no glory whatsoever. Why is it that we look up into the heavens on a clear night and we see that glorious moon shining brightly? It's not because that moon has its own glory; it is reflecting the very glory of the sun. If the sun were not there, the moon would be black. That's why every single month at the time of the new moon, we do not see that moon in the sky because the earth blocks the path so that the sun's image does not reflect to us off of that moon. Without the sun, there is no glory of the moon, and likewise, brethren, the moon represents the Church. Without God, there is no glory in the Church. There is no glory of human beings placed in the Body of Christ, except that the very power of God and of Christ are manifested through that Body—the Church. Verse 41:

There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

The stars, we know, represent the angelic host, and God created the angelic host with immortal life. They do have inherent life. God created them to be eternal beings, and so those stars in the sky do emanate their own light, many of them from many different light years away. And so, some of them appear brighter than others, and some of them are much brighter than others.

There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption . . .

That means we were born physical with no inherent life—flesh and blood bodies that depend upon our next breath in order to sustain that life, and when that breath goes, there is no more life. It disappears; we're dead. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption." What is an incorruptible body, except an eternal spirit body that cannot die?

It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body . . .

So, Paul is answering the question, how are the dead raised? Remember, back in verse 35. And here is the answer: "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body . . ." For the firstfruits—those who die in Christ having been called, having succeeded in this life's mission of overcoming the self—there is going to be a resurrection in which they will be raised incorruptible as eternal spirit beings.

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. [Skipping down now to verse 53.] For this corruptible must put on incorruption . . .

That's why you and I were created. My dear brethren, if you and I do not succeed in being born into the Family of God, we will have failed to achieve the mission for which we were born. You were created for the purpose of being a son of God. You were not created for any other purpose but to share eternity in the God Family—the riches, the glory, the blessings, the love, the peace, the unity and the harmony that flows through God's Holy Spirit among all who will be in that God Family. That's why you were created, brethren, and if you do not get it—if you and I do not make it—we will fail to achieve the only purpose for which we were created. That's why we are here. That's why we are alive. Those of you who are here and under the hearing of my voice understand that there is only a small harvest that God is working with now, the firstfruits harvest—called out for this very purpose. The rest of humanity, all of the millions and the billions who have lived and died and who yet live on this earth, is waiting for their opportunity for salvation. They haven't received it yet. That's coming at a later time, which we're going to talk about, but you have been given that opportunity now; and if we fail, we fail our very purpose for existence. ". . . this corruptible must put on incorruption [That's why we're here.], and this mortal must put on immortality." We must, brethren, or else there is no other life. If we fail, there is no life after death.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Yes, the very threat of death—eternal death, a death from which there is no salvation—that enemy will have been thwarted, beaten.

Next, we understand that the resurrection occurs in us, in the firstfruits harvest, ". . . thru the indwelling (now) of the Holy Spirit . . ." Notice John chapter 3 and verse 4:

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? [Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it?] Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

What is Christ certifying right here? He's talking about a spiritual birth. He's not talking about the birth that you and I experienced physically as flesh and blood human beings—when we were conceived, came through maturity and were born. No, we're talking about a different birth, a spiritual birth, that is yet in the offing. That birth comes only by receipt of the Holy Spirit. It tells the means by which God is working out the opportunity to save each human being. It requires a calling. It requires baptism. That's what this reference to water is all about. ". . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." That means baptism has to occur. It means there is a calling, where God opens the mind of this human being for the first time to understand those priceless truths they could never understand before. And once given that opportunity for that knowledge, then that individual has to accept it. They have to say, "Yes, I recognize this is the Truth. I know this is the right way. I want that way. I want the promise that God has given to me. I want the opportunity to be in His Family. I want to work and do whatever I have to do to achieve it." Therefore, once we come to know that real Christ, the first step is to become baptized. That guilty self, that body, the carnal mind, is symbolically killed in the watery grave. That's by water.

". . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit . . ." And then, you come up out of the water, symbolically having laid down your guilty past, and through the laying on of hands, you receive the down payment of the Holy Spirit dwelling within you—the earnest of the Spirit, not a full measure like Jesus Christ had, but even a small amount, the earnest of that Holy Spirit, which is the very mind of Jesus Christ. You receive a small part of the very eternal essence of God, living within your mind and heart, giving you the power to fight against that natural nature with which you were created, as was I—the power, then, to go to war and to fight

that spiritual warfare against our own carnal minds and against the spiritual enemies that seek our destruction, and to be successful and not give in or justify the self, but pursue that Way of Life throughout the remainder of that assigned life in the flesh. Then, judged to be worthy—not that we are worthy, but judged to be worthy—by our process of overcoming, we have an opportunity to be born into the very Family of God and receive that eternal salvation as a gift. What a glorious, glorious picture that is.

And so, that's why Christ said succinctly, when He answered Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," because that is the method by which God has provided for man's salvation. It has to come through the Holy Spirit. One has to first be begotten before he can be born, and the only way that a human being can be begotten of God is through the receipt of the Holy Spirit through baptism. That's the way the process works. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Romans 8 and verse 9: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you . . ." Now, we continue to be flesh and blood bodies. We still hurt when we fall down. We still bleed. We still have problems. We didn't turn into a spirit being, and yet Paul said, ". . . ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you . . ." You see, if you have gone through that process and received the earnest of God's Spirit dwelling within your very mind—the missing ingredient that man never had by natural birth—if you've received the down payment of that Spirit, then you are a unique creature. You are not like all the rest of the beings walking around on this earth.

. . . if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin . . .

Now, you still live in it. You still walk around; you still breathe and eat. You do all of those functions because you're still flesh and blood. The difference is in a change of mind where we do not live after the lusts of the flesh any longer. Yes, we fight them; we have weaknesses and we give in to them from time to time, but we do not justify them. We do not live after the lusts of the flesh; we are living instead after a totally different way—a way that we have come to love, to desire and

to relish because God has revealed His priceless way to us and we've decided that we want to love that more than anything else.

. . . if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

That's where we stand right now, brethren. We have the opportunity to have the quickening of the very Spirit of God, helping us through those tough times that we are in, helping us to fight the battles—the spiritual warfare—that we are waging. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh." No, we're not supposed to continue to do the things that we did by nature when we didn't know any better—going after and pursuing the natural lusts, the carnal mind.

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Yes, they are the begotten sons of God. That means they are little babies in the womb, coming to full maturity, looking for the opportunity of their birth—the full birth as a Spirit son of God, joining the very God Family. But as Mr. Armstrong always said, if we do not continue in that way after we began on this path, if we reject our calling—either before or after baptism, it doesn't make any difference—we fail. We can reject our calling without ever being baptized and we can lose it, or we can become baptized and begin to walk on that road, but then somewhere along the line become discouraged and decide to give it up, or we can become offended, become deceived, if we make ourselves a prey for the adversary who's just looking for an opportunity to get us. And so, if we fail after having been called as a begotten being, then we can become a miscarriage. We can become a spiritual miscarriage, and then we will never be born; we will never receive the glorious birth into that God Family. So, while we are yet flesh and blood, even though we have a down payment of God's Holy Spirit—we have access to that Spirit—we can quench that Spirit. That Spirit can be quenched. We do not have inherent, eternal life within us.

Christ gave the example; we don't have time to turn to it. He said, "I am the vine, and you are the branches; and the branches cannot live except they are fed by the vine." Cut off and by itself, a branch withers and dies. It does not have inherent life. It depends upon the feeding from that vine, connected to the root. That's the Father and the Son—the root and the vine. And so, we, like branches right now, as begotten beings, depend upon the sustenance from Jesus Christ for our lives. If you become born, if you receive that gift of life after death, you will then have eternal life dwelling within you. You will have inherent life. You will no longer actually depend upon the Father or the Son for your existence. You will be harmoniously within a Family that shares the Holy Spirit, but you will have inherent life, even as Jesus Christ has inherent life in Himself. But for right now, we receive that Spirit, we receive that eternal life, as a small earnest payment and it doesn't stay within us if we don't continue to receive it, flowing through the very mind of God within us. No, we can quench that Spirit. We can become a spiritual miscarriage if we are not ever diligent to continue on that road. That is the only way, brethren, that God has offered life eternal to human beings—a stark contrast to that which is taught in the world.

Next, we want to cover, ". . . there shall be a bodily resurrection of the just and unjust . . ." Here, now, we begin to touch on one of the controversies which I never would have thought that people who once understood the Truth, who were in that Body for so many years, would turn and reject, as they have rejected so many of the fundamental teachings. And yet, many of them have rejected the very fundamental doctrines that we learned through Mr. Armstrong concerning the resurrection of the just and the unjust. Mr. Armstrong said that there is going to be a resurrection of those who will receive eternal life and also a resurrection of those who are going to receive condemnation, and die the second death. He called that the final resurrection. Whether you call it the third resurrection or the final resurrection, the teaching was clear. Those who had the opportunity, who were given that opportunity to be begotten, and who became spiritual miscarriages—meaning, for whatever reason, they were either deceived or became offended or just became weak and gave up, and they died having failed their one opportunity—are going to live again for a short time. They're going to be resurrected in order to hear a guilty verdict passed upon them, and then they're going to die the second death in Gehenna fire. That was the original teaching.

Now, you've got a whole lot of people out there today, even of our former brethren, who will tell you, "Well, God is not going to resurrect someone just to throw them in a lake of fire." Many of them have embraced this false concept of universal salvation, which means that no human being is going to fail. Have you heard that one? They say, "If any human being fails to receive salvation, God would be the failure. A perfect God can assure that all human beings succeed." And therefore, if any human being fails in the end result, it's God's fault. How diabolical that concept is. No, it violates the whole principle that we learned—God gave human beings free moral agency, and we have to choose life over death. He's not going to compel anyone; we're going to have to prove that we want it—we want it bad enough that we're willing to sacrifice everything else that pulls at us in this life. We're going to have to be willing to give it all up, and put God first. He's not going to compel anyone. Yes, He's going to intervene. He certainly cried out to His people, Israel, time and time again; He begged them. He did everything possible to get them to repent. Many of them often would, generation by generation.

But there are some who will rebel; they will not repent; they will not turn back, and they will fail to achieve the purpose for which they were created. Those who have died in that state are now awaiting in their graves. They're waiting to come up in a resurrection as well, but it's going to be a resurrection to condemnation, when they're going to hear the guilty verdict passed upon them. They're going to know that they failed, and God is going to make sure that He completes the process of judgment. The process of judgment is not completed until the verdict is handed out. Those who died in their sins, died believing they were right. If there is no resurrection for them, and God just leaves them in the grave, then they never hear the end result of their experience. So, they are going to come up too. But let's look at some of the evidences—the proof—of what Mr. Armstrong taught, because that doctrine has been assailed like you would not believe in these last days, and by people who should know better. So, let's look at it.

Hebrews 9 and verse 27 to begin: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die . . ." Yes, it is. For you and for me to die is that which we are going to experience. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." There is going to be a judgment, and it is going to be a judgment—a resurrection—of the just and the unjust. There are two broad classifications of

people who are going to be involved in the resurrections that we're speaking of. In the next sermon, we're going to talk about the details of those three resurrections, because there are three. But, first, we want to set the stage for the remainder of this sermon by talking about 1) the certification that there is a resurrection of the just and the unjust, and 2) setting the stage for understanding the classifications of people who are going to be involved in a resurrection of some kind. Once we have all the players in mind—who these people are and how they differ from one another—then we can see the overall fabric of how God is going to raise them up at different times, the differing times of salvation, for the purpose of carrying out this Master Plan in three resurrections. There are two broad classifications of people involved in resurrections of some kind, and it is the just and the unjust. Now, regardless of how many distinct resurrections there are—because many of these people are now arguing that there are only two resurrections and not three—but no matter how many resurrections there are, there are these two broad classifications of the just and the unjust. Now, Mr. Armstrong taught us that there are three resurrections, and that's what we still believe; and I can absolutely support it from the Bible—at least to put those pieces together. And I can certainly tell you that those who claim there are only two resurrections have a whole lot weaker evidence for their position than that which Mr. Armstrong taught.

Let's turn to Acts 24 and verse 14, and we'll get started:

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets [And then, verse 15.]: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

There is going to be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. Now, how do these other detractors answer this? Those who don't believe in a third resurrection of condemnation say, "Well, see, the resurrection of the just and the unjust refers to the first and the second resurrection." They will tell you that the just refers to the firstfruits harvest who are going to receive eternal life when Christ comes back, and in that they're correct, but then they will tell you that the resurrection of the unjust refers to the deceived masses of the past—those who are going to come up in the second resurrection at the end of the Millennium, who were unjust because they were deceived and never had their first opportunity to

understand the Truth. That's what made them unjust. It's not that they're unjust in the final analysis; they've just been unjust in their first physical life on earth, in the first 6,000 years of man, when they didn't know any better. These unjust are going to be given their opportunity of salvation to understand the Truth for the first time. That's the argument. It sounds pretty compelling, doesn't it? It might be very easy to buy into that, except guess what? That's not what Mr. Armstrong taught us. It's not what he taught at all. He taught us that when the Bible refers to a resurrection of the unjust, we are referring to those who had their opportunity and who failed once they were given it; and therefore, they are going to be resurrected to receive condemnation and the second death. Can we justify what we believe?

Well, let's turn now to Matthew 25 and verse 31. Are these unjust those who had the Truth and rejected it, as Mr. Armstrong taught, or merely those who come up in the second resurrection, never having had saving knowledge up until that time?

Matthew 25:31—a parable that you're all familiar with:

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.

We're talking about a judgment. We're talking about a time of reckoning, of judgment, where verdicts are going to be handed out—either an innocent verdict with a reward, or a guilty verdict with the death penalty, one or the other.

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Someone is going to be counted worthy—not that we can ever be worthy of salvation in the flesh. No, we're not. It is by our development of character, because we tried the best that we could, we used the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and we did make progress in overcoming, step by step, and we never justified the carnal results of the flesh. We never sought to say that Christ was

unfair, or to make Christ in our own image. We accepted the true Christ. And even though we were weak, we fought, we struggled, and we did it throughout the remainder of our lives. Those are the ones who are going to be counted worthy and given that gift of the Kingdom of God.

Verse 41: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire . . ." Yes, it is going to be an everlasting fire—a Gehenna fire that's going to burn. It is an eternal punishment, as we're going to see, not eternal punishing, because flesh and blood bodies burn up and they're no more. If we have no immortal soul, then there is no immortal life to continue to writhe in agony and pain for ever and ever.

. . . Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred . . .

Many of them are going to justify themselves to the very end. They're going to come up in a resurrection, and they're absolutely going to defend themselves. They will say, "God, we loved you, we served you, we did all of these things in your name. Why are you being mean to us now?"

Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

It tells us very clearly that we don't have eternal life now, because eternal life is a reward for those who pass the judgment in that day. They are the ones who receive life eternal. These others do not receive life eternal; they receive death. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment . . ." Of course, that was always interpreted, and is interpreted by the churches of this world who call themselves Christian, as writhing in pain, their immortal souls being tormented

forever and ever in hell fire. And yet, the word here is "punishment," not "punishing." It's not, "They shall go away into everlasting punishing." They shall go away into everlasting punishment. It means the punishment, the penalty for their sin, is final. It cannot be retracted, cannot be undone; there are no "do-overs." At this point, it is sealed. The end result comes; they failed, and they are going to receive that punishment. It is an eternal punishment. It means that they're going to die the second death, and there is no opportunity again for salvation. That end is final; it is eternal. They will be obliterated out of memory, and there will be no memory left of them.

Now John 5:28—probably the most contested scripture concerning this issue about how many resurrections there are. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice." Sounds funny to me how the word "all" is used here. What about those who did have their calling in their first life—let's say either in the first-century Church at the time of the apostles, or today—and they blew their opportunity, and they died in rebellion against God? Well, this scripture says, ". . . in the which *all* that are in the graves shall hear his voice." It's a certification that everyone, including those that failed, are going to be resurrected to life again. They're going to be brought back to consciousness.

. . . for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves 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 damnation.

Now, in the *Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course*, this was one of the scriptures that was pointed to as a proof of the third resurrection. Note here: ". . . they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." That seems pretty clear to us, doesn't it? The problem is, these others want to argue over the meaning of "damnation." Okay, they have a little bit of a point. There is some ambiguity in this scripture which keeps us from technically interpreting John 5:29, in and of itself, as a certification of a third resurrection, but I can give you a parallel scripture in Daniel—and we're going to do that a little bit later—which seems to remove all doubt to me. It is absolutely a confirmation in my mind of what Mr. Armstrong taught us and that which we accept as divine revelation.

". . . they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Here is the alternative argument. This word in the Greek, translated as "damnation," is the word *krisis*. What does *krisis* mean? Believe it or not, *krisis* can have two different meanings. *Krisis* can mean either "condemnation and damnation," or it can mean simply "judgment." So, these others that want to argue against Mr. Armstrong, want to use the latter definition of the word *krisis*. They say that this should be interpreted, ". . . they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of [judgment]." Again, they apply this "resurrection of the unjust theory" to say that the ones who did evil in their first life because they weren't called and didn't have their chance yet, are the ones who were unjust. And so, this is a reference, they say, to the second resurrection. Of course, then they will say, "You see, here in John 5:28 and 29, there are only two resurrections mentioned—not three. It says, '. . . they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of [judgment].'" So, they'll say, "See? A certification that there are only two resurrections—the resurrection of life, which is the first resurrection for the firstfruits harvest, and the second resurrection, the resurrection of the unjust and the evil. Those who never had their opportunity and did bad things in their lives, are going to be raised up to have their first chance to accept Christ." It makes perfect sense. The problem is, it's a man's theory, and it absolutely refutes that which we know came from the apostle that God raised up to give us the Truth in the last days.

Those that use this argument have all kinds of holes in their theories anyway, and I will show you why. Yes, this word *krisis* can be interpreted as a general judgment, meaning it has no reference to a guilty verdict or an innocent verdict. There are several cases in the New Testament where *krisis* is used that way. What they won't tell you, is that there are a number of passages where *krisis* is specifically used to mean condemnation—damnation, a guilty verdict. This is how deceptive they are: When these men want to put together an article and malign Mr. Armstrong, they will give you facts and things that support their position, but they totally leave out all of the technicalities of the Greek, which actually refute what they're trying to pawn off as truth. Those that are faithful are going to tell you both sides of the story. We're going to tell you what we don't know. We're going to tell you what we can't confirm technically, and we'll make that distinction. But I can tell you, the basis of those who are going to stand in the Truth are those that do it by faith anyway, and recognize the revelation that came through a chosen servant. But let's look at some of the technicalities. Those who are attempting to apply this to

say that there is only a first and second resurrection, claim that the proper use of "judgment" is not denoting either a positive or a negative verdict. Certainly, *krisis* can mean judgment in general, or it absolutely can mean condemnation or damnation. Let me show you a couple of the scriptures these other men won't show you.

Matthew 23 and verse 33: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" "Damnation" is the word *krisis*. Now, is the proper interpretation here, "How can you escape the general judgment of hell?" Or, is Christ actually assigning a condemnation, a guilty verdict, to those who have borne out negative fruits? That's precisely what is happening here. You don't have a general judgment. Remember, the judgment is like going into court. You go into a courtroom to go through a trial. That's a judgment process. Evidence is heard for and against the accused or the issue that's being decided or debated. You have a judgment which takes place in a court of law. The judge makes a verdict after all the evidence has been weighed and the prosecution and the defense have rested their case. A decision is made, either for or against the plaintiff or the defendant. That's the way it works. The example works very fine here. So, are we speaking of *krisis*—this word interpreted "damnation"—as really just "judgment," meaning, you come in and the verdict hasn't been given? Or, is this an example in which we're specifically talking about a guilty verdict? That's precisely the context.

"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the [condemnation, the guilty verdict] of hell?" What is this hell? The grave. What is the end result of those who disobey and rebel against God in the final analysis? They're going to go to the grave. They're going to die. They're not going to live anymore. Therefore, we're speaking of a condemnation, a guilty verdict that results in death in the grave for all eternity. That's what Christ is referring to here. He's not referring to a general judgment that has neither a guilty or an innocent verdict.

Let's look at some more compelling ones, though. Mark 3 and verse 29: "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy [Spirit] . . ." Now, this already tells you that it's pretty bad. Blaspheming against the Holy Spirit is the unpardonable sin. So, we're looking at a result, an outcome, that occurs to someone who commits the unpardonable sin. "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy [Spirit] hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal [*krisis*]." If somebody commits the unpardonable sin and blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, are they in

danger of eternally being on trial? Is the proper translation here, "a general judgment"? ". . . he that shall blaspheme against the Holy [Spirit] hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal [judgment]"—eternally being in a process of being judged forever and ever for all eternity. They're going to sit in a courtroom and endure back and forth hearing of evidence. Is that what's going to happen to one who commits the unpardonable sin? Are they going to be judged forever? Or, are they going to be condemned to death forever? I think you know the answer. This particular use of the word *krisis* is appropriately translated "damnation"—condemnation. It means, the person who is guilty of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit is never going to receive forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal condemnation—damnation—just as it was translated.

John 5 and verse 24:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation . . .

That word "condemnation" is the Greek word *krisis*, the very same word we're talking about. ". . . but is passed from death unto life." So, tell me, if the only appropriate translation of *krisis* is "a general judgment," as these other men claim, and it never means condemnation or damnation, then how do they explain what we're reading here? ". . . He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into [judgment] . . ." Is there any human being that's not going to be judged? I thought all human beings are going to have to face the judgment. They're going to have to stand before their Maker, and either be judged to receive eternal life or be judged guilty. So, how is it saying that there is somebody that's going to avoid being judged? Except, maybe that's not the proper application of the word *krisis* in this instance. Yes, *krisis* can be, and in some places in the New Testament is, translated and used to mean a general judgment, but not here.

. . . He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [They shall not face a guilty verdict.]; but is passed from death unto life.

This should make it very, very clear that the word *krisis* absolutely can, and in many places does, mean damnation, just like it was translated in the New Testament. It means "condemnation, a guilty verdict." So, how does that make us view John 5:28 and 29, when verse 29 says:

And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Now, it is absolutely true that from a strictly technical basis, we cannot absolutely certify that in John 5:29, the use of the word *krisis* should be translated as "damnation" or "condemnation" as opposed to "a general judgment." But is there a different scripture in the Bible that seems to work as a parallel which absolutely supports Mr. Armstrong's interpretation of John 5:29? There sure is.

Let's turn to Daniel chapter 12 and verse 1:

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake . . .

This is a reference to a resurrection, the very topic that we're going through.

. . . 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, unlike the Greek from John 5:28 and 29, when it talks about a resurrection to life and a resurrection to judgment or condemnation, leaving it kind of fuzzy technically, there is no doubt about what Daniel said here.

. . . many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

That word translated "contempt" is the Hebrew word *deraown*, and unlike the word *krisis* in the Greek, which can have either a general or a specific meaning, this Hebrew word *deraown* has one, and only one, meaning. There is no opportunity to try and shift around it. *Deraown* means "an object of aversion, abhorring, contempt." It's negative; it's bad. There is no way that you can use *deraown* in the Hebrew and come up with a neutral way to say that it means a resurrection of judgment for those who haven't had their opportunity yet. No, the use of this particular word in Daniel is absolutely negative, which is a certification that when it says, ". . . many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt", that's exactly what it means. It means that somebody is going to be resurrected for no other purpose than to own up to the guilt of their contemptible behavior. They're going to pay with a guilty verdict and be subject to the second death in the lake of fire.

Even if we can't clarify or certify it from John 5:28 and 29, you can absolutely certify it from Daniel chapter 12. That, my dear brethren, in my mind, absolutely supports the original teaching that we received from Mr. Armstrong and that was certified in that old Correspondence Course, which said, yes, there are those who are going to be raised out of the grave, and they're going to come to know that they missed their opportunity—they missed the boat, they failed—and they're going to die the second death.

There are three classifications of people involved in resurrections. There is also a fourth classification, and that's those who actually live into or are born in the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ, but we are given little information about how those will receive eternal life. I'm going to make a few comments about that at the Feast of Tabernacles this year, but without any hard conclusions because the Bible simply does not tell us. Is somebody going to live out a normal 70, 80, 100-year lifespan in the Millennium? And then what happens to them? Do they die? Are they immediately changed into a spirit being? Or, are they going to live like Adam and many of those patriarchs did from the beginning? Are they going to live during the entire 1,000 years? That, we don't know, and so we can't answer that. But there are three classifications that God does tell us about—the firstfruits, those who lived and died without saving knowledge, and then those who had their opportunity and failed. We're going to talk very briefly about those three categories. That's going to set us up for the next sermon when we will put all of that into context of the resurrections that are going to address those classifications of people.

First, we want to talk about the firstfruits. Just a couple of scriptures here, and you all are aware of this information.

Romans 8 and verse 14:

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. . . . And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ . . .

That's why we were created. And brethren, if you are one who was called now out of all of the billions on the face of the earth, and given this priceless knowledge as a pearl of great price, you have a chance to be a part of the firstfruits harvest. Your calling is now; your one opportunity for salvation is right now. You're living it. You're not going to get another one.

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Yes, it is a life of suffering because when you're called to become a true Christian, you're called for a lifetime of crucifying your carnal nature; and that's suffering. But if we love it—if we love the promise of what God has offered to us, if we relish His Truth and His priceless laws, which actually bring peace, harmony and all kinds of good things, if we really love that the most—you see, then we're willing to endure the suffering, even as Jesus Christ was willing to endure immeasurable suffering for our sakes. That's what this time of firstfruits is all about.

James 1 and verse 18: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures [or, of His created beings]." That's what you are. You are part of that firstfruits. You are a totally unique created being by virtue of the fact that you have been given a chance to receive the Holy Spirit, which the rest of the world can't even begin to understand or appreciate, let alone receive, until the time of their calling. Yes, they're going to get their calling, but their calling is not yet. Your calling is now, and you have the priceless opportunity for that spiritual begetting, to actually become a new spiritual creation—a new spiritual being in the womb, so to speak, begotten of God—in the

process of maturing and growing toward that moment of spiritual birth when you will become a full-fledged God. What happens to these who are in this first classification of the firstfruits, that which is pictured by the Holy Day of Pentecost that we keep every year? What happens to them?

Ephesians 1 and verse 11:

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

That's who you are, those who first trusted in Christ—not because you, or any of us, were better, but because God called us and gave us that chance. That's the only reason we're first.

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed . . .

You see, you had to be called—God had to give you the chance, the opportunity—but then you had to respond to it. You had to say, "Yes, I believe this is the Truth; I know it's the Truth, and I know I want to pursue that Way of Life." ". . . in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise . . ." That's what you received when you made a commitment to that way of life in baptism, and you began to walk according to that new way of life in Christ.

. . . ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

It's just a small down payment of the Holy Spirit. That's all we have, and yet God promises to give us enough. We cry out to Him, and we ask for that Spirit, enough to give us the power to accomplish this mission in life, to fight against our carnal nature, and to be successful.

Revelation 14 and verse 1:

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. [Verse 4] These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

They are the first—those called, those who accept that calling, who believe, who become baptized, who receive the down payment of the Holy Spirit and live the remainder of their lives pursuing that way and not forsaking it. They are going to be the first ones to be redeemed. They're going to be part of a resurrection, and they're going to receive eternal life.

The second classification, then, are those who live into and are born in the Millennium, which I'll talk about a little bit more at the Feast of Tabernacles. But then, the next classification are those who lived and died without saving knowledge—millions and billions of human beings who were born, who lived maybe just a short time or maybe a long, full life, but they never had God's Truth. They were never called. They lived in a deceived state all of their lives. They paid the penalties for their mistakes, for doing it their own way, which is the only way they knew how to do it. They didn't know any other way. They lived and they died totally separated from God, never knowing who the real Christ was, never knowing the Maker who created them and brought them into being, and never understanding why they were put on the earth. They lived a futile life in that regard because they didn't understand their purpose for being. That is the next great classification of those that are going to be involved in a resurrection. They are going to have their first opportunity. They are going to be resurrected and given a chance to live in the flesh again—not as spirit beings like the firstfruits. Only this time, they're going to be called. They're going to be resurrected; they're going to stand on their feet as flesh and blood human beings again. But this time, their minds are going to be opened to the Truth, and these billions and billions are going to have their chance to do what you're doing right now—choosing between life and death. They never had the choice before to choose between life and death. God didn't even give them the opportunity. At this opportunity—synonymous with the second resurrection—they're going to have that chance for the first time to choose between life and death, to accept the way of God, to receive a down payment of the Holy Spirit through baptism, to walk in that way, and ultimately to receive their reward.

We do not have time to turn to Ezekiel 37, but you read verses 1–14 on your own. It is the prophecy that Ezekiel wrote down concerning the valley of the dry bones, which shows this great physical resurrection that is going to take place. It's not a spiritual resurrection; it's not the resurrection of the firstfruits that's being referred to here. These people are brought back to life with sinew, bone and skin. Those are physical things, not spiritual. They're going to stand on their feet, an exceeding great army, and God is going to breathe into them the breath of life. They're going to live again physically. What happens to them? They also, now having received God's Spirit, which chapter 37 tells us plainly, are going to have the opportunity to qualify to be born into the very Family of God.

What's the last classification of people? We've had the firstfruits. We've had those that lived and died without saving knowledge, who are going to be given their opportunity, after events take place, to receive that training and calling in God's way. And then, we have a third classification: those who were called, either as a part of the firstfruits in this age or a previous age, or else during and after the Millennium, but who died having rejected Christ. After they were given their one opportunity, they did the wrong thing. They messed up, they blew it, and they died having rejected Christ. Who are these?

Revelation 3 and verse 5 very quickly:

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life . . .

So, there's somebody whose name was written in the Book of Life, and as we understand, God wrote those names in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, which means He is counting on our success. When God wrote our names in the Book of Life, it is because He is counting on you making the right choice and choosing life over death. He didn't withhold it and say, "Well, if you're good enough and you do well enough, then, okay, I'll write your name in the Book." No, He wanted to be certain that you understood that He created you to become part of the God Family, and He's counting on you choosing life. And to certify His positive intent for your future, He went ahead and wrote your name in that Book ahead of time, and it has been there since the foundation of the world. He's counting on your success. And the only way that your name or my name is not going to stay in there, is if we do something to prove that we don't want life, that we want to have our own way rather than what God is offering.

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

It tells you that if God makes the statement that He will not blot out our names from the Book of Life, then it certainly must be possible for someone's name to be blotted out of the Book of Life. Otherwise, His statement is an empty threat. It has no meaning if He doesn't intend to do it in certain cases. So, the very fact that He made reference to a circumstance in which a name could be blotted out of the Book of Life, means that it could happen. In fact, we know it will happen. We'll see that next time.

One more scripture in closing, Revelation 22 and verse 18:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Yes, it is possible for a human being, who was once given that priceless opportunity, to strike his own name out of the Book of Life, to give up the very priceless gift for which he was created. That is a classification that is going to occur. We hope it involves as few people as possible. We hope that the majority of those who have stumbled for the time are going to repent and come back, but there is a classification of those who are going to pay the ultimate penalty. That is the third classification that we are going to deal with, and God did account for that in a resurrection. Next time, brethren, we are going to put the pieces in order of the times of salvation. We're going to look at all of the varying resurrections that God has included in His magnificent Master Plan.