

What is Resurrection?

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For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. (John 5:26-29, NIV)

1. Many questions swirled around how resurrection pertains to Believers in the first century. The apostle Paul was asked this question, which he responded in his letter to the church at Corinth. What is the significance of resurrection?

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. (1 Cor 15:17-21, NIV)

2. What do you observe about Paul's explanation of resurrection? Circle key words to focus your attention. Make a chart of your observations comparing First Adam with Last Adam.

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. (1 Cor 15:42-45, NIV)

3. When does both Jesus and the apostle Paul say when resurrection begins (John 5:24-29; 1 Cor 15:50-54)? Do Believers receive a body? What do you observe?

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

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I declare to you, brothers and sisters, 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.” (1 Cor 15:50-54, NIV)

4. Observe who, what, when! Who is resurrected? How many resurrections take place? When does the apostle John see resurrection taking place? What do you conclude about Believers? What do you conclude about non-Believers?

Before the thousand year reign

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. (Rev 20:4-6, NIV)

After the thousand year reign

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev 20:11-15, NIV)

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Teacher Notes

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It is important for the student to know that the Old and New Testaments are not separate and independent. While the New Testament is based on the Old Testament and often sheds light on the meaning of its prophetic information, the information from both testaments are necessary to gain a full understanding of God's word.

1. Many questions swirled around how resurrection pertains to Believers in the first century. The apostle Paul was asked this question, which he responded in his letter to the church at Corinth. What is the significance of resurrection?

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Ask the student: what does it mean that “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile?” Allow time for discussion.

This question revisits the definition of faith. Faith is the belief in the reality of God and placing a trust in His words. Jesus is the manifestation and evidence of the real existence of God (John 1:18; 5:36-38).

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16, NIV)

The historical reality of the resurrection of Christ was established fact, because the risen Christ was seen by so many witnesses, many of whom were still alive at the time of Paul's letter: the twelve original apostles, over five hundred disciples, Jesus' half brother James and Paul himself.

2. What do you observe about Paul's explanation of resurrection? Circle key words to focus your attention. Make a chart of your observations comparing First Adam with Last Adam.

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. (1 Cor 15:42-45, NIV)

Encourage the student make a chart such as this example. Ask the student what some of the various terms mean.

First Adam	Last Adam
Perishable body	Imperishable body
Perishable body sown in dishonor	Imperishable body raised in glory
Perishable body sown in weakness	Imperishable body raised in power
Perishable body sown a natural body	Imperishable body raised as spiritual body
Living being	Life giving spirit

The use of the term “glory” is significant, because it is in reference to God’s all encompassing goodness (Ex 33:18-19). To be “raised in glory” is to be raised through the all encompassing goodness of God, which can also be seen in Paul’s letter to the Roman church:

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Rom 6:4, NIV)

Ask the student: do you see the distinction the apostle Paul is making between two types of people? What type of body enters heaven? Why?

The apostle is making a comparative distinction between two classes of human beings: a) those who are of Adam will bear the body and likeness of the earthly man and b) those who are of Jesus will bear the body and likeness of the heavenly Man.

Paul alludes to faith. Those who have faith in Jesus Christ have the Holy Spirit indwelling in them, which is the hallmark of a spiritual body and enables entrance into the kingdom of God.

3. When does both Jesus and the apostle Paul say when resurrection begins (John 5:24-29; 1 Cor 15:50-54)? Do Believers receive a body? What do you observe?

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

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Note: Understanding the process of resurrection requires a good grasp of the book of Revelation.

Helpmewithbiblestudy.org takes an observable data driven approach in understanding eschatology and shows how the apostle John’s Revelation narrative could be understood sequentially, how the two earthquakes are the same, and how the Abrahamic Covenant is completely fulfilled. The answers for this question can be verified and checked. To learn more about how to study the book of Revelation, see our systematic study on Eschatology: the Study of Last the Words.

Ask the student: when does Jesus says resurrection begins? When does Paul says it begins?

According to Jesus (for Believers): when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God.

According to Paul (for Believers): at the last trumpet.

Paul's "last trumpet" refers to the seventh trumpet, and Jesus' "voice of the Son of God" refers to His first words after the seventh trumpet. Both accounts are referring to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ when He arrives in the cloud, and begins to gather all Believers, whether dead or alive.

Ask the student: What happens when resurrection begins? Does anyone receive a body?

Jesus only states that the dead will rise and come out. Observe carefully that Paul says the "dead will be raised imperishable" and the "perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable." Rather than being given a new body, the Believer must put something on!

When consulting Revelation, the breaking of the fifth seal introduces the only instance when the spirits of deceased Believers put something on – a white robe (Rev 6:9-11). After the seventh trumpet and the seventh bowl of God's wrath, the marriage and marriage supper of the Lamb occurs where the spirits of deceased Believers are all clothed in "fine linen, bright and clean, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev 19:7-9).

Because no one receives a body, this is the start of the process of resurrection for Believers. It does not appear that the resurrection process has started for non-Believers.

4. Observe who, what, when! Who is resurrected? How many resurrections take place? When does the apostle John see resurrection taking place? What do you conclude about Believers? What do you conclude about non-Believers?

Before the thousand year reign

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Ask the student: how does the apostle John understand resurrection?

John sees resurrection as coming to life which is defined as receiving a body. While John does not state that a body is received, the next chapter of Revelation, when New Jerusalem is introduced, the apostle records, "God's dwelling place is now among the people."

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,”for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. (Rev 21:1-3, NIV)

Ask the student: who completes their process of resurrection first?

The Believers who first resurrection will be of those Believers who died for their faith (Rev 20:4-6). This special honor is also alluded to in Hebrews 11:35.

Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. (Heb 11:35, NIV)

Ask the student: when do non-Believers start their resurrection?

Because Believers have already been gathered by Jesus Christ, the statement, “the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them” is in reference to non-Believers. For non-Believers, resurrection is not a process but a singular event. They come alive to face judgment before the Great White Throne.

Ask the student: what do resurrected non-Believers lack that results in a short lived life? Encourage the student to observe several reasons.

Non-Believers do not have faith in Jesus Christ which results in: a) no white robe of righteousness and b) no listing in the Book of Life.

Ask the student: for Believers, when does the process of resurrection begin and end?