



What about the Resurrection of the Dead?

In the Old Testament the prophecies about resurrection applied to the nation of Israel. But in the New Testament they were understood as being fulfilled in the resurrection of one man, Jesus Christ. Why did the understanding of the resurrection of the dead change from a nation to one man?

Jesus was understood, by the New Testament writers to be the King of Israel, and the King of the New Heavens and the New Earth, or the New Creation. As the King, He represented the nation as a whole. So, Jesus' resurrection was the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecies about the resurrection of all the people of the new covenant. He was the first person who would be resurrected. In fact, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection" (John 11:25).

In the Old Testament, God revealed that a resurrection of the dead would take place. Those prophecies were understood as referring to the resurrection of the nation of Israel when God would give His people a new heart and a new beginning. By studying Old Testament prophecies, we can gain a fuller understanding of the great meaning and power of Jesus' resurrection. In this study we will also see Jesus' resurrection is the beginning of a "new creation". (Jesus did raise Lazarus from the dead, but Lazarus died again. So, Lazarus resurrection was not part of the New Creation, in the same sense that Jesus' resurrection was of the New Creation).

As we study how the resurrection began a new creation, we will see that we can learn a great deal about how the resurrection is a part of the world to come, and the blessings God will grant to the people who truly believe in Jesus.

This week our lesson will focus on the resurrection. During our study we will find answers to:

- What does the Old Testament teach about a resurrection of the dead?
- How does John's account teach about the resurrection of the dead?
- How does Jesus' resurrection change the way I should live today?

What does the Old Testament Teach about a Resurrection of the Dead?

We find many hints about a resurrection of the dead in the first three chapters of the Bible, Genesis 1-3. It might seem strange that the story of creation of heaven and earth includes a lot of details about the new heavens and new earth that is to come, when this old creation passes away. The essential ingredients of God's design for creation, or the goal for God's creation, are explained in the first three chapters of Genesis. Sin prevented God's design for creation from reaching its goal, in the case of Adam and Eve. Christ will finally totally overcome sin, and the full potential of God's goal for creation will come into full development. Just in case you're wondering whether this understanding of Genesis 1-3 is correct, let me ask a question: Do you think God intended for Adam and Eve to spend all eternity in the Garden of Eden? I'll give the answer on the next page.

At the very beginning of the account of Adam and Eve we read how sin entered the world. The first aspect of death comes when Adam and Eve are separated from God. They had been in fellowship with God up to this point, but

after they sinned, they no longer had regular fellowship with God. First came “spiritual death” or separation from God, later physical death followed.

When Adam and Eve sinned, God gave them a promise, or a prophecy. In Genesis 3:15, God promised that the offspring, or seed, of the woman would strike, or crush, the head of the offspring of the serpent. This may imply that when this happens the curse of death will be withdrawn. This promise is presented by God as an antidote to what happened when sin entered the world. The removal of the curse of death, could point to a resurrection of the dead.

So, Genesis 3:15 is the first hint that a resurrection of the dead is coming. The curse of death will be withdrawn. Again, a resurrection of the dead is not specifically mentioned, but implied.

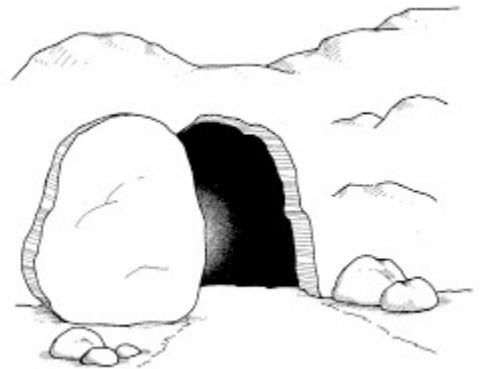
There is another hint in these first three chapters of the Bible. Adam and Eve clothe themselves with fig leaves because they realize they are naked (Genesis 3:7). Then, God gives them clothes of animal skins (Genesis 3:21). In ancient near eastern cultures when a person was given a new position, they were often given new clothes to go with that position. Priests were given special clothing (Exodus 28:2&3). When Jacob wanted to honor his son Joseph, he gave him a very special coat to wear (Genesis 37:3). If you think about it, even today in our society, we attach importance to clothing. Uniforms can indicate a person’s rank or position. The idea is that when God gave clothing to Adam and Eve He was telling them that He was giving them a position, and along with that position, an inheritance. The clothing was sort of like a down payment on what would come later. There isn’t any explanation of what this inheritance would be, but in the context of receiving the curse of death, it provides assurance that God isn’t finished with the human race. He has plans for the people He has created. We see the fulfillment of this plan in Isaiah 61:10 which speaks of how God has “clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has clothed me with the robe of righteousness”. Adam and Eve being given clothing foreshadows that those who believe in Christ will be clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Another hint is found in these first chapters of Genesis. God commissions Adam in Genesis 1:26-30.

- Human beings were created to bear the image of God (Genesis 1:27)
- They were to have dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:26), as well as be fruitful and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28).

This commission is repeated to Noah, in Genesis 9:1-7, and repeated to Abraham and other descendants of Israel. Again, this shows that even though sin and death entered the world God was not finished with the people He created.

Earlier I asked if you think God intended for Adam and Eve to spend eternity in the Garden of Eden. If you look at God’s commission to Adam in Genesis 1:26-30, you see that he was to “fill the earth.” He couldn’t fill the earth if he never left the Garden of Eden, unless his assignment was to expand the boundary of the Garden of Eden so that it filled the whole earth. So, that would mean that God had a long-term mission for Adam, and the human race, that would have included making some changes to the earth and to the Garden of Eden. In other words, there is more to God’s plan than having Adam spend eternity in the Garden of Eden, as it existed in its original form.



Even this early in the story of the Bible there is abundant evidence that God would provide a solution for the problem of sin. As Christians we see the answer to the problem of sin was Jesus Christ. In the first three chapters of Genesis, we find three hints: **(1)** the curse would be reversed (Genesis 3:15), **(2)** humanity had a future inheritance demonstrated by being given clothing (Genesis 3:21), and **(3)** the commission given to Adam in Genesis 1:26-30 was repeated many times throughout the Old Testament, showing that God was not going to give up on humanity. That’s a lot of Gospel news in just the first three chapters of Genesis.

What Does John’s Account Teach about the Resurrection of the Dead?

John explains the meaning of the resurrection as it connects to the ministry of Jesus Christ. Let’s take a look at some verses in John’s Gospel that teach us about the resurrection of Christ:

- **John 6:39** “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of **ALL THAT HE HAS GIVEN ME** I lose nothing, but **RAISE IT UP** on the **last day**.”
- **John 6:40** “For this is the will of My Father, that **EVERYONE WHO** beholds the Son and **BELIEVES IN HIM** will have **ETERNAL LIFE**, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

- **John 6:44** “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will RAISE HIM UP ON THE LAST DAY.”
- **John 6:54** “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has ETERNAL LIFE, and I will RAISE HIM UP ON THE LAST DAY.”
- **John 11:24** Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the RESURRECTION ON THE LAST DAY.”
- **John 12:48** “He who REJECTS ME and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what WILL JUDGE HIM AT THE LAST DAY.”

Jesus uses the expression “all that He has given to me” to describe the men and women who have come to believe in Him. He says that He will “raise ... up” these people on “the last day” (John 6:39). Jesus is saying that when He returns all who have believed in Him will rise from the dead, and to life in the new creation. In fact, “everyone who ... believes in [Jesus] ... will have “eternal life” (John 6:4). When the new creation remains, after the old creation is destroyed, those who believed in Jesus will still be alive because they have resurrection bodies. They are part of the new creation. If someone has believed in Jesus, then Jesus will “raise him up on the last day” (John 6:44). Jesus refers to believers as everyone who “eats” His “flesh” and “drinks” His “blood” has “eternal life” (John 6:54). The words at the beginning of this verse are obvious references to communion, where we eat the bread and drink from the cup that represent the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. It isn’t eating these items that saves us. They point to putting our faith in Jesus’ death on the cross as the payment for our sins. By putting our faith in Jesus Christ, we receive eternal life. Notice, Jesus says everyone who has believed in Him “has” received “eternal life.” Eternal life begins now, when we believe in Him. It isn’t only about the future. It is a present reality. The fullness of the new creation is yet to come, but the reality is here now, even though the old creation has not yet passed away.



When Jesus was talking to Martha, and told her that Lazarus would rise again, Martha replied that she knew that on the “last” day her brother would be resurrected (John 11:24). Jesus tells Martha, while standing outside her brother, Lazarus’s tomb, “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:23-25). The idea of being born again in John 3:3 also connects resurrection to new creation. Unless a person is “born again” he cannot “see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). The “kingdom of God” refers to the new creation. Unless you have the life of the resurrection you won’t be alive to see the new creation. This means that she understood, from the Old Testament, that resurrection was foretold.

What she was going to see only moments later was that Jesus is the fulfillment of those prophecies. In fact, Jesus is “the resurrection” (John 11:25). He is the power of the resurrection. He is the King of the New Creation, and His resurrection will signal the beginning of the New Creation.

There is a downside to all of this. When the New Creation comes in its full, physical presence, the Old Creation will be destroyed. Everyone who “rejects” Jesus Christ, and His salvation will be judged “on the last day” (John 12:48).

What does all this mean? When Jesus rose from the dead His resurrection body was a newly created body. Jesus passed from the Old Creation to the New Creation. Jesus only remained on earth for a short time after His resurrection. He ascended to heaven and was seated at the right hand of God (Hebrews 1:3; 10:12; 12:2). This was how Jesus took His throne as King of the New Creation. The New Creation is a reality in Heaven now. Jesus is on His throne in Heaven, as King of the New Creation. But the day is coming when He will return to earth, and the Old Creation will pass away, and only the New Creation will come to all who are in Christ. We know that in the New Creation “the dwelling place of God” will be “with man” (Revelation 2:3). In other words, the presence of God will be with believers more powerfully than what we experience now. The sin of this world will be gone. God “will wipe away every tear.” “Death will be no more.” There will be no more “mourning,” “crying,” or “pain.”

How Does Jesus’ Resurrection Change the Way I Should Live today?

Do you truly believe in Jesus? Believing in Jesus means that He has control of your life, because He has made you new, in His image (1Corinthians 15:49; Colossians 3:10). Just as Adam was created in the image of God, the person who believes in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior becomes a New Creation. What was damaged by sin is being made right.

I think of the image of Adam in the Garden of Eden. He should have driven the serpent out of the Garden or killed it. Instead, when Eve introduced Adam to the serpent, Adam was led into sin by the serpent. So, if Adam's job was to keep what was evil out of the Garden of Eden, he failed miserably when he failed to drive out the serpent.

Jesus did what Adam failed to do. He defeated Satan, when He died on the cross and rose from the dead. This fulfilled God's plan of the resurrection of the dead. Jesus was the first to rise from the dead in this way, but all who are in Him, will rise again when He returns, to spend eternity with Him.

Vigilance must be put into practice. We need to drive out thought patterns that lead us into sin. This includes all forms of sin in our lives, including both small and big sins. Pray that God will give you a new heart that craves to do what pleases God. If Christ has made you new, you will be changed. Then, continue to confess your sin, and to seek God's changes in your outlook and attitude.

In a sense all Christians are "sojourners" (1Peter 2:1). We are just passing through this world. As the old hymn says, "This world is not my home, I'm just passing through." We should not seek after the things of this world, which will pass away. We should be seeking the "city that is to come" (13:14). Set your personal goals on what is right. Reject the evil desires that fill this world and strive only for the purity of the things of God. Then you will be living your life in the light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Remember, if you believe in Jesus Christ you will live to see His Kingdom come in fullness and glory. We don't know all the details, but we do know the best part is that He will be with everyone who truly believes for all eternity.



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Now a certain man was ill, **Lazarus** of Bethany, the village of **Mary** and her sister **Martha**. It was **Mary** who anointed the **Lord** with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose **brother Lazarus** was ill. So the **sisters** sent to him, saying, “**Lord**, he whom you **love** is ill.” But when **Jesus** heard it he said, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” Now **Jesus** loved **Martha** and her **sister** and **Lazarus**. So, when he heard that **Lazarus** was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the **Jews** were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?” **Jesus** answered, “Are **there** not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend **Lazarus** has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.” The disciples said to him, “**Lord**, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” Now **Jesus** had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then **Jesus** told them plainly, “**Lazarus** has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not **there**, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” Now when **Jesus** came, he found that **Lazarus** had already been in the tomb four days. Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, and many of the **Jews** had come to **Martha** and **Mary** to console them concerning their **brother**. So when **Martha** heard that **Jesus** was coming, she went and met him, but **Mary** remained seated in the house. **Martha** said to **Jesus**, “**Lord**,

if you had been here, my **brother** would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” **Jesus** said to her, “Your **brother** will rise again.” **Martha** said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” **Jesus** said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, **Lord**; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.” When she had said this, she went and called her sister **Mary**, saying in private, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now **Jesus** had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where **Martha** had met him. When the **Jews** who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw **Mary** rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Now when **Mary** came to where **Jesus** was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “**Lord**, if you had been here, my **brother** would not have died.” When **Jesus** saw her weeping, and the **Jews** who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “**Lord**, come and see.” **Jesus** wept. So the **Jews** said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?” Then **Jesus**, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. **Jesus** said, “Take away the stone.” **Martha**, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “**Lord**, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.” **Jesus** said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And **Jesus** lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.” When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “**Lazarus**, come out.” The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. **Jesus** said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.” Many of the **Jews** therefore, who had come with **Mary** and had seen what he did, believed in him, but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what **Jesus** had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, “What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.” He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that **Jesus** would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they made plans to put him to death. **Jesus** therefore no longer walked openly among the **Jews**, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples. Now the Passover of the **Jews** was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. They were looking for **Jesus** and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?” Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him. (ESV) Exported from Logos Bible Software.