

# Understanding the THREE Resurrections

**Many in God's Church have serious difficulty fully explaining the Doctrine of the Resurrections from the Dead. Our Counterparts in the Catholic and Protestant World find the matter to be even more Theologically Formidable!**

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Among the doctrinal teachings proclaimed by the Church of God, which the main stream religious community has taken serious issue with, the matter of the three-resurrections is certainly prominent. I can't say that I've found any other religious organization that understands the matter as in-depth as did the Church of two decades ago. Perhaps there are a few who understand this subject independently, not having that background. It certainly is **unique**, what we once had. In coming to understand the matter, I find there's **more** on which to elaborate than did the Church of that time. Without knowing every-one's awareness level, I find the Church's teaching on the matter to have been fundamentally good, but we can and should build further on that foundation.

I came out of a religious denomination that had no particular use for ANY resurrection (the Baptists) but who acquiesced to there being one, as the scriptures are unmistakably clear. No doubt it is a problem for them to explain the **need** for any real resurrection (let alone more than one, separated by 1000 years as Rev. 20:5 states) as their version of things has it that all who die go to Heaven forever (or that other place) and once there, what possible need would there be for all people to be raised back to life!? Popular religious belief systems are as foreign to the resurrections as they are to another clear Biblical teaching: the literal Earthly Kingdom of God, with Christ Himself being on Earth ruling with His Saints for 1000 years. These same who, according to their teachings, are to spend Eternity 'up there'! But the Kingdom and the Resurrections are undeniable Biblical teachings, which the Church of God, a generation ago, understood rather well.

## Three Major Rejections

It is no accident that main stream religion has no particular use for either the Millennial Kingdom on Earth or the multiple Resurrections so frequently

spoken of in the New Testament. That disregard is a natural consequence of taking on elements of worldly religion in the early decades of the second century. Belief in the idea of ones' soul ascending up to be with the Lord in Heaven at death excludes certain Biblical teachings: Most directly, the idea of and the need for the resurrection from the dead. Obviously, if one has attained his eternal reward, what possible reason would there be for returning that person to a live physical state, especially when the specifically stated reason for such an occurrence is to impose just sentence! What, again?

A third relatively unique area of understanding, also pointedly rejected by the main stream, is the subject of the seven Biblical Holydays. A rejection which also has serious consequences. Another article, "A Shadow of Things to Come" addresses the specific things portrayed by each of these seven annual Holydays. This article will bring out the inter-relationship between those ancient observances and the fundamental New Testament doctrine of the resurrections from the dead.<sup>1</sup> The resurrections are more fully understood within the **prophetic outline** represented in the annual Holydays, and the Holydays are enhanced by understanding how the various resurrections factor into them. The framework for understanding the resurrections is a side benefit of our understanding of the Holydays and vice versa.

The resurrection factors into our Salvation in an essential way, as Paul emphatically pointed out in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:12-18.

First, the Biblical Holydays, particularly the Fall Holyday season, presents a scenario that is tied to and especially dependent upon there being multiple resurrections. Each era within the various ages: the millennial and post-millennial, are punctuated by a

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 6:1-2 names this subject as one of the seven fundamental doctrines of the Church.

resurrection. Each begins with one and ends with one: The Feast of **Trumpets**, which ends the Great Tribulation and begins the Millennial Age marks the occasion of the First Resurrection (occurring at Christ's Return). Only God's True Saints at the last trump experience this resurrection. The seven days of the **Feast of Tabernacles** represents that 1000 years time-span between the first and second resurrection, as Revelation 20:5 states. The **Last Great Day**, immediately thereafter begins with a resurrection (the one ending the millennium) and restores all those who never had opportunity for salvation, back to physical life to have the 'books opened' to them for the first time. The Last Great Day ends with the final resurrection (the general resurrection) where **ALL** millennial age and Last Great Day inhabitants, who lived in the flesh and who died at the ends of their normal physical lifetimes within those eras, are raised again briefly in order to be consigned to their respective rewards. (as Matthew 25:31-46 describes, separating 'the Sheep from the goats'). The Millennium begins with and ends with a resurrection. The Last Great Day also begins with and ends with a resurrection. The one that begins the Last Great Day is the same one that ends the Millennium.

In fact, the Spring Holydays are also bracketed by resurrections. We regard that as the season of 'Firstfruits', culminating in the **Feast of Firstfruits** (Pentecost). The Spring Holydays effectively begin with the resurrection of the first of the Firstfruits,<sup>2</sup> and end with the resurrection of all the firstfruits. (Those converted prior to Christ's second coming.) The Firstfruits resurrection completes the first harvest, but that same event is applied again at the beginning of the fall Holyday season, which pictures the 'second' harvest. Another consequence of rejecting the Holydays and Resurrections is a loss of ability to understand the two harvests of souls: that there are two 'days of salvation'! (Pictured by the 'early and latter rains'! ( James 5:7 ))

The **first** resurrection is exclusive to the Saints, who are thereby resurrected to Eternal Life, from their graves or directly from physical life, if they are among those who are 'alive and remain' as 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:15 mentions. But there are so many who **never had** opportunity for salvation in their lifetimes. Those who did and who spurned it

remain asleep thru the Last Great Day to the general resurrection of sentencing at its conclusion.

### They HAVE NO CHANCE?

But we have so many who never had opportunity. There are the great numbers who died in infancy; vast pagan societies who were never evangelized; the millions who lived before the time of Christ, even including the nation of Israel, who under the Old Testament administration were never truly converted, as that true Sacrifice which provided remission of sins had not yet been offered! That's why the resurrection of the nations of Israel back to physical life is so vividly emphasized in Ezekiel 37. It's interesting to watch how modern religion *squirms* in response to this obvious situation. Though they try, they can't otherwise explain the destinies of these ancient **unconverted** or of modern day infant deaths with any supporting scriptures. (Some allow the young, under the age of 8, access into Heaven without comprehending conversion!) My articles, "And So, All Israel Shall Be Saved" and "As in Adam All Die" explains this dilemma.

Religion's dilemma and question to answer is, How do all those who died without having had the opportunity for salvation ever come to have that opportunity? The Church of God **can** answer this.

In fact, it's a subject that Jesus elaborated on rather often. Protestants typically read over what He said. Some prime 'red letter' examples are: Matthew 12: 41-42, & Luke 11:31-32 In Matthew: "*The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.*" In Luke 11 the narrative is similar. In Matthew 11:20, there's more on this: "*Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum,*

<sup>2</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:20 & 23

which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.” These are very insightful. What we see here is a resurrection of men of various historic ages raised up together at the same time, who lived over a wide span of time, who have the time and opportunity to come to know what the others had opportunity to know and to condemn their **un**responsiveness! They otherwise wouldn’t know what the other ages had exposure to (speaking specifically to that generation who lived in the time of Christ). What we need to realize is that even the religious Jews weren’t being called **at that time**. God had chosen to keep a veil over their awareness. (John 6:44, 12:40, & Romans 11:7-8) Ultimately then, Christ is responsible for their inability to come to conversion at the first! My article: “*The Rejected Resurrection*” addresses this topic. From this also we understand that there **is** more than one day of salvation.

The **second** resurrection, as we understand it, occurs after the 1000 years are ended, (and likely just after Satan is released for his ‘little season’, (Rev. 20:7)) to have their ‘day of salvation’, their **opportunity**, which they never really had! The veil is lifted (even for those who had exposure to the Bible) and ‘the books’ (Bible) are opened to them as they never had been before. The duration of this age is likely the limit of one human lifetime, something maxing out around a century. Isaiah 65:20, and Revelation 20:11 shed some light on this matter. In Isaiah, it represents ‘*the child*’ dying (again?) as the century mark approaches. The ‘*child*’ is set in contrast to ‘*the sinner*’, so we can deduce from this that it refers to a ‘child of God’, returning to the grave, his opportunity period completed, but with his sentencing awaiting. Then Revelation 20:11 has the ‘books being opened’ (v.12) to those for whom ‘*no place could be found*’. This curious statement, I believe, tells us that these people, who come-up in this resurrection, at this point in time, cannot rightfully be consigned to either destiny, as they never had opportunity to respond to a call, as they never were called. And God either blinded them from seeing the truth, or they never were afforded exposure to it. So it would be highly inappropriate to ‘consign’ them to

either place at this point in time. It **isn’t** a ‘lack of space problem’, it’s a ‘just justice’ problem!

As to the **third** resurrection, it brings **all** who ever lived up out of their graves, from where ever they are, simultaneously, to a separation and a sentencing. All includes also those who disqualified themselves by spurning their opportunity, either in the present age, or in the millennial and post-millennial age, together with those who **did** qualify for Life during the millennial age and post-millennial age. Even they WAIT for a resurrection in order to receive their ‘just reward’ as we do today. This event is well described in Revelation 14:13 which is placed at an exquisite moment in the narrative, just after outlining the hope of God’s True Saints seeing the day of ‘justice’ on their enemies, but just before the narrative explaining the harvest of the world. (Not the first resurrection, but the one at which the group is divided between the saved and incorrigible. **Two different angels reap these two harvest groups.** Christ’s explanation of this resurrection (which is distinct from any other in that it brings up the saved and **unsaved together**) is related in Matthew 25:31-46.) Revelation 20:13-15 also correlates to this one, in that it involves looking into the ‘book of life’ to determine whose names, (of this final segment of resurrected humanity), ARE IN THERE. There’d be no need to look, if none were! (Yet the book of life was emptied of names in the first resurrection, telling us that others are to be **added** subsequently, which is the point of Revelation 20:12, which describes that ‘opportunity period’, when the ‘*biblion* is opened’ to them!). So we here see a segregation at this resurrection, like is described in Matthew 25.

Now I believe the above is consistent with the Church’s understanding of years past, with the possible exception of the matter regarding the ‘sheep from the goats’ separation, which I place with the third resurrection. Many, I find, hold that only the wicked come up in the third, thus disregarding Matthew 25:31, (and Revelation 14:14-20) and offering no logical explanation of it.

### Where Does it Say THAT?

But so many say, “I don’t find anywhere in the Bible where **three** resurrections are mentioned.” In fact, there are at least two places where the three are mentioned, in order, and all together! There is no

reason why we should remain unaware of them! Previous topics included my harmonization of these two in Matthew 5 and Revelation 20, both narratives being BY Jesus Christ to the Apostle John, some sixty years apart. I'll repeat it here for convenient reference, but with additional comments. These passages are extremely informative, as they both present **all three** resurrections in sequence, together in one place. Main stream religion hasn't paid adequate attention to these at all!

## Christ's Personal 'Three-Resurrections' Exposé given thru the Apostle John!

(From these two harmonized passages, all three resurrections are seen together, comprehensively, in sequence.)

*Light: John 5 / Bold: Rev. 20*

Perhaps the reason most students of the Bible have overlooked these is that first, they're not aware of there being multiple resurrections, and secondly, they haven't noticed the distinct time breaks, discernable in these narratives. When examining the categories of peoples Jesus here describes, we can see that **more than one** resurrection is represented.

**1.** *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. "And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them...And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 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 and of Christ, and shall reign with Him for a thousand years."* These are they in the first resurrection, occurring at Christ's Second Coming, prior to the Millennium, prior to the Last Great Day which culminates with the Great White Throne Judgment, in which the Saints will also co-officiate! (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:2 & Malachi 3:18)

Notice, the use of the term 'first', which requires there be at least one other resurrection. But then, the 'second' death illustrates a curious (to most religions) situation. The first **death** is not the one that brings us to our 'sentencing'. That is achieved only at and thru a resurrection. Note also, these in the 'first' are exempted from the need to stand before

the final judgment seat, as their situation is already pre-determined.<sup>3</sup> They **ONLY**, with those who are 'alive and remain' at the second coming, bypass the latter evaluative judgment. Both these demonstrate a uniqueness to the 'first' resurrection. They pass directly into 'Life', (John 5) and the 'second' death has no power over them. (Revelation 20) Such is **not** the case with all of the rest who are alive and remain (**unconverted** at this point in time) or who are afforded opportunity for salvation in the millennial or post-millennial age. (the post-millennial age being the 'second resurrection' period, as pictured by the Last Great Day).

(Notice, the sentencing to the 'second death' is not commemorated by any Holyday!)

**2.** *"Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear<sup>4</sup> will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. (to be assigned?) And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books."* This resurrection provides opportunity for those who **never had a chance** to respond to God's call and live 'by the things written in the books': (their names then being added into the Book of Life). No such opportunity is referred to in the next and final resurrection. The only book referred to there is the Book of Life, and that only for the purpose of seeing whose names are written in it!! And, notice, that final resurrection is **all-inclusive**! The previous one wasn't, nor does the previous impose the 'second death'! Those who rise to this opportunity

<sup>3</sup> Heb. 9:27 "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" We await the 'judgment' in order to receive our assigned destiny: 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

<sup>4</sup> Notice here the wording, suggesting that not all in this contingent will hear His call to 'rise'. In the next resurrection discussed, ALL will hear it and will appear!

return to the grave at the ends of their ‘natural’ lives, to await the resurrection to sentencing, which occurs with the third.

It’s interesting that Jesus **punctuated** each resurrection era in John’s first account but not his second. That perhaps because by the time of the second account (Revelation 20) the Church already understood there being more than one. But Jesus thought it necessary to lead-in with a “*Most assuredly*” and a “*Do not marvel*” because they would have ‘marveled’ as they were being introduced to something **quite new** at this point in time.

**3.** “*Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. “**And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works...This is the second death.**” This final ‘sentencing and consignment’ resurrection involves all who ever lived (excepting only those made immortal in the first resurrection) and is that ‘*sheep from goats*’ separation for sentencing as Christ explicitly referred to in Matthew 25: verses 31 – 46.*

The **first** resurrection is direct into **Life**. Then the **second** is to afford (an evaluative) ‘judgment and justice’ to those who died never having had **opportunity**. The **third** is for **final sentencing** of all, either to life **or** to condemnation: the second death! The second death is experienced by no-one, without their first having had opportunity and having passed through an evaluative judgment. For the Saints of God, that evaluation period is now! <sup>5</sup> For the rest, the dead who were never called at least, that period is after the thousand years are finished.

Now that we can understand from the above passages, the essential doctrine of the **resurrections** from the dead, and as a result, another doctrine listed there in Hebrews 6: that of **eternal judgment**: How **fair and equal** judgment and justice will come to all who have ever lived in their appointed time.

We are ready to understand the vital purpose for the Last Great Day. It is God’s WILL that ‘not any

should perish’ (needlessly). That also happens to be His PLAN! **The Last Great Day is the Day for ‘them too’!** After the Millennial Age, and after Satan’s brief release, those dead who never had an opportunity to know the Truth, with time to appropriately respond to it, by having God’s Spirit offered to them (which is essential to True Salvation) will be raised again, still physical, to be afforded that opportunity. They’ll live in an age absent of Satan’s influence, as did their physical predecessors in the Millennial Kingdom. (Except for that brief ‘blip’ between the Millennial and post-millennial ages.) They will be allowed to live out the remainder of their lifetimes (possibly up to the century mark, with salvation open to them! (Isaiah 65:20 & context.)) (consider also Matthew 22:30)

### Whosoever Will May Come

This is that ‘*whosoever will*’ era! This is that era when whether to respond to God’s call is **entirely up to the individual**, as ALL will be called at this time! (Revelation 22:17) That’s not the situation now. Those who are called are limited to just those that the Father, for some undefined reason, chooses to call in this timeframe. “*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.*” (John 6:44) “*...Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, **God** hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.*” (Romans 11:7-8 quoting Isaiah 29:10) How do **we** understand these words of Jesus, except in the context of the above?

Why would **God blind** the majority? Paul answers that later in the same chapter! “*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that **blindness in part** is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so **all** Israel shall be saved: as it is written, *There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.*” (Rom. 11:25-26 quoting Isa. 59:20) Blindness prevents those who can’t respond now from blowing their chance, so that an even **greater** number CAN successfully attain to it under far more amenable circumstances! There IS a physical resurrection to opportunity **between** the first resurrection and the last resurrection. **Ω***

<sup>5</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:17...judgment must begin at the house of God... This is for evaluation, not condemnation.