

A LOOK AT REVELATION 20:4-6 AND WHAT IS THE “FIRST RESURRECTION”

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.

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

Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

This is the only place in the Bible in which the phrase “_____”
_____” is used, and it speaks of those who live and

reign with Christ before _____
_____ (verse 5, “the rest of the dead

lived not again until the thousand years were finished.”) The question is, what is the first resurrection spoken of here, and why is it called the first resurrection? To fully understand these verses, seven aspects need to be analyzed:

1. John saw the *souls* (_____) of those beheaded for Jesus and His word.
2. These had not worshipped the beast.
3. They had not worshipped its image.
4. They did not receive _____ or their hands or forehead.
5. These *souls* lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.
6. They are priests of God and of Christ.
7. They are called “the first resurrection.”

Note the following:

- Revelation 20:4-6: These witnesses are “priests of God and of Christ” and shall reign with him a thousand years.
- Revelation 1:6: God calls the people of God: “kings and priests to God.” (see also, 1 Pet. 2:5-9)
- Revelation 5:6-10: Those around the throne in heaven sing a new song: “And hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God **kings and priests**: and we shall reign on the earth. ” (vv. 9-10, emphasis mine).
- Does not Revelation 18:23 group the witnesses of Jesus Christ (believers) of all ages together in one? “And in her [Babylon] was found the blood of prophets, and of _____, and of all that were slain upon the earth.” Who then are the martyrs that compose Revelation 20:4-6?

Charles R. Erdman, in talking about the martyrs and the timing of the mark of the beast, states the following about Revelation 20:1-6: “One thing is absolutely certain; this passage makes it impossible for anyone to believe in a ‘ _____ ’ of the church, or that the return of Christ may be ‘ _____ ’. This false theory (he says) has been very prominent in the teachings of many modern exponents of Premillennial views” (Erdman 1922, 70).

Was John not acquainted with the modern idea of more than one _____ resurrection from the dead, or did Jesus forget to tell him? What would that do to biblical inspiration and inerrancy? Contrary to some people’s belief, Revelation 20:4-6 is not referring to the resurrection of the body. It is a spiritual resurrection, which all receive by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8),

since believers were formerly dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1), but have been brought to life (spiritually) in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:5), and are called to be His witnesses in all the earth (Acts 1:8). John saw souls of the witnesses, not their bodies, and he called them the first resurrection. The bodily resurrection _____ of Revelation 20, where a general resurrection takes place, for the final judgment.

In Matthew 22:23-32, Jesus, when talking to the Sadducees who did not believe in a resurrection, told them that they were mistaken, deceived, and not knowing the scriptures or the power of God. He specifically spells out a spiritual resurrection in Matthew 22:31 when He says, “But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

Jesus saw Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as alive to God and called it _____ (v. 31). This was while their bodies were still in the grave. Therefore, we have here a resurrection that does not entail the body but is that of _____ being alive to God in heaven. This is the same relationship that we see in Revelation 20:4-5. John saw the souls of the witnesses living and reigning with God in heaven, which is what he calls the first resurrection. This aspect is further accentuated in Revelation 6:9-11, where John sees “souls” under the altar in heaven, crying, “How long, O Lord.” These witnesses, though _____, were alive to God.

This is comparable with 2 Corinthians 5:6-8, in which Paul says, “To be absent _____ is to be present with the Lord”.

What is meant in Philippians 1:21-23 when Paul says, “To die is gain and to depart and be with Christ is far better?”

Is this not being alive with Christ at death, _____
_____? Therefore, there is such a thing as a
spiritual resurrection. Is this not what Jesus was talking about in
John 5:24-25 when He said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour
is coming and *now is*, when the dead [spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1,5)]
will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will
live.” In this verse, Jesus was not talking about the resurrection of
the body but of the soul and spirit that were dead before God (Eph.
2:1). In John 5:28-29 Jesus was talking about the physical
resurrection of the body. There He does not say “now is,” but “____
_____.”

Therefore, the first resurrection is of the soul. It is of those who
are saved and have come to spiritual life with God. Furthermore,
while all believers will suffer the first death (the death of the body,
Heb. 9:27), they need not fear the second death (being cast _____

_____ into hellfire, Matt. 10:28 and Rev. 20:14).

Having the first resurrection (salvation by faith in Christ), believers need not fear _____: “Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power.” (Rev. 20:6) This is open to all who have faith in Jesus Christ, “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” (Rev. 2:11) Not just a select group _____, but throughout the reign of Christ, from His ascension to His consummation of all things.

This is very different from Dispensationalism which speaks of multiple _____ resurrections, separated by 7 years and then a thousand years. Scripture, however, speaks clearly of a spiritual resurrection open to all throughout the reign of Christ, from His ascension, and a general (bodily) resurrection of the wicked and the righteous in final judgment.

ANNIHILATION?

This is a subject in which much wrangling over God's Word has taken place over the course of time. False cults have never believed in the ultimate truth of God's Word. It is peculiar that in Christendom, that which for many centuries was called heresy can later become orthodox. All of this is produced by the mind of man as he changes God's Word to fit his personal belief. Hermeneutics certainly should be called into place as to the substituting of one word for another or the adding of a word to a text. Personal feelings should have no part in the interpretation of God's Word.

The question of annihilation is important today because a renowned theologian in evangelical circles has approved the doctrine of ultimate annihilation, namely Dr. John Stott, who declared that it is repugnant and _____ to believe in _____.

As far as the scriptures go, there is no question as to the difference of the fate of the godly and the ungodly. So is the issue that of eternal damnation? Is death instant destruction, annihilation, and non-existence? What do the scriptures mean by stating such a thing as _____?

First of all, we should remember when talking about this subject that we are dealing with the biblical doctrine of sin, and that in the light of the nature and character of a righteous and holy God. We are also dealing with the fact that man was _____ made in God's divine image, endowed with a righteous and moral conscience and without any moral blemishes. This image in man was to produce a behavior pattern compatible with that nature. Sin is the enemy of God, not just an act of man. We must therefore deal with the subject of sin in the light of a holy God.

This being the case, we must look at the source of man's fall.

Satan the tempter was created perfect and endowed with a righteous constitution, but he _____ not to abide in his original state (Ezek. 28:1-19; Isa. 14:4-15; Jude 6). In the Old Testament, Satan is depicted as the personification of two kings. Satan was created as a cherub, but wanted to take the place of God Himself. The creator is always greater than the thing created.

It must be held in mind that God did not create Satan as Satan. He created an angel, formerly named Lucifer (“_____”) that fell and became Satan (“_____”). The text states that he was created perfect until iniquity was found in him, and he willingly chose not to abide in that state. He therefore put himself under God’s judgment and, as a spirit being, was pronounced to be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10,12-15; 19:20; 21:8).

Jesus said hell was prepared for the devil and his angels, and it consisted of _____ (Matt. 25:41). Is there anyone who would question the duration of Satan's judgment? Would anyone question whether or not Jesus was telling the truth? It is safe therefore to say that those who follow Satan must be judged with him and also go to his eternal destination. First Timothy 3:6 warns of falling into the _____ as the devil. Sin is no small thing with God!

Revelation 14:9-11 states the eternal condition of the lost. Never once is there an indication given as to an immediate end of their suffering and torment. Some take fire in the natural sense and believe that as a piece of paper set on fire is soon consumed, so it must be with man in hell. However, these verses as given by God reveal that the condemned are tormented with fire (Rev. 14:10-11) and have _____.

This certainly does not indicate extinction!

In 1854, the Rev. John Cumming said, “He that attempts to add to [God’s Word] takes the place of God, and ‘shows himself as if he were God’” (Cumming 1854, 2). This is strong language.

However, it is the truth of God as set forth in His Holy Word and with a warning not to add or take away from what is written.

Nevertheless, together with the warnings, through the gospel God gives us the opportunity of turning from _____
_____. Look at the awesome cost God Himself paid to redeem man from that destruction: His own Son! Because of sin, Christ was put to death by a cruel and ignominious death at the hands of wicked men.

Jesus Himself in Luke 16:19-31 speaks of the final state of an unrepentant sinner as being in Hades and _____
_____. This certainly does not lend to

annihilation. The sinner is locked into that position and cannot get out (v. 26). He then asks another man named Lazarus, who is in a state of comfort, to go tell his five brothers to repent so they do not come to that place (vv. 27-28). How long has the sinner been there in that state of suffering? The man knew he got there because _____ (v. 30). A person's eternal destiny is based on his relationship to the Word of God (v. 31). Thank God for the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ! (Rom. 6:23)

As to fire, man may look at things only from his _____, or “natural” point of view, but God looks at it from His full view and speaks in terms we can understand. For example, in John 3, when Nicodemus was told he must be “born again,” he thought about natural birth and the entering into his mother's womb. Then, in John 4, when Jesus talked to the woman at the well about “living water,” she immediately thought of natural means— something by

which to draw water. So it is with fire in man's sense of the word.

However, in Exodus 3:2, Moses saw a bush on fire, yet it was not consumed. Who says we can compare "God's fire" with "man's fire?" The Bible warns us not to compare _____ with the spiritual, but to compare spiritual things with spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:13-14).

Man has been told. He has been warned. The choice is his to turn from the path of destruction on which Satan has put him. Jesus warned that the end of the broad road leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14). Condemnation and destruction are part of _____. In Mark 16:15-16, Jesus states, "But he that does not believe will be condemned." To choose to go one's own way is to pay the awful price in the end.