

The Rapture As Taught In Revelation

Part 11

The First Resurrection

Compiled/Formatted By Tom Stephens

IMPORTANT NOTE: The *First Resurrection* includes all believers...*ever*:

- **The Church:** The dead in Christ at the time of the Rapture (Rev. 4:1-4).
- **The Old Testament saints** seven 7-years later.
- **The Tribulation Saints**, born-again/martyred during the tribulation, who are the *only* saints on earth at that time. (Study Revelation 20:1-6. Then Revelation 7:9-17, with *emphasis* on vs. 13, & 14).

The Tribulation saints are mentioned in the following passage:

"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. 5) But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 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." (Rev. 20: 1-6).

The second resurrection includes the unbelieving dead.

Comments on Revelation 20 1-6, above:

Verses 1 through 3: Immediately after Jesus and His bride return to earth and destroy all those *who dwell on the earth*, Satan, the devil, will be cast into the bottomless pit for a period of one thousand years.

Verses 4-6, is the only passage that labels the "believer's resurrection". It is important to understand that just as there are two phases to Christ's second coming—(1) The rapture of the church and (2) The Glorious Appearing" mentioned by Paul in Titus: "Looking for that blessed hope, *and the glorious appearing* of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ;" (Titus 2:13).—so are there are 3 phases to the resurrection of believers: **A)** The Church (Rev. 4—the Rapture), **B)** 7 yrs later the O.T. saints, and finally **C)** the tribulation saints. John merges these together when he says "*Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection.*"

The Church Age Saints—Phase One

The saints of the church age will be resurrected in the 1st phase of the first resurrection, as outlined in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Revelation 4:1, (which also indicates the Judgment Seat of Christ has been completed, as the elders already had their rewards and were in their seats [thrones] around God's Throne like a rainbow). This passage described the Rapture of the Church, when all Christians will be resurrected. This *resurrection*, according to Paul, will concern only "the dead in Christ" and those "who have fallen asleep in Jesus". It will be limited to the Church Age. Consisting solely of those who are born-again believers, the *Rapture* will include no Old Testament saints. "In Christ" is uniformly used in the New Testament as a theological reference those who have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ and denotes the saints after the day of Pentecost. We will be changed from corruption to immortality in the blinking of an eye!

"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?*" 1 Corinthians 15: 52-55.

Old Testament Saints—Phase Two

Dr. Walvoord notes that the Old Testament seems to place the resurrection of Israel after the Tribulation. In Daniel 12, immediately after description of the Tribulation in the preceding chapter, deliverance promised Israel at the close of the Tribulation."¹

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people— everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt." (Dan. 12:1 -2)

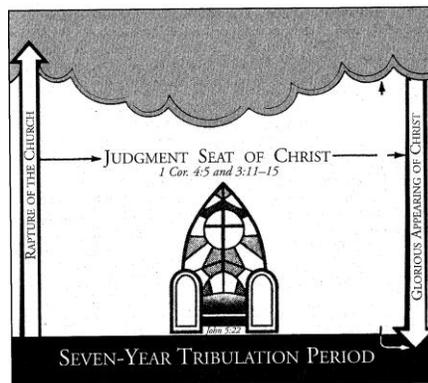
The suggestion that Israel will be resurrected prior to the Tribulation saints results from a comparison of Revelation 19:7-9 with Psalm 50:1-6. At the marriage supper of the Lamb, Israel will be in attendance friends of the Bridegroom. Since the marriage supper will occur just prior to the Glorious Appearing, we may assume that Israel will be resurrected *before* the Glorious Appearing, while Tribulation saints are raised during—or at His Glorious Appearing.

Tribulation Saints—Phase Three

Revelation 6:9-11 presents a picture of the Tribulation saints who have been martyred for the testimony of the Lamb, waiting for the resurrection, "*and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers ... was completed.*" This obviously refers the end of the Tribulation period, at which time, when Christ comes His glory to set up His millennial kingdom, the Tribulation saints will be resurrected.

This accords with our text:

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (Rev. 20:4)



In order to live, the tribulation saints must be resurrected; this evidently will take place while the angel is binding Satan, just prior to or at the beginning of the millennial kingdom.

The Happy And Holy Ones

Revelation 20:6 describes the eternal state of those taking part in the first resurrection as "blessed and holy." "Blessed" means "happy"; caused by the blessing of God, such happiness is linked with holiness. Human beings cannot enjoy uninterrupted blessing today because of sin. All those resurrected in the first or believers' resurrection will be resurrected holy. Thus the blessing of God, His original intent for the human race, will never be withheld, because they will live eternally holy and therefore eternally happy.

¹ Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, Page 291; Moody, Chicago; © Copyright 1966.

Those who partake of this first resurrection will be unusually happy because "the second death has no power over them" (Rev. 20:6). Fear of death is one of the primary causes of present unhappiness. People today can escape mentally from it or try to amuse themselves until they are unaware of it, but if they think at all, it disrupts what happiness they may have in their present state of mind. No Christian should fear death. The book of Revelation clarifies that our Lord and Savior holds the keys of death and Hades (Rev. 1:18), and thus the second death or the lake of fire (20:14-15) has no power over us. No wonder believers are happy. Their participation in the first resurrection has made them impervious to the second death.

THE UNBELIEVING DEAD—The Second Resurrection

Who are these who are called "the rest of the dead"? About this there no question. They are the unbelievers of all ages. Luke 16:19-31 demonstrates that after death they exist in Hades. They will be brought out of Hades and judged, then cast alive into the lake of fire, which is the second death. Since these unbelievers are not resurrected to life but to death, a state of separation from God, they are referred to as having part in the "second death." The second resurrection, then, is a resurrection to death.

The chart sharply contrasts the nature of the two resurrections:

The First Resurrection	The Second Resurrection
Those saved/slain during the Tribulation (Rev. 20:4)	Those deceived by Satan (Rev 20:8), unbelievers (21:8)
Will occur before the Millennium (Rev. 20:4)	Will occur after the Millennium (Rev. 20:11)
They came to life (Revelation 20:4)	The dead (Revelation 20:12)
Judged (Revelation 20:4)	Judged (Revelation 20:13)
Become priests & rulers w/God and Christ (20:6)	Tormented day and night forever (Rev. 14:10-11)
God's sons (Revelation 21:7)	There was found no place for them (Rev. 20:11)
Over them the 2d death has no power (Rev. 20:6)	Cast into the lake of fire, the 2 nd death (Rev. 20: 14, 15)
Enjoy Life eternal (Matthew 25:46)	Suffer everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:46)
Happy and holy (Revelation 20:6)	Weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30)

What Has Determined Our Resurrection?

The answer to this question signifies clearly your relationship to the One who does the resurrecting. I can never consider 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 without pointing out the condition of verse 14, "We believe that Jesus died and rose again." The condition of being a part of the resurrection of believers rests in personal acceptance of Christ's death for our sins according to the Scriptures and His resurrection on the third day according to the Scriptures. Right here it would be good to ask yourself, 'Am I ready for that resurrection? Have I met the condition? Will I be a part of it?' If your answer is negative, may I encourage you to accept Christ now? Call on Him, assured of His promise that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:13).

Just as John announced, "Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection," so it follows that tragic and horrible are those who have part in the second resurrection. For to have part in the second resurrection is to be eternally lost. At any cost, avoid that resurrection by calling on the Lord Jesus today so that you may partake of the first resurrection—that you may be one of Christ's at His coming. When I think of all these momentous events taking place at the end of time, I cannot think of anyone I would rather belong to than Jesus Christ!²

Blessings from Tom and Linda Stephens.
www.christsbondservants.org

² **Revelation Unveiled.** By Tim LaHaye; Pg. 325-329; Zondervan Publ. House, Grand Rapids, Mich. © Copyright 1999.