

TWO RESURRECTIONS

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- I. Revelation 20
 - A. Please turn in your bibles to chapter 20 of the book of Revelation.
 - B. Beginning at verse 4
 - C. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and **judgment was committed to them**. Then [I saw] the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received [his] mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and **reigned with Christ for a thousand years**. But **the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished**. This [is] the **first resurrection**. Blessed and holy [is] he who has part in the first resurrection. **Over such the second death has no power**, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4-6).
 - D. Describe the setting.
 - E. Two resurrections
 1. v.4 - “they lived and reigned”
 2. v. 5 - “the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished”
 3. v. 5 - “the first resurrection”
- II. Confusion concerning the Biblical Teaching of Two Resurrections.
 - A. Three Primary Reasons
 1. Unwillingness to accept Biblical teaching concerning what intervenes between the two resurrections.
 2. The two resurrections are *categories*, only one of which is also an event.
 3. Lack of understanding concerning the differing purposes of the two resurrections.
- III. Source of Confusion #1 - Unwillingness to accept Biblical teaching concerning what intervenes between the first and second resurrections: the thousand-year kingdom of God on earth.
 - A. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, **on earth** as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:9-10)
 - B. Early church understood and accepted the millennial age.
 - C. Church historian Philip Schaff - **The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age** is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a

thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment. . . . It distinguishes, moreover, two resurrections, one before and another after the millennium, and makes the millennial reign of Christ only a prelude to his eternal reign in heaven.¹

- D. Abuse by cults, such as Montanists, led to disavowal.
 - E. Views of Augustine – who heavily influenced subsequent view's of God's kingdom
 - 1. "this opinion would not be objectionable, if it were believed that the joys of the saints in that Sabbath shall be spiritual, and consequent on the presence of God; for **I myself, too, once held this opinion**. But, as they assert that those who then rise again shall enjoy the leisure of immoderate carnal banquets, furnished with an amount of meat and drink such as not only to shock the feeling of the temperate, but even to surpass the measure of credulity itself, such assertions can be believed only by the carnal.²
 - F. Spiritualize the first resurrection in order to make it refer to being born again resulting in a "Kingdom Now" theology, ala Roman Catholicism.
 - 1. Pour our own age between the resurrections.
 - 2. Amillennialism – “no millennium” - There is *no* literal reign of Christ over an earthly kingdom. Christ is *presently* reigning over a *spiritual kingdom* in either: (1) the hearts of men; (2) heaven, or (3) the church. The 1,000 years is a symbol representing an extended period of time.³
 - 3. Many amillennialists believe that the fullness of the kingdom has already arrived on earth and **we are presently in the age between the first and second resurrections**.
 - 4. The most listened-to Presbyterian minister of our day taught for ½ hour against the idea of two resurrections and never mentioned Revelation 20.
- IV. Source of Confusion #2 - Two resurrections are **categories**, one of which is also an **event**.
- A. Explain “category” vs. “event.”
 - B. Resurrection Order
 - 1. But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man *came* death, by Man 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.** (1Cor. 15:20-23) [emphasis added]

¹ Philip Schaff, and David Schley Schaff, *History of the Christian Church (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997, 1916), 2.XII.158.*

² Ronald E. Diprose *Israel and the Church: The Origin and Effects of Replacement Theology (Rome, Italy: Istituto Biblico Evangelico Italiano, 2000). p. 163.*

Order	Resurrection	Timing	Participants	Description	Scriptures
1	First	The Third Day	Jesus Christ	The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."	Mtt. 28:1-7; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18; 1Cor. 15:20
2	First	Shortly after Christ's Resurrection.	A Few OT Saints	At the earthquake attending the crucifixion, graves were opened. Shortly after the resurrection of Christ, these saints were raised. ⁶	Mtt. 27:50-53
3	First	Before the Tribulation.	Church	The resurrection of Church-age believers at the <i>Rapture</i> .	John 14:3; 1Th. 4:13-18; 1Cor. 15:50-53
4	First	Middle of the Tribulation. ⁷	Two Witnesses	God's two witnesses will be raised after being killed by <i>The Beast</i> .	Rev. 11:11-12+
5	First	After Jacob's Trouble	OT Saints	Old Testament saints will be resurrected to enter the Millennial Kingdom. ⁸	Dan. 12:1-2; Isa. 26:19; Eze. 37:13-14 ⁹
6	First	Beginning of Millennial Kingdom.	Tribulation Martyrs	The Tribulation martyrs will be resurrected so that they can rule and reign with Christ.	Rev. 20:4-6+
7	Second	End of Millennial Kingdom	Unbelieving Dead ¹⁰	At the end of the millennial reign of Christ, the final resurrection will consist of all of the unbelieving, wicked dead. They will be found guilty at the Great White Throne Judgment and cast into the Lake of Fire.	Rev. 20:11-15+

- V. First Resurrection spans an age - A man on Thanksgiving day may say, with great satisfaction, "All of the harvest is gathered in." That harvest may have included a few handfuls gathered on the first day, then after a long interruption due to a rainstorm, for example, the major part of the harvest may have been gathered, and then, after another momentary interruption, the final sheaves are garnered.
- VI. Source of Confusion #3 – Lack of understanding concerning the differing purposes of the two resurrections
- A. Separate Evaluation of Participants
1. John 5:26-29 - "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, "and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice "and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (John 5:26-29)
 2. Two resurrections serve two differing purposes:

- a) Resurrection unto life
 - b) Resurrection unto condemnation
 - (1) Condemnation is “judgment” – a different judgment than those in the resurrection unto life.
3. First resurrection judged for rewards. The **worst** possible result is having all our works burned up, but we ourselves saved.
- a) The judge is also the justifier. He would have to condemn Himself and reject His own work on the cross to condemn any in the first resurrection.
 - b) The Second death – defined in Revelation 20:14 as being cast into the lake of fire – has no power over those in the first resurrection. No power because believers will not participate in the second resurrection. *This is the resurrection unto condemnation* [judgment] which they avoid by faith in Christ.
 - (1) John 5:24 – Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and *shall not come into judgment*, but has passed from death into life.
 - c) Reign and judge
 - (1) Resurrected serve in government.
 - (2) Already glorified and therefore sinless—thus the government consists of Christ and sinless, resurrected believers.
 - d) Remaining dead do not participate, and are not resurrected until 1,000 years later.
 - (1) Governing over those allowed into the kingdom at the sheep and goat judgment of Matthew 25:31.
 - (2) Unglorified participants, therefore possible to sin. This explains one reason why the second resurrection occurs later.
4. Second resurrection judged for punishment. The **best** possible result is a reduction in suffering compared to others who are also condemned in the lake of fire – hell.
- a) Revelation 20:11 - Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, **small and great**, standing before God, 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 written in the books**. The sea gave up the dead who were in it,

and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And **anyone not found written in the Book of Life** was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15)

- b) Small and great – not stature, but rank in the history of mankind. Already a clue that accomplishments do not serve to divide those who are **in** this group from those who are **out**.
- c) V. 12 - Books were opened – these books are used to judge the small and great
 - (1) Judged “by the things which were written in the books”
 - (2) Seiss – “Yes, O man! O woman! whoever you may be, your biography is written. An unerring hand has recorded every item, with every secret thing. There is not an ill thought, a mean act, a scene of wrong in all your history, a dirty transaction, a filthiness of speech, or a base feeling that ever found entertainment in your heart, but is there described in bold hand, by its true name, and set down to your account, to be then brought forth for final settlement, if not clean blotted out through faith in Christ's blood before this present life of yours is ended.”
 - (3) Nonbelievers are given perfect justice—exactly what they have always expected: to be judged on their own merit as reflected by their works.
 - (4) They expect to be graded on a curve, but they are sadly mistaken. Absolute perfection is the requirement.
 - (5) Works determine the degree of punishment
 - (6) Only one man could pass this test, and He happens to be the judge: Jesus Christ.
- d) Another book . . . which is of life
 - (1) Since this judgment is not for rewards, the fact that judgment is based upon what is written in the other books is a reliable indicator that **none in this second resurrection will be found written in the book of Life**. If they were, they would have been raised as part of the first resurrection and participants in the millennial kingdom.
 - (2) The book serves as an exhibit—to witness that all those in the second resurrection have failed to trust in Christ as their names are verified as absent.
 - (3) The only basis by which these could have avoided condemnation is found in the work of the judge under

which they now stand. But they have rejected the judge and His work of justification on the cross.

- e) Second death – cast into the lake of fire - hell
 - (1) Two births, two resurrections, two deaths.
 - (2) “sinners rise from death to death” [BENGEL in JFB]
 - (3) "'Vita damnatorum mors est,' [death is a life of damnation] is the fearful gloss of Augustine."³
- f) The opportunity for a just trial where your works will condemn you (lack of perfection). People will get what they desire – a chance to stand before perfection on their own merit.

VII. No General Resurrection and Judgment

- A. The concept of a general resurrection and judgment at which all of mankind, both saved and unsaved, stand in judgment is not taught in Scripture.
- B. Misleading and even dangerous – gives the mistaken notion that destiny is determined at the time of judgment, after resurrection. That a sorting takes place where some find entrance to heaven and others do not.
 - 1. The sorting takes place at the moment of death.
 - 2. To stand in the second resurrection is to be doomed. Only a confirmation of status and a determination of degree of suffering remain.
- C. In the days of the pioneers, when men saw that a prairie fire was coming, what would they do? Since not even the fastest of horses could outrun it, the pioneers took a match and burned the grass in a designated area around them. Then they would take their stand in the burned area and be safe from the threatening prairie fire. As the roar of the flames approached, they would not be afraid. Even as the ocean of fire surged around them there was no fear, because fire had already passed over the place where they stood.

When the judgment of God comes to sweep men and women into hell for eternity, there is one spot that is safe. Nearly two thousand years ago the wrath of God was poured on Calvary. There the Son of God took the wrath that should have fallen on us. Now, if we take our stand by the cross, we are safe for time and eternity.⁴

- D. There is a fire coming which no man may outrun. The only escape is provided by Jesus. He alone is “the life” and “the resurrection,” He is that safe circle where those who participate in the first resurrection will take their stand.
- E. But for those who reject Jesus, all escape from the fire of God’s judgment is lost at the moment of death. Their fate will then be sealed – missing the first resurrection, they will rise to a fearsome courtroom scene with no chance of heaven or appeal.

³ Trench, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Asia*, 111.

⁴ M. P. Green, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989)*.

F. Truly, today is the day of salvation. Stand in Jesus while you still have time.