

Basic Doctrines: The Second Resurrection

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Today, large bodies of people claiming the Christian faith sincerely believe that this is the only day of salvation. They believe that, if a person does not repent and believe in Jesus Christ as personal Savior before this physical life ends, he will be lost forever to burn in torment in a fiery hell. Is this true? It surprises many to learn that the Bible reveals more than one resurrection.

As we saw, at Jesus Christ's second coming, truly faithful Christians will be raised to immortality, but what will happen to those who are not resurrected then? Are all those who died in sin fully accountable for their actions in this life, or will God ultimately give *everyone* a chance for salvation? In this continuing study of resurrections, we will see that the Bible reveals a second resurrection.

1. Will God resurrect all the dead in the same resurrection? Revelation 20:4-5; Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29; I Corinthians 15:23-24.

Comment: "This is the first resurrection" in Revelation 20:5 refers back to the events of verse 4, which describes those who are raised to immortality at Christ's second coming to become rulers with Him as kings and priests on the earth during the Millennium. The Bible nowhere says God will resurrect all the dead in the same resurrection. The apostle Paul affirms that both the "just" and "unjust" will be resurrected, and Jesus speaks of a "resurrection of life" and a "resurrection of condemnation" or judgment. However, these do not occur simultaneously. God has an orderly plan whereby He resurrects different groups of people at different times, "every man in his own order." This implies a succession of resurrections. Regarding the resurrection of the unjust, "the rest of the dead," who have not understood God's way of life, they must wait in their graves until the thousand years are over.

2. Are the unjust dead eternally lost? Acts 4:12; John 10:1, 9; Revelation 20:7-12.

Comment: The unjust dead are not eternally lost and without hope of having an opportunity to obtain immortality. God will not resurrect them merely to throw them into the Lake of Fire! Salvation only comes through one Person; only by learning of the life and work of Jesus Christ and accepting His supreme sacrifice in payment for our personal sins can human beings be saved. No one can obtain salvation except through Christ, who is the door. Anyone trying to enter another way is a thief and a robber. Therefore, we can enter the Kingdom of God only one way, through Christ.

3. Can a person have a second chance at salvation? II Peter 3:9; I Timothy 2:4-6; Ezekiel 37:1-14.

Comment: In resurrecting humans to mortal life, God will *not* give them a second chance for salvation—He will give them their first chance! At that time, He will raise those who were deceived and never understood His way, and reveal His plan of salvation to them. God wants all mankind to receive the gift of salvation, but He requires

repentance and righteous living. He is responsible to grant people the knowledge of the truth, and only when He calls them do they have their first real opportunity to hear, understand and follow His way of life.

4. What is "the resurrection of judgment"? John 5:29; I Peter 4:17; Hebrews 2:3; 6:4-6; 10:26-29; Matthew 10:15.

Comment: Most modern translations correctly render the last word in John 5:29 as "judgment" rather than "damnation" or "condemnation." God is now judging Christians; we are having our opportunity for salvation now. He holds every Christian accountable for his actions, but the vast majority of mankind today does not understand or believe the truth of God. By "the resurrection of judgment," Christ means that, in a future time, God will raise many from their graves to learn the truth and have their opportunity to walk in it. Based on how they live, God will then decide their fates. Most He will save, but some, in stubborn rebellion against Him, will condemn themselves to eternal death.

5. Will God resurrect physical Israel? Romans 11:2-3, 7-15, 25-27, 30-33.

Comment: God Himself has kept Israel from seeing and hearing (understanding and applying) His truth, giving Israel a spirit of slumber to make possible the salvation of the Gentiles. He has determined to call and choose only a limited number from Israel in this age, allowing the rest to remain blinded. With the rest of humanity, they will rise in the second resurrection and have the opportunity for salvation.

6. What is the Great White Throne Judgment? I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Corinthians 15:53-54; Revelation 20:11-15.

Comment: The resurrection of the righteous takes place at Christ's return, but that of the uncalled—the second resurrection—will occur in the Great White Throne Judgment after the Millennium. God is merciful, loving and kind, not willing that any should perish. He desires all to come to the knowledge of the truth and to true repentance at the proper time. He has determined that most will receive this opportunity when He has set up His Kingdom on the earth, an environment most conducive to salvation.

These people will be raised up to physical existence. The "books" that are opened at this time are the books of the Bible in which are revealed true knowledge and understanding. The "Book of Life" will also be opened so their names can be written in it when they repent of their sins, accept Christ as personal Savior, and receive the Holy Spirit. During this time, they will be judged according to their works. Thus, we see most of humanity standing before God to be judged. God in His wisdom has determined that this is the best way to bring the most sons to glory and eternal life in His Kingdom.