

83 FIRST RESURRECTION AND SECOND DEATH IN REVELATION

INTRODUCTION: Revelation 20 makes reference to “the first resurrection” and “the second death” which implies there is a first death and second resurrection. These terms are peculiar to the book of Revelation. We will seek to show the first death was the spiritual death of Adam into which all were born, and the first resurrection was trusting in God and His Son. The second death was the judgment of Old Covenant non-believers and the second resurrection was the raising of believers from sheol at the end of the Old Covenant age in AD 70. These concepts pertain to spiritual matters, not to bodies rising out of the ground. Paul said, “It is sown a physical body and raised a spiritual body.” I Cor 15:44. Please see Preterist Papers #9 “The Death of Adam.”

1. FIRST DEATH: The natural man is born spiritually dead due to the fall. To deny God is to stay dead.

- A. “Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, so also death was passed on to all men, because all sinned.” Rom 5:12
- B. “Through one trespass, all men were condemned.” Rom 5:18
- C. “But she who gives herself to pleasure is dead while she lives.” I Tim 5:6
- D. “I know your works, that you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.” Rev 3:1

2. FIRST RESURRECTION: Trusting in God and a reference to Jesus, the first born from the dead. Believers who are “in Christ” share in His resurrection, also known as being “born again” and “salvation.”

- A. “Just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.” Rom 6:4
- B. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” 2 Cor 5:17
- C. God “raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Eph 2:6
- D. “You were made alive when you were dead in transgressions and sins.” Eph 2:1
- E. “Even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.” Eph 2:5

3. SECOND DEATH: Destruction of those living and those in sheol who rejected Yahweh and His Son.

- A. “Don’t be afraid of those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. Rather, fear him who is able to destroy both soul [second death] and body in Gehenna.” Mt 10:28
- B. “Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.” Rev 20:14-15
- C. “But for the cowardly, unbelieving, sinners, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their part is in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.” Rev 21:8

4. SECOND RESURRECTION: Spiritual raising of those believers living and those in sheol, in the first century.

- A. “The trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.” I Cor 15:52
- B. “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality [second resurrection]. But when this corruptible will have put on incorruption, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then what is written will happen: “Death is swallowed up in victory [second resurrection].” I Cor 15:53-54
- C. “Having hope toward God, which they themselves also wait for, that there is about to be a rising again of the dead, both of righteous and unrighteous.” Acts 24:15 YLT
- D. “Elders who are among you, I exhort, who am a fellow-elder, and a witness of the sufferings of the Christ, and of the glory [resurrection] about to be revealed a partaker, feed the flock of God...” 1 Peter 5:1-2 YLT
- E. “For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory [resurrection] about to be revealed in us.” Rom 8:18 YLT.

5. SECOND DEATH AND SECOND RESURRECTION: simultaneous, collective and in the first century

- A. “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Dan 12:2
- B. Jesus said, “The hour comes, and now is, when the dead will hear the Son of God’s voice; and those who hear will live... Don’t marvel at this, for the hour comes, in which all that are in the tombs will hear his voice, and will come out; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.” John 5:25-29 YLT

6. THE FIRST CENTURY MARTYRS OF REV. 20 WERE “IN CHRIST”, SO THEY REIGNED WITH HIM AWAITING THE SECOND RESURRECTION.

“I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and such as didn’t worship the beast nor his image, and didn’t receive the mark on their forehead and on their hand. They lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead didn’t live until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over these, the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with him one thousand years.” Rev 20:4-6

7. AS LONG AS THE TEMPLE WAS STANDING, THE OLD COVENANT EXISTED. The temple was only a symbol of God’s presence and a shadow of better things to come.

“The Holy Spirit is indicating this, that the way into the Holy Place wasn’t yet revealed while the first tabernacle was still standing; which is a symbol of the present age, where gifts and sacrifices are offered that are incapable, concerning the conscience, of making the worshipper perfect.” Heb 9:8-9

8. JESUS PREDICTED THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE SPECIFICALLY.

“But he [Jesus] answered them, ‘You see all of these things [temple structures], don’t you? Most certainly I tell you, there will not be left here one stone on another, that will not be thrown down.’” Mt 24:2

9. HISTORY REPORTS THE TEMPLE WAS DESTROYED IN A.D. 70, ENDING THE OLD COVENANT, MAKING WAY FOR THE NEW COVENANT. In N.T. language, the O.C. was “this age” and the N.C. era was “the age to come”.

“The siege of Jerusalem of 70 CE was the decisive event of the First Jewish–Roman War (66–73 CE), in which the Roman army led by future emperor Titus besieged Jerusalem, the center of Jewish rebel resistance in the Roman province of Judaea. Following a five-month siege, the Romans destroyed the city, including the Second Temple.” Wikipedia, Siege of Jerusalem

10. BEFORE CHRIST’S SECOND COMING, BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS WENT TO SHEOL.

“Sheol is a term found in the Hebrew Bible, often translated as “the grave,” “the pit,” or “the realm of the dead.” The word “Sheol” appears in the Old Testament approximately 65 times.... Sheol is depicted as a shadowy place where the dead reside, regardless of their moral standing during life. It is not synonymous with the Christian concept of hell, as it does not inherently imply a place of punishment.” Source: Biblehub

11. JESUS EXPLAINED THE ENTIRE O.T. HAD TO BE FULFILLED BEFORE THE NEW COVENANT WAS IN PLACE.

Jesus said, “Don’t think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I didn’t come to destroy, but to fulfill. For most certainly, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not even one smallest letter or one tiny pen stroke shall in any way pass away from the law, until all things are accomplished.” Mt 5:17-18 (The destruction of the temple was prophesied in Dan. 9 and other Old Testament scriptures)

12. THERE IS BIAS IN THE TRANSLATION OF ESCHATOLOGICAL PASSAGES.

Number four in this document uses Young’s Literal Translation (YLT) and bolds the word “about” to indicate this may not be in your version of the Bible. In Preterist Paper #25, we demonstrated that translator bias appears to have figured strongly in the translation of certain New Testament passages pertaining to eschatology in commonly used versions of the Bible. This is apparently due to the widespread conviction that the second coming is in the future. In commonly used versions, the Greek word “mello” (to be about to, #3195) is absent. So for the relevant passages, we used a literal translation to convey the intended meaning of imminence.

CLOSING THOUGHTS:

The first resurrection was in the past for New Testament writers and other believers, but because the New Testament books were written before AD 70, the second resurrection was in their future. Those who believe the resurrection is future to us, think they will be home with the Lord when they die, but their theology does not support this. If the resurrection is in the future, they are destined for sheol when they die, to await the future resurrection. This is not consistent with scripture because the resurrection, judgement and Day of the Lord were imminent in the first century. The Preterist view is the only understanding that affirms believers’ immediate presence with God in heaven upon death.

Suggested related papers:

Preterist Papers #1 and #2 are foundational to all the studies on this website.

See P.P # 25 “Bias in Translation”

See P.P. #10 “Hell is Not in the Bible”

See P.P. #27 “The Millennium Lasted 40 Years”

See P.P. #9 “The Death of Adam”