
Chapter 11

Resurrection of the Dead

Christian hope is not escape from physical existence. God raised Jesus bodily, and He will raise the dead (Luke 24:36-43; John 5:28-29). The resurrection of the body affirms God's victory over death and the goodness of His purpose for creation (Romans 8:18-25; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28).

Jesus Is the Firstfruits

Paul calls Christ "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). Firstfruits were the beginning of a harvest and the promise of more to come. Jesus' resurrection is therefore both unique and representative: because He rose, those who belong to Him will be raised (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

A Real and Transformed Body

Jesus' risen body could be seen and touched, and He ate with His disciples (Luke 24:39-43; John 20:27). Yet His body was also transformed and no longer subject to death (Romans 6:9). Believers will likewise be raised imperishable, glorious,

powerful, and fitted for life in God's completed kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:42-49; Philippians 3:20-21).

Paul calls the future body a "spiritual body," but he does not mean a ghost or a body made from spirit instead of matter (1 Corinthians 15:44). "Spiritual" describes a body fully directed and sustained by the Holy Spirit, just as the present "natural body" is suited to mortal life. Continuity remains—we are raised—but transformation is complete. What is perishable becomes imperishable, weakness gives way to power, and death can never claim the believer again (1 Corinthians 15:42-54).

The Intermediate State and Final Hope

Believers who die are with Christ while awaiting the resurrection (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:21-23; 2 Corinthians 5:8). That conscious presence with the Lord is precious, but it is not the final stage of Christian hope. The final hope includes bodily resurrection when Christ returns (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

The Rapture and the Resurrection of the Church

The resurrection appointed for the church is commonly called the Rapture. Paul teaches that the Lord will descend from heaven, the dead in Christ will rise first, and living believers will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The word rapture describes that catching away. At that time, believers who have died will receive resurrected bodies, and living believers will be changed without first passing through death (1 Corinthians 15:50-53).

The Rapture is therefore not an escape into a bodiless existence. It is the resurrection and transformation of Christ's people. Because Christ conquered death, physical death cannot have the final word over anyone who belongs to Him (John 11:25-26; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57). The believer's hope is not a date-setting scheme but confidence that Christ will return, raise His people, gather them to Himself, and complete their salvation (John 14:1-3; Philippians 3:20-21).

Paul names resurrection among the elementary teachings because every new believer needs this hope early in the Christian life (Hebrews 6:1-2). This volume teaches the pre-tribulation Rapture:

Christ will gather His church before the Tribulation, delivering believers from the coming wrath and bringing them to Himself (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:13-18; 5:9; Revelation 3:10). The central promise is certain: Jesus will return, the dead in Christ will rise, living saints will be transformed, and all who belong to Him will be with the Lord forever.

Sincere Christians disagree about when the Rapture happens in relation to the Tribulation, so a new believer deserves to see why this book teaches a pre-tribulation Rapture. The question matters because it shapes how believers wait: watching for Christ Himself, or watching for a period of judgment that must come first.

First, Scripture promises that the church is not appointed to God's coming wrath. Paul writes that Jesus "delivers us from the wrath to come" and that "God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9). Revelation describes the Tribulation as the time when God's wrath is poured out on the earth (Revelation 6:16-17; 15:1). We therefore understand Christ's promise as removal of His church before that wrath begins, not preservation through it.

Second, Jesus promised a faithful church, “I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth” (Revelation 3:10). The promise is to be kept from the hour itself, a world-wide time of testing aimed at “those who dwell on the earth.”

Third, the New Testament calls believers to watch for Christ, not for a list of events that must happen first. Believers are “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing” of Jesus (Titus 2:13), and Paul tells grieving Christians to “comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:18). That comfort fits a hope that could be fulfilled at any time (Matthew 24:42-44).

This teaching does not promise that Christians escape suffering in this life. Jesus said, “In the world you will have tribulation” (John 16:33). The distinction is between the trouble believers face now and God’s outpoured wrath at the end of the age. Christians who hold other views of the timing remain brothers and sisters in Christ. The practical result of this hope is readiness: everyone who has this hope “purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:3).

Jesus did not give His people permission to calculate a date for His return (Matthew 24:36; Acts 1:6-8). Biblical watchfulness means living ready: remaining faithful, pursuing holiness, encouraging one another, and carrying the Gospel while we wait (Matthew 24:42-46; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 10:24-25). Speculation may create excitement for a season; resurrection hope produces steadfast obedience.

Resurrection of the Saved and the Lost

Jesus taught that all who are in the graves will hear His voice: some to the resurrection of life and others to the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:28-29). Paul likewise confessed a resurrection of both the just and the unjust (Acts 24:15). Resurrection leads into final judgment and eternal destiny; it is not a second opportunity to choose Christ after death (Hebrews 9:27).

KNOW THE WORDS

WORD	PLAIN MEANING
Resurrection	God’s raising of the dead to embodied life (John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44).
First-fruits	The first portion that promises the coming harvest; Christ’s resurrection

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	guarantees His people's resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).
Rapture	Christ's pre-tribulation gathering of the church, when the dead in Christ are raised and living believers are caught up and transformed to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:50-53).
Glorification	God's final transformation of believers into perfected likeness to Christ, including the resurrected body (Romans 8:29-30; Philippians 3:21).

THINK IT THROUGH

Q Is Resurrection Merely the Soul Living On?

No. Scripture teaches continued personal existence after death, but resurrection specifically concerns the raising and transformation of the body (Luke 24:39; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44). The Christian future is embodied life with God in a renewed creation (Revelation 21:1-5).

WATCH FOR COUNTERFEITS

Reincarnation, communication with the dead, and the idea that humans dissolve into impersonal divine consciousness contradict biblical resurrection (Deuteronomy 18:10-12; Hebrews 9:27; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23). Our hope is not repeated

earthly lives or hidden knowledge but Christ's return and God's act of raising the dead.

DECLARATION OF FAITH CONNECTION

This chapter supports these Church of God convictions:

- Jesus was raised bodily from the dead (Luke 24:39; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4).
- Christ will return to resurrect the righteous dead and gather living saints to Himself (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
- There will be bodily resurrection, eternal life for the righteous, and eternal punishment for the wicked (John 5:28-29).

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58. Write how future resurrection should affect grief, fear, steadfastness, and present service.

TALK IT THROUGH

1. Why is Jesus called the firstfruits?
2. What continuity and transformation belong to the resurrection body?
3. What is the intermediate state?
4. Who will be raised?

5. How should resurrection hope change life now?

FIVE DAYS IN THE BIBLE

Day 1: The Risen Jesus — Luke 24:1-49

List the physical evidence and the mission Jesus gives.

Day 2: If Christ Is Not Risen — 1 Corinthians 15:1-19

Trace what would collapse without resurrection.

Day 3: The Resurrection Body — 1 Corinthians 15:20-58

Write the contrasts Paul uses for the future body.

Day 4: Caught Up Together — 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Identify the sequence and the commanded comfort.

Day 5: All Things New — Revelation 21:1-8; 22:1-5

Describe embodied life in God's renewed creation.