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**B0612 – March 26, 2006 – Major Bible Themes**  
**Chapter 46 – The Resurrections**

What happens when we die? Is that it, do we disappear from existence? Do our spirits go on existing forever? Just what happens when we die? Well, the authoritative word of God does not teach that we are material only so that when we die we disappear from existence. People who believe this have adopted the worldview of atheism and hedonism which state, “eat, drink, be merry, for tomorrow we die.” But the Bible teaches a very different view. It teaches that ultimately all men will be resurrected. So, atheism and hedonism say no responsibility; theism says full responsibility. Biblically and truthfully, the issue is not whether men *will* be resurrected or not but which resurrection men will be a part of. Both the OT and NT teach that there are two resurrections in Scripture.

1. the resurrection to everlasting life
2. the resurrection to everlasting death/contempt/punishment

**Daniel 12:2** "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt.

**John 5:28-29** "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, <sup>29</sup> and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.

Before we look at these two resurrections we have to know what a resurrection is. *First*, resurrection is not re-incarnation. Reincarnation means you come back in a totally different body with a totally different form (Hinduism and Buddhism). Re-incarnation teaches that there is a total disconnect between the present body and form and the reincarnated body and form. That's not what the Bible means by resurrection. *Second*, resurrection is not the same as resuscitation. Resuscitation means you come back in the same body (e.g. CPR). Some people were resuscitated in the Bible, such as Lazarus (John

11:14, 43; 12:1ff) and Eutychus (Acts 20:9) but that is not resurrection. Those who are resuscitated eventually die again. *Third*, resurrection means the present body is transformed into a new human body so that the present substance which composes your body is used to form your new body. In other words, there's a connection between your present body and form and your resurrected body and form. You will be a human and you will be you. Of course, the new body will not be subject to decay or death and will have new capacities. But, in the end, you will still be you and so I hope you like you because you'll never be someone else. The Lord Jesus Christ was born in a manger and who died on the cross is the same Lord Jesus Christ who was raised from the grave and who walked around and appeared to more than 500. Remember, His body was absent from the grave showing that it was that body that was changed into a new body. Lastly, we must denounce the unscriptural view that unbelievers will be annihilated rather than experiencing eternal death. The Bible clearly teaches two resurrections, one to eternal life and the other to eternal death. The determinative factor between eternal life and eternal death is faith in God's Son.

**John 6:47** "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.

Now, while there are two resurrections these resurrections do not all take place at the same time. Some theologians claim there is only a general resurrection and general judgment at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ, but this cannot be sustained by Scripture.

## **I. THE FIRST RESURRECTION**

The first resurrection takes place in six or seven phases.

### **A. Christ**

The first phase is the resurrection of Messiah. His resurrection was prophesied in the OT. David sang

**Psalm 16:10** You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

Christ was crucified and raised on the third day (1 Cor 15:1-4) so that His body did not undergo decay.

### **B. Saints in Jerusalem**

The second phase is the resurrection of certain saints in Jerusalem after Christ's resurrection.

**Matthew 27:50-53** And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. <sup>51</sup> And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. <sup>52</sup> The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; <sup>53</sup> and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

Apparently, on the day of the crucifixion there was an earthquake which opened many of the tombs of Jewish saints. Three days later, after Christ's resurrection the bodies of these saints were resurrected. This is the only place in scripture this odd event is mentioned and we are never given further explanation. Some have explained this as resuscitation like Lazarus but "the fact that it occurred at the time of the resurrection of Christ"<sup>i</sup> indicates that it was a resurrection. So, Christ was the first-fruits and these saints were a token of a great harvest to come.

Some have speculated that if the 24 elders seen in heaven in Rev 4-18 are 12 Jewish saints and 12 Church saints then the 12 Jewish saints came from this resurrection since the rest of the Jewish saints will not be resurrected until the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ.

### **C. The Church**

The previous two phases of the first resurrection are historic. The remaining phases are future. The next resurrection is that of the Church at the pre-trib Rapture. At present, when a person passes away their spirit immediately goes to be with the Lord.

**2 Corinthians 5:6-8** Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord-- <sup>7</sup> for we walk by faith, not by sight-- <sup>8</sup> we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

There is no soul sleep but those who have gone before us are with the Lord, fully conscious and in bliss. However, they do not yet have a resurrection body. All church saints will be given resurrection bodies at the pre-trib Rapture.

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52** Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, <sup>52</sup> 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 will be changed.

This event will be private, the world will not see us caught up into the air but they will wonder where we have gone. The bodies of those living on earth will not die but will be instantly changed into resurrection bodies. This is the third phase of the first resurrection.

#### **D. Two Witnesses**

The fourth phase of the first resurrection is that of the two witnesses.

**Revelation 11:7** When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.

**Revelation 11:9** Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations *will* look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.

**Revelation 11:11** But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them.

The timing of this resurrection depends on whether they witness during the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the Tribulation. Since their ministry takes place in the midst of great persecution (cf Rev 11:5-6) I think they will minister during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. Therefore their resurrection will take place very near the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half.

#### **E. Old Testament Saints**

The fifth phase of the first resurrection is that of the Old Testament saints such as Abraham, David, and Simeon (Luke 2:25ff). Anyone who believed in the promised Messiah during these times and was not baptized by the Spirit will be resurrected during this phase. The timing of this resurrection is at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ. Reasoning for this comes from Dan 12.

**Daniel 12:1-2** "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your

people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. <sup>2</sup> "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt.

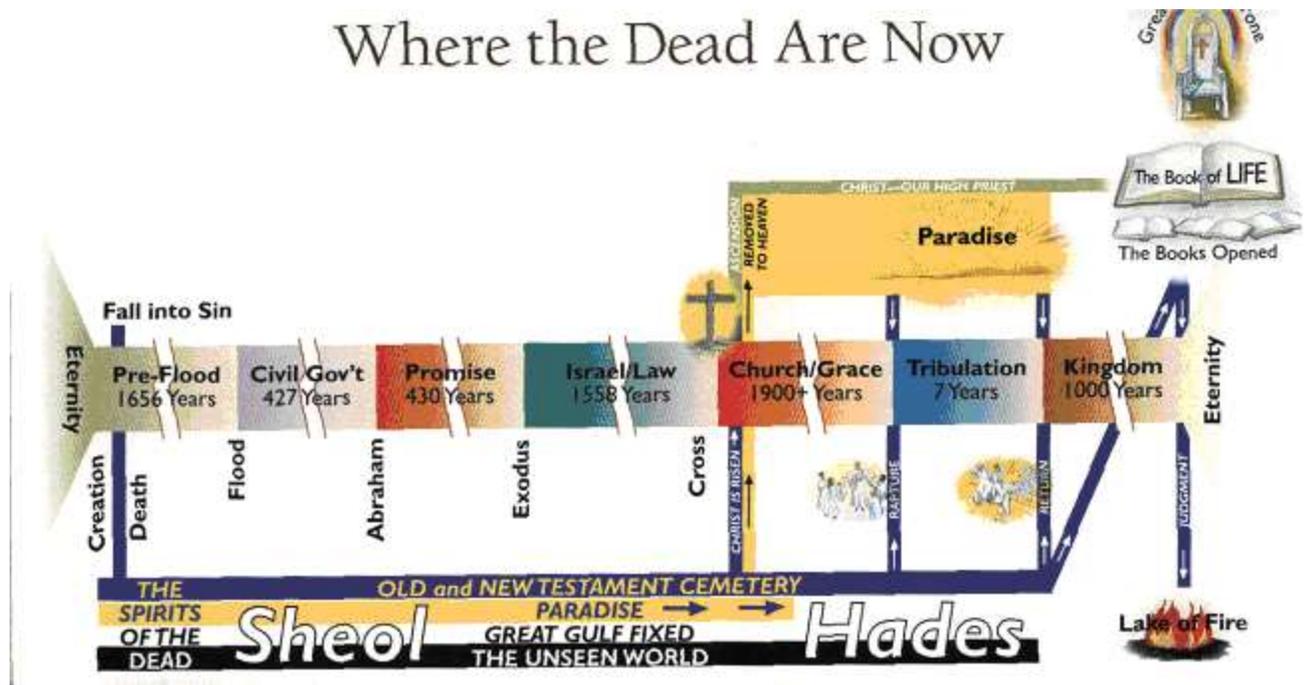
As you can see verse 1 speaks about the tribulation and the rescue of believing Israel. Verse 2 then speaks about the resurrection so it must occur about the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ. Another passage which has the same sequence of events is from Job.

**Job 19:25-26** "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. <sup>26</sup> "Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God;

Here the Redeemer will take His stand on the earth and that is when Job will see God in resurrected body. This is at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming.

If the OT saints will not be resurrected until the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ then where did they go when they died? The OT speaks of a place called Sheol or Hades. Sheol was the place of both the believing and unbelieving dead. However, we learn in Luke that Sheol had two compartments; Abraham's bosom and the Place of Torment. Between them is a great gulf. All believers went into Abraham's bosom, a place of comfort and all unbelievers went into the Place of Torment. Apparently they can see across the great gulf fixed but are unable to cross from one side to the other. Abraham's bosom is also called Paradise. When Jesus told the thief on the cross, today you will be with Me in paradise He was talking about the believer's compartment in Sheol. However, Eph 4:8-10 indicates that Paradise is no longer in Sheol but was taken by Christ into heaven, probably at His ascension. Now, all believers who die go immediately to be with Christ in heaven. Thus, that compartment in Sheol is empty.

# Where the Dead Are Now



## F. Tribulation Saints

The sixth phase of the first resurrection involves the Tribulation saints. These are all who believed in Christ and died after the Rapture of the Church.

**Revelation 20:4** And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Verse 5 says “the rest of the dead did not come to life until the 1,000 years were completed. This is the first resurrection. So, the first resurrection is that of all saints from creation through the tribulation and is broken into six phases.

1. Christ, the firstfruits
2. A token resurrection of Jewish saints
3. The Church
4. The Two Witnesses
5. The Old Testament Saints
6. The Tribulation Saints

## II. THE SECOND RESURRECTION

## A. The Wicked

The second resurrection comes in only one phase and is reserved for all unbelievers. It will occur at the end of the millennium.

**Revelation 20:5** The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed.

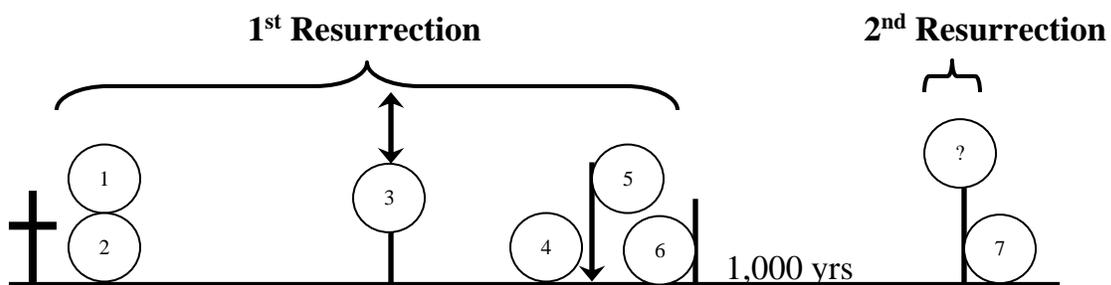
This is a terrible thought and one we will deal with in more detail in a later chapter.

## III. THE MILLENNIAL SAINTS

Lastly, there is the issue of the Millennial Saints. What of those who either re-populate the Millennium because they survive the Tribulation and the judgments between the Tribulation and Millennium or those who are born in the Millennium and trust in Christ during the Millennium. The Scriptures are silent on when these believers will be resurrected.

## IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, all men will be resurrected. This means their old bodies will be changed into new bodies. In the Bible there are two resurrections. The first resurrection is unto life and occurs in six phases; (1) Christ, three days after His crucifixion, (2) token Jewish saints on that same day but after Christ, (3) the Church on the day of the pre-trib Rapture, (4) the two witnesses near the end of the Tribulation, (5) OT Jewish saints at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ, and (6) Tribulation saints before the Millennium. The second resurrection is unto death and occurs in one phase after the Millennium (7). The issue of the resurrection of Millennial saints is not revealed in Scripture (?). The chart below puts everything in perspective.



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<sup>i</sup> Chafer & Walvoord, *Major Bible Themes*, 339-340.

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