

A Study on the Resurrections of the Dead

By Chris DeWeese

The study of prophecy is speculation. The study of eschatology, which is end time prophecy, is downright dangerous. Trying to interpret future biblical events is enlightening and can open up the scriptures to greater understanding, but it can also lead one to some pretty bad theology and behavior. The Millerites, who sold everything in the mid-1800s because they thought they had figured out when Jesus was coming back, come to mind. With that said, it is important to remember throughout this paper that the conclusions presented are speculative in nature. Yeshua Himself (Yeshua is Jesus and both names for The Messiah are used throughout this study) said He did not know the day or the hour, but we are also given specific information about coming events. This information has been preserved for a reason so studying, speculating, and learning is expected. The problems come when the prophecy interpretations start to become more than just a study and begin to affect one's daily life and interaction with others. When prophesy leads to false doctrine and building walls instead of bridges it is very bad. So please remember this study is speculative in nature.

The focus will be mostly on the second resurrection but it is best to start with the first one and even point out why there are two! Most of the western world only looks forward to one particular judgment day, if any at all for that matter. For the most part people look at the apocalypse as a singular event that signals the end of the world, but that's where the story seems to end. The idea of there being two resurrections is not generally discussed in mainstream Christianity and certainly not in popular culture. The details and timing of the end time events should be studied by Christians but especially those of us who observe the Sabbath and Holy Days due to the prophetic significance of these days.

There are some significant differences between what most of Christianity teaches and the fundamental reference points of this article. According to the Bible, hell does not exist now, dead people are in a state of sleep, and when bad people ultimately go to the lake of fire, they don't get burned for eternity. The lake of fire is going to be real, it just does not exist yet. While the fire is indeed unquenchable, that means that there is nothing one can do to stop it, not that the condemned burn forever. Saved people do not go to heaven when they die, either. When folks die, both believer and nonbeliever, they go to the grave and await one of two resurrections. The modern concept of heaven is what the Bible actually calls the Kingdom of God. It will be here on earth after the planet is completely renewed and the New Jerusalem will be its headquarters. Unrepentant sinners will be tossed into the lake of fire and consumed by the fire, ceasing to exist just prior to the renewal of the planet.

It is unfathomable that a sinless eternity contains a place of eternal agony for some that can be witnessed by those who are supposed to live on in eternity. It is also inconceivable that people could be in heaven right now, looking down on this sinful cesspool of Babylonian confusion, and not sin. For the rest of this study the reference about dead people is that they are actually dead - sleeping in their graves until some future event.

Without further ado, here are two pretty powerful scriptures that speak of the resurrections. Unless noted, the verses come from the NASB translation.

"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. (John 5:28-29)

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. (Rev. 19: 4-5)

If we take these two scriptures literally, the “resurrection of life” occurs prior to the thousand years and is the first resurrection. It occurs after the Great Tribulation and when Yeshua comes back in power and glory as the Lion of Judah:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. (1Thess 4:16-17)

So when Yeshua returns, He will descend from the sky. This goes hand in hand with Acts 1:10-11 where the angels tell the Apostles that Yeshua will return the same way He left - visibly, not secretly. The part about a shout or a trumpet comes from Yom Teruah or the Day of Trumpets or Shouting. Trumpets were used for thousands of years as a call for battle or to signal big events. The Day of Trumpets from Leviticus 23 has been ordained from at least the Exodus as a reminder of how Yeshua will return and how the thousand years will be ushered in - with a call to arms! It is also important to recall how Jericho fell with a shout and also how Gideon won the battle against the overwhelming enemy with a shout. Isn't it amazing that the return of Yeshua has been

prophesied about and foreshadowed for thousands of years prior to even His first coming?

To return to the topic at hand, though, we have the first resurrection where the saints, the dead in Messiah (Messiah is what the term Christ means), are resurrected. This is actually outlined long before Yeshua's ministry as well, even in detail:

Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.' "Therefore prophecy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. "Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. "I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it," declares the LORD.'" (Ezekiel 37: 11-14)

There is an interpretation out there that places this at the second resurrection because of the phrases "then you will know that I am the LORD" and because it looks like these did not have the Ruach (Spirit) because Yahweh says "then I will put My Spirit within you". This is the first resurrection for a number of reasons:

- If there is only one resurrection detailed in the Old Testament, it's probably the first one!
- Yahweh refers to these people as "My people". That would be an odd thing to call people who weren't His people
- They are also called "the whole house of Israel". Per Paul, Christians are adopted into the Israel of God so that would include us.
- In Revelation 20 it refers to those at the second resurrection to be resurrected and "judged". The people resurrected in Ezekiel 37

are not judged, they are resurrected to life - eternal life at that since they get the Ruach!

- If we read on, we see that Israel, Ephraim, and Judah are reunited *after* this resurrection! In Zechariah 14, we see Jerusalem established as the capital of the world during the 1000 years, not after.
- Verse 22 says that *after* this resurrection all Israel is called out of the nations!
- Verse 23 to the end of the chapter says that these resurrected people will be united with Israel from the nations, they will not sin ever again (second resurrection people may or may not sin), Yeshua will be their king, and these people will be a witness to the nations as to the power of Yahweh (see Zechariah 14)!
- If we read on to Ezekiel 38, we see that the great Gog and Magog war (Armageddon in Revelation) is *after* all of these events. The time line in Revelation puts that war at end of the thousand years, not the beginning!

The fact that those at this resurrection do not appear to have the Spirit until they are resurrected appears significant. It is important to remember that Yahweh breathed the Spirit into Adam and Adam was immortal until he and Eve sinned. While believers in Messiah do have a measure of the Spirit, we still die and await resurrection – just like Peter, Paul, and the rest of the early believers in Messiah. In “the resurrection chapter” of 1 Corinthians 15, Paul writes that the resurrected saints will be raised in a *spiritual* body at verse 44. Having a spiritual body and having a body where Yahweh breathes the Spirit into correlates.

Moving on to the second resurrection, there are two extremes within the pre-millennial Sabbath keeping groups. The first doctrine to contrast is more along the lines of what a Protestant church would believe - that everyone who does not make the first resurrection is resurrected at the second, shown the error of their ways, and then incinerated. The only key difference here is that

Protestants believe those who do not make it into the kingdom (heaven) are burned in eternal torment. The other extreme is that all people who never had a shot at Sabbath and Holy Day keeping Christianity are resurrected for 100 years and taught the Gospel while being ministered to by immortal saints who used to be Torah observant believers in Messiah in this lifetime. This doctrine limits the first resurrection to just the Christians who separated from the pagan practices of mainstream Christianity and adopted Sabbath and Holy Day observance.

The problems with the first scenario, the one where people who do not make the first resurrection are essentially doomed, are both scriptural and practical. Practically, it makes no sense to bring people up out of their graves only to condemn them and watch them roast in agony. Why resurrect them at all? A reading of Revelation 20 ought to take care of this problem. Keep in mind the next verses are after the thousand years:

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20: 12-15)

Those who are raised at the second resurrection are *judged* against the things in the books and those who are not found written in the book of life are tossed into the lake of fire. Being judged means that a verdict can be either favorable or unfavorable. If everyone at the second resurrection was going to

be thrown into the lake (judged unfavorably), why bring them back to life at all? If all of them are guilty and exterminated, why does it say that only those who are not found in the book of life are destroyed (meaning there are at least some who *are found* in the book of life)? These verses directly contradict the teaching that all at the second resurrection get cooked.

There are quite a few more issues with the second extreme; the one where those who do not make it into the first resurrection get another complete lifetime to come to the knowledge of the truth. The first issue would be the scripture above, where the people in the second resurrection are judged by the things which have already been written in the books. There is no indication here of the existence of another lifetime. To assume the need of another lifetime is to assume that Yahweh messed up the first time these people were born. Each person God created has a reason for their existence.

Peter, turning around, *saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" So Peter seeing him *said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" Jesus *said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" (John 21: 20-22)

That's a pretty stiff rebuke. Peter was concerning himself in affairs he shouldn't have and he got informed of the same. The idea that other people have a different lot in life, or that they have a different cross to bear, is just the way it is. Christians throughout history have had varying standards. How many died in the early centuries after Christ by torture and execution? How many were persecuted and murdered at the Reformation for not bowing their knee to Rome? How many are beheaded for the name of Jesus in the middle and far east today? The challenges we face today in western civilization pale in comparison to those martyrs. Having

to abstain from pork and having to find jobs that allow us to keep the Sabbath and the Moedim is laughably easy when juxtaposed against someone who was burned at the stake because they dared own a Geneva Bible in 17th century Europe.

Why would it take 100 years for someone to acknowledge Jesus while being ministered to by immortal believers from their past? Did it take 100 years for any of us? And if the others have to learn the Sabbath and holy days in the future, what's to say we don't have to learn martyrdom the hard way?

For the sake of the argument let's continue to entertain this notion. One chief scripture that those who adhere to the second chance go to is:

"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." (Mar 16:16)

Foremost, Mark 16:9-20 is actually not supposed to be in the bible. Yes, that's shocking information. A modern bible, especially an NASB, will make note of this. There are quite a few scriptures that are in the New Testament that aren't to be found in the earliest manuscripts. However, the adherents to this doctrine use Mark 16:16 to say that those who are not *baptized* will be condemned therefore all who lived before the Baptism of Yeshua must live again and choose to be baptized in order to enter eternal life. But that's not what it says. It says that those who have believed and been baptized will be saved, sure enough, but the second half of the verse leaves out the part about baptism! This is a slight difference, but I think it is very key in this realm of understanding (keeping in mind this is all based on speculation, well speculation based on a bit of study). Let's look at a scripture that proves this point implicitly:

One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? "And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" And He said to him, "**Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.**" (Luke 23:39-43)

This scripture seems to contradict the state of the dead in that Yeshua appears to tell this man that he is going to paradise the day he dies. However, it is important to remember that Yeshua did not go to paradise when He died, He went into the heart of the earth, the grave, for three days and three nights. In other words, neither one of them went to Paradise that day, but when Yeshua brings Yahweh's kingdom to earth, rest assured, that thief will be in that kingdom!

This brings us to the point of Luke 23:39-43 with respect to the concept that baptism is a requirement for entrance into the kingdom. The repentant thief who acknowledged his sin, recognized that Yeshua is the Messiah and His death was innocent, was *instantly* granted access to the kingdom - without the need for a baptism! All he needed to do was believe! It is very possible that the second resurrection will go a lot like what happened to the two thieves on the cross. Those who are resurrected with spite and malice will get treated rather poorly, to say the least. Those who come up repentant while acknowledging their own wickedness may very well be granted access to the kingdom. Why on earth would this require another entire lifetime? Keep in mind that this part is speculation, though. Speculation while drawing parallels, but speculation none the less.

To further elaborate on the resurrection of judgment, it is important to do a little concordance work on the words that the Bible translators translate into the word “judgment”. There are at least three words that are translated from Greek into English as judgment. The three words to focus on are:

G2920 Krisis – a judgment or decision

G2919 Krino - to judge or decide

G2632 Katakrimo - to give judgment against (condemn)

This author’s preferred translation is the NASB from Lockman Foundation. One of the reasons for this is because they translate krino and krisis as a derivative of “judgment” and they translate katakrimo as condemnation. Let’s look at a key scripture regarding the resurrections contrasting the NASB and the traditional KJV:

"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. John 5:28,29 (NASB)

And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. John 5:29 (KJV)

The KJV translates that last word differently and this is a key reason why a great many people believe that the second resurrection is an automatic and eternal punishment. G2920, krisis, is the word behind the word translated “damnation” here. It is supposed to say “judgment” or “decision”. This scripture does not show that the fate of all those in the second resurrection is set in stone. In fact, the KJV is very problematic with respect to John 5. In verses 22 the KJV translates “krisis” as judgment but in verse 24, it’s translated as condemnation, and then in verse 29 it’s translated as damnation. This is alarming because when the book

of John was written, it's *the same word* in all those verses! The NASB translates John 5 in a much more uniform and literal manner.

Further, the word for “judged” in Revelation 20:11-15 is G2919 “krino”. This word is also in John 5 at verse 22 and is translated as “judgment” in both the KJV and the NASB. This is important because neither of the two places we are studying that reference the resurrection of judgment uses the actual word for condemnation which is G2632 “katakrino”. I think this is very important. Krino means to decide but katakrino means to decide against or to condemn. If those at the second resurrection are indeed condemned, then why didn't the Spirit guide John use the word for that when he wrote that book? In fact, katakrino is not used in the book of Revelation at all! It is used at Mark 16:16 and that context parallels what happened with the thief who did not believe but let's take a look at another place where Yeshua uses this word:

"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn (katakrino) Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up." Matthew 20:18-19

In this context, condemned does mean put to death. Since there is a word that means condemned, which is as close to “damned” as the bible gets, and it is not used when referencing the resurrection of judgment, then it is concluded that automatic eternal damnation is simply not scriptural.

This word study is also important to the doctrine that teaches of another lifetime of learning. None of the words translated as judgment mean “to instruct in the ways of the LORD”. There is no hint of another lifetime in these texts, but only a judgment based

on past deeds. This is a very scary reality because who can stand to be judged by The Almighty? It is indeed a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. The goal for anyone who can is to accept Jesus as Messiah and be saved from the judgment! Those of us who are born again must try to reach as many as we possibly can to fulfill the commandment to love our neighbor! Because if the second resurrection is about a second chance with another entire lifetime to repent and learn the ways of the LORD (while Satan is locked up, incidentally), then what is the point of converting now? In fact, what would be the point of “now” at all? Converting someone now would be placing a heavier burden on them had they not known at all! It is written that if one comes to the knowledge of the truth and falls away, there is no more sacrifice for their sin. So, if the second resurrection is a shot at the gospel in a much more favorable environment than now, then it would be better to *not* evangelize now, which is directly opposed to the Great Commission and the actions of the New Testament believers!

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15)

Now let's examine the book of life! It is very common for someone to study prophecy and not realize that most of the references to

The Book of Life are actually in the Old Testament. It is introduced to us in Exodus:

“But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!” Ex 32:32 (NASB)

Here’s the list of all the places in the Bible where the book of life is referenced:

Exodus 32:32

Psalms 69:28

Isaiah 4:3

Daniel 12:1

Malachai 3:16

Philippians 4:3

Revelation 3:5, 21:27

He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. Rev 3:5 (NASB)

Note how the wording around the Book of Life is very similar in Exodus and in Revelation. It tells us that everyone’s names who are going to be written in the book either have already been written in the book or are written in real-time. The goal is to not get your name blotted out! Daniel 12:1 and Revelation 21:27 both speak of *finding* people’s names written in the book of life. The problem that some have with this is that it is very difficult to reconcile free will with some names not being in the Book of Life. We don’t know whose names are in there and whose aren’t so we are living a “blind test”. Essentially, we have to “opt out” of the kingdom rather than “opting in” by “earning” our salvation. We know that grace and salvation are gifts that cannot be earned and we also know that God desires that all men be saved (1 Timothy 2:3). It is a little hard to imagine that there are people whose

names aren't in the book. This is sad, but we must remember that there is a way that seems right to a man, but that isn't always what is right to our Father.

And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come. Rev 17:8 (NASB)

This is a sad yet clear reference that some people's names aren't written in the Book of Life. The psalmist writes in Psalms 139:13-16 that he was known by Yahweh prior to his being woven in his mother's womb. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knows everything and transcends time. He will surely not be surprised at who makes it into the kingdom. Our Elohim is all knowing and all-powerful. If He is bound by time and space constraints, then He is not the Creator of time and space. To our mortal minds, that is hard to grasp. Why, if He knows everything that is going to happen, does He allow bad stuff to happen? We can only guess is that somehow it is for our benefit. I hope someday that Yahweh does tell us these things, but I report to Him, not the other way around. He doesn't owe me anything, I owe Him my existence.

What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, " I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, " FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. Romans 9:14-18 (NASB)