

Anastasis

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1 Corinthians 15:1-34

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There once was a fabulously wealthy man who began to build an art collection with his son. Together they acquired many rare works of art. By the mid 60's they had built one of the rarest most valuable collections in the world. One day the son was drafted and left to faithfully serve his country. Although the father worried about his son's safety, he prayed for him each day. Tragically, though, the son was killed while rescuing another soldier.

About six months later a young soldier appeared with a large package under his arm. It was the man the son had saved. "Your son was my friend", the soldier blurted out". "He never stopped talking about you and your love for art". Holding out the package, he said, "I know this isn't much, and I'm not much of an artist, but I wanted you to have this painting". The father tore open the package and fought back the tears as he gazed at a portrait of his one and only son. "I will cherish it above all others", the father said, and hung the portrait over his mantle. When visitors came to his home, he always drew attention to the portrait of his son before he showed them any of the other masterpieces.

When the father died the news went out that the entire collection was being offered at an exclusive private auction. Collectors and art experts from around the world gathered for the chance of purchasing one of them. But the first painting on the auction block was the soldier's modest rendering of the son. As the auction began the crowd scoffed. They demanded the Van Gogh's and the Rembrandts be auctioned first. The auctioneer persisted. "Who will start the bidding? \$200? \$100?" The crowd continued to turn up their noses, waiting to see the more serious paintings. Still the auctioneer solicited, "The son! The son! Who will take the son? Finally a timid voice from the back said, "I'll bid \$10 for the son." The bidder was none other than the young soldier the son had died saving. The auctioneer continued seeking a higher bid, but the angry crowd began to chant, "Sell it to him and let's get on with the auction." The auctioneer pounded the gavel and sold the painting for the bid of \$10. An eager buyer from the second row bellowed, "Finally,

on with the auction." However, the auctioneer announced that the auction was now officially closed. Unknown to them all, the father had made one last stipulation in his will. Only the painting of the son was to be sold, and whoever takes the son gets it all: the priceless art collections and the entire estate.

Sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? But it has happened, and God has promised it. Whoever takes the Son gets every thing else the Father has to offer. It's that simple. *"He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life."*¹ (1 John 5:12-13)

The promise of Eternal Life is one of the central Doctrines of Christianity. People from the Old Testament like King David, King Solomon, and Isaiah all spoke of this future promise. And of course we are all familiar with the words of our Savior. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*² (John 3:16) I think most Christians are familiar with this, but perhaps some misunderstand just what it means to "not perish" or to have "eternal life". I mean, if the Corinthian Christians struggled with this concept, maybe some people do today as well.

When Paul started talking about "eternal life" with the Jews, it wasn't a foreign concept to them. Even the Greeks understood the concept of "eternal life". But the moment Paul started talking about *Anastasis* (the resurrection), the Greeks scoffed. Eternal life was one thing, but to bring a dead body back to life was nonsense. Why would anyone want this? Why would God do this to them? See, the Greeks felt everything physical was evil. Only the spirit and the soul were holy. So to die meant freedom from bondage; they could finally rid themselves of their wicked bodies that held them captive. Well anyway, guess what happens in Corinth. Yea, they become divided (big surprise there!). So once more, Paul has to settle the argument. (Read **1 Corinthians 15:1-34**)

The idea of the bodily resurrection, or *Anastasis*, is not a matter of Theology. It is biblical doctrine. We may have differing theological viewpoints of HOW the

¹*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update.* 1995 (1 Jn 5:12-13). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

²*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update.* 1995 (Jn 3:16). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

resurrection may happen, but the Bible is quite clear. God has promised that if we have the Son, we have life. And He didn't promise that our soul and our spirit would be comforted for eternity with Him in Heaven, but that just like Jesus, we too shall rise transformed. Even Job declares, "*As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God*".³ (Job 19:25-26). This promise was spoken to Daniel along the Tigris River in Persia. For the One who appeared like a man said "*But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age.*"⁴ (Daniel 12:13)

By the time Jesus is born, even the Pharisees believed in the resurrection. The Sadducees did not (which is why they were sad, you see). Well, apparently some Corinthian Christians said they believe Jesus rose from the grave, but their struggle with the resurrection of all believers indicates otherwise. Maybe they struggled with this philosophically, or perhaps they too had a hard time imagining how God could reassemble all the atoms that had decayed and returned to dust (that's the popular argument now days). But whatever the reason, this is a clear demonstration of their lack of faith. They did not believe that God would keep His promise.

Jesus says, "*for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.*"⁵ (John 5:28b-29). Now, if the faithful in the tombs are already being comforted by God (see Luke 16:23), from where will they come forth? Somehow God will raise these bodies of ours to glory if we have believed in the name of Jesus. He will not leave us naked. "*For we will put on heavenly bodies; we will not be spirits without bodies.*"⁶ (2 Corinthians 5:3) The question is not whether God will do this, but whether we have faith in His promise. I'm not saying we deserve this either. None of us do. But do we really trust what God has said? Do we believe that the one who takes the Son gets it all?

³New American Standard Bible : 1995 update. 1995 (Job 19:25-26). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

⁴New American Standard Bible : 1995 update. 1995 (Da 12:13). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

⁵New American Standard Bible : 1995 update. 1995 (Jn 5:28-29). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

⁶Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.