



"A miracle is the interruption of the laws of nature for a Divine purpose."

—Elmer Towns

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Death Is Not the End (Part Five)

Two of history's wisest men, Job and Solomon, contemplated the possibilities of an afterlife for human beings, and both concluded that something better awaited men and women on the other side of death. Realizing that [God](#) "has put eternity in their hearts" ([Ecclesiastes 3:11](#)), Solomon writes at the end of the book that, although the physical body "will return to the earth as it was, . . . the spirit [of man] will return to God who gave it" ([Ecclesiastes 12:7](#)). Job concludes that a time would come when, despite his being dead in the grave, "You [God] shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands" ([Job 14:15](#)). Both men knew there would be life after death.

The New Testament consistently teaches the doctrine of life after death through the [resurrection from the dead](#) (see I Corinthians 15 for the Bible's most concentrated teaching on it). While many understand that those whom God converts in this life will rise from their graves at the [return of Christ](#) to enjoy their eternal rewards ([I Corinthians 15:51-52](#); [I Thessalonians 4:14-17](#)), the Bible reveals that *all humanity* will live again!

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. ([Revelation 20:11-13](#))

The apostle John calls the people standing before God's throne "the dead, small and great." His description is very general. Note that he does not say "some" of the dead but simply "the dead." God does not discriminate between good or bad, rich or poor, free or slave, those who lived before Christ or after Him, or any other distinction. It appears plain that He raises to life every human who has ever lived who has not already been changed to spirit!

As laid out neatly in this chapter's chronological sequence, this second resurrection occurs immediately after the glorious Millennium of Christ's [reign on the earth](#) ([Revelation 20:5](#)) and Satan's final rebellion ([Revelation 20:7-10](#)). Unlike those rising to glory in the resurrection at Christ's return, called the [first resurrection](#) ([Revelation 20:5-6](#)), this vast sea of humanity returns to life for the purposes of judgment. This Great White Throne period is a time of evaluation of each person's individual works, that is, his day-to-day manner of life.

For some reason, some commentators believe that this is only the impenitent dead—those who will be cast into the Lake of Fire, mentioned in [Revelation 20:14-15](#). However, verse 15 clearly states that only those "not found written in the Book of Life" will suffer the [second death](#). This is a general resurrection, as it has often been called, of unsaved mankind. It is not God's desire to condemn them to eternal death, for He wants everyone to come to [repentance](#) ([II Peter 3:9](#)). They will be judged—as His church is being judged now ([I Peter 4:17](#))—for the purposes of granting them salvation, if they accept His calling and submit to His way of life. While it is the church's

"day of salvation" right now ([II Corinthians 6:1-2](#)), for these people, it will be their first opportunity to accept God's invitation to eternal life.

Consider the enormous number of people who will rise in this resurrection! A conservative estimate of all who have ever lived on the earth is upwards of 50 billion people and growing all the time. These billions will awake to a paradise on earth, which will have been made beautiful, prosperous, and productive under the care of the sons of God. The newly resurrected may suppose they have gone to heaven, but they will soon learn that the blessed [meek](#) inherit the earth ([Matthew 5:5](#)).

What a massive effort it will take to feed, clothe, house, and teach such an incredible population! Making matters even more difficult is the fact that they will come from every age, ethnic group, religion, language, and culture that has existed since the time of Adam! They will range from jungle dwellers of Borneo to the most sophisticated and intellectual cosmopolitans of modern times, from barbarous Mongols under Genghis Khan to vegetarian peaceniks heralding the Age of Aquarius, from animist tribesmen to Buddhist monks. We can hardly fathom the massive cost, infrastructure, organization, and leadership it will take to give care and instruction to so many people as will happen in this great period of judgment.

The [Old Testament](#) also contains a snapshot of this general resurrection, though it concentrates on the resurrection of the manifold millions of Israelites who have lived down the centuries. This is the famous prophecy of the Valley of Dry Bones in Ezekiel 37:

The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know." ([Ezekiel 37: 1-3](#))

The people whose bones these were had been dead a long time. The bones were dry, as if no juice of life could ever enliven them again. The prophet's reply is essentially, "Only God could make them live again. To me, they look

hopelessly dead." But we know, as [Jesus](#) instructs, "with God all things are possible" ([Matthew 19:26](#)).

Again He said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, and cover you with skin and put breath in you: and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.'"" . . . So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. ([Ezekiel 37:4-6](#), 10)

Notice what God says will happen in this resurrection: He will give them breath—the breath of life—to fill their lungs, and He will return to them their flesh: their sinews and skin. Clearly, God will raise them up to *physical* life again on the earth, not to some kind of ethereal existence in a celestial Xanadu. They will soon realize that their ideas of life after death were greatly mistaken and that the God of Israel, the One who raised them from the dead, is the one true God.

Next time, we will discover God's reasons for giving them this new lease on life.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Prepare for Your Future Now](#)

by John O. Reid

We have been base and ignoble, but Christ has enabled us to be cleaned up and transformed or shaped into offspring of God to be joint heirs with Christ as glorious spirit beings. God called us as foolish, but didn't intend for us to stay that way, intending us to be conformed to the stature (image and character) of Christ. We need to prepare for our future, systematically

inculcating God's Law into the core of our inner being by studying and applying God's words in every circumstance of our lives, preparing to instruct others as kings and priests. As part of our emergent nature, we must learn to exhibit godly love, compassion, forgiveness, patience, and ironclad self-control, mortifying human nature through the power of God's Spirit, living up to our new spiritual name.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Second Exodus \(Part One\)](#)

by David C. Grabbe

The Bible tells us that the time is coming when God will regather His people Israel to the Land of Promise, a greater Exodus than that from the Land of Egypt. David Grabbe gathers the prophecies of this momentous future event, focusing on when it will occur.

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