

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

The Bible gives us a clear definition of death. Death is the result of sin. Death is the separation of body and soul, while resurrection is the uniting of body and soul.

- Ecclesiastes 12:7 "The dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."

An event we look forward to at Christ's second coming is our bodily resurrection from the dead. This doctrine is frequently despised by the unbelieving world, which scoffs and mocks at the thought of the dead coming to life once again.

- Acts 17:31,32 "For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead. When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered."

The Sadducees of Christ's day were notorious for denying both the existence of angels as well as the teaching of the resurrection.

- Matthew 22:23-31 "That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question....Jesus replied, 'You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God...about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you...?'"

The resurrection consists of two main incidents: 1) bodies will once again be restored, and 2) there will be a reunion of the body and the soul. When God's trumpet sounds, all the dead will rise at one time.

- John 5:28,29 "...A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out..."

Believers' souls will return with Christ from heaven. They will be reunited with their glorified bodies to go back to heaven. The apostles' letters referred to the resurrection of the dead that the evangelists had mentioned in their histories of Jesus. They all wrote so that we would believe that Jesus is the Christ. By believing in Jesus, we have life through his name.

- John 11:25 "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die...'"

A glorified body means that the body now subject to the results of sin like illness, infirmities, pain, decay, and death, will no longer suffer those things. While there are some things we do not know about the glorified body, it will be the same body we have now, and it will be like Christ's glorified body.

- Philippians 3:21 "[Christ] will transform our lowly bodies so they will be like his glorious body."
- 1 Corinthians 15:52,53, "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."
- Colossians 3:4 "When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

Old Testament believers also expected the physical resurrection from the dead on the Last Day.

- Job 19:25-27 "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"

Unlike the glorified bodies of the believers, the bodies of the unbelievers will reflect the sin and debauchery that led them to their eternal destination in hell. The damned will have no power or heavenly beauty but, rather, they will display the hideous results of their sin-filled lives. Their souls will also be united with their bodies; however, they will return to hell in body and soul.

- Daniel 12:2 "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt."
- Isaiah 66:24 "And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind."

But what of those who are still living at the time of the resurrection? Scripture addresses this situation as well.

- 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 "According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the

trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words."

It is difficult for us even to imagine what our lives will be like after the resurrection from the dead because we will be perfect. It is Jesus our Savior's empty tomb that assures us that those lives will be infinitely better than the ones we have in this sinful world. Our certain hope is that we will be like Jesus for we shall see him as he is.

DISCUSS: Why must we believe that Jesus' body rose from the dead and that not just his spirit or his teachings live on?