

Rev. 20:6. the First Resurrection

by Horatius Bonar

The first resurrection is the hope of the Christian, where the righteous rise to glory and reign with Christ for a thousand years.

Scripture: Daniel 7:9, Luke 20:36, John 5:29, John 11:25, Acts 2:41, 1 Corinthians 15:23, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Revelation 2:11, Revelation 20:6, Revelation 20:13

Topics: "Resurrection", "Eternal Hope"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the hope of resurrection as central to the Christian faith, contrasting it with the finality of death. He explains that the first resurrection, as described in Revelation 20:6, is a promise of blessedness and holiness for those who have suffered for Christ, allowing them to reign with Him for a thousand years. Bonar highlights the significance of this resurrection, which brings eternal life and preservation from the second death, while also warning of the dire consequences for those who do not embrace this hope. He urges listeners to reflect on their spiritual state and the eternal choices before them, encouraging a life aligned with the promise of resurrection. The sermon concludes with a call to look to the cross for salvation, emphasizing that even the most lost can find hope in Christ.

Transcript

"Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection--on such the second death has no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."--Revelation 20:6.

Resurrection is our hope--not death. It has always been the Church's hope--the hope of patriarchs and kings and prophets. Martha only uttered the confession of the Church universal when she said, 'I know that he shall rise again.' Israel knew resurrection well--and the Old Testament assumes the truth of it.

It is not the putting off this vile body (or this 'body of our humiliation'), but the putting on of the immortal and incorruptible that is our hope; not our going to Christ, but His coming to us; not merely our victory over sin and its spiritual consequences, but victory over death and the grave. This hope grew brighter as the ages went on, until it was fully revealed in Him who is the resurrection and the life. But still more was needed; and it was reserved for Paul and John fully to unfold the hope.

This twentieth chapter of the Revelation is a very wonderful one, and specially valuable as giving us details of the resurrection hope.

An angel is seen descending out of heaven; he has the key of the bottomless pit, or abyss, and a great chain in his hand. He seizes the dragon, the old serpent (the murderer and liar from the beginning, John 8:44), who is the Devil, and Satan; binds him a thousand years; casts him into the abyss; locks him up; sets a seal above or upon him, to hinder his escaping and deceiving the nations for a thousand years. Then thrones are set up (Daniel 7:9); and there are sitters upon them, to whom judgment is given (1 Corinthians 6:2); the souls (Acts 2:41, 7:41) of the martyrs and the non-worshippers of the beast are made to live again; and being thus raised, they reign with Christ (ch. 5:10). But the rest of the dead are not raised until the end of the thousand years. This is the first resurrection.

It gets the designation of 'first,' not because of its pre-eminence and glory, but because it is before another. Properly speaking, the great resurrection fact is but one--'all that are in their grave shall arise;' but it divides itself into two parts or acts, separated from each other by a considerable interval--an interval (like that between the Lord's two comings) not at first revealed. But here the interval is explicitly announced--a thousand years. The righteous rise to glory at the beginning of that period, and during it they live and reign with Christ. At its close, the wicked rise, and are judged. This resurrection of the wicked at the close of the thousand years, sets aside the doctrine of annihilation entirely. They do not rise in order to be annihilated. They do not get new bodies merely in order to have these new bodies destroyed.

I. WHEN is it to be? When the Lord comes the second time. In the preceding chapter he is described as coming with the hosts of heaven for the destruction of His enemies. (See 1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:1). He comes as the resurrection and the life; the abolisher of death, the spoiler of the grave, the raiser of His saints.

II. WHO it is to consist of? This passage speaks only of the martyrs and the non-worshippers of the beast; but other passages show that all His saints are to be partakers of this reward. 'This honor have all His saints;' all who have followed Christ, or suffered for Him, from Abel downwards. They have suffered with Him here, and they shall reign with Him here. They have fought the good fight; they have overcome the world, and the god of this world. The conflict and the tribulation have been sore, but the recompense is glorious. Oneness with Christ now secures for us the glory of that day.

III. WHAT it does for those who share it? It brings to them such things as the following:

(1) Blessedness--Peculiar blessedness is to be theirs. God only knows how much that word implies, as spoken by Him who cannot lie, who exaggerates nothing, and whose simplest words are His greatest.

(2) Holiness--They are pre-eminently 'the saints of God;' set apart for Him; consecrated and purified, both outwardly and inwardly; dwelt in by him whose name is the 'Holy Spirit;' and called to special service in virtue of their consecration. Priestly-royal service is to be theirs throughout the eternal ages.

(3) Preservation from the second death--They rise to an immortality which shall never be recalled. No dying again, in any sense of the word; not a fragment of mortality about them, nothing of this vile body, and nothing of that corruption or darkness or anguish which shall be the portion of those who rise at the close of the thousand years. 'Neither shall they die any more' (Luke 20:36). They 'shall not be hurt of the second death' (Revelation 2:2), but shall feed upon the tree of life. Their connection with death, in every sense, is done forever.

(4) The possession of a heavenly priesthood--They are made priests unto God and Christ--both to the Father and the Son. Priestly nearness and access; priestly power and honor and service; priestly glory

and dignity--this is their recompense. They, with their glorified and reigning Head, form the link between creation above and creation below--between the Creator and the creature, carrying up the incenses of prayer and praise and service from all parts of a holy universe, now linked to Godhead forever, beyond the possibility of fall. They maintain the communication between God and His world, between Paradise regained and the Paradise that was never lost--no, between God and His innumerable worlds throughout all space. For priesthood is not for sacrifice alone, but for carrying on the endless communion between heaven and earth.

(5) The possession of the kingdom--They shall reign for a thousand years over a renewed earth, where there are traces still of the fall, and on which Satan is for a brief season to be let loose; and they shall reign forever and ever over a world thoroughly restored and purified, into which Satan shall never again find entrance. They are kings as well as priests, both in one--God's Melchizedek's, wearing the priestly miter, and wielding the royal scepter. Having their home and place and throne in the new Jerusalem, they rule over a delivered creation, over the converted nations, over a world now filled with the Holy Spirit in all its nations.

Such are our prospects--let us live accordingly. Let our coming honors influence us now--making us self-denied, consistent, heavenly--quicken us to zeal and love.

Sinner, walking on in unbelief, and worldliness, and pleasure, what are your prospects? Have you considered them? Are they satisfactory? What is your hope? What is judgment to do for you? What is resurrection to bring? Look at the following alternatives, and ask which is to be yours. Everlasting gladness--or everlasting sorrow? Everlasting glory--or everlasting shame? Everlasting songs-- or everlasting wailing? The marriage supper of the Lamb--or the perpetual banishment from all that is good and holy? The new heavens and earth--or the eternal wilderness, with its parched and burning wastes? The heavenly Jerusalem, with the Lamb as its light--or the blackness of darkness forever? The fruit of the tree of life and the waters of the celestial river--or the eternal hunger and the unquenchable thirst? (Luke 16:24). The first resurrection--or the second death? These are the alternatives before you--and there is no middle doom.

O that second death, and that resurrection unto condemnation! (John 5:29; Revelation 20:13.) You shall arise, O man--but what will that rising do for you? When you were carried out at the first death, there were tears shed upon your coffin; but shall it be so when you are carried out at the second death? Your funeral procession moves on; but there are not friends, no mourners. What means that dark procession? It is a legion of fallen angels come to escort you to that place where the worm dies not. They lament not, but rejoice that they have got you, both soul and body, into their keeping forever. O man! Man, made in the image of God, and made for fellowship with God--is this to be your end? Man, with a soul susceptible of such gladness and such sorrow, and with a body capable of such pleasure and such pain--is this to be your doom? Is this the end of all time's hopes, and fears, and dreams--its songs, and smiles, and laughter? Is this the end of sermons, and Sabbaths, and sacraments? Is this the end of warnings, and judgments, and providences, and entreaties, and messages of love? Well may hell from beneath be moved at your coming, and say--Have you too become like one of us?

Oh, before the last trumpet sound, before you lie down upon your earthly deathbed, lift up your eyes to the saving cross! There is healing in a look. Look and live! Though it were your last look here, before the eye closed forever, it would suffice. The uplifted Savior saves even at the last--saves even the chief of sinners!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/horatius-bonar/rev-206-the-first-resurrection/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net