



THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD

Reading: 1 Corinthians 15

The word 'resurrection' means 'coming back to life again'.

Jesus raised the dead and spoke of the future resurrection

During his ministry Jesus raised three people from the dead: a widow's son; a ruler's daughter; and his friend, Lazarus. Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, lived in Bethany, a small village near Jerusalem. They were devoted followers of Jesus. When Lazarus became ill, his sisters sent for Jesus. Jesus delayed going to help so that Lazarus would be dead and buried before he arrived. Jesus knew that this would be his last opportunity to show God's great power before his own death. When Jesus finally arrived, Martha said to him,

"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:21).

Jesus said to her, *"Your brother will rise again."* Martha knew that Jesus would raise the dead at his second coming, so she said,

"I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day" (John 11:24).

To show that his work of salvation is the only way to resurrection and immortal life, Jesus said to Martha,

"I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).

Then, to show all who were there that he had power to raise the dead, Jesus went to the tomb and cried with a loud voice, *"Lazarus, come out"*. After being dead for four days, Lazarus came out of the tomb alive!

Lazarus was not given immortal life at this time. Later he died again and is still in the grave but, as Martha had said to Jesus, he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. Jesus used this miracle to teach people about the hope of resurrection. Read about it yourself in John 11.

Jesus rose from the dead

Soon after this, Jesus was cruelly put to death. When he came out of the grave on the third day, his disciples could not believe their eyes. They thought that they were seeing a spirit, but Jesus showed them that he had been raised with a body:

*"See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a **spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.**" And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marvelling, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them"* (Luke 24:39-43).

They were now convinced that Jesus really was alive again. They had witnessed one of the most amazing miracles of all time. God had brought Jesus back from the dead. However, unlike the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus was both resurrected and given immortal life – he would never die again. He was the first person to ever receive this gift of immortality from God and so the Bible describes him as the *"firstborn from the dead"* (Colossians 1:18). We read of him saying, *"I am alive for evermore"* (Revelation 1:18).

Jesus will raise the dead and give immortal life

When he returns to the earth, the Lord Jesus will raise the dead and give immortal life to the people of God from all ages. He continued in Revelation 1:18:

"... I have the keys of Death and Hades."

'Hades' refers to the grave (see Lesson 23), so this verse is saying that Jesus Christ has the keys to unlock the grave. This means that Jesus has the power to open graves and set free those who are buried there by giving them endless life:





“For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will” (John 5:21).

But the Lord Jesus will not raise everyone who has ever lived. He is coming to judge people from all ages who have heard the call of the Gospel. Therefore, those who have heard the Gospel will be raised, both the righteous and the wicked. Daniel 12:2 explains:

*“And **many** (not all) of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, **some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.**”*

The apostle Paul confirms that both righteous and wicked people will be raised:

*“But this I confess to you ... I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, having a hope in God ... that **there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust**” (Acts 24:14,15).*

Jesus explained:

*“... **an hour is coming** when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the **resurrection of life**, and those who have done evil to the **resurrection of judgment**” (John 5:28,29).*

Only true believers will be accepted into God’s kingdom and be made immortal. We will learn more about the day of judgement in the next lesson.

Resurrection and immortal life for the faithful when Christ returns

The hope of the resurrection is the hope of the Gospel:

“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:22,23).

True believers throughout the ages have died looking forward to the day when they would be raised to life again. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews gives us a list of people who *“died in faith, not (yet) having received the things promised”* (Hebrews 11:13). Later in the same chapter he explains that they:

“... did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:39,40).

Not one of the faithful people listed in Hebrews 11 has yet been made immortal. All true worshippers of God will receive this blessing at the same time – when Christ returns.

Abraham was promised resurrection

Lesson 12 explained the great promises that God made to Abraham. One promise was that Abraham would inherit **for ever** the land he saw and in which he then lived. This was the land of Canaan, now known as Israel. In Genesis 13:15, God promised Abraham:

*“... all the land you see I will give **to you** and to your offspring **for ever**”.*

Abraham died without this promise being fulfilled – the New Testament confirms that this is true (Acts 7:5). Abraham must therefore be raised from the dead so that God can keep His promise. Abraham must also be given immortality so that he can inherit the land for ever. Abraham understood this, which is why he is listed in Hebrews 11 with those who *“died in faith”*, looking forward to the day of resurrection.

Jesus told the Jews of his day that they would see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God, but themselves cast out (Luke 13:28). Although these Jews read the Old Testament scriptures, their behaviour was not right with God. They will be among those resurrected to judgement *“who have done evil”* and so will not be accepted into God’s future kingdom. This is a warning to us.

A hope shared by all faithful people

All true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ share the hope of resurrection and immortal life. When early Christians died, their believing friends spoke of them as having “fallen asleep”, because just as people wake after sleeping, so true believers will be awakened from the sleep of death to be given immortal life. The apostle Paul wrote that some of





the 500 disciples who had seen Jesus after his resurrection had since *“fallen asleep”* (1 Corinthians 15:6). Paul believed that he would be raised from the dead for he wrote:

“And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power” (1 Corinthians 6:14).

A life far better than today’s

We live in an imperfect world. Life is full of problems: war, illness, famine, the death of loved ones, old age, terrible diseases like AIDS, natural disasters, stress, financial worries, unemployment, violence, and many more. The thought of living for ever with these problems is not attractive, but that is not what God offers.

The life that the Lord Jesus promises his followers when he returns is very different from life today, with all its cares and worries. The beautiful words of Revelation 7:16,17 describe life for immortal believers in God’s kingdom:

“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Jesus said this about those who will be given immortality:

“For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Mark 12:25).

Their bodies will be changed and become immortal like the body of Jesus after his resurrection. They will never grow old, suffer pain or die and will enjoy perfect health and unlimited energy. The apostle Paul wrote:

“... we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform (change) our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself” (Philippians 3:20,21).

Immortal life will only be given to people whose sins have been forgiven. Jesus was free from sin in his life, but he shared our human nature. When he was raised, he was changed and given a nature like God Himself. This is the wonder of eternal life, that those who are given this great gift by God will be changed in two ways so that they share the nature of God Himself (2 Peter 1:4):

1. their mortal bodies will be made immortal – they will never die again;
2. their minds will be changed – they will never be able to sin again.

What will happen to true believers who are alive when Christ returns?

Paul explains what will happen to true believers who are still alive when Christ returns.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:14-17	NOTES
<p>[14] <i>For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.</i></p>	<p>We know that Jesus rose from the dead. This is the guarantee that others can also be raised from the dead (notice the phrase ‘fallen asleep’).</p>
<p>[15] <i>For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.</i></p>	<p>Those who are alive when Christ returns will not meet him until after the dead have been raised.</p>
<p>[16] <i>For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.</i></p>	<p>Jesus Christ will come down from heaven with the authority of God. He will first raise the dead.</p>



<p>[17] <i>Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.</i></p>	<p>True believers who are alive when Christ returns, and those who were raised from the dead, will together be caught up into the air to meet him. Then they will always be with the Lord Jesus.</p>
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Verse 16 talks about people being raised from the dead. This lesson shows that resurrection is an important Bible teaching. Yet some people wrongly believe that the souls or spirits of righteous people go to **heaven** when they die. But resurrection would not be needed if people go to heaven when they die! Both ideas cannot be right. The Bible teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ will return to **earth** to raise the dead and give immortal life in God's kingdom.

Notice also that in verse 17 Paul does not speak of living with the Lord Jesus in heaven, but meeting him in the air. He is telling us about the arrangements that will be made for true believers to meet up with Jesus, wherever they are living on the earth. But those who meet up with the Lord Jesus will not stay in the air! Verse 16 says that the Lord is descending **from heaven**. We know that the Lord Jesus will return to the earth (Acts 1:11), so if true believers are to remain with him for ever, they must live on earth. The Greek word translated 'caught up' in verse 17 is used in Acts 8:39 to describe Philip being transported away from the Ethiopian he baptized, to continue his preaching elsewhere.

Preparing ourselves for Christ's second coming

Read again 1 Corinthians 15:51-58. Here the apostle speaks of the time when true believers from all ages will be given that great gift of immortality. All true believers very much look forward to the return of the Lord Jesus and pray that it will happen soon. As we look forward to that time, the apostle Paul tells us to be "*steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.*"

Summary

1. Jesus was the first person to be raised from the dead and given immortal life. The Bible describes him as the "*firstborn from the dead*".
2. Jesus Christ has the power to raise the dead. When he returns to the earth, he will raise the dead who have heard the call of the Gospel – the righteous and the wicked.
3. At the judgement to follow, Christ will give immortal life to true believers from all ages, both those raised from the dead and those who are alive at his return.

Verses to learn: John 5:28,29

Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Passages to read: 1 Thessalonians 4; Hebrews 11; John 11; Matthew 22:23-33

