



# A Traveler's Guide to the Afterlife

*A Bible Literacy Study Guide on the Eternal Destiny of the Individual*  
Dr. Timothy Gordon

## The Resurrection of the Body

# The Resurrection of the Body



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**These images are from the collection of Christian Art by contemporary artist, Duncan Long.**

# The Afterlife

Hades (NT)

Paradise

New Heaven & New Earth  
(Rev. 21:27)



**Body Dies**  
(Eccl. 12:7)

*Spirit* →

→ *Spirit*

Paradise

Lazarus, Jesus, thief on cross, OT righteous dead



**Great Gulf**  
(Luke 16:26)

Tartarus

rich man, angels who sinned, OT wicked dead



Sheol (OT)

*Eph. 4:8-9*

*1 Thess. 4:13-18*

*2nd Coming & Resurrection*

*2nd Coming & Resurrection*

**Judgment**  
2 Cor. 5:10

*Mt. 25:46*

*Mt. 25:41*

Hell  
(Rev. 21:8)

# The Resurrection Defined



- The central, defining doctrine and claim of the Christian faith is the resurrection of Jesus Christ, whom God brought forth from the dead.
- The resurrection of the dead refers to the promise based on the bodily resurrection of Jesus, that all believers will one day join Christ in the resurrection.
- Believers will be transformed, that is, renewed both morally and physically with "spiritual" bodies adapted for eternal life with God.

# The Resurrection Defined

## Miraculous Healings



- Elijah on the Zarephath widow's son (1 Kings 17:20-24)
- Elisha on the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4:32-37)
- The dead man who touched Elisha's bones (2 Kings 13:21)
- Jesus on Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:41-43)
- Lazarus (John 11:43-44)
- Peter on Dorcas (Acts 9:40-41)
- Paul on Eutychus (Acts 20:9-12).
- Matthew's account of the dead who were raised immediately after Jesus died (Matt. 27:52-53).
- In these raisings there is no suggestion that the person will not again experience death.

# The Resurrection Defined

## The Resurrection of Jesus Christ



- This resurrection is clearly linked with the overcoming of the powers of evil and death.
- For Paul, Christ's resurrection is the basis for the doctrine of general resurrection (1 Cor 15:12-19).

# The Resurrection Defined

## The Hope of a General Resurrection



- Many of the Greek philosophers, such as Plato, believed that an immortal soul inhabited a body and that at death the soul left its bodily prison and soared upward to the divine spirit.
- In the Old Testament *Sheol* is the place of the rephaim (shades), the Hebrew term for a weakened existence (Isa 14:9-11).
- These beings, however, are not souls without bodies. Therefore, the psalmist expected that God would ransom his soul from *Sheol* (Ps 49:15).
- It was Israel's firm belief in the goodness of God that led the Jewish people to believe that the righteous dead would yet see God (Job 19:26).
- This expectation was the foundation upon which the Jewish ideas concerning the resurrection were built.



# Significant Scriptures



- Isaiah 26:19—*Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.*
- Daniel 12:2—*2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*
- John 5:28-29—*28 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.*
- John 6:44—*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.*
- John 11:25—*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,*



# 1 Corinthians 15:50-54



- *50 I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*
- *51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,*
- *52 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.*
- *53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.*
- *54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."*

# 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18



- *13 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.*
- *14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.*
- *15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.*
- *16 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.*
- *17 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.*
- *18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

# Jewish Views of the Resurrection

## The Sadducees



- The Sadducees, who were oriented to this world, rejected any belief in the resurrection.
- They believed that such an idea was irrelevant to this life and was not part of the revelation which God gave to Moses.
- The Sadducees sought to trap Jesus by their question concerning the seven brothers who married one woman.
- Jesus criticized their view of resurrection life by indicating that earthly marriage patterns are not repeated in heaven.
- He also condemned their understanding of Moses and the Scriptures (Mark 12:18-27).

# Jewish Views of the Resurrection

## The Pharisees



- The Pharisees, in contrast to the Sadducees, believed in a resurrection.
- The Jewish historian Josephus reported that the Pharisees held that the good dead are transferred into other bodies.
- Although this report is not totally clear, it is certain that the Pharisees proclaimed a life after death that required a resurrection.
- It was from the ranks of these scholarly Pharisees that the apostle Paul came (Phil 3:5).
- Luke records that in his defense before the Sanhedrin (Jewish Council), Paul stressed that he was a Pharisee of Pharisaic descent and that he was on trial for affirming the resurrection (Acts 23:6).

# Resurrection in the OT



- Israel's concepts of the resurrection were born out of her relationship to God in her tumultuous history.
- At first glance the prophet Isaiah seems to express a view that the resurrection is for the faithful and that the wicked may not arise (Isa 26:10-19).
- The Jewish loyalist of the apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees apparently agreed that for some there will be no resurrection to life.
- But Daniel announced, "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan 12:2).

# Intertestamental Era



- With the prophetic voice being silent in the second temple period, and a feeling of the remoteness of God, harmonization with the justice of God took the form of requital after death.
- The question of why bad things happen to righteous people continued to fuel the concept of the resurrection, especially in light of the failure to establish Israel as the powerful nation it had once been.
- Apocalyptic literature was more commonplace, and the afterlife and the concern for individual salvation were prominent.
- It is in the context of persecuted saints in the second temple period that resurrection from the dead was developed into the form that is found in the New Testament.

# Intertestamental Era



- It is during this period that the concept of bodily resurrection takes shape.
- The Maccabean revolt in 167 B.C. incited the earlier belief in the resurrection of the just and polarized it to new heights.
- Other Jewish sources reveal a belief in a resurrection. The early second-century Syriac text 2 Baruch is an example.
- By the time of Christ, the Pharisees (the most influential Jewish sect just prior to the Christian period who dated back to at least the second century B.C.) believed in a resurrection (Acts 23:8) whereas, the Sadducees did not (Matt 22:23; Acts 23:8).



# Resurrection in the NT



- The New Testament consistently teaches hope in the resurrection of the believer based upon the resurrection of Christ as the "firstborn from the dead" (1 Cor 15:12-58; Col 1:18; 1 Thess 4:14-18; 1 Peter 1:3-5).
- This idea of resurrection is expressed in terms of such images as a transformed body (Phil 3:21), a new dwelling (2 Cor 5:2), and new clothing (2 Cor 5:4; Rev 6:11).
- The New Testament also contrasts resurrection to life with resurrection to judgment (John 5:29; Acts 24:15).
- Apparently a similar contrast lies behind the statements in Rev 20 about "the first resurrection" (20:5) and "the second death" (20:14).
- Not all who sought identification with the Christian church proclaimed a future resurrection. Some preached a spiritual awakening, or resurrection, that was already past.
- Such a view, adopted by Hymenaeus and Philetus and adopted by later Gnostic heretics, was sternly condemned by Paul (2 Tim 2:17-19).

# Rapture of the Church



- A phrase used by **premillennialists** to refer to the church being united with Christ at his second coming (from the Lat. *rapio*, "caught up"). The main scriptural passage upon which the teaching is based is 1 Thess 4:15-17.
- The major divisions of interpretation of Paul's words center on the relationship of the time of the rapture to the tribulation period which marks the end of the age.
- The **pretribulationists** teach that the church will be removed before this seven-year period and the revelation of the antichrist.
- The **midtribulationists** contend that the church will be raptured during the tribulation after the antichrist's rise to power but before the severe judgments that prepare the way for Christ's return to establish his rule on earth.
- The **posttribulationists** believe that the church will continue to exist in the world throughout the entire tribulation and be removed at the end of the period when Christ returns in power.

# gracEmail: The Rapture



**A Texas sister writes, "What is the Rapture in connection with Jesus' return for his church? I am terribly confused."**

**\* \* \***

The word "rapture" comes from a Latin verb meaning "to seize." The Bible does not use this word but it does envision a time when God's people are caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17). Evangelical Christians understand this in at least two different ways. Some look for a time before Christ's final return when all saved persons living on the earth will suddenly be snatched away to meet the Lord, leaving driverless automobiles racing down highways, airplane seats suddenly empty of passengers and millions of blank spots where living, flesh-and-blood people had been only an eye blink before. That is the premise of the *Left Behind* book series which has sold millions of copies.

# gracEmail: The Rapture



**A Texas sister writes, "What is the Rapture in connection with Jesus' return for his church? I am terribly confused."**

\* \* \*

Many other Christians, including myself, note that the passage which speaks most clearly about believers being caught up also says this will occur after Jesus descends from heaven, the final trumpet sounds and dead Christians have been resurrected. "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16-17). Those of us who hold this view do not think anyone will be "left behind" to continue living on this earth, for then human history here will have come to an end.

The modern church would do well to recover the blessed hope of Christ's return. That hope certainly includes the belief that Christ will some day take all his people to be with him forever – however God sees fit to handle it. Rather than speculating and quarreling over details, we would better spend our time anticipating that day and sharing the gospel with others who are not yet prepared.

# The Fact of the Resurrection



- **Jesus taught there will be a resurrection...**
  - A time is coming in which both those good and evil will come forth from the grave - **Jn 5:28-29**
  - Jesus assures those who believe in Him will be raised at "the last day" - **Jn 6:39-40,44,54**
- **His apostles proclaimed a resurrection from the dead...**
  - Peter and John "preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" - **Ac 4:1-2**
  - In his defenses before the Sanhedrin and Felix, Paul confessed his hope in the resurrection - **Ac 23:6; 24:15**
  - To the church at Corinth, Paul asserted the necessity of the resurrection - **1 Co 15:12-23**
  - To the church at Thessalonica, he taught the doctrine of the resurrection as a source of comfort - **1 Th 4:16-18**

# The Agent of the Resurrection



- **Christ attributed it to "the power of God"...**
  - As He reminded the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection - **Mt 22:29**
  - And of course, "with God nothing will be impossible" - cf. **Lk 1:37**
- **Paul also emphasized "the power of God"...**
  - The same power that raised Jesus from the dead - **1 Co 6:14**
  - He who can raise Jesus from the dead can certainly raise us up at the last day - **2 Co 4:14**



# The Universality of the Resurrection

- **As taught by Jesus - John 5:28-29**
  - o "ALL who are in the graves will...come forth"
  - o Both "those who have done good" and "those who have done evil"
    - One to experience a "resurrection of life"
    - The other a "resurrection of condemnation"
- **Paul taught all would be raised...**
  - o "both of the just and the unjust" - **Ac 24:15**
  - o "for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" - **1 Co 15:21-22**



# The Time of the Resurrection



- **At the "last day", when the Lord comes again...**
  - o Jesus spoke again and again of raising the dead at "the last day" - **Jn 6:39-40,44,54**
  - o Paul wrote of it occurring when Jesus comes again, to deliver the kingdom to the Father, having destroyed the last enemy, death itself - **1 Co 15:22-26**
  - o He later says that it will occur at "the last trumpet" - **1 Co 15:52**

# The Resurrection Body

## The Body of the Righteous



- Will be our physical bodies, but gloriously changed and different! - **1 Co 15:35-55**
  - o By the power of God (cf. **Mt 22:29**), our physical bodies will serve as the "kernel" from which comes incorruptible and immortal bodies in which to house our souls - **1 Co 15: 35-37**
  - o Our physical bodies...
    - Sown in corruption, will be raised in incorruption! - **1 Co 15:42**
    - Sown in dishonor, will be raised in glory! - **1 Co 15:43a**
    - Sown in weakness, will be raised in power! - **1 Co 15:43b**
    - Sown as natural bodies, will be raised as spiritual bodies! – **1 Co 15:44-49**
  - o Even those who are alive at Christ's coming will undergo this "change", in which that which is corruptible and mortal will "put on" incorruption and immortality - **1 Co 15:50-55**

# The Resurrection Body

## The Body of the Righteous



- Will be conformed to the glorious body of our Lord! - **Ph 3:20-21**
  - o That which is "lowly" will be transformed to be like that which "glorious"
  - o How? "...according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself"; i.e., by the power of God!

# The Resurrection Body

## The Body of the Wicked



- Very little is actually revealed, other than the wicked will indeed be raised from the dead
- Though the Scriptures only apply the terms "incorruption" and "immortality" to the resurrection bodies of the righteous, most interpreters hold that the resurrection body of the wicked...
  - Is not subject again to death
  - Is capable of experiencing eternal suffering
  - There are some, however, who understand that the "second death" will be literal...
    - I.e., after the resurrection and judgment, the wicked will "die" again (a separation of resurrected "body" and spirit)
    - Not that the wicked will be annihilated, but that they will spend eternity as "disembodied spirits" in the lake of fire
    - This is not to be confused with those either don't believe in a resurrection of the wicked, or who believe the wicked will be annihilated
- Since the Bible is relatively silent on this subject perhaps **"...the best course seems to be simply leave the problem where it was left by the writers of the New Testament."** (Ray Summers, The Life Beyond, p. 93)

# Questions for Discussion



1. What does the OT teach about resurrection? Discuss Is. 26:19 and Dan. 12:2.
2. What does the NT teach about resurrection? Discuss Luke 14:13-14; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; Rom. 8:11.
3. What does the Bible teach about the resurrection event? Discuss 1 Cor. 15:5-54 and 1 Thess. 4:13-18.
4. What kind of resurrection body will Christians have? Discuss Matt. 22:30; 1 Cor. 15:42-44; 2 Cor. 5:1-4; 1 John 3:2.
5. Discuss the concept of a rapture of the church in dispensationalism. Is it biblical? Why or why not?

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