

## THE PROMISED RESURRECTION

“For this is the will of my Father, that **everyone** that beholds the Son and exercises faith in him should have everlasting life, and **I will resurrect him at the last day.**” – *John 6:39-40*

Yes, it is the will of the Father that all who believe and exercise faith in Jesus Christ will have everlasting life by means of a resurrection from the dead! There is one exception where some would have a direct translation from earth to the heavenly realm (*1 Corinthians 15:51-52*), but for the vast majority, the means of survival after death is the promised resurrection.

All Christians believe in the hope of a resurrection, but there is a controversy as to where they will be resurrected. Some believe the resurrection will be to heavenly life; others believe that only 144,000 will be resurrected to the heavens, and the remaining billions will be resurrected to live again on the earth. But what did the Bible writers believe? Let’s take a look at the resurrection hope through the eyes of the Bible writers and see where, in fact, faithful mankind will be resurrected.

We know that many in the nation of Israel believed in a resurrection. In the last verse of the Bible book of Daniel, a promise is made to the prophet Daniel that he would fall asleep in death, rest for a little while, and then be resurrected “at the end of the days.”

“And as for you yourself, go toward the end; and you will rest, but you will stand up for your lot at the end of the days.” – *Daniel 12:13*

We also have the comments of Martha, the sister of Lazarus, showing that she fully expected her brother to be resurrected “on the last day.”

“Jesus said to her: “Your brother will rise.” Martha said to him: “I know he will rise in the resurrection on the last day.” – *John 11:23-24*

However, not all Jews believed in a resurrection, as recorded in the book of Acts:

“[A] dissension arose between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the multitude was split. For Sadducees say there is neither resurrection nor angel nor spirit, but the Pharisees publicly declare them all.” – *Acts 23:7-8*

The Pharisees consisted of the scribes and the rabbis. They were extremely superstitious, and, like most Jews of that day, had little comprehension of spiritual things, though they did believe in the resurrection, in angels and in spirit. To the Pharisees, the resurrection was to life on earth “in the last day,” similar to the resurrections performed by Elijah and Elisha:

“And he proceeded to stretch himself upon the child three times and call to Jehovah and say: “O Jehovah my God, please, cause the soul of this child to come back within him.” Finally Jehovah listened to Elijah’s voice, so that the soul of the child came back within him and he came to life. Elijah now took the child and brought him down from the roof chamber into the house and gave him to his mother; and Elijah then said: “See, your son is alive.” Upon that the woman said to Elijah: “Now, indeed, I do know that you are a man of God and that Jehovah’s word in your mouth is true.” – *1 Kings 17:21-24*

“At last Elisha came into the house, and there the boy was dead, being laid upon his couch. Then he came in and closed the door behind them both and began to pray to Jehovah. Finally he went up and lay down upon the child and put his own mouth upon his mouth and his own eyes upon his eyes and his own palms upon his palms and kept bent over him, and gradually the child’s flesh grew warm. Then he began walking again in the house, once this way and once that way, after which he went up and bent over him. And the boy began to sneeze as many as seven times, after which the boy opened his eyes.” – *2 Kings 4:32-35*

The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection. They comprised the priesthood and the wealthy class. They were not at all spiritual minded men; they were fleshly in their reasoning and their beliefs and they had no comprehension of heavenly or spiritual things. They strongly promoted religious ritual and dogma, even when those rituals and dogma often failed to honor God. (*Matthew 15:9*) And as their reign continued, they were determined to doggedly hold on to their superior position over the peoples.

The Pharisees and the Sadducees were more like political parties than religious sects. The Sadducees strongly disagreed with the Pharisees and considered the belief in spiritual matters as absurd, and the earthly resurrection as foolishness. Though they both joined together in seeking the death of Jesus, the Sadducees were the most aggressive. And they were the foremost ones who sought to entrap him.

On one occasion, they sought to demonstrate the foolishness of an earthly resurrection to the Pharisees and all the people who were present by offering a convoluted story of the resurrection according to the way the Pharisees taught it. The account reports:

“However, some of the Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came up and questioned him, saying: ‘Teacher, Moses wrote us, “If a man’s brother dies having a wife, but this one remained childless, his brother should take the wife and raise up offspring from her for his brother.” Accordingly there were seven brothers; and the first took a wife and died childless. So the second, and the third took her. Likewise even the seven: they did

not leave children behind, but died off. Lastly, the woman also died. Consequently, in the resurrection, of which one of them does she become [the] wife? For the seven got her as wife.” – **Luke 20:27-33**

Jesus knew, and so did the people, that these Sadducees were not sincere in asking this question because it was not likely that such a case would really occur; and besides, this practice of the brothers of a dead man seeking to beget children for him was practically a dead letter at this time among the Jews. Nevertheless, Jesus condescended to reply to their mischievous question.

“Jesus said to them: ‘The children of this system of things marry and are given in marriage, but those who have been counted worthy of gaining that system of things and the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. In fact, neither can they die anymore, **for they are like the angels, and they are God’s children by being children of the resurrection.**’” **Luke 20:34-36**

Clearly, Jesus explained that the resurrection was not a returning to life on earth, but a restoration to life in heaven – as angels, as children of God. He assured the Sadducees that the resurrection was real by directing them to the words of Moses:

“But that the dead are raised up even Moses disclosed, in the account about the thornbush, when he calls Jehovah ‘the God of Abraham and God of Isaac and God of Jacob.’ He is a God, not of the dead, but of the living, **for they are all living to him.** In response some of the scribes [the Pharisees] said: ‘Teacher you spoke well.’” – **Luke 20:37-38**

Here, Jesus explained that although Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had died, to God, they were alive. They had a resurrection guarantee! And as part of the resurrection, they will be as angels in heaven, not as men on earth. Jesus made this same point in an earlier conversation about an army officer who demonstrated tremendous faith in Jesus. He said:

“But I tell you that **many from eastern parts and western parts** will come and recline at the table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob **in the kingdom of the heavens.**” – **Matthew 8:11**

But what about the resurrection of Lazarus. Was he not resurrected to the earth? Does that not prove that some would be resurrected to everlasting life on earth? Actually, no, it does not. The resurrection of Lazarus was not the type of resurrection Jesus promised his followers. The resurrection of Lazarus had a particular purpose.

“Therefore his sisters dispatched word to him, saying: ‘Lord, see! the one for whom you have affection is sick.’” But when Jesus heard it he said: **This sickness is not with death as its object,** but

is for the glory of God, in order **that the Son of God may be glorified through it.**” – *John 11:4*

Lazarus’ resurrection was to demonstrate the **power** of God, to show that the Son of God had the authority to bring life back into a body. We also know Lazarus’ death was not the promised resurrection because Lazarus eventually died again, likely of the same illness that took his life the first time. It was similar with the resurrections performed by Elisha and Elijah. Their resurrections were **not** to everlasting life, for each of them eventually died. Whereas the resurrection promised by God is to everlasting life to the heavenly realm, like the resurrection of Jesus:

“Or do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him **through our baptism into his death**, in order that, just as Christ was raised up from the dead through the glory of the Father, we also should likewise walk in a newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, **we shall certainly also be [united with him in the likeness] of his resurrection**; because we know that our old personality was impaled with [him], that our sinful body might be made inactive, that we should no longer go on being slaves to sin.”–*Romans 6:3-6*

We also know that these temporary resurrections are not the resurrections of promise because Jesus was the first to undergo the resurrection of promise:

“[T]hat the Christ was to suffer and, **as the first** to be resurrected from the dead, he was going to publish light both to this people and to the nations.” – *Acts 26:23*

“However, now Christ has been raised up from the dead, **the firstfruits** of those who have fallen asleep [in death]” – *1 Corinthians 15:20*

“Moreover, no man has ascended into heaven but he that descended from heaven, the Son of man.” – *John 3:13*

So, the resurrection of Lazarus, and those performed by the prophets of old were powerful demonstrations of divine power, but they were not the promised resurrection.

Still, questions remain about the resurrection of promise. For example, Paul wrote:

“Nevertheless, someone will say: “How are the dead to be raised up? Yes, with **what sort of body** are they coming?” – *1 Corinthians 15:35*

Early Christians had some confusion about what the resurrected bodies would be like since all they could imagine is the fleshly body of man. So Paul explained that there are several types of bodies depending on the need. Seeds have bodies suitable for its needs; mammals have bodies suitable for their needs; birds and fish have bodies suitable for their needs. There are earthly bodies (planets) and heavenly bodies (sun, moon, stars) all suitable for their needs. (*1 Corinthians 15:36-41*) And then there is the spiritual body:

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised up in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised up in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised up in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised up a spiritual body. **If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual one.**” – *1 Corinthians 15:42-44*

Yes, those who gain the resurrection of promise will have spiritual bodies, like the angels. He also explained the development of earthly man, and the stages he must pass through:

“It is even so written: “The first man Adam became a living soul.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Nevertheless, the first is, not that which is spiritual, but that which is physical, **afterward that which is spiritual.** The first man is out of the earth and made of dust; the second man is out of heaven. As the one made of dust [is], so those made of dust [are] also; and as the heavenly one [is], so those who are heavenly [are] also. **And just as we have borne the image of the one made of dust, we shall bear also the image of the heavenly one.**” – *1 Corinthians 15:45-49*

So we can see that spiritual life in heaven is the nature progress of man!

Another question might be, who will be among those resurrected? Jesus answered:

“Do not marvel at this, because the hour is coming in which **all those in the memorial tombs** will hear his voice and come out, **those who did good things** to a resurrection of life, **those who practiced vile things** to a resurrection of judgment.” *John 5:28-29*

And the Apostle Paul said:

“I have hope toward God, which hope these [men] themselves also entertain, that **there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.**” – *Acts 24:15*

So it appears that **all** who have died will be resurrected – the righteous and the unrighteous, even those who ‘practiced vile things.’ But not all would gain the promised everlasting life. Some would receive a resurrected of judgment.

How are we to understand the resurrection of judgment? We can only speculate, but we have some ideas based on what we know about the Father's mercy and justice.

We know that all those who have died are said to be sleeping. (*1 Corinthians 11:30*) They have not yet been judged and they have not yet been destroyed. True justice require a fair hearing and an adjudication. We might liken this to a person who was caught stealing on camera with several eye witnesses and the contraband in hand. In spite of all this damning evidence, justice requires a trial and an adjudication before that person can be sentenced for the crime. And he is entitled to an attorney or advocate to plead on his behalf.

So can we assume it might be similar with the resurrection. At that time, 'in the last day,' all mankind must show up for an adjudication of whether they are to be given everlasting life or everlasting destruction. How the actual process of resurrection occurs is a mystery to mankind. However, we imagine it must involve a reuniting of the non-physical aspects of the human being – his personality, his memories, his identity, etc.

It seems that a resurrected one would likely be unconscious, and perhaps his angel will plead on his behalf in the manner of an attorney. (*Romans 8:26*) Those who died in union with Christ are given the resurrection to life. For the others, perhaps there are extenuating circumstances. Maybe, in spite of their behavior, they showed respectful honor to those who came in the Father's name:

“He that receives you receives me also, and he that receives me receives him also that sent me forth. He that receives a prophet because he is a prophet will get a prophet's reward, and he that receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will get a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water to drink because he is a disciple, I tell you truly, **he will by no means lose his reward.**” – *Matthew 10:40-42*

And at the end of the day, all whom mercy can save will be given a heavenly body, similar to angels, and returned to consciousness. But if not, his life will be extinguished and true and unquestioned justice will be served.

This may, or may not, be the way the resurrection is carried out, but it is a possible way to understand it. Mankind will have to await a further revelation from the Father should He wish us to know this matter in detail. But however it is done, we are certain it will be in harmony with the Father's justice, wisdom, mercy and love. Nevertheless, we can avoid an adverse outcome by making sure we are a part of the resurrection to life by accepting our sonship in union with Christ, practicing righteousness, and choosing to do the divine will to the best of our ability.

It is never too late to turn to the Father and chose the divine will. We remember the account of the evil-doer who was impaled alongside Jesus. This was his last day on earth, yet in this moment, his destiny changed:

“But one of the hung evildoers began to say abusively to him: ‘You are the Christ, are you not? Save yourself and us.’ In reply the other rebuked him and said: ‘**Do you not fear God at all**, now that you are in the same judgment? And we, indeed, justly so, for **we are receiving in full what we deserve for things we did**; but this [man] did nothing out of the way.’ And he went on to say: ‘Jesus, remember me when you get into your kingdom.’” – *Luke 23:39-42*

The second evildoer had a ‘fear of God.’ He recognized and admitted the seriousness of his error. He exercised faith in Jesus and his humility was well received; it was counted to him as righteousness.

“And [Jesus] said to him: ‘Truly I tell you today, **You will be with me in Paradise.**’” – *Luke 23:39-42*

This repentant evildoer was promised a resurrection to Paradise. So the question is, where is Paradise? Many believe this is a reference to a regenerated earth into a beautiful garden like the one in which Adam and Eve were privileged to dwell. That place came to be known as the Garden of Eden. But a review of the scriptures reveals that the Garden of Eden was never known as a paradise. There is a specific Hebrew word for “Paradise” and it was not used in reference to the Garden of Eden.

However, the Bible does refer to a place called “Paradise” in three specific instances – the one referenced above at *Luke 23:42*, and:

- As a heavenly place where the Apostle Paul apparently visited:

“Yes, I know such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body, I do not know, God knows—that he was **caught away into paradise** and heard unutterable words which it is not lawful for a man to speak.” – *2 Corinthians 12:3-4*

- And as the heavenly place of God:

“Let the one who has an ear hear what the spirit says to the congregations: To him that conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in **the paradise of God.**” – *Revelation 2:7*

Each of these references identify paradise as a place located somewhere **other than earth**. While the earth has the potential to be truly beautiful, that would not be the equivalent of a true Paradise. We are told:

“Eye has not seen and ear has not heard, neither have there been conceived in the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love him.” – *1 Corinthians 2:9*

Thus we are assured that the Paradise of God's making would far surpass every idea we currently have of what Paradise could be. It is otherworldly! This scripture also implies that we will be able to experience heaven through our senses – our eyes and our ears. So it should not be surprising that there could be something akin to physical beauty in the heavens.

The shortsightedness of the resurrection of promise arises when we assume that the heavens are nothing more than an ethereal place where spirits float about, when, in fact, it is a glorious world where life continues on a higher plane with untold grandeur and beauty. It is referred to as 'the real life' (*1 Timothy 6:19*) with heavenly residences (*John 14:2*), crystal clear waters of life, and plants and fruit-bearing trees. (*Revelation 2:7; 22:1-2*) There is music and singing (*Revelation 14:3*) and myriads of angels and unique companions who will all praise the Father with us. (*Revelation 5:11*) To learn more of what the Bible reveals about the heavens, see the series of articles, **The Glorious Heavenly Hope**.

In all of our research, we can find no reference in the entire Christian writings that would lead us to conclude that mankind would be resurrected to any place other than heaven. No, the hope for earthly resurrection is not a Biblical teaching. We expect that all who have ever lived who gain the resurrection of promise will be in the heavenly kingdom, including Daniel, Lazarus, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and those 'from eastern and western parts.' (*Matthew 8:11*) Yes, as Jesus said:

“For this is the will of my Father, that **everyone** that beholds the Son and exercises faith in him should have everlasting life, and **I will resurrect him at the last day.**” – *John 6:39-40*

Come Lord Jesus, come!

***“Elaia Luchnia”***