

REVELATION – SERMON 80

THE SAINTS' RESURRECTION AND REIGN

Revelation 20:4-6

INTRODUCTION

- There is a growing tide of opposition to Christianity in the world, particularly in Western nations where the gospel once flourished
- They cannot destroy Christ, so they seek to destroy his people on earth
- From the beginning, God's children have been hated, persecuted and slaughtered by the children of the devil (Romans 8:36; Hebrews 11:36-38)
- Christ told his disciples that at the end of the age, "shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake" (Matthew 24:9)
- To many in the world, Christians "are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19)
- This would indeed be the case, were it not for one crucial fact—that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and has given us assurance that he will raise us to glory also
- Previously we saw that when Christ returns to establish his earthly kingdom, Satan will be banished to the bottomless pit for 1000 years
- The focus now turns to the resurrected saints who will inhabit the kingdom, and their position as rulers over the earth

I. THE SUCCESSIVE JUNCTURES OF RESURRECTION (5)

A. There will be a future resurrection

1. The Scriptures clearly teach that all people, believers and unbelievers, will be resurrected (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15)
 - a. Believers will be raised to everlasting life (1 Corinthians 15:22)
 - b. Unbelievers will be raised to everlasting damnation (Matthew 10:28)
2. Amillennialists and Postmillennialists teach that there is a one general resurrection
 - a. In order to accommodate their false view that Millennium is already in effect, they regard the “first resurrection” as spiritual regeneration, or salvation, and the subsequent resurrection as being the literal bodily resurrection
3. Yet verse 6 clearly states that there is a 1000 year gap between the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust
4. The resurrection of believers is called the “first resurrection”
 - a. “First” (*prote*) here indicates “foremost, chief”
 - b. It marks this resurrection in terms of its chronological priority, but as the supreme, “better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35) which grants everlasting blessedness

B. The first resurrection takes place over a number of stages

1. It is not a single event, but an *order* or *class* of resurrection
2. Note the following stages of the first resurrection:

TIMING	PARTICIPANTS	DETAILS	REFERENCES
The third day	The Lord Jesus Christ	Christ is now the "firstfruits of them that slept"	Matthew 28:1-7; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18; 1 Cor. 15:20
Before the Tribulation	Church-age saints	The resurrection of those who are in Christ at the Rapture	John 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:50-53
Mid-point of Tribulation	Two Witnesses	They will be resurrected after being killed by the beast	Revelation 11:11-12
After the Tribulation	Old Testament saints	Believers from all previous dispensations raised to enter the kingdom	Daniel 12:1-2; Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37:13-14
Beginning of Millennium	Tribulation Martyrs	They will be raised to reign with Christ	Revelation 20:4

3. The scripture is silent as to whether there will be another resurrection of believers at the end of the millennium
 - a. It is suggested that though there will be death during the Millennium (Isaiah 65:20), this will only afflict the unbelievers, who may suffer death as punishment, while the believers will enjoy Christ's healing and protection (Malachi 4:2)

C. The "rest of the dead"

1. The souls of unbelievers will remain in hell during the 1000 years (Luke 16:23)
2. There will be a final resurrection of the wicked at the end of the 1000 years when they will be raised, judged at the great white throne, then cast into the lake of fire forever (20:11-15)

II. THE SAINTS WHO JUDGE AND REIGN (4)

A. The saints on their thrones

1. Old Testament saints will reign (Daniel 7:9-10,22)
2. Church age saints will reign (Matthew 19:28; 1 Corinthians 6:2; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 3:21; 5:10)
3. Tribulation saints will reign
 - a. These believers, who will suffer the most severe persecution and humiliation, are singled out in this verse for public exaltation and reward at the beginning of the kingdom
 - b. They died for the “testimony of Jesus and for the word of God” (6:9), refusing to take the mark of the beast or worship his image (13:5)
 - c. The word for “beheaded” (*pepelekismenon*) literally means to “cut off with an axe”, indicating that the beast may institute beheading as the preferred means of killing believers
 - d. Their souls at this point are clothed with immortal bodies as they are resurrected – “and they lived”
 - e. This group has a special role to not only reign with Christ, but “serve him day and night in his temple” (7:15)

B. Judgment given to them

1. As the Father gives the Son a kingdom, so the Son gives a kingdom to His saints (Luke 22:29)

2. Christ will delegate authority to the saints to rule over the earth's inhabitants (Luke 19:12-28)
3. The iron rule of Christ will be administered by believers (2:26-27)
4. Offenders will be judged swiftly for the slightest infraction of Christ's laws
 - a. Unjust anger and insults towards others will bring judgment (Matthew 5:22)
 - b. Unreconciled debts must be paid (Matthew 5:25-26)
5. The title "Christ" (Anointed One) looks back to Psalm 2:2 here, as it does wherever it occurs in Revelation (11:15; 12:10; 20:6), tying this reign to Old Testament expectations of God's kingdom on earth

III. THE SANCTIFIED JOY OF THE REDEEMED (6)

A. They are blessed

1. This is the fifth of seven beatitudes in Revelation (1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 22:14)
2. To be blessed is to be happy and favoured
3. To even eat bread in the kingdom of God is blessedness of infinite degree (Luke 14:15)
4. But to be granted to reign with Christ in his kingdom is blessing beyond understanding
 - a. Adam in Paradise was made a little lower than the angels
 - b. The believer perfected in glory is granted a far greater position, even over the holy angels (1 Corinthians 6:3)

B. They are holy

1. They are holy (*hagios*) because they are saints (*hagion*)
2. They are made holy by the blood of the Lamb (7:14)
3. Holiness is a requirement to enter the kingdom (Hebrews 12:14)
4. Many people want to enjoy the *blessedness* of the next world but have no desire for its *holiness*
 - a. Such people are hypocrites, professing to know God but denying him in their works (Titus 1:16)
 - b. Those who possess true saving faith desire not only to be saved from hell, but to be sanctified and freed from sin altogether (Psalm 51:6-7,10; Matthew 5:6)

C. They have a part in the first resurrection

1. The word for “part” (*meros*) is a portion or share
2. What we do with our lives determines what our portion is in the next
3. Most people choose to have their portion in this life (Psalm 17:14)
4. In so doing, their part is taken from the book of life and from the holy city (22:19)
5. They shall have their part in the lake of fire (21:8)

D. The second death has no power over them

1. This “second death” is first mentioned in 2:11, and is defined in 20:14 and 21:18

2. The “first death”, to which all mankind is subject, is physical death
 3. In comparison to the second death, physical death is insignificant (John 11:25-26), and even desirable for those who are Christ’s (Philippians 1:23)
 4. The second death can only be escaped by the second birth – born once, die twice; born twice, die once
- E. They shall be priests of God and Christ, and reign with him
1. The Lord will honour those who honour him (1 Samuel 2:30; John 12:26)
 2. To execute judgment, “this honour have all his saints” (Psalm 149:5-9)
 3. On that day, glorified saints shall have “praise and honour and glory” (1 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Peter 1:7)

CONCLUSION

1. Mephibosheth was condemned by justice, but was not only spared by the king, but allowed to sit at the king’s table (2 Samuel 9:7)
2. We too are condemned by God’s law as sinners worthy of eternal death, yet by his infinite grace, our King not only grants to us life from the dead, but permits us to sit at his royal table
3. Have you received this gift of grace by trusting in the blood of Jesus Christ?
4. There is soon coming a day when there will a great reversal, when they “that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first” (Matthew 19:30)

5. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32)
6. The believer should rejoice to be seen by the world as foolish, weak, base and despised, for these are the ones that God chooses to display his grace in, that no flesh should glory in his presence (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)
7. To render to God these brief lives in exchange for eternal glory is a proposition that only a fool would reject (Romans 8:17-18)