

**IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH... RESURRECTION?<sup>1</sup>**

**What will happen when we die? Is there life after death—resurrection?**

The answer comes only from God—the One who created life and holds all people accountable to himself.

- He has spoken to us through the Bible... his revelation of himself: Who he is; what he has done; what he requires of us; and who we are in his eyes.

The Bible speaks of life as but a brief moment of our existence, followed by death, resurrection, judgment, and finally an eternal existence in one of two destinations.

There is a very familiar Psalm that begins... *“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.”*

- However, there is another verse in this same Psalm, the last verse—verse 6, that may not be as memorable but one that we need to hear... for it affirms the eternal destiny of the Shepherd’s flock.

READ... Psalm 23:6 **“Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”**

It is the New Testament that makes God’s eternal plan for every human being clear...

- There is an eternal destiny; a life beyond this life... resurrection lies ahead.

And it is the resurrection of Jesus that is the final proof.

- Jesus’ resurrection not only declared him to be what he claimed to be... the Son of God.
- But is, also, the guarantee for those who **“believe.”**
- Scripture reveals that because Jesus lives, believers too will live and share his destiny: *“When he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”* (1 John 3:2)

The biblical doctrine of the resurrection is pivotal in the Christian faith.

- Paul the apostle wrote, *“If only in this life we hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.”* (1 Corinthians 15:19)
- God raised Jesus from the dead and thereby vindicated him as the true Messiah—the Christ... God’s Anointed One.

**What, then, is the shape of a believers hope?**

The Bible speaks decisively... resurrection is not simply the continuation of existence; it is resurrection to an endless life in a transformed state of being.

- The resurrected pass beyond the power of death and decay.

For Jesus, bodily resurrection meant resuscitation with transformation.

- That is, what was a physical and mortal body became a spiritual and immortal body... transformed by the power of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Zondervan Expository Dictionary of Bible Words

The significance of Jesus' resurrection is beyond imagination—it is central to our faith.

- The apostle Paul points out that Jesus “*through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.*” (Romans 1:4)
  - The resurrection is proof of all of Christ's claims and it is a solid foundation for our faith!
- The Bible says that Jesus is the “*firstfruits,*” the “*firstborn of many sons*” of the harvest of the age to come. (1 Corinthians 15:23; James 1:18; Revelation 14:4; Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:18)
  - His resurrection is the guarantee that the death that grips the human race because of Adam and Eve's sin has been conquered and that eternal life, in Christ, is the believer's destiny.
- Jesus' resurrection to endless life is our guarantee of eternal life.

**READ... Hebrews 7:24-25 “Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”**

### The resurrection of the *believer*

Resurrection is a transformation to a different state of being that is for **believers** only—“*those waiting for him*” ...for Jesus' return.

We can best understand the core teaching of the New Testament revelation on the resurrection of believers by answering three questions: 1) What do we know of the resurrection as transformation? 2) What do we know about the resurrection state? 3) What is resurrection power?

### **First... What does the Bible reveal about resurrection as transformation?**

John, wrote that God has made **believers** his own children<sup>2</sup> and then added, “*What we will be has not yet been made known;*” but we do know that when Jesus “*appears, we shall be like him.*” (1 John 3:1-2)

- Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4 provides the broad outline:
  - When Jesus returns, “*those who have fallen asleep*” will come with him, and those still alive will meet him in the air.
  - The “*dead in Christ*” will be raised before the living believers are caught up, and together the whole “family of God” will meet Jesus in the air.
  - Paul concludes, “*So we will be with the Lord forever.*”

Paul gives us more details in 1 Corinthians 15 by answering the questions... “How are the dead raised?” and “With what kind of body will they come?”

- Paul simply notes that the resurrection body will correspond to our present body, but in contrast it will be... **imperishable, glorious, infused with power—spiritual rather than natural.**
- It will be in “*the likeness of the man from heaven,*” through a transformation that will happen “*in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.*”

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<sup>2</sup> 1John 3:1

**READ... 1 Corinthians 15:50-54 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 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.”**

### **Second... What does Scripture say about the resurrection state?**

The answer is very little... but many have found it fascinating to observe the capabilities of the resurrected Jesus and speculate what being “*like him*” might mean.

- For instance, the resurrected Jesus had “*flesh and bones*”<sup>3</sup>
- Why not “flesh and blood?”
- Is it because “*the life of the flesh is in the blood*”<sup>4</sup> and a resurrected person is infused with a different kind of life?
- Some have noted Jesus’ sudden appearance among his disciples in a locked room—is this teleportation?
  - Or can a resurrected person move between the atoms of a physical universe?

While such speculation has a fascination, we do best to let the issue about our resurrection state rest with God, as John and Paul did.

- John noted in his first epistle... we do not yet know what we will be—but we will be like Jesus.
- Paul noted that... the limitations of our physical nature will be gone, and, whereas we are now perishable—we will then be imperishable.
- Power will replace weakness; immortality will end mortality—we can never die.

### **Finally... What is the resurrection power?**

This is one of the most exciting of New Testament themes.

- Paul writes that “*if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*” (Romans 8:11)

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 24:39

<sup>4</sup> Leviticus 17:11

The point Paul makes is that the Holy Spirit, the agent of Jesus' resurrection, lives within the **believer**.

- This means that resurrection power is available to us even in our earthly mortal bodies.
- Through the Holy Spirit we are raised beyond our human limitations and enabled to live a righteous life.
- The “*power of his resurrection*”<sup>5</sup> at work in our lives today should be an animating reality for everyone who “believes.”

**READ... Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**

Death does not have the final victory! “*Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (1 Corinthians 15:57)

- Yes, victory, even over death and the grave, has been won through our Lord Jesus, who died, and rose... and is coming again.

One respected author and speaker on the subject of death wrote<sup>6</sup>...

- I cannot prove the existence of heaven. I accept its reality by faith, on the authority of Jesus Christ who told us... “*In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*” (John 14:2,6)

Listen to the apostle Paul’s words on applying the truth of the resurrection of believers to our everyday lives:

- “*Now my brothers and sisters, in light of these sublime truths, be steadfast in doing the Lord’s work, knowing that he will reward you at his coming.*” (1 Corinthians 15:58)
- “*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*” (Colossians 3:1-3)

**“HALLELUJAH, THE TOMB WAS EMPTY SO THAT HEAVEN CAN BE FULL!!”**

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<sup>5</sup> Philippians 3:10

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Bayly