

be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust (Acts 24:15, NKJV).

There is a “proper time” for everyone to learn about God and to enter into his Kingdom. Some come to this knowledge before others. Jesus told a group of religious leaders who thought that they were righteous that “the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you” (Matthew 21:31). Paul spoke of the resurrection in that light:

For since by man [Adam] came death, by Man [Christ] also came **the resurrection of the dead**. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. **But each one in his own order**: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. **The last enemy to be destroyed is death** (1 Corinthians 15:21-26, NKJV).

This verse and the one below show that there is an order to resurrections. Those who diligently follow God in this life will certainly be raised first. But God has not forgotten the others. He will “put an end” to all evil rule and cause everyone to obey Him. These verses say almost the same thing, adding more details:

...They [diligent Christians] came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6).


And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne [a later resurrection], and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and

Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. **Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire** (Revelation 20:12-14).

These scriptures show that God will eventually put an end to death. Where did death come from in the first place? God originally made us in His image (Genesis 1:26), but told the first people that if they disobeyed Him, they would die (Genesis 2:17 and see 1 Corinthians in left column). People have been dying ever since.

For the wages of sin is **death**, but the gift of God is **eternal life** in Christ Jesus our LORD (Romans 6:23).

This short article cannot explain all that the Bible says about life and death. There certainly are promises of blessings for following God, and promises of punishments for disobeying God. Everyone will need to worship only God before receiving Eternal life. But the vast majority of mankind who have lived and died knowing little or nothing of God are not “lost forever”. God envisions a time when they will all know Him:

“No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (Jeremiah 31:34). 

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All Who Die Shall Live Again!

When a loved one dies, many questions naturally arise. What happened to him? Is he in “Heaven”? Is he in “Hell”? Was she a good person or was she bad? Did she know God? Was he or she “saved”?

Sometimes, messages delivered at funerals will attempt to assure those attending that the departed person is in heaven. Sometimes, they may try the opposite. But can one man, or even a group of men decide the eternal fate of anyone? The Apostle Paul answered that question:

I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. **It is the LORD who judges me**. Therefore **judge nothing before the appointed time**; wait till the LORD comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God (1 Corinthians 4:3-5).

Christ knows the truth—what each person has done and why he or she did it. The Apostle Paul

continued inside...

said that Christ would judge **in the future** at His return! Even though most of the Christian world teaches that people go immediately to “heaven” or “hell” at death, the Bible teaches that after people die, they await a resurrection. Notice a few scriptures:

If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come. You will call and I will answer you; you will long for the creature your hands have made. Surely then you will count my steps but not keep track of my sin. My offenses will be sealed up in a bag; you will cover over my sin (Job 14:14-17).

Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day...**For David did not ascend to heaven** (Acts 2:29,34).

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and **then he will reward each person according to what he has done** (Matthew 16:27).

That same day the Sadducees [a religious sect], who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. “Teacher,” they said, “Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died. **Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?**” Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. **At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage;** they will be like the angels in heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? **He is not the God of the dead but of the living.**” When the crowds heard this, they were as-

tonished at his teaching (Matthew 22:23-33).

People were astonished at Jesus’ teaching during His day, and they are often still astonished when they read His teaching today!

What Happened When Jesus’ Friend Died?

The Gospel of John, Chapter 11 tells the whole story of Lazarus and is worth reading. We will focus on the resurrection part of it here:

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha (John 11:1).

...He [Jesus] went on to tell them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.” His disciples replied, “LORD, if he sleeps, he will get better.” Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead” (John 11:11-13),

Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and **many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother.** When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. “LORD,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” **Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”** Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” “Yes, LORD,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world” (John 11:18-27).

The story goes on to show that Lazarus was dead for four days, but Jesus brought him back to life! When Lazarus came to life, he did not talk about being in heaven, nor did his sister Martha expect him to be there—she expected he would be

in “the resurrection at the last day”.

When we face a death among our own family and friends, it can seem somewhat far away from this Bible story. We do not have Jesus physically with us—where we can ask Him a question and hear the answer—where we can see Him raise the dead. Does the Bible give any hope for those who died not knowing God?

What About Those Who Do Not Believe in Jesus, God or the Bible?

The Bible makes clear in many places that all people would be better off if they lived by the Bible. The sooner they come to God, the better. But it also speaks of those who do not know God:

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our [Christians] sins, **and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.** We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands (1 John 2:1).

...God our Savior, **who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.** For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time (1 Timothy 2:3-6).

The LORD is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, **not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance** (2 Peter 3:9).

What about people who knowingly do evil? Some corrupt Jewish leaders once tried to kill the Apostle Paul (Acts 23:12), and then made false charges against him in a Roman court (Acts 24:13). This is what Paul said about them:

I [Paul] have hope in God, which they [corrupt Jewish leaders] themselves also accept, **that there will**