

Between Death and Resurrection

Easter is the popular name of the Christian holiday celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The preeminent passage on the resurrection is 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Rather than review notes that I already used in 2024 on that chapter, I wanted to explore the answer to the often asked question, “What happens when I die?”

There are two answers. For the unbeliever, there is Torments. It is a holding cell for the unbeliever waiting for the final judgment and placement into the Lake of Fire forever. For the believer there is heaven. For the Old Testament believers prior to Jesus’ resurrection the location was a place called Paradise. We have two incidents that give us a peak at the state of the believer in Paradise. The first one is when Saul calls up Samuel in the Old Testament. The second one is the narrative of Jesus describing Lazarus and the rich man. Again, this is still technically in the Old Testament times. Jesus is telling the story in the age of the Mosaic Law.

This lesson does not deal specifically with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It deals with that interim state of the believer and unbeliever prior to the resurrection. Death, or the rapture, precedes resurrection.

But first, where does the term “Easter” come from?

“The English term may derive from the Anglo-Saxon goddess name *Ēostre*;¹”

“The modern English term *Easter*, cognate with German *Ostern*, developed from an Old English word that usually appears in the form *Ēastrun*, *Ēastron*, or *Ēastran*; but also as *Ēastru*, *Ēastro*; and *Ēastre* or

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter>

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Ēostre. In the 8th century AD, Anglo-Saxon monk and scholar Bede recorded in his *The Reckoning of Time* that *Ēosturmōnath* (Old English for 'Month of Ēostre', translated in Bede's time as "Paschal month") was an English month, corresponding to April, which he says "was once called after a goddess of theirs named Ēostre, in whose honour feasts were celebrated in that month".²

The “Venerable” Bede lived 672/3-735 AD.³

“The holiday was originally celebrated around the time of the Jewish passover and named “paskha” in Greek. This name is derived from the Aramaic word for passover. The earliest documentation for the celebration of the Christian paska is in a 2nd century document AD (probably written between 160-170AD by Melito of Sardis⁴.”

“The First Council of Nicaea (325) established common Paschal observance by all Christians on the first Sunday after the first full moon on or after the vernal equinox.⁵”

The English naming of the feast as Easter was later than the establishment of the Christian feast. So the original holiday was not a replacement for a pagan holiday. That is not to say that there was some mixing of the two holidays later in history.

Consider a possible scenario for the establishment of the festival. Jesus was a Jew. The disciples were Jewish in their observance of holidays with Jesus. The Jews had Biblical holiday's mandated and described in the Torah. Each one had doctrinal meaning attached to them. There were also rituals mandated and described in the Torah, like the Levitical sacrifices. Each one had doctrinal meaning attached. They were teaching aids. The Jewish holiday of Passover celebrated the deliverance of the

2 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter>

3 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bede>

4 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter>

5 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter>

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sons of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. We sometimes say there is a typology between the deliverance (same word is also translated salvation) of the sons of Israel and the saving (delivering) work of Jesus on the cross. This typology was illustrative doctrinally of a future work of Jesus on the cross. So, in a sense, Christianity took over the Passover from a physical deliverance of Israel which was forward looking to the cross typologically to a backward looking to the saving work of Jesus on the cross.

Christianity has both rituals and holidays that are Bible-based. The communion was instituted by Jesus. The doctrine associated with it deals with His work on the cross, his death.

1 Corinthians 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

There is no set time to celebrate the communion or "Eucharist."

Death. Remember there are seven different deaths in the Bible. The context is an illustration of Jesus work on the cross. In verse 25 Jesus relates the wine to His blood and the New Covenant. Clearly He is talking about a spiritual death and not a physical death. So we are talking about the spiritual death of Jesus on the cross as He was being judged for all sin.

But it also is the blood sacrifice establishing the New Covenant. Jesus' sacrifice ratifies the covenant, the New Covenant. But the New Covenant is not put into effect until the Millennium/Kingdom. Jeremiah 31 made the covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah, not Christians.

Jeremiah 31:31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new

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covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

There are two Christian holidays which are not mandated in the New Testament but which are related to two important doctrines.

Christmas celebrates the virgin birth of Jesus. The doctrine of the Virgin Birth is fundamental to Christianity. It asserts that Jesus had no sin nature. As a result, He was the only person in history who was qualified to be judged for the sins of the world. It is an essential doctrine.

Easter, or best named as Resurrection Sunday, celebrates the resurrection of Jesus. Paul explains the doctrine of resurrection in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. In no uncertain terms, he states the fundamental importance of the resurrection of Jesus. If Jesus was not resurrected, then neither will we be resurrected. If that were true, then Christianity is a myth. But the documented evidence is convincing. Jesus was resurrected. So will believers.

There are two Bible-based rituals for the Christians. Water baptism and the communion or as Catholics call it, the “Eucharist.”

Water baptism was practiced in the book of Acts subsequent to faith in Christ. It is a way of openly declaring that a person had believed in Jesus. Some also see it as a parallel to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit which places the believer “in Christ.” That is not the topic here.

Before Jesus betrayal, court cases, torture, crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus participated in the “Last Supper.” In it He instituted a ritual for the Christian community, the Eucharist or Communion. Jesus said to do this in memory of His (spiritual) death on the cross.

The holiday of Easter/Resurrection Sunday takes us from the cross to the continuation of salvation after physical death: resurrection.

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Today, this lesson deals with the interim period between physical death and resurrection. There are two Bible narratives that give us a peak at this. In the Old Testament, Saul “brings up” Samuel from the dead to ask him for help. In the gospel of Luke, Jesus narrates a conversation between an unbeliever and a believer both who had died, but had not been “resurrected.” Let us start with Saul.

Saul started out as “good.” But at some point, he decided not to follow God’s revealed will, the spoken Word of God. It came through the prophet Samuel and eventually written down. Saul turned against God. But when he got in a jam, he went back to God. His request for an answer from God went unanswered. That is because God had already answered him as Samuel will tell us. Failing that he went to the prophet Samuel. Except in this narrative, Samuel is already dead.

1 Samuel 28:3 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. And Saul had removed from the land those who were mediums and spiritists.

Saul had done as other good kings had done and attempted to rid the country of mediums and spiritists who dealt with demons to “bring up” people from the dead for what we today would call a séance. That was an anti-God activity. It was evil.

1 Samuel 28:4 So the Philistines gathered together and came and camped in Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel together and they camped in Gilboa.

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1 Samuel 28:5 When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly.

Here was a challenge that Saul could not solve on his own. He lacked the understanding or the will to rely on God's promises as David had done. He had so turned against God that his soul was numb spiritually for lack of a better word. Thieme uses the term "scar tissue on the soul." He was at the point of the sin unto death.

1 Samuel 28:6 When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets.

1 Samuel 28:7 Then Saul said to his servants, "Seek for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her." And his servants said to him, "Behold, there is a woman who is a medium at En-dor."

God didn't answer Saul the way he wanted. As I said, God had already provided the answer through Samuel when he was alive. Saul now goes from rejecting God to engaging in evil activity worth of death by his own edict.

1 Samuel 28:8 Then Saul disguised himself by putting on other clothes, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said, "Conjure up for me, please, and bring up for me whom I shall name to you."

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I found this verse fascinating. There is a verb for putting on clothing. It is followed by a noun that means clothes. It is not the word I expected. There are other words that could have been used, but this word for clothes comes from a root meaning treachery. Some divine irony.

By night. In the Bible, night is often associated with evil. After Judas left the upper room supper, the Bible says it was night (John 13:30). Judas was engaged in evil activity.

1 Samuel 28:9 But the woman said to him, “Behold, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those who are mediums and spiritists from the land. Why are you then laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?”

In verse 3, we are told that Saul had removed mediums and spiritists. Now he seeks one out. The penalty from the Torah for practicing this demonic activity was death.

Leviticus 20:27 ‘Now a man or a woman who is a medium or a spiritist shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones, their bloodguiltiness is upon them.’”

Saul makes a promise to the woman that he cannot keep. He vows by the life of Yahweh, the God that he has rejected. Irony. He has put off his clothes of royalty. Irony in light of what happens.

1 Samuel 28:10 Saul vowed to her by the Lord, saying, “As the Lord lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.”

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God is no longer answering or responding to Saul. Yet here he vows using the Lord's name. The word translated "Lord" is the covenant name of God, Yahweh. God isn't responding to Saul but Saul is now speaking for God.

1 Samuel 28:11 Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" And he said, "Bring up Samuel for me."

1 Samuel 28:12 When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice; and the woman spoke to Saul, saying, "Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul."

Saul went to a medium who was under judgment of death in "treacherous" clothes asking for something only God could provide. But in this case, God allowed Saul an audience with the dead Samuel. God is still dealing with Saul in grace.

1 Samuel 28:13 The king said to her, "Do not be afraid; but what do you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I see a divine being coming up out of the earth."

Divine being. The word is "gods." She does not say "spirit," but the Hebrew word for "gods," *elohim*. This is the only way she can describe what she saw. It was from her perspective, supernatural.

1 Samuel 28:14 He said to her, "What is his form?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped with a robe." And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did homage.

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Note the contrast to Saul. Samuel is wearing a robe. He was spiritual nobility. Saul disguised himself downgrading his clothing from that of a king to a common man. Note the irony. Saul is about to be killed and be removed as king. Also, Saul had rejected God's word. No humility. No bowing down to God. But here he bows down to Samuel. Again, irony.

1 Samuel 28:15 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" And Saul answered, "I am greatly distressed; for the Philistines are waging war against me, and God has departed from me and no longer answers me, either through prophets or by dreams; therefore I have called you, that you may make known to me what I should do."

Saul has turned against God, so God stopped answering him. Except now through a sin that will lead to his death. He is asking for guidance. Samuel will refer back to the Word of God that Samuel spoke to Saul previously. As other pastors have said, the Word of God has words of guidance. The Holy Spirit can use memory of Bible verses to guide us. But Saul forgot.

Disturbed me. What was Samuel doing that he was "disturbed?" The Bible doesn't say. The Hebrew word can mean "to tremble, to quake, to rage, to be agitated."⁶

But it causes us to consider that Samuel was busy doing something for God. He was not idle.

6 <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/7264.htm>

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1 Samuel 28:16 Samuel said, “Why then do you ask me, since the Lord has departed from you and has become your adversary?”

1 Samuel 28:17 The Lord has done accordingly as He spoke through me; for the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David.

God spoke through Samuel giving him a prophecy of what was going to happen. Saul did not listen to the Word of God. So Samuel reminds him of what it says now. God did not have to respond to Saul. The answer had already been given to Saul by Samuel. But for our sakes, this is documented. We have a glimpse of a dead person prior to resurrection.

Here is the incident in which Saul says he sinned, and seeks pardon. Saul has apparently gone too far. Even though he says he repented, he really wants to cling to his kingship. And as Samuel will say, Saul may have repented, but Saul has rejected the Word of God, what we call Bible doctrine. As a result, the kingdom will be torn away from him. At this point, there is no prophecy of his death. He may not have arrived at the sin unto death. But he is nearly there.

1 Samuel 15:24 Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice.

1 Samuel 15:25 Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me, that I may worship the Lord.”

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1 Samuel 15:26 But Samuel said to Saul, “I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.”

1 Samuel 15:27 As Samuel turned to go, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore.

1 Samuel 15:28 So Samuel said to him, “The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you.

Back to our passage.

1 Samuel 28:18 As you did not obey the Lord and did not execute His fierce wrath on Amalek, so the Lord has done this thing to you this day.

Here is God’s command to Saul:

1 Samuel 15:3 Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.”

This was a command from God to Samuel to Saul. It was a command to Saul as king. Saul made an attempt at keeping this command but did not complete it. God was specific.

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1 Samuel 28:19 Moreover the Lord will also give over Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines, therefore tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. Indeed the Lord will give over the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines!”

We learn some important lessons from Saul’s failure. First, the Word of God is of utmost importance. It is one method of illuminating God’s will. Secondly, this leads to a discussion of death.

Samuel died (1 Samuel 28:3). He was obviously a believer. So he was no doubt in Paradise before he was called to counsel Saul. We know that no one received a resurrection body until after Christ has been resurrected. And there is an order to that resurrection. Christians go after the Rapture. Then Old Testament saints. The exact order and timing are dealt with in other lessons. So Samuel is not in a resurrection body. But he appears to Saul and the witch of Endor as a visual being. He can talk and reason. He remembers what he told Saul previously. The witch describes him as “elohim,” translated by the NASB as “divine.”

The application to us is this. We continue to be “us,” even after we die physically. Our memories are intact. We can reason and speak. In short, our lives continue. The issue is what kind of body will be have prior to receiving a resurrection body? Or will our bodies be essentially “resurrection bodies” at that point. I don’t know that there is a good answer. We will be recognizable and be functional prior to the resurrection. And if Samuel is “disturbed” from what he was doing, then we likely will not be idle in heaven after physical death and prior to the resurrections. We will attend the marriage feast of Jesus in Heaven.

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Let us look at the second passage. Jesus narrates it for us as historical fact.

Luke 16:19 “Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day.

Luke 16:20 And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores,

Luke 16:21 and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man’s table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.

Luke 16:22 Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.

Angels carried Lazarus away to heaven, in this case a place called Abraham’s bosom. Do some believers get an angelic escort to heaven? Apparently so.

Luke 16:23 In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and *saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.

Luke 16:24 And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger

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in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'

Luke 16:25 But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.'

Luke 16:26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.'

Luke 16:27 And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house

Luke 16:28 —for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

Luke 16:29 But Abraham *said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'

Moses and the Prophets. Bible doctrine from the Old Testament. The Word of God. In this case, the doctrine relates to justification/salvation, the gospel.

Luke 16:30 But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!'

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Luke 16:31 But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’”

Moses and the Prophets. Again, the emphasis on Bible doctrine.

Some application from these two Bible narratives. First and foremost is the importance of the Word of God. Both passages emphasize that. For Saul that was the spoken Word of God that was eventually written for future generations to learn from. Our eternal location is dependent upon our use of the gospel. Faith in Jesus as savior and we will be in heaven. Rejection of God’s gospel and no faith in Jesus and the unbeliever will first be in Torments and then in the Lake of Fire.

Second, both believers and unbelievers have some kind of recognizable body which can function: thinking, speaking and feeling. In the case of unbelievers, they are in constant pain. Perhaps this is just a prelude to the Lake of Fire. Too often people joke about having parties in Hell. Hell is no party. If the prelude to the Lake of Fire/Hell is torment, Hell is much worse. And it is FOREVER.

It is a motivation for us to give the gospel to people we know. Torments is a place of constant pain and the Lake of Fire is worse. Why wouldn’t we want to have friends and family saved? Pray that you will have opportunities to give the gospel.

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1 Thessalonians 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

1 Thessalonians 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 4:15 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 not precede those who have fallen asleep.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 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 will rise first.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Happy Resurrection Sunday.