

A word cloud background with various religious and spiritual terms in different sizes and orientations. The words include: life, spirit, soul, resurrection, faith, eternal, body, alive, victory, embodied, and heavens. The title text is overlaid on this background.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD IN A NEW CREATION

Dan & Radiana Cordos

Preliminary translation

What does "resurrection of the dead" really mean? What actually happens when the dead rise again? Is this promise a future event, a living and present reality that touches the soul of the believer right now, or a mystery unfolding over time, from generation to generation?

Exploring themes such as Adamic death, birth from God, and the eternity of the New Covenant, this book offers a profound vision in response to the questions posed by the apostle Paul himself: "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?"

Questions as old as faith itself find their answers rooted in the text of Scripture—offering a perspective that unites creation, salvation, and resurrection into a coherent and living plan.

A necessary read for all who desire to understand what it means to be raised with Christ.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD IN A NEW CREATION

**HOW DO THE DEAD RISE? WITH WHAT BODY WILL
THEY RETURN?**

Dan Cordoș

and

Lidia Radiana Cordoș

Editura Candela, Arad, 2025

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The quotations from the Scripture are taken from the Cornilescu translation in the original Romanian version. In the English version, we used several translations, noted in parentheses each time.

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PREFACE

In our first book, "*The Creation from Genesis to Revelation: 'Behold, I make all things new'*", we also briefly touched on the resurrection of the dead. In the pages of this study we will explore the subject in depth. The resurrection is a subject that has aroused and continues to arouse much controversy. For Christians, belief in the resurrection of the dead is essential, because it has its foundation in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is God who gives life and raises the dead, and the New Testament affirms that the first to rise from the dead was Jesus Christ. In this study, we will look in detail at why Christ is called "the first risen from the dead" and attempt to bring clarity to this fundamental aspect of the Christian faith.

We will also analyze the nature of the resurrection promised in the Scriptures, asking: Is it physical? Or is it spiritual? Or could it be both? The answer to these fundamental questions will be given exclusively on the basis of the teaching of Scripture. We will not appeal to other writings, experiences or subjective testimonies. For our part, we believe that the authority of Scripture is indisputable, since the author is God, and those through whom it was written were merely instruments through whom He communicated.

Another topic worth exploring is the connection between creation and the resurrection of the dead. Is there any connection between the creation described in *Genesis 1* and the promise of the resurrection of the dead? If so, what is the nature of this connection? Or, on the contrary, is it a completely new reality, different from what the creation of *Genesis* is? These questions invite us to look in depth at how the Scriptures describe both the beginning in *Genesis* and the end in *Revelation*, in view of the greatness and intentions of God,

according to his plan that was formed before the foundation of the world.

Then we will also explore how the resurrection is presented as a foundational hope of the Christian faith, an essential truth that lies at the foundation of the Gospel. The Apostle Paul strongly affirms that if Christ has not been raised, then our faith is in vain (see *1 Corinthians 15:14-17*). The resurrection is therefore a reality that gives meaning to the Christian's life and fulfills God's promise in the Old Testament.

In addition, we will try to clarify the differences between the various interpretations of the resurrection. We will answer questions such as: What happens to man after death? What is the connection between the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of believers?

Another important thing is the number of resurrections and the time of the resurrection(s) and what is the order of these resurrections and how they fit into God's plan. We will also study when these resurrections take place and how they relate to other prophetic events. All these topics require careful analysis, with the relevant texts of Scripture as a starting point.

As we move forward in this study, we aim to let Scripture speak, without imposing conclusions based on specific denominational teachings, or other speculative interpretations. Our goal is to discover God's revealed truth and to understand more deeply the hope He offers us through the resurrection.

In this endeavor, we will analyze key passages of Scripture that deal with the theme of death and resurrection, seeking to understand the deeper meaning of these teachings. We will consider both the Old Testament writings and the New Testament revelations presented by Jesus and his apostles.

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand what the resurrection is, we must clarify what death is. Therefore we will begin our study with:

Adamic death and its nature

The resurrection of the dead is an highly debated subject, both by Christians and by the most bitter opponents of Christianity - the so-called "New Atheists".

The first group, Christians, although they believe that the dead rise from the dead, do not have a unified understanding on the subject. They are divided, holding different views on the nature of both death and resurrection (bodily and/or spiritual).

The second group, the atheists, who reduce existence to the physical, natural and material world, vehemently dispute the possibility of the resurrection of the dead. Like the Sadducees in Jesus' day, they believe neither in the existence of the spirit nor in the resurrection of the dead, while denying that Jesus rose from the dead. For them, everything is matter, and thought and everything that has to do with the personality of man are but products of the human brain.

So to understand the nature of the resurrection, we must first understand the nature of death. What kind of death entered the world through Adam's sin? There are only these possibilities:

1. Physical death
2. Spiritual death
3. Or both

What was Adam's condition before he sinned?

Scripture tells us that Adam and Eve "*were both naked and were not ashamed.*" The commandment Adam received from God, the prohibition against eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was given precisely to make him aware that if he made that choice, he would die:

*Genesis 2:16-17 (ESV) And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for **in the day that you eat** of it you shall **surely die.**"*

Note that this commandment implies man's freedom of choice - in fact, it prompted Adam to make a choice: either **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**, the only one destined to bring death, or **all the other trees**, including **the tree of life**, the only one that could provide eternal life (*see Genesis 3:22*).

It is interesting to note that all the other trees in the garden (apart from the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) were not intended to bring either death or life. Scripture emphasizes their other role: **to provide a place where man hid from the face of the Lord after sinning**, even though they shared a common feature with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, being a "*delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise*" (*see Genesis 2:9 and Genesis 3:6*). This brings to mind earthly man's attempt to hide behind **his "good" deeds**, which are the fruit of all sorts of "goodly trees, delight to the eyes", symbolizing deeds by which man tries to receive God's acceptance.

What followed Adam's election?

1. **The discovery of emptiness**, after which he tries to cover it with a **garment of his own making - made of fig leaves** - and then hides from God, overcome with **fear**.

2. **The promise of the destruction of the serpent's head** by the woman's seed (*i.e. Christ*).
3. **The punishment of the woman** with great suffering, with the pains of childbirth and submission to the man (first Eve was deceived then Adam).
4. **The cursing of the earth** on account of the man, and punishing him, so that by toil and sweat of face he might bring forth his food out of an earth that would bring forth thorns and thistles - until he returned to the dust from which he was taken.
5. **The name that Adam gives his wife: 'Eve'**, meaning 'life', because she was the mother of all the living (after the fall into sin).
6. **The clothing of Adam and Eve in garments of leather**, made by God - implicitly resulting in the stripping of the fig leaf garments made by their hands. The leather garments imply a sacrifice and speak across the ages of the clothing of man with Christ (see *Romans 13:14*), who sacrificed himself for the sins of mankind.
7. **The banishment of man from the Garden of Eden**, to be denied the right/access to the tree of life (which was meant to give eternal life). We implicitly understand that sin has put up a dividing wall between man and the life in God. **The restoration of this right** was to come **only through faith in Christ's sacrifice** (see *Revelation 2:7; 22:14*).

These are the main points Scripture emphasizes about the change brought about by Adam's sin.

The most common understanding of the consequence of Adam's sin is that it marked the beginning of physical death, which came later, at the age of 930. This idea assumes that man, being made from the dust of the ground, initially had eternal physical life.

However, Scripture offers no support for this idea. The only verse that could be misinterpreted in this sense is *Genesis 3:19* (ESV), which reads:

"By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

We note that **the punishment was** not physical death (*returning to the ground*), but **to till the ground and earn food by toil**. The phrase "*till you return to the ground*" indicates only the duration of the punishment, not the punishment itself. Likewise, the expression "*for you are dust, and to dust you shall return*" does not speak of a change brought about by sin, but of **Adam's earthly nature from his creation**. The passage does not say that Adam became 'dust' through sin, for he was dust from the beginning.

The conclusion to be drawn from this analysis is that man did not physically die the day he sinned. However, he did die on that day because God declared it so. Therefore, the death of which God spoke is spiritual death, which is the loss of access to the tree of life, which was intended to give eternal life (see *Genesis 3:23*).

Man's choice was spiritual in nature (it was not a matter of physical food), being a choice between the words of God and the words of the serpent. Man had to decide who to believe in: God or the serpent. Thus, as a result of his trust in the words of the serpent - disbelieving the words of God, man came to know his emptiness that he had not previously realized. As a result, he covered his body with fig leaves and hid himself from the Face of God among the trees of the garden.

The word 'naked' expresses the idea of not being clothed, that is, the lack of a covering, not necessarily physical, but primarily spiritual. The Garden of Eden was created by God as a place intended for man in his original state of spiritual 'nakedness'. Eden thus becomes the "garden of choice", the place where man decided what "garment" to put on. To say that the Garden of Eden is the same as God's Paradise is a mistake. In Paradise there is only the tree of life which is by the river of life (see *Revelation* 22:1-2).

Although God had warned him not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for it brings death, **man freely chose** to believe the serpent's delusion and was responsible for his choice. It is remarkable the order in which God establishes responsibility and pronounces judgment:

1. **The serpent** - is cursed, and the enmity between his seed and the Seed of the woman is declared, who will crush his head.
2. **The woman** - is punished by increased suffering and submission to the man.
3. **Man** - is punished by cursing the ground, from which he will toil to get his food.

This accountability/punishment must also be understood spiritually in the same way as man's initial state (the state of "emptiness").

We have seen that following the election of Adam and Eve, now clothed with death from the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil", followed their banishment from Eden to be denied access to the tree of life. Of course, one might wonder:

Why did God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden?

This is a profound question that causes many to question God's goodness. The most common answer given by Christians is that God did not create robots, but free beings. This is true, but the reality is even deeper. God had a plan formed in Himself before the foundation of the world (see *Ephesians 1*). It is **a mysterious plan of election in love**, of glorification through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace. Everything that happened in Eden is part of the way to the fulfillment of this divine plan. If we keep in mind this good plan of God, with a glorious end, then the question of suffering can also be understood much better. Adam's fall was no accident, but was part of God's plan (see *Romans 11:32; Galatians 3:22*), and yet man is responsible for freely choosing death as a result of the serpent's deception. In the same way, the making of the serpent and his presence in the Garden of Eden were part of this God-made plan. Shocking, isn't it?

It is difficult to accept these things if our minds are trapped in a system of thinking strictly based on right and wrong (the serpent model), but when our minds are enlightened and transformed by the love of God, we understand that He wanted to make Himself known to us, and this was only possible through the incarnation of Christ. Eternal life is the knowledge of the one true God and of Jesus Christ (see *John 17:3*). In Eden Adam did not know God and Jesus Christ in order to have eternal life. Eden is therefore the place where God created all the necessary preconditions - the need for redemption - so that Christ could reveal the Father to us. Scripture teaches us that God is love (agape), and love can only be known when there is a deep need to be loved. Therefore, we can firmly affirm that the first man, Adam, did not have eternal life which he lost through sin. From the state of "nakedness" he became "clothed" with death, not with life, which - hypothetically speaking - he could have accessed by taking from the tree of life. The only one who gives

eternal life is the incarnate Christ, and this life has been brought at the end of the ages. We can say that Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God's life-giving love, a love made known to the world only after he became incarnate.

In conclusion, the death that entered the world through Adam is spiritual, not physical. Physical death has existed from the beginning, because it is part of the things seen, material, and these are transient. Paul teaches in *2 Corinthians 4:18* (ESV) thus:

*"we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For **the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.**"*

We believe that no one can claim that Adam's physical body was invisible. And if it was visible, then it was also transient, a fact confirmed by the generations that have succeeded one another through the ages and will continue to succeed one another. The things that are visible were transient from the beginning, even before the fall into sin, because God created them that way. But out of this world in which the generations are continually succeeding one another, God brings to eternal life all those who are dead in Adam, but who put their trust in Jesus Christ by obeying the Gospel. That is why it was necessary to understand what death is, in order then to explain what resurrection is, taking into account the nature of Adamic death.

Adamic death is not physical but spiritual.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

After death entered the world through Adam's sin, God repeatedly promised that the dead would rise. The resurrection is from Adamic death and this should prevent us from making unscriptural speculations about the nature of the resurrection, certainly if we consider what Scripture says. We saw in the introduction that Adamic death is not physical but spiritual; therefore, the promised resurrection must be from that very death. Although the resurrection from Adamic death is spiritual, we also have some examples of the resurrection of the physical body.

Resurrections of the physical body

The Old Testament Scriptures speak explicitly of physical resurrections in only a few passages. We will quote them and speak very briefly about them:

*1 Kings 17:22 (ESV) - "And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And **the life of the child came into him again, and he revived.**"*

*2 Kings 8:5 (ESV) "And while he was telling the king how **Elisha had restored the dead to life**, behold, the woman whose son he had restored to life appealed to the king for her house and her land. And Gehazi said, "My lord, O king, here is the woman, and here is her son whom Elisha restored to life"."*

*2 Kings 13:21 (ESV) - "And as a man was being buried, behold, a marauding band was seen and the man was thrown into the grave of Elisha, and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, **he revived and stood on his feet.**"*

These passages relate three instances of resurrection from physical death. It is important to understand that these resurrections are miracles and do not represent the resurrection

of the dead promised by God in the Old Testament Scriptures. All who were physically resurrected experienced physical death again.

Explicit prophecies of the resurrection of the dead

The first promise we will look at is:

*1 Samuel 2:6 (ESV) - "**The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up.**"*

This verse is part of the prayer of Hannah (*Song of Hannah*) and, in our understanding, is a prophecy of the victory of the incarnate Christ during the apostolic generation. The verse shows that God sends people into the abode of the dead - through physical death - but He also brings them out. So the abode of the dead is shown as a place from which God brings the dead of the Old Testament period to life. This bringing to life is a coming out of Adamic death - the spiritual death of the first Adam, not physical death. It is not the physical body that is taken out of Sheol, but the soul. The only one who experienced resurrection in both aspects is Jesus. In *Psalms 16:10*, these two dimensions of His resurrection are prophesied by David:

1. *"For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol"* - the spiritual aspect. The abode of the dead was a place of souls.
2. *"Nor will You let Your Holy One see decay"* - the physical aspect. The grave is a place of the body.

Other passages that speak explicitly about the resurrection of the dead are:

*Isaiah 25:8-9 (ESV) - "**He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD***

*has spoken. It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, **that he might save us**. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice **in his salvation**".*

*Isaiah 26:19 (ESV) - "**Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.**"*

The first passage is a prophecy of the resurrection of the dead, expressed by the words "**He will swallow up death forever**". At the end of the passage, we are shown that the destruction of death is accomplished through salvation. This is also clearly expressed by the apostle Peter:

*1 Peter 1:9-10 (ESV) - "now that **you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls**. Concerning this salvation, **the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully.**"*

In the following quote Jesus makes a clear distinction between the physical body and the human soul:

*Matthew 10:28 (ESV) "**And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.**"*

The context of the passage speaks of the persecution of the disciples by men. Therefore, the soul of man cannot be killed by other men, but they have power **only** over the physical body. Even though the soul dwells in a body, man can only kill the body. The distinction is clear as early as *Genesis 2:7*, where the body is of the dust of the ground, and the soul is the breath of life from God.

Thus, when Isaiah speaks of the destruction of death through salvation, he is referring to the human soul, not the physical

body. The same principle is affirmed by Jesus in *Matthew 16:26* (ESV) : "*For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?*".

The second passage in *Isaiah* is more difficult to understand because it seems to speak of the resurrection of the physical body from the dust. Although this verse is based on a symbolic, physical image, it expresses a spiritual reality. Such images appear frequently in the pages of Scripture. Verse one, in the same chapter, makes it clear that this resurrection is in a strong city whose walls are salvation:

Isaiah 26:1 (ESV) - "*In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: **'We have a strong city; he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks.'***"

And prior to the resurrection of the dead in verse 19, verse 5 shows us that "*For he has humbled the inhabitants of the height, the lofty city. He lays it low, lays it low to the ground, casts it to the dust.*" In our understanding, this passage refers to the destruction of the apostate Jerusalem of the first century, which put Jesus to death and persecuted throughout history the prophets, and in His generation His apostles.

Verse 14 also confirms this, for the memory of the dead in the city of pride has been blotted out ("*you have visited them with destruction and wiped out all remembrance of them*"). This was prophesied long before by Moses, who says in *Deuteronomy 32:26*: "*[...] I will cut them to pieces; I will wipe them from human memory*". Chapter 32 is a clear prophecy of the destruction of first-century Jerusalem, which forgot "**the Rock**" ("*you forgot the God who gave you birth*" - v.18), i.e. Christ, asking Pilate to crucify him.

As in *Isaiah 26:19*, the resurrection of the dead is also prophesied by *Daniel*, thus:

Daniel 12:1-2 (ESV) – *[...] But at that time your people shall be*

*delivered, everyone **whose name shall be found written in the book.** And **many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.**"*

Again we see that the prophet uses symbolic imagery of the resurrection, "*Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.*" Those found written in the book (the book of life - from Rev. 20) are part of the saved people and the others are judged, an idea expressed by the words, "*some to shame and everlasting contempt.*" The phrase "*dust of the earth*" does not refer to physical graves. If it did refer to graves, how does one solve the problem of those who drowned in the sea, those who were eaten by fish or wild beasts, burned by fire ...? Someone might say: what, you don't believe that God can bring someone completely disintegrated to physical existence? We believe that all things are possible with God, but we don't believe that we can force the "hand" of God to enact any aberration that may cross our minds. As we have already pointed out, physical resurrections were only signs and wonders.

If we read on to *Daniel* 12, we see that the resurrection prophesied by him was to take place when "*the power of the holy people comes to an end*" (v.7), after the 70 weeks of years of *Daniel* 9:24 had passed. Between the 69th week and the 70th week is a generation apart (about 40 years) and this was fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (the AD70 according to history), which was also prophesied by Jesus in *Matthew* 24. It was then that the power of the people of Israel was shattered utterly, and they were broken up as a nation, scattered among the Gentiles. This is not the Israel of today, but the Israel of the Old Covenant whose power ended in the first century.

The prophet Ezekiel also prophesies about the resurrection of the dead:

*Ezekiel 37:5 (ESV) - "Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: **Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.**"*

*Ezekiel 37:6 (ESV) – "And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, **and put breath in you, and you shall live**, and you shall know that I am the LORD."*

*Ezekiel 37:10 (ESV) - "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, **and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.**"*

The dead of the house of Israel are seen by *Ezekiel* in a vision, as a multitude of dry bones, being carried away by the Spirit of the Lord into a valley. The Lord asks *Ezekiel*, "*Son of man, can these bones live?*" The answer is in the following verses, "*I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.*"

So the resurrection is the result of the Spirit entering into the dead (verse 14), and although the rest of the passage says that the flesh grew on the bones and they stood upright, this resurrection is not physical, although the imagery seems to indicate this. Remember what Jesus says in *John 6:63*: "***It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.***" If the Spirit would give physical life in *Ezekiel 37*, then this resurrection, in the flesh, according to Jesus' teaching, "*is no help at all.*"

Hosea also prophesies the resurrection of the dead, those in the abode of the dead, in the following passages:

*Hosea 6:1-2 (ESV) - "Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; **on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.**"*

*Hosea 13:14 (ESV) - "I shall ransom them from the power of Sheol; I shall redeem them from Death. **O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting?** Compassion is hidden*

from my eyes."

The first passage speaks of the life received through the resurrection of Christ, who is the One first raised from the dead on the third day according to the Scriptures. In the first book we wrote¹, we showed that the three days also refer to the days of creation in *Genesis 1* (day 4, 5, 6 - as historical periods), which correspond to the days of the second world of the Old Covenant, not just the three natural days, while the body of Jesus was in the tomb.

In the second passage, we see that in the abode of the dead were the souls of the dead. Therefore, the resurrection prophesied by *Hosea* is the resurrection of the souls that went to the abode of the dead after physical death. We will explain this prophecy in more detail when we study *1 Corinthians 15*.

Job also believed in the resurrection of the dead. The following passages show this fact:

*Job 7:9-10 (ESV) - "As the cloud fades and vanishes, so he who goes down to Sheol does not come up; **he returns no more to his house**, nor does his place know him anymore."*

*Job 19:25-27 (ESV) - "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And **after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in** (apart from my flesh - more accurate) **my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself**, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!"*

¹ Dan and Radiana Cordoş – The Creation, from Genesis to Revelation? "Behold, I make all things new." <https://facerea.ro>

The Hebrew phrase "*umibbeshari echezeh Eloah*" can be:

- "*in my flesh I shall see God*" (ESV),
- OR: "***apart from my flesh I shall see God***" (LXX, patristic reading)

It is noteworthy that *Job* did not believe that if one dies, he ever physically returns to the seen world, shown by the words, "***he returns no more to his house.***" But he believed that **his Redeemer is alive** and that **he will stand upon the earth**. These words show us that *Job* knew that the Redeemer, that is, Christ, was to be incarnate **at the last** (last days) to fulfill the work of redemption.

Job was aware that at that time he would be in the abode of the dead. This can be understood from the words: "***And after my skin has been thus destroyed, apart from my flesh I shall see God.***" But whose eyes will see him if he has no skin? Of course *Job* is referring to the sight that the soul/spirit has, not the physical body. Just as with physical eyes we see physical light, so with spiritual eyes we see the spiritual light of Christ, the risen One from the dead.

Neither we nor *Job* saw Christ physically. But *Job* was to hear the words of the gospel preached by the risen Christ in the spirit (see *1 Peter 3:18*), in which He went to preach the gospel to the dead (from the abode of the dead), as *1 Peter 4:6* (ESV) shows us:

"For this is why ***the gospel was preached even to those who are dead***, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does."

I have heard leading people in the theological world say they do not understand this verse. I think their misunderstanding stems

from a fear that this passage would support the possibility of salvation after death. However, if we understand that the abode of the dead no longer exists in the New Covenant world in which we find ourselves, as *Revelation 20:13-14* shows us, then things become clearer. We will return to these points in the course of the study.

Implicit prophecies of the resurrection of the dead

The text underlying the explanations of the Old Testament's implicit promise of the resurrection of the dead is found in the New Testament, in *Matthew 22*, *Mark 12* and *Luke 20*. This passage also explains the nature of God's promised resurrection. We quote from *Luke 20:27-40* (ESV):

27 *"There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection,*

28 *and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.*

29 *Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and died without children.*

30 *And the second*

31 *and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died.*

32 *Afterward the woman also died.*

33 *In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife."*

34 *And Jesus said to them, "**The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage,***

*35 but **those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead** neither marry nor are given in marriage,*

*36 for they cannot die anymore, because **they are equal to angels** and are sons of God, **being sons of the resurrection.***

*37 **But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.***

*38 Now **he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him.**"*

39 Then some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well."

40 For they no longer dared to ask him any question."

From this passage we see that the Sadducees were trying to put Jesus in an impossible situation, expecting that He could not give an answer. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, and their question shows that they understood the resurrection prophesied in the Scriptures to be a physical, fleshly one, evidenced by the question, "**Whose wife will the woman be?**" Jesus' answer is surprising.

First of all, He explains that the people of "*this age*" marry and get married, which clearly indicates that he is also referring to

the physical world, not just to the Old Covenant reality in which his interlocutors found themselves. For them, there were only two options: either to remain in the Adamic death characteristic of the Old Covenant age, or to experience the resurrection from the dead, which made them part of **the age to come** — an age that was imminent for their generation.

Therefore, only those who were "*sons of the resurrection*" were to belong to this next age. This statement implies a profound reality: **people can belong to different ages**, depending on their relationship to the resurrection brought through Christ.

The distinction between the two ages:

- ***This age*** is the time when death is still present - not just physical death, but especially Adamic death (separation from God). It is a time marked by marriages, births, natural life and physical death. In this age, people begin their lives within a system of thought inherited from the fall in Eden — the dualistic mindset of good and evil — which characterizes the Old Covenant.

Those who hear and receive the Gospel pass from Adamic death to eternal spiritual life, even during this age. However, physical death remains a reality through which all people, including those who have come out of Adamic death, have passed, are passing and will pass.

"This age" also coincided with the **Old Covenant period** in which Jesus' contemporaries found themselves, a period in which the true (spiritual) resurrection could not take place until after Christ's victory over death. (Earlier physical resurrections were only temporary signs.) It is important to note that Jesus makes these statements *before* His own death and resurrection - which is why He

speaks of future realities in the future tense.

- ***The future age*** belongs to those who are resurrected. In this new age, Christ - the *first risen One* - becomes a life-giving spirit, not a resurrected physical body that generates biological life.

This is why the Lord says that those who will be resurrected "***are equal to angels***" and will be "*sons of God*". These expressions emphasize the spiritual nature of the resurrection. Hebrews 1:14 confirms that the angels are "ministering spirits", thus reinforcing the idea that the resurrection introduces the believer into a spiritual reality of the new age.

Second, Jesus shows proof of the resurrection of the dead by quoting *Exodus 3:6*, where Moses calls the Lord:

"the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

Time and again, I have heard Christians claim that God is the God of the universe. However, Scripture does not say this, even though God created the universe. He is not the God of lifeless matter, but the God of the living.

This truth is also found in *Exodus 3:15* (NIV), where God says:

*"This is **my name forever**, the name you shall call me **from generation to generation**"*

What Name?

"The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"
(also said in *Exodus 3:6* - at the burning bush). In other words:

The foundational promise of the resurrection of the dead - expressed implicitly - consists in the Name of God which He says at the Burning Bush: I am "*the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*"

If Jesus had not explained to us that the dead are raised by the very fact that God calls Himself the God of the fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we might never have understood this truth.

The statement "[...] **for all live to him** " is truly astonishing. How can this be true even before the resurrection of the dead?

A first explanation relates to the eternity of God, for whom all things are in the present. This is a difficult concept for the human mind, limited by time and space. However, there is another explanation, linked to creation in *Genesis 1*. In our first book² we pointed out that on the seventh day God rested after finishing all creation - a creation that is not limited to the physical world, but also includes **the new creation in Christ**. With this in mind, we can understand that all the dead who were in the abode of the dead, from God's perspective, had already been raised at the end of the sixth day when all things "*were very good*", that is, were perfected.

But why, in his answer to the Sadducees, the Lord did not quote from *Ezekiel 37*, *Isaiah 26:19* or *Daniel 12*, where we find explicit

² Dan and Radiana Cordoş – The Creation, from Genesis to Revelation? "Behold, I make all things new." <https://facerea.ro>

promises of (apparently physical) resurrection? We believe that these passages, which give a physical picture of the resurrection, may pave the way for twisting the resurrection according to the natural thinking of earthly man. *Peter* speaks of some of his contemporaries who were twisting the Scriptures to their perdition (see *2 Peter* 3:16). These men, not having the Holy Spirit, interpreted the Scriptures according to their own minds, relying on a purely human logic centered on the things that are seen with the physical eye.

Recall that after the seventy joyful disciples return, Jesus says the following:

Luke 10:21 (ESV) "[...] I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will."

Those who considered themselves wise and learned were the elites of the time: the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the chief priests. They refused to be taught by Jesus, thinking themselves superior in knowledge. This is why we believe that the passages which speak explicitly of the resurrection of the dead were twisted by them, because, not having received revelation from God, these truths, which belong to the spiritual realm, remained "hidden" from them.

The Old Testament Scriptures were written in such a way that they can only be fully understood by the revelation of the Holy Spirit (see *1 Corinthians* 2:9-14). And this grace of revelation is given by the Spirit only to the humble, those who are eager to understand and willing to be taught by Christ and His apostles. The Sadducees, the scribes and others like them thought they were wise, therefore they were hindered from understanding the Scriptures.

It is evident from Jesus' explanations that profound truths about the resurrection are not stated directly, but are revealed implicitly. The way in which God presents Himself at the Burning Bush contains the most important promise - an eternal promise, extending from generation to generation. This promise, first received by the father of faith, Abraham, shows that the resurrection of which Jesus speaks is grounded in faith, a promised and guaranteed reality from God. We find it in *Genesis 17:8* (ESV):

*"And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and **I will be their God.**"*

In *Genesis* chapter 17 we find the covenant God makes with Abram. God ascribes this covenant to Himself, saying in verse 4, "*This is My covenant*" (as opposed to the one in *Genesis 15*, which He does not ascribe in the same way), whereupon ABRAM (see the old name in *Genesis 17:1,3,5*) **receives the new name: ABRAHAM**. This new name is received on the basis of an everlasting covenant (see verse 7), whereby the Lord promises that, **in the future, he will be the God of Abraham and his seed after him.**

Abraham is the first man in the Scriptures to receive the promise of resurrection from the dead, based on God's covenant in *Genesis 17*.

Also promised is the possession of a land, the land of Canaan, as an everlasting inheritance, God reinforcing the promise with the words, "***and I will be their God.***" But it is precisely this

strengthening of the promise that implicitly represents **the promise of the resurrection of the dead** - God is the **God of the living**. And Canaan, given in everlasting possession, cannot refer to an earthly country, but to a heavenly one, from another creation.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews, speaking of Abraham's faith concerning the inheritance of the promised land, states:

*Hebrews 11:16 (ESV) - "But as it is, they desire **a better country, that is, a heavenly one**. Therefore **God is not ashamed to be called their God**, for he has prepared for them a city."*

After which, in verse 10 of the same chapter, it is said:

*"For he (Abraham) was looking forward to **the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God**."*

We are clearly shown that the homeland or city in which Abraham was to dwell for ever is not earthly but heavenly, built by God. Therefore, God *"is not ashamed **to call be called their God**"*, because Abraham and his descendants Isaac and Jacob **waited in faith** for this city. These passages take us back to the Burning Bush of Exodus 3, where God affirms the same truth: I am their God.

Jacob, the third father of the nation of Israel, fleeing from his brother Esau, who sought to kill him, stopped for the night at Luz on his way to Haran. That night, he had a dream in which he saw the ladder of heaven (see *Genesis 28:10-15*). Upon awakening, he made an oath, recorded in the following passage:

*Genesis 28:20-21 (ESV) - "Then Jacob made a vow, saying, **"If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will***

give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I may return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God."

It is remarkable that, at first glance, Jacob seems to put conditions on the Lord's being his God, linking this commitment to his protection during the journey, food and clothing. This might seem a kind of bargain with God, as if only on these conditions would he recognize Him as God. However, our understanding is that these words have a profound prophetic significance with long-term implications. Jacob's journey, as a *result of which, on his return from Paddan-Aram, he (like Abraham) also receives a new name - Israel ("He who wrestles with God", Genesis 32:28) – it is a pattern of the journey of the people of Israel throughout the Old Covenant. At the end of this journey, the Lord was to become their God. This was only made possible by receiving the Bread of Life and the White Robe from Christ. Without the sacrifice of the body of Christ and without the garment cleansed in his blood, God could not truly become the God of Israel, that is, to have the resurrection from the dead.*

Seen in this light, the apparent condition set by Jacob is not a bargain, but rather a humble acknowledgment, a prayer that expresses his dependence on God's grace (see *Hosea 12:3-4* (NIV), "[...] *struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favor*").

The following verse confirms that the Lord became his God:

Genesis 33:20 (NIV) - *"There he set up an altar and called it El Eloe Israel (**The Lord is the God of Israel**)"*.

The promise of resurrection is present in numerous passages in the Old Testament where God reaffirms the belonging of his people. Here are a few of these:

*Exodus 19:5 (ESV) - "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, **you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples**, for all the earth is mine;"*

Since God is the God of the living, the promise of resurrection from the dead is clear from the expression, "*you shall be my treasured possession.*"

The Old Testament Scriptures are replete with statements suggesting the resurrection of the dead, phrased in such expressions as "*I will be their God,*" "*you shall be Mine,*" "*that I may be their God,*" etc.

Here are a few more verses that illustrate this truth:

*Exodus 29:45 (ESV) - "I will dwell among the people of Israel and **will be their God.**"*

*Exodus 29:46 (ESV) - "And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. **I am the LORD their God.**"*

*Leviticus 20:26 (ESV) - "You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that **you should be mine.**"*

*Leviticus 26:44-45 (ESV) - "Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for **I am the LORD their God.** But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that **I might be their God: I am the LORD.**"*

*Ruth 1:16 (ESV) - "But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and **your God my God**"."*

*Jeremiah 31:33 (ESV) - "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And **I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**"*

*Jeremiah 32:38 (ESV) - "And they shall be My people, and **I will be their God.**"*

*Ezekiel 11:20 (ESV) - "that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and **I will be their God.**"*

*Ezekiel 14:11 (ESV) - "that the house of Israel may no more go astray from me, nor defile themselves anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be my people and **I may be their God**, declares the Lord GOD.""*

*Ezekiel 34:24 (ESV) - "And **I, the LORD, will be their God**, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken."*

*Ezekiel 37:23 (NIV) - "They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and **they shall be my people, and I will be their God.**"*

*Ezekiel 37:27 (ESV) - "My dwelling place shall be with them, and **I will be their God**, and they shall be my people."*

*Malachi 3:17 (ESV) - "They **shall be Mine**, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him."*

We have thus far studied the promise of the resurrection of the dead in the second world, that of the Old Covenant. Was a promise of resurrection also made in the first world, the one before the flood?

In concluding this chapter, we will briefly answer this question, emphasizing that we have not identified any passage in *Genesis* in which God made a clear promise of the resurrection of the dead in the first world. The only important promise we find is that the seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head. The crushing of the serpent's head symbolizes the punishment for man's deception - the deception that brought death into the world. The first resurrected was to be Jesus Christ, the Seed of the woman, who crushed the serpent's head, fulfilling this promise at the end of the second world, the Old Covenant.

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

When we read the New Testament, we must realize that, historically speaking, the events recounted still take place during the Old Covenant. Even the resurrection of Jesus takes place in this period, when the Old Covenant Law was still in force. Therefore, the physical resurrections and the promises of the resurrection of the dead, which we find in the pages of the New Testament, still belong to this framework.

Although the preaching of the Gospel announced the replacement of the Old Covenant by the New Covenant, in the apostolic period this transition was a gradual process: The Old Covenant was shrinking while the New Covenant was growing. This truth is expressed by John the Baptist himself, the greatest and last prophet of the Old Covenant, in the following words:

*John 3:30 (ESV) - "**He must increase but I must decrease.**"*

(The New Covenant grows while the Old Covenant shrinks until it disappears)

Even after the resurrection of Jesus, the transition from the Old to the New Covenant was still in progress. The sacrifices that continued to be offered at the Temple in Jerusalem demonstrate that the Old Covenant had not yet disappeared (see *Hebrews 9:8-9*). Its end point is marked by the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem (see *Matthew 24*). Therefore, the teaching that the final change from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant took place with the resurrection of Jesus is erroneous. The New Covenant is based on a new creation, the foundation of which is Jesus, the first risen from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus marks the beginning of the new creation, which was to be completed at the resurrection of all the dead and His spiritual

return at the end of the apostolic generation, as He promised in *Matthew 24:34*.

Resurrections of the physical body

The following is a brief account of some of the physical resurrections recorded in the New Testament.

The resurrection of the widow's son of Nain

*Luke 7:12-15 (ESV) - "As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." **The dead man sat up and began to speak.** and Jesus gave him to his mother."*

This is the first resurrection of Jesus and is one of a series of miraculous signs intended to show that he is the Christ proclaimed in the Old Testament Scriptures. At the same time, for the widow of Nain, it was a great act of mercy that brought great joy into her life.

The resurrection of Jairus' daughter

The next passage tells of the resurrection of Jairus' daughter:

Luke - 8:49-56 (ESV) - "While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more." But Jesus on hearing this

*answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well." And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, "Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "**Child, arise.**" **And her spirit returned, and she got up at once.** And he directed that something should be given her to eat. "*

This is Jesus' second physical resurrection. As well as the immense joy it brought to Jairus' family, this resurrection is also one of the great signs by which Jesus proved that he is the Messiah, so that those who see may believe.

The resurrection of Lazarus. Jesus' resurrection teaching

In contrast to the first two resurrections, the resurrection of Lazarus has an even deeper significance. It is recounted in John chapter 11:

*John 11:20-26 (ESV) - "So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "**I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.** Do you believe this?"*

John 11:42-45 (ESV) - "I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they

may believe that you sent me." When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him."

The event of Lazarus' death takes place close to the time of Jesus' crucifixion. Lazarus, from Bethany, had two sisters, Martha and Mary - the latter anointed him with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair. Although *John 11:1* describes Lazarus as a nobody, verse 3 emphasizes that Jesus loved him. So, although Lazarus is presented as an ordinary man, he was "an ordinary man" loved by Jesus.

After the two sisters' envoys had told Jesus that Lazarus was sick, he stayed two days beyond the Jordan, where John had first baptized him, in Bethabara of Perea. Jesus had left Judea because of the Jews who sought to stone him to death. We notice that Jesus did not rush to go and heal Lazarus, whom he loved, as we would have expected. Only after the two days had passed did Jesus say to the disciples, "*Let's go back to Judea.*" Their response was: "*Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?*"

Next, Jesus gradually explains the situation to them. At first he said to them, "*Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.*" The disciples did not understand that Jesus was talking about Lazarus' death. Then He clearly stated, "*Lazarus has died.*" Thomas took the initiative and said to the other disciples, "*Let us also go, that we may die with him.*" Apparently their fear of death was so strong that they didn't realize that their friend Lazarus had died, and Jesus said he was going to go and wake him up, that is, to resurrect him. The pressure from the Jews was mounting and the disciples felt it.

When Jesus arrived, he was told that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. His dialog with his sisters Martha and Mary is very important. Martha says with regret and sorrow: "*Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.*" She continues, "*But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.*"

Jesus said to her, "***Your brother will rise again.***"

Martha answered him, "*I know that **he will rise in the resurrection** on the last day.*"

From Martha's response we understand that she believed that there would be a resurrection, "***on the last day,***" of all the dead from the Old Testament period. Her grief was over the loss of her brother's physical life, who died young. When Jesus resurrects the son of the widow of Nain - her only son - he says to her, "*Young man, I say to you, arise*", showing that this resurrection also refers to a young person. In the same way, Jairus' daughter was his only child and about 12 years old.

The three physical resurrections that Scripture tells us Jesus performed out of mercy for those who had suffered loss (see *Luke 7:13*), refer to young people. Any parting from a loved one is difficult, but when someone dies young, the pain is much more intense. We also notice that nothing is said about the parents of the three siblings, which leads us to think that they, too, had already passed away. In this case, the suffering of Martha and Mary would have been even greater.

Jesus' next words to Martha are an amazing revelation: "***I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live***" (verse 25). What does Jesus mean by these words? What resurrection and what life is he referring to? Is it a resurrection and a strictly physical life?

Surely Jesus is referring to the resurrection of the physically dead, as indicated by the expression "***even if they had died***". Lazarus had been among the physically dead for four days, and yet he heard the voice of the Son of God crying to him, "*Lazarus, come out*". By this, Jesus proved that He had the power to call to life even the dead of the Old Testament period (see *John 5:25; 28*). And if the Lord had referred only to His power to revive physical life, then, from the statement "*I am the resurrection and the life*", it would be understood that He gives transitory life, because Lazarus died again, like any other man. Jesus' words go far beyond the restorative power of the physical body, which was only a temporary miracle. He is the resurrection and eternal life in a new creation in which He was to be the first risen One. So the resurrection of Lazarus is only a sign, as *John 12:18* says, a foreshadowing of the true resurrection of the last day, a resurrection that was to conform to the spiritual nature of God (see *John 4:24*). If the resurrection promised in Scripture is the physical one, then Lazarus would still be with us today.

The next words of Jesus - "***And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die***" - bring a great clarification. If someone is physically alive and believes in Jesus, then he will never die spiritually, even if he dies physically. This is why Jesus did not tell the disciples from the beginning that Lazarus had died, but that he was asleep. Likewise Paul, when speaking of Christians who died physically in the apostolic generation, uses the expression "*those who are asleep*" (see *1 Thessalonians 4:13*).

If the death to which Jesus refers by the words "*will never die*" was the physical one, then all those who have believed in him since then would not have to die physically. The fact that people continue to die physically proves that *Adamic* death is spiritual. Physical death is part of the seen reality from the beginning, before the fall of Adam. Therefore, the life received by faith is also spiritual.

This truth, of the spiritual nature of the resurrection, is reaffirmed by Jesus in the following passage:

*John 5:24 (ESV) - "Truly, truly, I say to you, **whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.**"*

Therefore he who believes is no longer spiritually dead, as he was before he believed, because he has already passed from death unto life. Therefore, the life and death to which Jesus refers are of a spiritual nature: death is *Adamic*, and life is strictly spiritual - it does not refer to the physical body, but to the saved soul.

Bottom line:

The physical resurrection of Lazarus was only a temporary sign, meant to show Jesus as the one sent by the Father and to foreshadow the true resurrection of the last day. Although Lazarus was restored to bodily life, this was only a fleeting restoration, a symbol of Jesus' power over Adamic death. The deeper purpose of this miracle was to reveal his power to bring to life spiritually, a resurrection according to God's nature, which gives eternal life to all through faith.

These resurrections, which are the resuscitation of the physical body, are part of the miraculous signs performed by the Lord Jesus to confirm that he is the One proclaimed in the Old Testament Scriptures. In this sense, the passage in *Isaiah 35:4-6* is particularly relevant, prophesying His ministry:

*"Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, **your God** will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. **He will come and save you.**" Then **the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;**"*

After John the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod (see *Matthew 11*), he had a moment of doubt, unsure whether Jesus was the promised 'One'. He sent some of his disciples to ask him: "Are you the One who is to come, or shall we look for Another?" The

answer Jesus gave appealed to the prophecies that spoke of Him:

Luke 7:22 (ESV) - *"And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, **the dead are raised up**, the poor have good news preached to them"."*

All the miracles performed by the Lord Jesus, recorded in the pages of the New Testament, are intended to prove that He is the Christ. The physical resurrections, as visible signs, were meant to reveal his Godhead. However, the Scriptures show us that these resurrections, being temporary signs, do not represent the very reality promised by God, but are only shadows that point us to deeper spiritual truths. They are given to help us, by faith, to fathom the truths of 'the world of God', the realm of the unseen (see *2 Corinthians 4:18*).

A striking example is the sign of the circumcision of the flesh given to Abraham in *Genesis 17*, which finds its fulfillment in the circumcision of the heart, performed in the spirit (see *Romans 2:29*) - an invisible but profound act precisely because of its spiritual nature.

Scripture tells us in *1 Timothy 1:17* (ESV) that God is unseen:

"To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

Therefore, the King of eternity, the only God, cannot be seen with the eyes of flesh. And in *1 Timothy 6:16* we are told that no man has seen Him (and therefore not even Adam), nor can see Him. God is Spirit (see *John 4:24*) and can only be 'seen' if we receive sight by being 'born of the Spirit', born again:

John 3:3 (ESV) - *"Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

Therefore, seeing the Kingdom of God - that is, perceiving it and the presence of the King, who is God - is possible only by being born of God, that is, by receiving spiritual "sight". The passage in *John 9*, which recounts the healing of the man born blind, is extremely revealing. Symbolically speaking, the man born blind embodies the condition of every human being; there was not and is not, with the exception of Jesus, any human being born with this spiritual sight. Jesus alone can open our eyes to see the Light of His Face. Understanding these truths is essential to fathom the truth of the resurrection of the dead as promised in the Scriptures.

For some Christians today, signs and wonders are the goal of their search, but neither in Jesus' day were they, nor need they be an end in themselves. This is emphasized in the following passage:

John 4:48 (ESV) - "Jesus said to him, 'Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.'"

These words are spoken as a rebuke, because the Lord would have had them believe him at his word. Thus the signs and wonders were performed because of their unbelief in His words. Jesus' purpose was that people would believe in His Word through which the Father was revealed. But the signs proved futile to the unbelieving Jews, a fact which is also evidenced by the following passage:

John 12:37 (ESV) - "Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him."

They did not believe, and in their arrogance, they did not realize that they were "blind", but believed that they "saw" and did not need anyone to open their "eyes". As far as they were concerned, the words of Jesus in *John 9:38 (ESV)* were fulfilled,

"For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."

So those who considered themselves wise were hardened so that they did not understand that the One who spoke to them was God in Person (see *Isaiah 6:9-10, John 12:40-41*). The essential condition for man to 'see' is humility, followed by a sincere desire to receive teaching from the Holy Spirit, the One who makes known the God of the Scriptures. The Jewish elite, though knowledgeable of the Scriptures, arrogantly and fiercely opposed Jesus' teaching.

Let's consider a few more passages where Jesus teaches about the resurrection:

*Luke 15:24 (ESV) - "For **this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.**" And they began to celebrate."*

*Luke 15:32 (ESV) - "It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for **this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.**"*

In *Luke 15*, we find the well-known parable of the prodigal son. It tells the story of a father who had two sons. The younger, desiring independence, asked for his share of the inheritance and went to a distant country, where he squandered his wealth on pleasure and debauchery. When he had come to a state of extreme poverty and hunger, he came to his senses and resolved to return to his father, desiring at least to be received as a servant, realizing that he was no longer worthy to be considered a son. But instead of reprimand or rejection, the father welcomed him with open arms. He dresses him in his best clothes, puts a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet - signs of his restored dignity and his acceptance as a son, not a servant. Then he orders the fatted calf to be cut for a great feast. The reason for the rejoicing is clearly expressed, **"This my son was dead and is alive."**

This parable offers a profound spiritual lesson. The father in the story represents God, and his words show us what true death and true life mean. To be 'dead' to the Father is to forsake him, to have no relationship with him. To be 'alive' is to return home, to enter into relationship with God. So the death and resurrection presented in this parable has nothing to do with the death and resurrection of the physical body.

*John 5:25-29 (ESV) - "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when **the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.** For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for **an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out,** those who have done good to the **resurrection of life**, and those who have done evil to the **resurrection of judgment.**"*

These words are spoken by Jesus before the resurrection of Lazarus. The resurrection referred to here is the resurrection of those in the tombs - that is, those who have been physically dead since the world before the flood. Jesus' statement: **'an hour is coming, and is now here'** indicates that the resurrection of the dead was imminent in the apostolic generation.

However much we try to place this resurrection - that is, the raising of souls from the abode of the dead - in the indefinite future, we cannot do so unless we ignore the words of Jesus. Not understanding the spiritual nature of the resurrection may lead some Christians to believe that the resurrection of those from the tombs is physical and still in the future. According to this interpretation, the only one who has resurrected so far is Jesus, whom **these Christians say has a physical body of glory.**

The physical resurrection of Christ

Although Jesus was also physically resurrected, Scripture nowhere states that Jesus' physical body after the resurrection was a glorified one. However, this idea is taught in many churches. The argument that Jesus had a glorified body just because he could pass through closed doors is not valid (he was flesh and bones, see *Luke 24:39*). Even before his crucifixion, he manifested supernatural powers - for example, when he commanded the sea, "**Shut up, no mouth!**" or when he walked on water.

The confusion about the resurrection stems from a misunderstanding that **Jesus was resurrected in both body and spirit**, a point explained by Peter and Paul in their epistles. We will analyze these passages in more detail later.

Jesus told His disciples that He would be killed, but after three days He would rise again (see *Mark 8:31*). However, He did not give much clarification about the nature of His resurrection. Yet when the Scribes and Pharisees asked Him for a sign, He answered them:

*Matthew 12:39-40 (ESV) - "**An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**"*

From this passage we understand that as *Jonah* was for three days and three nights as dead, so also the Son of Man was to be in the earth. It is therefore implied that Jesus was to come out of the grave, just as *Jonah* was brought back to life. This involved His physical resurrection, a fact confirmed by Scripture.

It is remarkable that Jesus calls His physical resurrection "*a sign*," the only sign offered to that wicked and adulterous generation. This sign does not refer strictly to His physical resurrection, but to the events that followed during that generation. Just as *Jonah* preached, going "*one day's journey*" through the city and proclaiming, "*Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!*", so the Gospel and the judgment to come were proclaimed for about 40 years by the apostolic Church - each day symbolizing a year.

The apostolic generation lasted about forty years (from 30 to 70), during which time the gospel and the heavenly warning were preached, beginning in Jerusalem and then reaching to the ends of the earth (see the evidence in *Romans 10:18; 16:25-26; Colossians 1:23*). Nineveh was spared because it repented at *Jonah's* preaching, but Jerusalem was not spared because it rejected the gospel of Jesus and the apostles He sent (see *Matthew 28:18-20*).

The cunning of the Jewish elite reached an extreme level. When they heard the testimony of the guards who had been sent to guard the tomb at their request and found that it was empty, they bribed the guards with money, asking them to lie and say that Jesus' disciples had stolen his body while they were asleep. Those sitting in Moses' seat became worse than the robbers, for their robbery was not only against material goods, but against the very truth itself: that Jesus was risen.

Although Jesus was physically resurrected and could have shown himself to people other than the disciples, including the Jewish elites, this did not happen, because God does not reveal himself to the false and self-righteous. The Apostle Peter emphasizes this fact in the following passage:

Acts 10:40-41 (ESV) - "***But God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.***"

So, the witnesses of the resurrection were chosen beforehand by God and were not limited to the twelve apostles but included other disciples. The fact that Jesus ate and drank with them confirms the reality of his physical resurrection.

The first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection were the women (see *Matthew 28:1,9*). In the Gospel of *John*, chapter 20, we are told of the encounter between Jesus and Mary Magdalene:

John 20:13-16 "*They (angels) said to her, "**Woman, why are you weeping?**" She said to them, "**They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.**" Having said this, she turned around and **saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.** Jesus said to her, "**Woman, why are you weeping?** Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus said to her, "**Mary.**" She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "**Rabboni!**" (which means Teacher)."*

This episode is one of the most moving accounts in the New Testament. Mary Magdalene, overcome with grief, goes early in the morning to the tomb on the first day of the week to discover that the stone had been taken away and the body of the Lord was no longer there (see *John 20:1*). This is the cause of her tears: The body of her Lord, the One she loved so much, was no longer in the tomb. Remarkably, although Jesus had died, to Mary He was still 'my Lord'.

Mary's use of the phrase *"My Lord"* echoes down the ages, reminding us of the words of Sarah, Abraham's wife, who called Abraham *"my lord"* (see *Genesis 18:12*; *1 Peter 3:6*). Mary Magdalene not only recognized Jesus as Lord, but loved him deeply, realizing the grace of forgiveness she had received from him.

"Woman" - a name with deep meaning

Both the angels and Jesus address Mary Magdalene as *"Woman"*. This address takes our thoughts back to *Genesis 2:23* (ESV), where Adam says of Eve:

"Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman (ebr.: iṣa = woman), because she was taken out of Man (ebr.: iṣ = man)'."
(at last / this time - from ebr.: "pa'am")

This appellative name ("Woman") is not accidental. Eve, created from the rib of Adam, prefigures the Church, born from the pierced rib of Jesus on the cross (see *John 19:34*; *20:24*). The Apostle Paul confirms this parallel in *Ephesians 5:30-32* (NKJW):

*"For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but **I speak concerning Christ and the church.**"*

The passage shows us that hidden in *Genesis 2:23-24* is a great mystery, which is not just about Adam and his wife, but prefigures the relationship between Christ and His body, the Church. Adam's expression - ***"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"*** - anticipates the fact that the "Woman" (the Church), the one destined to be His Bride, was to be

received only at the end, at the fulfillment of creation in *Genesis 1*, with the renewal of all things as described in Revelation. An important implication of this is that the living creatures to which man has given names not only represent animals, but also symbolize humans. The expression in *Genesis 2:20* - '*But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him*' - cannot be understood as simply referring to animals only, because it would mean that a suitable helper was sought among them, which is impossible. This verse suggests that Adam had been put before all created beings up to that time, but none of them were really suited to him. It also points to a prophetic expectation of a 'helper fit for him' that was to be revealed at the right time, and spiritually fulfilled through the Church, the Bride of Christ, the last Adam.

This perspective helps us to understand more deeply the mystery of the union between Christ and the Church, prefigured from the beginning of creation. Just as Eve was made from Adam and she was given to him as his wife, so the Church is created from Christ, through his sacrifice, and is united to him in a relationship of eternal love.

The implication of this is that, throughout the Old Testament, and especially throughout the Old Covenant, there was no suitable wife found for the Lord. Although God made a covenant with Israel and desired to have His people as a faithful wife, they turned out to be unfaithful, like an adulterous woman (see *Jeremiah 3:20*).

This imagery is found in the book of Hosea, where Israel is compared to an unfaithful wife and God to a husband who calls her back to repentance: '*Go again, and love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress*' (*Hosea 3:1*).

This allegory emphasizes the fact that Israel, though called to be the chosen people and wife of the Lord, she was unfaithful. Idolatry and repeated disobedience made it impossible for ancient Israel to be the bride God was looking for. That is why, finally, the true Bride is revealed in the New Testament - the Church, the one cleansed by the sacrifice of Christ being sanctified so that she is without spot and wrinkle (*Ephesians 5:27*).

The same address, 'Woman', is also used by Jesus at the beginning of his ministry when he performs the first miracle - the turning of water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee (see *John 2:4*). This time, however, the 'Mary' he addresses is his biological mother, who symbolically represents Israel - God's Old Covenant wife, from whom the Messiah was to be born after the flesh.

At that wedding, the old wine - symbol of the Old Covenant - had run out. Mary asks Jesus to intervene, and he replies:

"Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." (ESV)

Nevertheless, Jesus turns the water into wine, and the new wine, the good wine, left at the end, symbolizes the New Covenant that He was to establish.

Thus, from the wedding at Cana to the morning of the resurrection, the appellation 'Woman' runs like a red thread through the New Testament, indicating that out of Israel the Church would be born — symbolized by Mary Magdalene, the 'Woman' who weeps for her Lord. In the same way, the "Woman" of *Genesis 2* represents Eve, but also symbolizes the Church, and the link between the first Adam and the last Adam, Jesus Christ, becomes evident in this context.

This symbolism of the "Woman" fits perfectly into the theme of creation in the Gospel known as *John*, a Gospel of complete creation. From the very first words, it refers to what was "in the beginning" in *Genesis*, when all things were made through the Word, that is, through Christ, before his incarnation. By this parallel, we are shown that creation ends with the New Creation, completed in Christ and his Church. This introduction in *John 1* mirrors the six days of creation in *Genesis 1*, a creation that was to be fully completed only by Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension, and return in glory at the end of the sixth day - a point we demonstrated in our first book³. The repetition of the phrase '*the second day*' three times in *John 1* and the mention of '*the third day*' in *John 2* suggest that the wedding at Cana takes place on the 'sixth day' - a detail of profound symbolic significance when related to the creation described in *Genesis 1*.

This vision of the consummation of creation through Christ is also reinforced by his words to Peter after the resurrection, "*If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!*" (*John 21:22* ESV).

By these words, Jesus is suggesting that his coming - the event by which creation was to be completely finished and perfected - was to happen before that disciple physically died.

This statement leaves no room for speculative interpretation, but emphasizes the certainty of the end of His creation (from *Genesis 1*) before the death of the disciple Peter is inquiring about.

³ The Creation, from Genesis to Revelation? Behold, I make all things new.

Since this disciple is presented in the text as the one who wrote the Gospel, we will now make a few observations about the identity of the writer of the Gospel attributed to John, even if this will briefly take us away from the main theme of this book.

According to tradition, this Gospel bears the name *John*, based on the assumption that *John*, the son of Zebedee, wrote it. The same is said of *1 John*, *2 John* and *3 John*. On closer examination of the New Testament, however, this assumption is not borne out. In our opinion, the Gospel is written by another disciple of Jesus who is not one of the twelve. Here are some arguments in support of this view:

1. The identity of the "disciple whom Jesus loved"

The Gospel named after John is written by the disciple whom Jesus loved (*John 21:20-24*). In *John 11:3,5*, we are explicitly told that Jesus loved *Lazarus* and his two sisters, *Martha* and *Mary*. This suggests a special bond between Jesus and *Lazarus*.

2. John's character and the mismatch with the 'disciple of love' image

John and his brother *James* are called "Sons of Thunder" by Jesus (*Mark 3:17*), and in *Luke 9:54* they ask permission to call down fire from heaven on a city of Samaritans. This does not fit the image of a "disciple of love".

3. The problem of the missing author's name

If *John* did not give his name out of humility (as some say), then why does he specify his name when he writes Revelation? (*Revelation 1:1, 4, 9*).

4. Presence of other disciples at the Last Supper

It is assumed that only the twelve were at the Last Supper. However, Mark 14:20 says of the seller, "*He is one of the twelve*." This wording suggests that there were more present. If it had only been the twelve then it would have said, "He is one of you present here." In addition, *Mark 14:51-52* says that after the Last Supper, a young man who was following Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane ran away naked when the soldiers tried to catch him. It is very likely that this young man was with them at the supper, which confirms that it was not just the Twelve who were present.

5. Presence at the cross

This disciple is the only one who is mentioned as being present at the cross with *Mary*, the mother of Jesus (*John 19:26-27*). However, about the twelve, Scripture states that they were scattered:

- *Matthew 26:31* (ESV): "*Then Jesus said to them, 'You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'*"
- *Mark 14:50* (ESV): "*And they all left Him and fled.*

6. How is John an exception?

If all the disciples left Him out of fear, according to *Matthew 26:31* and *Mark 14:50*, how does that explain *John* making an exception and being present at the cross with Mary?

7. Why is the author not included among his disciples?

In *John 20:30* we read, "*Jesus did many other signs before his disciples which are not written in this book.*"

By this wording, the author of the Gospel seems not to include himself among "his disciples" - that is, the 12 - before whom Jesus did these "other signs". If the author had been the apostle John, one of the 12, we would have expected him to include himself naturally among the witnesses of these signs, not to speak of them in the third person.

8. Peter's question in John 21

In *John 21:21*, Peter asks Jesus, "*Lord, what about this man?*" It is important to note that Peter does not call this disciple by name. If it had been John, we believe Peter would have named him directly. Also, the fact that Peter asks only about this disciple and not about others present there suggests a particular curiosity about his identity.

9. The rumor of immortality

Jesus' answer to Peter's question led to the rumor that this disciple would never die (*John 21:23*). This would

make sense if it were about Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead (*John 11:43-44*), giving rise to the assumption that he already had an endless physical life. Why would they say this about John? How was John different from the other twelve disciples? Lazarus was different because he had passed through death and had been raised by Jesus.

Conclusion

The above arguments suggest that the author of the Gospel of John is not John the son of Zebedee, but rather would have been Lazarus (though a shadow of doubt remains), whom Jesus loved in a special way and who had a unique experience of being raised from the dead. This would also explain why Peter takes a special interest in his destiny.

In conclusion, we recall that two other physical resurrections are recorded on the pages of the New Testament: that of Tabitha and that of Euthyphus. Likewise, many of the Old Testament saints were resurrected bodily at the moment of Jesus' death, when the veil of the Temple was torn, and appeared to many in Jerusalem (*Matthew 27:52-53*). However, we won't discuss them further, because they also fall into the category of signs that we have already discussed.

Peter's teaching on the resurrection of the dead

The Apostle Peter was a disciple with a peculiar temperament, who loved Jesus deeply, even though he denied Him because of his fear of the Jews. The fear of death overwhelmed him when, with curses and oaths, he denied that he knew Him (see

Matthew 26:72-74). In *Luke 22:31-34* (ESV), we read:

*"Simon, Simon, behold, **Satan demanded to have you**, that he might sift you like wheat, but **I have prayed for you** that your faith may not fail. **And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.**" Peter said to him, "**Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.**" Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."*

From this passage, we see that Satan was allowed to sift Jesus' disciples. The text does not mention that God resisted this request, only that Jesus prayed that Simon Peter would not lose his faith. It is understood that Satan had certain rights obtained by deceiving man in Eden, rights which God did not violate. God's justice is so perfect that He respects even the rights of His enemies.

We find the same idea in the book of Job, where God allows Satan to subject Job to extreme trials. However, in both cases - both Job's and Peter's - everything ends in victory, with a deep knowledge of God and great faith.

Before Peter could turn to God, he needed to see his own powerlessness. Although he thought he would be able to stay with Jesus to the end, in reality this proved impossible. Peter, like Adam in the Garden of Eden, put his trust in his own strength without God's help. Adam thought that by knowing good and evil he could choose only good and become like God, but in reality he too was gripped by fear. Likewise, Peter was convinced that he could remain faithful even when faced with danger to his life, but out of fear he denied Jesus to a simple servant girl.

After the third denial the cock crowed and Peter went out of the high priest's courtyard weeping bitterly. This confrontation with

reality made him realize how powerless he was, and this realization was crucial to his spiritual recovery.

Simon Peter's return to God takes place after the risen Jesus shows himself to him personally, as part of the process of spiritual restoration. The Apostle Paul states in *1 Corinthians 15:5* that Jesus appeared first to Peter and then to the Twelve, emphasizing the importance of this encounter for Peter's recovery. All of His disciples become children of God after, in *John 20:20*, Jesus shows them His hands and rib, from which they are born into a new creation, when He breathes on them and says, "*Receive the Holy Spirit.*" This act of the breathing of the Holy Spirit is reminiscent of the breath of life that God gave at the beginning to the first Adam in *Genesis 2:7*, when "*the Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living soul.*" However, this parallel highlights a profound contrast: the first Adam, created from dust, became a living soul, but imperfect, giving rise to a genealogy of carnal men, subject to sin and death. In contrast, the last Adam, Jesus Christ, through the breath of the Holy Spirit, inaugurates a genealogy of spiritual men, born of the Spirit, transformed by his grace, made righteous and destined to live forever.

Through this breath of the Holy Spirit, the risen Christ inaugurates a new creation, a spiritual establishment which makes the disciples the first children of God, born of his sacrifice, on the very evening of the resurrection. In a deep spiritual sense, the words of *Genesis 2:23* - "*This **at last** is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh*" - find their spiritual fulfillment in the relationship between Christ, the New Adam, and his Church, created from his sacrifice on the cross. Peter and the other disciples who forsook him, now restored by Christ's grace, become the first-born of the New Creation in Christ, born of the Spirit and united with him in an eternal communion.

Having discussed Peter's fall and restoration, let us now see what he teaches about the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead. The first passage to which we will refer is Peter's speech in *Acts 2:22-36*.

Peter is addressing the crowds gathered in Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost, on the occasion of the descent of the Holy Spirit. After beginning his address by calling them "*Men of Israel*", he holds them responsible for Christ's crucifixion at the hands of the transgressors. However, he immediately emphasizes that "*God raised him up*". Then, to demonstrate that Christ's resurrection was prophesied beforehand, he quotes from *Psalms 16*:

*Acts 2:25-28 (ESV) - "For David says concerning him, 'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. **For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.** You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'"*

Peter argues that David, being a prophet, spoke of the resurrection of Christ, not of his own resurrection, because David's body remained in the tomb and knew decay. Instead, Christ was resurrected and exalted to heaven, to the right hand of God, from where he sent the Holy Spirit, as promised. *Peter* reinforces this truth by quoting from *Psalms 110*, showing that David did not ascend into heaven, for the prophecy refers to Christ:

*Acts 2:29-32 (ESV) - "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch **David** that he both died and **was buried**, and **his tomb is with us to this day**. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and **spoke***

about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses."

So, *David* prophesied of Christ's resurrection in *Psalms* 16, not himself, because *David* had died, and his tomb was known at that time. Instead, Christ, after his resurrection, ascended into heaven at the right hand of God and sent the promised Spirit. *David*, on the other hand, was in the abode of the dead, for he himself spoke of the Lord in *Psalms* 110, from which *Peter* quoted the first verse:

Acts 2:34-35 (ESV) - "***For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, 'The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'"***

By all these explanations, *Peter* proves that Christ's resurrection and ascension were prophesied in the Scriptures, and that His sitting at the right hand of God takes place in expectation of the subjection of all enemies under His feet. And in verse 32 it says that they, the apostles, are witnesses of Christ's resurrection.

Peter, who out of fear had denied Jesus even in the presence of a simple servant girl, now boldly stands before a large crowd, proclaiming with power:

Acts 2:36 (ESV) - "***Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."***

What changed in *Peter* that he was no longer afraid? The answer is simple and profound: he came to know the risen Christ, believed with all his being in his power, and received a life that no one else could take from him. Men can only take the life of the body, but the life received in the Breath of life from Christ is

eternal and untouchable by any human power. Understanding this truth freed him from all fear. He now knew with certainty what Jesus had said before:

Luke 12:4 (ESV) - "[...] do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do."

Peter's transformation was the work of the Holy Spirit, sent by Christ at Pentecost. That boldness came not from himself but from the new life he had received through faith in the risen Christ. This inner life was stronger than any fear, because it could no longer be destroyed by physical death. This was the resurrection preached by Peter.

The persecution that Jesus had told them they would experience began very soon after Pentecost. In *Acts* chapter 3, the healing of the lame from birth is recorded. Peter and John found him begging for alms at the gate of the Temple called "Beautiful." Although the lame expected to receive material things from them, what he received was much more: healing complete at *Peter's* command, "*In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!*"

The crowds present at the Temple, seeing the former lame walking with *Peter* and *John*, followed them, amazed at this miracle. At that moment *Peter* boldly addresses them, "*Men of Israel, why do you **wonder** at this?*" (see *Acts* 3:12-26).

Just as he had done on the day of Pentecost, *Peter* boldly confronts them, accusing them of denying Jesus, putting him to death, and choosing a murderer (Barabbas) instead. Then, in verses 15-16, he forcefully states:

"you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And his name—by faith in his name—

*has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that **is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.***"

This is *Peter's* further public testimony of Jesus' resurrection. In verse 2 of Acts chapter 4 we are told that the Jewish elite were deeply disturbed that the apostles were preaching the resurrection of the dead in Jesus' name. Because of this, *Peter* and *John* were thrown into prison until the next day, when they were to be judged by the Sobor.

No one can preach the true resurrection unless he has already experienced it. It presupposes a personal and authentic experience of the new life offered by Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who bears witness in the inner man that this new life has been received and is real. *Peter* had had this transforming experience, he was "*filled with the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 4:8), which is why he was no longer afraid to confess the One whom he had once denied. Thus he boldly confronts those without a council:

*Acts 4:9-12 (ESV) - "If we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a lamed man, by what means this man has been healed, **let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.** And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

The account goes on to say that those in the assembly marveled at the boldness of *Peter* and *John*, realizing that these simple men with no formal education were with Jesus. Since the healing of the lame was an indisputable fact, the consistory decided to

threaten them and forbid them from teaching people in the name of Jesus. But their answer was firm: "*Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for.*"

Finally, the council, for fear of the crowd praising God for the healing of the lame from birth, decided to let the apostles go.

Up to this point we have seen *Peter's* testimony of the resurrection of Jesus in Jerusalem to the circumcised. But *Peter* also confessed the risen Christ for the first time to the Gentiles. The account of this pivotal moment is found in *Acts 10*, where the return of the centurion *Cornelius* is recounted.

Cornelius, a God-fearing man from Caesarea, tells all those gathered in his house, including *Peter*, about how an angel had appeared to him four days earlier while he was praying. The angel commanded him to call *Simon Peter* from the city of Joppa. After listening to *Cornelius*, *Peter* begins his discourse with this important confession: "*Truly I understand that God shows no partiality*", recognizing that God welcomes everyone who fears him and does his will, regardless of their race or origin. This is a key moment because it marks the beginning of the proclamation of the Gospel to the Gentiles, not just to Israel.

Peter goes on to testify about Jesus Christ, saying:

*Acts 10:37-43 (ESV) - "you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how **God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power**. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. And **we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made***

him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Peter's message is clear and powerful: Jesus Christ, the One who was killed by the Jews, was raised by God on the third day and ordained to be Judge of the living and the dead. The witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus were only those whom God had ordained beforehand, as evidenced by the words, "*he gave himself to be revealed, not to all the people, but to us, to the witnesses chosen beforehand by God.*" These were many, and Paul mentions that He appeared to over 500 brethren at one time (see *1 Corinthians 15:6*). God did not allow Him to show Himself to the elites of the people of Israel who put Him to death. Why? Because the Lord knew them and knew that they were not of His sheep because they had no faith. The resurrection of Christ was revealed to those who had hearts ready to believe and receive the truth, not to those who rejected it with hardness. Salvation is offered through faith in Him, and the forgiveness of sins is accessible to all who truly receive Him. This is the good news: The risen Christ is not just the Savior of Israel but of the whole world, offering eternal life to all who believe in his name. This is the message that brought salvation to Cornelius and those in his household, a message that lives on for centuries. The risen Christ, the Savior of all nations, continues to offer eternal life to all who believe in him. This good news reaches throughout history, changes hearts and brings hope to all who receive it in true faith. Peter's testimony in Acts remains a powerful example of transformation by the Holy Spirit and the courage to proclaim the truth without fear.

He also tells us of Christ's death and resurrection in his first epistle.

*1 Peter 3:18-20 (ESV) - "For **Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water."***

Peter testified that Christ was risen in the flesh, saying: "us [...] who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10:41). So the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus is strongly affirmed by Peter, and we believe it. However, what is very interesting is what he says in the passage quoted above, "*being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.*" This suggests that Peter is teaching something that was not made clear in his words in Acts. Beyond the physical resurrection, he now speaks of a resurrection of Christ "in the spirit."

So Peter is affirming that Jesus was resurrected in both body and spirit.

How is this resurrection explained? Why does Peter refer to two aspects of Christ's resurrection?

We have already mentioned that Jesus' bodily resurrection was a sign for His generation. The physical body in which Jesus was resurrected was flesh and bones, as He Himself says, "*a spirit has neither flesh nor bones, as you see that I have,*" thus fulfilling the

prophecy in Psalm 16:10, "you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption." Therefore, Jesus did not see decay because He was holy unlike any other man who has ever lived, is living, or will live on earth. Scripture says, "*For all men have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). Therefore, the fact that Jesus is the first risen from the dead suggests that His bodily resurrection is not the nature of the New Creation resurrection inaugurated through Him, but is the resurrection in the spirit.

Therefore, the resurrection "*in spirit*" of which Peter speaks is in harmony with the nature of God who is Spirit.

It was in this nature that Jesus ascended to the right hand of God - not in the flesh. If anyone wonders what happened to his physical body, Scripture says that he "*saw no decay*". No other details are given, but we are clearly told that Christ was restored to the glory He had before the foundation of the world (*John 17:5*).

We have seen that, in His resurrected Spirit, Christ went to preach the gospel to the dead who sinned in the days of Noah. This idea is repeated in the next chapter,

1 Peter 4:6: (ESV) - "For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does."

If we do not understand these passages about the proclamation of the Gospel to the dead, we cannot understand well either the resurrection of Christ or the resurrection in general. The souls of those in the Sheol could not have been saved without the work of Christ. It is important to note that salvation is for the soul, not the physical body, as Peter states in *1 Peter 1:9*: "*obtaining the outcome of your faith, **the salvation of your souls.***"

So the souls of the dead in the first two worlds - the pre-Flood world and the Old Covenant world - had to hear the good news of the Gospel. How this was accomplished is beyond our full comprehension. However, the verse shows that the proclamation of the gospel had a clear purpose: judgment and life in the spirit (the way God does), respectively. The judgment and the reception of eternal life by the souls of those dead (we do not mean the physically dead today) was to be determined by how they related to the gospel of Christ risen from the dead.

Since the revelation of the incarnate Christ took place at the end, it was necessary for those who had died throughout history to hear the Gospel, so that all might share in the same call to salvation based on the same revelation. The dead in the first two worlds: the pre-Flood world and the Old Covenant world, had only a beginning revelation of the beginning things of the world (see *Galatians 4:3*).

Peter also says some things that we can contrast with what he says about the resurrection in *Acts*:

*1 Peter 3:21-22 (ESV): - "**Baptism**, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body **but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ**, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, **authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.**"*

Baptism, therefore, is an authentic witness of heartfelt faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Immersion in water is merely a symbolic act, illustrating the spiritual reality experienced by the one saved by faith. It is very important to note that after Jesus ascended into heaven, Peter states in his epistle written much later that "*angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*" In *Acts*, at the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel, *Peter*, quoting *Psalm 110:1*, said that after the ascension, Jesus "waited for his enemies to be made his footstool." Now, however, toward the end of the apostolic period, *Peter tells us that this submission was already a fulfilled reality.*

How was it fulfilled?

Through the proclamation of the gospel by the apostles to the ends of the earth, according to the call received from the Lord in *Acts 1:8*: "*You will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth.*" This obedience refers to the spiritual dominions and principalities that have been brought under the authority of Christ by the power of His gospel that has been believed in the world (see *1 Timothy 3:16*).

Following the passage quoted above from *1 Peter 3*, we note that *1 Peter 4:7* states, "*The end of all things is at hand.*" This statement suggests that the epistle was written at a time close to that end spoken of in the New Testament. Our understanding is that the end refers both to the conclusion of the Old Covenant and to the conclusion of creation described in *Genesis 1-2:3*, and that it occurred at the end of the apostolic generation when all things were made new in a new, spiritual reality.

To summarize:

The resurrection of Christ, as witnessed and taught by *Peter*, is manifested in two dimensions:

1. **Physical:** This represents the fulfillment of the prophecy in *Psalms 16:10* - "his body saw no decay." The bodily resurrection of Jesus was a temporary sign to the apostolic generation, proving that He had conquered death and was indeed the promised Messiah. His body was real, flesh and blood, and this was confirmed by the testimony of the disciples who ate and drank with Him after the resurrection.
2. **Spiritual (in the Spirit):** This dimension of the resurrection refers to the spiritual nature of the risen Christ, conformed to the nature of God, who is Spirit. *Peter* states in *Acts* that his soul was not left in Sheol. Therefore, **His soul** - reflecting His nature as the Son of Man (yet without sin, but burdened with the sins of mankind) - **was resurrected, made a life-giving Spirit**. This marks the complete victory over Adamic spiritual death and **the inauguration of a New Creation** — with Christ Himself, the first to rise, as its beginning in His nature as the life-giving Spirit.

Paul's teaching on the resurrection of the dead

The Apostle Paul, though not one of the twelve apostles, received revelations from God of extraordinary importance. Central among these revelations is the resurrection of the dead, one of the subjects he deals with and explains at length in his epistles. Paul clarifies not only the reality of the resurrection, but also its nature, giving a deeper understanding of how the resurrection relates to salvation, eternal life and the establishment of a new creation.

Speaking of his calling to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he says:

*Romans 1:3-4 (ESV): - "[...] concerning his Son, who was descended **from David according to the flesh** and was **declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit** of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord [...]."*

If we read this passage carefully, we notice that Paul makes a clear distinction between His fleshly nature (natural, coming from the seed of David) and His spiritual nature, as the Son of God, in which He pre-existed before the foundation of the world. This spiritual nature, invisible to the physical eye, was, however, clearly proved by his physical resurrection from the dead. Therefore, His bodily resurrection took place to prove that He is spiritually the Son of God. Paul emphasizes the difference between these two natures, stating that, "*according to the Spirit*" - not the physical body - Christ was declared proved to be the Son of God.

Thus, Jesus Christ, in His human nature, is the Son of David, and in His spiritual nature, He is the Son of God. In Christ we have the perfect union between man and God. Because God is Spirit (see *John 4:24*), His Son shares the same nature as the Father. Though living as a man, Jesus never sinned in any way, being the only sinless man in all creation, perfect and holy.

However, the fact that Jesus did not sin is not due to His nature as the Son of David, but to His nature as the Son of God, in whom the Father dwelt. As *Psalms 16:8 (ESV)* says, "*I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.*" In His humanity He was sinless because of the Father's presence in Him, thus remaining spotless and holy in all His walk on earth.

Thus, Jesus Christ, Son of David and Son of God, united in the same Person, perfectly manifested both human and spiritual

nature, living a pure and holy life in full obedience to the will of the Father.

In chapter 6 of the Epistle to the Romans, Paul explains the connection between the death and resurrection of Christ and the death and resurrection of Christians, evidenced in baptism.

*Romans 6:4-7 (ESV) "**We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.**"*

By being immersed in baptismal water, the Christian symbolically dies with Christ and is "buried" with him, and then "resurrected" to a new life, lived for God, freed from the bondage of sin. Baptism symbolizes this passage from the old man to the new man, created in the image of Christ.

We note that *Paul* emphasizes that both the death and resurrection of the Christian are Christ-like. They cannot be identical, for even if a Christian were to die martyred on the cross, he would die as a man martyred by sin, deprived of the glory of God, whereas Christ, being without sin, gave His life as a perfect sacrifice for our salvation. Therefore, a physical resurrection identical with Christ's is not supported by *Paul's* teaching. The resurrection of which he speaks refers to the transformation from the old man, ruled by sin, to the new man, ruled by Christ: 'that the body of sin might be stripped of its power' (v. 6).

In the original text, the expression "the body of sin" is to sōma tēs hamartias and designates the corrupt state of human nature, not the physical body. This is a spiritual reality of human decay, not a physical one.

Jesus emphasizes this reality when he says:

Matthew 5:28 (ESV): - "But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent **has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**"

If the Lord says that one has already sinned, even before physically committing the deed, it means that the power manifest in the body of sin is a spiritual reality, not a physical one. In order to live a new life, freed from the power of sin, man must put off this sinful nature and put on Christ. This profound change, from the old man to the new man, is the essence of the spiritual resurrection of which Paul speaks.

The effects of this resurrection must be practically visible in the Christian's life. Paul emphasizes this truth in *Romans 6:12-13* (ESV):

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness."

The physical body is mortal and transitory since the creation of man, as we see in *Genesis*, because it is part of the material, seen world, where the cycle of birth and death is inevitable (see 2 *Corinthians 4:18*). Paul's exhortation is not directly aimed at the physical body, but at man's corrupt nature, which he calls "the

body of sin." In other words, sin, which exerts its influence through this fallen nature, must no longer rule over the members of the physical body and use them as instruments of unrighteousness. The decision belongs to the inner man, who, if he is in Christ, becomes a new creature, born again. The new man, transformed inwardly, also submits his physical body to God's will.

For example, someone who before knowing Christ was ruled by various addictions, using his body as an instrument of sin, now, enlightened by the Spirit of God, resists them by bringing his members into obedience to the new man created in the image of Christ (see *Ephesians 4:24*).

In *2 Corinthians 4*, Paul speaks of the apostles' ministry of preaching the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is remarkable how he expresses himself, describing the gospel in this way:

2 Corinthians 4:7 (ESV) - "But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us."

For *Paul*, the Gospel is a treasure carried in jars of clay, that is, the physical bodies in which the inner man, enlightened by Christ, dwells. These bodies are weak (*clay*), subject to suffering and degradation, but they become a means through which this *surpassing power* from God is made manifest.

After describing the persecution apostles endure for this ministry, *Paul* continues:

2 Corinthians 4:10-12 (ESV) - "always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be

manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you." (see also 2 Corinthians 6:4-10)

We note that the death to which the apostles were subjected because of Jesus was also felt in the physical body - through persecution, beatings, imprisonment, hardships, etc. (2 Corinthians 6:5). Yet, says Paul, it was in this very mortal body that the life of Jesus was manifested, working a spiritual change in the believers in the Corinthian church. This change has nothing to do with a future transformation of the physical body, but is an outward manifestation of the new life in the inner man, born of the Spirit of God, for the benefit of those whom the apostles ministered to.

The same idea is found in the Epistle to the *Colossians*:

Colossians 1:24 (ESV) - "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church."

The apostles renounced the old man's self, accepting the persecution unto death in the physical, mortal, transitory body. This contrast is also made clear in the following verse:

2 Corinthians 4:16 (ESV) - "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day."

So Paul is talking about the life of Jesus in the inner man, but also manifested in the outer man, who is transient. This "resurrection" is not a physical one, but a spiritual, inward one, manifested outwardly through the submission of the members of the physical body to the will of God.

Therefore, when Paul speaks of the "*life of Jesus*" manifested in the mortal body, he does not refer to a physical resurrection of the mortal body, but to the living of a new life, led by the Spirit. This is the true resurrection of which the Scriptures speak - a profound spiritual transformation that makes the believer alive to God even while his physical body remains subject to death and suffering.

In *Romans 8:10-11* (ESV), Paul states:

*"But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, **he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.**"*

At first sight, this passage seems to speak of a future resurrection of the physical body. However, if we look at the context and meaning of the term soma (body) in Paul's writings, we see that it is not a physical resurrection after death, but a spiritual transformation that takes place in the believer's present life. Although "*your mortal bodies*" refers also to the physical bodies in which the inward man dwells, the resurrection to which Paul refers is not a resurrection of bodies after they have died, but a manifestation of the life of Christ in the bodies of those who are still physically alive. This idea is reinforced by the previous verse (*Romans 8:10*), where Paul affirms that although the body is subject to death because of sin, the believer's spirit is already alive because of the righteousness received through Christ.

If *Romans 8:11* referred to a future physical resurrection, it would mean that the Spirit of God will revive the physical bodies of believers "*because of His Spirit*" who dwells in them. But where does the Spirit dwell? In the inner man or in the physical body? The answer is clear if we consider that the physical body

is subject to decomposition with death. Could the Spirit dwell in a decaying physical body? Obviously not!

Therefore, the Spirit dwells in the inner man, and the "resurrection" of which Paul speaks must be understood in this context. It is not a resuscitation of the physical body after death, but a spiritual transformation that takes place in the present life of believers. This "resurrection" helps them to be led not by sin but by the Holy Spirit, manifesting a new life even in the members of their physical, transitory bodies.

This understanding becomes even clearer when we compare it with *Romans 12:1* (ESV), where *Paul* uses the same term "to soma" (body) and says:

*"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice**, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."*

Here, *Paul* is not exhorting believers to burn their physical bodies on the altar, but to submit their whole being to the will of God, to renounce the lusts of the flesh and live a holy life. Likewise, in *Romans 8:11*, the phrase "will also give life to your mortal bodies" does not mean a physical restoration after death, but a deliverance from the dominion of sin through the work of the Holy Spirit, so that the bodies of believers are no longer instruments of unrighteousness but of righteousness.

This understanding is in harmony with *Paul's* message in *Romans 6:12-13* which we have quoted here. Therefore, the resurrection Paul speaks of is not a future physical restoration, but a new, spiritual life manifested also in the bodies of living believers by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the true resurrection of mortal bodies, which is the submission of the members to God's will and living by the Spirit.

In *Philippians 3:20-21* (ESV), *Paul* affirms that "*But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*"

This statement is often interpreted as a promise of a future physical transformation of believers' bodies. However, if we look carefully at the terminology *Paul* uses and the general context of his epistles, we see that he is speaking of a change of a spiritual nature, not a physical restoration in the seen world. The expression "*the body of our humble state*" (Greek *sōma tēs tapeinōseōs hēmōn*) refers to the believer's present condition in this world, an existence marked by weakness, suffering and limitations. It is not just the limitations of the physical body, but the whole state of man in this transitory life. In contrast, the glorified body is called "*the body of His glory*" (Greek *sōmati tēs doxēs autou*), indicating that the believer's resurrection was to be in conformity with the spiritual and glorified nature of Christ, who "*sat down at the right hand of God*" (cf. *Heb 10:12*).

It is not Christ's physical body that is called "*the body of His glory*", but His spiritual body - not a flesh and blood body - transformed and glorified according to the Father's nature, according to the glory He had before His incarnation, "*before the world existed*" (according to *John 17:5*). His seating at the right hand of God is not to be understood as a physical position in a particular place, but as an expression of the supreme authority and righteousness which He acquired through His death and resurrection. This reality is spiritual and designates the position of dominion, glory, and power that Christ has, as written in *Philippians 2:9-11* (ESV) :

"Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of

Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

So His ascension is directly linked to the Name given to Him, not to the resurrected physical body, a new Name (see *Revelation 3:12*) which reflects His supremacy over all creation.

Likewise, *Ephesians 1:20-21* (ESV) shows "*that he (God) worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.*" (this age= Old Covenant, next age = New Covenant)

Therefore, "*his right hand*" is not to be understood as a physical place, but as an expression of entitlement and recognition of His position of sovereignty and supreme authority. The body in which Christ now finds Himself is a spiritual one, as *Paul* describes it in *1 Corinthians 15* - a body full of glory and power, in full harmony with His deity.

Another important passage in which *Paul* speaks about the resurrection of Jesus is found in *Acts 13*, in his address in the synagogue in *Antioch of Pisidia*. After giving a brief recapitulation of the history of the people of Israel, *Paul* comes to the central point of his message: the promise God made to *David*, which was fulfilled in the person of Jesus. Thus he says:

***Acts 13:23* (ESV) - "*Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.*"**

Paul goes on to explain that the inhabitants of Jerusalem, together with their rulers, did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah and condemned him to death, even though they found no fault

in him. But God raised him from the dead and he appeared for several days to those who were to witness his resurrection before the people.

Then follows a profound and surprising declaration:

*Acts 13:32-33 (ESV) - "And we bring you the good news that **what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled** to us their children by raising Jesus, **as also it is written** in the second Psalm, **"You are my Son, today I have begotten you."**"*

It is remarkable how *Paul* interprets Psalm 2. The verse '*You are my Son, today I have begotten you*' is applied not to the biological birth or incarnation of Jesus, but to his resurrection. In this sense, the resurrection is presented as a 'birth' into a new reality - a birth into a new, spiritual and glorious life, which powerfully confirms His status as the Son of God (cf. *Romans 1:4*).

Thus, for Paul, the resurrection of Jesus is not only the living proof of the victory over death, but also the fulfillment of the messianic promise made to the fathers - especially to father *David*. This "birth" or resurrection marks the beginning of a new creation, and Jesus is the first begotten of the dead, that is, the first resurrected in the new creation (see also *Acts 26:23*).

So, since in *Acts 26:23 Paul* states unequivocally that Jesus is "the first risen from the dead", it is clear that he is not referring to his physical resurrection - because obviously, before Jesus, there were people who were raised to physical life, like Lazarus. But the resurrection *Paul* speaks of is a different one: a resurrection

in the Spirit, a passing into a new, spiritual, uncorrupted life - as *1 Peter 3:18* says Jesus was: "*put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.*"

To claim that Jesus is the "first risen from the dead" in a physical sense is to ignore the previous resurrections recorded in Scripture. Objections such as "Lazarus did not pass through locked doors" or "Lazarus died again" are merely attempted arguments designed to support the idea that Jesus' physical body after the resurrection would have been a body of glory (*Philip* the evangelist was raptured by the Spirit being in a human body).

The new creation, of which the apostles speak, does not begin with a restored physical body, but with a spiritual body - according to the spiritual nature of the Father (see *1 Corinthians 15:44-49*). In this sense, Jesus is the first to enter into this new and eternal reality, this spiritual creation.

If we were to argue that the new creation begins with His resurrected physical body, we would be forced to admit that for almost 2000 years, He is the only participant in this new creation, while all of humanity, from the beginning of the world to the present day, is still in death. This physical perspective does not reflect the true meaning of the new creation inaugurated in Christ, which is spiritual, eternal and accessible to every believer who "rises with him" in a spiritual way.

Proponents of a future physical resurrection usually also assert that the entire material creation - the seen world - is to be

restored to a supposed original state prior to Adam's fall. According to this view, along with the physical resurrection of all the dead, there would also be a renewal of the cosmos, with the emergence of a new heaven and a new earth, both in a literal, physical sense. However, this view raises a logical question: since the supposed physical restoration of the universe has not yet taken place, where is the physical body of Jesus now? How can a so-called glorified body exist anywhere in a universe still subject to decay, corruption and death - and yet at the right hand of God? This question rejects the idea of a future material restoration and emphasizes the importance of a spiritual understanding. According to it, Christ's resurrection marked the beginning of a spiritual reality, unseen but accessible to all who believe through the Holy Spirit.

Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:1 bring further clarification to the nature of Christ's resurrection:

*"Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? **Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?** Are not you my workmanship in the Lord?" (ESV)*

So *Paul* affirms that he has seen Jesus. The natural question is: When did *Paul* see Jesus? The answer is found in *the* account in *Acts 9*, where we are told that Jesus appeared to him on the Damascus road. *Paul* sees a shining light coming from heaven and he hears the voice of Jesus speaking to him, but he does not see a physical or bodily form of him.

So why does *Paul* say that he "saw" Jesus?

To understand what it means to 'see' in New Testament language, it is essential to consider how Jesus uses the term. Consider, for example, the dialog between Jesus and *Philip* in *John 14:8-10* (ESV):

*"Philip said to him, "Lord, **show us the Father**, and it is enough*

*for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and **you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? **The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works**.”*

To *Philip's* request to see the Father, Jesus replies that who has seen him has seen the Father. The first interpretation we think of would be that it is about having seen Jesus physically. But Jesus immediately makes it clear: it is not his physical body that is to be 'seen', but the invisible person who dwells in him - the Father.

Therefore, "seeing" in this context does not mean mere perception with the physical eyes, but the recognition with the heart and spiritual understanding of the divine presence and authority in the one who speaks. In the case of *Philip* - it was the Spirit of the Father present in Jesus. In Paul's case - it was the recognition of Christ's presence in the light and voice that spoke to him.

Therefore, when Paul says that he saw Jesus, he is referring to a genuine spiritual experience in which he knew the Lord after his glorification in a real, vivid and revealing way, not through the eyes of the body, but through the "eyes of the heart" - as he himself will later say in *Ephesians 1:18*.

The conclusion to be drawn is that *Paul* saw Jesus in His glorified state - not in the physical body of flesh and bones that He had had until His ascension, but in His spiritual body, in which He sat at the right hand of the Father.

The same idea, that 'seeing' means an understanding of the heart, appears in other passages in the New Testament. For

example, *John 4* tells of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. Here is a short excerpt from their dialog:

*John 4:25-26 (ESV) - "The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I **who speak to you am he.**"*

A significant detail emerges from this passage: Jesus does not simply say "I am He," as if to refer to His physical identity, but "*I who speak to you am he.*" So the Messiah could not be recognized merely by his bodily appearance, but by the words he spoke. This idea is supported by the fact that the Jewish elite, although they saw him physically, did not really know him. To see God is, in fact, to know Him by 'hearing' and understanding His Voice - by the revealed Word which enlightens the heart.

This understanding of 'sight' as spiritual perception is echoed in the account of the healing of the man born blind in *John 9:35-38*. After being cast out by the Pharisees for his testimony about Jesus, the Lord seeks him out and asks, "*Do you believe in the Son of Man?*" To the honest reply, "*And who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him?*", Jesus says, "*You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.*"

This expression is naturally linked to the dialog with the Samaritan woman and to the other examples mentioned: Jesus does not reveal himself by a simple physical identification, but by his words, by the voice that reveals his identity. To "see" in the sense of the Gospel is not to look at him with bodily eyes, but to know him who speaks with the heart - a knowledge born of faith and inner enlightenment.

The spiritual blindness of the Pharisees thus becomes very evident: they saw Jesus physically, but they did not know him.

The formerly blind man, on the other hand, only really "sees" when he understands who it is who has spoken to him. And his response confirms this revelation: "*I believe, Lord!*" - a confession that shows a full, deep, full sight of the heart.

The same "seeing" perspective must be applied to Jesus' return. If we compare *Matthew 24:30* - where it says that "*they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven...*" - with *Matthew 24:27*, where His return is likened to lightning streaking across the sky from sunrise to sunset, it becomes clear that this cannot be a localized, physical appearance of a human body. Lightning is not a static image, but a dynamic one, visible everywhere at the same time, suggesting a spiritual, universal and all-embracing manifestation. This comparison reinforces the idea that the manifestation of His presence is spiritual, not bodily, and that his coming is not intended to be seen with physical eyes, but to be recognized with the eyes of the heart by those who are open to the work of the Spirit. In this sense, His spiritual return at the end of the apostolic generation does not contradict His present position at the right hand of the Father, but confirms it as an eternal spiritual reality, not a physical one. With the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, the central elements of the Old Covenant were removed, marking the definitive end of the Old Covenant and the full establishment of the New Covenant - a spiritual, eternal reality open to all who believe.

A similar perspective on 'seeing' is also evident in the account in *John 21*, where Jesus shows Himself a third time to the disciples after His resurrection at the Sea of Tiberias. It is remarkable that the disciple whom Jesus loved recognizes Him and says to *Peter*: "*It is the Lord!*". The natural question that arises is: why didn't *Peter* and the other disciples recognize **Him** immediately? Was He not the same one Who had already appeared to them on the

day of the resurrection, when he breathed on them and said to them, "*Receive the Holy Spirit*"?

It follows that Jesus could not be recognized by his physical features. This is also supported by the encounter with Mary Magdalene, who did not recognize him at first, but also by the experience of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, who did not know him until the breaking of the bread. In *John 21:12* we read: "*Now none of the disciples dared ask him, 'Who are you?' They knew it was the Lord.*" Remarkably, it does not say that they "saw" and recognized Him, but that they "*knew*" - an act of inner understanding, of spiritual knowledge. Therefore, the risen Christ was not known to the disciples by the face of His physical body, but by the words spoken by Him, which penetrate the hearts of those who are open to receive Him.

This spiritual recognition of Christ is not only a historical reality, but also a present reality, accessible to us. Even today, those who "see" Christ do not perceive him through the eyes of the body, but through the eyes of the heart, opened by the Holy Spirit. Just as the disciples knew him by his words, so believers in every age recognize him in the Truth written in the Scriptures, in the power of his Word - in the work of the Spirit who continues to reveal him.

To "see" Christ is to recognize Him as Lord and Savior through an inner revelation, a spiritual enlightenment that needs no physical proof but living faith. Jesus says in *John 14:21* (ESV) : "*Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.*" This revelation is not visible to the natural eye, but it is a manifestation of His presence in the heart, in the spirit of the born-again man.

Thus, His resurrection, ascension and return are events of the new creation, belonging to the spiritual dimension, and are not to be expected or sought in physical, seen terms. Christ is alive, present and visible - not in flesh and blood, but in and through the Spirit. And this sight is accessible to anyone who believes, anyone who has the "eyes of the heart" open to receive him.

This spiritual reality of Christ's presence at the right hand of the Father, which *Paul* implicitly affirms when he says that he "saw" him, is essential in order to understand the nature of the resurrection of the dead.

If Christ, the first risen from the dead, lives in a spiritual and eternal dimension, then the resurrection of his own must also be understood in the same framework of the new spiritual creation, not in material terms.

Therefore, before delving into the teaching about the resurrection of the dead, it is necessary to recognize that Christ is **not** at the right hand of the Father in a body of flesh and bones, but in his spiritual body, according to the nature of God.

Paul, who says that he 'saw' Jesus in his glorified state and received the gospel directly from the Lord (see *Galatians 1:11-12*), explains to the Ephesians what the resurrection that God gives to those who believe the gospel means.

In *Ephesians 2:1-3*, he reminds them how they were once dead in their sins and lived according to the will of the flesh. They were, like all men, separated from God. But then, in the

following verses, he shows how God, by his love and grace brought them to life together with Christ.

Paul says clearly:

"and (He) raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6)

Here he is not talking about a physical resurrection, about bodies rising from the tombs. It is about a spiritual resurrection, a deep and real change in the believer's life. Although the believer still lives in the body, he no longer belongs to the old world, but is part of a new reality - a spiritual and heavenly one. To be "resurrected" and "with him in heavenly places" means to be united with Christ, to receive life from God and to begin to live according to his will. This resurrection comes not by our good works, but by faith. But good works become the clear proof that this new life is genuine. Paul says that God prepared them "beforehand" for us to walk in them (*Ephesians 2:10*). In other words, the new life that God gives to those who believe is seen in the way they live: a changed, clean, fruitful life.

So the resurrection that Paul speaks of in the Epistle to the Ephesians is not just a future promise. It was a present work already being accomplished in the lives of the believers in Ephesus. An inner resurrection in the spirit, made visible through good works and a life lived in holiness. It shows that man has passed from death to life, already a sharer in the Kingdom of God - even before it is revealed in its fullness, "with power", as Jesus said to the disciples:

*"Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death **until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.**" (Mark 9:1 ESV)*

Therefore, the resurrection of which *Paul* speaks was taking place in the context of a new creation and a new kingdom, which was expected to come with power - that is, to be fully manifested - at the end of the apostolic generation, before some of the disciples had physically died. Therefore, in his writings, Paul speaks of the resurrection both in the present tense, as a reality already begun, and in the future tense, but a future close to them. It was a spiritual resurrection, which was to come to its fullness with the manifestation in power of the Kingdom of God and the definitive close of the Old Covenant age.

We shall see in the course of this study that this spiritual resurrection of the apostolic period - begun by faith and lived in the life of those brought to life by Christ - is in fact what the New Testament calls the first resurrection.

In the same spirit, the Apostle Paul also teaches the Church at Colossae:

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. **When Christ** who is your life **appears**, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." (Colossians 3:1-5)

According to this text, the resurrection with Christ was already a reality for the believers in Colosse - a spiritual resurrection, lived by faith. The appearing in glory with Christ, however, was expected as a future event, to take place "*when Christ ... appears*". This appearing does not refer to a physical return, but to a full revelation of his glorious presence, which would be fully

manifested at the end of the Old Covenant age, and the final establishment of the New Covenant.

Having died to the old man and put off their former sinful life, Christians have been made alive together with Christ through an inner transformation. They "*have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator*" (Colossians 3:10). This renewal was not just a mere moral change, but a profound work of the Spirit of God, transforming believers into the image of Christ, whose character is at its essence love. The Christian life, therefore, was not merely a matter of outward rules or behavior, but was the fruit of an inner work, a spiritual resurrection which was already beginning to change the inner man, in expectation of the full manifestation of the glory of Christ.

The glory that was to be fully revealed at his return was already at work in their lives, gradually changing them "*into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*" (2 Corinthians 3:18 NKJW). They were thus in a continual process of renewal, already experiencing the reality of the new creation, but awaiting its consummation at the appearing of Christ, when all dominions and principalities would have been subject to him. This appearing was to take place at the full conclusion of the Old Covenant, marked by the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem (see Matthew 24) - a prophetic moment marking the end of an age and the confirmation of the full entrance into the spiritual, New Covenant kingdom.

The fact that the spiritual resurrection experienced by believers in the apostles' day was not only a present reality, but also included a future dimension, is clearly evidenced by Paul's words in 2 Timothy 2:11-13:

*"The saying is trustworthy, for: **If we have died with him, we will also live with him**; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself."*

This passage reinforces the idea that, although the believers had died with Christ (that is, they had put off the old, sinful man), living with him — in the full sense of the word — was still to come. Paul speaks to them of a future living which was to be fully manifested with the appearing of Christ in glory. It is a full unity with Christ in his kingdom, which was to be revealed at the end of the apostolic generation. This experience at the end was the fulfillment of the spiritual process already begun — the goal towards which all those who endured in faith until the end of the Old Covenant, which was completed at the end of the apostolic generation, were moving.

The text also warns of the dangers of backsliding and unbelief, emphasizing the responsibility of Christians to remain steadfast to the end. In other words, life with Christ was not only a present promise but also a future reward, conditional on perseverance in faith and patience. The falling away of some of those who were in the Christian community of the apostolic generation was anticipated and foreseen. Jesus spoke of this in several parables - such as the parables of the tares and of the ten virgins (see *Matthew 13* and *Matthew 25*) - showing that not all those in the Christian community were truly part of it. *Paul* also confirms this truth in *2 Thessalonians 2:3* (NKJV), where he makes it clear that Christ's return would not occur — "*unless the falling away comes first*" — a falling away that took place in the apostolic generation, not in our time. This turning away did not mean a turning from faith to unbelief in the modern sense of atheism, but a turning back to the Old Covenant - to Mosaicism - thus renouncing the

grace brought through Christ and returning to what was already obsolete and on the way to extinction (see *Hebrews 8:13*).

After having analyzed several passages in which the apostle Paul speaks about the resurrection, it is time to dwell on the most extensive and detailed text on this subject in the New Testament: chapter 15 of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Here *Paul* offers a crucial teaching on the nature of the resurrection, its purpose and its connection with the work of Christ. This chapter is a cornerstone for understanding the whole Christian perspective on life, death and the new creation.

An analysis of the resurrection explained in 1 Corinthians 15

This is the central New Testament text on the resurrection. Here we find most of the details of this event, as well as an in-depth analysis of the full establishment of the new creation in Christ, according to God's plan, formed in Himself before eternity. The expression "the restoration of creation" is often used, as if there had been a perfect creation before the fall into sin, which now needs to be restored. In our opinion, this teaching is profoundly wrong and has no basis in Scripture.

According to the understanding presented in our first book, the creation of *Genesis 1* is not just an initial physical act, but a symbolic unfolding in time - a prophetic picture of salvation history.

The first three days of creation represent the first, pre-Flood world, and days four, five and six are the three days of creation that mirror the Old Covenant world in which God revealed himself to Israel. This world '*was under the bondage of wickedness*', an old creation, close to destruction in the first century.

Prophetically, the sixth day of *Genesis 1* takes on a special significance in salvation history. It is the day on which Christ enters the world by incarnation, making atonement for sins through death and resurrection, thus giving life to the new creation. It is not only a "*third day*" in the natural sense, after the crucifixion, but also a prophetic day, beginning with the death of an obsolete system, its abolition and the resurrection of a new

creation in Christ, which was to grow and multiply and fill the earth (*Genesis 1:26-28*).

Therefore, when Paul states in *1 Corinthians 15:4* that "*Christ was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures*", we can understand this "third day" not only in a natural sense, but also in a symbolic sense. Christ's resurrection marks the beginning of a new stage in the history of creation - the stage of eternal life, of fruitfulness and the establishment of the Kingdom of God in power. This is the third great stage, after the first world, the pre-Flood world, and the second world, the Old Covenant world in which God worked through Israel.

This 'third day' pattern is also found in the creation account in *Genesis 1*: on the third day, the earth comes up out of the waters and brings forth life - greenery, grass and trees with seed - a picture of the beginning of life and fruitfulness. However, that world has gone astray through the union of the sons of God with the daughters of men (*Genesis 6*), and creation has become totally corrupted by sin. As a result, God decided to almost totally destroy the world, saving only Noah and his family. In Christ, however, the image is crowned with perfection: the new creation is called to bring forth eternal fruit and fill the "earth" with the spiritual life that comes from God. If from the first world only the righteous - Noah - was saved, at the end of the second world, the Righteous One, Jesus Christ, became sin so that through faith in his sacrifice many sinners might become righteous.

In *1 Corinthians 15* we are shown how the resurrection of Christ is the beginning of this new reality, and that believers, united with Him, are part of this new creation which had gradually begun to manifest itself in the apostolic generation and was being completed with the end of the Old Covenant, marked by the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem.

From the first verse of chapter 15 we notice that *Paul* addresses the Corinthians with the following words: "*I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you [...]*". He then goes on to emphasize the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, because these are the central point of the Gospel. The resurrection of Christ is not presented as a mere statement of faith, but as a historical event confirmed by eyewitnesses.

The first witness mentioned by *Paul* is *Peter*, then the twelve disciples, and later more than five hundred brothers who saw Jesus at the same time - most of whom were still alive at the time of the epistle. Then to all the apostles, after which he appeared to James. These all saw Jesus in his resurrected body, in his physical form, not just in a spiritual resurrection.

This list of witnesses serves a persuasive role: it is a powerful testimony, proving the reality of Jesus' resurrection, which underpins the Christian faith.

In verse 8 *Paul* says that he also appeared to him:

"Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time." (NKJV)

If, in the case of the other disciples, Jesus appeared to them before his ascension, in *Paul's* case, the appearance took place after Christ had already been glorified. The apostle refers to the encounter on the road to Damascus, when Jesus revealed himself to him in a dazzling light and with a voice that spoke to him from heaven. Thus Paul also becomes a witness of Christ's resurrection, but his experience differs from that of the other witnesses who saw Jesus resurrected in the flesh. This difference suggests that while the physical resurrection was real for the others, Paul emphasizes another dimension of the resurrection: the manifestation of a spiritual reality, belonging to a new,

spiritual creation. We also recall this in connection with *Peter's* account of Jesus' resurrection, emphasizing its spiritual dimension (1 *Peter* 3:18).

In verse 12, Paul touches on an essential and sensitive issue for some members of the Corinthian church: doubt about the reality of the future resurrection of the dead, a fundamental belief for Christians, as it was expected by the first-century church. He asks directly:

"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?" (1 *Corinthians* 15:12 NKJV).

On this basis, *Paul* argues that the denial of the general resurrection undermines the very essence of the Gospel. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not risen either, and in this case the apostles' preaching is futile, the believers' faith is groundless, and salvation becomes illusory. Without the resurrection, the Gospel is powerless and death becomes the hopeless end of human existence.

Verse 19 of 1 *Corinthians* 15 draws attention to an essential, often neglected truth:

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable." (NKJV)

These words are a reminder of the tendency of some Christians to relate to God only in terms of immediate usefulness, expecting from him a life without want, full health, fulfilled children and success in all aspects of life. Such a conception reduces faith to a form of subtle idolatry, in which man worships not the living God, but an imaginary projection - a "god" modeled after his own desires and aspirations. This way of

thinking not only distorts the Gospel, it also distorts the understanding of the resurrection. Instead of looking forward to resurrection in a spiritual reality, in the Kingdom of God in the unseen realm, some Christians actually long for an eternal life on earth, in an improved version of the present world. But, according to Scripture, eternal life is not in a repaired creation, restored to a supposed original, pre-fall state, but in a completely new one. The goal of this new reality is not the perpetuation of a physical, earthly comfort, but eternal communion with Christ in a spiritual setting, fully conformed to the nature of the Father who is Spirit. The resurrection is therefore not simply a continuation of the present life, but a passage into a radically transformed existence in which all things are made new.

Many Christians today envision a future re-created physical creation in which they will receive new bodies, similar to their present ones - head, body, hands and feet - but immortal. In contrast to this view, some of the believers in the Corinthian church rejected the resurrection altogether, because they misunderstood that a resurrection of physical bodies was being preached to them - an idea they found absurd or unacceptable. The Apostle Paul directly addresses this confusion beginning in verse 35 of chapter 15, a point we will consider in due course.

In verse 20, *Paul* affirms that the resurrection of Christ is the "*firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*," - the first risen from the dead. Christ did not remain in Sheol, as prophesied in *Psalms 16:10*: "*You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.* (NKJV)" We have already shown that Christ is not the first resurrected in the physical sense - there have been other resurrections recorded in Scripture before - but is the first resurrected into a new spiritual creation, definitively entered into heavenly glory. *Paul* continues the point

by showing that all the rest of the dead, who were still in the abode of the dead, were to be raised at Christ's coming.

The unbelief of some of the Corinthians, we believe, concerned specifically the fate of believers who had died before Christ's return: they doubted that these would receive any life or resurrection. However, this does not exclude the possibility that they still expected those who remained alive until His return to receive eternal life in some physical form. It is possible that some were confused about the nature of resurrection and whom it applied to — whether it referred only to the living, or also to the dead whose bodies had already decayed.

Even this uncertainty reinforces the idea that these believers expected Christ to return in their lifetime. Though they misunderstood the nature of resurrection, they should not be regarded as outright unbelievers like atheists. Paul clearly says in verse 2, “*unless you believed in vain,*” suggesting that they still held on to the gospel — but without resurrection, their faith was empty. Moreover, the fact that they continued attending church gatherings shows they maintained some faith in God. Rather, they seem to have been an internal group within the community, holding to their own particular views — just as we still find a variety of differing opinions among professing Christians today.

In verses 21-23, the inspired text shows us a profound parallel between two essential persons of salvation history: Adam and Christ. Through Adam, the first man, death entered the world and spread to all mankind. In contrast, through Christ - called the “*firstfruit*” of the resurrection - eternal life was inaugurated. All men, born in Adam, inherit a state of spiritual death. But whoever believes in the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ is made partaker of a new spiritual life, being raised in a like, not an identical, resurrection (see *Romans 6:5*).

Therefore, the beginning of death and resurrection is linked to two representative persons: Adam, through whom came death, and Christ, through whom came life.

Next, in verse 24, Paul speaks of an essential moment in God's plan - the end:

*"**Then comes the end**, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power." (1 Corinthians 15:24)*

Paul does not explicitly clarify what exactly "the end" means, but the context gives clear clues. This "end" is marked by two major events: **(1)** the complete destruction of all opposing spiritual authorities - principalities, lordships, and powers - and **(2)** the handing over of the kingdom to God the Father by Christ.

So the end is characterized by a transfer of authority: the spiritual kingdom, under the rule of Christ in the period of the defeat of evil (see *Psalms 110:1*), is finally entrusted to the Father. This indirectly implies that, up to that time, the world was still under the influence of these fallen spiritual forces - a reality recognized in other passages of Scripture, where the devil is called "*ruler of this world*" (see *John 12:31; Ephesians 2:2; 6:12*). Thus it is made clear that the end refers to the close of an age, a reign, a world in which the devil was lord. At the same time, this end marks the beginning of a new world in which the Father would reign.

For Christians of the apostolic generation, this "end" was still a future event. The question is whether this event is also in our future. If this were so, then the kingdoms and principalities have not yet been subdued, and the Father has not yet received the kingdom from the Son. The fact that the apostolic Church, including Paul, was awaiting the end in their own generation is

undeniable. There are numerous passages in the New Testament which show this, among them *Matthew 10:23* (ESV) ("*you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes*"), *Matthew 24:34* (ESV) ("*Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place*"), *Romans 13:11-12* (ESV) ("*our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand.*"), *1 Corinthians 7:29* (ESV) ("*the appointed time has grown very short*"), *Hebrews 10:37* (ESV) ("*Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay*"), and *James 5:8-9* (ESV) ("*You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand... behold, the Judge is standing at the door*").

The Apostle Paul confirms in verse 25 that Christ reigned with the apostolic Church to subdue principalities and powers. He writes:

"For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (*1 Corinthians 15:25* ESV).

If the struggle with principalities and powers in the heavenly places of which we speak, also mentioned in *Ephesians 6:12* - had not ended in the victory of Christ and the apostolic Church, then we would have to acknowledge a major failure of the mission of Christianity in the first century. This would mean that the Church, in its apostolic and historical form, failed in its calling to participate in the establishment of the Kingdom and to overcome the forces of evil. In such a perspective, the devil would still be the "*ruler of this world*", and the Kingdom of God would remain, perpetually, a postponed reality - a promise always future but never fulfilled. The implications of such an understanding are devastating for the Christian faith, for it turns the hope of change into endless waiting. It is time for this error to be recognized and abandoned. Christianity must no longer perpetuate a vision that nullifies the victory of Christ in the first

century. The so-called theological community, responsible for promoting this unfounded view, bears a great responsibility to history and revealed truth.

All Christians should personally turn to Scripture and stop receiving without discernment whatever they are told, just because those speakers are highly educated. Education, however rigorous, does not guarantee genuine understanding of God's Word. Just as the religious elites of the first-century Jews, despite their training, did not understand the Scriptures, and the fisherman Simon Peter — a simple man — understood them by revelation from God, so Christians today can come to know the truth if they approach the Scriptures with sincerity, humility, and an open heart (see 1 Corinthians 2:6-16).

The following passage demonstrates that Christ was already reigning in the apostolic generation, because the struggle with principalities and powers to subdue them was a lived reality of the early Church (see *Ephesians 6:12*).

1 Corinthians 15:25-28 (ESV) "For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all."

Very interesting is the way Paul expresses himself: after stating that Christ must reign "until He has put all enemies under His feet," he immediately adds that God "has put all things in subjection under his feet" - in the past tense. So we have to do with a tension between a present reality and a progressive fulfillment: a submission "already" but "not yet" fully. This reality

was concrete for the apostolic Church, which lived in the context of the establishment of the Kingdom and the defeat of the evil one. How does one explain this apparent contradiction between an obedience that was claimed to have already been achieved and one that was still in progress?

In our first book⁴ we affirmed and explained that the struggle with principalities and powers in apostolic times, the period during which Christ reigned with His Church, falls within the thousand-year reign - of course, a symbolic thousand years, not literal (see the chapter "The Thousand-Year Kingdom. Kingdom of God").

Sin, which entered the world through man, in the Garden of Eden, by the deception of Satan, gave him authority over a fallen world through the deception of the lie Adam believed. This sin was blotted out by Jesus Christ through His sacrifice, on the basis of which man is cleansed from all unrighteousness. In virtue of this, Paul says that God "has put all things under his feet", because his victory was already assured, but it was to be manifested in the apostolic Church through her perseverance in faith and patience until the end. Then the victory would be complete, after the devil had been cast into the lake of fire and brimstone - in a spiritual sense, marking the end of the Old Covenant world and its authority.

Paul goes on to refer to a practice among the Corinthians: baptism for the dead. This passage has sparked much debate among Christians over the ages, but there is no definitive or unanimously accepted explanation. However, one thing is clear: if some of them practiced this kind of baptism, it meant that they believed that the dead would rise - unlike others in the

⁴ The Creation, from Genesis to Revelation? Behold, I make all things new

Corinthian church who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

*"Why are we in danger every hour? I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, **I die every day!** What do I gain **if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus?** **If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."** Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. **For some have no knowledge of God.** I say this to your shame." (1 Corinthians 15:30-34 ESV)*

In this passage the apostle Paul offers himself and his fellow laborers as an example. They preached the Gospel at the cost of their lives, being exposed daily to the danger of death. But if the dead do not rise, what would be the point of these sacrifices? Why would they risk their lives every day? In such a perspective, it would make more sense for them to live like other people, enjoying transitory life without restraint. *Paul* therefore emphasizes that the resurrection is an essential truth of the Christian faith - without this faith, their whole dedication becomes meaningless. Moreover, the resurrection was precisely God's promise to the fathers of Israel (cf. *Acts 13:32-33*). To deny the resurrection is, in fact, not really to know God - even if one claims to have faith in him.

We are now at the crux of Paul's argument, where he directly addresses the objections of those who denied the possibility of the resurrection of the dead.

How do the dead rise?

*1 Corinthians 15:35-38 (ESV) "But someone will ask, "**How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?**" You **foolish person!** What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.*

*And what **you sow is not the body that is to be**, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body."*

Here *Paul* answers a typical objection raised by those who rejected the resurrection: How could the dead be raised? And what kind of body could they have after resurrection?

The direct and cutting expression - "*You foolish person!*" - shows the apostle's deep frustration with the confusion and prejudice of those who had not understood the essence of the Gospel. It is not simply a personal indignation, but a reaction to the gravity of their unbelief: to deny the resurrection is to ignore the power and promise of God.

The most popular interpretations say that this passage would refer to the resurrection of the physical body, like the resurrection of Jesus' body. We will show that *Paul denies exactly this*. Let's look carefully at what the passage says:

1. "*How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?*"

This question is prompted by a misunderstanding of the resurrection, perhaps based on Jewish conceptions or certain Greek philosophical influences, which could only conceive of an afterlife in terms of the actual physical body. But *Paul* answers the question by showing that another kind of body is involved.

2. "*What you sow does not come to life unless it dies first.*"

Paul uses an analogy from nature - the grain of wheat. You sow not a complete plant, but a single grain, which must die in order to give birth to new life. It is a process of transformation, not

restoration. So is resurrection: not a resurrection of the old physical body, but a radical renewal into a new creation, according to God's will.

3. ***"You sow not the body that is to be, but only a grain."***

This statement is crucial. *Paul* rejects the idea that at the resurrection the Corinthians were to receive the same physical body they had in earthly life, but "improved." He asserts that the resurrection body is different by nature - just as the ear of corn is fundamentally different from the sown grain, though they are organically related. If we take another example of a seed, say an acorn, the body that is born from the seed is a secular tree. This contradicts the conception of a mere "bringing to life" of the physical body. A body with head, hands and legs is not sown, and then resurrects a physical body with an identical appearance, but which no longer dies.

4. ***"God gives a body, as it pleases God; and to every seed he gives a body of its own."***

The resurrection body is given by God, and is not a result of the earthly qualities of the old body. It is a body that corresponds to the new existence-spiritual, heavenly, uncorrupted, as *Paul* will detail in the following verses (vv. 42-44). Every "seed" (i.e., every man born of the Word and the Spirit) receives a body befitting the new life.

We have come to an essential point in this study: How does the physical resurrection of Jesus harmonize with the apostle Paul's explanation of the grain dying to give birth to a new body? Does *Paul* support the idea of a physical resurrection similar to that of Jesus?

After the crucifixion, Jesus' body — consisting of head, hands, feet and torso — was laid in a tomb. On the third day, he rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples and to the women in a physical, tangible, flesh-and-blood body. Therefore it was a physical body that was laid in the tomb, and a physical body that came out of it. However, this resurrection, though real and strongly witnessed, is not the same as the resurrection *Paul* describes in *1 Corinthians 15*.

The apostle uses the image of the grain of wheat which, once sown, dies **not** to give rise to another identical grain —one with unusual properties like appearing, disappearing, or passing through closed doors—but to an entirely new and different body, just as an acorn gives rise to an oak tree. The metaphor emphasizes not the physical continuity of an improved form, but the profound transformation of the nature of the body - the difference between the acorn and the oak is great. In this context, the physical resurrection of Jesus is to be understood not as a universal model of the resurrection, but merely as a sign that proved that he is the Messiah destined for his generation - a sign that fulfills the words of *Psalms 16:10*: "[...] *you will not abandon [...] your Holy One to see corruption.*"

Many Christians believe that Jesus is now at the right hand of God in a resurrected physical body, made of flesh and bones, but made immortal. But this belief raises a significant problem: if Jesus is in a physical body while at the same time being the head of a spiritual body - the Church, made of living stones - it follows that he would have two bodies: one physical and one spiritual. This contradiction highlights the fragility of the idea of a future physical resurrection.

*1 Corinthians 15:39-45 (ESV): "For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. **There are heavenly bodies and***

earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. **So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.** It is sown in dishonor; 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.** If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, "**The first man Adam became a living being**"; the last Adam became a **life-giving spirit**."

This passage directly confirms what we are arguing, emphasizing the existence of two kinds of bodies: earthly and heavenly. The heavenly bodies are superior to the earthly, having a different glory and brightness, just as the sun differs from the moon, and the stars differ from each other in brightness.

Earthly bodies, *Paul* says, are characterized by **decay**, **reproach** and **powerlessness**. In contrast, heavenly bodies are characterized by **incorruption**, **glory** and **power**. And further on, the apostle states plainly, "*It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.*"

This statement challenges us to ask: what does "*natural body*" mean? Is Paul referring to the physical body, flesh and bones? Or to some other component of the human being?

The verse immediately following offers an important clue:

*"If there is a **natural body**, there is also a **spiritual body**. Therefore it is written: 'The first man Adam became a living being,' and the last Adam became a **life-giving spirit**."*

Table: Correspondence between the natural and the spiritual body.

Natural body	Spiritual body
<i>a living being (living soul)</i> ψυχὴ ζῶσα - psychē (living soul) First Adam	<i>a life-giving spirit</i> Second Adam

One can clearly see from the quoted text that the natural body is associated with the living soul of the first Adam, and the **spiritual body** with the **life-giving spirit** of Christ. When *Paul* speaks of the "natural body," he is not simply referring to a physical, fleshly body, but to a form of human existence in which the inner life - the will and desires of the soul - are manifested through the body in a natural, earthly setting.

The original term for "living soul" is "*psychē*," which translated from the Greek means "soul" or "life," just as it appears in *Genesis 2:7*, from which Paul quotes.

*1 Corinthians 15:46-49 (ESV) "But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. **The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.**"*

If we look carefully at the way *Paul* expresses himself, "*But it is not the spiritual that is first but the **natural, and then the spiritual**,*" we can understand that this reflects Adam's state before the fall into sin, immediately after he received the breath of life from God. *Paul* does not say that Adam became natural

and earthly after he sinned, but that he was so from the beginning. Thus, an earthly, ungodly man could not bear the image of the heavenly one, and therefore had no eternal life.

This should give pause to many in the theological world, who teach Christians that Adam originally had eternal life (including physical life), which he lost through sin - an idea that is unfounded and unsupported by Scripture. Moreover, the presence of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, destined to give eternal life, would have been meaningless if Adam had already been immortal. All this supports the conclusion that the first Adam was, from the beginning, earthly and mortal. Therefore, the idea of a supposed resurrection of an eternal physical body, which was from the beginning transitory, becomes unfounded, since we find no such teaching in the Scriptures.

Every man born into this world is like Adam and, like Adam, chooses sin. We are talking, therefore, about an Adamic genealogy, made up of sinful men, devoid of the glory of God - that is to say, devoid of His image. For this reason, *Genesis 1:26-27*, which states that man was made in the image of God, cannot be applied to the first Adam, but to the second Adam, that is to Christ (and, implicitly, to His Church), as we explained in our first book, in the chapter on the sixth day of creation. The first Adam was made only in God's likeness, as we learn from *Genesis 5:1-2*.

On the other hand, Christ, the last Adam, is the image of the invisible God, the embodiment of his being, who came down from heaven. And just as from Adam is born a natural, earthly genealogy, so also from Christ is born a heavenly, spiritual genealogy - immortal, spiritual men, who receive as a gift the eternal and imperishable image of Christ.

Paul then gives a clear answer to the questions in verse 35: "*How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?*"

*1 Corinthians 15:50 (ESV) "I tell you this, brothers: **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.**"*

That verse is the apostle's conclusion to these questions and should put to rest any debate about a supposed future resurrection in a physical body, akin to the resurrected, physical body of Jesus - which some still consider a spiritual body. But how could a body made of flesh and bones be truly spiritual? Jesus says clearly, when he shows himself to his disciples after the resurrection, "*For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have*" (Luke 24:39). Furthermore, the nail marks in His hands and the rib pierced by the Roman soldier's spear show that His resurrected body was the same body that had been crucified on the cross.

Recall that after *Paul* asks the two questions in verse 35, he follows up in verse 36 with a scathing reply, "*You foolish person!*" To whom are these words addressed? To some in the Corinthian church who believed that the gospel would support a physical resurrection of the dead. They could not believe that someone whose body had decayed could still be physically resurrected. So the problem of their unbelief was based on a wrong assumption about the nature of the resurrection. And if someone today starts from the same assumption, even though he claims to believe in a future physical resurrection, the same words of verse 36 can apply to him.

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 (ESV) "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall

be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality."

Paul goes on to tell a mystery. A mystery is a hidden, unknown or not fully understood reality that is usually gradually revealed by God. In the scriptural sense, the mystery is not a perpetual mystery, but a divine truth, hidden in the past but revealed at God's appointed time.

The mystery *Paul* reveals refers precisely to the time of the resurrection of the dead, which he and the first-century Christians had been waiting for. This is emphasized by the words: '*we shall not all sleep*'. *Paul's* conviction, therefore, was that not all Christians of the apostolic generation were to die physically before the event described in this passage was fulfilled, a conviction also confirmed in *John 21:22*: "*If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?*" This belief is in complete harmony with what Jesus also says in *Matthew 10:23*: "*Truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.*"

Therefore, the resurrection of the dead was to take place at Christ's return, at the end of the apostolic generation, before all the disciples had physically died (see also *Mark 9:1*). To place this event thousands of years into the future is speculation that continues to mislead many contemporary Christians.

In the rest of the passage we are told that the dead would be raised incorruptible, and those among them who had not fallen

asleep (not physically died) by that time would be changed. The change *Paul* speaks of is from the body subject to putrefaction to the body that puts on incorruption. And if Paul was referring to the physical body as well, not just the soul, it means that this physical body of flesh, now having a new garment, was to put off putrefying. But a physical body requires a physical garment. A body of the soul requires a spiritual garment. Yet what was to be clothed? The body or the soul? Or both?

Following on from *1 Corinthians 15*, *Paul* speaks of the resurrection of the dead and the transformation of the living at Christ's return. He states that "*the dead will be raised incorruptible*" and those who had not fallen asleep (i.e., had not physically died) will be changed. This change at the end does not refer to a "physical body" that would become immortal, but to a profound spiritual change of the soul through salvation (*1 Peter 1:9* (ESV) "*obtaining the outcome of your faith, **the salvation of your souls.***").

The Apostle Paul gives the Thessalonian church the same explanation of the resurrection and transformation of believers as he does in the Epistle to the Corinthians. What in *1 Corinthians 15:51-52* is expressed by the word "*changed*" appears in *1 Thessalonians 4:17* as "*caught up*". The two passages describe the same end-time event for those who remained alive until the coming of the Lord in the first Christian generation.

Paul is writing to the Thessalonians:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 (ESV) - "***But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that **we who are*****

alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord."

These are the only two passages in the New Testament that explicitly speak about the rapture or transformation of those who remain until the coming of the Lord: *1 Corinthians 15:51-52* and *1 Thessalonians 4:17*. From both texts it is clear that *Paul* expected this transformation within his generation, not in the distant future. He tells the Thessalonians the same thing he had affirmed to the Corinthians, "*we who are alive and remain...*".

For clarity, we can trace the parallels between the two passages:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17	1 Corinthians 15:51-52
<i>those who are asleep</i>	<i>we shall not all sleep</i>
<i>the trumpet of God</i>	<i>the trumpet will sound</i>
<i>the dead in Christ will rise first</i>	<i>the dead will be raised imperishable</i>
<i>we who are alive ... will be caught up together.</i>	<i>we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed</i>

It's easy to see that it's the same event described slightly differently, for the same community: the first-century church.

Therefore, the rapture - or change - is not for a generation in their future, nor in our future, but for the apostle's contemporary. Those who were still alive at the time of the 'coming of the Lord' were to be 'caught up in the clouds' to meet him in the heavenlies. If we interpret this rapture to be physical, with a physical body literally lifted up into the clouds, then the clouds and the heaven would also be physical. By this logic, believers would have to meet Christ in the atmosphere, in physical bodies, and spend eternity "somewhere in the air." Obviously, such a conclusion sounds absurd.

But what, then, do these words mean: the clouds and the air? Paul uses deeply symbolic language, and understanding it requires going back to Old Testament symbolism.

In Scripture, the cloud is often associated with the glory and presence of God. For example:

- In *Exodus 13:21*, the Lord went before Israel "by day in a pillar of cloud."
- In *Exodus 40:34*, "the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle";
- In *1 Kings 8:10-11*, the glory of the Lord filled the Temple in the form of a cloud.

So the 'clouds' are not atmospheric, but signify the presence of the Lord - the place of meeting with God.

Likewise, the "heaven" is not the physical space between the earth and the sky, but a spiritual realm in which unseen forces manifest. Paul himself calls Satan "the prince of the power of the air" (*Ephesians 2:2*), referring to a spiritual dimension, not the atmosphere. By this logic, meeting the Lord in the heavenlies is a spiritual union, a full entrance into the kingdom of Christ, not a physical journey through the air.

The change or rapture, therefore, represents a profound spiritual transformation: the transition from Old Covenant thinking to New Covenant consciousness. It is a transition from a (soul) body subject to sin to the inner man, renewed in the image of God. This act enlightens man's mind to know his oneness with Christ in the spiritual reality of His kingdom.

This is not a physical change, but a spiritual reality experienced by believers in Christ at the moment when the Law was fulfilled and death and sin lost their power. It was the moment of the closing of the Old Covenant and the beginning of a new creation - a reality of the Spirit, in which there is no condemnation, but life and eternal fellowship with the Lord.

In the teaching of Jesus we do not find a single instance in which salvation or change of the physical body is spoken of, but only of the soul, although *John 5:28-29* is often interpreted as a change of the physical body.

*Matthew 16:26 (ESV) "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or **what shall a man give in return for his soul?**"*

When *Paul* uses the term "put on," he is referring to a spiritual change. This act of "putting on" is not about the physical body, as a materialistic interpretation would suggest, but rather it refers to the putting on of the soul into a spiritual nature that is not subject to death. This is a change of spiritual status, which qualifies the human being for eternal life in the presence of God.

If *Paul* was referring to a physical body being transformed into an "immortal body," then we should expect to see many first-century Christians still alive today, which is not borne out by historical reality. Therefore, the correct understanding of this passage suggests that it is not a physical body that would be resurrected, but the soul that was to be saved, "clothed" in a spiritual, immortal, and glorious nature. Thus, the resurrection does not refer to a return to an immortal physical life, but to a transformation of the soul.

The term "put on" also appears in two other significant passages written by the Apostle Paul, which reinforce the spiritual nature of the Christian's change:

Romans 13:14 (ESV) - "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ [...]" (Greek: *endýsasthai ton Kyrion Iēsoun Christon*), and

Galatians 3:27 (ESV) - "For as many of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Greek: *Christon enedýsasthe*).

In both cases Paul uses the verb *endýō*, which figuratively means to clothe oneself with a spiritual identity, character, or reality.

It is not a physical act, but an inner change that gives to the believer's life the image and nature of the risen Christ.

To understand this call to "put on" more clearly, it is essential to note the context in which it appears in Romans 13:14. The previous verse, Romans 13:12 (ESV), explains the time frame they were in:

"The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."

With this image, Paul is emphasizing the imminent transition from the Old Covenant - associated with darkness - to the New Covenant, characterized by light, truth, and life lived in Christ. The "night" symbolizes the state of mankind in the Old Covenant period, under sin and in ignorance of God. In contrast, "day" refers to the approaching manifestation of Christ, the full establishment of his spiritual kingdom and his embodiment - this time, not in a physical, human body, but in the corporate body of his beloved Church.

First-century Christians were living in this unique moment of transition, like Noah who was building the ark of salvation in anticipation of the flood. *Paul* urges them to 'put off' the deeds of darkness, that is, to give up the old, sinful way of life and 'put on' the 'armor of light' - a phrase for a life lived in truth, righteousness and communion with Christ. This change is fundamentally spiritual, not physical, although it is also manifested in the seen world.

Moreover, the expression *"have put on Christ"* in *Galatians 3:27*, directly associated with baptism, confirms the symbolic nature of this "putting on": the baptized person does not acquire a new physical body, but receives a new spiritual identity in Christ.

So the language of "clothing" used by Paul in *1 Corinthians 15:53* is also deeply symbolic and spiritual. It is not a matter of clothing a physical body with something visible or material, no longer subject to physical decay. This spiritual way of looking at things is true throughout *Paul's* epistles and fits with the message of the New Testament as a whole.

The same verb *endýō* - *to put on, to be clothed* - is used in the following passage:

Ephesians 4:22-24 (ESV) - "put off your old self, [...] and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God ..."

Paul refers to putting on the new self, which is created in conformity with God, with His image. It is very clear that the apostle is referring to the clothing of the inner man in a spiritual sense. The image of God does not refer to the physical body, but to the spiritual, the spirit. This verse confirms that Adam did not have the image of God even before the fall into sin. Being created from the dust of the ground, he is by nature earthly and as such cannot possess the divine image in the spiritual sense revealed in the New Testament. The image of God is not a quality of the natural man, but a spiritual gift which is received only in Christ through the new birth. Only through union with Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit can man be transformed into the image of his Creator. Therefore, the first man to bear the image of God is Jesus Christ. This truth emphasizes that the statement in *Genesis 1:26* - *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"* - has a prophetic and Christological dimension, fully fulfilled in Christ. Thus this verse does not refer to the first Adam, but anticipates Christ, the Last Adam.

The apostle *Paul's* explanation of the resurrection of the dead concludes with the following passage:

*1 Corinthians 54-56 (ESV) - "When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: **"Death is swallowed up in victory."** "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" **The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.** But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

The clarification of the clothing of the mortal body, subject to putrefaction, with the immortality given through the resurrection, continues with the quotation from *Hosea 13:14*:

"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

We note that the prophet *Hosea* is referring to the dead who were in Sheol, not the physical bodies in the tombs. The Old Testament teaches that in Sheol were the souls of the dead, not their bodies. So *Hosea* speaks of a victory over death in a spiritual sense, when souls are redeemed, not when bodies are resurrected. In the same sense, *Paul* also refers to those in the abode of the dead, not those in the cemetery, even though he uses the term "body" when referring to the human soul. In his symbolic language "body" does not necessarily denote physical matter, but man in his totality, as he is in his mortal and sinful state.

Thus, the clothing of the "body" in immortality is to be understood as a spiritual transformation of the inner, soulish being, not as a biological resurrection.

Paul takes this text from *Hosea* and uses synonymous terms to convey the same idea, then adds: "*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.*"

The word "sting," can be explained as "the thorn that causes death," i.e., sin. Although the Law is perfect, it gives sin the power to bring condemnation, because it defines the heavenly standard and demands a righteousness which man, in his old nature, cannot attain. Thus the Law empowers sin to bring death to the sinner.

Therefore, in Christ, all are dead to the Law (cf. *Romans 7*) and alive to God, living a new life, freed from the condemnation of sin and death (see *Romans 8:1-2*).

What *Paul* is saying is that with the end of the age of the Law, sin and death lose their power. As long as the Law was in force, sin had the legal force of accusation and death reigned through it. With the end of the Old Covenant, however, when the Law completed its work, the power of sin was destroyed and death was defeated. This confirms that the apostle did not have in view a literal bodily resurrection, for at the close of the Old Covenant there was no resurrection of physical bodies.

This moment marks the end of the reign of the Law and the full establishment of a new spiritual creation in Christ, in which believers no longer live under condemnation but in the freedom and guidance of the Spirit, with the full operation of the law of the Spirit of life. Thus, the victory over sin and death is closely linked to the fulfillment and completion of the Old Covenant, not a future expectation, but an event already fulfilled in the first century.

In conclusion, although the Apostle Paul uses the term 'body' in the context of the resurrection, he is not referring to a resurrection of the physical body, but to a change of the inner man, made in the image of God - a spiritual reality, in conformity with the spiritual nature of God, not a physical one.

First and second resurrection

The only place in Scripture that explicitly speaks of two resurrections is Revelation chapter 20. The first, or "first resurrection" as it appears in the Cornilescu translation, is found in *Revelation* 20:5-6 (ESV):

*"The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. **This is the first resurrection.** Blessed and holy is the one who shares in **the first resurrection!** Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years."*

The expression "second resurrection" is nowhere to be found in the Scriptures, but it follows logically from *Revelation* chapter 20. It teaches us that there are two resurrections separated by a thousand years, during which time the first resurrected were to be priests and reign with God and Christ. At the end of the thousand years there was to be the resurrection of all the rest of the dead, some to judgment and eternal punishment, and some to life and eternal reward. The dead referred to come from the Sea and the abode of the dead.

So the first resurrection is closely connected with the thousand-year kingdom, and if we come to understand what this kingdom is and when it was to take place, things become clearer.

This is one of the most controversial topics in Christianity. There are many opinions and contradictions that divide believers, turning the ordinary Christian into a bewildered bystander, exposed to all sorts of contradictory teachings and interpretations. It seems that instead of seeking the truth of Scripture, they seek to increase the number of followers - as if the truth is established by majority vote. If that were so, Jesus would never have said: *"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:32)."*

The kingdom to which Jesus refers in this passage is the kingdom of God the Father, and it is promised primarily to the first-century disciples. It is inaugurated after the resurrection of all the dead and the judgment described in Revelation chapter 20. But the thousand-year kingdom takes place before that. If the Lord's disciples were to be partakers of the kingdom of God, then they first had to reign with Christ for a thousand years. In our first book we devoted a chapter to explaining this kingdom.

According to some Christians, neither of these two kingdoms has yet come, which leads to the conclusion that the first resurrection has not taken place either.

But Scripture contradicts such an understanding, for *Paul* speaks of the kingdom as a reality present in the first-century church. In his epistles, he makes direct references to the fact that some Christians already considered themselves to be reigning and lived with the consciousness of participating in a form of spiritual kingship.

For example, in *1 Corinthians 4:8* (ESV), *Paul* writes, *"Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you!"* - a clear irony at the Christians in Corinth, who claimed to be reigning even though their lives were

shaken by struggles and grave sins. Yet it is clear that *Paul* is not denying the idea of the kingdom in their generation, but rather affirming it.

And in *1 Corinthians 15:25* (ESV), Paul says, "*For He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet.*" This is phrased not as a future, indeterminate promise, but as an active, unfolding reality. Christ was already in the position of spiritual authority and reign, the process of subduing the enemies was underway, and the early church was part of that kingdom as the enemies were overcome and subdued.

The same idea is supported by the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost when, preaching to the crowds, he says of Christ in *Acts 2:34-35* : "*Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.*" This "until" is essential. It points to a process already inaugurated: Christ is exalted and reigning, and what follows is merely the unfolding of this act of authority for the subduing of enemies.

Therefore, both *Paul* and *Peter* are saying the same thing from different perspectives: the kingdom of Christ was already active in the first century, and the process of subduing the enemies had been set in motion. This reality is perfectly compatible with the statement in *Revelation 20* about those who share in the first resurrection and "reign with Christ a thousand years". If Christ was already reigning, and some Christians were actively participating in that reign, then the first resurrection, in the sense described there, must have taken place already in the first century, and Jesus' disciples were the first to take part in it. This resurrection was a spiritual resurrection, resulting from being born of the Spirit - a strictly necessary condition for being a partaker of the kingdom (see *John 3:3-6*).

James, through his epistle, gives further clarification, saying of the early church Christians the following:

*James 1:18 (ESV) - "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be **a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.**"*

Therefore James, along with his contemporary Christians, were the firstfruits of Christ's sacrifice. Christ is the firstborn of the new creation (see *Colossians 1:15*), and the first who followed after Him were His disciples and all others who believed the word of the gospel preached by the apostles.

The pattern of the fulfillment of this reality in the apostolic church is found in the Feast of the Harvest - of the firstfruits:

*Exodus 23:16 (ESV) - "You shall **keep the Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits** of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor."*

We think it is hard to honestly dispute that the Christians in the first century church represent the firstfruits won by Christ through His sacrifice. And if they are among the firstfruits, then they are the first resurrected from Adamic death - a spiritual death, not a physical one.

A passage that brings further clarification is Hebrews 12:22-23 (ESV):

*"But **you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.**"*

This epistle is addressed to the Jews, who were the chosen people under the Old Covenant. The teachings and explanations inspired by the Holy Spirit which the author gives are of paramount importance for a proper understanding of the Scriptures as a whole.

Let us note some very important things that emerge from this passage:

1. The Jewish Christians of the first century are told by the apostle that they have drawn near to the city of the living God, which is the heavenly Jerusalem.
2. The Church of the firstborn cannot be other than that which was brought into existence on the day of Pentecost.
3. The firstborn are written in heaven, which implies that they have risen with Christ just before the judgment and the descent of the New Jerusalem from heaven. In fact, the birth mentioned in this passage is synonymous with the resurrection.
4. God, the Judge of all, is the One who wrote them in heaven; so they were no longer to be judged by the One who wrote them, since they had passed from death to life (see *John 5:24*). This is why in *Revelation 20* we are told that the second death has no power over them.
5. Since a clear connection is made between the Church of the firstborn and the spirits of the righteous, it follows that the spirits of the righteous sanctified by Jesus Christ were already written in heaven.

The closeness of the first-century Jewish Christians to the heavenly Jerusalem proves that the descent of the New Jerusalem from heaven was near in the apostolic generation. This implies that the New Jerusalem was to descend from heaven in their generation. If this had not yet been fulfilled, then

Scripture would contain untrue prophecies and teachings - an unacceptable conclusion, since it would imply that God is not telling the truth.

The New Jerusalem therefore **came down** from heaven by the end of the apostolic generation, which implies that its nature is **spiritual**, not physical. And in a spiritual Jerusalem dwell righteous spirits brought to life by Jesus Christ, as the passage shows.

There are other passages which make it clear that the first resurrected were the Christians of the apostolic Church, and the first were the Lord's disciples, the witnesses of his resurrection. We do not discuss them now, as we consider the explanations given to be sufficient. If anyone desires further information, he can find it in our first book, in the chapter explaining the thousand-year kingdom. Here we also explain that the thousand years are symbolic and were fulfilled by the end of the apostolic generation.

As for the second resurrection, we mention only that it takes place immediately after the end of the thousand-year kingdom. In *Revelation 20* it is clearly written that, at the end of the thousand years, the devil is loosed to deceive the Gentiles and to gather them together to war against the saints and the beloved city. But God sends a fire from heaven that consumes them, signifying the final defeat of the devil.

This destruction is spiritual, not physical, since the devil is also a spiritual being. The casting of him into the lake of fire and brimstone thus expresses an act of final spiritual judgment.

After this event the judgment of all the dead takes place. Those who were not found written in the book of life are punished by the second death - a spiritual and definitive reality, i.e. eternal

separation from the presence of God, symbolized by being thrown into the lake of fire.

Instead, those found written in the book of life have resurrection and entry into the holy city, the New Jerusalem, which has come down from heaven - the full image of the new creation and dwelling with God.

Given that in the previous pages we have presented in detail the meaning and unfolding of the Second Resurrection, we will not dwell further on this subject.

CONCLUSIONS

In the course of this study we have seen how Scripture speaks of the resurrection of the dead - not as a mere physical event, expected in the distant future, but as a profoundly spiritual reality, directly linked to new life in Christ. The resurrection is not the promise of a bodily "restoration" after death through a supposed physical resurrection, but a present work of the Holy Spirit: a real passage from death to life for those who believe.

This reality was fully manifested in the apostolic generation and remains valid for every generation of men. God, who is eternal, has made an eternal plan - *for all generations* (see *Genesis 9:12*).

The popular idea in some religious circles about a so-called "**last generation**" of mankind holds that at some point human history would end with the extinction, the annihilation of mankind. Scripture makes no such claim; on the contrary, it clearly speaks of a **last generation, but this is the last generation of the Old Covenant**, namely the apostolic generation of the first century, not a last generation of mankind. From then on, generations continue to succeed one another unceasingly, and through the Gospel, God brings to life from spiritual death all those who believe wholeheartedly the good news of salvation.

In this sense, **God's covenants with Noah and Abraham are called "everlasting"** (see *Genesis 9:16 and 17:7*). To Noah, God promises that he will not destroy all living things, which guarantees **the perpetuation of physical life** on earth; and to Abraham, in *Genesis 17*, he promises the eternal inheritance of the land of Canaan - without geographical boundaries, a clear reference to the heavenly homeland. With these promises, Scripture confirms that salvation is an ongoing process, passed down from generation to generation in the New and Everlasting Covenant. *Genesis 17* is, in fact, a prophetic promise of the New Covenant, based on the promise that God gave to Abraham and his Seed - Christ.

The erroneous paradigm of the end of the present physical world and the emergence of another - also physical, but perfect and eternal - has unfortunately led to a number of hasty conclusions unfounded on Scripture. One of these is the teaching of a supposed physical resurrection of the dead into a remade, idealized universe, thought to reflect the state before Adam's fall. We have shown in this study that such a view is not supported by Scripture, but stems from the tension that arises between the spiritual language of scriptural revelation and the materialistic views characteristic of naturalistic thinking (see *1 Corinthians 2*).

If we have a paradigm shift in our minds - enlightened by the Holy Spirit - and understand that "the end" refers to the completion of the Old Covenant, which coincides with the end of creation in *Genesis 1* (with the new creation in Christ), then things take on a new meaning. Questions that have plagued humanity for centuries - Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? What is the meaning of life on earth? - are clearly and articulately answered.

We are born into a physical world, visible and limited in time, but with a great purpose beyond mere biological existence. We are created to experience a second birth - the birth of the Spirit - which brings us into a new, spiritual reality: the one from which Jesus came and into which he leads us, in the presence of the Father, forever. The true resurrection, the coming to life, is like the birth of a child into a family: the beginning of a belonging and of a life that never ends. Being born of God illuminates the meaning of life in its depths, offering the full answer to the essential questions of human existence.

What happens to those who have no resurrection?

Where do they go?

Scripture gives us an evocative picture that sheds light on this profound question. It is the well-known *Genesis* account of *Jacob and Esau*. These two twin brothers were in the same womb - in the womb of Rebekah, who had been barren until Isaac prayed to the Lord and God listened.

In *Genesis 25:22*, we are told that the two children were wrestling in their mother's womb. In bewilderment, Rebekah asks, "*If it is thus, why is this happening to me?*" - and the Lord answers:

"Two nations are in your womb, and *two peoples from within you shall be divided*;" (ESV)

This powerful image prefigures two distinct spiritual lines: one of faith and promise, the other of nature and disinterest in the gift of spiritual inheritance.

Many centuries later, the prophet *Malachi*, inspired by God, interprets the history of the two in the following terms:

"Yet *I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated* [...] *If Edom says, 'We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins,' the LORD of hosts says, 'They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called 'the wicked country,' and 'the people with whom the LORD is angry forever. '"* (Malachi 1:2-4 ESV)

Esau, though he was the first, despised his birthright - which symbolized blessing and spiritual inheritance - by selling it for a mere meal: a bowl of lentils, which he received in exchange from Jacob. By his gesture, he embodies the natural man, concerned only with the immediate and fleeting, not valuing God's call and promises.

Like Esau, people in all generations - past, present and future - have sold, **are** selling **and** will sell their birthright in God for the fleeting pleasures of this world. Esau forfeited the blessing because he chose to despise his birthright, selling it to Jacob, who cherished the privilege and coveted it.

Choice is free, but it has eternal consequences for every man. Those who do not share in the spiritual resurrection - that is, the birth from God - remain outside true life, even though they may have been close to it. They go not only to physical death, but to eternal perdition, that is to say, to a finalization of the state of spiritual death into which every man is born into this world. Whoever rejects Christ rejects true life and remains forever separated from the presence of God.

On Jacob's return from his journey to Paddan-Aram, his brother Esau comes to meet him with 400 men, determined to avenge the loss of the paternal blessing he should naturally have received from their father, Isaac. Esau did not understand that the moment he sold his birthright for a meal, he implicitly gave up the blessing attached to that birthright. The words of the apostle Paul, with reference to Ishamel and Isaac, which say:

"But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now", (Galatians 4:29 ESV)

can also be applied to Esau and Jacob. Esau, born "naturally", lived according to the immediate desires of the body and despised spiritual realities. Jacob, on the other hand, though imperfect, desired what was heavenly: the blessing, the birthright, and the inheritance of the promise promised to Abraham. In this light, their story becomes a vivid picture of two kinds of people: some who live in the flesh, bound by the seen

and transient, and others who live by faith, seeking the unseen and eternal.

On the night before his meeting with Esau, Jacob has a dramatic experience: he wrestles with a man - whom Scripture reveals to be God Himself - and refuses to let Him go until he receives His blessing.

The prophet *Hosea* completes this picture, saying that *Jacob* wept and prayed in that struggle with the Angel (*Hosea 12:4*). In the end, he receives God's blessing - one that would not only change the outcome of his encounter with Esau the next day, but also foreshadow a future destiny with generational implications that would culminate, in *Jacob's* case, in his Seed: Jesus Christ. In contrast, *Esau's* natural choice - to disregard the birthright - brought painful consequences for his descendants: the nation of Edom on Mount Seir, whose root is in him, was destined by God to judgment and destruction.

*Ezekiel 35:3-9 (ESV) - "... I am against you, Mount Seir, ... I will make you a desolation and a waste. ... **Because you cherished perpetual enmity and gave over the people of Israel to the power of the sword at the time of their calamity ... because you did not hate bloodshed, therefore blood shall pursue you. ... I will make Mount Seir a waste and a desolation ... Then you will know that I am the Lord.**"*

(see also Obadiah 1:10,14,18;)

Although there was no direct confrontation between Jacob and *Esau* at the time, their conflict was passed down in history through their descendants. *Esau's* hatred did not die out, but became an inherited hatred that defined Edom's attitude toward Israel. It was precisely this persistent hostility that brought God's judgment, which decreed the complete destruction of Edom.

Any man, in any generation, who follows Esau's example - despising God's call and choosing the natural over the eternal - ultimately chooses a fate like Edom's: a final judgment, an eternal separation from God. This is the answer to the questions posed above.

What happens to those who follow Jacob's example?

After the battle at Peniel and the blessing received from God, the encounter between the two brothers ends not in conflict but in embrace and tears – an unexpected moment of reconciliation. God's blessing showed its power even in this formal gesture of reconciliation, which was immediately followed by parting, showing that the reconciliation was only on the surface.

After this moment, the twins' paths diverge: *Esau* returns to Mount Seir, to his homeland of Edom, and *Jacob*, after a stop in Shechem, continues on to Bethel. There God speaks to him again, confirms his calling and renews the promise made to the patriarchs:

*Genesis 35:9-1 (ESV) - "God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, **"Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name."** So he called his name Israel. And God said to him, **"I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you."***

The promise God makes to Jacob on his return from Paddan-Aram is a great one: a Land. The text in *Genesis 35:12* makes it clear that this land *was given* to Abraham and Isaac - using the past tense. But to Jacob, God says, *"I will give to you"* - using the future tense. Why the difference?

Because the inheritance promised to Israel (before Jacob) was not just the physical possession of the land, given only to his genealogical seed, but had in view the final, eternal fulfillment that was to come through his Seed - Christ (cf. *Galatians 3:16*). In fact, Jacob's struggle, which began in his mother's womb when he held Esau by the heel at his birth, was only truly over when the promise given to the people of Israel came to its full fulfillment in Christ, the One through whom the inheritance became a reality for him and for all who believe in his sacrifice.

The struggle begun by Jacob did not end with the separation from Esau. It was carried on by his descendants, the people of Israel, throughout the Old Covenant - a struggle for faithfulness, for inheritance, for the fulfillment of God's promise. This struggle found full victory only in the Seed of Jacob, Jesus Christ, through whom the promise was sealed and the inheritance secured.

In the same way, each of us begins with a similar struggle. We too have an inner "Esau" - the natural, impulsive man, driven by immediate desires, who despises spiritual things and easily renounces what is eternal. This "Esau" must be given over to destruction, like Edom, so that the new man - the one who seeks God's blessing with tears and steadfastness - may live and inherit the promise.

Jesus' words identify this inner "Esau":

*"Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, **let him deny himself** and take up his cross and follow me."* (Matthew 16:24 ESV)

This is the call Jesus addresses to each one of us - that the new man, born of God, may grow, while the old man, "Esau", is cast aside and perishes.

It is in the same sense that we must also understand the words that Jesus says:

"For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 16:25 ESV)

To seek to save your life is, in fact, to cling to your old, earthly self - your inherited identity by nature. But whoever renounces this self, by choosing the way of the cross and following Jesus, discovers true life: the new life received by being born of God. This is the life which he gives as a gift, by grace, to those who believe.

Overcoming does not come by force, but by crushing - by tears and prayer, as the prophet *Hosea* says of *Jacob*. So it was on the night of the battle of Peniel, when he would not let God go until he had received His blessing.

We find a similar pattern in *Peter's* life. At first, he reacts naturally: he draws his sword and tries to defend Jesus in his own strength, unable to accept the thought of losing the One he loved - the One who embodied God's blessing and in whom he had put all his trust.

But then he was filled with fear because of the Jews, just as *Jacob* was frightened at the news that *Esau* was coming towards him with 400 men (see *Genesis 32:6-7*). Out of fear, *Peter* denied the Lord three times. Finally, however, after the rooster crowed - heralding the dawn of the night of the Lord's capture - he went outside and wept bitterly, a sign of a broken heart and genuine repentance.

This is why *Simon Peter* is the first of all the disciples to be shown Christ after the resurrection, as the Apostle *Paul* notes : "*He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.*" (*1 Corinthians 15:5*).

At Peniel, *Jacob* is struck in the thigh - the sign of his brokenness - but there he is blessed and transformed. After this encounter, he goes to Bethel, the House of God, where he receives a new identity: from *Jacob* he becomes *Israel*, "he who fights with God

and is victorious". Not by his strength, but by the grace of a real encounter with God - an encounter that changed his destiny forever.

Esau and Jacob symbolize two kinds of life: one lived according to the flesh, in soul death, and the other lived by the Spirit, in God's guidance. The birthright reflects the essence of a renewed, blessed life - life lived as a beloved son of the Father. Jesus is the firstborn of the new creation, the Son in whom the Father is well pleased. In him all things have been made new. Whoever is born of God receives this "birthright" - the inestimable privilege of being a beloved son or daughter, not by merit of his or her own, but by the sovereign calling and choice of the Father, who has brought us to eternal life and light.

Having arrived here, in the light of the resurrection, a personal and essential question arises: do you desire this right, as Jacob did? Do you value it so much that you seek it with tears in prayer and will not leave God until he gives it to you?

To be risen is to be born into the eternal Family of God and to share intimate communion with the Father. He loved us, brought us to life and made us heirs of his heart and character.

Jesus came to his own, but his own did not receive him.

"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12 ESV)

Esau despised this right. Even today, many do not understand what it really means. They think that salvation is just getting out of hell or having your sins forgiven, and even for this they try to "pay" through almsgiving or good deeds that outweigh the bad deeds - all products of a religious but unrenewed self.

Some believers do not live their lives by their new nature, received as a gift from the heavenly Father, but continue to relate to God by their old nature, seeking good from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, instead of living from the tree of life, from Christ.

To better understand the difference between life lived by the flesh and life lived by the Spirit, let us take a concrete example. Consider an unpleasant event in a person's life.

The natural human reaction is as follows:

- He thinks that the event is a mere chance, unrelated to a divine plan, because everything in the seen world seems painful or meaningless.
- He feels that he must control the situation at all costs in order to keep himself safe or balanced.
- They rely exclusively on their own mental, emotional or physical resources to solve the problem.
- He or she is overcome with despair when self-efforts prove insufficient, believing that all is lost.

In contrast, the reaction of the man conscious of his being a child of the heavenly Father, already risen, brought to eternal life by the Spirit, is quite different, for he:

- He believes that nothing is by chance. Every situation - pleasant or painful - is part of the perfect plan of the heavenly Father, who works in all things for the good of those who love him. This security banishes fear and despair.
- He rests in the conviction that he lacks for nothing. The Father knows what he needs and will send what is needed in time from the riches of his grace. In Christ, all heavenly blessings are already inherited.

- He not only receives blessing by trial, but becomes himself a blessing to others, representing the Father exactly in the place in which he has been placed.
- He understands that by grace he shares with Christ in the creation of the new things in his kingdom, already living in the dimension of the new creation.
- He knows that, though still living on earth, his heart and soul are already united with the risen life in a spiritual, immaterial body.
- He lives conscious of the fact that, being part of the Bride of Christ, he is a co-worker with God. His main concern is not to find the solution to his problem, but he is eager to see what the Father is doing - and his involvement is one of spiritual collaboration.
- He finds peace, joy, rest, strength and security not in the absence of problems, but right in the midst of them, because these gifts come from relationship with the Father, not from circumstance.
- Understand that prayer is not just a request but a union with the Father's will. Prayer uttered from a resurrected heart becomes an act of cooperation in the realization of the new things of the Kingdom of the Son of His love. Although we seem to ask, in fact we participate - by faith - in the birth of these spiritual realities, which take shape and then spill out into the visible world.

This is what the resurrected life looks like. This is what it looks like to live a life detached from what is seen and anchored in what is unseen - for the things seen are fleeting, the things unseen are eternal.

This is the abundant life promised by Christ - a heart from which rivers of living water flow, an existence nourished by the

knowledge of the love that created us and that resurrects us in a reality not subject to the visible world or unconditioned by earthly circumstances.

This is our belonging to the Kingdom of God - a holy calling to live in fellowship with the Father, in the dimension of the Spirit, from our earthly life.

Being resurrected means that you have already come Home. You don't have to wait to close your physical eyes to open them to a heavenly reality; you can have the joy of that experience right now, because the Lamb of God has called us to be where He is.

He who receives this perspective - though he lives in the physical body - has the grace to taste, even now, the glory of a resurrected, spiritual life, in which the human soul is fulfilled in the highest possible way. There is no greater happiness on this earth than to know that you are a beloved Son or Daughter, in whom the Father is well pleased - not because of your merits, but because the life-giving Spirit has united you to Him.

The resurrected life is both a gift of the Father, offered through our new nature received from Jesus Christ, and a personal choice to leave the earthly, transient reasoning and to receive into our souls the mind that springs from union with the Lord of life.

Our prayer is that each reader will choose this risen life. To live in the Spirit, in the kingdom of love, in a living, real and eternal relationship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen." (Romans 11:36).

