

## What Is Resurrection?

Before we get into the significance of the final resurrection at the Second Coming of Jesus, let's look at what "resurrection" actually means.

The dictionary defines resurrection as restoring a person who was dead back to life. In the Bible, we find that the word resurrection is used a number of times to describe events where people who have passed away were brought back to life through God's power.

The word resurrection is used 42 times in 40 different verses of the New Testament (King James Version) and comes from the Greek word anastasis, which is also the root word for "anesthesia."

Here are some of the people in Scripture who were resurrected, or raised from the dead.

Widow of Zepethath's son (1 Kings 17:17-24)

Shunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4:18-37)

Israelite man (2 Kings 13:20-21)

Widow of Nain's son (Luke 7:11-17)

Jarius' daughter (Luke 8:49-56)

Lazarus (John 11:1-44)

The saints in Jerusalem (Matthew 27:50-54)

Dorcas (Acts 9:36-42)

Eutychus (Acts 20:7-12)

These people experienced their body and mind being brought back to consciousness, to the current state of humanity. After this miracle of resurrection occurred, they lived out their earthly lives to later die again. They were not given eternal life at that time.

However, there is a highly significant resurrection coming when earth's history reaches its end and Jesus returns to earth, as He promised in John 14.

This resurrection will happen at the end of time. God's people will be redeemed to the perfection He originally intended mankind to have. We will still be ourselves. You will recognize loved ones—but we will all be changed from having perishable, sin-corrupted bodies to imperishable bodies that will allow us to fully enjoy eternity with God.

The definition of resurrection remains the same—a physical event in which a person dies, lays at rest in the grave, and then God returns the breath of life into them. But the resurrection at His Second Coming will be the one to end the need for resurrection at all.

It's the event that Christians expectantly await. It gives us hope for the future, no matter what happens.

In fact, the resurrection is the most wonderful thing we can hope for! The Bible reassures us that no matter what, in the end, followers of Christ will have no more pain or sorrow. God will wipe away every tear! The resurrection is part of God's plan, when death shall be no more (Revelation 21:4).

It's so hard when we lose someone we love and we want to see them again. Death was not a part of God's initial plan for mankind. We were originally made to live forever! So when someone dies, it feels unnatural. It hurts.

We all long for that day when we can see our loved ones again.

The resurrection is the promise all believers in Christ cling to: one day all who have died in Christ will be resurrected and given a new life.

It's also important to note that whenever people were resurrected in the Bible, they didn't talk about what heaven was like. This is because they hadn't been there yet. They were "sleeping" in their graves, in an unconscious nonexistence.

"His spirit departs, he returns to the earth; In that very day his thoughts perish" (Psalm 146:4)

"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" (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

When we die we are "asleep" until the resurrection. The breath of life from God that makes us a living soul is returned to God until He gives it back.

So those brought back to life on earth weren't yanked away from paradise to be brought back to a sinful earth.

We can take comfort in the idea that our loved ones are resting peacefully in the grave until Christ's second coming.

## **WHY ARE THERE TWO RESURRECTIONS? WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?**

The Bible also tells us there is more than one resurrection at the End Times—the First Resurrection and the Second Resurrection.

One for the followers of God (the resurrection of life)

One for the lost, the resurrection of condemnation (or death)

"Do not be amazed at this, because a time is coming when all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good things, to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked things, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28, 29).

This means that all who have ever lived and died will one day be resurrected. Let's take a closer look at the differences between the two resurrections.

### **THE FIRST RESURRECTION**

The First Resurrection is of the "dead in Christ." The dead in Christ are those who, by the time of their death, loved God and accepted the sacrifice of Jesus.

"And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

When the dead in Christ are resurrected, they are made imperishable—they cannot die again. They will have been made perfect, as humanity was always supposed to be.

“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” (1 Corinthians 15:52).

After this resurrection, they will live for eternity in heaven and then in the New Earth. They will no longer experience pain, sorrow, or death.

## **THE SECOND RESURRECTION**

The Second Resurrection happens one thousand years after the First, as told in the Book of Revelation. Those who were resurrected in the First Resurrection will have spent this Millennium in heaven with God, learning about His judgment and everything that happened in earth’s history.

This resurrection is not a happy occasion. This is when those who rejected Jesus as their Savior will be resurrected.

As God presented His judgment during the Millennium, these names were not found in the “Book of Life,” where the names of God’s followers are recorded when they accept Jesus’ sacrifice.

“The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended” (Revelation 20:5).

When this second group of people are raised from the dead, they will not experience eternal life. Instead, they will experience the Second Death—complete separation from God for eternity. And when anyone is separated from their life force, they cease to exist.

“Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14, 15).

## **IS THE RESURRECTION THE SAME THING AS THE RAPTURE?**

While similar in theme and association, the short answer is no. The Resurrection is what happens when the dead are raised to life. “Rapture” is what happens when we are caught up in the air with Christ and His host of angels in the clouds of heaven.

However, upon hearing the word “rapture,” many will think of an event defined as the “Secret Rapture.” Popular teachings surrounding this idea have led to many Christians believing that one day believers will simply disappear before the “Great Tribulation” begins.

You may have seen books or movies about the secret rapture, like the series, Left Behind. Unfortunately, the idea of a secret rapture contradicts what the Apostle Paul says will actually happen at the end of time.

Believers go to heaven when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. And this event will be anything but secret.

“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” (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

“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. Therefore encourage one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

The word rapture actually means “the transporting of believers to heaven at the Second Coming of Christ.”

Believers will be “raptured,” or caught up together with the Lord in the air and go to heaven together. But notice how the event will be preceded by the trumpet of God. This is no secret rapture!

“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him” (Revelation 1:7).

“Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:30, 31).

Every eye will see and every ear will hear. That trumpet call will be so loud it literally wakes up the dead!

Instead of a secret snatching away of God’s people, the rapture happens as a component of the “parousia.”

Parousia is a Greek word used in the Bible that means “a coming” or “a presence.”

In the New Testament, the word “parousia” is primarily used in reference to Jesus’ return, but is also used to talk about others who were coming to visit or someone’s presence.

So to recap what happens at the second coming of Jesus Christ:

The first resurrection happens and all of the dead in Christ are raised back to life.

Then all of God’s people will be caught up in the air with Jesus and his angels.

We can be comforted knowing our loved ones are resting in their graves waiting for Jesus’ return. And we know the day is coming when all who believe will meet Jesus in the clouds to go with Him to heaven.

### **WHEN DOES THE RESURRECTION HAPPEN?**

The Bible gives us signs that Jesus’ return is near. But we’re also told that God’s timing is not for anyone to know but the Father God Himself.

“But about that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone” (Matthew 24:36).

But here’s what Scripture does tell us concerning the timing of this grand event.

Matthew chapter 24 describes certain events that will occur in the world as the earth grows more sin-sick and the time of the end draws closer. Among these are:

False Christs seeking to deceive many (vs. 5)

An increase in natural disasters (vs. 7)

Global conflict (vss. 6, 7)

Food shortages (vs. 7)

Increase in selfish disregard for humanity (vs. 12)

Persecution of Jesus' followers (vs. 9)

However, we're also told these things are "merely the beginning" of the end times (vs. 8).

But one positive thing will happen for sure—everyone will have had the chance to hear about Jesus.

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come" (vs. 14).

As for the Second Coming itself? An early clue is in Job, where we are told that when a man dies, he does not rise again until the "heavens are no more."

"So a man lies down and rises not again; till the heavens are no more he will not awake or be roused out of his sleep" (Job 14:12).

When Jesus comes again, the sky will dissolve. It's pretty crazy to think about what that will be like, but the Bible is clear. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ will involve the sky or heavens "passing away."

"All the stars in the sky will dissolve. The sky will roll up like a scroll, and its stars will all wither as leaves wither on the vine, and foliage on the fig tree" (Isaiah 34:4, CSB).

The Second Coming will be a sudden event that surprises those who are not ready. Just like you would be surprised if a thief broke into your house, most people will be surprised when Jesus comes again—because they weren't watching for Him.

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed" (2 Peter 3:10).

But with this focus on "readiness," why isn't anyone supposed to know when Jesus will return?

Well, the exact timing is none of our business, and it's futile to obsess over it. If we've accepted Jesus as our Savior, we are to have our hearts ready for it at all times.

We still have our lives to live on earth. And though God wants us to know that His Coming is near, and to know it could happen suddenly, anytime, He doesn't want us to forgo the roles we're given in our current lives. He doesn't want us to be living in a countdown, simply biding our time until the end.

He wants us to focus on caring for those around us and spreading the Gospel message—sharing with others the very hope we're talking about here: that we all will be brought back to life!

## **LOOKING BACK AT JESUS' RESURRECTION**

What is Jesus Bringing from the Dead? What is Jesus Bringing from the Dead?

It's because of Jesus' death and resurrection that we have the hope of eternal life. It's because of His sacrifice that we can look forward to seeing our precious loved ones who have passed away.

## **HIS ULTIMATE SACRIFICE, WHICH MAKES THE RESURRECTION POSSIBLE**

When Jesus died on the cross, He took on the punishment meant for us. He knew there was no other way to save us from our sins.

From the very beginning of time, when sin entered the world, this was God's plan. The Bible tells us that Jesus was the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:8).

Scripture reveals to us the prophecies of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection long before Jesus was even born into this world (Isaiah 53).

Jesus died to save you! That's how much He loves you. He was willing to die a humiliating and painful death on the cross, as well as experience separation from His Father—the second death.

Remember how those who are part of the second resurrection (those whose names are not written in the Book of Life) also will experience the second death? That's what happened to Jesus when He died on the cross.

As Jesus hung on the cross, He couldn't feel God's presence. He cried out in anguish:

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

And as Jesus breathed His last breath, he felt the weight of the world's sin on His shoulders. He who had no sin was made sin for our sake.

"He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (1 Corinthians 5:21).

His sacrifice made it possible for us to one day go to heaven, to be redeemed at the First Resurrection. This is humanity's ultimate lesson in what true, unconditional love is.

A sign that says 'He is Risen'

## **HIS EMPTY TOMB**

The good news is that death had no power because our God is mighty. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we know He has the power to conquer death itself.

The Bible tells us that Jesus died on the cross on a Friday (the preparation day) and was resurrected on Sunday morning (the first day of the week).

"God raised him up, ending the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by death" (Acts 2:24).

Jesus rested in the tomb after his death until his resurrection. He did not go to heaven during that time. He was sleeping in the grave just like the others who were resurrected from the dead in the Bible.

When He saw Mary after his resurrection, Jesus said:

"Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'" (John 20:17).

It's the message of the Gospel. The good news everyone needs to hear. The tomb is empty!

“When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him” (Mark 16:2).

“And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you” (Mark 16:5-7).

Jesus was raised to life. The second death had no hold on Him. But that's not all! When you choose to follow Jesus and accept His free gift of salvation, you will not die the second death. Instead you will receive the gift of eternal life.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

That blessed hope we talked about? It's a living hope found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

“According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...” (1 Peter 1:3).

Because of Jesus's resurrection from the grave, we have the hope of heaven. We have the hope of being resurrected at Jesus' Second Coming.

“... to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you...” (1 Peter 1:4).

Our hope of resurrection at the end of time is based on the foundation of His resurrection two thousand years ago. What would we do without that hope and promise?

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was a historical event that many people witnessed. He spent 40 days on earth before going up to heaven and He appeared before hundreds of people.

“He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

“He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me” (1 Corinthians 15:5-8).

Because of His resurrection, many believed—including Jesus' brother James who had been a skeptic. The man who wrote the Epistle of James grew up with Jesus.

For whatever reason, James didn't believe his brother was the Messiah. In fact, none of Jesus' brothers believed in Him (John 5:7).

But after James witnessed His resurrection, he was convicted and believed.

## **HIS PROMISE TO COME BACK**

At the end of the 40 days, Jesus ascended into heaven. But before His ascension the disciples asked Him if He would restore the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6). Jesus answered saying:

“It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:7, 8).

Jesus came out of the tomb in bodily form on the resurrection morning. He was still in that same body as He ascended into heaven.

The disciples watched as their Lord went into heaven and two men appeared next to them wearing white robes. These two men said words to comfort them.

“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

Earlier, before His death, Jesus said similar words to the disciples to reassure them. He made a special promise. He promised to one day return!

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (John 14:3).

Our hope of salvation and the Second Coming of Jesus would not be possible without the resurrection.

## **REVELATION'S PROMISE**

The thought of God judging each person—to determine which resurrection they will be part of—can feel intense and intimidating. But God doesn't want us to fear.

We can rest assured that God is fair and just. He loves each one of His children with an everlasting love. It's His desire that no one should perish (2 Peter 3:9).

We can trust that He will correctly judge those who will want to be with Him for eternity, and those who will not.

In the end, God's people will rejoice. There will be no more sorrow and no more pain. God promises that for each one of us!

“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

We can look forward to eternal life after God's perfect judgment and the eradication of sin. This is it! This resurrection is the end of the story for Satan, death and evil—but it's not the end of the story for God or His people.