Eternal Life in Yahweh's Family

Summary

A third angle on the same doctrine, this time built directly on Yah'shua's own words — and on two Old Covenant figures He used to make an uncomfortable point about a "second chance."

- Yah'shua's own teaching (John 5:28-29; John 6:40) as the primary basis, rather than Job or Paul.
- The "resurrection of life" (the first resurrection, to immortal "sons" of Yahweh's family who reign with the Messiah) distinguished from the "resurrection of judgment" (the second resurrection, to a further mortal lifetime of learning and decision).
- Yah'shua's reference to the people of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba being raised to "condemn" a later, more privileged generation (Matthew 11-12), used as evidence for this second, later opportunity.

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Few questions are more important than what happens to us after death. For religious believers the question is particularly important, because most religions promise their adherents some kind of life beyond the grave. What did Yah'shua the Messiah teach about life after death? Most people would find the answer surprising, because statements in the Gospels about life beyond the grave differ considerably from what traditional Christianity has long taught.

For example, John 3:13 plainly says that "No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven - the Son of Man" *(New International Version).* Statements like this show that Yah'shua and His disciples did not teach that heaven was the reward of the saved. Instead the Messiah repeatedly spoke of a future resurrection of the dead, a fact that most of His hearers understood and accepted, yet few readily do today.

After all, they were familiar with biblical passages showing that such notable figures as Job *(Job 14:14-15)*, David *(Psalm 16:9-10)* and Isaiah *(Isaiah 26:19)* clearly expected to be raised from the grave. Yah'shua's close friend Martha, for example, told Yah'shua that she knew that her dead brother Lazarus would "rise again in the resurrection at the last day" *(John 11:24).*

So what did Yah'shua teach about the resurrection? Who will be in it? When will it take place? Will there be more than one resurrection? Let's examine His words to be sure we understand the coming resurrection "at the last day".

In John 6:40 Yah'shua gives an encouraging promise to His followers:"... This is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Here again, the myth that all mankind are being judged now and that their ignorance of Yahweh is no excuse, is proven as the myth it is! The Messiah clearly states that "everyone who sees the Son of Man and believes in Him may have everlasting life". Obviously there are billions of people who may not have any excuse for not knowing Yahweh, but they have every good excuse for not knowing of Yahweh's Messiah or of His Bible for that matter!

The Messiah explains that He is the very power behind that coming resurrection; that He will raise those who believe in Him. Note that He also tells us the timing of the resurrection - that the dead will rise again "at the last day." In biblical terminology, "last day" generally refers to the time surrounding Messiah's second coming or beyond.

The apostle Paul discusses the resurrection at length in I Corinthians 15. He tells us that the dead are resurrected in a specific order. First Yah'shua Himself, then "afterward those who are the Messiah's at His coming" *(verse 23)*. In verses 51- 52 he is even more specific: "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."

When is this "last trumpet"? Revelation 8-11 describes a series of seven trumpet blasts and associated plagues that precede the Messiah's return. At the sounding of the seventh trumpet, loud voices proclaim: "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of Yahweh and of His Messiah, and He shall reign forever and ever!" *(Revelation 11:15).* This trumpet, then, announces the Messiah's return to earth.

"The dead in the Messiah" are raised. At this seventh trumpet Yah'shua returns to earth and "those who are the Messiah's" rise from their graves to meet Him. Paul spells out more details in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: "For the Messiah Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of Yahweh. And the dead in the Messiah will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Messiah in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Messiah."

As Paul describes it, both the faithful who have died in centuries past as well as the faithful still living at that time will be part of this resurrection. They are a specific group of people. In the verses quoted above, Paul calls them "the dead in the Messiah" and "those who are the Messiah's." Yah'shua Himself refers to this as "the resurrection of the righteous" *(Luke 14:14, New International Version).*

Those in this resurrection, the Messiah tells us, "can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are Yahweh's children, since they are children of the resurrection" *(Luke 20:36, NIV).* In other words, the family of Yahweh, currently composed of Yahweh the Father and Yah'shua the Son, will expand dramatically to include many more immortal spirit members. This is why Scripture calls Yah'shua "the firstborn among many brothers" *(Romans 8:29, NIV).*

What will those who are given immortality in Yahweh's family in this resurrection be like? Paul asks and answers this question in 1 Corinthians 15: "But, you may ask, how are the dead raised? In what kind of body?... There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies; and the splendour of the heavenly bodies is one thing, the splendour of the earthly another. The sun has splendour of its own, the moon another splendour, and the stars yet another; and one star differs from another in brightness. "So it is with the resurrection of the dead: what is sown as a perishable thing is raised imperishable. Sown in humiliation, it is raised in glory; sown in weakness, it is raised in power; sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body... As we have worn the likeness of the man made of dust, so we shall wear the likeness of the heavenly man ... This perishable body must be clothed with the imperishable, and what is mortal with immortality" *(verses 35-53, Revised English Bible).*

In other words, says Paul, we will be raised with a glorified, immortal, powerful spirit body! In fact, Daniel 12:3 *(NIV)* tells us that those in this resurrection "will shine like the brightness of the heavens...like the stars for ever and ever"! What an incredible transformation!

But what will those who are raised to glorified, powerful spirit immortality do? They will not be raised to a life of endless leisure and idleness in heaven. No, Yahweh has something far more important in mind! Yah'shua reveals the future of His faithful servants to His friend and disciple John in the book of Revelation. Revelation 20:4 tells us what happens to those who are given immortality in this resurrection: "And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them... And they lived and reigned with the Messiah for a thousand years."

Where do they reign? At that time Yah'shua the Messiah will have returned to earth to establish His Kingdom, so they will live and reign with Him on earth, rebuilding and re-educating the entire world in Yahweh's way of life. They will be the leaders and overseers of this new and transformed civilization to be built under Messiah's rule. Revelation 5:10 tells us these resurrected saints are "a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth" (NIV).

This 1,000-year reign of Yah'shua the Messiah and His saints is commonly known as the Millennium *(after the Latin for "thousand years").* Describing this time, Isaiah 2:3 says: "Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem."

Continuing in Revelation 20, verse 5 makes a startling parenthetical statement: "But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished." It also explains that the resurrection of The Messiah's faithful followers at His return is "the first resurrection."

John's vision then fast-forwards 1,000 years to the incredible time when "the rest of the dead" of verse 5 are raised. Notice verse 12: "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before Yahweh, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were [then] written in the books."

What is this resurrection all about? How does this differ from the first resurrection? We first need to recognize that many billions of people have lived and died having never heard the name of Yah'shua the Messiah, the only name by which they could be saved *(Acts 4:12).* They never had the opportunity to learn of Yahweh and His way of life, especially of His Messiah. So what happens to them?

Not understanding this second resurrection, theologians and religious teachers have wrestled with this question for centuries. Some think those in this category get a free pass into heaven; others think they burn forever in hell. Still others mistakenly believe that this group "has no excuse" for they claim that Yahweh

has made Himself known to all men through His very creation. None are remotely close to the truth, for Yahweh is eminently fair and just in all His dealings with all of humanity.

Yahweh will neither condemn nor reward those who have never heard or learned of His truth, that all men must be saved through Yah'shua the Messiah. This fact is not at all evidenced by Yahweh's creation! However, He will, in His own time, give every man, woman and child who has ever lived an opportunity to learn and accept that truth, repent and receive His gift of eternal life through His first-born Son, Yah'shua the Messiah. And that is what this great resurrection is all about.

When we remove our preconceived notions, we see that Revelation 20:12 is describing a period of judgment extending over some time, not a one-time sentencing. People in this resurrection will have time to learn Yahweh's truth - a truth they've never heard before - and to either accept or reject their Saviour and Yahweh's way of life.

Yah'shua himself draws the distinction between these resurrections by inspiring John to write John 5:28-29. "Do not marvel at this." He says, "for an hour is coming in which all those in the tombs will hear His voice. And they will come out, the ones having done good into a resurrection of life; and the ones having practiced evil into a resurrection of judgment" *(Green's Literal Translation).*

Those who have lived righteously come up in what Yah'shua calls "a resurrection of life." As noted earlier, this is the first resurrection, to divine spirit immortality. The other resurrection, of those who have lived a life apart from knowledge of Yahweh, His ways and His Messiah, will be "a resurrection of judgment" - the time when they will have their opportunity to learn Yahweh's truth and accept or reject it, and they will be judged on that basis. It is not merely a time to mete out a pre-determined "sentence" as most mistakenly believe. That mistaken belief presumes that Yahweh would resurrect these people simply to turn around and put them to death again!

With this background we can properly understand one of Yah'shua the Messiah's most puzzling statements, found in Matthew 12:41-42*(NIV)*: "The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here."

Yah'shua here describes an astounding time when the long-dead people of the ancient Assyrian capital of Nineveh *(of Jonah's day)* and the Queen of Sheba *(from Solomon's era)* will live again alongside those from The Messiah's generation. And while they had lived and died many centuries before Yah'shua was even born, they will point out that those of The Messiah's time had no excuse for rejecting the very Son of Yahweh.

In Matthew 11:20-24 Yah'shua similarly points out that "it will be more tolerable... in the day of judgment" for the people of the long-destroyed cities of Sodom, Tyre and Sidon than it would be for those who had lived in cities like Capernaum in which He had performed miracles that proved His divine identity. “More tolerable”; in other words, they too will have a chance to repent at their then first exposure to the knowledge of the Messiah!

Ezekiel 37 includes a remarkable description of this resurrection in which people are raised to a temporary flesh-and-blood existence. Unlike those who are given immortality in the first resurrection, those in this second resurrection are fully human and remain subject to death. Those of them who choose Yahweh's way of living will receive eternal life as glorified members of Yahweh's family. Those who don't - as well as those in previous ages who have utterly rejected Yahweh's offer of salvation in the face of full knowledge while alive, are destined to perish in the lake of fire, to be utterly burned up and forgotten *(Hebrews 10:26-27; Revelation 20:14-15; Malachi 4:1).*

These amazing prophecies show that Yahweh does not show partiality *(Romans 2:11).* He will offer his gift of salvation to all who have ever lived. This is the surprising and profoundly encouraging truth Yah'shua taught about the resurrections.

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