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Series: [The Resurrections](#)

# The Resurrections (54)

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[Matthew 28:1-10](#)

(Continuation from [01-08-12](#))

## The Doctrine of the Resurrections

### 5. The Resurrection of Tribulation Saints

Special mention is made of the resurrection of those who died as martyrs in the Tribulation as being raised in connection with the second coming of Christ to establish His kingdom. In [Revelation 20:4](#) John writes that he saw:

[Revelation 20:4 \(NASB\)](#)

**<sup>4</sup>Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.**

This statement is explicit that the martyred dead of the tribulation will be raised when Christ comes to establish His kingdom. [Revelation 20:5](#) declares,

[Revelation 20:5 \(NASB\)](#)

**<sup>5</sup>The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.**

A natural question follows as to how this resurrection could be first when there have been other resurrections preceding it, such as the resurrection of Christ, the resurrection of the church, and the resurrection of the Old Testament saints.

The answer is that the term “**the first resurrection**” refers to all resurrections of the righteous even though they are widely separated in time. They are all “**first**” that is, before the final resurrection of the wicked. Accordingly, the term “**first resurrection**” applies to all the resurrections of the saints regardless of when they occur, including the resurrection of Christ Himself.

### 6. The Resurrection of the Millennial Saints

Scripture in no passage clearly predicts the resurrection of the millennial saints, and some have concluded that saints who enter the Millennium will never die. Scripture, of course, is also silent about a rapture of living saints at the end of the millennial kingdom. Both these items of prophecy are of no immediate concern to saints living today, and truth relating to it can be disclosed after Christ’s return to set up His kingdom.

The presumption is, however, that some saints who survive the tribulation time will be already advanced in age, and in any case it is doubtful whether anyone will survive for the entire thousand-year reign. Even Adam and the early Christians did not live to attain the age of one thousand years. Accordingly, it may be assumed that even those who are saved will die in the Millennium even though their life may be greatly prolonged.

According to [Isaiah 65:20](#):

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**Isaiah 65:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> "No longer will there be in it an infant *who lives but a few days*, Or an old man who does not live out his days; For the youth will die at the age of one hundred And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred Will be *thought* accursed.

This statement, on the one hand, indicates that life will be greatly lengthened, that is, that at the age of 100 a person is still in his youth. In the Millennium, believers who are old men will fill out their days, meaning that they will live to a ripe old age. On the other hand, this does not state that they will not die. By contrast, a person dying at the age of 100 will do so because of sin, and death will come as a form of judgment.

The evidence remains that there will probably be saints who die in the Millennium and that they will be raised at the end of the millennial kingdom. This doctrine, however, is not built upon explicit Scripture, but is probably the best explanation. At the same time millennial saints are raised, undoubtedly living millennial saints will be raptured or taken from the earth without dying in the same fashion as the church is raptured. This will be in preparation for the destruction of the present earth and heavens.

## The Intermediate State

Today, I want to begin a new section in our study of **The Doctrine of the Resurrections** on what is often called the **intermediate state**. This is not an easy subject simply because there is no real clear doctrinal statement on it in the Scriptures, and there appear to be major differences and changes relative to the intermediate state that occurred after the resurrection of Christ. A basic definition of the **intermediate state** would be as follows:

*The intermediate state is that condition or state of existence between the time of a person's death and the time that they receive new resurrection bodies.*

After someone dies they exist independent of their body (disembodied spirits) until their particular bodily resurrection. For the New Testament believer this would happen at the Rapture. I am not sure when this would actually happen for the lost person. The passage in [Luke 16:19-31](#) about Lazarus and the rich man seems to indicate that the rich man who was in torments had some kind of body. In fact, he asked if Lazarus could get some water to place on his tongue and provide him with some relief.

However, we know that Paul stated that **"to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord"** ([2 Corinthians 5:8](#)). Whenever we go to a funeral, we know that the body of the individual, lost or saved, is in the casket, or has been cremated. They are somewhere else, but their physical body is still here.

What we affirm, however, is that in the eternal or final state, everyone, either lost or saved, will have a body. The redeemed will have a resurrected body like that of Christ, and the unredeemed will have a body that does not disintegrate due to the intense suffering that it will have to endure for eternity.

The biblical term for the believer receiving a new body is the biblical doctrine of **glorification**. It is described in [1 Corinthians 15:35-49](#). Obviously, these will be bodies different from those that we currently have, but at the same time they will be very similar in nature and their fundamental characteristics. We will still be able to function as we do

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now – talk, hear, see, feel, touch, think, evaluate. I personally believe that we will still eat and breathe and do things as we do now. Apparently Christ did those things when He returned to the earth after His resurrection. We know that we are going to have a marriage supper with Him ([Revelation 19:5-10](#)).

If we could phrase all of this in the form of a question, we might ask the following: **“Where does someone go when they die, and what is their state or condition in that location?”** The doctrine of the intermediate state implies that between a person’s death and the resurrection of their body, there is an intermediate and intervening state in which the individual ***does not possess a body as they currently have*** and are waiting for the future resurrection of their body for the eternal state. I am trying to be very careful at this point simply because it is not clear as to what kind of body a ***lost*** person who has died currently has, or when they will get a different kind of body. It simply is not fully clear to me personally. What we affirm is that a person’s **intermediate condition** will vary based on whether or not that person was saved or lost when they died.

So, the question would be this: **“Is this intermediate state in heaven for the saved and in hell for the lost?”** If that is the case, then respectively they would either experience the presence of God and His blessings or the absence of God and His judgments. It is not known whether or not the intermediate state would be less intense than the final or eternal state, but they are still of the same qualitative nature – either suffering or blessing.

There is not a great deal of information in the Scriptures relative to this subject. And to make it even more difficult, the idea of an **“intermediate state”** is not something that has wide theological agreement. The arguments for it, both pro and con, have seemed to vacillate during different periods of the church. In fact, the Roman Catholic false doctrine of purgatory somewhat developed from this idea of an intermediate state. The biblical references to this idea are fairly scarce as well. When we discuss the various resurrections or the Second Coming, there will be plenty of Scriptural references to either of those subjects – but not with the term **“intermediate state”**. In fact, the term **“intermediate state”** is not even a Scriptural term, but simply a theological expression that has been developed to identify this particular state of being. In some ways, we must admit that it is somewhat problematic. The question that this term generates is simply **what is the condition of the individual during this period of time and where is the individual located?**

Obviously, the **intermediate state** is not a permanent state, but a temporary state between the time of a person’s death and the resurrection of their body at whatever time that may occur eschatologically based on their salvation or lack of salvation. It may occur at the Rapture, at the Second Coming, or at the Final Judgment of the wicked when they will be cast into the Lake of Fire. It should be noted that most of the biblical passages refer more to the eternal state rather than the intermediate state.

There is a very false doctrine that I only mention at this point simply because you have probably heard of it in some form in the past. It is called **“soul sleep”**, and is a false doctrine that states that once someone dies that the soul remains unconscious until it is resurrected to be with the Lord or resurrected for the final judgment. It should be noted that the Scriptures seem to clearly speak of the **intermediate state** as a very conscious existence, not some kind of temporary repose.