

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

One of the most wonderful doctrines of the Bible, and probably one of the most misunderstood, is the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead. The fact that no one living today has ever seen a dead person brought back to life has the effect of making the worldly-wise discount this doctrine as myth and mere religious superstition. Then there are others who have adopted the false belief that all have been born with an immortal soul and when someone dies, their soul either goes to heaven or is condemned to hell, there to suffer for all eternity.

However, to the seeker of Biblical truth, the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead can meet these challenges. God's Word will clearly answer the question, "Will there be a Resurrection of the dead?" Let us go to the Word of God and see what is said on this subject. One question to consider is -- By what or whose power will the dead be raised to life? While this is a reasonable question, Christians know well Jesus words, *"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible"* (Matt. 19:26). Yes, even the raising of the dead is possible with God. Jesus raised the dead during His first advent, and God resurrected Jesus some 2,000 years ago (1 Cor. 15:20; Acts 2:24; 4:10; Gal. 1:1). Many were eye witnesses to this.

To question the wisdom and the power of God is not only to doubt Him, but to make God out to be a liar. Isaiah 55:11 assures the believer that **His Word will come true**: *"So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."* The Lord, unlike man, *always* keeps His promises (Isaiah 14:24, 27).

Let us consider the power and wisdom of God. Only an Almighty Creator could have conceived such wondrous and complex works. From the single-celled amoeba to the Creation of man in all his intricacy and perfection, there surely is revealed the perfect wisdom and power of God. David well said, man is *"fearfully and wonderfully made"* (Psa. 139:14). All nature declares the Creator's handiwork (Psa. 19: 1-3; Prov. 8:23-31). The Logos, God's Only Begotten Son, was instrumental in creation. God gave Him all the wisdom and power to accomplish every work of Creation. The Apostle Paul tells us in Col. 1:16 that all things were created by Him and for Him.

God had a Plan, a blueprint, and the Logos followed that plan perfectly. In Gen. 1:26 we see that another, other than God, was involved in the Creation of man. "Then God said, *'Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, according to **Our** likeness.'*" We are told in 1 Cor. 8:6 that all things are *from* the Father but *through* the Son. The Bible abounds with Scriptures telling of the marvelous and wondrous things that were created, to the praise and glory of both Father and Son. Read chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis; Psalms 8, 19, 65, 66, 104, 148; Job 38 & 39. All these chapters describe the awesome Wisdom and Power of our Great God. Being able to create all this, how can one doubt that He can also raise the dead?

Someone might ask, *But what if God should change His mind?* God never changes His mind as we humans so often do. We are assured of this in Isaiah 40:8: *"The grass withers and the flowers fall, but **the Word of our God stands forever.**"* Also James 1:17 tells us, *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, **with whom there is no variation or shadow caused by turning.**"* (See also Isa. 55:11) Having been assured that *"nothing is impossible with God"* and that He has power to raise the dead, let us now look at why mankind dies in the first place.

Gen. 1:26-31 tells us that after His final creation, that of man, God pronounced all of Creation “very good.” He then directed Adam and his wife Eve to “multiply” and fill the earth. Adam was given dominion over all the animals. They lived in a beautiful Garden where their every need was provided, and they could have lived forever. However, Adam was commanded not to eat the fruit of a certain tree, being warned that if he did so he would die (Gen. 2:15,17). The mighty cherub, Lucifer, (meaning “light”) was assigned as the guardian over Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Lucifer had been perfect until sin was found in him. Ezek. 28:12b-17 tells of his great pride. In Isa. 14:12-15, while written in the first person about the King of Babylon, these verses actually carry with it a much deeper spiritual insight that reflects the mindset of Lucifer himself, which led to his sin and God’s judgment. His ambition and his pride were so great that he wanted to be greater than God. *“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart, ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation, on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.”*

This powerful cherub, who had been honored with the position as guardian of man, wanted to be their God. He desired to be worshipped and honored. This ambition led him to become the ruler of the dominion of darkness and the god of this present evil world (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:13). He tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God, and so all of Adam’s descendants have come under his evil influence and the death sentence. (See 1 Cor. 15:22.) How did Lucifer, now known as Satan or “Adversary,” cause our first parents to sin? First, he deceived Eve into disobedience through doubt. Using the serpent for his mouthpiece, he said, *“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”* Gen. 3:2-4 tells us, *“And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.” Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die;”* thus, the first lie was told by Satan, with dire consequences (John 8:44).

Satan also told Eve, *“For God knows that in the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil”* (Gen. 3:5). Eve gave some of the fruit to Adam, and thus he joined her in disobedience to God’s command (Gen. 3:6). Eve was deceived by the serpent but Adam was not. 1 Tim. 2:14 tells us, *“And Adam was **not** deceived, but the woman, being deceived, fell into transgression.”* Since that day, all mankind has come under the penalty of sin and death (Rom. 5:12). We read of God’s curse in Genesis 3:17-19, *“...Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”* In verses 22-24, God set cherubim and a flaming sword to keep Adam and Eve from returning to the garden after He had banished them. The serpent, who was used by Satan in his deception, was then also cursed and Satan’s eventual demise was predicted in Gen. 3:14-15: *“So the LORD God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.’”* Jesus was to be that seed who would crush the head of the Serpent, Satan (Gal. 3:16).

Since we are all descendants or children of Adam, we are all subject to death, for we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God (Psalm 51:5; Rom. 3:23). The question might arise, *“If God is so wise,*

why didn't He make provisions for not allowing Adam and Eve to sin?" The answer to this question is found in understanding God's plan for mankind. God did not create man to be a robot. He created him *"in His image"* with the ability to freely choose for himself. This is called being a "free moral agent." Though men are free to choose, there are consequences to be paid for wrong choices that are in disobedience to God's just principles. Adam was justly condemned because he freely chose to disobey God.

God allowed Adam free choice even though He knew beforehand that he would sin. The *permission of evil* by God plays a very important part in His Plan. Mankind is experiencing the results of sin, and with that knowledge he will be motivated to choose righteousness in the Lord's coming kingdom. Satan's deception of Eve reveals to us that he is a liar and that he cannot be trusted (John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8). Knowing beforehand that man would sin, God in His love made provisions for his redemption. We read of this in Rev. 13:8 where it speaks of a *"Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."* God sent His only begotten Son to die for our sins (John 3:16). 1 Timothy 2:5,6 states, *"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the **Man** Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."* It was the love of God and that of His dear Son for mankind that prompted our redemption from sin and death (1 Cor. 15:22; Rom. 5:12, 18, 19).

Satan has blinded and confused the minds of men about this wonderful provision of Salvation for all mankind. Many churches believe and teach that if you are good, you will go to heaven; but if you are bad, then an everlasting Hell of torment is your lot. This negates the purpose for Christ's future earthly Kingdom when the Lord Jesus, with his Bride, will be the means of restoration and bringing mankind back into harmony with God (Ezek. 16:55; Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 6:2,3; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 20:4, 22:17). Jesus died for our sins (Jn. 1:29). He paid the price required to ransom back all mankind by his death. A perfect life was required for the perfect man Adam. It was the **Man**, Christ Jesus, who provided this ransom for all men (1 Tim. 2:5, 6). Jesus provided this ransom price when He laid down His life on Calvary's Cross. Isa. 61:1 states prophetically, *"The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners."* One day soon, all mankind will be released from the prison house of death. Jesus' death guarantees the resurrection of all men (John 5:28, 29).

The Apostle Paul was very positive that the Resurrection of Jesus from death was proof that mankind will also have a Resurrection. He states in 1 Corinthians 15:12-14, *"But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith."*

The Soul

Genesis 3:4: *"'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman."* This was Satan's bold lie. From this lie came the teaching that the soul is immortal, and when a person dies, their soul either goes to heaven or to hell. Catholicism has a third possible place to which the soul could go called Purgatory. These serious errors are widespread among Christian churches. The Bible teaches that man does not **possess** a soul, but rather that he **is** a soul. (See Genesis 2:7.)

This erroneous teaching of the immortality of the soul has been the means of keeping people in religious bondage based on the fear of possible eternal torment.. The Bible teaches that the soul dies at the same time as the body ceases to breathe. The dead would remain dead forever if it were not for the

redeeming sacrifice of Jesus which makes it possible for all mankind to be raised from death (Psalm 146:4; Ezek. 18:4, 20; 1 Cor. 15:22). Some scriptures that describe the condition of the dead can be found in:

Psalm 6:5 - "No one remembers you when he is dead. Who praises you from the grave?"

Psalm 115:17 - "It is not the dead who praise the LORD, those who go down to silence."

Ecclesiastes 9:5 - "For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten."

Ecclesiastes 9:10 - "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working...planning...knowledge or wisdom."

Ecclesiastes 12:7 - "Then shall the dust return to the earth...and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

The Prophet Ezekiel (in chapter 18:4,20) and the Apostle Paul agree on the state of the dead, for Rom. 6:23 says, "...the wages of sin is death." (See also 1 Cor. 15:21, 22.) Man was created mortal and was *subject* to death. (Death was a possibility.) Gen. 2:7 tells us, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Reading again in Ezek. 18:4, "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: **the soul that sins, it shall die.**" God's Word plainly states that the "soul"--the living being -- shall die if it sins, and all have sinned (Rom. 3:23). "What man is he that lives and shall not see death" (Psalm 89:48)?

When a person dies, he remains in a *sleep* of death until the resur-rection. Jesus made this clear in John 11:11-14 where he used *sleep* to represent death. "These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, '**Our friend Lazarus sleeps; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.**' Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleeps, he shall do well. However, Jesus spoke of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking a rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, '**Lazarus is dead.**'" Yes, the dead will remain in their graves until the Resurrection, and only then will they be awakened out of the *sleep of death*. (See also Acts 7:60; 1 Cor. 15:20; 2 Peter 3:4; 1 Thes. 4:14.)

The New Testament holds forth many scriptures on the subject of the Resurrection. Acts 24:15 states, "And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." John 5:28, 29 tells us, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the tombs 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 **judgment.**"

The Apostle John, on the Isle of Patmos, was given additional insight into the Resurrection. Revelation 20:12-14 tells us, "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire."

The First Resurrection

The Bible speaks of two Resurrections. The first will take place when Jesus comes to take to himself his Bride -- those who have been his faithful disciples from the day of Pentecost to the completion of his Church, including some who will be alive at that time. This is clearly taught in 1 Thes. 4:13-17: "Brothers,

we do not want you to be ignorant about those who **fall asleep**, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."

John identified the **first** Resurrection in Rev. 20:6: "Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years." These will be resurrected to glorious spiritual bodies (1 John 3:2). Those who have a part in the **first** Resurrection will receive the rewards sought for in Romans 2:7: "To those who by persistence in doing good seek for glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life." Many other rewards are held out to the overcoming Bride of Christ. The following are some of these promises:

Rev. 2:7 - "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."

Rev. 2:10-11 - "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."

Rev. 2:17 - "To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a newname written on it, known only to him who receives it."

Rev. 2:26-28 - "To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations -- 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery' -- just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star."

Rev. 3:5 - "He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels."

Daniel prophesied that these faithful followers of Jesus would have a part in ruling in Christ's future kingdom. In Daniel 7:18 and 27 we read, "But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever -- yes, for ever and ever." - "Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven **will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High**. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him." Then in 1 Cor. 6:2-3 we read, "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels?.." (These are those angels that fell into sin in Noah's day. See Genesis the 6th chapter)

The Second Resurrection

The Second Resurrection, which will occur at a time later than that of the Church, will be for the rest of all mankind. This *second or after* resurrection will occur at the beginning of Christ's future earthly kingdom. What are the conditions of this judgment day? Isaiah 26:9 tells what will happen at this time. "When your judgments come upon the earth, **the people of the world learn righteousness**." This judgment time will last for the entire thousand years of Christ's reign. At that time Satan will not be able to deceive and tempt people to evil. Rev. 20:1, 2 tells us that he will be "bound for a 1000 years." This period of time is also called the Millennial Age -- "Millennial" meaning "one thousand."

During Christ's Kingdom each person will be responsible for his own actions. Ezekiel 18:20 tells us this: *"The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him."* (Also see Acts 3:22, 23.) Today, it can be truly said, *"the fathers have eaten the sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge"* (Jer. 31:29).

The 1000-year Kingdom of Christ will be a world-wide school for the billions that are to be resurrected. There will be peace and harmony throughout the earth. Isaiah 11:9 describes this wonderful time: *"They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."* (Also Num. 14:21; Isaiah 54:10.) The conditions in Christ's future Kingdom are further described in Jeremiah 31:34: *"No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."* At the end of the 1,000 years, the world will have its final testing to see if they are worthy of everlasting life or not. We are told that Satan will be *"loosed for a little season"* to test the hearts of mankind. (See Revelation 20:7-10.)

Revelation 21:7-8 tells us of two groups of people. The first group are those who will pass this final test and prove faithful, learning the ways of righteousness. The second group are those who choose not to learn and succumb to Satan's final seduction. *"He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars -- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. **This is the second death.**"* "... the fiery lake of burning sulfur" - does this mean a place of eternal torture? No, this is *symbolic of total destruction or total annihilation*. Note that it is also called *"second death."* We must remember that the book of Revelation is a book of highly symbolic language. We read earlier that *"the dead do not know anything."* This is true in the first death, and it will be equally true of those who refuse to live under the righteous principles and government under our Lord Jesus Christ and will be mercifully annihilated in the *"second death."* They will be as if they had never been.

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Conclusion

Thus we see God's Word reveals a wonderful Plan of Redemption for all mankind. It is centered in the great sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ who provided all that was needed for man's redemption from sin and death, so that one day, in God's due time, they will be delivered, in the coming Resurrection, to live on a restored earth where Edenic conditions will exist. During that time *"at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father"* (Phil. 2:11). The Bible opens in Genesis with man created perfect and falling into sin, and ends in Revelation with him being restored to perfection and full harmony with his Creator. ***What kind of love is this?*** Surely we should want to serve and give Praise, Honor, and Worship to such a God!

THE INCOMPARABLE CHRIST

"He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

He came from the bosom of the Father to the bosom of a woman. He took upon Him the *"form of a servant"* that we might become the sons of God.

He was born in a supernatural way, lived in poverty, reared in obscurity. Only once did He cross the boundary of the land, in childhood. He had no wealth nor influence, and no college education; yet the profoundest wisdom of men never equaled His last discourses in John 13 to 17 and the Sermon on the Mount. *"Never a man spake like this man."*

His relatives were inconspicuous and uninfluential, yet, in infancy he startled a king; in boyhood he puzzled the Doctors of the Law. Even at twelve years of age He proved He was far in advance of the theologians, for He was *"taught of God"*. In manhood He ruled the elements, so that He could defy the laws of gravity by walking on water, and quiet the raging sea with a word. He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His services.

He never wrote a book, yet not all the libraries of the world could hold the books that have been written about Him. He never wrote a song, yet He has furnished the theme of more songs than all song writers combined. He never founded a college, yet all the schools together cannot boast of as many students as He has. He never marshaled an army, drafted a soldier, nor fired a gun, yet no leader ever had more volunteers who have, under His orders, made rebels stack arms or surrender without a shot being fired. Great men have come and gone, yet He lives on. Herod could not kill Him, Satan could not seduce Him, death could not destroy Him, the grave could not hold Him, and even demons obeyed Him. He fed the hungry multitudes with a boy's little lunch, broke up funerals, and gave back to life those that were dead.

He laid aside His purple robe for a peasant's gown. He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor. As to how poor? Ask Mary. He slept in another's manger; He sailed the lake in another's boat. He rode on a borrowed beast. He was buried in a rich man's tomb.

He conquered death, rose on the third day as He said He would, ascended into heaven and is now at the right hand of the throne of God. He will one day soon come to take His church, His *"Bride"* to be with Him as He promised centuries ago, and together with her will judge the world in righteousness. At this time every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue shall confess Him as Lord to the glory of the Father and He will wipe all tears from off all faces; there will be no more sighing or crying or death but Everlasting Joy and Peace.

Jesus is the Chiefest among ten thousand, the only One who can satisfy the soul and give Everlasting Life to those who were perishing. HE IS ALTOGETHER LOVELY...and... HE IS OUR SAVIOUR!

What a Saviour!

"Man of sorrows!" what a name for the Son of God who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim! Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned He stood
Sealed my pardon with His blood; Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

Guilty, vile, and helpless, we; spotless Lamb of God was He,
"Full Atonement!" can it be? Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

Lifted up was He to die, "It is finished," was His cry,
Now in heaven exalted high, Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

When He comes, our glorious King, all His ransomed home to bring,
Then anew this song we'll sing; Hallelujah!

What a Saviour!-

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