

First and Second Resurrections?

Q: What are the “first” and “second” resurrections in Revelation 20?

Answer:

- The “first resurrection” is the believer’s transition from this life into heaven at death.
 - In Revelation, the “thrones” are in heaven, so these are believers in heaven. The passage clearly speaks of “the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus,” etc. “They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. . . This is the first resurrection.” This is the souls of believers in heaven.
 - Premillennialists see this as the bodily resurrection of believers, arguing that “resurrection” and “brought to life” are always used to speak of bodies (which is not true – Eph. 2:4). Their view holds that there is a thousand years between the bodily resurrection of believers and non-believers (which conflicts with Mt. 25:31-32; John 5:25-29).
 - The “thousand years” in which these souls reign is the church age.
- The “second resurrection” is in Rev. 20:5: “The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.” This is the general resurrection at the Second Coming of Christ, when all who have died will be joined to their bodies for the Final Judgment.
 - It is noteworthy that John does not use the expression “second resurrection,” which suggests a parallel.
- Do I believe that unbelievers in hell will have a physical body to suffer bodily torments? Yes, at the final resurrection, all are rejoined to their bodies and the Bible’s description of hell involves bodily torment.
 - “An hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment” (Jn. 5:28-29).