

The First Resurrection

Revelation 20:4-6

East Berlin Community Church

Pastor Keith A. Mosebrook

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Introduction

- God originally created man to live forever in his fleshly body.
 - Genesis 2:16-17-- *"the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*
- Adam's sin quickly polluted the entire human race .
 - Romans 5:12-- *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned"*.
- Death, both physical and spiritual death, was also introduced in the human race
 - Genesis 3:19-- *"In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; For dust you are, and to dust you shall return."*
- Although Adam and those after him lived a long, long time, all of them died, except for Enoch.
 - Genesis 5:24-- *"Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him."*
- God set the limits for physical life to 120 years.
 - Genesis 6:3-- *"the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.'"*
 - Life expectancy today is 77 years.
 - Scientists and medical researchers are trying to find the "fountain of youth"
- In the midst of all the recorded deaths in the Old Testament runs **the hope of a future resurrection**
 - **Abraham believed that God could raise the dead.**
 - Genesis 22:2-- *"Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."*
 - Genesis 22:5-- *"Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."*
 - Hebrews 11:17-19-- *"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense."*
 - **Suffering Job's hope was in a future resurrection.**
 - Job 19:9-11, 13-14--*"stripped me of my glory and taken the crown from my head. He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone. My hope he has uprooted like a tree. He has also kindled His wrath against me, and He counts me as one of His enemies... He has removed my brothers far from me, and my acquaintances are completely estranged from me. My relatives have failed and my close friends have forgotten me."*
 - Job 19:17, 20-- *"my breath is offensive to my wife and I am repulsive to the children of my own body.... My bones cling to my skin and to my flesh, and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth."*
 - Job 19:25-27-- *"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"*

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- **David expressed his trust and hope in a future resurrection.**
 - Psalm 16:5-9-- *“O LORD, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Yes, I have a good inheritance. I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel; My heart also instructs me in the night seasons. I have set the LORD always before me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope.”*
 - Psalm 16:10-11-- , *“For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”*
 - **David’s hope was applied by Peter on the Day of Pentecost to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.**
 - Acts 2:29-32-- *“Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.”*
- **The prophets Isaiah and Hosea both speak of a future resurrection.**
 - Isaiah 26:19-- *“Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.”*
 - Hosea 13:14-- *“ I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes.”*
- The particulars of God’s plan for the future are clearly spelled out in Daniel
 - The four Gentile World powers and the coming of the fifth kingdom, the kingdom of God
 - The 490-year plan to prepare Israel to receive their Messiah and kingdom
 - The career of the Antichrist: the treaty with Israel, the breaking of the treaty, the abomination of desolation that desecrates the temple, the battles that make up the campaigns of Armageddon.
 - **The revelation of a future resurrection**
 - Daniel 12:1-3-- *“At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.”*
 - The time of the resurrection: After the tribulation period
 - The two-fold division of the future resurrection: The wise and righteous who will be raised to everlasting life; and the unwise and unrighteous who will be raised to *“shame and everlasting contempt.”*
- **Jesus adds additional information regarding the general resurrection revealed in Daniel 12.**
 - John 5:24-29--*“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. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. 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.”*
 - Jesus Christ will call the dead to life for He is the source of life.
 - Jesus Christ is also the judge of all mankind, for the Father has given to Him all authority

- A two-fold resurrection will occur.
 - *“those who have done good to the resurrection of life”*
 - The “Fruit” reveals the “Root”
 - Jesus Christ would later claim to be the “resurrection and the life”
 - John 11:25-- *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”*
 - *“those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation”*
- *So will these two phases of the future resurrection happen simultaneously or do they happen in stages?*

The First Resurrection

- Revelation 20:4-6-- *“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.”*

A. The Time Sequence of the First Resurrection

1. **The general resurrection is divided into two:** the first resurrection which involves the righteous; and a second resurrection which involves the wicked. Between the two phases of this general resurrection is a span of 1,000 years.
 - a. Six times in Revelation 20 there is a reference to 1,000 years.
 - b. This clearly describes a period of time before which and after which certain events occur, thus indicating a literal 1,000 years interval between the two.
 - c. During this 1,000 years, Jesus Christ and those with Him will reign over a literal kingdom here on earth.
2. **The majority view today is that this is not to be taken literally, but rather figuratively or spiritually.**
 - a. Jesus Christ is reigning today in heaven over this world.
 - b. The promises made to Israel of a future kingdom apply spiritually to the church today. There is no future plans for Israel and thus no future millennial kingdom here on earth.
 - c. The first resurrection is to be taken figuratively as referring to the spiritual regeneration of the souls of men, and not a literal bodily resurrection.
 - d. The second resurrection mentioned in verse 5 is to be taken literally, referring to the final resurrection right before God destroys the present heavens and earth and creates the new.
3. **Nothing in the text indicates the spiritual regeneration of the soul, but everything points to the resurrection of the body.**
 - a. The Greek word behind *And they lived* is found twelve times in the book of Revelation, each time referring to physical life. Only one time (Revelation 3:1) does it refer to a believer’s spiritual life.
 - b. The word “resurrection” occurs 42 times in the New Testament, and only once does it refer to something other than a literal bodily resurrection.

B. The Three-Fold Blessing connected to the First Resurrection

- Revelation 20:6-- *“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.”*
- 1. **The second death has no power over them.**
 - Revelation 20:14-15-- *“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.”*

- 1 Thessalonians 5:9-- *"For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."*
2. **Those raised will serve as "priests of God and of Christ".**
 - 1 Peter 2:9-- *"a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."*
 3. **Those raised will "reign with Him a thousand years"**

C. The Five-fold Participants in the First Resurrection.

1. **Christ's relationship to the First Resurrection**
 - a. Without Christ's resurrection, we have no hope.
 - 1 Corinthians 15:19-- *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."*
 - b. **Jesus Christ as the "first fruits" of the redeemed**
 - 1 Corinthians 15:20-23-- *"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits 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 first fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."*
 - 1) The "first fruits" is the representative sample offered to God before the harvest begins.
 - 2) His resurrection as the "first fruit" guarantees our resurrection
 - c. **The first resurrection is a permanent resurrection.** Those who were raised to life in the Old Testament times and even the New eventually died, but those raised in this first resurrection will never die, but will live forever.
2. **The Order of the First Resurrection**
 - 1 Corinthians 15:23-- *"But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."*
 - a. **Jesus Christ**, as the first fruits, leads the way.
 - b. **Church saints**
 - 1) Believers who die prior to the rapture will be raised when Jesus returns in the first phase of His second coming.
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17-- *"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 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 by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."*
 - 2) Both the living and resurrected believers will experience a tremendous transformation enabling our bodies to live in eternity.
 - 1 Corinthians 15:51-57-- *"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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is*

your victory? "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

3) When Jesus Christ returns at His second coming, we will accompany Him.

- Colossians 3:4-- *"When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."*

c. **The Two Faithful Witnesses who are martyred**

- Revelation 11:11-12-- *"the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them."*

d. **The Tribulation Saints**

- Revelation 20:4-- *"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."*
- Revelation 7:9-- *"the great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands."*
- Revelation 7:14-17-- *"the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."*

e. **The Old Testament Saints**

- Daniel 12:2-3-- *! "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever."*

1) Promised to reign in the kingdom

- Daniel 7:27-- *"Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him."*

2) Jesus mentions the inclusion of the Old Testament saints in the kingdom

- Matthew 8:11-- *"many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."*

3) Daniel is guaranteed his inheritance

- Daniel 12:13-- *"But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days."*