

Article 7 – The Resurrection

“We believe in the resurrection of the just and the unjust, and that the vile bodies of the Saints shall be changed like unto the glorious body of Jesus Christ, and that the felicity of the Saints will be eternal and the punishment of the wicked will be everlasting.”

This seventh Article of Faith addresses the doctrine of the Resurrection. The Resurrection is arguably the most important and central doctrine in the Bible. It is the ultimate reason why Jesus Christ suffered, died and rose again. Paul argued that if there is no resurrection, life has no meaning or purpose; we are still in our sins, those that have died are lost forever, and *“we are of all men most miserable...let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.”* 1 Corinthians 15:19, 32.

The Bible assures us that there will be a general resurrection of the dead when all people will be raised and brought before God in judgment (Acts 24:15; Revelation 20:10-15). This resurrection will be a physical, bodily event. The bodies of the Saints will be raised and reunited with their souls and spirits to become eternally perfect and complete persons. The bodies of the Wicked will also be raised again to be reunited with their souls and spirits to become eternally miserable and wretched persons. Both operations will happen at the command of Jesus Christ at the last day. *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”* John 5:28-29.

The bodies of the Saints will be transformed into a glorious, heavenly form, just like that of Jesus Christ. *“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”* Philippians 3:20-21. This transformation is not just a cosmetic change, but instead will be a fundamental alteration of our very nature, bringing us into full conformity with Jesus Christ.

In this state, the Saints will enjoy everlasting happiness (felicity), joy and righteousness in the presence of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. As Jesus said, *“Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”* Matthew 13:43. This joy is eternal and will never end in *“the new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”* 2 Peter 3:13. The Wicked, by contrast, will be banished from the presence of God and will suffer everlasting condemnation, shame and misery. This torment will be eternal and will never end in *“everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”* Matthew 25:41.

Some have questioned whether the punishment of the Wicked really will be eternal, and have instead suggested that at some point the Wicked will dissolve into nothingness and cease to exist. This is not what the Bible teaches. The words “eternal” and “everlasting” mean the same thing: to last forever. The Wicked will receive everlasting punishment in a conscious, tormented state. (Matthew 25:46). The Saints are promised everlasting life in a conscious, joyful state (John 3:16; Isaiah 35:10). If the existence of the Wicked in the lake of fire eventually ends, then we have no assurance that our “everlasting life” won’t similarly end some day as well.

Everlasting and eternal are just that; everlasting and eternal. We will rejoice in the presence of Jesus Christ forever, and will always know what horrible condemnation He suffered on our behalf to redeem us to God. Praise His glorious name! Even so, come, Lord Jesus!