

# *The First Born of the Dead*

By Pastor Mike Taylor  
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*Revelation 20: 4* “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

*5* But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first **resurrection**.”

I have had emails wondering about what is the first resurrection and believing that the rising of the saints will not happen until after the tribulation has played out. They say “Those verses plainly teach that the **FIRST** resurrection (as in “dead in Christ rising” I Thess. 4:16) takes place **AFTER** the tribulation saints have resisted the **mark of the Beast**. How do you think you will be “raptured” before the mark of the Beast, when the Bible plainly says that the first resurrection is **AFTER** the mark”

People look to these passages and reason that the dead in Christ will not rise until the end of the Tribulation. But are they correct, or are they missing something? I have a dear sister, that I will call “Judy” and emails me all the time with her “proof” of a post tribulation coming of the Lord Jesus, who is adamant that the first resurrection will not take place until after Jesus returns, one time only, at the end of the tribulation. Is she right? Let's see.

## **THE BEGINNING OF THE FIRST RESURRECTION.**

At first glance at the aforementioned scriptures, it would seem to the casual Bible reader that the first resurrection does take place after the tribulation, but we must take the whole of scripture and not take one verse, or a set of verses out of context, as the bible **CANNOT** contradict itself, as the Word of God supports itself no matter what verse you are reading. A better interpretation of the First Resurrection would be the interpretation of the “resurrection of the righteous”!

*Matthew 27:52-53(KJV)*

*52* “And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

*53* And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.”

The Gospels chronicle the blessed event of the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, **Jesus Christ**. By these verses above, the saints who had died believing the promise of the coming of the Messiah were raised to life as well. They believed looking forward to that blessed event, even as we look backward at the completed event, but we both believed. These were saints who had fulfilled the years of their mortal life. As Jesus was the First Fruits of the resurrection, so were these people. Just as Jesus was on the earth for a full 40 days to witness to the masses of Jews that would believe His resurrection, so did these raised saints witness during these 40 days by their being raised to life. They witnessed to many during this time and so are we to believe that after they finished, they just died again? What witness would that be? No, I believe that Jesus took these saints with Him sometime during His days on earth after the resurrection, as Jesus and these resurrected saints were the beginning of the “First Resurrection”. As Jesus entered into the heart of the earth, He removed those found in Paradise, as Paul spoke of: **Ephesians 4:8** “Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

4:9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

4:10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)”

But this was just the start of the resurrection of the righteous or the 1st resurrection...1st Corinthians: 23 *“But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.*

24 *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.”*

If you understand the implication of the verses that speak of Jesus as the first fruit of those born of the dead, then you realize that Jesus also was part of the first resurrection. As with any harvest of fruit, as the term “first fruits”, is important, as fruit is gathered in stages, not all at once of many a variety of agricultural products are harvested. So this harvest of God’s people will come in stages, but all will be part of the 1st resurrection.

### *1st Colossians*

18: *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”*

There is no record of these raised saints in subsequent books of the bible, in Acts, or any of the epistles of Paul, that these people did anything but rise from the dead. They had no need to die again, as their sins had been forgiven, as they believed the promise that had just been fulfilled. As Jesus became a new creation with a new body that we will experience, so they also were part of that new creation. We don't know who they were, their names, or where or how far this miracle reached, but we do know that they came to life and were resurrected, just as our Lord was raised. If it was any other way, this fact would have been recorded to further the Gospel.

If we return to the verses in Revelation 20, then we must understand that this is the culmination of the resurrection of the righteous who are called collectively, the First Resurrection. Then if there is a collective series of resurrections, beginning with Jesus Christ, our Lord, then by implication, there must be others or a chronological order of events that will take place that will be called the First Resurrection, not just one.

### **THE TWO WITNESSES**

Let's take a look at another resurrection. Let's look at the raising to life of the two witnesses. Revelation chapter 11:

7 *“And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.*

8 *And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.*

9 *And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.*

10 *And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.*

11 *And after three days and an half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.*

12 *And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, **COME UP HITHER.** And they ascended up to heaven in a **cloud**; and their enemies beheld them.”(emphasis mine)*

These two prophets are unquestionably part of the first resurrection’s company of believers. The assembly which makes up the first fruits harvest contains at least two other groups of believers.

It is often overlooked that Rev. 20:4-5 speaks of these two distinct groups.

If you look at the verses in Revelation chapter 20, it shows one group that is sitting on thrones. They can't be angels, as angels are never given authority to rule or to judge. That blessing is given to only one group, and that is the Church. So these judging saints have been resurrected some time before those being resurrected here. The second group are those that were beheaded during the Tribulation period (Revelation 6:10-11, and 7:9) and ends the chronological order of events called the First Resurrection, or the resurrection of the righteous. They were killed for their faithfulness to Christ, the beheaded faithful are blessed because they have a part (literally, to experience along with others) in the first resurrection. Only by spiritualizing this passage and ignoring the textual details can this group be made to represent all believers of all the ages. John clearly intends a smaller group, every single one of them beheaded. Obviously, not all Christians raised to life will have this detail of being beheaded.

Of the first group, if we go back to Revelation chapter 4, I believe you can grasp who these resurrected saints are and when they were resurrected.

*4 "And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold."*

These are the symbols of the resurrected saints, called the Church who are part of God's government on the earth. They are not angels, as previously mentioned, but glorified saints before God's throne sitting on thrones with crowns on their heads. (see Lk. 22:30, Rev. 3:21 & I Cor. 6:2-3).

Those sitting on these thrones could not be there, unless Jesus had resurrected them to life before this time. This is confirmed by Matt. 16:27 and Jesus' words found in Rev. 22:12 where He declares, "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to His work."

As I have preached many times, the tribulation is designed for two things and two things only. First is the refining of Israel as silver is refined in the fire. It will be the most terrible tribulation that will fall upon those who have rejected their Messiah for 2000 years, save for a few who have been shown mercy and their eyes opened to the truth of their Savior. The second truth of the Tribulation is to purge and destroy all who are in direct rebellion against God's Laws, and the blasphemy against God's only Son, Jesus Christ, the Lord. It makes no sense for God to inflict this level of His Holy wrath upon His own bride, as Jesus has paid the price for our sins, and we have no need to be converted to Christ, as that blessing has been accomplished at the cross for all eternity. That would smack of purgatory, or being refined further, as Jesus and His blood just wasn't enough. Was it enough? You know the answer to that one... Yes, it was enough and when He said it was finished, my brethren, indeed it was. No need to refine the church further, as they have been redeemed at the cross.

Rev. 4:4 and 5:8-10 reveal that the Church will have received their reward of crowns before Jesus Christ initiates the Tribulation Period with the breaking of the first seal in Rev. 6:1.

*6 "And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see."*

This is the beginning of God's wrath, so to begin God's wrath, the church must be removed, as Paul wrote under the Holy Spirit's inspiration, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ", 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:9.

1st Peter 5:4 reveals that these crowns could not have been issued to believers unless Jesus Christ had already been seen by them at the gathering of His church to life "...when the Chief Shepherd appears.

*v.4 "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."*

### **A SIDE POINT**

One point that makes obvious sense, and would make no sense if the opposite conclusion were true, which is this. If there is ONLY one resurrection at the end of the Tribulation and Jesus returns and destroys all rebellion with the sword of His mouth, then those raised will be spirit beings with new bodies, and those who are wicked will be destroyed. Matthew chapter 13 confirms this:

*49 "So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,*

*50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."*

My question is....who will go into the Kingdom Age being mortal to repopulate the earth? See the problem? There will be no one. A better explanation is that Jesus is not coming back to change all into spirit beings, as that has been done earlier. What He is coming back for is to set up His Kingdom. Those who survive the tribulation will go into the Kingdom Age being mortal but have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior during the tribulation, but escaped martyrdom and will repopulate the earth. Those who have died, not accepting the mark of the beast, will be raised to life and will comprise the fulfillment of the first resurrection and receive their new bodies, the same as with Jesus Christ and the saints raised with Him, the first fruits of the two witnesses and the redemption of the His body, the Church approximately 7 years prior.

### **TWO DIFFERENT TRUMPET CALLS**

Another point that is made right along with the verses that began this sermon, is that the trumpets in 1st Thessalonians, is the same trumpet blown by the 7th angel in Revelation 11:15. There is a misconception that these are the same trumpets blown. The biggest reason that I can find is they announce two different events. The one that Paul writes in 1st Thessalonians is followed by nothing but sheer joy. We have been redeemed from the earth. Each in his own order:

**1st Thessalonians 16** "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

**17** Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

**18** Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Now compare this with the trumpet that is blown by the 7th angel that is erroneously thought to be the last trump that Paul speaks of and the third woe: Revelation chapter 11,

*"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned."*

*In subsequent verses, we see the third woe being enacted upon a rebellious earth and it's inhabitants. Bowl judgment after bowl judgment is poured out of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. How fast? We don't know, but when it comes it is NOT a trumpet to signal joy, but a signal of unspeakable horror, violent death, and suffering beyond any of our imaginations. They are two trumpets blown, but separated by some amount of time. One trumpet for joy and "rapture" and the last one of death and destruction are their plain, distinct differences. Got that? Good, let's move on.*

### **THE SECOND RESURRECTION**

The nature of the second resurrection is brought forth in Revelation, which depicts the unrighteous dead being released from the power of death for the purpose of a final judgment,

*"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [Hades, the grave] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works...And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20.13,15 KJV bible).*

This is called the Great White Throne Judgment and the books will be opened. (Daniel 7:10). What books will there be? We know that there is what the bible calls a "book of life". Someone asked me what the difference was in the "Lamb's book of Life, and the "book of life" mentioned in the bible at several places. The book of life, in my belief, is the written history of every human being that has ever been born and chronicles how their life was lived, either for God or in sin by following Satan's temptations and lies. The Lamb's book of Life are those names that have been re-written at the moment of salvation and accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Master of their life. Those whose names are not written in this book or the Lamb's book of Life will be cast out and thrown into a great inferno and will be in torment forever, called the Lake of Fire. What are the other books? I believe they are the books of your Bible, God's Holy Word. By God's Word, each man and woman will be judged who are raised in the 2nd resurrection.. Those who have been resurrected unto life in this chronological order of the 1st resurrection will have their name in the book of life. Judgment will be passed on the wicked as not being found in this Lamb's book of life at this final resurrection, as the righteous have been rewarded before this time for they have been covered by the blood sacrifice of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

### **WHICH RESSURECTION FOR YOU?**

What each of us have to decide is, which resurrection will you be involved with? Obviously, the first resurrection is the one that any sane person would choose if they were convinced of the penalty imposed for not following the clear message of the Books of your Bible. Many will be deceived. Many will revel in their unrighteousness. Many will follow the god of this world, Satan, the devil to their own destruction. What about you? Will you choose life, or will you choose death? Eternal death awaits for the resurrected wicked raised at the 2nd resurrection, BUT life eternal awaits those who are part of the 1st resurrection. It is promised : 1st Corinthians,

*51" Behold, I shew 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 trump: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall 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 shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have 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 thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"*

*Whether we live or whether we die, we will meet the Lord in the air, at His coming for His Bride. Where will you be? Will you be in the first resurrection? How do you obtain life through the first resurrection? John 3:16-17,*

*"for God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, has ever lasting life. God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through HIM should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

This is Pastor Mike Taylor praying God's love in your life through His Son. See you at the First Resurrection. If you have any needs for prayer, counseling, or just a listening ear, email me at [realteam1999@sbcglobal.net](mailto:realteam1999@sbcglobal.net),

***God bless you, till we meet at Jesus feet.***