

## **"The rest of the dead" (Rev 20:5)**

### **Introduction**

*"...hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For it is the spirit of prophesy who bears testimony to Jesus." (Revelation 19:10)*

Examine the interpretation through the lens of the Christian message. Is it agreeing with the "testimony to Jesus"? Is our understanding in line with the context of the Christian message as revealed by the key witness, Christ Jesus?

*"I am the resurrection and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 11:25)*

*"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 17:3)*

## **Who are the "rest of the dead"? (Read)**

Some theories:

!, They are all the dead who have ever lived who are not in the first resurrection of the righteous. They are resurrected after the final test when Satan is freed from the abyss and are judged before 'the great white throne' of God according to the deeds they performed in their former lifetimes. Some are given everlasting life on that basis while others are destroyed in the lake of fire depending on the nature of those "deeds".

2, They are the wicked dead who opposed Christ in the great tribulation but are all brought to life at the end of the thousand years to be condemned for this. Thus they stand before the great white throne to hear their judgement pronounced, then they are thrown into the lake of fire.

3, They are the ones who have not been condemned, though are not yet right with God. They are resurrected during the thousand year reign but can only receive eternal life after the final test, which is after Satan is freed to mislead the earth again at the end of the millennium.

## **Can a person receive eternal life outside Christ as a reward for good deeds?**

John 17:3 "This means everlasting life, their knowing you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent"

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even though he may die, he will live..."

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is everlasting life in Christ our lord.

Only the body in Christ is eternal - if not in Christ then how will the dead be raised to immortality?

**Will the wicked enemies of God rise to a resurrection of judgement at the end of the thousand years?**

(2nd theory)

Isaiah 26:14 *They (God's enemies - the incorrigibly wicked) are now dead, they live no more; they do not rise. You punished them and brought them to ruin; you wiped out all memory of them.*

God does not bring the incorrigibly wicked back to life.

The purpose of life is to serve God for eternity. The purpose of the resurrection of the unrighteous is to bring them to life so they may come to know Christ and be saved i.e., live eternally.

## Translation issues

The KJV and the RKJV render this verse (Rev 20:5) as : 'The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were ended'.

Most other Bibles translate this as ' The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended'.

The phrase "live again" would imply that the rest of the dead are not resurrected until the thousand years have ended, but the phrase 'come to life' is ambiguous. As we have seen, 'life' in the NT can mean eternal life, not just existence. If the latter meaning is correct here then it could mean that the rest of the dead do not come to *eternal life* until the end of the millennium, but may be raised in the flesh before then.

## Abarim Interlinear translation of Revelation 20:4-5

### Verse 4

χειρα hand noun acc-si-fem	αυτων of them 3rd-p pers pron gen-pl-mas	και and conjunction	εζησαν they lived verb aor-act-ind 3rd-p pl	και and conjunction	εβασιλευσαν they became kings verb aor-act-ind 3rd-p pl
μετα with(in) preposition	του of the def art gen-si-mas	χριστου of Christ noun (name) gen-si-mas	χιλια thousand adjective acc-pl-neu	ετη years noun acc-pl-neu	

The verb 'to live' is '**ezesan**' in Greek, So it appears that the translator has inserted "again" as an interpretation of meaning but it is not present or indicated in the original Greek.



## Verse 5

και and conjunction	οι the def art nom-pl-mas	λοιποι rest adjective nom-pl-mas	των of the def art gen-pl-mas	νεκρων of [the] dead adjective gen-pl-mas	ουκ not conjunction
εζησαν they lived verb aor-act-ind 3rd-p pl	αχρι until adverb	τελεσθη it might be completed verb aor-pas-sub 3rd-p si	τα the def art nom-pl-neu	χιλια thousand adjective nom-pl-neu	
ετη years noun nom-pl-neu	αυτη this dem pron nom-si-fem	η the def art nom-si-fem	αναστασις Rise noun nom-si-fem	η the def art nom-si-fem	πρωτη first adjective nom-si-fem

**Thayer's Greek Lexicon explains two possible meanings of the word 'ezesan' ('to live') used in the New Testament:**

- 1, To live, breathe, be among the living, (not lifeless or dead)
- 2, To enjoy real life, to have true life and be worthy of it'

The real life that is in Christ is eternal in the spiritual body. So if the righteous are raised to immortal life (ezesan there in verse 4), then the rest of the dead receive immortal life (same word in verse 5) after the end of the millennium.

The context does make this interpretation possible and not unlikely.

### **Is verse 5 apocryphal or spurious?**

Omitted from the Codex Sinaiticus (4 CE), the Syriac 'Peshitta' (5 CE) and several later Byzantine era manuscripts.

Is it a gloss, perhaps inserted as a clarification? Or is it a malicious attempt to mislead or confuse?

Parembolē (digressions) and parenthetical remarks were not infrequent in ancient literature and were not necessarily the result of interpolation.

As long as it is according to the spirit of prophecy, do we need to worry about it?

## **When are the rest of the dead resurrected to mortal life?**

Isaiah 26:19 *But your dead will live, Lord, their bodies will rise - let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy - your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.*

Eternal bodies are not of the earth - not flesh and blood like Adam's which perishes. Those born of the spirit have bodies like Christ's, but the lives of the mortal resurrected ones will be greatly extended during the millennium:

Isaiah 65: 22 *For as the days of a tree, so will the days of my people be; my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands.*

Yet such mortal flesh cannot endure for eternity.

**Can people not live forever as flesh and blood in Paradise? Is it not God's will that they do so?**

The flesh is always at enmity with the spirit. Even the "*mind of the flesh is hostile to God.*" (Romans 8:7)

Making our minds over to God is so difficult to maintain.

This relentless conflict between flesh and spirit is described in Galatians 5:17

*"For the desires of the flesh are against the spirit, and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing what you want to do"*

Adam and Eve were perfect in the flesh but they gave way to temptation.

The millennium will provide a level playing field for all. There will be no incentive to rebel. (See Isaiah 65) Yet some wickedness will still manifest:

Isaiah 26: 10

*But when grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn righteousness.*

*Even in the land of uprightness they go on doing evil and do not regard the majesty of the Lord.*

Ultimately the final test will reveal motives. But why can some not receive eternal life before the end of the millennial if they are repentant?

The final pre-requisite for receiving eternal life is that we overcome Satan, the world, and the flesh:

*For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. (1 John 5:4)*

Overcoming requires resisting sin no matter what lures Satan uses.

*Resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7)*

The apostle Paul wrote eloquently of overcoming in chapter 8 of Romans - he summarises the power believers have through the holy spirit to overcome the attacks of the enemy:

*In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us (Romans 8:37)*

In Revelation 2 and 3 those who are victorious receive a victory wreath (crown)

Jesus exhorted his followers to "endure to the end" (Mt 24:13) An endurer clings to his integrity to god and to his faith no matter how high the cost:

Hebrews 3:13:

*We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end.*

Mark 13:13:

*You will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.*

*Ephesians 6:11-17* describes the spiritual armour available to all believers.

*James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10* - The Crown of Life is for those who persevere in faith through temptation, tribulation, and persecution.



**Problem:**

**In the millennium Satan is not going to be there to resist.** What are the subjects of the kingdom to overcome in Paradise?

Adam - "Adama" created from dust/earth/clay, so he would eventually die. God had to bring in a temptation and allow Satan to pressure him. Adam had to overcome under test before he could receive eternal life in the body that Christ received. But he failed that test.

Job had everything because God put a fence around him. So God had to allow Job to be tested even to the extreme degree.

Even Jesus had to be fully tested by Satan. (Conquering the world, the flesh and the Devil).

*Therefore it is necessary that Satan should be let loose to mislead the earth a final time at the end of the thousand years. Those who are victorious under that test are the "rest of the dead" who receive eternal life after the thousand years have ended.*

## **The Great White Throne (Rev 20:11-15) (To be read out)**

Revelation uses apocalyptic language - outlandish imagery and deep metaphor. It is a great mistake to read it literally. The language here entirely figurative.

The "*earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them*" (Rev 20: 11) Is any part of that literal?

Does the Bible teach that planet Earth and heaven will be destroyed? Why would God destroy Earth and creation after pronouncing it good in Genesis? Why would heaven need to be destroyed?

Revelation 21:1 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.*

Earth can mean the society of mankind and heaven its rulerships. After the thousand years have ended there is no need for hierarchy and rulership - Jesus restores the kingdom to the Father - all humans are now either immortal and equal, or in the lake of fire.

## **Is this a literal resurrection?**

*And books were opened...The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. (Rev 20:12)*

These lives have already been lived.

This is all retrospective. The point being made here is that each and every person who ever lived is judged after having had a fair chance. The judgement is finalised after the thousand year reign ends. Everyone who ever lived will have made their own choices based on true knowledge and the records will prove what those choices were from their deeds.

Is this passage really describing the rest of the dead who come to life when the thousand years are over mentioned earlier in verse 5? My opinion is no. This is not describing a literal resurrection of all the dead after the thousand years are over.