

When the Lord Jesus Christ returns the second time, he will establish the Kingdom and reign with his people as promised in 2 Sam 7. In order for this to occur his people must be resurrected, therefore, the resurrection of his people must be pre-millennial. With God there are only two classes of men, the just and the unjust, that is, believers and unbelievers.

The resurrection of the body is a vital and a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. All people will be resurrected. The question is, is the resurrection of the just and unjust simultaneous? Will there be a general resurrection of both the just and the unjust. There is a definitive answer to this question given in the Scriptures. It states that there will be two resurrections of two classes of men separated by a specific interval of time. That passage is Revelation 20. However that passage and the entire Apocalypse have been prone to false interpretations along with allegorical and spiritualizing interpretations. The understanding of this book in general and this passage in particular has therefore been quite varied. We will examine this passage in the light of other Scriptures and by the analogy of Scripture determine if anything less than a literal understanding of this explicit passage is really justified. Let us pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We are told in verses 4-6. 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.* ⁵ *But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.* ⁶ *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.*

Paul states in 1 Cor 15, ¹² *Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?* ¹³ *But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:* ¹⁴ *And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.* ¹⁵ *Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.* ¹⁶ *For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:* ¹⁷ *And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.* ¹⁸ *Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.* ¹⁹ *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

To pervert the doctrine of the resurrection is to embrace heresy and is to be condemned and shunned. Paul warned of two teachers who distorted this doctrine, *And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some,* 2 Timothy 2:17-18.

They did not deny the doctrine of the resurrection, but corrupted it, saying that the resurrection was *past already*, that what Christ spoke concerning the resurrection was *to be understood allegorically*, that it must be meant of a spiritual resurrection only. It is true that being *quicken* (Eph 2:1-6), being *born again* (Jn 3:5-8) may be termed a spiritual resurrection, but to infer from this that there will not be a true and real resurrection of the body at the last day is to pit one truth against another. Dear friends, let us take heed of Paul's exhortation here.

As we shall see, it is premillennialism that is the most faithful to Paul's position. It is postmillennialism and especially amillennialism that have a tendency to undermine the centrality of the resurrection. For the premillennialist it is the glorious premillennial return of Christ and the concurrent resurrection of the just, which is the "blessed hope." By contrast the emphasis of the postmillennialist is on the world getting better and on a millennial period of great blessing before the return of Christ. For many amillennialists their hope is in heaven. Many of them seemingly fail to realize that heaven is the intermediate state, where the disembodied spirits of the just await the resurrection. Many Amillennialists and Postmillennialists are looking forward to spending eternity in heaven, and the resurrection they profess, seems a useless adjunct to their eschatology.

In order to escape the literal teaching of Revelation 19 and 20 Amillennialists and Postmillennialists follow Augustine's theory of "recapitulation" and "repetition" and interpret Rev 20 as beginning at the first advent of Christ. In an effort to counter the premillennialist interpretation of the two resurrections separated by 1000 years, they understand the

first resurrection and those who *lived* to be a spiritual resurrection or regeneration. The fact that those who were *beheaded* were those who *lived* and partook of *the first resurrection* proves that the reference is to a physical resurrection, as does Christ's statement in Rev 1:18, where he said, *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.* See also Jn 11:25,26. He was not speaking of a spiritual death and spiritual resurrection, but physical death and physical resurrection. Revelation 20 plainly teaches two physical resurrections, those who were just and those who were unjust separated by 1000 years!! Notice verse 6, *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.* The first death is physical death; the *second death* is eternal in *the lake of fire.* Those who are cast there are the wicked.

The point we want to make about the resurrection is more directly to the issue at hand. Premillennialists believe in a literal, earthly millennium, as promised by the covenants, prophesied by the prophets, taught by Christ and his Apostles, and as set forth in the Scriptures. The beginning of the thousand years coincides with the receiving of the everlasting Kingdom promised to the Christ, where he will rule in the midst of his enemies, as Psalm 110 teaches.

This millennium is bracketed by two resurrections, the first resurrection at the return of Christ at the beginning of the millennium, and the resurrection of *the rest of the dead*, the resurrection of the wicked, at the end of the millennium both of which are physical resurrections. The testimony of the book of the Revelation is clear and explicit on that point. Does the rest of Scripture support the view that there are two separate resurrections, that of the just and of the unjust. We will note that there is ample testimony in all of Scripture to sustain the teaching of the book of the Revelation. And if this is so, it sustains the view that Revelation 20, as literally understood, is a reliable and faithful account of the eschatological future.

Now all Christians believe in the resurrection of the dead, however, not all Christians believe that there will be two separate resurrections of the dead, one of the just and one of the unjust, separated by at least 1000 years. Many simply believe in one general resurrection, where the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust occur at the same time.

Dr. Kenneth Gentry stated "Why should we believe that the New Testament everywhere teaches a general, singular resurrection on the last day, only to discover later in the most difficult book of the Bible that there are actually two specific, distantly separated resurrections for different classes of people?"

The testimony of the book of the Revelation is clear and explicit on that point, however, since Almillennialists and Postmillennialists deny these facts, we will examine the Scriptures to show that there is ample testimony in all of Scripture to sustain this teaching. But first let us notice the faith of the APC:

Chapter 32 of the Confession of Faith of the American Presbyterian church, Of the State of Man After Death and of the Resurrection of the Dead states:

SECTION I : The bodies of men, after death, return to dust and see corruption, but their souls (which neither die nor sleep) having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies; and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledges none.

SECTION II : At the return of the Lord Jesus Christ such living persons as are found in him shall not die but be changed, and all the dead in Christ shall be raised up with the self-same bodies, and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls forever.

SECTION III : The bodies of the unjust shall, after Christ has reigned on earth a thousand years, be raised by the power of God to dishonor.

First let us look at the faith of the Apostle Paul in this regard, Philippians 3:11. *If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.* The word translated "of" here is *ek* in the Greek. It means *from, out from, away from; by, by means of, by reason of, because; for; on, at; of.* What is Paul really saying here? What is he hoping for? If there is a general resurrection of all the dead, then why is he seeking, striving, and hoping to attain unto it? Why is he "suffering the loss of all things" and striving "by any means" to attain unto something that will be common to all men? The answer is, of course, that Paul is seeking to attain unto the first resurrection, the resurrection of the just,

the resurrection of the dead at the coming and kingdom of Jesus Christ. This language is corroborated by being incorporated into several similar texts.

William Hendriksen, an amillennialist, and no friend of the view of separate resurrections says, this of this verse... "What is meant by this out-resurrection out of the dead" (thus literally)?

He spiritualizes this resurrection, but that is an untenable position. The same language is used in multiple texts, many of which clearly refer to a physical resurrection. Paul writes in 1 Cor 6:14, *And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.* The preposition ek is prefixed to the verb to raise and translated by the word up. This confirms the idea that there is not simply a raising of the dead, but a raising **out from among** the dead. If there is a general resurrection of all men, then Paul could simply have said that we will be raised. However, if there is a separate resurrection of the just from among the dead, then the reason for Paul's specific language becomes apparent.

This is confirmed by the words of Christ himself. Mark 9:10, *And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.* Clearly the resurrection referred to here is physical. The translation is "from out of the dead or from among the dead."

This is not a general resurrection of all men at the same time. First, the resurrection of Christ was not part of a resurrection of all men, but Christ alone was resurrected from among the dead. Secondly, the disciples, who were not Sadducees, and who believed in the resurrection, were not wondering what a resurrection of the dead meant. That they already knew. They were wondering what a resurrection out from among the dead might mean.

Luke 20:34-36 *And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, (that is, from out of the dead or from among the dead) neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.*

This text again confirms the same point. If all men are to be resurrected, then what does it mean to *be accounted worthy to obtain...the resurrection of the dead*. After all, even the most unworthy, even the most depraved and wicked men, will be resurrected. But if there are separate, distinct resurrections of the just unto eternal life and of the unjust unto eternal condemnation, then Jesus' statement makes perfect sense. Then Christ is saying that those who are worthy will be resurrected separately out from among the great mass of the dead. This is confirmed by such texts as the following:

But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God, Luke 14:13-15.

If there is to be a general resurrection of all men to their just deserts at the end of the age, why does Christ specify that the righteous shall receive their reward at the resurrection of the just. And why is the response connected to eating bread in the kingdom of God? The only logical conclusion possible is that there is a separate resurrection of the just, who shall enjoy the blessings and benefits of entering into the kingdom of God.

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 6:39-40.

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. John 6:44

Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day, John 6:54.

If there is to be a general resurrection of all the dead at the last day, at the end of this age, at the return of Christ, why does Christ make this privilege exclusive to the elect in all these verses? In verse 39 being elected of the Father is connected with being raised up at the last day. In verse 40 believing in Christ and having eternal life is connected with being raised up at the last day. In verse 44 coming to Christ by being effectually called by the Father is connected with being raised up at the last day. And in verse 54 communing in the blood and body of Jesus Christ is

connected with being raised up at the last day. If this is so, and if the Scriptures, emphatically and repeatedly, make such prerequisites for being raised up at the last day, how can we hold to a general resurrection of the dead that includes the wicked at the same time?

Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection, Hebrews 11:35

Here also Paul infers that there is more than one resurrection. He states that to attain unto a particular resurrection, the resurrection obviously elsewhere referred to as the resurrection of the just, is to obtain a better resurrection. The text does not imply a common resurrection for all men with different results. It implies a different resurrection.

And all this is confirmed by 1 Corinthians 15, the great Pauline passage on the resurrection. First of all Paul says, *If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die, 1 Corinthians 15:32.*

Paul seems here to be speaking of resurrection in general. If there is no resurrection of the dead, why suffer all things in this life. Let us eat and drink and be merry for this life is all that there is. However, as he proceeds to discuss the resurrection of the dead, he is clearly alluding to something far different than a general resurrection common to all men. He is speaking of the resurrection of the just. The following verses clearly imply that the resurrection under discussion is limited to those who are the just, those who are justified by the blood of Christ. Paul says of this resurrection...

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body...And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly...For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality, 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 49, 53.

This is clearly speaking of a resurrection unto life and eternal glory. In this theological debate let us not lose sight of this larger thought. The Gospel, the good news of salvation, is that *Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.* Believers, who were chosen in him before the foundation of the world, and were given to him by his Father, and were purchased and redeemed by his blood, and were called by his grace and regenerated by his Spirit, and who trust in him, and are possessed by him, shall be raised up by him at the last day at his second and personal coming.

Is your hope in Christ? Have you examined your heart in this regard? Have you rested your salvation in Christ alone? Have you proved this in your heart and life? If you have not looked inward here, do not delay! Christ's resurrection is a pledge and earnest of ours, if we are true believers in him; because he has risen, we shall rise.

Notice that Paul does not speak of the resurrection of the wicked here. They are nowhere mentioned. In fact that there are a series of separate resurrections is clearly stated by Paul in this passage.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's 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. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, 1 Corinthians 15:20-26.

In verse 22 Paul says that "all" shall "be made alive" or resurrected. But in the very next verse he states that this will not all happen simultaneously. Rather he says that this will happen in a certain order. That order is first the resurrection of Christ, the first-fruits. Secondly those that are Christ's at his coming. *Then cometh the end.*

Paul teaches that not everyone shall be raised at the same time. Christ the firstfruit had already been raised. Next to be raised *they that are Christ's at his coming*, obviously his second coming, as his first coming had already past. Now it should be clear to all that the first phase, the resurrection of Christ, and the second phase in this resurrection order, the resurrection of those that are Christ's at his coming will be separated by at least 2000 years. So this certainly demolishes the idea that it is not possible for there to be an interval of 1000 years between the second and

the third phase of this resurrection order as premillennialists believe. The word translated *order* is a military term, having to do with different ranks or bands. The word here means that these bands will be raised in their proper order.

But how will we understand *then cometh the end*. Some think that this could refer to the *resurrection of the wicked* at the end of the 1000 years. However, the resurrection of the 144,000, the res. of the two witnesses, the res. of the tribulation martyrs, and the res. of the godly Millennial mortals must be accounted for. Also Paul does not refer to saints like Enoch, Elijah, Moses, those that were resurrected at Christ's resurrection, etc. So it seems that these designations in 1 Cor 15:23,24 are broad categories of resurrected and transformed saints. Notice the phrase in verse 22 *in Christ shall all be made alive*. The term *in Christ* denotes the state of the believer. Therefore there is no reference to the wicked in these bands. Those resurrected at the end may be the last of the just who will be resurrected. All the rest will be added to one of these latter two groups.

Paul states, *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed*, 1 Corinthians 15:52.

Again Paul is explicit in the timing of this resurrection and is clearly restricting his remarks to a resurrection of the just. Nowhere is there even a hint of any general resurrection that would include the resurrection of the unjust. They are not in view anywhere in this classic passage of the resurrection. From this passage it would be difficult, if not impossible, to prove a general resurrection of the dead, of both the just and unjust, at the coming of Jesus Christ.

Let us now examine a couple of passages that have been pressed into service to argue for a general resurrection of the dead. The first one is a verse in Daniel 12:2, *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*.

In the KJV translation this is a problem text for both views. For the proponents of a general resurrection this is problematical, because the text does not say "all," but "many." To those who say that "all" of something can be "many," it is still a problem, because it doesn't just say that "many" are resurrected, but that "many of" of a certain class of people, of those that *sleep in the dust of the earth*, will be resurrected. Now many of something is not all of that something. This text in that sense cannot teach a general resurrection of all men at this point in time.

For the proponents of separate resurrections of the just and the unjust this text has also been problematical, because the KJV speaks of persons being resurrected to both everlasting life and to everlasting shame and contempt. Attempts to solve this dilemma by postulating a general resurrection of all professing believers, both good and bad are extremely unsatisfying. One is either a Christian or one is not. One is either one of the just, justified by the finished work of Christ, or one is not, regardless of one's personal sins. To be part of the resurrection of the just, but be condemned to everlasting shame and contempt is contradictory. The resolution to this text has to be found elsewhere.

The resolution is, I believe, to be found in the Hebrew text. Prof. Bush's translation is consistent with the exegesis of the text expressed above. He translates...*"And many of the sleepers of the dust of the ground shall awake—these to everlasting life and those to shame and everlasting contempt."*

This gives two classes of resurrected persons. First of all "these," the persons being referred to, as being resurrected at the point of time the text is discussing. These, as participating in the resurrection of the just, are raised to eternal life. Those, another class of persons, who will be raised separately at another point in time, not in view in this text, will be raised to everlasting shame and contempt. Understood this way the text is made to speak consistently and supports the doctrine of separate resurrections of the just and unjust. This text does not therefore constitute an effective proof text for a general resurrection of the dead as is often presumed.

With regard to this passage Alexander Reese states "it remains to deal with a difficulty that exists in connection with the current versions. These seem to teach that the resurrection is not limited to the just, but that certain of the wicked dead are raised at the same time "to suffer shame and everlasting contempt." This is a genuine difficulty to many in accepting the literal interpretation of the passage, for in all other Scriptures the first resurrection is limited to the righteous...According to competent Hebraists the second verse of Daniel 12 is not happily translated in the English versions."

Reese goes on to quote the following authorities for the proper grammatical rendering of this text.

Tregelles, in his Daniel, pp. 165-6 states: "I do not doubt that the right translation of this verse is what has been given above: 'And many from among the sleepers of the dust of the earth shall awake; these shall be unto everlasting life; but those (the rest of the sleepers, those who do not awake at this time) shall be unto shame and everlasting contempt.' The word which in our Authorized Version is twice rendered "some" is never repeated in any other passage in the Hebrew Bible, in the sense of taking up distributively any general class which had been previously mentioned; this is enough, I believe, to warrant our applying its first occurrence here to the whole of the many who awake, and the second to the mass of the sleepers, those who do not awake at this time. It is clearly not a general resurrection; it is "many from among," and it is only by taking the words in this sense that we can gain any information as to what becomes of those who continue to sleep in the dust of the earth.

"This passage has been understood by the Jewish commentators in the sense that I have stated. Of course these men with the veil on their hearts are no guides as to the use of the Old Testament; but they are helps as to the grammatical and lexicographical value of sentences and words. Two of the Rabbis who commented on this prophet were Saadiah Haggai (in the tenth century of our era) and Aben Ezra (in the twelfth); the latter of these was a writer of peculiar abilities and accuracy of mind. He explains the verse in the following manner:

"'And many : The Gaon (i.e., R. Saadiah, whom he often quotes) says that its interpretation is, those who shall be unto everlasting life, and those who shall not awake shall be unto shame and everlasting contempt.'" Nathaniel West, in his *Thousand Years*: pp. 266-269, states, "The true rendering of Dan. 12:1-3, in connection with the context, is 'And (at that time) many (of thy people) shall awake (or be separated) out from among the sleepers in the earth-dust. These (who awake) shall be unto life everlasting, but those (who do not awake at that time) shall be unto shame and contempt everlasting.' So the most renowned Hebrew Doctors and the best Christian exegetes render it; and it is one of the defects of the *Revised Version* that—for reasons deemed prudent, doubtless, by the Old Testament Company—it has allowed the wrong impression King James' Version gives, to remain. A false doctrine is thereby, through defective rendering, given color from the Word of God, which repudiates it at every step."

And in a note West adds: "So Cocceius, the best Hebraist of his day : 'No universal resurrection is taught here. These who are unto eternal life are distinguished from those who are unto eternal shame and contempt. The former awake at the time specified, Dan 11:45, (and I would like to read this verse, referring to the Antichrist. You can read the context - *And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.*),12:1. To carry the verb 'awake' into the second member of the verse is to add to Scripture, which I dare not do.' So Saadiah, the prince of Hebrew scholars, the two Kimchis, Abarbanel, Bechai and Maimonides."

The next text to examine is the well known resurrection passage in the Gospel of John.

John 5:25, *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. Verse 28, Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, Verse 29, 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 passage speaks of two separate resurrections - one a resurrection of life, the other a resurrection of damnation. The issue again is whether or not the resurrections are simultaneous. The crux of this text hinges on the meaning of the word hour. The meaning of this word is a moment, an instant, an occasion; time, short indefinite period of time; hour of the day (i.e. a twelfth part of the period between sunrise and sunset, sometimes longer and sometimes shorter than sixty minutes). If the meaning here is taken for an hour, as a single short period of time at some time in human history, then this text can be, and has been, used to argue for a general resurrection of the dead. The Greek word in question *ora* can also carry the meaning of time. It is so used by Ambrose and even by Augustine, who is claimed by both amillennialists and postmillennialists, as the father of their eschatological system. If that interpretation of *ora* is accepted then the text merely teaches that a time is coming when these resurrections will take place. However, it would no longer imply that these resurrections will take place in a single, short period of time, such as one hour.

In conclusion, there are no texts that mandate an interpretation of one general resurrection of the dead at a single point in time, and we have an explicit passage in the Apocalypse, the book that is dedicated to expounding eschatology, that clearly teaches two distinct resurrections separated by a 1000 year period.

Revelation 20 immediately succeeding the account of the return of Christ at the end of the age, clearly teaches two separate resurrections; the first resurrection, and a thousand years later, the resurrection of the unjust. To allegorize, or spiritualize, or argue this explicit passage away would be difficult under any circumstances. When it clearly and emphatically confirms what can already be deduced from all the other resurrection passages, then this passage throws much light on the subject.

All questions have not been answered. For instance since there will be mortals living during the 1000 years, what happens to them after the rebellion of Satan and Gog and Magog? What is their state during eternity?

This debate will undoubtedly continue, perhaps until the Lord returns. However, the above stated arguments should give food for thought to those who have always assumed, based on tradition and a superficial reading of the text and the allegorical and spiritual method of interpretation, that there is but one general resurrection of the dead.

Let us look forward to the resurrection of the just and seek by God's grace to attain unto this better resurrection.