

New Features on Prewrathministries.org

New on the resource page is Charles Cooper's new book, God's Elect and the Great Tribulation. It is an interpretation of Matthew 24:1-31 and Daniel 9. I have not read the book yet, but Charles has been a good friend and I have depended on his advice and teaching on several occasions. My understanding of the book is that it takes on the argument that Matthew 24 is only for the Jews. The book shows that it also applies to the church, and it deals with the timing of end time events as laid out in Daniel and Matthew 24.

What Others Are Saying

Randy Alcorn in his book on Heaven, reviews in great detail what heaven will be like and contrasts some of our popular current belief against what the scriptures actually say. If you have not read this book, I highly recommend it.

One of the major tenets of the book is the fact that what God began in the beginning by creating a perfect earth—the garden of Eden. He will finish when He creates the new heaven and new earth. He shows how scripture teaches that we are not meant for some out-of-body spiritual existence floating around on clouds, rather, we have always been meant to live in a physical earth in physical bodies which will be the final heaven. He goes on to say that he believes, according to scripture, that the new heaven and earth will be a lot like this one - only better!

Related to my discussion of the first resurrection, Randy Alcorn also points out the fact that in scripture God's people are destined to rule the new heaven and earth with Jesus. There is a passage of scripture you and I have heard over and over again, but about which Alcorn's book brought a new and exciting light. The passage is...

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Feature Article: The First Resurrection

By Elbert Charpie

One passage I have received a lot of questions about is Revelation 20:1-6. That passage is:

Rev 20:1 (NIV) And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. **4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God.** They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ 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 are those who have part in the first resurrection.** The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

Now the questions I have had raised is "who are these on thrones? - who are these who have been beheaded? - what is the first resurrection? - and how does the rapture fit into all of this?"

First, we need to understand the timing. This episode happens after the battle of Armageddon when the beast and false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire and just before the millennial kingdom begins. Jesus has taken back rule of the earth and an angel comes and binds Satan and throws him into the Abyss—and the millennial kingdom begins for a thousand years without the influence of Satan.

According to the Prewrath view the rapture has already taken place and the bema judgment. Those on the thrones - I believe these are the raptured saints from all ages. I base this on the following scriptures that say the saints will be given authority to rule in the kingdom of heaven.

1 Cor 6:2 (NIV) Do you not know that the **saints will judge the world**? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that **we will judge angels**? How much more the things of this life!

2 Tim 2:12 (NIV) if we endure, **we will also reign with him**. If we disown him, he will also disown us;

Rev 5:9 (NIV) And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and **they will reign on the earth.**"

Rev 3:21 (NIV) To him who overcomes, I will give the right to **sit with me on my throne**, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

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The First Resurrection (Continued from page 1)

Matt 19:28 (NIV) Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, **you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones**, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Even the passage in Rev 20 here states in verse 6, "they will be priests of God and of Christ and will **reign with him** for a thousand years."

So, I believe there is ample evidence that these given authority are the raptured saints. But, who are those beheaded? Are these the ones at the opening of the 5th seal who were under the altar? Those at the fifth seal were asking "how much longer?" I believe they were looking for the rapture which happens at the 6th seal. And we know that in the rapture the "dead in Christ will rise first." So, I believe these are those who will **become** believers and be martyred for their faith **after** the rapture takes place. They are given special consideration because they died for their faith by being included in the first resurrection.

And that leads me to the last question, what, then, is the first resurrection? Let us look back at the passage...

Rev 20:4 (NIV) I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. **And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded** because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. **They came to life** and reigned with Christ 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 are those who have part in the first resurrection. **The second death has no power over them**, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

At this point, the ones on thrones are not said to have come to life—they are already seated. The martyrs come to life, as opposed to the rest of the dead, and then we are told that this is the first resurrection. I believe the first resurrection is inclusive of all those mentioned up to this point—those seated on the thrones and those brought back to life, now, at the beginning of the millennium. Now it begins to make sense. The first resurrection consists of all those raptured and those who sacrificed their lives after the rapture for the cause of Christ. They are in glorified bodies and the second death HAS no power over them—their decision has been made. They will not be a part of those that will rebel at the end of the millennium.

Now we know from scripture, such as Isaiah 2, that there will be multitudes left on the earth that survive the Day of the Lord's wrath and yet have not taken the mark of the beast. Because it says...

Isa 2:2 (NIV) In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and **all nations** will stream to it. 3 **Many peoples** will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. **He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.**" The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4 **He will judge between the nations** and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

Now these people will not be a part of the first resurrection, they will have to wait until the end of the millennium. What alarms me is the description of the rebellion that will occur. It sounds like Satan will still deceive the majority of those living on the earth...

Rev 20:7 (NIV) When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them for battle. **In number they are like the sand on the seashore.** 9 **They marched across the breadth of the earth** and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

What Others Are Saying (Continued from page 1)

Isa 9:7 (NIV) Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.

The book, Heaven, suggests that the government or rule continually increasing throughout eternity would suggest that maybe this universe was not created for just earth. Maybe we are the beginning, and God's kingdom will increase throughout the universe and maybe as we accept authority and rule in the kingdom of heaven we may find ourselves reigning over other worlds. Of course, our rule would not be for our glory, but for the glory of Him who redeemed us. Now, this is speculation, but if you think about that Isaiah passage - it will boggle the mind to think about how God's kingdom will never cease to increase throughout eternity.