

## WHY DID SO MANY IN THE AFTERMATH OF JESUS' RESURRECTION SAY THAT THE GENERAL RESURRECTION HAD ALREADY HAPPENED

Jesus supposedly died in the cross and rose again from the dead to enjoy eternal life and glory. Yet not one word of the New Testament speaks of anybody seeing this glory. Jesus in the appearances seems to be a mere ghost or read like encounters with an ordinary man. The general resurrection at the end of time means that everybody will rise some like Jesus did but others will rise to suffer forever in Hell.

Interestingly the problem among the first generation of Christians was the burgeoning view that the resurrection in general was already in the past. It was significant enough to warrant a mention in the New Testament.

Paul, the first to discuss the resurrection in Christian literature, at times in the Bible attacks the heresy that the resurrection has already taken place. He gives no detail so it is safest to assume he refers both to those who think that God gives you a new body when you die in Heaven as soon as you expire. Many however take it to be directed at those who say the resurrection is just a symbol for the soul living on after death. The first option is interesting. Why does it matter WHEN the resurrection happens when the point is that it WILL? And there is no way a ghost floating away from your corpse can be counted as a resurrection. It is like saying drinking water is the same as breathing. It has no relationship with the word.

Here is a quote from a gifted theologian, "The view that resurrection has already occurred, that is, in the form of a spiritual resurrection not incompatible with the fact that the bodies are still lying in their graves, is a heresy. He makes this point when he condemns the views of Hymenaeus and Philetus, 'who have swerved from the truth by holding that the resurrection is past already. They are upsetting the faith of some' (2 Timothy 2:18)" (see Millard Erickson in his book Christian Theology, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985, page 1197).

The Bible text merely says these men said the resurrection already happened. If a spiritual resurrection as in the body dying but the soul living on is not a resurrection at all then what? Gnostics said that the resurrection was only a symbol for spiritual awakening. That would not be a resurrection either. Taking resurrection to mean something other than resurrection is reading too much into the text. Keep it simple. The heretics were saying the dead were already risen. We have a declaration then that people in those days were saying Jesus died and rose that same day and it was not three days later. They were like today's theologians who hold that you rise from the dead when you die for resurrection is about restoring you as a person more than about bringing your body back. The heretics probably assumed that the person ceases to exist body and soul at death and the only hope is the resurrection for body and soul make up the person not the body or the soul but both together.

Implications of the heresy: Jesus rose as soon as he died.

-It does not matter what happened his body.

-The prophecy that he would rise in three days is either false or not misinterpreted.

-Jesus would cease to exist unless he rose. He then was not God for God cannot die. Jesus like us depends on resurrection.

-Some think that time is an illusion of some kind which is why God is able to bring the dead back to life in the resurrection - that suggestion is implicitly ruled out here.