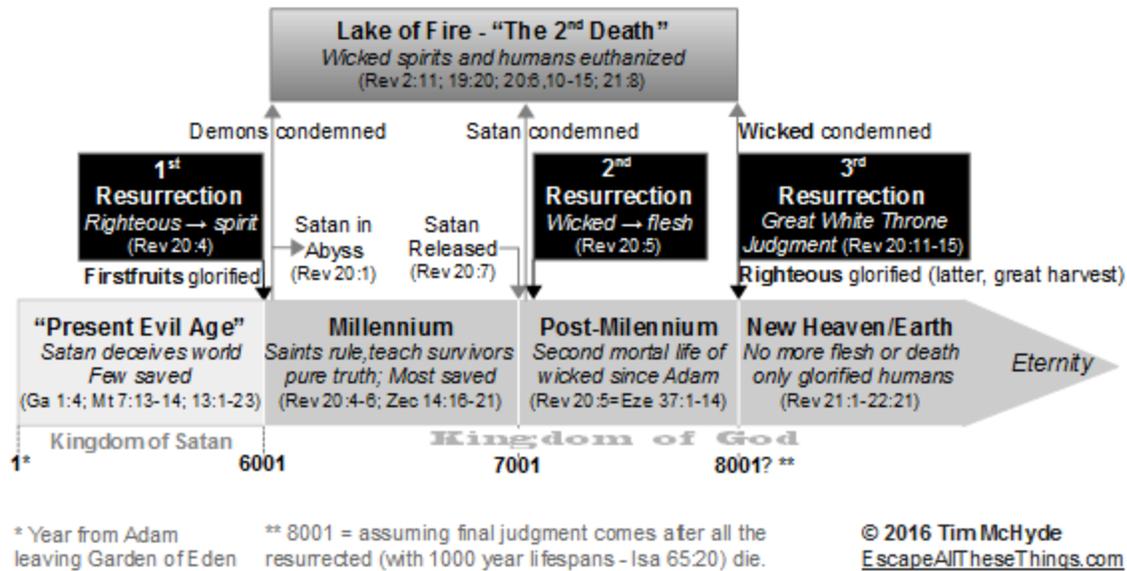


# Revelation's 3 Resurrections vs. Heaven/Hell At Death



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By Tim McHyde / June 4, 2016

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Bible prophecy teaches about not just one, but three future mass resurrections. If you think everyone goes to heaven or hell when they die, then it's time to understand what the Bible says about God's genius plan to use multiple resurrections to "raise" up children like himself—who all come to understand fully that only his way of love works.

## When the Bible Sounds "Wrong"

Have you ever read the Bible and noticed how what you're taught by Christianity or at church makes the Bible sound "wrong" at times? You can literally be reading the Bible and thinking, "that can't be right, because every Christian knows *this* instead."

Want an example? Read this passage about events at Jesus' return to reign:

Revelation 20:1-4 (HCSB) —

1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven with the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for 1,000 years. 3 He threw him into the abyss, closed it, and put a seal on it so that he would no longer deceive the nations until the 1,000 years were completed. After that, he must be released for a short time.

4 Then I saw thrones, and people seated on them who were given authority to judge. I also saw the people who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of God's word, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and who had not accepted the mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with the Messiah for 1,000 years.

"What's that? They are *just* coming back to life when Christ returns? That can't be right because everyone knows the righteous are go to live in Heaven when they die."

Isn't it bizarre to find ourselves arguing with the Bible? LOL. Yet when you have always been taught something to the point you "know it," statements to the contrary are just going to sound wrong at first, even if those statements come from the Bible!

## Who Needs the Resurrection, Anyway?

Indeed the resurrection seems pointless and superfluous in the face of Christian teaching. Christians believe that people go to either heaven or hell immediately upon death. In either case, they spend eternity there and that's that. If that's the case, what does God need to have a resurrection for?

Nevertheless, in the New Testament you will find 40 references to the "resurrection" of the dead. The Book of Hebrews and Paul call the resurrection a foundational teaching ([Heb 6:1-2](#); [1Co 15:14](#)). Peter called the fact of the resurrection the reason for our faith ([1Pe 1:3](#)).

Obviously, somebody is wrong; either the Bible or the popular Christian teaching. Whichever it is, neither alternative is going to give you a warm fuzzy feeling.

Because of the cognitive dissonance, or stress that holding these two opposing ideas creates, most perplexed readers try not to think about it. They move on to another part of the Bible, hopefully with less difficult parts. That's understandable as this dilemma seems impossible to resolve for most. Few Christians are tenacious truth seekers. They just want to be happy, not right.

Before you decide which belief to hold on this question, let's cover the key verses on the resurrection. You will see that the resurrection is bigger and more exciting than you ever imagined. **It even reveals the incredible compassion and wisdom of God in how he will deal with the lost.**

## Three Future Resurrections

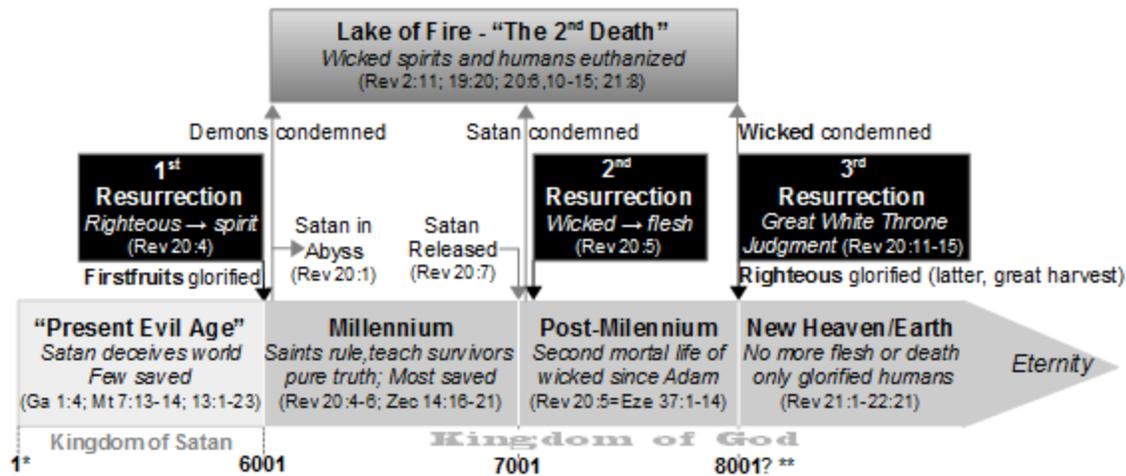
There is not only one resurrection taught in Bible prophecy. There are **three future "mass" resurrections**. I say mass resurrection to differentiate from individual resurrections like when Paul raised Eutychus from the dead after he "fell asleep from his preaching" (OK only kind of, lol) ([Acts 20:7-12](#)).

While individual resurrections can happen at whenever someone has the faith to pull it off, the three mass resurrections have a predetermined, fixed schedule.

1. **"The First Resurrection"** (Rev 20:4; 1Co 15:23) — This is the resurrection we read about above in Revelation 20:4 where the saints "come back to life" to reign with Christ at his coming. It's the simplest one to understand: only "the dead in Christ," or **the righteous**, are in this resurrection (1Th 4:16). They rise up on the day of the Rapture (Tishrei 1/Day of Trumpets) at Christ's Second Coming. They continue on up to heaven for the marriage supper of the Lamb. They return ten days later on Tishrei 10/Yom Kippur/Armageddon to reign for 1000 years with Christ. (Tishrei 1 - Tishrei 10 = ten days). This is a time of peace because God's Word fills the earth (Hab 2:14) and Satan, his demons and their associated deception are removed (Rev 12:9;20:10). God's loving way of peace will be taught and practiced by all.
2. **Resurrection of the Wicked** (Rev 20:5=Eze 37:1-14) — After the Millennium is over and after Satan's release, rebellion and defeat soon after, the "rest of the dead" come back to life (Rev 20:5). Since all the righteous came up in the first resurrection, "the rest" could only be **the wicked**. This is all those who lived and died since Adam but did not hear or become convinced by God's Word/will and adopt it (Lk 8:21). Rather than being summarily damned to hell for all eternity for their ignorance, skepticism or deception regarding salvation (as Christianity teaches), they come up in physical bodies again as Ezekiel's famous "Valley of Dry Bones" vision literally portrays for all humanity through the example of the nation of Israel (Act 10:34-35). This resurrection is (literally) the secret to God's plan to save everyone. It gives a second chance to all those who died before the age of accountability (like aborted babies), the mentally handicapped, and the many individuals who lived and died without ever hearing or adopting God's word. Satan's world today makes it so very hard to find the truth and live it in the face of persecution and trials. **God does not penalize us for not making it in this evil world; instead he rewards us greatly if we do make it now against the odds.** We get to rule for 1000 years with Christ (something those in the second resurrection do not get to do). Most won't be radical enough to pull this off and will a world without Satan's deception to see the superiority of God's way and gain salvation. **"How many billions of people will live on the earth after the resurrections and how will they be accommodated and fed?,"** some ask. The Bible does not specify, but just from the information already covered in this article it's easy to answer.
  1. There are 1000 years of great peace and prosperity to prepare for their arrival with housing and training centers.
  2. There will be billions of glorified saints and the angels to do the work with great divine capacity.
  3. There will be billions of people also on earth to help prepare and to receive them.

Given all that and a big earth to spread them over, I don't see a problem with a literal second resurrection to flesh of all the wicked just as Revelation 20 and Ezekiel 37 say.

3. **The Great White Throne Judgment** (Rev 20:11-13=1Co 15:24) — This resurrection comes sometime after the second resurrection; exactly how long after is not revealed. It would make sense if it came after everyone in the previous resurrection finishes their second life of learning God's ways. Regardless, Revelation says all the dead come up to stand before Christ on his great white throne and are judged according to their works (Rev 20:13). This is for everyone else who lived and died since Adam and missed the first resurrection. (Those who were already glorified in the first resurrection do not stand in this judgment.) At this point everyone who became righteous after the first resurrection is given eternal life. Those few who still remain "wicked" or in rebellion to God after their two lives receive death in the lake of fire for eternity (Rev 20:15). This is the end of the phase of mortal flesh and blood humans (Rev 20:14-15) and the end of death, too. Only glorified humans remain and they all live in the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:8; 22:15).



\* Year from Adam leaving Garden of Eden

\*\* 8001 = assuming final judgment comes after all the resurrected (with 1000 year lifespans - Isa 65:20) die.

## Heaven or Hell Upon Death?

You may have noticed in the passages above that when someone dies, it does not say they go on living in either heaven (or even in hell). They wait until one of the first two resurrections (which one of course depends on their status as righteous or wicked, respectively). That means they are not alive and waiting until then.

Where do they wait? The Bible indicates that the souls of the dead *do* go to heaven, returning to God "who gave the spirit" ([Ecc 12:7](#)). However, it also indicates that while we are "present with the LORD" we are not conscious but "resting:"

[Revelation 6:9](#) — When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. 10 They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

Notice that even esteemed martyrs are revealed to be resting under the altar in heaven, not walking around and playing harps or talking with Jesus. They speak for a brief moment at the 5th seal and then are told to go back to resting.

This is what the consensus of the verses on this topic tells us. Our reward at death is not to go immediately to stay in heaven consciously but to wait in suspension ([Rev 6:11](#)) for the first resurrection and then to rise ([Rev 20:4](#)) and rule on the earth ([Mt 5:5](#)) after a short ten day visit to heaven ([Rev 15:2](#)).

That may be disappointing news for most, but before you get upset consider the silver lining. **This also means that unsaved people do not go to hell upon death, either.** The wicked await a resurrection, as well. The difference is they get a second chance in the flesh without Satan's deception rather than getting glorified. They can upgrade to a spirit body at the Great White Throne Judgment if they learn God's way and adopt it before they die in this second life.

If not, then they get the Bible's version of hell: the lake of fire. The difference being is there is not eternal torment there. They are burned up instantly and spared from suffering and a wicked life that only brings misery. God is not a sadist but is merciful even to the wicked ([Luke 6:35](#)).

What about "Lazarus and the Rich Man?" ([Luke 16:19-31](#)) It is accepted as a parable drawing upon the pagan Egyptian concept of the afterlife to teach about the reversal of fortunes that happens in the next life. (Christianity did not introduce the concept of hell, but absorbed it from paganism into its traditions just as Judaism did.)

## Objection #1: "Absent from the body is to present with the LORD" (2Co 5:8)

Even though the "soul sleep" while people wait for the resurrection is the literal teaching of the Bible, there are a few verses that people *think* contradict them.

One of the main proof texts Christians use to defend the idea of going to heaven to be with Jesus consciously upon death is this verse:

[2 Corinthians 5:8](#) — We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

One way to answer this passage was already touched on above. The teaching of waiting for the resurrection does not contradict that we go to heaven when we die. It just denies that we are alive and conscious immediately then.

The other way to answer this that I think is more what Paul had in mind is that it is speaking of what one perceives going from life to death to resurrection. When you sleep, you are faintly conscious of the passage of time. When you wake, you have a general idea if you slept minutes, hours or all night. But when you're dead, you "know nothing" ([Ecc 9:5](#)) including awareness of time. That means the very next moment of consciousness after you lose consciousness at death will be you in the resurrection! For the righteous like Paul, to say you'd rather leave your body and be present with the LORD sounds immediate because it will seem immediate in perception. That perception does not deny the fact that you wait *completely unconscious* for potentially thousands of years in between your last consciousness and your next consciousness. You just will have no awareness of any gap. You die and wake up (to your mind) immediately in the resurrection with Jesus.

Therefore, there is no contradiction in what Paul said and what the Bible teaches on the dead waiting unconscious for the resurrection.

## Objection #2: "Man is appointed to die once" (Heb 9:27)

The other objection I hear all the time is against the teaching of the second resurrection and second chance and therefore second death for some (most) people.

[Hebrews 9:27-28](#) — Just as man is appointed to die once, and after that to face judgment,

28 so also the Messiah, having been offered **once** to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.

This verse seems to say "we all can only die once." In isolation that would be a reasonable conclusion. However, in context that's not what it's saying as I'll show below.

## Some Die Zero Times

But first without any study of the context we can disprove that interpretation very quickly by considering what Paul says about what happens to the living at the 7th trumpet when Jesus returns:

[1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 \(HCSB\)](#) —16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the archangel's voice, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so we will always be with the Lord.

Do you see the problem with saying Hebrews teaches "everyone dies *exactly* once?" Paul contradicts this idea by revealing that some of the saints will *never* die. If we happen to be alive when Jesus returns, we will never taste death as are "quickened" from flesh to spirit (1Co 15:51-52) and caught up to heaven with Jesus and remain with him forever.

In other words, Hebrews is only speaking of an "appointment" to die. Not everyone makes that appointment, and some die two or even three times. One death appointment is a true statement for the sake of the argument he is making.

Then what does "once" mean? It's clear if you read the rest of the thought in verse 28. Paul is teaching the relationship between two steps in fallen human life and two steps in Messiah's perfect life. Just as we are to die once and then come to judgment, so too does the Messiah die once as an offering then comes back at the Second Coming bringing salvation. His point is not declare the absolute number of times all humans die!

## Conclusion

Did you notice while looking at Hebrew 9:28 that it proves the point that the righteous (whether dead or alive) are waiting for Jesus' Second Coming to bring them their "salvation?"

[Hebrews 9:28](#) — so also the Messiah, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.

Paul confirms we don't get salvation in heaven upon death as Christianity teaches; we all wait for Jesus to "bring" it to us at his Second Coming!

I hope you enjoyed the thrilling insights from the three resurrections in Bible prophecy. For more of that and to also finally have both understanding and peace about end time events coming soon upon us, please consider supporting me and yourself by getting my book Know the Future.