

## The General Resurrection

### The Dispensational Timeline

Louis Berkhof: “It is the common opinion among Premillenarians that the resurrection of the saints will be separated by a thousand years from that of the wicked. They almost seem to regard it as an axiomatic truth that these two classes cannot possibly arise at the same time. And not only that, but the type of Premillennialism which is now dominant [dispensationalism], with its theory of a twofold second coming of Christ, feels the need of positing a third resurrection. All the saints of former dispensations and of the present dispensation are raised up at the *parousia* [secret rapture] or the coming of the Lord. Those still alive at that time are changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. But in the seven years that follow the *parousia* many other saints die, especially in the great tribulation. These must also be raised up, and their resurrection will occur at the revelation of the *day of the Lord*, seven years after the *parousia*. But even at this point Premillenarians cannot very well stop. Since the resurrection at the end of the world is reserved for the wicked, there must be another resurrection of the saints who die during the millennium, which precedes that of the wicked, for the two cannot be raised up at the same time.” (Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*)

### A Simple Reformed Timeline

- At death, the *bodies* of believers and unbelievers alike (the only exception being those living when Christ returns), go to the grave, where they decompose and return to dust — “ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” In Scripture, when death is referred to as “sleep,” it is referring merely to the *body*.
- The *souls* of individual believers, which were raised to life at the new birth, go immediately to heaven upon death, to live

and reign with Christ until His second coming. This is referred to, in Revelation 20:5, as the “first resurrection.” (To equate the “first resurrection” to a premillennial secret rapture, as Scofield does in the above quote, does not stand up to serious biblical scrutiny.)

- The *souls* of individual unbelievers at death go immediately to hell, where their eternal punishment begins. This would be the “first death” (though Scripture does not use that term) or at least a continuation of it, because the unsaved were born *already* “dead in trespasses and sins,” and never passed from death to life.
- At the second coming, there is a general *bodily* resurrection of all humanity, “*the just and the unjust*” in which all who “sleep” in the dust of the earth — that is, their bodies — will awake and go to their rightful place. For unbelievers, this is the “*resurrection of condemnation*,” also called the “*second death*” (John 5:29; Revelation 2:11, 20:6,14, 21:8). For believers, it would be the “second resurrection,” or the “*resurrection of life*” (John 5:29).

**1 Corinthians 15:51-57:** *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— 52 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. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 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." 55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? O HADES, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*