

Both Resurrections Will Witness Christ Coming

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Many who read God's word, the Bible, understand that Jesus Christ will return at some point in the future. They may also realize that Christ's return will resemble his final ascension into the heavens as witnessed by eleven of his disciples (Ac. 1:9-11). However, as this study will reveal, there is much more to Christ's future appearance and it is not limited to one point in time.

Before examining scriptures related to Christ's return, it must be established that there are two resurrections of the dead. The writer of Hebrews describes the first resurrection as the better one and many, who will enter it, suffered during their physical lifetime because they chose to obey God's word even if it meant losing their lives.

*Women received their dead raised to life again. And **others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection** (Heb. 11:35; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise stated; emphasis added).*

Those who are found worthy to be in the first resurrection are the ones who trusted God's word and obeyed it. This is why Christ described them as being "just".

*And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for **you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just** (Lk. 14:14; emphasis added).*

The Greek word translated into the English word "just" is SGD # 1342, which is used 41 times to describe righteous behavior. And God defines

righteousness as obedience to His commandments.

*For **all Your commandments are righteousness** (Ps. 119:172b; emphasis added).*

Christ confirmed that being part of the first resurrection would depend on whether a person acted in a worthy manner during their physical lifetime.

*But **those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage;** ³⁶*nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being **sons of the resurrection** (Lk. 20:35-36; emphasis added).**

Even the Apostle Paul did not believe that he was already worthy of being in the first resurrection. Instead, he knew that he had to endure until the end of his lifetime striving to obey God.

If, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead (Php. 3:11; emphasis added).

*But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, **lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified** (1Cor. 9:27; emphasis added).*

Christ confirmed that obeying God word, and enduring hardships, to the end of one's life is a prerequisite to being in the first resurrection.

*And you (God's faithful and obedient servants) will be hated by all for My name's sake. But **he who endures to the end will be saved** (Mt. 10:22; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).*

This is not a new concept. It was clearly understood during the time of the Old Testament that if someone stopped doing what is lawful, as defined by God's law and commandments, they would perish.

But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity (cf. 1Jn. 3:4), and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die (Eze. 18:24; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Those who will be in the first resurrection are currently being "tried and tested" by the standard of God's word.

*But he (Christ) answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but **by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God**'" (Mt. 4:4; Ed. note in parenthesis).*

The Apostle Peter confirmed that God's servants are being judged by every word of God now. This way they do not have to be judged at the end of Christ's millennial rule on earth when everyone, who was not in the first resurrection, is brought back to life.

*For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God, and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸Now "**If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?**" (1Pet. 4:17-18; emphasis added).*

For the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his (Christ's) voice ²⁹and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life (1st resurrection), and

those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation (2nd resurrection) (Jn. 5:28b-29; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

The "resurrection of condemnation" is a period of judgment that can end in everlasting death for anyone who refuses to admit their sins; followed by seeking God's forgiveness. If they refuse to repent, they will die for the second and final time.

*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit (of Almighty God) says to the churches. **He who overcomes** (sinful conduct) **shall not be hurt by the second death** (Rev. 2:11; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

Going back to Peter's statement that "if the righteous one is scarcely saved"; he was pointing out that although the righteous do their best to obey every word of God, they have only done what is expected of them, or the bare minimum.

*So likewise you, when you have done **all those things which you are commanded**, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do' (Lk. 17:10; emphasis added).*

Sadly, there are many who believe they are doing "the Lord's work", while they casually break different aspects of God's law.

*Not everyone who says to me (Christ), 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. ²²Many will say to me in that day (during the second resurrection), 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name?' ²³And then **I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!'** (Mt. 7:21-23; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

According to Matthew 7:21-23, these people will be perplexed when they are resurrected because they misunderstood what was required to inherit everlasting life. Most of them probably believed they would go to heaven upon their death (see study: The Lesson of Lazarus). Instead, God's word is clear that those, who seek to "live by every word of God" during their lifetime, will enter the first resurrection when Christ returns to rule this planet.

Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God (the Father) and of Christ, and shall reign with him (Christ) a thousand years (Rev. 20:6; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

*For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then **we who are alive** (at that future time) **and remain** (in the flesh) **shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And thus we shall always be with the Lord (1Thes. 4:16-17; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

After the conclusion of the thousand-year period, everyone who was not in the first resurrection will be brought back to life and judged according to their conduct, using God's law and commandments as the standard.

But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished (Rev. 20:5a).

Having confirmed that there are two resurrections, we can look more closely at the experience each of these two groups will have as soon as they regain consciousness. Starting with those in the first resurrection, Christ's appearance is described as follows:

*Now when he (Christ) had spoken these things, while they watched (the eleven apostles), **he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.** ¹⁰And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men (angels; cf. Jn. 20:12) stood by them in white apparel, ¹¹who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? **This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven**" (Ac. 1:9-11; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

So Acts 1:9-11 is a second witness to 1Thessalonians 4:17, which describes the first experience everyone will have in the moment they regain consciousness.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we (who are in the 1st resurrection) shall be changed. ⁵³For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal; must put on immortality (1Cor. 15:52-53; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Interestingly, the experience of those in the first resurrection will be the same as those in the second resurrection. Specifically, both groups will see Christ in the clouds at the moment they are resurrected (see study: Christ and the Pillar of Cloud). Because the Jewish religious leaders lied about what Christ taught and then sought false witnesses in order to kill him, they will be part of the second resurrection, as the following scripture confirms.

*Jesus said to him (the high priest), "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, **hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven**"* (Mt. 26:64).

The following is a second witness to this truth,

*Behold, **he** (Christ) **is coming with clouds, and every eye will see him** (in both the 1st and 2nd resurrection) *and they who pierced him* (the Jewish religious leaders, Pilate, the Roman soldiers, Satan, and every unrepentant sinner) ... (Rev. 1:7a; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

So there will be two resurrections, and in both cases the first thing everyone will experience is Jesus Christ appearing in the clouds. Specifically, Christ will be surrounded by his loyal angels.

*For **the Son of Man will come in the glory (power) of his Father with his angels, and then he will reward each according to his/her works** (Mt. 16:27; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).*

In summary, these same angels are described figuratively as "clouds", and they will be seen with Jesus Christ at each of the two resurrections. Therefore, the very first thing anyone will see, when they are resurrected, is Jesus Christ with his loyal angels; regardless of which resurrection an individual finds themselves in.

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