

In this study we will be examining three resurrections: the resurrection of Christ and what it means for believers, the resurrection of the righteous dead which is called the first resurrection and the resurrection of the wicked dead, called the second death. Resurrection means a return to life subsequent to death. There are two types of resurrection referred to in scripture: spiritual and physical. Spiritual resurrection is that of the human spirit being quickened - made alive by the Holy Spirit - from death in trespasses and sins, to a renewed life in Christ (CP Ro 6:11; Eph 2:1-7; 5:14). This expresses what being born again means, or the doctrine of regeneration. It only takes place in this life. When this life is ended there is no more spiritual resurrection (CP He 9:27; Rev 22:11-12).

These scriptures prove conclusively that there is no further opportunity after death for salvation, yet a great many Christians believe there is. They misconstrue what the scriptures teach about Jesus preaching to the spirits in prison in 1Peter (CP 1Pe 3:18-20). These are not the spirits of humans being given another chance for eternal life as so many believe. They are fallen angels whom God has reserved in chains until the Great White Throne Judgement, when they will be consigned to hell (CP 2Pe 2:4-6). The Greek word for hell here is **tartarus**, a dark abyss, a place of punishment, a prison for fallen angels (CP Jude 6-7). The spirits in prison are the fallen angels of Gen 6 who produced the giants of the Old Testament which precipitated Noah's flood (CP Ge 6:1-7). The word *preached* in 1Pe 3:19 would be more appropriately translated as herald or proclaim. The Greek word used here is **kerusso** which means to proclaim or herald, as a public crier, whereas the Greek word to describe preaching the gospel for salvation is **euangelizo** which means to evangelise, proclaim the good news, preach the gospel. These spirits sinned in the days of Noah yet all humans who sinned then perished in the flood. They are not kept in a special prison. Furthermore human spirits are never just called *spirits* in scripture. Where human spirits are referred to they are qualified as such (CP Nu 16:22; 27:16; He 12:23). Now to the resurrection of Jesus.

The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead is not just one of the held beliefs of the Christian faith; it is the primary and essential truth of the whole gospel of salvation. Without that truth the gospel of salvation has no purpose. It is the foundational principle of the new birth. Faith in a risen saviour is the very essence of Christian belief. It is a condition of our salvation (CP Ro 10:8-10). It is the resurrection, not the cross, which is the focal point of the New Testament. As crucial as the cross was to God's plan of salvation and without detracting in any way from the significance of Christ's pain and suffering on the cross as the central fact of Christianity, because the cross was the price Jesus paid for our redemption, it was the empty tomb and the risen Christ that made resurrection life for believers possible. The resurrection of Christ transforms His death on the

cross into the gospel of life (CP Ro 4:24-25; 1Cor 15:3-4; Eph 1:19-23; 1Pe 1:3-5). On the cross Jesus was no threat to His enemies, but in the tomb He was. His enemies were not concerned that He would get down from the cross but they were concerned that He would rise up from the grave: His resurrection had been prophesied in the Old Testament (CP Ps 16:10; 49:15; 68:18; Isa 26:19). And He had foretold it Himself (CP Mt 12:38-41; 16:21, 17:22-23; 20:18-19; 27:63-66; Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:34; Lu 9:22; 18:31-33; 24:7, 21, 46). As well He had also raised up three dead people: the daughter of Jairus (CP Mk 5:22-23, 38-43), the son of the widow of Nain (CP Lu 7:11-15) and Lazarus (CP Jn 11:41-45). Their resurrection fulfilled God's purpose for that particular moment in time but Jesus' resurrection fulfilled God's purpose for eternity. Jesus can never die again, and neither will those who are redeemed unto resurrection life with Him (CP Jn 3:16, 36; 5:24; 11:25-26; 1Th 5:9-11; 1Jn 5:11-12).

Our new life in Christ began at the resurrection. It is true that we were crucified with Him on the cross and buried with Him by baptism unto death that the body of sin might be destroyed, but we did not become new creations in Christ until we arose with Him from the grave, i.e. after we had died to sin (CP Ro 6:1-10; 2Cor 5:17; Col 2:11-13; 3:1-3). Ro 6:1-10 and Col 2:11-13 do not refer to water baptism as many believe but to believers being baptised into Christ by the Holy Spirit at their conversion to Christ and then living completely renewed and empowered lives in Christ thereafter. This is made clearer in Col 3:1-3.

Christ won the victory over sin and death for believers through the resurrection, and since He is raised from the dead, believers have the assurance that the next step in God's plan of salvation is their resurrection into Christ's glory. This is the certainty we have because Christ has been raised from the dead and He said, "because I live, ye shall live also" (CP Jn 14:19). We do not live anticipating physical death as unbelievers do but in anticipation of Jesus coming again for us, and whether we be living or dead at that time we shall rise together with Him in glory. This is assured because He has already risen and ascended to heaven. That is why the resurrection is so important to believers - not only does it guarantee the future resurrection of the righteous dead, but it also guarantees the rapture of the saints still living when Jesus comes back (CP Jn 14:1-3; 1Cor 15:51-57; 1Th 4:13-18; Rev 20:6).

When we partake of the Lord's supper we are sharing in and identifying with His death and His resurrection from the dead. If Christ was still in the grave there would be no body or blood to partake of, but since He is risen from the grave and lives for evermore, as we take unto ourselves the elements representing His body and His blood, we are taking unto ourselves His everlasting and abundant life (CP Ro 5:8-11, 18-19). That is why communion is a healing and renewal service as well as a memorial service (CP Isa 53:5). In the communion service we

are proclaiming the salvation benefits our Lord purchased for us through His death and resurrection. One of the benefits is our own future resurrection (CP 1Cor 15:19-23).

Now to what Jesus calls the first resurrection. It is foretold by Job (CP Job 19:25-27), King David (CP 2Sam 12:23; Psa 17:15), Isaiah (CP Isa 25:6-8; 26:19), Daniel (CP Dan 12:2), Jesus Himself (CP Jn 5:28-29; Rev 20:4-6), and Paul (CP 1Cor 15:20-22, 51-57; Php 3:8-12, 20-21; 1Th 4:13-16). Notice in Dan 12:2, Jn 5:28-29 and Rev 20:4-6 that both the first and the second resurrections are referred to. They merge into one but they are two distinct and separate events in time. The second resurrection will not take place until at least 1007 years after the first resurrection (which allows 7 years for Antichrist's reign and 1000 years for Christ's millennial reign). The first resurrection includes all the righteous dead from Abel to the very last one saved in the tribulation. All the redeemed from all ages are included, not just the Church. This even includes Rahab the harlot (CP Josh 2:1-3, 6:17-25; He 11:31, Jas 2:25). Jesus said in Jn 5:28-29 that **all** that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth: those that have done good unto the resurrection of life, which is the first resurrection, and those that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation which Jesus calls the second death. Those that have done good include Old Testament saints and New Testament saints alike. We will all be resurrected from the grave and raptured to heaven together.

The rapture and the first resurrection go hand in hand. They are two facets of the one event that will occur when Jesus comes again to take the saints up to heaven (CP 1Cor 15:19-23, 42-45, 51-58; Php 3:20-21; 1Th 4:13-18). These scriptures clearly express the Lord's eternal purpose and plan for His saints. The ultimate purpose of His coming back for the saints is so that they will be with Him in all eternity and taking them to heaven is simply the first step in His purpose (CP Ro 8:28-30). We learn from 1Th 4:14 that when Jesus comes back for the saints He will bring with Him the spirits and the souls of all the dead saints to be united to their resurrected bodies. Their corruptible bodies will rise up from their graves and put on incorruption while the mortal bodies of the saints still living at that time will put on immortality. They will all be changed in the blink of an eye (1Cor 15:52). We also learn from Php 3:21 that our new transformed bodies will be flesh and bone like Christ's glorious resurrected body which He showed to the disciples before He ascended to heaven (CP Lu 24:36-43; 1Jn 3:2).

The first resurrection covers the period of time from Christ's resurrection until His second coming (CP 1Cor 15:23; Rev 20:4-5). There are six different resurrections and/or raptures referred to in scripture during this period. The first was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He was first resurrected, then raptured to heaven (CP Lu 24:50-51). Second was

Paul the apostle. He was raptured to heaven for a time of learning from the Lord (CP 2Cor 12:1-4). The next will be "...they that are Christ's at His coming". This includes all the dead saints - Old Testament and New Testament alike. They will be resurrected from their graves and then raptured to heaven together with the saints still living at that time - the Church (CP 1Cor 15:19-23; 1Th 4:13-18). This signifies the end of the Church age. No person left on earth at this time will be in Christ. All that are Christ's at His coming will be gone. The next ones to go to heaven will be the man-child (CP Rev 12:1-5). It will be raptured in the middle of Antichrist's reign to escape the second half of the Great Tribulation (CP Rev 7:1-4 with Rev 14:1-5). The fifth combined resurrection and rapture are God's two witnesses (CP Rev 11:3-12). The last ones taken up to heaven are the great multitude of saints who get saved during the Tribulation (CP Rev 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 15:2-4; 20:4-6).

Everyone may not agree with the number, or the order of the resurrections and raptures listed here, but being right or wrong is not fundamental to salvation. All we have to do is respect each other's point of view and make sure we are included among those that are Christ's at His coming. That is the only thing that matters because scriptures clearly teach that those who think they are Christ's, but are not committed to His gospel, will have no place in His kingdom (CP Mt 5:13-16, 20). To demonstrate the impact Christians should have on the world Jesus used two common illustrations in V13-16: salt and light. The important quality to note is that salt ought to maintain its basic character. If it does not it has lost its purpose for existence and is only fit to be thrown out. That is a grim warning to Christians who lose their zeal for the things of God (CP Jn 15:1-6). Jesus teaches virtually the same thing here that He teaches in Mt 5:13-16. It is an ominous warning to those who are not committed to Christ's gospel. Christians are to be the light of the world. A light is meant to shine and give direction - like a city built on a hill or a lamp on its lampstand - all can see it. It is not to be hidden from sight. Light-radiating Christians live so that others can see their good deeds and glorify God in heaven (CP Mt 7:19-27).

There are only two options open to those who hear the gospel: they can build on one of two foundations - rock or sand. The rock represents the Lord Jesus Christ and His truths and the sand represents our own righteousness. Our own righteousness cannot save us. It is only by being completely surrendered to the authority of Jesus and totally consecrated to the service of God that we can withstand the forces of darkness that beset us in life (CP Lu 13:23-24). We only need these two verses to give us the understanding of what Jesus teaches here. The word *strive* means to contend for; to compete for a prize; to labour fervently; to take pains; to wrestle; as in an award contest, straining every nerve to the uttermost toward the goal. This is presented right throughout the New Testament as

the life task of every Christian (CP Jn 6:24-27; 1Cor 9:24-25; Php 2:12; 3:8-15; He 4:1-3; 2Jn 1:8). The onus is upon all Christians to contend for the things of God and to reject the things that cause enmity with God (CP 2Th 2:8-12).

This teaches us that after the Church is raptured to heaven salvation will no longer be available to those still living on earth who have already heard the gospel and rejected it. They will be lost for eternity if they do not repent and commit their way to Jesus while the Church is still here. This includes members of our own immediate family and other relatives and friends whom we love dearly, as well as professing Christians not truly committed to Christ and others who are backslidden (CP Mt 12:30; Rev 22:11-12). These scriptures clearly define those who are Christ's. Rev 22:12 refers to the rapture and highlights the impending doom that awaits the unbelievers and reprobates of V11. What a man is when Jesus comes back for the saints is what he will be in all eternity. Show those who have already heard the gospel and rejected it or are backslidden these scriptures and explain what they mean: that once the Church is gone from the earth salvation will only be available to those who never had an adequate opportunity to receive the knowledge of the truth, or to hear and understand the gospel. No one else will ever get another chance.

We must never hold out a false hope of heaven to anyone not completely yielded to the authority of Jesus and totally consecrated to the service of God (CP Mt 7:19-27). There is no hope of ruling and reigning with Jesus throughout eternity without that commitment and consecration in our earthly life, and there are many scriptures to confirm this. The

truth is there is only one kind of Christian in God's order of things: the

born again Christian. No other can enter into the kingdom of heaven (CP Jn 3:3-5). The parable of the ten virgins in Mt 25:1-13, the parable of the talents in Mt 25:14-30 and the parable of the unfaithful servant in Lu 12:35-48 all teach us that those who profess to love God but are indifferent and careless about the things of God will forfeit their place in the kingdom when Christ returns for the saints. These are three profitable teachings that we should all know (CP Mt 25:1-13; 25:14-30; Lu 12:35-48).

Now to the second death which takes place after Christ's 1000 year reign on earth (CP Rev 20:4-6, 11-15). In stark contrast to the rewards or loss of rewards, according to their earthly works the saints will receive at the Judgement Seat of Christ in the first resurrection, here at the Great White Throne Judgement the wicked dead will be judged to determine the degrees of punishment they will suffer in hell according to their earthly works (CP Lu 10:10,15; 12:39-48). Lu 12:47-48 teaches that the greater their knowledge of God the worse will be the punishment of those that rejected that knowledge. It is sobering to think that they are all doomed to a Christless eternity of torment and damnation yet some of them could have been saved if only we Christians had tried a bit harder. What a compelling motive we have for praying for the lost, for preaching what the Bible teaches about hell and for winning souls to Christ (CP Jn 9:4 with Jude 23). *Day* in Jn 9:4 signifies life and *night* signifies death. Believers must also do the works of God now. Soon it will be too late (CP 2Cor 6:2). "...now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."