

The Resurrection of Believers



Victory Over Death (Part 10)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with again.

Yesterday I spoke about the tremendous cosmic changes that were produced in the unseen world by the death and resurrection of Jesus and, in particular, how it affected the destiny of the souls of believers at death.

Today I'm going to speak about the next great phase of God's program, "The reuniting of soul and body at the resurrection." In this talk I'm going to focus on the resurrection of righteous believers.

In the New Testament, the resurrection of righteous believers is always closely associated with the Second Coming of Christ. The Greek word used for this normally, is parousia. Parousia means literally "presence." We need to bear that in mind. Of course, if somebody has been away, and then again becomes present, their becoming present indicates their return; so, naturally, it can be rendered "return," but we always need to bear in mind that its primary meaning is "presence." Now, there are many different prophecies relating to this event; there are also many different interpretations of exactly what's going to take place at the return of Jesus.

For my part, I would just offer one simple expression of opinion. It seems to me, on the basis of the meaning of the word parousia, that it need not necessarily be one single, brief event, but that it could be something that continues over a considerable period of time, even a period of several years. Now, that's just an opinion.

Rather than going into the controversial aspects of this subject, I would like to content myself with stating five main purposes, which I see will be fulfilled by the coming, the return of Jesus.

These are the five purposes that I see. I certainly am not suggesting that they are the only purposes, nor am I necessarily suggesting that I'm stating them in the order in which they will happen. So, here are the five purposes:

1. To receive the Church as His Bride to Himself.

2. To save Israel as a nation.

3. To overthrow Satan and the Antichrist.

4. To judge the Gentile nations.

5. To establish His Millennium Kingdom on earth.

Obviously, some of these are interrelated and as I said before, I say again, I am not necessarily asserting that the order in which I listed them is the order in which they will happen, although that does seem to be a certain reason for thinking that that must be somewhat the approximate order.

Now, as an integral of all this, the resurrection of righteous believers will take place. This is described by Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, and he's speaking as he indicates, by revelation:

> "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. [That is, those who have died in the faith] 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, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall 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. Therefore comfort one another with these words." (NAS)

We do need to bear in mind that these are words of comfort, and to receive them in that way. They are not words of confusion, but words of comfort.

Now, in my book, The Resurrection of the Dead, I've given the following outline of the event that Paul here describes, and I'm going to read it from my book (page 65):

> "The primary purpose of Paul's teaching here is to comfort Christian believers concerning other Christians, relatives or other loved ones, who have died. These Christians who have died are described as 'them which are asleep'; or, more precisely, 'them which sleep in Jesus'. This means those that have died in the faith of the gospel. Paul's message of comfort is based on the assurance that these, and all other true believers, will be resurrected.
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> The actual picture which Paul gives of this phase of the resurrection is as follows.
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> First, there will be three dramatic sounds to herald this phase of resurrection. The first sound will be the shout of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. This is in agreement with the words of Jesus Himself in John chapter 5, verses 28 and 29: 'all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.' It is the voice of Christ Himself alone that has power to call the dead out of their graves. However, at this particular moment He will call forth only the righteous dead, only those that have died in the faith. The calling forth of the unrighteous dead will be reserved for a later phase of resurrection.
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> The other two sounds that will be heard at this point will be 'the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God.' The archangel here referred to is probably Gabriel, since it appears to be his special ministry to proclaim upon earth impending interventions of God in the affairs of men. All through the Bible, one main use of the trumpet is to gather the Lord's people together in any special time of crisis. Thus the sound of the trumpet at this point will be the signal for all the Lord's people to gather together with Him, as He Himself descends from heaven to meet them.
>
> Upon earth two great events will occur in swift succession. First, all true believers who have died in the faith will be resurrected. Second, all true believers alive on earth at the moment will undergo an instantaneous, supernatural change in their bodies.
>
> Then both these companies of believers, those that were resurrected, and those whose bodies were changed without dying, will together be swiftly raised by God's supernatural power from the earth up into the air. There they will be received into clouds, and within these

> clouds they will be reunited with their Lord and with each other. Thereafter the Lord and His redeemed believers shall for ever be united in the unbroken harmony and fellowship of heaven."

The same event, which I just read from my book, The Resurrection of the Dead, is described by Paul also again in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, where he says:

> "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, [that means, we shall not all die, and I would like to point out that sleep is only used in the Scripture of those who die in the faith, because it speaks of an awakening. 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 imperishable, and we [That is, we who are alive on earth at the time] shall be changed." (NAS)

What a dramatic event that will be! I love that phrase, "the twinkling of an eye…" It means that at one moment you and I, as believers, will be looking at one another, we'll see one another just as we've got used to seeing one another. Then, there'll be a kind of flash of brilliant light that will cause us to blink just for a moment; and when we open our eyes after blinking, we'll see one another completely different. In just that split second, our physical bodies will have been totally transformed by the supernatural power of God, and we'll have a totally different kind of body. That's the glorious hope that lies ahead of every true believer.

In various places Jesus compares His coming again to that of a thief. For instance, He says in Revelation 16:15:

> "Behold, I am coming like a thief…" (NAS)

Also, in Matthew 24:42-43, He says to His disciples:

> "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had know at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into." (NAS)

So again there, Jesus says that there is some kind of correspondence between His coming again and the coming of a thief. This is in agreement with the phrase that was used by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4 where he says:

> "We shall be caught up…"

The Greek verb is harpazo. It's used in various other places in the New Testament. For instance, in Acts 8:39 we read:

> "The Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away…"

Philip suddenly disappeared out of the sight of the eunuch by whom he had just been baptized; and the eunuch went on his way, but Philip was no longer to be seen anywhere. The translation there was "snatched away."

Then in John 10:12, speaking about the wolf coming amongst the sheep, it says, "The wolf snatches the sheep", the same word, harpazo.

Matthew 13:19. It speaks about the birds that catch away the seeds sown by the wayside, and it says:

> "The evil one snatches away the seed…"

And in Jude verse 23, it speaks about snatching people out of the fire. That's the same word that's used in every one of those passages. I think, as we put the passages together, it gives us a rather vivid picture of what's going to take place when Jesus comes. That verb harpazo, to snatch away, suggests one single swift, violent act. It's all going to be over very quickly. Just like the thief grabs something and runs with it, not stopping to look back for a moment, so Jesus will come and take His people to Himself.

However, there is one important difference between what Jesus will do and what a thief does. The important difference is this: the thief takes that which does not belong to him, but Jesus is only going to take that which belongs to Him. 1 Corinthians 15:23, speaking about this tremendous moment that lies ahead, it says, "Those who are Christ's at His coming…" Christ is coming only for those who are His own. Only those who have been redeemed and completely to Him, so that they no longer belong to himself, to Christ. Are you one of those?

Our time is up for today, I'll be back with you again next week at the same time, Monday through Friday. I'll continue with this theme of "Victory over Death." The topic of my next talk will be, "The Nature of our Resurrection Body."

Stay tuned now for two special offers. The first is my book, Resurrection of the Dead. This book contains the truth that can deliver you from all fear and uncertainty concerning

death, and enable you to face both death itself, and the eternity that lies beyond with calm and unshakable assurance. The second offer is my complete series of talks this week on “Victory over Death, Part 2,” which is available in a single, carefully edited 60 minute cassette. Stay tuned for details.

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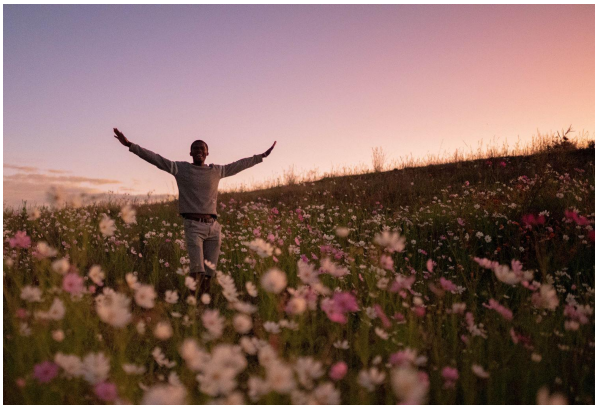


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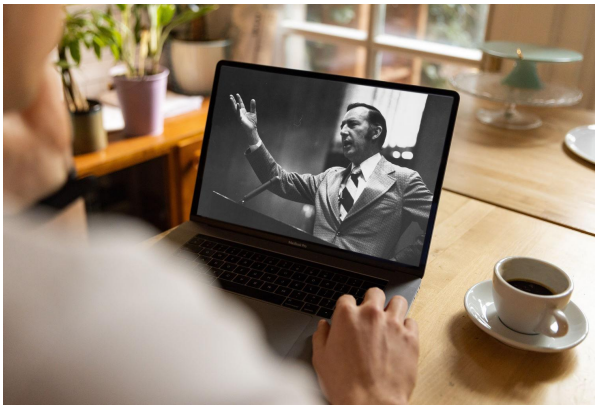
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