

The First Resurrection of Revelation Chapter 20 Explained!

Greetings, I'm Dr. Paul Felter. Welcome to my video podcast, where I expose church fallacies and flawed Christian tradition with Bible truth. I let the Bible speak for itself. I want to thank all my supporters for your prayers and support. May the Lord richly bless you in all that you do.

I continue to receive comments on my Youtube channel claiming the Rapture occurs at the end of the seven-year tribulation quoting Revelation 20:5 as proof. Revelation chapter 20 verse 5 speaks of the "first resurrection," so that must include the Rapture of the church, Right?

Sadly, many will take one verse of scripture out of context and make a doctrine of it. They will then erroneously force application on unrelated passages entirely outside the context of the original scripture. The Apostle Peter warns against doing this very thing in the following verse:

2 Peter 1:20 KJV - "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation."

Peter states that you cannot take a single scripture and make a private interpretation or doctrine. One must consider all scriptures pertaining to a topic to gain the proper understanding of the truth and ascertain the correct doctrine.

So, let's do exactly that, let's examine some other scriptures pertaining to the resurrection topic so we can gain a proper understanding of the truth and formulate the correct doctrine and application. Sadly, many Christians will not take the time, or make the effort to do this, therefore they will continually arrive at erroneous conclusions. Additionally, please make note that these passages are part of bible prophecy, so they do not include the Rapture, as the Rapture of the church is not found in bible prophecy, more on that later.

Before we begin examining passages referring to the resurrection of Revelation chapter 20, you must understand that the resurrection described in Revelation chapter 20 is not the first occurrence of a resurrection in scripture. The first resurrection in your bible was that of the Lord Jesus Christ when he rose from the dead on the third day after His death on the cross in 33 A.D. This is why Jesus is called the **firstfruits** and the **first begotten**.

*1 Corinthians 15:20, 23 KJV - "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the **firstfruits** of them that slept. ... But every man in his own order: Christ the **firstfruits**; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."*

*Revelation 1:5 KJV - "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the **first begotten of the dead**, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,"*

Jesus Christ was the first person resurrected from the dead. Jesus was resurrected to a new glorified body fit for eternity. Others, like Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:35-43), Lazarus (John 11:1-44) and Tabitha (Acts 9:36-43) were merely resuscitated back to life, only to die again. They did not receive new glorified bodies.

The first resurrection of Revelation chapter 20 refers to the phrase “they that are Christ’s at his coming” in the above passage from first Corinthians 15. The second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of the seven-year tribulation is found in Revelation chapter 19 verse 11. The first resurrection of Revelation chapter 20 occurs after the second coming of Jesus Christ at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.

Also, from the above passage in first Corinthians chapter 15, we see there is an order of the resurrections: Christ being first and later those at his second coming. This passage does not concern the Rapture, but the second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of the 7-year Tribulation. This order is shown in the following chart. Since there is a first resurrection, there must logically be a second resurrection, else the use of the word first is meaningless.

Resurrection	Participants	Timing
Firstfruits, First begotten	Jesus Christ	33 A.D.
The First Resurrection	All saints not part of the church, the body of Christ (OT Saints, the patriarchs, the prophets, the little flock saints, Jesus’ disciples, and the Tribulation martyrs)	After Jesus’ second coming at the start of His Millennial Reign
The Second Resurrection	All the ungodly lost (all mankind lost from Creation)	After the Millennial Kingdom just before the GWTJ

I will add the Rapture to the above chart later in the video.

Now that we understand the order of resurrections given by Paul in 1st Corinthians 15:20 & 23, let’s look at some additional resurrection passages.

I want to begin in the book of Daniel, chapter 12 verse 2:

Daniel 12:2 KJV - "*And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*"

Daniel is clearly writing about the dead, those that sleep in the dust of the earth. But, one day they shall awake. Some will awake to everlasting life; and others will awaken to shame and everlasting contempt. Daniel writes of two resurrections: one to everlasting life, that would obviously be for the righteous, the godly, and a second resurrection for the ungodly, those that awake to shame an everlasting contempt.

Jesus spoke similar words in John's gospel:

John 5:25–29 KJV - "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the **dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God**: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which **all** that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto **the resurrection of life**; and they that have done evil, unto **the resurrection of damnation**.*"

The “resurrection of life” spoken by Jesus corresponds to Daniels resurrection to everlasting life. The “resurrection of damnation” spoken by Jesus corresponds to Daniels resurrection to shame and everlasting contempt.

The Apostle Paul, while speaking before Felix the governor, also made a distinction between the two resurrections.

Acts 24:15 KJV - "*And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, **both of the just and unjust**.*"

From these passages it is clear there are two prophesied resurrections for humanity.

1. The first, the **resurrection of life**, for the just, the righteous, to everlasting life.
2. The second, the **resurrection of damnation**, for the unjust, the unrighteous the ungodly, to eternal damnation or hell.

Lastly, I want to examine Jesus' conversation with Martha found in John chapter 11 regarding the resurrection of her brother Lazarus.

John 11:23–25 KJV - "*Jesus saith unto her, **Thy brother shall rise again**. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the **last day**. Jesus said unto her, **I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live**:*"

The first point we want to consider here is obvious, Jesus is speaking to Martha about the resurrection of the righteous, the just, unto everlasting life: this is the first resurrection.

The second point is that this resurrection unto life occurs at the “last day”. I find it surprising and somewhat disheartening that Martha understood this, but the average Christian does not! So let me explain.

What is the last day?

Let's consider some passages referencing the “last day”:

John 6:39–40 KJV - "*And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the **last day**. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the **last day**.*"

John 6:44, 54 KJV - "*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the **last day**. ... Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the **last day**.*"

It's obvious from these passages that the resurrection unto eternal life for the just, the righteous, occurs on the last day.

The apostle John describes the last day in his gospel, chapter number 7.

John 7:37 KJV - "*In the **last day**, that **great day of the feast**, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*"

The feast spoken of by Jesus in this passage is the feast of tabernacles, the last feast of the year on the Jewish religious calendar. The "**last day**" of that feast is also called the "great day."

The resurrection of the just, the righteous, the godly saints unto everlasting life will occur sometime in the future on the last day of the feast of tabernacles, after the second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of the seven-year tribulation, and at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. That places the resurrection of the just unto everlasting life precisely at the time of the first resurrection in Revelation chapter 20.

Revelation 20:4–6 KJV - "*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 (the resurrection of the just)**. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the **first resurrection**: on such the second death (**the resurrection of the unjust**) hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and **shall reign with him a thousand years**." (parenthesis mine)*

The above **first resurrection** is the first prophesied mass resurrection, the **resurrection of the just**. The resurrection of Jesus Christ in 33 A.D. pertained only to him and not believing saints. The **resurrection of the unjust**, the second resurrection, occurs prior to the Great White Throne Judgment, after the 1000-year reign of Christ. The unjust are resurrected to stand in judgment before Jesus Christ. They are judged according to their works and those whose names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life are cast into the lake of fire, this is the **second death**! Neither of these two resurrections include the **Rapture** of the church, the body of Christ.

Notice that the first resurrection also includes those beheaded for their witness of Jesus Christ during the seven-year tribulation. They will live and reign with Christ for 1000 years. This is a reference to the Millennial Kingdom here on earth, not the heavenly program for us, the church, the body of Christ.

The first resurrection includes the following saints:

1. The Old Testament saints, those righteous saints that believe in God from Genesis to Malachi.
2. The righteous followers of Jesus during his earthly ministry in the early chapters of Acts: Jesus' disciples and the little flock.
3. The Tribulation saints, those martyred for their testimony of Jesus Christ during the seven-year tribulation.

The destiny for these three categories of resurrected saints is the Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ. The destiny of the church, the body of Christ, we that have been saved during this present dispensation of grace, is heavenly places. Therefore, it is clear that the Rapture is not part of the prophesied first resurrection.

In Revelation 20:5, the word "first" categorizes and prioritizes the type of resurrection being discussed. Here, the "first resurrection," refers to the resurrection of the just unto life along with the tribulation saints. The "first resurrection" occurs after the return of Jesus Christ at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom, the thousand years mentioned in verse 4. This first resurrection is distinct from the later, or second, resurrection of the rest of the dead, the ungodly, who are judged after the thousand years at the Great White Throne Judgment (GWTJ).

So, in this context, the word "first" categorizes the resurrection being discussed as the primary prophesied resurrection associated with raising the righteous dead unto everlasting life.

There are only two PROPHESED mass resurrections in your Bible as we have read.

1. The resurrection of life, the First Resurrection, occurs just after the second coming of Jesus Christ, at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom as defined in Revelation 20:5.
2. The resurrection of damnation, the second resurrection, which occurs just before the GWTJ, after the Millennial Reign of Christ, where all the lost dead, "the rest of the dead," are judged and suffer the "second death" when cast into the lake of fire at the GWTJ.

The key word here is "**prophesied.**"

The Rapture, as revealed to us by our Apostle Paul, is not part of bible prophecy, nor the first resurrection. We, the church, the body of Christ, have an UNPROPHESED resurrection as Paul describes in the following passage:

1 Corinthians 15:51–52 KJV - "*Behold, I shew you a **mystery**; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the **dead (saints) shall be raised incorruptible, and we (the living saints) shall be changed.***"
(parenthesis mine)

The word mystery means hidden wisdom, something kept secret by God to be revealed at the appropriate time. God revealed this hidden wisdom to the Apostle Paul for us, the church, the body of Christ. We, the church, the body of Christ, have a **mystery resurrection**, the **Rapture!** A resurrection not revealed in the prophetic scriptures.

We find a similar passage in 1st Thessalonians chapter four.

1 Thessalonians 4:15–17 KJV - "*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 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**: 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.*"
Glory hallelujah!

Notice that those resurrected at the Rapture are the dead "**in Christ**", not the righteous saints from the beginning of creation. Old Testament saints like Able, Noah, Abraham, Moses, King David, the Old Testament prophets, and others will not participate in the Rapture, as they lived before the cross and were not "**in Christ**". Separating these two groups of saints is critical to your understanding of how the **first resurrection** differs from the **rapture of the church**, the body of Christ.

The phrase "**in Christ**" occurs 74 times in scripture, all written by the Apostle Paul. So, it's clear that the term "**in Christ**" pertains to the church, the body of Christ, not Old Testament saints, not the followers of Jesus during his earthly ministry, and not the tribulation saints. It's a concept unique to the church, the body of Christ. Therefore, the resurrection of the dead "**in Christ**" pertains only to us, the body of Christ, those saved during this present dispensation of grace. We alone will participate in the Rapture! All the other righteous saints will be raised at the first resurrection of Revelation chapter 20 and enter the Millennial Kingdom. We who are "**in Christ**" are raised to enter heavenly places, not the earthly kingdom promised to Israel.

Our Apostle Paul clarifies that in the following passages:

Ephesians 1:3 KJV - "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in **heavenly places in Christ***:"

Ephesians 2:6 KJV - "*And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in **heavenly places in Christ Jesus***:"

2 Corinthians 5:1 KJV - "*For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, **eternal in the heavens***."

There are only four resurrections in the word of God, and they are as follows:

Resurrection	Scripture	Participants	Timing
Firstfruits, First Begotten (Prophesied)	1 Cor 15:20	Jesus Christ	33 A.D.
The Rapture (Mystery)	1 Cor 15:51-52	Members of the body of Christ, those “in Christ”	Before the Tribulation
The First Resurrection (Prophesied)	1 Cor 15:23, Rev 20:4-5	All other saints not part of the body of Christ	After Jesus’ second coming
The Second Resurrection (Prophesied)	Rev 20:5	The “rest of the dead”, the ungodly lost	After the Millennial Kingdom just before the GWTJ

Conclusion:

1. The first resurrection in Scripture was Jesus Christ rising on the third day after His crucifixion. This was a singular event.
2. The First Resurrection of Revelation chapter 20, a mass resurrection, includes all righteous saints that have ever lived with the exception of those “in Christ”.
3. The First Resurrection of Revelation chapter 20 occurs after the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of the Tribulation at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.
4. The dead “in Christ” are raised at the Rapture mystery resurrection where the dead “in Christ” rise first (1st Thessalonians 4:13). The Apostle Paul is very careful to limit the Rapture to only those that are “in Christ” and not all the saints that have ever lived.
5. The Rapture resurrection is not part of the First Resurrection as the Rapture is for those “in Christ” only.
6. The destiny of those raised at the First Resurrection is the Millennial Kingdom.
7. The destiny of we, the church, the body of Christ, saved during this present dispensation of Grace who are raised at the Rapture, is **heavenly places**.
8. The Second Resurrection, the rest of the dead, the ungodly lost, occurs after the Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ, just prior to the GWTJ. Their destiny is the lake of fire, the **second death!**

It’s easy to see why some include the Rapture in the first resurrection. They are thrown off by the use of the word “first”. As we have noted, the first occurrence of a resurrection was that of the Lord Jesus Christ. The use of the word “first” in Revelation chapter 20 verse 5 pertains to the first prophesied mass resurrection, that being the resurrection of the just, the righteous, unto everlasting life. **It is not used to indicate the initial position or action in a sequence of events.**

Therein lies the confusion! Some do not understand the word “first” in its proper context in Revelation chapter 20. This is why a detailed, in-depth study is necessary. Without it, your understanding of scripture will be very limited and flawed. That’s why our Apostle Paul command of us to study:

2 Timothy 2:15 KJV - "*Study to shew thyself **approved** unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*"

