

Explaining The Resurrection

'Sadducees who deny there is resurrection came to Jesus. "Teacher, Moses wrote, 'If a man dies childless, his brother will marry his wife and raise up children for his brother.' If there were seven brothers and the first married and died childless, leaving his wife to his brother. The second died and the third, to the seventh then after them all, the woman died. In the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven for they all married her?" Jesus answered them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. The children of this age marry and are given in marriage. Those who are considered worthy to attain to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. They cannot die again for they are like the holy angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. The dead are raised as Moses showed at the bush when he called the Lord, 'The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' He is not the God of the dead but of the living for all (people) are alive to Him. You are therefore badly mistaken"' (Matthew 22:23 to 32; Mark 12:18 to 27).

'When Paul perceived some were Sadducees and the others were Pharisees he called out in the council, "Men and brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. Concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" ... The Sadducees say there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit but the Pharisees confess all of these' (Acts 23:6 & 8). All people who have ever lived will one day face God at their resurrection. Anyone who refuses to believe in a resurrection is badly mistaken, as Jesus said. After being resurrected, only those who are worthy will be taken to heaven. That means only people who have accepted God into their lives will be found worthy. We will not become angels, but we will live similar holy lives like holy angels. Angels were not created to marry and have children and when the souls of people go to heaven, we will no longer marry and have children. People were only told to have children to increase the human population in this 'age' of human reproduction, as Jesus said. Angels do not need to reproduce because millions of them were created by God and their home is already in heaven.

There have been a few resurrections of righteous people mentioned in the Bible but they all died again later, after being resurrected to life in Israel. One was the unnamed boy in 2 Kings 4:32 to 37. Jesus caused several people to be raised from death when He was on earth, the most famous being Lazarus the brother of Mary and Martha (John 11:1 to 44). 'Some women received their dead by resurrection' (Hebrews 11:35). When Jesus died several righteous people were resurrected and rose from their graves and were seen by many people. Clearly, they had some kind of body and were not in a decaying, odorous, skeletal form or the people in Jerusalem would have been horrified. 'Jesus cried with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit. Behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. The earth quaked and the rocks were split. The tombs were opened and many bodies of God's holy people who had died were raised and came out of the tombs after His resurrection. They entered into the holy city (Jerusalem) and appeared to many people' (Matthew 27:50 to 53). Although these people were given a second chance of life on earth, they were not resurrected into eternity until later when they died. We need to keep in mind the words of Jesus. "All people are alive to Him" (Luke 20:38). We are made up of body, soul and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). It is the body of flesh that dies, not the spirit or the soul. The soul and spirit remain together and will be resurrected and given a new body to live throughout eternity. Righteous people will have a new body to enjoy in heaven, a heavenly body that cannot die. Wicked people will also have a new body that cannot die and will suffer dreadfully for eternity in the eternal furnace known as the Lake of Fire. Jesus said, "So will it be in the end of the world. The holy angels will come forth and separate the righteous from among the wicked and will cast them into the furnace of (the Lake of) Fire. There will be the weeping (wailing) and the gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:49 & 50). Jesus was inferring there would be terrible suffering.

King David prophesied the resurrection of Jesus, generations before it happened. Jesus was resurrected into eternity but stayed on earth for forty days to establish of the New Church then called 'The Way' (Acts 9:2). 'From the baptism of John to the day He was received up from us, one of these men must become a witness with us of His resurrection' (Acts 1:22). 'You (God) will not leave My (Jesus') soul in Sheol, neither will You (God) allow Your Holy One (Jesus) to see corruption' (Psalm 16:10). 'Foreseeing this, the prophet spoke about the resurrection of the Messiah, neither was His soul left in Hades nor did His flesh see decay. This Jesus, God raised up to which we are all witnesses' (Acts 2:31 & 32). 'The Jews were upset because the apostles taught the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead ... With great power the apostles gave their testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Great grace was on them all' (Acts 4:2 & 33). 'Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with Paul. Some said, "What does this babblers want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be advocating foreign deities," because he preached Jesus and the resurrection ... When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked but others said, "We want to hear you again concerning this"' (Acts 17:18 & 32). 'I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would happen, how the Messiah must suffer and how, by the resurrection of the dead, He would be first to proclaim light both to these (Jewish) people

and to the Gentiles' (Acts 26:22 & 23). 'He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus our Lord' (Romans 1:4).

When Jesus appeared to people during His forty days on earth after He was resurrected, He had a new eternal body, a new body that would never die but in that new body He wore the gaping wounds of His torturous crucifixion but the wounds did not seem to be filled with blood nor did they apparently look awful. The apostles recognised Him immediately so He must have looked just like He did while in His earthly body of flesh. In His new resurrected body, Jesus was able to appear and disappear at will so His earthly body that binds us to earth had been transformed into an eternal body. 'The other disciples said to Thomas, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." After eight days His disciples were inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came in, the doors being locked, He stood in the midst of them and said, "Peace be to you." Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger and see My hands. Reach here your hand and put it into My side. Do not doubt but believe" (John 20:25 to 27).

When humans die our bodies of flesh will be buried, cremated or lost at sea but our soul will be resurrected and given a new eternal body that looks the same as our earthly body just like Jesus had. However, our new immortal bodies will be perfect, not ravaged by sin, disease or age. Tragically, despite the Lord's every effort to save humanity not all human souls will go to heaven. People can choose to accept Jesus and eternal life or they can choose to reject God and be lost forever. Jesus did not come to save our bodies of flesh, He came to save our souls from ending up in the place of the damned called the Lake of Fire that burns forever, also called the 'second death' (Revelation 21:8). To enter heaven a person has to repent of their sin, walk with God, obey Him and He will write their names in His Book of Life (Psalm 69:28). But ... 'If anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, they were cast into the Lake of Fire' (Revelation 20:15). God decides when people die and how long they live so God only heals people when He does not want them to die – yet. If God wants us to live longer, nothing can kill us. If God wants us to die, nothing can prolong our lives on earth. God is the Creator and it is His prerogative to decide our lifespan. That is why even the most dedicated Christians die but they die knowing they will be resurrected into righteousness. They will die when God decides, not when we decide (Proverbs 3:2).

The following verses speak about the salvation of our souls, not our bodies of flesh. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah! By His boundless mercy we have been born-again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Born anew into an inheritance beyond the reach of decay, reserved in heaven for you ... until you fully inherit your final salvation that will be revealed to you in the last day. You should be exceedingly glad and greatly rejoice (in your salvation) though for a little while you may be distressed by trials and suffer temptations so the genuineness of your faith may be tested. Your faith is infinitely more precious than perishable gold, tested and purified by fire. This proving of your faith is intended to result in praise, glory and honour when the revelation of Jesus the Messiah, the Anointed One is revealed. Without having seen Him you love Him, you believe in Him and exult with inexpressible joy, receiving the result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. The prophets who prophesied of the grace intended for you, searched and inquired earnestly about this salvation. They sought to find out to whom or when this was to come which the Spirit of Jesus working within them was indicating when He predicted the sufferings of Jesus and the glories to follow' (1 Peter 1:3 to 11).

The Bible tells us there will be two different eternal resurrections when every person who has ever lived will have to stand before Jesus, the Son of Man, to be judged. The first one will be the resurrection only of righteous people who have been found worthy to be with God. Jesus warned us, "Be watchful all the time, praying you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will happen and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36). The second resurrection will be one thousand years later and will be for the wicked to stand before God to receive their judgement. 'Many of those who died and sleep in the dust of the earth (were buried) will awake, some to everlasting life (with God) and some to shame and everlasting contempt (in the Lake of Fire). Those who are wise (who walked with God) will shine as the brightness of the expanse and those who turn many to righteousness will shine as (brightly as) the stars forever and ever' (Daniel 12:2 & 3). 'The hour will come when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and will come out. Those who have done good (will be raised) to the resurrection of (eternal) life (with God) and those who have done evil (will be raised) to the resurrection of judgment' (John 5:28 & 29). 'I serve the God of our forefathers believing all things according to the law and what is written in the prophets, having hope toward God, which these people look for. There will be a resurrection of the dead both of the just and unjust ... It is for this one thing I cried out standing among them, "Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged before you today!"' (Acts 24:14, 15 & 21). Clearly, there are two separate resurrections of the dead – one for the righteous and one for the wicked – one for the just and one for the unjust. We will discuss the first resurrection first then we will discuss the second resurrection later in this article.

Jesus inferred, the first resurrection will be a time of rewarding the righteous for doing righteous deeds. 'Jesus said to the man who had invited Him, "When you make a dinner or a supper do not call your friends, nor your brothers, nor your kinsmen, nor rich neighbours or perhaps they might return the favour and pay you back, but when you make a feast ask the poor, the maimed, the lame or the blind and you will be blessed, because they do not have the resources to repay you. You will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous"' (Luke 14:12 to 14). 'Martha said to Jesus, "I know that Lazarus will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in Me will still live even if they die' (John 11:24 & 25). Jesus meant, people who believe in Him, follow Him and obey Him will live forever, even if their body dies. The Lord has called every believer to be baptised in water by full immersion, wherever possible so we can be part of His resurrection. 'Do you not know, we all who were baptised into Jesus were baptised into His death? We were buried with Him through baptism to death. Just like Jesus was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we might walk in newness of life. If we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, we will also be part of His resurrection' (Romans 6:3 to 5). 'Oh that I may know Him, the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed to His death if by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead' (Philippians 3:10 & 11).

When Adam sinned, he brought all humanity under the curse of physical and spiritual death. Jesus came to save our spirit and soul, not our bodies of flesh (1 Peter 1:9). 'Jesus has been raised from the dead. He became the Firstfruits of those who are dead. Since death came by man (Adam) the resurrection of the dead also came by Man (Jesus). As in Adam all die so in Jesus all (believers) will be made alive (resurrected), each in his own order. Jesus was the Firstfruits then those who are (believers in) Jesus' (will be resurrected) at His (second) coming, then (one thousand years later) when the end (of this world) comes He will deliver up the Kingdom to God the Father when He will have abolished all ungodly rule and all authority and power. He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet' (1 Corinthians 15:20 to 25). The end of this world will come after Jesus has reigned on earth for one thousand years.

'Someone will say, "How are the dead raised?" and, "With what kind of body do they come?" ... God gives everything a body as it pleased Him and to each seed a body of its own. All flesh is not the same flesh but there is one flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish and another of birds. There are celestial bodies (like the holy angels) and terrestrial bodies (like people) but the glory of the celestial differs from that of the terrestrial. So is the resurrection of the dead. This body is sown in corruption (sin) and raised in incorruption (holiness). It is sown in dishonour and raised in glory. It is sown in weakness and raised in power. It is sown in a natural body (our body of flesh) and raised in a spiritual body (like Jesus had after His resurrection). There is a natural body and there is also a spiritual body. The spiritual body is not first but what is natural, then the spiritual. The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam (Jesus) became a life-giving spirit. The first man is made of dust of the earth. The second Man is the Lord from heaven. Adam and his descendents are made of dust but and as is the heavenly, so they (the born-again believers) are heavenly. As we have borne the image of those made of dust, let us bear the image of the heavenly. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery. We will not all die but we will all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. The trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible and we will all be changed. This corrupted body must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. When this corruptible will have put on incorruption and this mortal will have put on immortality, then what is written will happen, "Death is swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your sting? Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin. Thanks be to God Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus' (1 Corinthians 15:35 to 57). The end of this age is not the end of the world.

The end of this age will happen when Jesus comes to rule over the earth for one thousand years and this is when the first resurrection of the righteous takes place. 'I saw thrones and the holy angels sat on them. Judgment was given to them. I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the Word of God ... They lived and reigned with Jesus for a thousand years. This is the first resurrection. The rest of the dead (the unrighteous) were not resurrected until the thousand years were finished. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. Over these people, the second death (the Lake of Fire) has no power but the holy people will be priests of God and of Jesus and will reign with Him one thousand years' (Revelation 20:4 to 6). The first resurrection is not Judgement Day. Judgement Day is over one thousand years after the second coming of Jesus.

The second resurrection ... The end of the world will come after the thousand years has been fulfilled. That is when the second resurrection of the unrighteous will take place. We know Jesus did everything He could to save the soul of every person who has ever lived and He started the early church, but there were millions of people who died before Jesus came the first time. He had to give them a chance of salvation and Jesus prophesied He would go into the heart of the earth for three days. Jesus said, "Just as Jonah was three days

and three nights in the belly of the whale so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). But why would Jesus go down into the heart of the earth for three days? After Jesus died and while He still bore the terrible wounds on His flesh from His crucifixion, He went to Hades, the place of the dead to preach to the souls of the people there. Hades is likened to a prison because nobody could escape from there unless they accepted Jesus. 'Jesus suffered for sins (of humanity) once, the Righteous for the unrighteous so He might bring you to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit He went down and preached to the spirits in prison (in Hades) who before (in the early days of humanity) were disobedient when God waited patiently in the days of Noah ... To this end the Gospel was preached even to the dead so they might be judged indeed as men in the flesh, but live as to God in the spirit' (1 Peter 3:18 to 20, then 1 Peter 4:6). Isaiah also prophesied the same event. 'The Spirit of the Lord God is on Me (Jesus) because God has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the humble. He has sent Me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound' (Isaiah 61:1). These deceased people whose souls are in the prison of Hades had to have a chance to walk with God and Jesus gave them their chance when He preached to them in the spiritual world of the dead. If they repented when Jesus preached to them they will be resurrected with the righteous but if they did not repent, they will be resurrected with the unrighteous. The attitude of some of the people who lived during the time Jesus was on earth reveals to us, not everyone wants to walk with God. The people who were living when Jesus was here were divided. Some accepted His Gospel and some rejected it. The people in Hades would have had the same attitude. The trouble with people rejecting the Gospel means they will end up facing the Judgement of God and they could end up suffering the second death, the eternal Lake of Fire from where there is absolutely no escape. It is forever and ever (Revelation 21:8). The scriptures tell us at least one person from every tribe, nation, language and family who ever lived on earth, from the most ancient of times right up to the present day will be represented in heaven, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of Jesus. 'Behold a great multitude which no man could number, out of every nation, of all tribes, peoples and languages were standing before the throne and before the Lamb (Jesus), dressed in white robes with palm branches in their hands' (Revelation 7:9).

Erroneous beliefs regarding eternal resurrection can be found in some churches. We know they are wrong because they are opposite to what the Bible teaches. If it is not written in the Bible we can be confident the text or belief is not from God. If a text or belief is not from God then it is either from a carnal spirit within a sinful person or it could be from the devil. Some denominations teach a so-called 'divine vision' or 'beautiful vision' will reward people in heaven. The so-called 'vision' is a spiritual entity like a non-physical eternity with God. That belief is very similar to ancient pagan Egyptian, Greek and Roman beliefs of their form of eternity. In fact until God began teaching the Jewish people via Moses, the entire world had their own erroneous beliefs regarding heaven. Vikings believed in Valhalla. An Eastern religion believes in Nirvana. All of these beliefs are completely wrong and opposite to what the Bible teaches. The Scripture teaches us we will have a true, actual resurrection and will be given an entirely new, incorruptible, immortal body, similar to the one we live in now on earth. Righteous people will have an immortal body and will live in heaven. Unrighteous people will have an immortal body and be sent to the Lake of Fire. There is no place 'in between' the two.

This is what will happen after the thousand years reign of Jesus. This is the end of this earth and the universe. 'The heavens and the earth we have now, (created) by the same Word (of God) have been stored up for fire being reserved against the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men ... The day of the Lord will come as (suddenly) as a thief in the night in which the heavens will be destroyed with a great noise and the elements (stars, comets, meteors etc) will be dissolved with fervent heat and the earth and the works in it will be burned up ... Christians look for and earnestly desire the coming of the day of God, which will cause the burning heavens to be dissolved and the elements will melt with fervent heat' (2 Peter 3:7, 10 & 12). Some people may ask, "If this heaven and earth is going to be burned up at the end of the world, where will the righteous live?" We will live on a newly created earth and universe. 'Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth and the former things (of earth) will not be remembered nor come to mind ... The new heavens and the new earth, which I will make will remain before Me, says God' (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22). 'According to God's promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells' (2 Peter 3:13). 'I (Apostle John) saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth have been destroyed and the sea is no more' (Revelation 21:1). God Himself will live with us. He will be our God and we will be His people (Revelation 21:3). This new earth will be glorious where fullness of life, including holy physical life will be given to us. This idea of a physical resurrected body was scoffed at during Jesus' day by some Jewish Sadducees and by some pagan Gentiles (Acts 17:32) and is still rejected by some Gentiles today. Jesus and the apostles taught the resurrection truth as their doctrine which was greatly strengthened when Jesus physically rose from the dead and had His new, resurrected body the disciples could see and touch and He ate a meal with them (Luke 24:36 to 43). For centuries the true resurrection promise was rejected by the church, yet understanding the Scriptures makes sense when we discuss the real, physical resurrection. Believers who are found to be worthy to enter heaven will not be floating around

in an ethereal wonderland. We will be living on the newly created earth with our Lord and Saviour, Jesus our Messiah.

The fact is, Jesus was resurrected from the dead to live forever in His new immortal body. When Jesus was born on earth He had a mortal body like all mankind but after His resurrection He had a new immortal body to show all of His genuine believers, they too will have an immortal body that looks just our earthly body. Jesus was resurrected and will never die again. We will be resurrected and will never die again. Jesus was careful to teach us about the resurrection and we can only imagine how wonderful it was to be taught by our Master, Creator, Saviour and Messiah being God Himself. Our resurrected Lord met with dozens of people after He had risen and continued teaching them. The resurrection of Jesus was an actual historical event, witnessed by hundreds of people and recorded in the New Testament for everyone to read and be informed. His resurrection was an example of what genuine believers will experience when we are resurrected. The apostles believed Jesus would be resurrected but they could not comprehend what it meant. Thanks to the writers of the Gospels we are able to understand exactly what resurrection is and we can be excited about our heavenly future. Before Jesus rose, the disciples were fearful doubters but after He rose and after they had been filled with the Holy Spirit the apostles and hundreds more disciples became fearless, courageous, confident proclaimers of the Salvation Message of Jesus and of the Kingdom of God, giving up their lives to preach the Truth. Apostle John was the only apostle not to be murdered for his faith. Their amazing transformation from fearful to fearless is the greatest proof they had experienced the actual resurrection of Jesus. No ordinary vision would be able to transform so many people at one time. It had to be an extraordinary experience to change people to that extent.

If you who are reading this want to escape the second resurrection that leads to Judgement Day and want to be included in the first resurrection of the righteous, you will need to accept Jesus as your Saviour, accept His sacrifice, be baptised by full immersion and walk obediently with God every day of your life and you could be part of His thousand year reign on earth. This is what righteous believers can look forward to and what the unrighteous will miss out on. 'Jesus came and He took the Book of Life out of the right hand of God Who sat on the throne. When Jesus had taken the Book the four living creatures (seraphim) and the twenty-four (Jewish) elders fell down before the Lamb, each one having a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints (God's holy people). They sang a new song saying, "You are worthy to take the Book and to open its seals for You were sacrificed and redeemed us for God with Your blood out of every tribe, language, people and nation, and made us kings and priests to our God and we will reign on earth." I (Apostle John) saw and I heard something like a voice of many holy angels around the throne, the four living creatures (seraphim) and the (twenty-four Jewish) elders, and the number of the redeemed was ten thousands of ten thousands and thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb Who has been slain, to receive the power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honour, glory and blessing!" I heard every created thing in heaven, on the earth, (buried) under the earth, in the sea and everything in them saying, "To Him Who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be the blessing, the honour, the glory and the dominion, forever and ever!" Amen!' (Revelation 5:7 to 13).

Amen and God bless you.

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