

WHAT ARE THE FIRST AND SECOND RESURRECTIONS?

A Message from the Quorum of Twelve Apostles

In a continuing series of articles regarding the *Last Dispensation of Time*, this is part two focusing on the *Resurrection*

Part one of this article clarified the following:

- When the body dies the souls of the “righteous” are consigned to *Paradise* and the souls of the “evil” are consigned to “outer darkness.” – *Alma 40:11-14*
- Everyone that passes away from this life is destined to resurrect with the same mind (and spirit) they possessed when they died. – *2 Nephi 9:14-16; Alma 34:32-36; Alma 20:17; Mormon 9:13-14*
- At the judgment, God will reunite souls with bodies and permanently assign the immortal bodies to their final resting places: The righteous will shine forth in the *Kingdom of God* and the wicked are cast out to drink the dregs of a bitter cup. – *Alma 40:21-26; John 5:28-29*
- Followers of Christ will resurrect to the reward of the righteous. Because God is just, for those who never knew the *Plan of Salvation* and did not have an opportunity to repent of their sins during their lifetimes, a provision was made through Christ’s *Atonement* for the sins of mankind, enabling those among these ignorant who have righteous spirits to participate in salvation at the time of judgment. – *2 Nephi 9:14-26*

This article will focus on the following aspects of the resurrection:

- How many resurrections will there be and who will participate in each of them?
- Who will participate in the *First Resurrection* and the *Second Resurrection*?
- What are the prospects of those who willfully reject Christ and of those who do not know of Him or the *Plan of Salvation*?

How Many Resurrections?

Although there are multiple examples of people being raised from the dead in the scriptures, these are exceptions to the pattern of resurrection established by the resurrection of Christ. Those who died and were restored to mortal life again were not alive for eternity and the recipients eventually died to await the resurrection made possible by the *Atonement*. Additionally, the scriptures speak of those who were

translated and taken up to heaven and of those who were translated and permitted to live forever. All of these special cases illustrate the omnipotence of God who is able to do all things. We are reminded of His sovereignty and supremacy in *Isaiah 45:5-25*. Notwithstanding exceptions, it is important for us to preach and teach salvation through Christ according to God's plan: Faith in Christ, Repentance, Baptism, and Endurance to the end of life.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was truly the "first" general resurrection and included all souls up to and including the time of Christ who lived in the hope of His Salvation (or were ignorant of Christ but died in a righteous Spirit – these are those who were not "locked" in rebellion against God. See the section below, "The Resurrection of Christ," for detailed explanation of this category of souls). Those who rebelled against God and died in their sins had no part in that resurrection. *Mosiah 15:21-27*. However, the scriptures refer to two resurrections that will occur after Christ's resurrection: One is entitled "The First Resurrection"; a second resurrection is described as well. Both of these resurrections will be discussed below.

The Resurrection of Christ

At the time of Christ's resurrection there were souls in the following categories:

- Alive – knew of Christ; both believers and non-believers
Alive – did not know of Christ

"Non-believers" refers to those who do not accept Christ. They will not have part in the First Resurrection.

"Did not know Christ" refers to:

- some who would later accept Him before passing away
- some who would never know of Him before passing
- some who would learn of Him but would not accept Him.

Their Resurrections would not be in the same category.

- Passed away – knew of Christ; both believers and non-believers
Passed away – did not know of Christ

Those who had passed on were destined to resurrect with the same mind and spirit as they possessed before they passed away. – *Alma 34:32-34; Alma 20:17; Mormon 9:13-14*

At the time of their deaths their souls separated from their bodies and the souls of the righteous were consigned to *Paradise* while the souls of the unrighteous were consigned to outer darkness. – *Alma 40:11-14*

Many of the righteous who were consigned to *Paradise* (and resurrected at the time of Christ's resurrection) were seen at the resurrection of Christ – *Matthew 27:52-53; 1 Corinthians 15:22-23; 3 Nephi 23:9-11*

The scriptures confirm that at the time of His resurrection, Christ brought forth those described by Jacob, Helaman and Mosiah, who lived in the Hope of Jesus Christ. All who died faithful in the Gospel since the days of Adam, would have been included in the resurrection at that time.

It is clear that when the body dies the souls of the righteous are consigned to a holding place consisting of *Paradise*, for the righteous, and outer darkness, for the evil. This holding place separates the righteous from the evil and is where all souls will remain until they resurrect at the final judgment. When Christ's soul was separated from His body, He descended to this holding place referred to as the prison, to await His resurrection. This is when He preached to the spirits there. – *Ephesians 4:9-10; John 5:25-29; 1 Peter 3:18-21; Acts 2:25-31; Psalms 16:7-11*

Peter refers to the souls in prison as being sometime disobedient in the days of Noah. It is important to understand that even if given an opportunity to repent and accept Christ as the one and only Savior, the scriptures are clear that souls cannot change from the spirits they die with and must come forth in their resurrection with the same mind and spirit as they possessed before they passed away. From our mortal perspective, it may seem incredulous that anyone facing impending doom would not repent, but it is clear that God's judgment is perfect, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Only those whose spirits were not "locked" in rebellion against God were able to accept Christ as their Savior after meeting Him. – *2 Nephi 9:14-16; Alma 34:33-36; Hebrews 4:12; Romans 2:11-16*

We have accounted for all those who resurrected with Christ, from Adam to the time of Christ. Now we will examine the plight of the dead who did not rise with Christ (the unrighteous) and those living from the time of Christ until the end of time.

The First Resurrection

The process of the *First Resurrection* will follow the pattern of the resurrection of Christ and the requirements for eternal salvation are the same:

- At death souls are separated from their bodies and assigned to *Paradise* or outer darkness. – *Alma 40:11-14*
- To be carnally minded is death to be spiritually minded is eternal life. – *2 Nephi 9:39; Romans 8:7; James 4:4*
- All are destined to resurrect with the same mind and spirit as they had when they died. – *Alma 34:32-34; Alma 20:17; Mormon 9:13-14*
- After His death Christ descended to the lower parts and preached to the spirits in prison. This event with subsequent witnessing of those who resurrected with Christ suggests consideration of a pattern concerning souls after Christ who die without knowing Him. – *Ephesians 4:9-10; John 5:25-29; 1 Peter 3:18-21*
- To obtain salvation, the *Gospel of Jesus Christ* commands everyone to repent of their sins, to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and to serve God to the best

of their ability, enduring to the end of life – *John 3:3-21; 2 Nephi 31:2-21; Mosiah 3:19-22; 2 Nephi 9:23-24; Alma 7:14*

- The Blood of Christ atoned for: Those fallen due to the transgression of Adam, those dying without knowledge of God’s will, and those who have ignorantly sinned. – *Mosiah 3:11; 2 Nephi 9:25-26; Mosiah 15:21-26*
- We know that little children have eternal life. – *Mosiah 3:16*

At this point it should be easy for believers in the *Gospel of Jesus Christ* to understand that salvation is assured for those who exercise faith, repent of their sins, are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and serve God to the best of their ability enduring to the end of their lives.

But what about those who die without knowledge of God’s will and never have an opportunity to be born again? What about those who ignorantly sin but are righteous to the best of their understanding and ability? Although the law of Christ has been given for all to follow, the scriptures declare that for those who died not knowing the will of God for their lives, or who have ignorantly sinned, there is *Atonement* – not punishment or condemnation. Where there is no condemnation, the mercies of the Holy One of Israel can have claim upon them, because of the *Atonement*. The scripture further states that those who died before the coming of Christ, in their ignorance, not having salvation declared unto them during life, would have a part in the *first resurrection with Christ*, or have eternal life, being redeemed by the Lord. Notwithstanding these promises, those who lived in willful ignorance, or willfully sinned persisting in their carnal spirits will be held accountable for their sins – *2 Nephi 9:25-26; Alma 42:17-20; Mosiah 3:11-22; Mosiah 15: 21-26; Alma 33:16-20; Alma 29:4; Alma 41:8; Helaman 12:20-26; Helaman 14:20-31; Mosiah 16:1-13*

The scriptures do not tell us how God will reconcile His command to be born again for those who die without knowledge of God’s will, but as stated previously, God is omnipotent and supreme, He will not rob justice for mercy, and in His divine wisdom will enter names into the *Book of Life* while satisfying His own requirements. We may take a hint from the visit Jesus made to preach to the souls in prison between His death and resurrection. No doubt, He has a plan for those ignorant souls who have died since that time to know Him and to receive Him.

A few thoughts about the “ignorant” soul that will receive Christ and be saved: This is one whose spirit drove him to live righteously according to his own understanding and knowledge and who would gladly have accepted the Lord and His Gospel in life had he acquired knowledge and understanding. Accordingly, this is not one who would have turned away from Jesus in this life.

Revelation chapter 20 provides a major outline of the *First and Second Resurrections*.

- The Devil is bound, cast into the bottomless pit where he is sealed and cannot deceive the nations for a thousand years, after which he will be loosed for a little while. – *Revelation 20:1-3*

- The resurrected sit on thrones and reign as priests with Christ for one thousand years. These are the martyrs for Christ and those who have not received the mark of the beast. – *Revelation 20:4-6; 13:11-18; 14:4-10; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20*
- The rest of the dead resurrect when the thousand years ends – This is the *First Resurrection*. The participants in the *First Resurrection* cannot be affected by the second death. – *Revelation 20:5-6; 2:11; 20:14; 21:8; Jacob 3:11; Alma 12:16, 32; 13:30; Helaman 14:18-19*

Revelation 20 tells us that the *First Resurrection* is reserved for those who died in and for Christ. Also, that it is a great blessing to be part of the *First Resurrection*, most particularly because of immunity from the power of the second death.

Matthew 24 foretells the second coming of Christ. Especially note *verses 21-31* where after great tribulation Christ comes to gather His elect from the four corners of the earth.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 tells us that the dead in Christ shall rise first, then those alive shall be caught up.

1 Corinthians 15:22-24; 51-52, speaking of the saints, says at the trump's sound the dead shall rise and the living shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye.

The Second Resurrection

The *Second Resurrection* is shrouded in mystery but supporting scriptures all seem to validate the following scenario:

This final resurrection is for the souls who did not resurrect with Christ (those who did not receive Christ when he went down into the prison at that time) and for all those who did not resurrect in the *First Resurrection*. All will receive judgment. **At some point, everyone will have had an opportunity to accept salvation, but as noted, none who pass away will be able to change from the spirit in which they lived this life as they will have the same mind and spirit as when they died. Those who have rejected Christ and done evil will not change. This is the final resurrection and the final judgment. All of those who have resurrected in the *First Resurrection*, including those caught up and changed in the twinkling of an eye, are immune from the second death and the evil will be cast into the lake of fire which is the second death.** – *Revelation 20:5-15; Rev. 21:8; Mosiah 15:21-27; 1 Corinthians 15:22-24, 51-52; John 5:25-29; 1 Peter 3:18-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17*

Some have speculated that the *Second Resurrection* is a “second chance” to accept salvation. Nothing in this article should be understood as supporting that idea. Multiple scriptures referenced are clear that those who reject the Lord in this life will carry that rejecting spirit with them when they die and will not have the ability to change. “...And while His arm of mercy is extended towards you in the light of day, harden not your hearts...for why will ye die?” *Jacob 6:5-6*. The scriptures are not explicit as to how God will handle those who are truly ignorant as to the will of God, i.e., have been righteous to the best of their ability and knowledge without having met the Gospel. We understand

that these souls will have gone to *Paradise* immediately when they died. At the time of the *First Resurrection* when those alive in Christ are taken up and changed to immortality, there may be others alive who are still ignorant. These would not have participated in the *First Resurrection*, but, given the consistency of God, it seems reasonable to believe that their souls will be treated the same as those who lived and died before Christ without knowing Him. Aligning with that pattern, after the *First Resurrection* and before the final judgment they come to learn of Christ, accept Him as their Savior, and are written into the *Book of Life*. As we have mentioned before, God is omnipotent, supreme, and able to do all things. What is mysterious to us is totally within His control! – *Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:4-6*

Conclusion

Revelation 21 sums it all up: We read of a new heaven and a new earth and no more death. God sits on His throne for eternity surrounded by those who have inherited the reward of the righteous. *The New Jerusalem*, the *Bride of the Lamb*, is described and the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple of the city. **The ultimate goal – eternal life – is achieved! Amen and amen!**

In the Love of God,

The Quorum of Twelve Apostles

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