

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

"The First Resurrection"

Revelation 20:4-6

Revision

1. The Lord Jesus Christ will return to the earth as the Faithful, True, Word of God (19:11-16). He will come as King of kings and Lord of lords (19:16).
2. All human efforts to disrupt His ultimate purposes for the universe will be overcome (19:17-21). As the promised Messiah, He will completely obliterate His enemies.
3. On the heels of these significant disclosures, the Bible extrapolates how an angel from heaven incarcerates the Dragon (old serpent, Devil, Satan) in the Abyss for 1000 years (20:1-3).
4. The moral government of our Lord during the 1000 years (Millennium) will have a competent ("saved") leadership to rule with the Lord. To achieve this, the Bible explains the doctrine of Resurrection (20:4-6).

1. RESURRECTION DATA

- a. It is universal v. 5; John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15

While the text obliquely states it, the truth is surely Scriptural. "Dead" people (νεκρῶν nekron) will ultimately live again (20:4, 5). There is no suggestion whatsoever in the Word of God that resurrection is reserved for a few select persons. Rather, there is an appropriate time when all (πάντες pantes) in the grave will come forth (ἐκπορεύσονται ekporeusontai). Let no one think that the grave is the end of things. Resurrection will come!

- b. It is spiritual vv. 5, 6

This is not to say it is incorporeal, but on moral matters, resurrection relates to:

- 1) Those who do (ποιέω poieo) good – life.
- 2) Those who do (πράσσω prasso) evil (bad, worthless, φαῦλος phaulos) – damnation (condemnation).

Hence, concerning resurrection, God divides the world on spiritual (moral works) basis.

- c. It is chronological vv. 5, 6

Inasmuch as the text speaks of the "first resurrection," chronology is surely a consideration. Some view "resurrection" as singular, but the use of "until" (ἕως heos) makes it quite obvious that there is no room for a final general resurrection. Moreover, the idea of an "out" resurrection is not in the least foreign to the Bible (cf. Luke 14:13, 14, where ablative (or genitive) case is used; Luke 20:35 where a preposition is used; Hebrews 11:35 where a "better" resurrection is noted).

2. RESURRECTION DEFINITIONS

- a. Numerically vv. 5, 6

Twice the Scriptures teach about a "first" resurrection (πρώτης protes). This denotes a matter of order. Admittedly a second resurrection as such is not the subject of the Word, yet the thought is obvious. The preposition "until" (v. 5) assuredly affirms it.

b. Physically vv. 4, 5 cf. vv. 12, 13

The term "resurrection" is employed about 42 times in the N.T. One of these may not be to something physical (cf. Lk 2:34). Therefore bodily or somatic resurrection is in view here. Confirmation of this is threefold: 1) The use of the verb "lived" (v. 4). 2) The use of the term "death" from which certain will come alive (vv. 4, 5). 3) The concept of life in the context (vv. 12, 13) makes mystical or "spiritual" resurrection incompatible with this passage.

3. RESURRECTION DETAILS vv. 4

a. Group #1

Those who sat on thrones (20:4) are a reference to New Testament saints since Pentecost. They were first referenced as the 24 elders (Rev. 4, 5). They were raptured (1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 4:1). At this moment they are present with the Lord (Phil. 1:23), but will return with Christ at His revelation (19:11-16). It must be noted that they sat (aorist tense, hence done) and judgment was given (aorist passive εδοθη edothe) to them. That is fully consistent with church responsibility (1 Cor. 6:2, 3). This is not an apparition, but a divine communication to John for it is recorded: "I saw" (εἶδον eidon).

b. Group #2

The same divine notation "I saw" is carried over to this group. That the noun "soul" is used here does not mean these are unreal persons (Gen. 45:25-27; Acts 2:41; 27:37; 1 Pet. 3:20). The perfect tense verb "beheaded" (πεπελεκισμένων pepelekismenon) links these persons with the breaking of the fifth seal (6:9). They are therefore martyrs from the Tribulation. They are not the Church. Do not forget these are martyrs "for" (on account of, διὰ dia) the testimony of Jesus and "for" (on account of, διὰ dia) the Word of God. Take note: in today's wimpy Christianity, filled with worldliness and compromise, those "beheaded" are hard to find.

c. Group #3

Closely aligned with the "beheaded" are those who "worshipped not the beast, neither his image, neither received his mark." This is likely a third specific group in view of: 1) The connecting "and." 2) The negatives. 3) The aorist verbs. The events referred to here are from this Book (Rev. 13:1-10; 11-18). These are unquestionably Tribulation saints.

Conclusion What benefits are for those included (having, present tense ὁ ἔχων ho echon) in the First Resurrection? Here are some recorded: 1) They are blessed (v. 6). What a glorious state of grace from God. 2) They are holy (v. 6). This sets out their separated pure character and walk before God. 3) Second death has no power (Greek: authority ἐξουσία exousia). Judgment for eternity is out of the question. 4) They are priests of God and Christ. Have continual access into God's presence. Moreover, they are associated with Christ in His Melchisedec character (cf. Heb. 7). 5) They reign with Christ 1000 years. Remember: Methuselah lived 969 years "and he died" (Gen. 5:27). We shall live 1000 years and not die. Hallelujah! Are you set for the first resurrection? Make sure now!