

Return to Article of the Month Index

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THE FOUR RESURRECTIONS

Resurrection seems like a simple enough word and concept. But, as with all Biblical topics, the surface meanings do not even come close to the in-depth jewels which are to be found. Resurrection is a BIG subject — even though the word itself occurs relatively infrequently in Scripture (and not at all in the Old Testament). This month’s article will not be exhaustive on the subject. That would require at least a small book! But the aim of this article is more to present a general overview of the topic and a few related scriptures.

It is important at the outset to note that “resurrection” does not mean awakening. The Greek word (*anastasis*) has, instead, the meaning of a “re-standing.” To be resurrected means to be brought back from the condition of imperfection and from alienation from God into a condition of perfection and of a total, unmediated, perfect communication with God. Admittedly, an awakening from the state of death will be for most of the race the first step in the process which leads to the resurrected state. But awakening from death is not resurrection and is not so used in the Bible.

— The Primary Text —

In John 5:28, 29 we find a few words from Jesus on the subject. Translation becomes an issue in these verses, but a careful review of any Greek text (for those who can read Greek), or of the better English translations, will reveal Jesus’ intent.

Jesus is teaching the basic TWO parts of the subject of resurrection. As you have probably noted in this website, there are to be TWO destinies for the descendants of Adam and Eve. The greater part of the human race will obtain an eternal salvation on a perfected earth as perfected human beings. A much smaller part of us will experience an eternal salvation as spirit beings, not as humans, and not confined to the earth. Both salvations will be glorious in their own way, and the recipients of both will live in grateful admiration for what they have received.

It is because of this two-part salvation that Jesus discusses two resurrections in John 5. A relatively-accurate version of the two verses reads something like this:

- 5:28 Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming in which all who are in their tombs shall hear his voice
- 5:29 and shall come forth. Those who have done THE [special] good will come forth to a LIFE-RESURRECTION. Those who have practiced [because it is still in their flesh] THE evil [which remains part of their nature], will come forth to a JUDGING-RESURRECTION.

What Jesus is doing is acknowledging that the called-out, spirit-begotten of the Christian Age (his true disciples) have their judgment now, in this lifetime. It is they who will have a resurrection giving them their reward immediately upon awakening: LIFE. Their judgment will then have been past. Their resurrection process will have come to its completion by their being granted their spiritual-life reward.

But that will be as the Millennial Age is just beginning. During the Millennial Age of Christ's Kingdom, the remainder of humanity (who have not faced judgment in this life) will come forth to BEGIN their resurrection process. That process will involve their being judged then for the things they do then. (Revelation 20:12, 13) Hence Jesus calls their resurrection a "JUDGING-RESURRECTION" — a re-standing brought about by the process of judgment after awakening. Its result will, just as with the spiritual class, be LIFE. But it will be life on earth.

Thus both resurrections are processes resulting in life (re-standing with God). The primary DIFFERENCE in the two resurrections (other than the spirit versus flesh status) is that "The LIFE-RESURRECTION" is a Gospel Age (or Christian Age) process. "The JUDGING-RESURRECTION" is a Millennial Age process.

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It might be good to note here the horrible implications of the poor translation in the King James translation. It calls the second resurrection "a resurrection of damnation." Perhaps the easiest way to see the absurdity of this translation is

to remember that resurrection means re-standing. Thus we would have a “re-standing of damnation”! That is not a re-standing; it is a re-falling! The translators apparently did not understand “*anastasis*,” and, obviously, they were in the grips of Satan’s lies about the existence of eternal torment.

— A Further Division —

There are hints throughout Scripture which make us realize that the two major resurrections of which Jesus spoke are further divided. The “life-resurrection” will have two groups partaking of it. The “judging-resurrection” will, likewise, have two groups partaking of it. While this breakdown is complex and both hinted at and supported by a number of Scriptures, two texts get us started in the consideration.

In Revelation 20:6, we find mention of “the first resurrection.” Our curiosity is piqued by the term — especially since it applies only to those who “came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

In Hebrews 11:35, we have reference to “a better resurrection.” Our curiosity is again piqued by the term, making us wonder why and how it is better — and better than which other resurrection! The context makes it plain that this “better resurrection” is for the very-faithful of the Old Testament. The 40th verse shows that those who obtain this “better resurrection” do not obtain it without the help of “us.” Who are the “us”? It is the same group which has part in “the first resurrection.”

The “better resurrection” is part of what Jesus called the “JUDGMENT-RESURRECTION.” It is earthly. The resurrection of the faithful of the ancient world is “better” than the general resurrection of the whole world of mankind. It is better because the FAITH of these ancient worthy ones has won for them God’s approval in advance of the rest of humanity. God will utilize these Old Testament faithful ones as “princes” in the earthly phase of His Kingdom. We will see this testified shortly in an Old Testament prophecy. (See Hebrews 11:2, 34.)

The “first resurrection” is part of what Jesus called the “LIFE-RESURRECTION.” It is to a spirit nature in heaven. The other part of the “Life-Resurrection” is for a group which is called in the Bible “a great multitude.” It is found in Revelation 7. In Revelation 7, we find both parts of the “Life-Resurrection.” The “first resurrection” is those in 7:3, 4 — 144,000 who constitute the “body of Christ” (symbolized here by “Jews”). The other part

of the “Life-resurrection” is shown in verses 9-17. This “great multitude” is comprised of genuine, spirit-begotten Christians who fell short of the “mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus,” but who will receive a partial reward — a resurrection to life as spirit beings. (See III John 8 and Philippians 3:14.)

— Other Substantiating Texts —

The FOUR RESURRECTIONS (two resurrections of two parts each) are shown in Psalm 45:13-17. Here we are shown (in resurrection order) the four groups we have discussed.

1. The “first resurrection” is the “King’s daughter” of verse 13 and half of verse 14. She is “led to the King.” She is Jesus’ spiritual bride.
2. The “great multitude” of Revelation 7 (the partial-reward group of III John 8) is shown in the second half of Psalm 45:14 and in verse 15. This group (yet spiritual “virgins”) has been “companions” to the 144,000. They are “led forth into the King’s palace — a spiritual reward, but not as the “bride of Christ.”
3. Verse 16 is about the Old Testament faithful of Hebrews 11 — the “better resurrection.” These receive an earthly resurrection, but it is better than the world in general receives because these are made “princes in all the earth” — the earthly administrators of the Kingdom of Christ.
4. Finally, verse 17 shows us the largest of the resurrection groups — the whole world of mankind. They constitute the masses of “all generations.” They “will give...thanks forever and ever.”

Thus Psalm 45 confirms and details the recipients of the 2 parts of the spiritual resurrection, and the 2 parts of the earthly resurrection.

This same breakdown was hinted at as early as Genesis 2:10-14. After the single river of Eden, representing the origins of man’s experience, we find the river dividing into four parts. The destinies of the progeny of our first parents are thus symbolized. The four are in the same order as the groups of Psalm

45. The picture-prophecy begins with the river of the land of gold, foretelling the “high-calling” or divine nature of “the first resurrection.” Then, in order, the picture-prophecy proceeds finally to the general resurrection of the whole world of mankind — the “Euphrates” (which means “good and abounding”).

It is also likely that the parting of Jesus’ garments into four parts (John 19:23, 24) was done to foretell that Jesus’ sacrifice would give benefit to four different groups we have identified.

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While this article may raise many questions in the minds of truth seekers, it does faithfully represent the testimony of the whole Bible on the subject of resurrection. It is a topic of many complexities, but also of just as many satisfying and exciting answers.