

The Resurrection

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Introduction:

- I. Their names were Hymenaeus and Philetus and Paul mentioned them in his second epistle to Timothy.
 - A. He grouped them with others whose “profane and idle babblings” would spread like gangrene (cancer).
 - B. Unlike the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6, 15) whose false doctrine was not specifically identified in Scripture, Paul noted that these two men were saying that the resurrection had “already taken place” (NASB).
 - C. Paul wrote that they had strayed from the truth and they were “overthrowing” the faith of some.
- II. It is unlikely, although not impossible, that these two men were teaching that a physical resurrection had already happened. That would have been easily confronted and shown to be false.
 - A. It is more likely that these men were teaching some kind of spiritual resurrection, individual or corporate.
 - B. These two men may have been the original “realized eschatologists”! (As Allan Turner points out, their false doctrine was not exactly the same as the modern realized eschatologist who believes that the resurrection of the dead was not completed until A.D. 70 [Turner, 133]). The argument of the realized eschatologist, however, is that the resurrection of the dead was a spiritual one.
 - C. Dawson argues that these men correctly understood the nature of the resurrection, but were mistaken about the timing of it. (458-459)
- III. The first reaction of many brethren to the statement that the resurrection of the dead occurred (was completed) in A.D. 70 is incredulity.
 - A. The statement seems absurd...unless one understands the realized eschatologist’s view of the nature of the resurrection.
 1. “Surely no one believes that the resurrection of the dead occurred in the first century! The cemeteries still contain the physical remains of countless people.”
 2. “So, we have now established, exclusively from Jesus’ own teaching, that the Resurrection was to be at the same time as His Coming and the Judgment – all at ‘the end of the (Mosaic) age’ (Mt. 16:27-28; Mt. 13; and Dan. 12).” (Essays on Eschatology, Appendix 1 – Wayne Petty, 467)
 3. Of course, the assumption being made is that the realized eschatologist is talking about a physical resurrection.
 - B. Another reaction is to believe that the doctrine is so absurd that no response is really needed.
- IV. This study is necessarily not all-inclusive; the topic of the resurrection of the dead is affected by several other fundamental topics, the result of which is that the “scripture base” for the discussion of the resurrection is very large.

V. Synopsis of this study:

- A. Describe the views of realized eschatologists regarding the resurrection of the dead.
- B. Provide a brief analysis of 1 Corinthians 15.
- C. Respond to the teaching of realized eschatology with specific regard to Samuel Dawson's arguments on 1 Corinthians 15.
 1. Evaluate Dawson's view of the background of the chapter, as provided by the rest of the epistle.
 2. Look specifically at Paul's citations from Isaiah 25 and Hosea 13 and Dawson's argumentation regarding those passages.
- D. Examine other passages in the New Testament relating to the subject of the resurrection.

Body:

I. **The Resurrection – According to Realized Eschatologists**

- A. It can be difficult to understand exactly what realized eschatologists believe about the resurrection of the dead for primarily three reasons.
 1. There are substantial differences in the views of various realized eschatologists.
 2. The language of some is vague, employing terminology that has been invented in the development of their view (e.g., sin-death; body of Adam, death of fellowship, etc.).
 3. The view of the resurrection held by some realized eschatologists is evolving.
- B. The following quotations by proponents of realized eschatology should serve to explain what they mean by "the resurrection of the dead":
 1. "There is nothing in Paul's corporate language of the 'body' of Christ that forces us to assume that the resurrection to come (in their day) would involve the literal process of individual corpses coming out of their graves. Instead, the expected eschatological resurrection was the translation of the children of God from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3:18). The death from which we are corporately raised is from sin-death, or alienation from God. This is what it meant for Christ to be the firstfruits of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20, 23), the harvest to follow was the early church and all Israel (Jas. 1:18, cf. Rev. 14:4)." (King, p. 309).
 2. "We established in the previous chapter of this volume that the resurrection Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 15 was not a resurrection of physical bodies out of holes in the ground, but the resurrection of Old Covenant Israel from the death of its fellowship with God." (Dawson, 109)
 3. "Who were the 'some' at Corinth and whose resurrection were they denying? They certainly didn't deny their own resurrection. They didn't deny the resurrection of Christ. They didn't deny the resurrection of Gentile Christians, whom Paul himself converted from paganism. They didn't deny the resurrection of Jewish Christians, whom Peter and Paul had converted from Judaism. Who was left to be resurrected after they eliminated the resurrection of dead Gentile Christians and dead Jewish Christians? Only Old Covenant,

saints, particularly those of Israel. Some at Corinth denied the salvation of the Old Testament faithful. As the chapter 4 of this book demonstrated, the resurrection of the dead ones served as the basis of Paul's preaching. It was the identical hope of Israel he preached solely from Moses and the prophets. Yet some Christians denied the resurrection to the very ones it was promised to, the faithful of Israel. The Corinthians most certainly believed in the resurrection of Jewish and Gentile Christians, but not the Old Covenant saints. Paul later affirmed they stood or fell together. Even the resurrection of Christ stood or fell with the resurrection of the Old Testament saints. As an Old Testament saint himself, he was part of that very group! Further, Paul later showed that if the Old Testament saints were not raised (as prophesied in the prophets), then New Testament saints wouldn't be either. In other words, 'If the Jews don't get theirs, you Gentiles won't get yours!'" (Dawson, pp. 139-140)

4. "Paul depicted the ongoing translation of the body of death headed by Adam (which would, of course, contain Old Covenant Israel) to the body of life headed by Christ. This is Paul's concept of the resurrection, a process ongoing as Paul wrote. This was the concept of the resurrection in Moses and the prophets, and Paul said he preached nothing but what Moses and the prophets taught on this subject. Nothing had changed about Paul's physical body, but he himself had been translated from Adam's body of death (as per Rom. 7.24, where Paul said, 'Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?') into life in the body of Christ." (Dawson, 144)
5. "Before Jesus' generation ended, he had conquered everything except Adam's death. He had even overcome physical death, hadn't he? Of course, lying, stealing, and murder still exist, but not under Christ's reign. Those over whom he reigns share no part in those evil deeds. However, at the resurrection Paul spoke of here (the resurrection of Israel from spiritual death, the death Adam died the day he sinned, the death of his fellowship with God), death was conquered and abolished. The resurrection which Moses and the prophets taught, all the apostles preached, and Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 15, is about restoration of fellowship with God, not about being raised from biological death. Obviously, though Jesus conquered physical death in his resurrection, physical death was not abolished in Jesus' generation, nor is it yet. Both wicked and righteous men still die physically. However, Adam's sin-death, or the death of his fellowship with God, was abolished at the resurrection in Jesus' generation. If the popular view is correct that Paul spoke of victory over physical death, it's hard to see how those things have continued for over two thousand years now, and the job still isn't done!" (Dawson, pp. 168-169)
6. "All men in Adam, including Old Covenant Israel, the 'dead ones,' were 'the natural man,' as all men in Christ were 'the spiritual man.' As Paul wrote, Jews and Gentiles alike were in the body of Adam, because they died spiritually, and their body (singular) that was rising or made alive was the body of Christ, and still is." (Dawson, 187)
7. "Who were the 'dead ones?' They were the same Old Covenant dead ones Paul discussed throughout the chapter, the very ones the Gentile Christians in the Paul Party denied the resurrection to." (Dawson, p. 190)

8. “We’ve already seen that he referred to the old man Adam, and that immortality is not an innate property of man given at birth, but is given at the resurrection. The corruptible body (not bodies) Paul spoke of was fleshly, Old Covenant Israel or the old man Adam. At the resurrection of Israel in Jesus’ generation, that body would be transformed into the incorruptible body, New Covenant Israel.” (Dawson, p. 191).
 9. “Preterism (sometimes called ‘Full Preterism’) is almost identical to the Reformed partial Preterist position, with only one great exception - the nature of the resurrection. Whereas the Reformed position teaches a bodily resurrection, Preterism agrees with Paul, that ‘it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body’ (I Cor. 15:44). The spiritual nature of the general resurrection (though Preterists strongly defend Christ's bodily resurrection) is, probably, the main factor that precludes Preterism from being absorbed into any other denominational positions, unlike partial Preterism, which is conformable to nearly all...The Second Coming of Christ is directly stated as occurring in the space of the men then living (Matt. 10:23; Matt. 16:27, 28; Matt. 24:34), and is also often implied as being very near (James 5:8, 9; 1 Pet. 4:7; I Thess. 5:23, etc.). The Judgment is also declared and implied as being within a short space (Matthew 3:7; 16:27-28; 23:36-38; Acts 2:16, 17, 20; James 5:9; I Peter 4:5, 17; Revelation 22:12), as was the Resurrection, which is nothing more than the redemption of believers from the same death passed upon them by the curse spoken in Genesis 2:17. To prove the nature of the resurrection, Paul states the following: ‘It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body’ (I Cor. 15:44). This most significant passage is almost entirely overlooked when considering the actual substance or nature of the resurrection body!” (Dennis; cited by Ross A. Taylor on his website; the original article by Todd Dennis is no longer available)
- C. Note, however, this summary by Wayne Jackson (not a realized eschatologist!) of the view:
1. “The Mosaic regime was hovering over, smothering, dominating, intimidating, and persecuting the Christian system, so that the kingdom, the church, in its power and glory, was not yet fully operative. However, in A.D. 70, when the Jewish nation was destroyed by the Roman, the church, or ‘the body’ was, in a manner of speaking, resurrected. It had, in effect, been ‘buried’ under Judaism for forty years, from A.D. 30 to 70. When the Jewish nation fell in A.D. 70, there was then, effectually, a resurrection of Christianity, a raising of the body of Christ, from that old suppressive Judaistic system. So, according to the theology of Max King and his followers, when the Bible speaks of the resurrection of the body, it is not discussing the human body; rather, it is alluding to the resurrection of the church out of Judaism in A.D. 70.” (Jackson, 46)
 2. It appears to me that Max King has changed his view in more recent times.
- D. Summary of the general position of realized eschatologists on the resurrection of the dead:

1. The resurrection discussed in the New Testament was a spiritual one, rather than a physical one. Perhaps what makes the theology of realized eschatologists convincing to some is that the Scriptures definitely speak of a person's conversion to Christ as a spiritual resurrection (Romans 6:1-6).
2. There will be no bodily (physical) resurrection at any time.
3. The resurrection actually occurred over a period of time, rather than being a "point-action-in-time" event.
4. Max King presented the view that the resurrection took place over the 40-year period of time from the death of Jesus until the destruction of Jerusalem.
5. The identity of the "dead ones" resurrected varies, depending on which proponent of the theory one is reading. Suggestions include:
 - a. The church (from the oppression of Judaism)
 - b. All of God's spiritual children, including Old Covenant saints and New Testament converts, both Jewish and Gentile
6. Dawson believes the discussion of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 is specifically discussing a "sub-set" of the entire group resurrected, i.e., Old Covenant saints.

II. The Apostle Paul and the Resurrection

- A. First Corinthians 15 is arguably the most comprehensive discussion of the resurrection of the dead in the New Testament, thus an analysis of this chapter would be profitable.
 1. Verse 12 identifies the reason for Paul's discussion. His discourse regarding the topic of the resurrection stemmed from the skepticism of some at Corinth that the dead would be raised (vs. 12).
 2. He began by reminding the Corinthians of the gospel which they had accepted and by which they were saved (vs. 1-2, 11).
 3. He continued by noting the centrality of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus to the gospel (vs. 3-4).
 - a. "Christ died for our sins" (vs. 3)
 - 1) He died physically on the cross (cf. Isaiah 53:7-9; Hebrews 10:5-14).
 - b. His physical body was buried in the tomb of a rich man and He rose again the third day "according to the Scriptures" (John 2:18-22; Matthew 12:38-40; Luke 18:31-33).
 - c. What was raised was that which was put into the tomb – the physical body of Jesus. Make no mistake about this – Paul was discussing the resurrection of the physical body of Jesus.
 - 1) It was the body of Jesus which was missing from the tomb (John 20:2-9) and which was touched by the apostles (John 20:19-20, 24-27).
 - 2) There were many who saw the risen Jesus, including Paul (vs. 5-10). What they saw, of course, was the resurrected physical body of Jesus.

- 3) It is freely admitted that the resurrected body of Jesus was different in some ways from that which was buried. It was changed, but it was still a body.
- 4) The very etymology of the Greek word translated *resurrection* implies some connection between that which has died and that which is raised (*ana*, up and *histemi*, to cause to stand) [Vine, 972]. That which has been resurrected has been “caused to stand up.”
 - d. The important point was that the Corinthians had already accepted the physical resurrection of Jesus as part of the gospel preached (vs. 11).
4. Paul tied the general resurrection (“resurrection of the dead”) to the resurrection of Christ (vs. 12-13, 15-16). These verses only make sense if the two resurrections (Christ & the dead) are of the same nature.
5. Paul also noted several consequences if Christ was not raised:
 - a. The preaching of the apostles was in vain (vs. 14).
 - b. The faith of the Corinthians was also empty, futile (vs. 14, 17).
 - c. The apostles are false witnesses (vs. 15).
 - d. The Corinthians were still in their sins (vs. 17).
 - e. Those who have already died (“fallen asleep”) have perished (vs. 18).
 - f. We are of all men the most pitiable (vs. 19).
6. Christ is the firstfruits (vs. 20).
 - a. The firstfruits is a reference to the responsibility under the Mosaic Law to offer the very beginning of the harvest to the Lord, as an indication of gratitude for the rest of the harvest (Leviticus 23:9-14).
 - b. The very term “firstfruits” implies that there will be an additional harvest (see verse 23).
7. Paul identified the time of the “main harvest”, i.e., the resurrection of those who are Christ’s - “at His coming” (vs. 23).
8. “If we are not raised...” (vs. 29)
 - a. Baptism for the dead – useless if the dead do not rise (vs. 29)
 - b. Why live in peril for the sake of the gospel (vs. 30-32)?
- B. The inevitable question: What will our resurrected bodies be like (1 Corinthians 15:35)?
 1. Some might ask this question because of curiosity about the future.
 2. Paul’s answer to this question, while perhaps not satisfying our curiosity, does indicate to what kind of resurrection and body he refers in this context.
 3. 2 Corinthians 5:1 - temporary tabernacle versus eternal house made without hands (cf. Mark 14:58)
 4. Our bodies will be different than what we have now (1 John 3:2), like Jesus (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Corinthians 15:49).

5. Paul's illustration of planting a seed: what you put in the ground is not what comes out of the ground (1 Corinthians 15:35-38). So it is with our resurrected bodies.
 - a. In the horror movie genre, movies about zombies have been popular for some time. Zombies, of course, are just dead people coming back to life.
 - b. Even with my limited zombie experience, I can usually recognize the zombies in the movies. They nearly always have a distinctive gait and it is obvious that their bodies are in some stage of decay!
6. The apostle Paul taught that the saints would be resurrected with changed bodies. (1 Corinthians 15:42-54).
 - a. Contrasts: corruption vs. incorruption (vs. 42); dishonor vs. glory (vs. 43); weakness vs. power (vs. 43); natural vs. spiritual (vs. 44); mortal vs. immortal (vs. 54)
 - b. Our resurrected body will be appropriate for heaven (1 Corinthians 15:50).

III. Arguments for a Realized Resurrection from First Corinthians (drawn primarily from Samuel Dawson's discussion of chapter 15)

A. There are several general areas which deserve our attention:

1. The overall context of 1 Corinthians
2. The nature of the death being discussed in chapter 15
3. The use of the present passive tense in chapter 15
4. The use of "body" versus "bodies" in chapter 15
5. The use of quotations from the Old Testament prophets in chapter 15

B. The overall context of 1 Corinthians

1. Dawson lists several weaknesses of the "traditional view" (110).
 - a. First, "it doesn't recognize the context of the entire book of I Corinthians; and thus, treats chapter 15 as a completely independent subject that just fell by itself from heaven."
 - b. Second, "it overlooks the nature of the first major doctrinal problem in the first-century church."
 - c. Third, "it's not based on the nature of the problem and the divisions in the church at Corinth."
2. Dawson sees tension between Jewish and Gentile Christians as the backdrop for the problems at Corinth.
 - a. "Since Paul's most critical opposition there (Corinth – asd) came from unbelieving Jews, tension naturally arose between Jew and Gentile Christians, which we will see further in I Corinthians, especially including chapter 15." (118)
 - b. "The tension that existed between these two groups contributed to the parties and divisions in the church there, as it did throughout the first-century church where both groups were present." (119)

- c. “In Chapter 1, Paul introduced the schisms or parties among the Corinthians. We’ll discuss these parties further in the commentary section, but for now, we’ll say that brethren calling themselves after Paul, Apollos, and Peter (all Jews) were based on the attitudes of superiority that Gentile Christians had toward Jewish Christians.” (122).
 - d. Dawson identifies different groups in 1 Corinthians 15 based on his perception of the “attitude of superiority” of these Gentile Christians toward their Jewish brethren. He writes, “In Chapter 15, Paul detailed the resurrection of the dead and dealt with the denial of it by one of the parties to others outside their party.” (125)
3. Although the relationship of Gentile Christians to the Law of Moses was a major doctrinal issue in the first century, note the difference between 1 Corinthians and Galatians.
 - a. Paul didn’t deal with circumcision or the Law of Moses in 1 Corinthians.
 - b. However, Dawson argues that Gentile Christians were “looking down” on the Jewish Christians rather than the other way around (as seems to have been the problem in the first century church). When he arrives at chapter 15, he sees the Gentile Christians (the “Paul Party”) as the ones denying the resurrection of “Old Covenant saints.”
 4. Dawson offers virtually no evidence for his view of the divisions at Corinth.
 - a. He offers a brief summary of the chapters of 1 Corinthians, linking much of the subject material to the supposed Jew/Gentile tension.
 - b. Note his summary of chapter two:
 - 1) “In Chapter 2, Paul showed that he was no greater than the other apostles, especially Peter to temper the enthusiasm of Gentiles in the ‘Paul Party,’ the very existence of which Paul abhorred, and whose attitude toward Jewish Christians he deplored. These Gentiles were denying the resurrection to ‘some’ in I Corinthians 15.” (123)
 - c. His conclusion?
 - 1) “Thus, most of the chapters of I Corinthians deal with various aspects of the same party divisions that Paul tackled in the first chapter. I Corinthians 15 didn’t just drop out of heaven with no context. Yet the popular view of the chapter completely ignores the context of the Jew-Gentile conflict of who was pleasing to God, as we’ll see.” (125)
 5. The denial of a general resurrection of the dead is not hard to understand in light of Greek thought about the relationship between body and spirit. Willis comments:
 - a. “Therefore most commentators are persuaded that this false doctrine originated from the Greeks rather than from the Jews. You will recall that when Paul preached the resurrection of the dead in Athens, less than fifty miles from Corinth, some of the Athenians sneered at him (Acts 17:32). The reason for this is apparent when one understands Platonic thought. ‘We are, on the one hand, pointed to the rationalism of the pagan Greeks, which simply refused to accept the resurrection of the body but held that

the body is only an evil (*kakon*), or a fetter (*desmos*), or a dungeon, yea, a grave for the soul (*soma-sema*, ‘body-tomb’), from which death frees the soul (Orphic teaching and Platonic philosophy). When these Greeks became Christians they readily believed, we are told, the immortality of the soul but balked at the resurrection of the dead.’ The early gnosticism of the Greeks not only made the belief in the resurrection of the body impossible but also made it undesirable. Hence, the Greeks generally denied the possibility of the resurrection. They did, however, admit that a resurrection might occur as an isolated miracle. However, the idea of a general resurrection at the end of the age is alien to the Greeks. Apparently the general Grecian doctrine was what Paul was opposing in Corinth.” (522-523; Willis cites Lenski [The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians, 624] and the Tyndale New Testament, Vol. 1, p. 369)

- b. Findlay of the Expositor’s Greek Testament also concurs with this analysis (917).
6. Dawson accuses others of ignoring the context of 1 Corinthians (125), but he imposes on the chapter a context that doesn’t exist.
- a. Earlier he wrote, “However, people who just read a passage will often carry with them many false or casual presumptions, which will lead them to little more than proof-texting.” (109).
 - b. It would seem that Dawson has described his own approach to First Corinthians!
- C. What was the reason for Paul’s discussion in 1 Corinthians 15?
1. Dawson comments:
 - a. “We may assume these Corinthians knew little of the Old Testament prophets, but on the resurrection, Paul asserted that he taught nothing but Moses and the prophets, and that the Corinthians received, embraced, and stood fast in that teaching. Thus, the issue Paul dealt with in this chapter was not that the Corinthians, any of them, rejected the resurrection. They embraced it.” (129)
 - b. According to Dawson, “some” of the Corinthians were denying the resurrection of the Old Covenant saints, who were the guarantee of the harvest. Note his comment, “It was only this latter group that some at Corinth didn’t believe would participate in the resurrection.” (149)
 - c. [Commenting on 1 Corinthians 15:1-11] “Paul did not strive in this section to prove that Jesus was raised from the dead, that there was to be a resurrection of the dead, that the Corinthians denied the resurrection of the dead, nor that some denied the resurrection of dead Christians. His goal was to show that the apostles all preached exactly the same thing on the resurrection. This being true, it wasn’t appropriate for the Corinthians to be divided, which they were, on the resurrection of the dead.” (127)
 2. Paul provided eyewitness testimony to prove the resurrection of the dead. Why cite this evidence if he had no intention of sustaining the claim that Jesus was raised?

- a. Verse 12 clearly states that some of the Corinthians were denying the resurrection of the dead.
 - b. Although the unity of the apostles' preaching is certainly true, that's not Paul's point in verses 1-11! His point is that the Corinthians believed in the resurrection of Jesus when it was preached to them as part of the gospel! Note the *inclusio* in verses 1 and 11.
3. Consider carefully verse 12: "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?"
 - a. Paul did not write "no resurrection of some of the dead."
 - b. Some were saying that there was NO resurrection of the dead. There are no additional qualifiers in this verse!
- D. What is the "death" that Paul discusses in chapter 15?
1. It is certainly true that words are defined in part by the context (immediate and larger) in which they are used.
 2. Realized eschatologists argue that the resurrection of the dead in 1 Corinthians 15 is a spiritual resurrection. "The dead" were those who were spiritually dead.
 3. However, the resurrection of Christ discussed in the beginning of the chapter was a bodily (i.e., physical) resurrection.
 - a. Christ was described by Paul as the firstfruits. Would the firstfruits be of a different nature than the rest of the harvest? The provision of the Mosaic Law from which this expression is drawn did not contemplate two different harvests.
 - b. Paul wrote in verse 21, "For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead." The two men are identified as Adam and Christ in the next verse. Based on the connection between the physical resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the dead denied by some of the Corinthians, we would expect that the death spoken of in chapter 15 is physical death.
 - c. Note this comment by Jim McGuiggan: "People, I'm saying what you already know to be true. The resurrection being denied in 1 Corinthians 15 was a denial of the coming to life again of dead bodies otherwise it could not have affected the bodily resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus was being undermined by the consequence of the Corinthian denial (vs. 13, 16). The Corinthians were saying, 'Dead bodies cannot rise.' Paul said, 'If that is true, Jesus couldn't have risen.'" (The McGuiggan-King Debate, p. 235; cited by Almon Williams)
 4. However, Dawson sees only spiritual death in verse 21. He argues that only spiritual death came by Adam; Adam's physical death was not because of his sin.
 - a. "First, Adam didn't die physically because of sin. The physical death of Adam and his descendants was not a punishment for Adam's sin, any more than the physical death of any other living creature was punishment for Adam's sin. Like all others of Adam's descendants, you and I will die

physically, but not because of Adam's sin. Our physical death is not a curse for sin. Surely, the serpent was cursed, as was the ground. Likewise, painful childbirth and toilsome labor resulted from Adam's sin, but we die physically for the same reason Adam did. We're mortal, as was he, and we lack of (sic) access to the tree of life, as did he." (155)

- b. It is certainly true that Adam and Eve died spiritually the day that they ate the forbidden fruit. Adam died physically hundreds of years later.
 - c. However, the reason he died, as Dawson notes, is that he "lacked" access to the tree of life. Before he sinned, he and Eve had access to the tree of life; after they sinned, God drove them from the Garden for the specific purpose of denying them access to the tree of life (Genesis 3:22-24). It is not too much of a stretch to conclude that Adam's physical death was the result of his sin!
 - d. Since mankind was denied access to the tree of life, we all die physically and so "by man came death."
5. Paul also affirmed that Christ must reign "till He has put all enemies under His feet" (vs. 25).
- a. He identified the last enemy as death.
 - b. Based on Paul's comment to the Philippians that "to die is gain" (1:21), Dawson concludes that physical death is not an enemy to the Christian and therefore Paul must be referring to spiritual death in verses 25-26.
 - c. It seems clear, however, in the greater context of 1 Corinthians 15 that the last enemy to be conquered is physical death. The resurrection of Christ, as the firstfruits of the harvest, was the guarantee of the eventual victory over death, a victory realized at the general resurrection.
- E. Dawson argues that the use of the present passive tense in the Greek text of chapter 15 implies that the resurrection under consideration was already underway in Paul's day.
1. He cites the grammars of J. Gresham Machen and Ray Summers on the subject of the significance of the present passive tense. However, the comments cited by Machen and Summers (Dawson, 135), only describe the general significance of the present tense in the Greek language and the difference between the active and passive voices of that tense, rather than the use of the present tense in various contexts.
 2. All popular versions consistently use the future tense in their English translations of the present passive verbs in chapter 15.
 3. For example, Paul used a present passive indicative verb in verse 26.
 - a. ^{NKJ} **1 Corinthians 15:26** The last enemy *that* will be destroyed is death.
 - b. ^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 15:26** The last enemy to be destroyed is death.
 - c. ^{NAU} **1 Corinthians 15:26** The last enemy that will be abolished is death.
 - d. ^{NIV} **1 Corinthians 15:26** The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

- e. ^{KJV} **1 Corinthians 15:26** The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed is death.
4. Note these statements by Dawson:
 - a. “In most of our translations, the present, past, and perfect tenses are translated well. However, in 1 Corinthians 15, the *present passive* tense has received ill treatment. The *present active* tense shows how the subject of the sentence *is acting*. An entirely different concept, the *present passive* tense shows how the subject of the sentence *is being acted upon*. Yet his present passive tense is often ignored, or completely changed to a future.” (135)
 - b. “1 Corinthians 15 contains many instances of abuse of the present passive tense, where translators ignored, weakened, or changed the tense. Rather than being due to translational difficulties, this indicates translators’ bias. This “rising” was already in progress when Paul wrote these words, which rules out a resurrection of fleshly bodies out of the dirt sometime in our future.” (136-137)
 - c. (Commenting on 1 Corinthians 15:26) “Literally, this is ‘the last enemy that is being destroyed.’ Notice the present passive tense, depicting an ongoing process occurring as Paul wrote, was translated as *shall be*, a future! How ‘misleading’ is that? This is not scholarship, nor is it a translational difficulty. It’s no more difficult than discerning a present tense from a future tense! It is probably theological bias. As we’ll continue to see, this ignoring and changing the tense of the verbs Paul used has profound implications on the subject of the resurrection.” (167-168)
 5. Despite Dawson’s claim about the lack of scholarship, noted grammarians of the Greek language observe the futuristic use of the present indicative tense.
 - a. J. Harold Greenlee lists the futuristic present (the present used for the future) among the uses of the present indicative (53). He cites John 14:2 as an example.
 - b. Under “*Special Uses of the Present*,” Dana & Mantey list the futuristic present and comment, “This use of the present tense denotes an event which has not yet occurred, but which is regarded as so certain that in thought it may be contemplated as already coming to pass” (185). They cite Matthew 26:2 and Luke 3:9 as examples.
 - c. In Burton’s Moods and Tenses (accessed through BibleWorks), the author comments, “In a similar way, the Present Indicative may be used to describe vividly a future event (he cites Mark 9:31, Matthew 28:18; 27:63 and Luke 3:9)...The term ‘Present for Future’ is sometimes objected to, but, without good reason. The arguments of Buttman, pp. 203f., and Winer, *WT*. pp. 265 ff.; *WM*. pp. 331 ff., are valid only against the theory of an arbitrary interchange of tenses. It is indeed not to be supposed that Greek writers confused the Present and the Future tenses, or used them indiscriminately. But that the form which customarily denoted an act in progress at the time of speaking was sometimes, for the sake of vividness, used with reference to a fact still in the future, is recognized by all

grammarians. See, *e.g.*, *J.* 397; *K.* 382, 5; *G.MT.* 32. The whole force of the idiom is derived from the unusualness of the tense employed.”

6. Commenting on verse 26, Morris writes, “It (the verb *to destroy* – *asd*) is in the present tense, and the use of this tense for future action strikes a note of vividness and certainty” (216).
 7. In light of the fact that the resurrection of the dead was being denied by some of the Corinthians, Paul’s use of the present passive indicative “for the sake of vividness,” *i.e.*, to emphasize the certainty of the event, is not hard to understand.
- F. Why did Paul, in his use of the word *body*, use the singular instead of the plural?
1. Beginning in verse 35, Paul addressed the matter of the nature of the resurrected body. He anticipated (and even worded) the hypothetical questions, “How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?”
 2. Dawson argues that Paul’s use of the singular (body rather than bodies) is strong evidence of a “corporate” resurrection (a group or body of individuals) rather than a resurrection of the individual bodies of many persons. Note his comment on verse 35:
 - a. “Second, we often read, ‘And with what kind of body do they come?’ and wonder: Will they have broken bodies, aborted bodies, drowned bodies, mangled bodies, baby bodies, or wrinkled bodies? Since circumcision was such an important issue in the New Testament, will they be circumcised or uncircumcised bodies? Will they be male and female bodies? Will some be the bodies of amputees? Do you notice the shift we make from ‘body’ to ‘bodies’? Paul said ‘body,’ and we think ‘bodies.’ Paul never used ‘bodies’ in this chapter. He spoke of the resurrection of one body, the Old Covenant faithful who were being transformed into the body of Christ. The question had to do with how Jewish and Gentile saints were going to be in that one body, along with Old Covenant saints who didn’t even see or obey Christ. Paul had already said that those who deny the resurrection of the Old Testament dead ones must also deny the resurrection of Christ. Christ died for them because of promises made to the fathers, yet some in the Paul Party denied the resurrection of those for whom Christ died according to promise.” (177-178)
 3. Perhaps the reason that we so quickly think “bodies” is that the use of the distributive singular is a common thing. Note the following comment by Almon Williams:
 - a. “Finally, a misuse of English grammar is the smug insistence that when a word is singular in form, it must be singular in usage. For instance, Max King does this repeatedly in resurrection passages where the term body is often in the singular number although it obviously has a plural force... Nigel Turner, a Greek scholar, puts the clincher on this usage in the Bible when he explains the reason for its prevalence, ‘Contrary to normal Greek and Latin practice, the N.T. sometimes follows the Aram. and Hebrew preference for a distributive singular’ (Moulton 23) and gives numerous examples in his grammar on page 23.” (228)

- G. Do the quotations in 1 Corinthians 15 from Isaiah and Hosea confirm that Paul was speaking of a spiritual resurrection?
1. Note the citations by Paul and the original passages which he cited:
 - a. “So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’” (1 Corinthians 15:54)
 - 1) “He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken.” (Isaiah 25:8)
 - b. “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:55)
 - 1) “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes.” (Hosea 13:14)
 - 2) The quotation in verse 55 appears to have been taken from the Septuagint, thus the disparity with our English texts translated from the Hebrew text.
 2. Dawson argues:
 - a. The original contexts of Isaiah and Hosea in the texts quoted by Paul are not about a physical resurrection.
 - b. He contends that the use of these texts, which in his opinion are concerned with the first-century spiritual resurrection of Israel, indicates that Paul was writing about the same spiritual resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15.
 - c. In fact, he insists that the context of the quotations in Isaiah and Hosea determine the context of 1 Corinthians 15. He writes:
 - 1) “The Old Testament foretold the resurrection quite a number of times, not the popular view of fleshly bodies coming out of holes in the ground, but a lot about the resurrection of Israel: how Israel would die, be planted like a seed, be resurrected and transformed, etc. This is why Paul could quote his conclusion in 1 Corinthians 15 from Isaiah 25 and Hosea 13, which we’ll soon see, were to be imminently fulfilled when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed.” (105-106)
 - 2) “No serious student of the prophets believes a physical resurrection of a physical body is depicted in Isaiah 25. Yet, ignoring the significance of Paul’s quotation of this verse in I Corinthians 15, we think it’s a physical resurrection out of the dirt, although we can’t read that interpretation back into Isaiah. If we do, remember Paul asserted that he didn’t preach anything except what Moses and the prophets taught on the subject; but popularly, we make him do the very thing he denied.” (192)
 3. What exactly is the context of the statements in Isaiah and Hosea? Did Isaiah and Hosea write about a spiritual resurrection of Israel in the first century? Consider these comments by commentators:

- a. Homer Hailey: Hosea 13:14
- 1) “Is verse 14a to be interpreted as a threat, ‘Shall I ransom?’ (Harper), or as a promise, ‘I will ransom, etc.’ (Keil, Deane, and others)? It is a promise of God to the doomed nation that though they go into captivity and there suffer the pangs of travail and sorrow, yet God will redeem them; He will deliver them from their captivity. Their restoration would be as a birth; also it would be as a resurrection from the dead (see Ezek. 37). The pestilences and destruction of Sheol would be overcome. Hosea looks not to Christ’s resurrection or to ours, but to the restoration of the people. However, the true significance of death’s destruction and of Sheol’s defeat was not made clear until Christ’s resurrection, and the complete defeat of death will be consummated in our own resurrection from the grave (1 Cor. 15:54, 55).” (Minor Prophets 181)
- b. Duane Garrett: (concur with Hailey)
- 1) “This is therefore a taunt, a poetic unit that implies the defeat of death itself. That being the case, it is unavoidable that one must take v. 14a in a declarative sense, that God intends to redeem the nation from death...The metaphor of death follows from the previous passage, in which Ephraim is like a woman giving birth to a breech baby, but it also describes in general terms the condition of national demise and exile. Ezekiel develops the idea of national resurrection further in his dry bones text (Ezek. 37:1-14). As in Ezekiel, the message of resurrection applies first of all to the restoration of Israel, but it also looks ahead to a personal, bodily resurrection. Here, as elsewhere, the prophet develops a type. Both national and personal resurrection legitimately arise from the idea that God can restore that which has died. Paul’s appropriation of this text in 1 Cor. 15:55 as a celebration of the resurrection is fully warranted.” (265)
- c. Harold Tabor cites Isaiah 25:8 as evidence that the idea of a resurrection (physical bodily) was known in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament (75; he cites Hosea 13 for the same purpose).
- d. Hailey (considered by many to have been a “serious student of the prophets”!) understands the text of Isaiah 25, from verse 6 on, to be concerned with the age of the Messiah. He comments on Isaiah 25:8,
- 1) “Having made provision for the great spiritual feast and having removed the covering or veil of ignorance and unbelief, the Lord makes a third provision: *He hath swallowed up death forever*. This was achieved through Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul says that God’s ‘purpose and grace...was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, but hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel’ (II Tim. 1:9-10). In Christ’s victory over death our victory is guaranteed, for death will be swallowed up in victory (I Cor. 15:54). He will wipe away tears from the faces of His people and provide them comfort in the midst of affliction (cf. Heb. 13:5-6). And

in their victory over all forces by the strength which He gives, their reproach is taken away.” (Isaiah 207)

- e. It is not a foregone conclusion that both Isaiah and Hosea wrote about a spiritual resurrection, as Dawson asserts.
 - 1) Although not an intensive treatment, it has been shown that there are reputable scholars who believe that Hosea’s comments were made with regard to Israel’s restoration from captivity and Isaiah’s comments anticipated a physical, bodily resurrection.
4. Dawson notes that men are still dying; physical death wasn’t abolished. Consider his comment:
 - a. “However, at the resurrection Paul spoke of here (the resurrection of Israel from spiritual death, the death Adam died the day he sinned, the death of his fellowship with God), death was conquered and abolished...If the popular view is correct that Paul spoke of victory over physical death, it’s hard to see how those things have continued for over two thousand years now, and the job still isn’t done!” (168-169)
 - b. When did Paul say that death would be defeated?
 - 1) Paul wrote that “all shall be made alive...at His coming” (vs. 22-23). He connected the coming of Christ with the resurrection of the dead.
 - 2) Dawson believes that the coming of Christ spoken of by Paul was His coming in judgment against the Jewish nation in the first century.
 - a) Thus the death of which Paul spoke would also have been “destroyed” (by whatever resurrection Paul had in mind) in the first century.
 - b) Dawson argues that since men are still dying, physical death hasn’t been destroyed or abolished (vs. 26) and so the death which was conquered must have been spiritual death rather than physical death.
 - 3) Although this study is not specifically focused on the coming of Christ, it must be acknowledged that if one rejects Dawson’s assumption that Paul was writing about a first-century coming, then his argument regarding physical death has no validity.
 - 4) The realization of the victory over death would still be in the future, i.e., “when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality.” Christ’s resurrection from the dead is the guarantee of that victory.
5. Since Dawson’s arguments on Isaiah and Hosea are related to the original context of the statement, it would be profitable to discuss the relationship between quotations and their contexts.
 - a. Dawson repeatedly affirms that the original contexts of Isaiah and Hosea are *prima facie* evidence of Paul’s meaning for “resurrection” in 1 Corinthians 15.

- 1) Dawson's assertions regarding the original contexts of Isaiah and Hosea can be legitimately challenged.
 - 2) I would also argue that the basic assumption of his argument regarding these quotations is also erroneous.
- b. Old Testament quotations sometimes seem to be used "out of context," i.e., out of their *original* context.
- 1) Some examples:
 - a) When Jesus was born, Herod attempted to kill Him by putting to death all the male children in Bethlehem and the surrounding area.
 - 1] The gospel writer Matthew claimed that the resultant mourning at the death of the infants was the fulfillment of a statement from Jeremiah (31:15).
 - a] Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more." (Matthew 2:17-18)
 - b] Thus says the LORD: "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation *and* bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted for her children, Because they *are* no more." (Jeremiah 31:15)
 - 1} Jeremiah's statement was originally made concerning mourning for the people who had been carried off into captivity.
 - 2} I am not suggesting that Matthew's application of Jeremiah's statement was illegitimate, but he certainly applied Jeremiah's statement to a different event from the original circumstances.
 - b) Paul wrote to the Romans about God's plan to include Gentiles among the elect. He quoted from Hosea.
 - 1] ²² *What* if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ *even* us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? ²⁵ As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved." ²⁶ "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, '*You are not My people,*' There they shall be called sons of the living God." (Romans 9:22-26)
 - 2] Yet the number of the children of Israel Shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall

come to pass In the place where it was said to them, 'You *are* not My people,' *There* it shall be said to them, 'You *are* sons of the living God.' (Hosea 1:10)

- 3] Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, And I will have mercy on *her who had* not obtained mercy; Then I will say to *those who were* not My people, 'You *are* My people!' And they shall say, 'You *are* my God!' (Hosea 2:23)
 - 4] The name of Gomer's third child ("Lo-Ammi"; Not-My-People) was indicative of the Lord's relationship with His people because of their idolatry. The main point to observe is that Hosea's comments were made with respect to Israelites.
 - 5] However, Paul used the same statements to talk about Gentiles.
 - 6] Perhaps sometimes we define the context of a passage in too narrow a fashion (e.g., Did the original statement in Hosea contemplate only Jews or God's spiritual people in general?), but it seems that Paul used Hosea's statement in a context different from its original context.
- c) As Matthew related the circumstances of the announcement of Jesus' birth, he used his familiar "formula" (vs. 22) to connect the nature of the birth with a statement in Isaiah.
- 1] ²² So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." (Matthew 1:22-23)
 - 2] "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14)
 - 3] Matthew's use of Isaiah's prophecy seems to be an example of "double fulfillment."
 - a] Isaiah's prophecy was intended as a sign from the Lord to Ahaz, king of Judah, who was being attacked by Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel, that he would be delivered.
 - b] It is difficult to understand how the birth of Jesus, occurring approximately 700 years later, could serve as a convincing sign to Ahaz.
 - c] Isaiah's prophecy must have had some fulfillment in Ahaz's time, a fulfillment which would have convinced the king of the truth of the Lord's message.
 - 4] I am not suggesting that Matthew's application of Isaiah's prophecy was illegitimate.

- a) I believe the Holy Spirit revealed to Matthew the second, more distant fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy.
 - b) The point of a “double fulfillment” is that a statement which clearly applied to one set of historical circumstances (first fulfillment) could also be applied to a different set of circumstances (second fulfillment).
- 5] Nathan’s prophecy concerning the son of David is another example of a double fulfillment (2 Samuel 7).
- c. Application to 1 Corinthians 15?
- 1) A discussion of Old Testament quotations and their context is relevant to the study of 1 Corinthians 15 for the following reason: Dawson repeatedly argues that the resurrection of 1 Corinthians 15 must be of the same type (spiritual, not physical) as that contemplated in Isaiah and Hosea (their original contexts – in his opinion) since Paul quoted from these prophets.
 - 2) As we have seen, a prophecy can be made concerning one event, but also anticipate another later event.
 - a) In the case of Hosea 13, the original context appears to be about the restoration of Israel from captivity, but the passage is applied by the Holy Spirit through Paul (1 Cor. 15) to another “raising from the dead,” i.e., the physical resurrection of the dead.
 - 3) A hermeneutic principle that we often emphasize is the need to interpret passages in light of their context.
 - 4) It seems to me, however, that the immediate context of the quotations should determine how they are being used, i.e., with what meaning/application they are being used.
 - a) We should not abandon the principle of observing context in the interpretation of passages.
 - b) However, immediate context trumps original context.

H. Summary:

1. It is freely admitted that this study does not attempt to answer every argument or assumption which realized eschatologists make regarding 1 Corinthians 15. The arguments I have addressed are, in my opinion, some of those stressed by Samuel Dawson in his explanation of the text of 1 Corinthians 15.
2. To say that realized eschatologists “read into” 1 Corinthians 15 ideas that are not there may seem like a simplistic analysis of their approach, but it is an accurate one.
3. Hopefully this study has demonstrated, in some small way, the fact that virtually every part of Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians is viewed by Dawson from the standpoint of how it can relate to the “tension” between Jewish and Gentile Christians, all of which then supposedly contributes to the proper interpretation of chapter 15.

4. Nevertheless, any interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15 must not only take into account the greater context of the book, but must not create disharmony or “disconnects” between the various sections of the text (i.e., must respect the internal harmony of the chapter).

IV. **The Bodily Resurrection in Other New Testament Passages (a sampling)**

- A. Although 1 Corinthians 15 offers a fairly comprehensive view of the resurrection of the dead, there are many other passages that address the subject in varying degrees. Any interpretation of the teaching in 1 Corinthians 15 must harmonize with the rest of Scripture which is equally related to the same topic.

B. **John 5:24-29**

1. In John 5, it seems clear that Jesus spoke of two resurrections.
 - a. John 5:24-25 ²⁴ “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. ²⁵ “Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.
 - b. John 5:26-27 ²⁶ “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, ²⁷ “and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.
 - c. John 5:28-29 ²⁸ “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ “and come forth -- those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.
2. Note the “resurrection” of verses 24-25: verse 24 explains the sense in which “the dead” will live. They hear the voice of the Son of God (“hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me”) and “pass from death into life.” This resurrection is a spiritual resurrection.
3. Jesus gave us several hints that He was talking about two different resurrections.
 - a. In verse 24, He said, “The hour is coming, and now is...,” but in verse 28, He said, “the hour is coming.” The resurrection of verse 28 was still in the future.
 - b. In verse 25, Jesus spoke of “the dead,” but in verse 28 He described those to be resurrected as “all who are in the graves; there is no mention of “graves” with reference to the first resurrection.
 - c. There are two groups of people who are resurrected in verses 28-29: those who have done good and those have done evil. Consequently, there are two outcomes to the resurrection of these verses, life and condemnation, but only one outcome contemplated in verse 24, i.e., everlasting life.

C. **John 11:21-26**

1. Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, had died and been buried. When Jesus arrived in Bethany, He spoke with Martha and affirmed, “Your brother will rise again” (vs. 23).

2. In response, Martha said, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (vs. 24).
 - a. Was Martha speaking of a spiritual resurrection? Lazarus was physically dead and buried at the time Martha said this.
 - b. There was no need for him to be resurrected "spiritually." Clearly she expected a physical resurrection.
3. Note Jesus' next comments:
 - a. John 11:25-26 ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"
 - b. To whom was Jesus referring in verse 25? He described the individual who believes in Him, but "dies." Was Jesus talking about spiritual death? Certainly not.
 - c. In verse 26, He affirmed that "whoever lives and believes in Me *shall never die.*" In this verse, Jesus seems to have been contemplating spiritual death. He who lives spiritually (enter into a relationship with God) need never die again spiritually as long as he continues in his faith.
 - d. It is clear that Jesus was speaking of two different deaths:
 - 1) Those who believe in Him shall live, i.e., they shall be physically resurrected to life (see John 5:29). Christians (those who live and believe in Him) still die physically.
 - 2) Jesus was speaking of spiritual death in verse 26.

D. Mark 12:18-27

1. The hypothetical story of the Sadducees based on the practice of levirate marriage.
 - a. In their story, seven brothers successively married the same woman.
 - b. The Sadducees evidently believed that this hypothetical situation, possible under the provisions of the Law of Moses, presented a dilemma for the doctrine of the resurrection.
2. Of course, Jesus answered the Sadducees' question by first noting that they did not "know the Scriptures nor the power of God" (vs. 24).
3. He then observed that when the dead rise, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven (vs. 25).
4. If the resurrection which the Sadducees didn't believe in (Mark noted that they "say there is no resurrection") was indeed a "spiritual resurrection," why did they ask the question about levirate marriage, a question which has to do with physical death?
 - a. Once the seven brothers died physically, of what consequence would a spiritual resurrection (on this earth) be to them? What would be the point of the Sadducees' question in verse 23?
 - b. On the other hand, if the Sadducees had in mind a physical resurrection and realized eschatologists are correct in their denial of a general bodily

resurrection, why didn't Jesus correct the Sadducees' misapprehension rather than comment on the absence of marriage after the resurrection?

5. Max King explains the parallel passage in Luke 20 as follows:
 - a. "The statement that those in the world to come would neither marry nor be given in marriage is not, as it would appear on the surface, a denial of marriage or physical life in the New Covenant age. Rather, it has the meaning of Paul's statement that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). Jesus was not teaching that the citizens of the world to come "do not marry" anymore than Paul taught that citizens of the kingdom do not eat or drink. The point being debated is the nature of the world that was to come." (368)
 - b. King apparently fails to recognize that Paul's statement in Romans 14 is, in fact, in the form of a "not...but" statement. Jesus' answer to the Sadducees, however, is not in the form of such a statement!
 - c. "The 'children of this world' (the Old Covenant world) were constituted as such by physical birth, being the fleshly seed of Abraham, and a physical sign, circumcision. The citizens of 'this world' were propagated by marriage or fleshly procreation. But such would not be true in the world to come (the Christian age). Jesus said those who would be worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead, would not do so by physical means or methods. It was not the kind of world that could be entered by flesh and blood (1 Cor. 15:50). It was a spiritual world and a heavenly inheritance, involving one's spiritual relationship with God through Christ. 'Nor can they die any more' because they are 'sons of the resurrection' (Luke 20:36), refers to the spiritual state of redeemed humanity, and not the physical state. Jesus said those who kept his sayings would never die (Jn. 8:51), 'And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die' (Jn. 11:26). This is because they are the 'sons of the resurrection' (Lk. 20:36), which corresponds to the *adoption* of Romans 8:23." (King, 368)
 - d. King changes the focus of the response of Jesus from whether resurrected ones marry or are given in marriage to the question of propagation or procreation after the resurrection, allowing him then to travel the road of "how people become citizens of the kingdom"!
6. Dawson argues similarly, suggesting that Jesus was teaching that levirate marriage would no longer be necessary in the church age (443-445)!
7. Jesus also stated that such resurrected ones cannot die anymore (Luke 20:36).
 - a. Although King equates Jesus' comment to other passages which speak of spiritual security on the basis of continued faith, Jesus gave no such condition here.
 - b. Those who teach the impossibility of apostasy will appreciate King's explanation of this passage!

8. How could God refer to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as “living” (vs. 26-27) long after they were physically dead, when the “resurrection” (per realized eschatology) had not yet occurred?
 - a. If they were already spiritually alive (at the time God spoke to Moses in Exodus 3), why would they need to be “resurrected” in the days of Jesus’ generation?
9. To appreciate Jesus’ entire response to the Sadducees, it is necessary to understand that they did not believe in spirits (see Acts 23:8).
 - a. It was for this reason that Jesus spoke about the existence of the three patriarchs long after their physical bodies had died.
 - b. Jesus prefaced His final remarks with these words, “But concerning the dead, that they rise...” (vs. 26). In His statement to Moses regarding His relationship to the patriarchs, God implicitly stated that the patriarchs still existed (vs. 27).

E. Acts 23:1-9

1. While appearing before a combined assembly of Pharisees and Sadducees, Paul asserted that he was being judged “concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead” (23:6).
 - a. His comment immediately divided the assembly and the Pharisees began to defend Paul (23:9).
 - 1) “Seventh, regarding the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, we must wonder why Paul was mocked by the Greeks in Acts 17 for believing in the resurrection, if it were not a physical reality. We must wonder why Paul aligned himself with the Pharisees on the issue of the resurrection (Ac. 23:6-9; 24:15, 21). We must wonder why we Christians still marry and are given in marriage, since Christ said in the resurrection we will not marry (Lk. 20:35). We must wonder why the apostles never corrected the widespread notion of a physical resurrection, which was so current in Judaism (cf. Josephus, Talmud, etc.).” (Gentry; emphasis mine – asd)
 - 2) Did Paul not understand the view of the resurrection held by Pharisees? Since Paul was formerly a Pharisee, this is very unlikely. Did the Pharisees believe in a spiritual resurrection, “the resurrection of Old Covenant Israel from the death of its fellowship with God” (Dawson, 109)? Are we to believe that the Pharisees thought that physical Israel was “dead”, no longer in fellowship with God? Were the Pharisees anxious to leave the Old Covenant behind in order to live under the New Covenant?
 - b. Since the Sadducees denied a physical resurrection, why would Paul’s comment divide the assembly if his hope was a spiritual resurrection? Paul’s comment wouldn’t have offended either group!

F. Acts 24:14-15, 21

1. When Paul answered the charges against him, proffered by the Jews before the Roman governor Felix, he again spoke of his hope in God.

- a. Acts 24:14-15 ¹⁴ “But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. ¹⁵ I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of *the* dead, both of *the* just and *the* unjust.”
- b. Note that Paul described the resurrection as involving both the just and the unjust. Who are the just? Who are the unjust?
 - 1) In the view of realized eschatologists, “the expected eschatological resurrection was the translation of the children of God from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3:18). The death from which we are corporately raised is from sin-death, or alienation from God” (King, 309).
 - 2) We might understand the “unjust” being spiritually raised to be “just” or perhaps the translation of the “just” into the kingdom of heaven, but Paul didn’t describe his hope, the resurrection of the dead, in those terms.
- c. Dawson addresses Paul’s comment only in a tangential way.
 - 1) According to the index of scriptures at the conclusion of Essays on Eschatology, he discusses Acts 24:15 three times in his extensive work; twice he simply observes the Passover, making no comment on Paul’s claim that both the just and the unjust will be raised.
 - 2) On the third occasion, Dawson affirms:
 - a) “Paul here alludes to the prophet Daniel. He believed what the prophet wrote about the resurrection of the just and the unjust (Daniel 12:2), and he believed it to be imminent.” (468)
 - b) ¹ “At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands *watch* over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, *Even* to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book. ² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame *and* everlasting contempt. ³ Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.” (Daniel 12:1-3)
 - c) Dawson explains the resurrection of Daniel 12:
 - 1] “But there is more in Daniel 12 – we find that the time of the judgment at the ‘end of the age’ was also to be *the time of the resurrection!* In fact, the very verse from Daniel (12:3) that Jesus quoted in the Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Mt. 13:43) is a description of some of those who would be raised....Clearly, ‘those who are wise that shine’ are those who slept ‘in the dust of the earth’ and would awake to ‘everlasting life.’ These are the same ones in the parable who are symbolized by the wheat that would be harvested at ‘the end of the age’ and gathered into barns. Those who would awake

from ‘the dust of the earth’ to ‘everlasting contempt’ would be the tares that would be burned at the ‘end of the age.’ *Here resurrection is inextricably linked to judgment.* They were to be raised so that they could be judged.” (467).

- 2] It is interesting that Dawson doesn’t elsewhere describe the resurrection of the dead as related to judgment. He writes:
 - a] “...the resurrection which Moses and the prophets taught, all the apostles preached, and Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 15, is about restoration of fellowship with God, not about being raised from biological death.” (168)
 - b] “Restoration of fellowship with God” doesn’t sound like judgment.

G. Acts 26:6-8, 21-23

1. When Paul made his defense before Herod Agrippa and Festus, he connected the “hope of the promise made by God to our fathers” to the resurrection of the dead (26:6-8).
2. Paul’s objective in preaching to the Gentiles is that they would “receive forgiveness of sins AND an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith” (26:18; emphasis mine - asd).
3. How is a bodily resurrection related to our hope of eternal life? Dee Bowman, in a lecture at Florida College in 1986, commented:
 - a. “The resurrection of the body to a pure, holy, and eternal existence is the foundation for hope in the Christian. Everything else is built on it. Being ‘begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead’ (1 Pet. 1:3) is better understood with the addition of ‘to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.’ The resurrection secures for the Christian not only a present route or access to the Father but also the guarantee of a new body, not one affected by the deterioration of sin or the ravages of age, one in which he can offer praise and devotion to God forever (John 14:6; Rom. 5:1-5)...There are three things which transform our hope into reality, all of them taking place at the second coming of our Lord. First, in order for man to enjoy the paradise of heaven, he must have *an appropriate body*, one not subject to the ravages of time. He has, all of his time on the earth, longed desperately for it. Second, there must be *a proper habitation* for this body, one that will provide a complementary setting for the new body. The habitation must fit the new body in the same way that God made earth the habitation for the body of the first man, Adam. And, finally, he needs *eternal existence*, a way to protect, preserve, and use his body to the glory of God.” (186)
4. Dawson repeatedly argues that Paul didn’t teach anything about “the resurrection” other than what Moses and the prophets wrote.
 - a. He claims that Paul “said a number of times (in Acts – asd) that on the resurrection, he didn’t preach anything except what Moses and the prophets said should come to pass” (110).

- b. “We’ll see momentarily that Paul told the Jews on the resurrection that he taught nothing but what Moses and the prophets said would come to pass. *Nothing*. How could he have said that if he was giving newer revelation on the resurrection than was contained in their Old Testament scriptures?” (103)
- c. The passage which he has in mind is Acts 26:22-23. Note carefully what Paul said,
 - 1) "Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come -- ²³ "that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles." (Acts 26:22-23; NKJ)
- d. Contrary to Dawson’s claims, Paul did NOT say that all of his teaching regarding “the resurrection” was contained in Moses and the prophets.
 - 1) Paul actually listed the things to which he gave witness, the things which the prophets and Moses said would come...in verse 23.
 - 2) He mentioned three things: the suffering of Christ, the resurrection of Christ and the fact that Christ would proclaim light to both Jews and Gentiles.
- 5. Paul did imply a general resurrection.
 - a. He gave witness to the fact that Christ would be the first to rise from the dead, suggesting that others would follow (26:23).
 - b. There is, however, a difference between the wording of the American Standard Version (which Dawson quotes) and the New King James Version and English Standard Version in verse 23.
 - 1) ^{ASV} how that the Christ must suffer, *and* how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles.
 - 2) ^{NKJ} "that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles."
 - 3) ^{ESV} that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."

H. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 2

- 1. The Thessalonians apparently didn’t understand the circumstances of those who died prior to the return of Jesus and apparently some brethren had, in fact, already “fallen asleep” (4:13).
- 2. Paul wrote to assure the congregation at Thessalonica that these brethren would be raised and go to be with the Lord at His coming.
- 3. Paul described the brethren who had died as “those who sleep in Jesus” (4:14).

- a. In light of the meaning of the resurrection, as understood by realized eschatologists, how could these individuals be “in Jesus” prior to the resurrection?
 - b. If they had already been spiritually resurrected (to be “in Jesus”), how are we to understand the subsequent resurrection spoke of in verse 16?
 - 1) Are we to understand “dead” in this passage as meaning spiritually dead? How can one be spiritually dead “in Christ” (see 2 Corinthians 5:17)?
 - 2) Paul wrote that “the dead in Christ will rise first.” If there is no resurrection of our physical bodies, then these individuals must be raised spiritually.
4. Furthermore, Paul distinguished between the “dead in Christ” and “we who are alive and remain” (4:16-17).
- a. Virtually the only comment Dawson makes about this passage is that Paul understood the coming of the Lord to be imminent because he included himself among those who would still be alive when Jesus came!
 - b. Of course, Dawson believes that the coming of which Paul spoke was the coming of the Lord in judgment against Jerusalem and it is extremely doubtful that Paul lived to see that coming!
5. King also has very little to say specifically about this passage. He writes,
- a. “The coming of Christ was a gathering together of all the redeemed unto himself in the new world. It was promised in John 14:3, foretold in Matthew 24:31 (a fall of Jerusalem passage), taught by Paul in Ephesians 1:10, presented in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, 2 Thessalonians 2:1, and envisioned by John in the marriage symbol of Revelation 19:7-8.” (191)
 - b. What Paul wrote was that “we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them (the resurrected dead – asd) in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (4:17). He did not write about the Lord gathering all the redeemed into a kingdom on this earth – we will meet Him in the air!
6. Paul returned to the discussion of the coming of the Lord and “our gathering together to Him” in his second epistle to the Thessalonians (2:1).
- a. As in the first letter, Paul definitely connected the resurrection to the coming of Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:16).
 - b. It appears that the Thessalonians were in danger of believing that the day of the Lord had already come (2:2-3).
 - c. However, Paul informed them that certain things had to happen first, specifically the falling away and the revealing of the man of sin (vs. 3). If the coming of the Lord under consideration (realized eschatologists only recognize one “coming” after the earthly ministry of Jesus) was to take place at the destruction of Jerusalem, why didn’t Paul simply say, “You will know when the Lord comes...Jerusalem will be destroyed” – instead of all that cryptic material about the “man of sin”?

I. **2 Corinthians 4:7-5:10**

1. Writing to the Corinthians about the physical sufferings that he endured for the sake of the gospel (4:8-12), Paul noted that his outward man was perishing while the inward man was “being renewed day by day” (4:16).
2. The expression “our mortal flesh” (4:11) helps to define the context of Paul’s remarks and the meaning of the word *body* in this passage.
3. He continued the same line of thought in chapter five, clearly referring to his physical body as an “earthly house” and a “tent” (see also 2 Peter 1:13-14).
 - a. The apostle affirmed that, if our earthly house is destroyed, we have a “building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (5:1).
 - b. Observe the continuation of Paul’s thought with the use of such words as “habitation” (5:2) and “tent” (5:4).
 - c. He described the desire of those “in this tent” to be “further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life” (5:4b), a phrase reminiscent of 1 Corinthians 15 and the discussion of the change in our bodies at the resurrection.

V. **Does It Matter?**

- A. We need to remember the apostle Paul’s comment regarding the teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus – like that of others, it was a cancerous doctrine. These men had strayed from the truth.
- B. If the resurrection of the dead was spiritual and has already happened, how are we to understand the conversion (resurrection from spiritual death to fellowship with God) of all those after A.D. 70?
 1. Paul explained the implications of water baptism with the figure of a death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:1-6).
 2. The Scriptures teach that a person is spiritually raised at that point. Is this happening anymore?
 3. Was water baptism only intended to be practiced during the “eschaton”?
 4. “In addition, baptism is interpreted with the same template as the resurrection. In the eschaton, ‘baptism was the initiation of believers into the saving events of Christ’s death and resurrection in order to die and rise with Him, thereby working out the change from the old to the new aeon’ (Max King, *The Cross and the Parousia of Christ*, 712). Though this purpose has ended today, King says baptism now simply initiates one into the present state of eternal life (*Ibid.* 715).” (Gibson)
 5. It is interesting that the International Preterist Association saw fit to include in their doctrinal statement that they believe in the continued observance of both water baptism and the Lord’s Supper (<http://www.preterist.org/whatwebelieve.asp>).

Conclusion:

- I. Someone has said that if the only tool one has is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail. If we approach Scripture with a particular systematic theology already entrenched in our minds, every passage will be interpreted to fit that viewpoint.
- II. That seems to be the “hermeneutical philosophy” adopted by realized eschatologists.
 - A. Words (such as “resurrection”) are defined in ways that ignore the context in which they are used and then redefined to suit whatever passage is currently under consideration.
 - B. Passages which do not seem to fit the paradigm of the spiritual resurrection of A.D. 70 are basically ignored (e.g., Acts 24:15 – resurrection of both the just and the unjust) or given such “tortured” meanings that one wonders if anyone would arrive at the same meaning unaided by presuppositions.
 - C. Common grammatical uses of words are ignored (distributive use of the singular), while complex structures are constructed basically out of nothing (see Dawson’s elliptical “not—but” construction of Matthew 22:31-32; pp. 302-304).
- III. In an episode of the television program *Monk*, detective Adrian Monk temporarily is led to believe that his wife, supposedly killed by a car bomb, is actually still alive. He visits the grave of his wife to reassure himself that his wife Trudy is still buried there. As he leaves the site, he converses with a woman who is visiting the gravesite of her husband. “Don’t worry,” Monk tells her, “your husband is dead and he’s going to stay dead. This is an excellent cemetery; they know what they’re doing” [quotation from memory]. Some day, however, not even the most adept cemetery caretaker will be able to prevent the dead from responding to the voice of the Son of Man (John 5:28-29)!
- IV. What a glorious hope – that our bodies will be resurrected, changed into the bodies which Paul described in 1 Corinthians 15! Commenting on that chapter, David Owen wrote,
 - A. “The weakness of our present body is most vividly demonstrated when it perishes, but our resurrected body will be raised ‘in power’ to live without death. It should be noted that Paul does not say we will be raised a spirit, but, rather we will be raised with ‘a spiritual body’ (vs. 44). Throughout this chapter he has emphasized the fact that it is our body that will be raised. It will be raised a spiritual body, and we shall be all that God intends us to be. To illustrate, suppose you had never seen a train, but one day you happened upon a train that had derailed and was a twisted wreck. Have you seen a train? No, you have seen a train wreck, but you have not seen a train as it is intended to be. There is a sense in which we have not seen man as God intends him to be. But one day we shall be perfectly what God intends.” (1996 F.C. Lectures, 216)
 - B. Lord, hasten the day!

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