

The First Resurrection & the Second Death

Revelation

20:4-6



⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.



Revelation 20:5



- The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.
- This is the first resurrection.

Look back at verse 4

What is the first resurrection?

This is the only passage in the entire NT that puts “**first**” in front of resurrection.

The way you understand the 1000 (millennial) kingdom directly influences your understanding of the **first resurrection**.



Option 1

It is the spiritual rebirth aka born again, saved or regeneration

Option 2

It is the life God gives the believer when the body dies and the soul is transported to heaven

Option 3

It is the bodily resurrection that happens for the believer when Jesus returns



Revelation 20:4



- Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. **They came to life** and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

In v. 4

**Notice these people are physically dead—
they were beheaded.**

**And notice they came to life is placed after
we learn that they were beheaded for the
Word of God and their testimony of faith in
Jesus.**

Coming to life only works for option 2.



Option 1—is NOT an option.

John is not describing their spiritual birth i.e. becoming Christians—these are solid believers they are giving their life for the cause of Christ.

The people in v. 4 are Christians who gave their life for the cause of Christ.

They are martyrs and John wants us to understand they did NOT stay dead—“they came to life.”



Option 3—is NOT an option.

Coming to life cannot describe the bodily resurrection that occurs when Jesus returns because that require us to understand that the believer is presently dead but we know the souls of those who in heaven are described as being alive.

Jesus makes this very clear in Matthew 22:32-32.



Matthew 22:29–30

- And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ³² ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? **He is not God of the dead, but of the living.”**



John calls this the first resurrection to establish a contrast between the resurrection of the body that will occur when Christ returns.

At this point, John is writing to encourage those who were martyred (beheaded/slain) for the cause of Christ.

You, early church, believer need to know that your loved one who died for not taking the mark of the beast is now alive with Christ.



Revelation 20:6



- **Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection!**

**What I presented is the
minority opinion;
here is the majority opinion.**

20:5 the rest of the dead. The bodies of unbelievers of all ages will not be resurrected until the Great White Throne judgment (vv. 12, 13). **first resurrection.** Scripture teaches two kinds of resurrections: the “resurrection of life” and “the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:29; cf. Dan. 12:2; Acts 24:15). The first kind of resurrection is described as “the resurrection of the just” (Luke 14:14), the resurrection of “those who are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Cor. 15:23), and the “better resurrection” (Heb. 11:35). It includes only the redeemed of the church age (1 Thess. 4:13–18), the OT (Dan. 12:2), and the Tribulation (v. 4). They will enter the kingdom in resurrection bodies, along with believers who survived the Tribulation. The **second kind of resurrection**, then, will be the resurrection of the unconverted who will receive their final bodies suited for torment in hell.

John MacArthur



Did you notice the addition of the word “kind”?

John doesn't say first kind of resurrection.

John says “first resurrection” and he says it twice.



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**Last week we looked
with GREAT detail @
John 5:28-29**



John 5:28–29

- Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.



**As I read John 5, I don't see
anyway to separate those
resurrections by 1000 years.**

Consider:

Acts 24:15 & Dan 12:2



Acts 24:15

- having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that **there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.**



**A resurrection of both
the just and unjust.**

**What does that look
and sound like to you?**



Daniel 12:2

- And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, **some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.**



Again I want to be transparent.

**This is an area where I may be wrong
and do NOT want to be dogmatic.**

**We must be dogmatic concerning the
reality of a future resurrection of all the
dead without being dogmatic about the
timing.**



I think the **first resurrection** is describing the reality that I don't stay dead as a believer; when I physically die my soul comes alive and I come alive in the presence of Christ.

This existence in heaven without a spiritual body is called the **intermediate state** because it doesn't go on forever.



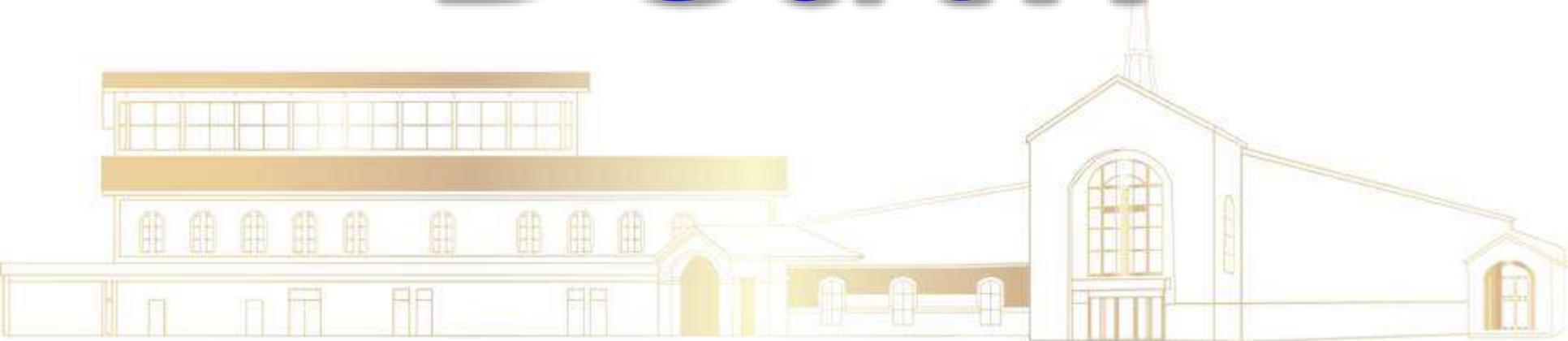


The major advantage to Option 2 is the degree to which John is now describing something that both Jesus and Paul affirm to be true.

If Option 2 is wrong John is introducing something that no other NT author writes about.

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Second Death



Revelation 20:6



- **Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection!**
Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

**Why is John using
this unique formula
of first resurrection
and second death?**



In John's formula everyone doesn't participate in the first resurrection—only the holy.

For the righteous there is a first and second resurrection is what John seems to be implying.

And likewise for the unrighteous when it comes to death.



John's use of First Resurrection and Second Death in Revelation

<p>[First] Death (physical)</p>	<p>Second Death (eternal punishment in the lake of fire)</p>
<p>First Resurrection (soul life in heaven)</p>	<p>[Second] Resurrection (bodily)</p>

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**This is not John's first
use of Second Death**



Revelation 2:10–11



- **Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.** ¹¹ **He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'**

**What happens when we put
Revelation 2:10-11 side-by-
side with Revelation 20:4,6?**

Do they look the same?



Comparing Revelation 2:10-11 to 20:4 & 6

2:10-11

Be faithful **unto death,**

give you **the crown**

Of life

The one who conquers
will **not be hurt by the
second death.**'

20:4 & 6

who had been **beheaded**

and **reigned** with Christ for
1000 years.

Came to life

Over such **the second death
has no power,** but they will
be priests of God and of
Christ, and they will reign
with him for a thousand
years.

One of the arguments presented for a 1000 year kingdom on the earth after the return of Christ is the necessity of reigning with Christ.

But Rev 22:5 suggests otherwise.



Revelation 22:5



- And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they [his servants] will reign forever and ever.

What is the second death?

Let's look at
v. 11-14



Revelation 20:11



- Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.

The common view today is that there are multiple future judgments separated by time, location and target audience.

This is not what the Bible teaches.



Matthew 25:32

- Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates **the sheep from the goats.**



Revelation 20:12



- **And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne,**

The Revelation of Jesus Christ
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Look Back @

Revelation 11:18



Revelation 11:18



- **The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”**

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“Small & Great” **Poor & Powerful**



Revelation 19:5



- And from the throne came a voice saying, “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.”

Revelation 20:12



- and books were opened.
- Then another book was opened, which is the book of life.

Philippians 4:3

- Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement **and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.**



Revelation 21:27



- But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Which is it?

**Am I being judged out of
the books or am I good to
go if my name is in the
book of life?**



Those who are in the book of life have performed works warranting inclusion, while those who are punished are those who have pursued and practiced evil. Such works are not the basis for being found in the book of life but constitute the necessary evidence of belonging to God.

Thomas Schreiner



Revelation 20:12



- And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.

**What have
you done
with Christ?**



1) I have ignored him.

2) I have dismissed him.

3) I have marginalized him.

**4) I follow him. I strive to obey
him.**



**What am I doing with my
life?**

**What will be written in the
books that gives evidence I
am a follower of Christ?**



Matthew 16:27

- For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay [reward] each person according to what he has done.



Psalm 62:12

- and you, O Lord, demonstrate loyal love. **For you repay men for what they do.**



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Turn Back to Romans 2:6-11



Romans 2:6

- He will render to each one according to his works:



Let me show you the work that puts your name in the book of life.

John 6:28–29

Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?”

Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”



Romans 2:7–11

- to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, **he will give eternal life;**⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, **there will be wrath and fury.**



2 Thessalonians 1:8

- in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those **who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.**



1 Peter 4:17

- For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, **what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?**



Romans 2:9

- There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does **evil**, the Jew first and also the Greek,



Romans 2:10-11

- but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.
- For God shows no partiality.



True faith expresses itself in a changed life—though not a perfect life, to be sure—revealing the transformation taking place by God’s grace. Those who live in the same way they did before conversion reveal that they never truly belonged to God.

Thomas Schreiner



Revelation 20:13



- And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.

Revelation 20:14



- Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.
- This is the second death, the lake of fire.

Revelation 14:9–11

A third angel followed the first two, declaring in a loud voice: “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and takes the mark on his forehead or his hand, ¹⁰ **that person will also drink of the wine of God’s anger that has been mixed undiluted in the cup of his wrath, and he will be tortured with fire and sulfur** in front of the holy angels and in front of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke from their torture will go up forever and ever, and those who worship the beast and his image **will have no rest day or night,** along with anyone who receives the mark of his name.”

