

THE FIRST RESURRECTION

In the Book of Revelation we read that people who participate in the first resurrection are blessed and holy. And the writer to the Hebrews says that some people will participate in a better resurrection.

Is there more than one resurrection spoken of in the Bible? Just what is this first and better first resurrection?

If you do not know the answers to these questions you might want to pay careful attention to the information contained in this broadcast. Because, you will hear things that very few understand or teach about an awesome opportunity that is being offered during the gospel age of salvation.

John records this in the Book of Revelation about the first resurrection:

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their right hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev.20:4-6 KJV).

Because of their performance under extremely difficult circumstances, these individuals will receive a greater reward than those who subsequently enter the Kingdom of God at a later date and under different circumstances.

The Righteous Dead of All Ages

In the Book of Hebrews, chapter eleven, beginning in verse 33, there is a long list of righteous individuals who died without receiving what God had promised them.

"These are the individuals, Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection" (Heb.11:33-35 KJV).

A Better Resurrection

The entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews chronicles these righteous individuals and their deeds of faith as they lived and died in obedience to God. Verse 35 shows that they did all this in order to obtain a better resurrection. Is one resurrection better than another? The answer is Yes! The first resurrection is the best and most desirable, because of the rewards that will be given to those who participate in it.

Continuing in verse 39:

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb.11:39-40 KJV). See also v13.

At that point in history, these righteous individuals had not received their reward; moreover, they still have not received it. They are dead, and not alive in heaven or any other place. However, the prophets and the righteous of all ages, including Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, and David, will receive their reward at the same time as those who died after Jesus and those who remain alive at his return. See 1.Thes.4:13-15.

THE DAY JESUS RETURNS

One of the most misunderstood topics of the Bible is the return of Christ. Most people do not begin to comprehend the magnitude of the events that surround this climactic event or its importance in the overall plan of God for the future of humanity. The first resurrection will undoubtedly be one of the most awesome and glorious events to ever take place.

A number of cataclysmic, earthshaking events will occur on the day that Jesus returns to the earth. The following are three of these major events that directly concern the elect of God:

The resurrection of the righteous dead to immortality

The change of the living righteous to immortality

The rewarding of the righteous for their diligent effort and self-sacrifice

Jesus Appears In The Sky

One of the first events on this day will be the gathering of the elect of God to meet Jesus in the atmosphere above the earth. As Jesus enters the earth's atmosphere and lights the sky with his glory, the angels will begin to collect the righteous of all ages:

Jesus said of this awesome event:

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24:29-31 KJV). See also Isa.43:5-7; Mk.13:24-27; 14:62; Rev.1:7.

The Dead Rise First

In this great day, everyone who has obtained salvation will rise to meet Jesus as he enters the atmosphere, and all of the righteous who have died over the centuries will be resurrected and will join him before those who are alive at his coming:

The apostle Paul told the Thessalonians:

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep [that means those who are dead], that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep

in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep" (1.Thes.4:13-15 KJV; 1.Cor.15:51-54).

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1.Thes.4:16-17 KJV). See also 2.Thes.2:1-8.

Some believe that these verses mean that the righteous will not come back to earth but will remain in heaven; however, this is not the case. All of the prophecies that deal with the Kingdom of God in relationship to physical humans after the return of Christ clearly show Jesus ruling on earth over nations comprised of physical humans. If the righteous are to be with Jesus, they will be on earth with him, not somewhere in heaven. See Matt.5:5; Rev.5:10.

The Change to Immortality

Those who participate in the first resurrection will have escaped the punishment reserved for the wicked and have been promised that they will live forever as immortal spirit-beings in the Kingdom of God.

Notice what is said of these individuals in the Book of Revelation chapter 2 and 20:

"He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches; He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death" (Rev.2:11 Para.).

In chapter 20 we read:

"Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power. . ." (Rev.20:6).

To Be Immortal

The gift that God offers to those he calls to participate in the first resurrection is not just eternal

life; it is much more. The angels have eternal life and are sustained by God's life-giving power yet they can be destroyed if they disobey God. The life God offers to the elect is immortal life, which can never be destroyed:

The quality of life that the righteous are promised is comparable to that which God himself has. God the Father and Jesus Christ are spirit-beings who inherently possess the highest form of life: immortality on the divine plane of existence. This kind of life springs forth from itself; it never dies or decays and is not dependent on any other source to sustain it: See 1.Tim.1:17; 6:12-16.

To the Elect at Corinth, Paul explains the resurrection from the dead and the difference between the mortal humans who can die and the immortal spirit-being who cannot die. Paul says:

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory" (vs.51-54). See also 2.Tim.1:9-10; 1.Pet.4:6; Rev.20:6.

It is this quality of life called immortality that God grants to those who participate in the first resurrection. The acquisition of immortality and eternal life allows the elect to pass beyond this physical existence into the Family of God. Immortality represents the highest reward for faithfulness to God, and it is abundantly clear that God intends to share immortality with those he calls to salvation during the gospel age.

Article Offer

If you want to know what the Bible actually says about the difference between eternal life and immortal life and how to obtain both, get a copy of my book "How to Become Immortal.

Peter said of the great gift of immortality:

"Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature. . ." (2.Pet.1:4 KJV).

To have divine nature, is to have the nature of the Sovereign God and his Son, who are at present the only God-beings in the divine Family of God.

The apostle John said of this divine nature:

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1.Jn.3:2 KJV). See also Rom.6:1-5; Phil.3:21.

The apostle John leaves no doubt that those who participate in the first resurrection become God-beings in the Family of God.

According to the prophet Daniel: The righteous who receive immortality, will also receive a glorified body, which will radiate with the brightness of the stars. Chapter 12 of the Book of Daniel says this:

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan.12:3 KJV).

The apostle Paul said that, those who participate in the first resurrection are among the first of humanity to resurrected from the dead and enter the Kingdom of God as spirit-beings.

Paul said:

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1.Cor.15:19-23 KJV). See also Col.1:13-18.

To the Romans he said this about those who were to be first:

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestine to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom.8:29 KJV). See also 2.Cor.6:17-18; Jn.1:12; chp.3:1-3; Rom.8:8.

Article Offer

In Romans chapter 8 and Ephesians chapter 1, Paul speaks of the Father's plan to create and select certain individuals long before the existence of the world. These individuals were created and selected for an opportunity to become the first humans to be transformed into sons of the Father's new creation. If you want to know what the Bible says about the subject of predestination. Get a copy of my study, Predestination, Fact or Fiction.

The scriptures clearly show that Jesus was the first of humanity to be resurrected as an immortal being and a son of God, and according to the writer to the Hebrews, those who will be resurrected at his coming are also considered to be the first of humanity to receive son-ship in the Family of God:

Hebrews chapter 10 verses 10 and 11 say this:

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb.2:10-11 KJV).

Hebrews chapter 12 verses 22 and 23:

"But you have drawn near to Mount Zion, even the city of the living God, to a heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, and to an assembly, a Church of the Firstborn ones having been enrolled in heaven; and to God the judge of all; and to the spirits of just ones who have been perfected" (Heb.12:22-23 KJV). See also Rev.14:4.

The apostle James explains that it is the Sovereign Father who chooses those who will participate in the

first resurrection as the first-fruits:

"Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures" (Jms.1:16-18 KJV).

A Time of Rewards

The rewards and inheritance for the righteous are reserved in heaven; but, when and where will they be given to the saints? The prophetic scriptures clearly show that those who participate in the first resurrection, will be given rewards for the works they performed during their lifetime. When speaking of the distribution of these rewards, Jesus said:

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt.16:27 KJV). And, "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done" (Rev.22:12 NIV).

In the Book of Revelation John says this about rewards for those who participate in the first resurrection:

"And the nations were angry, and your wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that you should give reward to your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear your name, small and great; and should destroy them which destroy the earth" (Rev.11:18 KJV).

The apostle Paul knew that besides being given immortality, which was beyond any human's ability to earn, the righteous would also receive rewards for their performance above and beyond their call to salvation:

Paul said to the Corinthians:

"Now he that plants and he that waters are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor" (1.Cor. 3:8 KJV; vs.13-15).

And to Timothy Paul said this in relation to the first resurrection that he knew was to participate in.

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing" (2.Tim.4:8 KJV).

The Kingdom of God Established on Earth

After the first resurrection, Jesus will return to the earth with the elect of all ages who will have been changed into immortal beings (1.Cor.15:51-54). One of the primary reasons Jesus will come to rule the inhabitants of earth is to bring peace, so that his father's plan for the salvation of humanity can go forward, unimpeded by Satan who is the god of this world. See 2.Cor.4:4; Rev.12:9.

Isaiah prophesied that, after the return of Christ, there will be a time of peace in which the nations will come to Jerusalem to learn the way of God:

Isaiah chapter 2, verses 2 through 4:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it" (v2).

In Isaiah, the government of God is symbolized by a mountain that will be above all other governments. Notice that people will look to God's government for guidance:

"And many people shall go and say, Come you, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (v3).

When all the earth finally comes under the rule of the God family, which includes the elect of God who will have been made immortal, the earth will finally be at peace:

Continuing in verse 4:

"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (v4). See also Isa.9:6-7.

Revelation chapter 11, verse 15 says:

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev.11:15 KJV). See also 1.Cor.6:2-3; 15:24; Rev. 12:5; 19:15; 20:4-6.

This is the time that Jude referred to when he said:

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. (vs.14-15).

The prophet Daniel said about the end times when Christ will return to conquer the earth:

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan.2:44 KJV). See also ch.2:1-44.

The prophet Micah also spoke of the time when Christ would be ruling the earth from Jerusalem:

"But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain [government] of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains [governments/nations], and it shall be exalted above the hills [governments/nations]; and people shall flow to it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain [government] of the Lord and to the house of the

God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Mic.4:1-3 KJV).

CO-RULERSHIP WITH JESUS

The Prophet Ezekiel was inspired to tell of a time after the first resurrection, when all of Israel will again be a nation under God's leadership with David as their king:

Notice what Ezekiel records in Ezekiel 37, beginning in verse 24:

"And David my servant shall be king over them; and they shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children, for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever" (Ezk.37:24-25 KJV). See also Zech.12:8-10.

The Apostles

On two different occasions, Jesus promised that the twelve disciples would rule the earth with him:

Peter said to Jesus, "look, we have left all things and followed you: what then shall happen to us? Jesus said to them, Truly I say to you, You who have followed me; in the regeneration, when the Son of man sits on his throne of his glory, you also will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt.19:27-28 Para.).

Jesus also told his disciples:

"You are those having continued with me in my trials. And I appoint a kingdom to you, as my Father appointed to me, that you may eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom. And you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel"

(Lk.22:28-30 Para.).

In the Book of Revelation, Christ promised rulership to all who live a righteous life and overcome the trials and temptations of this present life.

"To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev.3:21 KJV).

And in Revelation chapter 2, beginning inverse 26, Jesus said:

"And he that overcomes, and keeps my works to the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to pieces: even as I received of my Father" (Rev.2:26-27 KJV). See also 1.Cor.6:2-3; 2.Tim.2:12.

Major Responsibilities

Many people wrongly assume that the elect will be in heaven forever; however, those in the first resurrection will rule the earth with Jesus for at least a thousand years during which the earth will become a place of peace and prosperity. One of the first major responsibilities for those in the first resurrection is to assist in the conversion of humanity, because God the Father and Jesus Christ want everyone to obtain salvation (1.Tim.2:4; 2.Pet.3:9). For this task, true Christians are being trained and prepared through trials, tests, continual bible study, and prayer in order to grow in grace and knowledge, so that each will be able to fulfill an office of a king and a priest who will rule and teach God's truth to those who have never heard or understood the way to salvation.

The apostle John wrote this to the seven churches in Asia:

"Grace to you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. To him that loved us and

washed us from our sins in his own blood, And has made us kings and priests to God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev.1:4-6 KJV).

Those who participate in the first resurrection, will be the examples, leaders, and teachers for the rest of humanity who have never had an opportunity for salvation. Those in the first resurrection are the ones who will teach the rest of humanity the way of God.

Jesus said this about his return to rule the earth and those who would rule with him:

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King [Jesus] say to them on his right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father [God the Father], inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt.25:31-34 KJV). See also Jms..2:5.

The message from the Sovereign God through the Messiah to mankind /is about the fantastic future in store for anyone who will heed the instructions given in his good news message.

Because most of the professing Christian Community only hears a message that is focused solely on Jesus Christ, they simply do not believe what Jesus Christ said or the early church taught concerning the Kingdom of God and the awesome rewards for those who participate in the first resurrection.

It is abundantly clear from studying the Bible that God the Father intends to share immortality with those he calls to repentance,/ baptism, /and conversion prior to the first resurrection.

Although immortality represents the highest reward that is granted for faithfulness to God,/ there are many more rewards. /The reward for being righteous is not to float around heaven playing harp music for eternity. /God the Father and Jesus Christ have something far more spectacular in store for

those who are found worthy to take part in the first resurrection.

Some of the rewards for righteousness are as follows:

- Becoming a king and a priest (Rev.1:4-6)
- Becoming a son of God (Jn.1:12; Rom.8:14)
- Becoming a joint-heir with Christ (Rom.8:16-18)
- Being a co-ruler with Christ (Rev.2:26-27)
- Having one's name in the Book of Life (Phil.4:3)
- Having access to New Jerusalem (Rev.22:14)
- Inheriting all things (Rev.21:7)
- Inheriting the earth (Psa.37:9)
- Inheriting the Kingdom of God (Matt.25:31-34)

These are only a few of the awesome rewards and responsibilities that have been promised to the elect of God. The magnitude of the rewards for those who participate in the first resurrection is so far beyond our imagination and dreams that it defies human comprehension.

The apostle Paul told the Corinthians:

"But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him" (1.Cor.2:9 KJV).

The following are the four basic reasons that God has called people during the gospel age of salvation to participate in his earthly family of kings, priests, and ambassadors and to participate in the first resurrection:

1. To prepare a people to help Jesus Christ rule the world.

"And [he has] has made us to our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev.5:10 KJV). See also 1.Thes.3:13; Rev.3:21; 20:4-6.

2. To preach the good news of the soon coming Kingdom of God.

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14 KJV).

3. To preach the message of repentance.

"Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit, Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. . ." (Matt.28:19-20 KJV).

4. To grow in grace and knowledge (2.Pet.3:18) and learn and perfect the ways of God in their lives, so that they will be able to fulfill the purpose for which they were called.

THE RESURRECTIONS

In the Book of Revelation, we find the statement, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished, this is the first resurrection" (Rev.20:5 KJV). Logic tells us that if there is a first resurrection, there must be a second. A diligent study of the Bible will reveal that there are a number of resurrections of the dead.

Article Offer

If you want to know more about what the Bible says about the many resurrections that are to occur as God works out his plan of salvation for humanity, get a copy of our studies about the various resurrections.

In his infinite wisdom, the Eternal God has designed his plan for mankind very carefully in order to give every person an opportunity to have eternal life. The vast majority of people who have lived throughout history have died without hearing or understanding God's plan.

The popular belief concerning a single resurrection for all humanity has no merit. The plan of God for the salvation of humanity is far more complex and fair than commonly believed.

Those whom the Father has called to salvation from the time of Adam to the time of the return of Christ are the ones who will be in the first and best resurrection. They are the righteous of all ages who have qualified during this lifetime to become the leaders of the world:

Yes! The first resurrection is the best resurrection. During this resurrection, the elect of all ages will be taken to the heaven of heavens where they will be given their rewards and prepared to return with Jesus Christ to conquer and rule the earth in righteousness:

After the first resurrection, there will not be a single person on earth who has the spirit of God. The earth and its people will have been almost totally destroyed by the events at the end of the age, and the people of the earth will be in a state of confusion, terror, and shock. They will be wondering what happened and how they are going to survive. Into such a world, Christ and those who have participated in the first resurrection will return to bring peace, joy, happiness, and harmony to humanity and an opportunity to become a spirit-beings in the Kingdom of God.

I see that my time is up, but if you want to know more about the prophecies concerning true Christians and what God the Father and Jesus Christ expect of them or more about the other subjects that I have briefly touched on in this in this broadcast, Write to me at the at the address given in the following announcement. Until next time this is Bud Cocherell for Bible Research .org.

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