

The Voice of Truth # 534

The First Resurrection

In our last study, we showed you plainly from God's Word that the scriptures teach that Christ will rule in person upon this earth. The Word of God plainly states that Satan and all of his works through man will be utterly and completely destroyed and Christ will take over the rule of this earth to which he holds the title deed, and that rightly so, and with his saints will rule over an earthly, visible kingdom, for a period of one thousand years. During this time, the beast and the false prophet will be in the lake of fire, and Satan will be chained in the bottomless pit with all of his demon spirits and fallen angels. Therefore, when this earth is completely cleared of Satan's presence, work, and power, Christ takes over and sets up his kingdom and builds his perfect world order; his new society and universal worship of the Lord Jesus Christ under the leadership of his royal priesthood of resurrected and translated saints who rule and reign with him.

We closed our message with just a brief statement about the first resurrection last Sunday. At this time, we want to take up the teachings of God's word regarding the resurrection of the saints or the first resurrection, with our Bibles open now at 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. 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.

Nowhere in Scripture is the resurrection of the damned spoken of as the second resurrection. Listen again to that fifth verse; **But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.** The resurrection of the damned is spoken of as the rest of the dead. This does away with the possibility of purgatory and a second chance after death. Now, let me say in the very beginning of our study on the resurrection that the Bible nowhere teaches a general resurrection, even though there are some scriptures that seem to teach it. But if you'll correlate all your scriptures on the resurrection together, you cannot honestly find that the Bible teaches a general resurrection.

The resurrection of the dead is plainly taught in the Old and New Testament. Now get it now, the resurrection of the dead is plainly taught in the Old and New Testament, but the resurrection from among the dead is a further revelation of the truth of the resurrection found only in the New Testament.

Now let us turn to Mark 9:9 and read the words of our Lord. **And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them they should tell no man what things they had seen till the Son of Man were risen from the dead,** or literally from, out from among the dead. Now that's what it literally means. There's no doubt what he is referring to. Now let's turn to another scripture just briefly, found here in Luke 20:35. Listen, **but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead** or from among the dead, **neither marry nor are given in marriage.** Now, there is no doubt in this scripture, Luke 20:35, that he is referring to believers only and their resurrection from among the dead. Therefore, Revelation 20:6 can only refer to the completion of the resurrection of the saints. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection. The conclusion we must come to, then, is that the first resurrection includes the bodies of saints only, and it has nothing at all to do with the resurrection of the wicked or the damned.

What are the evidences that the first resurrection has only to do with the saints? We find three proofs given in Revelation 20:6. Namely, **blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.** The resurrection of the damned could not be called blessed, which refers to the happy state of the believer, or holy, which

refers to the character of the believer. Now listen to the second statement, verse 6. **On such the second death hath no power.**

Revelation 20:14 tells us what the second death is. Listen, **And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.**

Rev. 21:8 **But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.**

This is the Gehenna fire, but the scripture says plainly here that those who have part in the first resurrection will live and reign with Christ a thousand years. They will be blessed, they will be holy, and the second death hath no power over them. All right, now let's look at the third evidence. And they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. Those having part in the first resurrection will be priests of God and of Christ, reigning with him for one thousand years.

The government of the earth will be a theocracy, the reign of God, and the kingdom will be spiritual as well as material. Christ will reign as King-Priest. Believers will reign with Him as Judge-Priest. We have a type of Christ as King-Priest in the person of Melchizedek according to Hebrews 7. Not only will the saints rule or shepherd the nations with Christ, but they will lead the worship as priest. The Priest always functions in the realm of worship. During the millennial reign of Christ, they will not only point the inhabitants of the earth to Christ as king on the throne, but they will lead them to worship Christ as God, who is worthy to be worshiped. There is much confusion about the order of the resurrection in the minds of Bible students. Generally, 1 Corinthians 15:22 is quoted as proof of a general resurrection in which both saved and lost are raised at the same time. Listen, **as in Adam, all die even so, in Christ shall all be made alive.** And they stop right there. If you'll read the next verse, you'll find that the Lord gives us a further revelation as to how it takes place - **But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ at his coming. 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. We see then that the resurrection of the wicked cannot take place at the time of the resurrection of the saints. According to John 5:29, there is a resurrection of life, there is a resurrection of damnation, a resurrection of the just, which is from among the dead, a better resurrection, according to Hebrews 11:35, and a resurrection of the unjust. The first resurrection is a resurrection from among the dead, therefore the natural conclusion is some are raised and the rest are left, and we have to distinguish between the resurrection of the saints and the resurrection of the damned. The resurrection of the just is always mentioned first, and the resurrection of the wicked second. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Paul writing to the Thessalonians said, **the dead in Christ shall rise first.** We generally take this to mean the dead saints are raised first, and then the living saints are translated afterward. But I think there's a deeper meaning to this scripture. At any rate, it indicates a time element between orders or ranks in the resurrection, probably only a momentary lapse between the dead and the living believers at Christ's coming for his bride or church, but undoubtedly a longer lapse between the believers and the unbelievers.

The unfolding of this revelation of the order of the resurrection is stated clearly in Revelation 20:5. **But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.** This gives us the time element, which is a thousand years between the resurrection of the saints and the resurrection of the damned. In the early days of my ministry, I believed in a general resurrection and preached it, that the saints and the damned would all be raised together, but I couldn't reconcile certain scriptures to fit the doctrine. Finally, the whole truth opened up to me one day as clear as the noonday sun, and I never ceased to praise the Lord for revealing that truth to my heart and mind under the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. Now I know where to put every scripture that deals with the resurrection. whether it is regarding the saved or the damned, and all the scriptures fit together perfectly like the stones of the temple, with the chief cornerstone being 1 Corinthians 15:23, **Christ the firstfruits.** Standing at the empty tomb and beholding the burial clothes, then resting at his feet as Mary did, crying, Rabboni, my master, and knowing him experimentally as my risen Lord and Savior, my Redeemer, my substitute, my surety, my mediator. I behold all the scriptures fitly joined together, setting forth the great doctrine of the resurrection

of the saints from among the dead, and then a thousand years later, the resurrection of the damned, and magnify the God of the resurrection.

Let's look again at that most blessed truth that flashes from verse 6 of Revelation 20. **Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.** This follows the announcement in verse 5, **This is the first resurrection.** This is the declaration that the whole army of saints, each company, in its own order, has completely come through the valley of death. Let's turn our gaze to the grand procession; and in 1 Corinthians 15:23 we see at the head the captain of our salvation, **Christ the firstfruits.** What a triumphal entry through the portals of glory, as the angels sing, Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and a King of glory shall come in. See that group surrounding him, who are they? Listen to Matthew 27:51. **And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept, arose and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.** He who had descended into the lower parts of the earth, into Hades itself, as he ascends up on high, he led the captives with him; He emptied the prison house of its pardoned criminals, He gives gifts unto men, and together they pass up into glory. What hallelujah in heaven! This is the first fruits of the resurrection. That's the first order. Christ with those who rose with him. My friend, you see that great group? I don't know how many there were, the scripture doesn't say.

Then afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Long he waits for the trumpet sound, but hark, the first note, Michael the archangel shouts, and all heaven stands at attention. Then with a mighty voice of the conqueror, the shout of the bride groom, and every sleeping saint comes to life. Every living saint is translated and together they meet the Lord in the air, according to 1 Thessalonians 4:16. What a harvest! This is the second company of that mighty army of saints, and we can surely call this the great harvest of souls. We saw this great resurrection of the saints in Revelation 4, when John saw a door open in heaven through which he was called to **come up hither.** That door, and John's ascension, indicated a resurrection and rapture of the saints, which answers to 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. They are the saints because they sing of being redeemed to God by the blood of the Lamb, Revelation 5:9.

We look again, and in Revelation 7, we behold a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, stand before the throne in their resurrected, glorified bodies, praising the Lord.

Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. As John beheld, he marveled and turned to the angel and said, Sir, whence came they? And the answer was, **These are they which come out of great tribulation, and hath washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.** Yes, this is the group of resurrected or translated saints that the Lord Jesus Christ took out of the great tribulation during the reign of the Antichrist.

Next, in order of array, between two companies composed of multitudes, we see two witnesses in that 11th chapter of revelation lying dead in the streets of Jerusalem while the crowds of merry-makers dance and exchange gifts in celebration over their downfall. There they lie for three and a half days, and suddenly they stand upon their feet. A great voice calls them, come up hither, and they ascended up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them. What a sight! What fear falls! Another resurrection. That's part of the first resurrection.

Yes, the great battalion leader, the risen, exalted, glorified Lamb of God is marshalling his army. He has called them and conscripted them, prepared them, and outfitted them, and now he is marshalling them company by company to the heavenly assembly ground from which he will march against the presumptuous foe, the Antichrist and his confederated allies. Look, here comes another company, 144,000 in that 14th chapter, having their father's name written in their foreheads. It's a special group. While they sing a new song that no man can learn but this special company, who **were redeemed from among men**, according to Revelation 14:4. It is another group of tribulation saints, who have a special relationship to the Lamb, for they follow Him whithersoever he goeth. If we will just take the scriptures at their face value and let them mean what they say, we'll have to come to the conclusion that the first resurrection is not just one single event, but it's made up of various resurrections and translations that occur at different times beginning with the resurrection of Christ until His second coming.

Now let's look at the last company that brings up the rear of the armies of the Lord Jesus Christ and completes the first resurrection. The Lord has returned to

Mount Olivet as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He's cast the Antichrist and the false prophet into the lake of fire and had Satan chained and bound in the bottomless pit. They are the souls that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God. Souls who had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands. They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. That word lived means they were resurrected. So this completes the first resurrection, and in verse 5 we are told, **the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years are finished. This is the first resurrection.** Not one single body of a believer will be left in the grave when our Lord Jesus Christ shall come back to this earth to reign, because John 5:25 says, **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.** And John 11:25 says, **I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.** Let's read the literal translation of Daniel 12:2,3 in this connection, **and at that time of trouble** (tribulation) **many of thy people**, the Jews, **shall awake** or rise out from among the sleepers in the earth's dust. These who awake shall be **unto life everlasting**, but those who do not wake at that time shall be like **unto shame and contempt everlasting**. This clearly sets forth that the resurrection of the saints is completed when Christ comes to deliver up his people.

What a change is wrought when this earth is swept clear of all Satan's tracks. All the saints are resurrected and placed in positions of authority to rule this earth with him for one thousand years. No wonder the scripture describes him setting up his kingdom as shepherding the nations with a rod of iron and breaking them to pieces like a potter's vessel. He will sweep away all the haunts of sin, places of iniquity, with the besom, that broom of destruction. The waters of judgment shall overflow the hiding places of crime, corruption, and oppression. All the cliques and gangs and political rings with their gangsters and racketeers, murderers and profane, thieves and peace disturbers will be forever broken up. The backbone of Satan's great society built on dishonesty, greed, selfishness, and corrupt administrations will be crushed. In other words, he'll hew down everything that is hid under the refuge of lies and bound by the covenant with death and the agreement with hell, and will establish a new society and a new world order based on truth, justice, and judgment, centered around the worship of Jehovah,

the one and only true God, creator of heaven and earth, and all that is therein. Won't that be a glorious day when this earth will be shepherded by the saints of God, a world wherein dwelleth righteousness, and there shall be but one King, the Lord Jesus Christ?

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection. While the saints live in this present world, they are hated because the world loves its own and hates the saints of God. The saints have been chosen out of the world, therefore the world hateth them. The unregenerate heart does not like the gospel or the terms of the gospel. The world has no honor or favor to cast upon the saints. Therefore, the history of the church of the living God has been a book of martyrs. When the time of Satan's great society is over and the angel cries, blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, it'll be a day of blessedness, a day of happiness, a day of joy, a day when the saints of God shall sit in places of rulership, in places of honor, because Christ will put us there. The saints then will be a holy people, and righteous, because they have attained unto the resurrection of the saints, that is our blessed hope, that's the coming of our Lord and our resurrection, or the translation of our bodies, made in the likeness of our blessed Lord.

Look at those words, **on such the second death hath no power.** Christ tasted death for us. In the three hours of darkness on the cross, Christ went to Gehenna fire and suffered the equivalent of that which the unbeliever will suffer if he goes to hell throughout eternity. Christ blots out the sting of death because he tasted death for every believer. Therefore, there is no fear of eternal punishment in the heart of the believer. He knows Christ suffered for him. He knows Christ bore the wrath of God in his own body and paid the eternal price that justice demanded of every sinner. I stand today upon that holy ground, that sacred ground; On the ground where the wrath of God was poured out upon the Lord Jesus Christ, upon the cross. The stroke that was intended for me fell on Him as He hugged me to His bosom, and bowed His head over me. God poured out His wrath and His vengeance upon Christ, who was made sin for me, until He cried, **It is finished.** He was saying, Father, that's enough. I have doubly paid for his sins, let him go free. Therefore, as I march down the road of time toward the celestial city, I have no fear in my heart, because he tasted eternal death for me and paid the penalty of

that broken law in full, he drank the cup of damnation dry, and the Father can't collect that debt twice, first from my surety, then from me. I am safe in Christ, because that sin debt was paid to the full, to the last fathering. Therefore, the second death hath no power on me. That's the shelter under which I live: once I abode under the shelter of the wrath of God, but now I abide in him, the eternal shelter for me - body, soul, and spirit. And that's for every believer.

In verse 6 it also says, **they shall be priests of God and of Christ**. Every saint now is a royal priest, and the saints together are a royal priesthood, but after the resurrection, when we are placed in positions of judgeship and authority to rule and shepherd with Christ, we shall be priests of God and of Christ, not only to judge the people according to the righteousness of the law, but to point them to Christ, the Redeemer, the Lamb of God, the King of kings. When we get to the study of the kingdom on earth we'll find that as priests we will lead pilgrimages to Jerusalem each year where Christ sits enthroned, to worship him and visit the great new temple that'll be built according to Ezekiel's prophecy. It'll be one of the most beautiful temples that the world has ever known. My friends, do you know Christ?

Again, in that sixth verse, we find the length of the time, **they shall reign with him a thousand years**. That expression **a thousand years** is used six times in that first seven verses of Revelation 20. You read that and notice the six times it's used.

Then the Bible in conclusion, the Bible speaks of the Sabbath stating there'll be **a rest for the people of God**, in Hebrews 7. The first 6,000 years since Adam was created, is fast coming to a close, and we're in the evening time of the world's history. It is beginning to dawn toward the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath of rest. My heart cries out, Lord Jesus, has not this old world trampled thy name underfoot long enough? Have they not blasphemed thy name just long enough? Have they not trampled thy people down and made them the offscouring of the earth just long enough? Isn't it time for thy coming? So our cry is this morning, come, Lord Jesus, come, come quickly. Our cry is come quickly, Lord Jesus, come.