

# The Plain Truth About the First Resurrection

## How Does This Pivotal Event in God's Plan Occur?

Those of us who have the firstfruits of God's spirit desire to know the truth on all issues, especially those that relate to the greatest upcoming event in all of history: the resurrection from the dead of all those predestined to be eternal brothers of Jesus Christ. That is our hope, to be changed from flesh and blood into ever-living spirit if we are alive at Christ's return, or from the dust of the earth for those who have died over the millennia since Adam.

Many ideas abound regarding how that resurrection will occur — the events surrounding it and their order. A popular current idea is that of the "rapture," wherein those destined for the resurrection will rise into the air at Christ's return at some time before the Great Tribulation, and be with Christ in heaven before the hammer of the Beast power falls upon the earth, causing incredible death, destruction, and havoc. This idea has been popularized by movies such as *Left Behind*.

Others teach that the resurrected saints rise into the air and meet Christ, then immediately return to the earth on white horses to defeat the Beast and False Prophet. Many, if not most, religious denominations teach that the spirits of people at death immediately rise up to heaven to be with God ... but this belief flies in the face of the fact that Christ has not yet returned to rule the earth, and when He does at that point the saints will rise to meet Him in the air. How can they do so if they have already risen to heaven at their death? There are variations on these beliefs, but are they backed by Scripture?

### The State of the Dead

One should first understand the state of the dead: do their spirits actually ascend to God at death, or are they in a different state? The Scriptures are very clear on the matter as stated by Job, Jesus Christ, and others.

Job 14:14-15. "If a man dies shall he live

again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait [in the grave] until my change comes. You shall call, and I will answer You; You will have a desire to the works of Your hands."

John 11:11-13. "These things He said; and after that He said unto them, 'Our friend Lazarus sleeps; but I go, that I may awaken him out of *sleep*.' Then His disciples said, 'Lord, if he sleeps, he shall do well.' Howbeit Jesus spoke of his death; but they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in *sleep*."

*sleep* = *koimao*, "to slumber, figuratively to de cease."

I Corinthians 11:30. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many *sleep* [*koimao*]."

I Corinthians 15:20. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that *slept* [*koimao*]."

Several other scriptures could be given which



**The people buried in cemeteries, or anywhere on the earth or lost in the sea, are existing in a state of "sleep," from which they will some day be raised in a resurrection.**

show that physical death is likened to sleep, such as Deuteronomy 31:16, Daniel 12: 2 and 13, Mathew 9:24, Acts 7:60, I Corinthians 15:51, and I Thessalonians 4:14 and 5:10. Moreover, God teaches us that King David is dead and buried, not active and conscious in heaven (Acts 2:29), and "... the dead know not nothing ..." (Ecclesiastes 9:5). The spirit is not gone, but it is not conscious and active. One might say the spirit is like a hard drive containing all the memories and traits of the person, inactive and waiting to be activated at Christ's return.

Interestingly, the Greek word for *cemetery* is κοιμητήριον, "sleeping place," so the language itself tells us that even from ancient times it was understood that death is like sleep. At least some of the ancients understood that people did not move into a state of spirit consciousness at death.

We know that the sleep of death is not final, but that the firstfruits (James 1:18) — also known as the elect (Matthew 24:31, chosen (Mark 13:20), those written in the Book of Life (Revelation 3:5), and saints (Romans 1:7) — will be resurrected at the end of the age (John 6:39), just as Jesus Christ, the first of the firstborn (Romans 8:29), was raised. It is this first resurrection that we want to explore in this study, to see just what the Eternal has planned for us. As we understand more perfectly His plan, we can look forward with ever more clarity to the wonderful future that God has in store for us. Later on, after the Millennium, all of those who were not raised in the first resurrection — those who were not called and chosen at that time — will be raised as shown in Revelation 20:5, 11-15, but their fate and circumstances will not be dealt with in this study.

## **How the Resurrection Will Really Happen**

In order to more easily understand the progression of events during the resurrection, I have arranged it into five parts. All of these parts are portions of a continual flow of events that will be made clear as we move along.

## **PHASE I OF THE RETURN OF CHRIST**

### **1. The Last Trumpet Blows. Jesus Returns and the Saints Are Raised.**

There are seven trumpets that will be blown successively by seven angels, each one signifying a particular major event upon the earth. Below are listed those trumpets as revealed in Revelation 8 to 11.

**Trumpet 1** (Revelation 8:7) Hail and fire mingled with blood are thrown to the earth, which burn up a third of the trees and all of the grass.

**Trumpet 2** (Revelation 8:8-9). A "great mountain" burning with fire plunges into the sea, and a third of the sea becomes like blood.

**Trumpet 3** (Revelation 8:10-11). A great star called Wormwood, burning like a torch, falls upon a third of the rivers and water springs, which become bitter and cause many deaths.

**Trumpet 4** (Revelation 8:12). One-third of the sun, moon, and stars are struck so that a third of them are not visible in the day or night.

**Trumpet 5 = Woe 1** (Revelation 9:1-11). A star [spirit] falls from heaven and is given the key to the "bottomless pit," which is opened to let out smoke that darkens the sun and air. Out of the smoke come "locusts" that torment people on earth who do not have God's seal on their foreheads, to torment them like scorpions stinging. The king of these "locusts" is Abaddon.

**Trumpet 6 = Woe 2** (Revelation 9:13-21). Four angels bound at the Euphrates River are released to kill a third of mankind with a 200 million-man army, and with "horses" that deliver fire, smoke, and brimstone. The other two-thirds of humanity do not repent of worshipping demons and idols, murders, sorceries (drug usage), sexual immorality, and thievery. The two witnesses complete their testimony in Jerusalem for 3 1/2 years, are then killed by the Beast, and are raised after 3 1/2 days.

**Trumpet 7 = Woe 3** (Revelation 11:15-19). Loud spirit voices say, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" The temple of God is opened in heaven and the ark of His covenant is seen, and then come lightning, thunder, noises, an earthquake, and great hail.

It is at this last trumpet — Trumpet 7 — that Jesus Christ is finally made King of Kings and Lord



**Each trumpet in Revelation is blown by an angel, and is probably heard in a significant portion of the world.**

of Lords to rule over all the earth, to replace Satan the devil who has ruled for 6,000 years, after tempting Adam to sin and replacing Him. Jesus overcame Satan in the wilderness temptation (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13) to qualify as ruler over the earth, but Satan has remained entrenched as ruler for these past six millennia (II Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2). The devil's rulership officially ends at the seventh trumpet, but not until after the return of Christ and the saints is he forcibly removed from power; more on that later.

Note too that the seventh trumpet in the sequence of months, beginning on Nisan 1 at the first visible crescent of the moon following the spring equinox, marks the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24-25). A trumpet was blown to mark the beginning of each month, and the seventh month began on Sivan 1, the end of the year for festival matters deal-

ing with the Temple and priesthood but the beginning of the year for kingship and civil matters. Thus, the seventh trumpet is a time of new beginnings, even as it signals the end of the old order of seven previous months.

At this seventh trumpet Jesus Christ returns to resurrect the saints, and send out His angels to retrieve them.

Note from the three scriptures in the box below that,

**a. The resurrection of the saints occurs at the seventh trumpet blast (the third woe).**

**b. Christ comes with His holy angels — termed “clouds” in Matthew 24:30, since there are millions of them, and in groups they appear as clouds — to raise up the saints, both those who have died and those alive at that time.** Jesus will return just as the two angels declared to the disciples in Jerusalem when Jesus ascended to heaven.

“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven,

**I Corinthians 15:51-52.** “Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

**I Thessalonians 4:15-17.** “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep [dead]. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and **with the trumpet of God**. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

**Matthew 24:30-31.** “Then [right after the Tribulation] the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels **with a great sound of a trumpet**, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other,”

will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9-11).

As clouds of angels received Jesus as he ascended to heaven, so clouds of angels will come with Him when He returns from heaven at the resurrection.

*c. These saints who were dead are raised first, followed by those who are still alive, perhaps only minutes later.*

*d. The saints are shown in Matthew 24:31 to be raised in two groups, just as shown in I Thessalonians 4:16-17. See the box below.*

<b>I Thessalonians 4:16-17</b>	<b>Matthew 24:31</b>
<i>Those who are dead</i> →	<i>Elect from one end of heaven to the other</i> (Heaven is the spirit dimension.)
<i>Those who are alive</i> →	<i>Elect from the four winds</i> (Wind is air, the physical dimension.)

The angels collect these elect from the same space — one physical and the other spiritual (heaven) — because they are indeed present in the same space. The unseen spirit realm is not visible, operating at a different “frequency,” as it were, though occupying the same space and time dimensions. Thus Solomon could say that at death “... the dust will return to earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Since the angels collect the deceased saints from “one end of heaven to the other” as these angels return to the earth with Christ, it is clear that the spirits of the saints have been resting on the earth’s surface where the angels are sent, probably at the place on earth where they died ... though these spiritual “hard drives” of each person, as I have termed them, are invisible and “sleeping.” Those alive at this time will also be raised in the same vicinity as those raised who were dead, and only a short time later, since they are “caught up together with them in the clouds” as they rise up to meet Jesus.

*e. The saints are taken up to meet Christ at the same time as the two witnesses are (Revelation 11:12), just before the time that it is declared that all of the earth’s kingdoms belong to Jesus Christ (Revelation 11:15).*

## 2. The Marriage Supper in Heaven

The saints have been carried by the angels to meet Christ in the air. What next? Some say that they then accompany Jesus on white horses to return to earth and defeat the Beast and False Prophet, as described in Revelation 19:11-21. Yet, there are serious problems with that interpretation. First of all the saints have not been given white robes — that occurs at the marriage supper — and second of all Jesus did not come on a white horse with the angels to fetch the saints. Acts 1:11 says that He would come the second time in the same way that He left ... and that was certainly not on a horse!

What are we then left to deal with? Quite simply, the fact that Jesus and the

saints journey to the heavenly throne of the Father — where Christ had been at the Father’s right hand for about 2,000 years — following the resurrection, for it is there that they are given white robes and white horses. Read Revelation 19:6-9.

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters, and as the sound of mighty thunders, saying, ‘Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!’ Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”

Here we have the culmination of the plan of God, wherein the marriage of the saints to Jesus Christ occurs with great fanfare at the Father’s throne! This great event occurs at the point where Yahweh Elohim (the Lord God) is given rulership on earth, which we just read in Revelation 11:15, which occurs at the seventh trumpet! We see here the wife of Christ, the elect, just resurrected to meet Him in the air, now having moved to the very temple of God in heaven. They are now given white robes, which they did not have when they first met Christ in the

air, and are accepted of the Father to *marry* [*gamos*, “wedding or wedding feast”] His Son Jesus Christ. What an incredible event this will be!

It is at this feast in heaven, and during the time spent with the Father and Christ, that the risen saints will begin learning about their *mansion* (*mone* = “residence and action”; John 14:2), or responsibilities as kings and priests, but in addition they will be coached for their part in the soon-to-come attack on the Beast and False Prophet. The time spent at the throne before the attack is not revealed, but it could be 45 days, which is the difference between the 1290 and 1335 days of Danial 12:12. The attack of Jesus Christ and the saints is spelled out in Revelation 19:11-21. Quoted below is just a portion of this battle.

“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called the Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

Notice that “heaven was opened,” meaning Christ and the saints have just exited the throne of God, the saints arrayed in white robes, and appearing in the material world to attack and destroy the Beast and False Prophet. It is not a pretty picture, as the two of them are captured, and burned up and destroyed in the lake of fire.

Notice also how the events on the Day of Atonement picture this wedding in heaven. The Day of Atonement follows the Feast of Trumpets, as the wedding feast follows the resurrection — and as shown in Leviticus 16:12-15, the high priest enters

the Holy of Holies this one time during the year, bringing a censor full of burning coals from the altar, his hands full of finely beaten sweet incense ... which typify the prayers of the saints. The incense is placed on the fire so the cloud of incense will cover the mercy seat — the place where God dwells. This scene is analagous to God’s throne in heaven. Then some blood of a sacrificed bull is sprinkled with the priest’s finger on the mercy seat, and in front of the mercy seat the blood is sprinkled seven times; this was for the sons of the high priest and his household. Then this process is repeated, but with the blood of a goat chosen from two goats by drawing lots, which represents Christ, for the sins of all Israel (Leviticus 1;6:7-9).

There can be little doubt that the priest — which represents each one of God’s spirit-possessing people — is going into the very presence of the Father as typified by the Ark and its two covering cherubs. We are now kings and priests (Revelation 5:10; 20:6), in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, who is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, as explained in Hebrews 7 ... and Christ is the firstborn of many brethren (Romans 8:29). As he is a King and Priest at the Father’s right hand at His throne (Revelation 3:21), so will be the saints at the resurrection.

## PHASE II OF THE RETURN OF CHRIST

### 3. Attack Upon the Beast and False Prophet

Following the marriage supper, the saints and other spirits follow Jesus Christ to wage war against the Beast and False Prophet. This matter has already been discussed to some extent, but is continued below from Revelation 19:17-21.

“Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, ‘Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.’ and I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war

against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.”

The Beast and False Prophet and their armies are destroyed, and these two leaders are cast into the lake of fire and destroyed. Nothing remains of the former great and powerful Kingdom of Babylon, whose merchants became rich through trading virtually every item imaginable

“For in one hour such great riches came to nothing. Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance. and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What is like this great city?’ They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.’” (Revelation 18:17-19).

The merchants of Babylon were the “great men of the earth, for by your *sorcery* all the nations were deceived” (Revelation 18:23). It is interesting that the Greek word for *sorcery* is *pharmakeia*, or “medication,” a word that comes from *pharmakeus*, meaning “a drug, i.e. a spell-giving potion, a poisoner.” What do we see that Babylon’s medical profession and illicit drug dealers do to people? They medicate them with drugs, covering the symptoms of pain and distress that are meant to drive people to seek their Creator and follow Him. These drugs also alter people’s perceptions and will so they can be controlled by governments, and even allow demons to enter. Revelation 18:23 confirms this altered perception by stating “... by your sorcery all the nations

were deceived.”

#### 4. Satan and the Demons Are Bound

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.” (Revelation 20:1-3).

An angel catches Satan and casts him into the bottomless pit, where he is bound with a spiritual “chain” of some sort, and is shut up so he can no more deceive the nations and cause the mayhem that he and the demons have created for 6,000 years. Because he is no longer around to cause the “bondage and corruption” of today’s world, wherein “the whole creation groans and labors” (Romans 8:21, 23), the earth will be able to blossom forth and be at peace as during the Eden of Adam’s day, before he sinned. The demons and evil angels will assuredly be thrown into the bottomless pit as well, for they are henchmen in causing this earth to be destroyed through war, famine, and pestilence. We read of Satan’s final destruction after the millennium in Ezekiel 28:18.

#### 5. The Millennium Begins

With Jesus Christ King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and with the saints ruling with Him, the earth can finally return to Edenic conditions for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:4-6). We have no true conception of the beauty of this new age, but Paul intimated what a glorious future there is in store for us in I Corinthians 2:9 (taken from Isaiah 64:4).

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those that love Him.”

Indeed, we will be inheritors of kingship and priesthood in a renewed world which we will help rebuild on Eden's lines. Isaiah stated, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind" (Isaiah 65:17). The resurrection is an essential prelude to that new age coming, and it is important that we understand it. Let us glory in God's great plan that He pleads with us to not let slip away. Let us not neglect such a great salvation (Hebrews 2:3)!

**An Afterthought**

It is highly interesting that the two phases of the resurrection may have a correlation with a long-held Jewish belief that there are two interpretations of the Messiah's coming: one as a suffering servant and

king of peace, the other as a conquering king to restore Israel's kingdom. Let's look at the suffering servant king first in Zechariah 9:9-10.

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!  
 Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem!  
 Behold, your king is coming to you;  
 He is just and endowed with salvation,  
 Humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
 Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.  
 And He will speak peace to the nations;  
 And His dominion will be from sea to sea,  
 And from the River to the ends of the earth."

"The king is not coming to fight a war; he comes in gentleness and meekness. He is the king over all the earth, and he has all authority, but he comes in

<p><b>The Seventh Trumpet, return of Jesus Christ, and the resurrection. The angels gather the elect and meet Christ in the air. All the nations now are Christ's.</b></p>	<p><b>The spirit saints and Christ go to the throne of God.</b></p>	<p><b>The marriage supper in heaven.</b></p>	<p><b>The saints are given white robes, horses, and instructions on battling the armies of the Beast.</b></p>	<p><b>Christ and the saints attack and destroy the armies of the Beast.</b></p>	<p><b>Satan and the demons are cast into the bottomless pit and chained.</b></p>	<p><b>The Millennial reign of Jesus Christ and the saints begins.</b></p>
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*This scenario is revealed in I Corinthians 15:51-52, I Thessalonians 4:15-17, Matthew 24:29-31, Revelation 11:15-19, Revelation 19:6-21, and Revelation 20:1-4.*

**Scenario of the First Resurrection**

**TIME LINE** →



*The return of Jesus Christ at the resurrection is a much "milder" event, albeit incredibly awesome, than the later return to wage war against the Beast power.*



*When Christ and the saints and angels descend from the heavenly wedding supper to wage war against the Beast, events will be much more intense and physical than with the first coming.*

this humble fashion, riding on a baby donkey, as opposed to a chariot or even a great horse.

“This passage of Scripture provides a picture of a Messiah-king, a deliverer of salvation, gently offering his kingship to Israel and to the world. He is a man of peace for all peoples. He will proclaim peace to all the nations, not just to Israel” (Garrett Smith, *The Returning King: The “Two Messiahs” in Zechariah*, [www.jewsforjesus.org](http://www.jewsforjesus.org)).

On the other hand, this same book of Zechariah paints a picture of a much different king in Zechariah 14:2-4 and 8-9.

“For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured. Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.... And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the

only one, and His name the only one.”

How do we accommodate these seemingly contradictory versions of the Messiah into one Individual, one humble and lowly and the other a conqueror who comes in wrath to mete out judgement to His enemies? It so happens that the New Testament writers believed that the Messiah was to first come as a humble, suffering servant, as He did for the 31 years He lived on the earth (see John 14:27, Luke 19:10, and especially Matthew 11:29, which states, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls”), but they also wrote of His return to battle the Beast and False Prophet, as stated earlier in this study (Revelation 19:11-21). In that final battle these two evil beings are destroyed, along with the military forces they commanded.

Could it be that Phase I of the resurrection scenario, when He meets to saints in the air, is comparable to the return of Jesus Christ as a suffering servant, for He is to come “peacefully,” though in power and glory, to meet the resurrected saints in the air before they go to the throne of the Father? This is not to deny that the first coming of Jesus was as a human being as a suffering servant. Then Phase II could be analogous to the return of the Messiah in power to the earth to kill the Beast, False Prophet, and armies and then establish the Kingdom on earth. The thought is interesting.