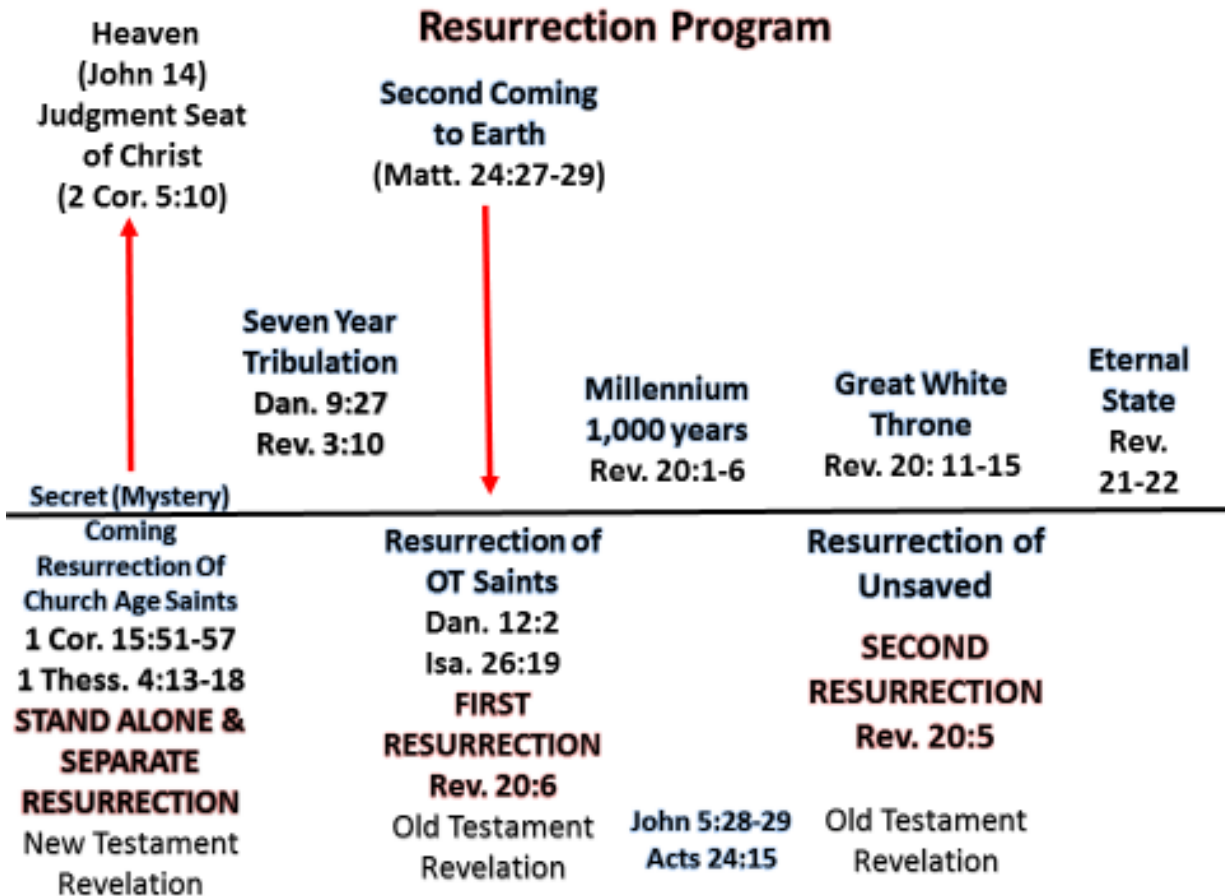


The Program of Resurrection

(As Outlined in Scripture)

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What does the Bible say about God's resurrection program? In this study, we are going to investigate the overall teaching regarding God's resurrection program as it pertains to Christ and those who follow His resurrection. Here is a resurrection timeline that I've put together to give you an overview of how I understand the resurrecting program from a dispensational and prophetic standpoint. These details will be brought out in this study.



According to Scripture, there are four distinct resurrections that are outlined in the resurrection program of God. The Bible makes this abundantly clear. First, there is Christ's own bodily resurrection which is historical (John 20:1-31; 1 Cor. 15:3-4).

Second, along with the “mystery” teaching of the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:52-54), there is also the secret (“mystery”) resurrection of saints (not foretold in the Old Testament or foreseen to be part of the original resurrection program). This resurrection includes saints that have lived during the Church Age (Acts 2) and occurs at the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-57).

Third, there is the “first resurrection” of Old Testament and Tribulation saints (prophesied in the Old Testament) which takes place at the Second Coming of Christ to earth (Dan. 12:2; Rev. 20:4).

Fourth, there is the second resurrection unto judgment (Rev. 20:5-6) which takes place at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11-15). John 5:28-29, Daniel 12:2, and Acts 24:15 point to the two resurrections from the Old Testament perspective, *excluding* the “secret resurrection,” since this particular resurrection was NOT revealed in the Old Testament.

Below are some general observations of the resurrection program of God.

- A. The Bible never uses the phrase "general resurrection." Some people teach by certain verses (John 5:28-29, Dan. 12:2) that there will be one, general, resurrection of both the saved and unsaved of all ages, which occurs at the same time. This is a false assumption. What Jesus taught in John 5:28-29 was true from the perspective of Old Testament saints and the limited knowledge they possessed regarding the resurrection program. The Old Testament saints were given the large picture but limited revelation concerning the resurrection program. They viewed the resurrection as occurring only in conjunction with Christ's Second Coming on a final last day. However, the epistles, which are directed to the Church, would give a new revelation regarding the resurrection program. These verses merely point to the overall picture of the resurrection program of God, as outlined for Old Testament saints. In John 5:28-29 Jesus revealed that all would be raised (both saved and unsaved). However, there is not the slightest implication that both classes (Old Testament and New Testament saints) will be raised at the same time. Jesus was not teaching the new revelation regarding Christ's coming (John

14:1-3) and resurrection program (1 Cor. 15:51-52; Rev. 20:5) in John 5:28-29 and the different time elements involved. These details are filled in later.

- B. Revelation 20:5 makes it very clear that there are at least two resurrections and between these two bodily resurrections there is 1,000 years (the Millennium). The idea of a "first resurrection" implies there must be two resurrections. The first resurrection precedes the second resurrection which is termed as the "second death" (Rev. 20:6) and is outlined in Revelation 20:11-15. The first resurrection will consist of saved, Old Testament saints and Tribulation martyrs, since this was the content of Old Testament revelation (Dan. 12:2; Isa. 26:19). The Second resurrection is of the unsaved at the Great White Throne Judgment.
- C. There will also be a secret (mystery) resurrection that is a stand-alone resurrection (1 Cor. 15:51-54), which means it will be *separate* from the first resurrection of believers, since the first resurrection was not a secret but part of Old Testament revelation (Dan. 12:1-2; Isa. 26:19).
- D. I Corinthians 15:20-23 clearly reveals there is division in the resurrection program of God. Every man is raised "in his own order" (1 Cor. 15:23). Different ranks of people are raised at different times or stages in God's resurrection program. There is no such thing as a general (one time event) resurrection.
- E. It can be observed that all believers, Old Testament and New Testament, are resurrected prior to the second resurrection (a resurrection to judgment). The Old and New Testament believers will be raised in a series of stages and at their appropriate times (1 Cor. 15:23). Again, there is no such thing as a "general" resurrection of the saved and unsaved, which occurs at the same time. Only the second resurrection can be considered a true "general" resurrection that occurs as a single event. This is because it is a resurrection of only the unsaved (Rev. 20:5, 12-15).
- F. Jesus actually inferred in His teaching that there would not be a general resurrection of the saved and unsaved. He spoke of

saved people as taking part in the “resurrection from the dead” (Luke 20:35) or literally “from among the dead.” This statement implies that there are those who are still dead and awaiting their resurrection after a group of saved people have already been raised from the dead for entrance into the earthly kingdom. Therefore, we can conclude that those saved people who are included in the “first resurrection” of believers (Rev. 20:5) are said to be from “among the dead.” In other words, there will be those who are saved and raised from among the unsaved dead, but the unsaved, dead people will not be raised at the same time. The resurrection of the unsaved will occur later in God’s prophetic program (Rev. 20:11-15).

G. When it comes to the second resurrection, the resurrection of the unsaved, it occurs all at once, as a single event, with no person left dead and in the grave. The second resurrection which is the one true “general” resurrection from the dead is not “from among” the dead. It is simply the resurrection “of” the dead - “the rest of the dead” (Rev. 20:5). This is an important distinction.

Now let’s consider the order of God’s resurrection program.

1. Christ’s Resurrection (firstfruits)

I. The resurrection of Jesus Christ (the firstfruits).

This is the FIRST stage in God’s resurrection program. There can be no future resurrection of people without Christ’s own personal resurrection from the dead (John 11:25-26). Christ is called “the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:20). The term “firstfruits” indicates a harvest will follow in relationship to God’s resurrection program. Sleeping is a term related to the body (Dan. 12:2; John 11:11-14; Acts 7:60; 1 Thess. 4:15) and indicates that others will be raised from the dead following Christ’s own resurrection. However, the harvest and parade can only begin with Christ’s own resurrection, before any other people can have the prospect and promise of physical or bodily resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:14-16).

Christ's own resurrection is the first stage in God's resurrection program. Christ becomes the first person to be raised from the dead that will never die again. Others were raised from the dead, prior to Christ's resurrection program (Luke 8:38-43; John 11:44) but these people did not possess incorruptible bodies and they died again. Others were restored to life at Christ's resurrection (Matt. 27:52) but they too evidently died again, not possessing their eternal, corruptible, or glorified bodies (1 Cor. 15:52), which are only promised in the future program of resurrection. Those who were brought back to life at the time of Christ's resurrection will be raised once again with the Church Age saints, since these same saints were eventually united to the Church that was formed on Pentecost (Acts 2).

The saints raised at Christ's resurrection were a token of a greater, coming harvest of people, who would be raised from the dead with incorruptible bodies at Christ's return in the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:23). In the meantime, they served as "many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3) that Christ had risen from the dead. Christ, however, is the first to be raised from the dead with a body that will never again suffer death (Rev. 1:18). Christ's resurrection is historical; however, the other three resurrections are prophetic, which means they are linked to the future.

II. The secret resurrection (Church Age saints – not taught in the Old Testament).

This is the SECOND stage in God's resurrection program.

- 1. Christ's Resurrection (Firstfruits)**
- 2. Secret Resurrection (Church)**

The participants in this resurrection involve saved people of the Church Age (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22; 3:10; 5:25; Col. 1:18). Some teachers suggest that the resurrection of Church Age believers is part of the first resurrection, as mentioned in Revelation 20:6. This is possible, since the first resurrection consists of all

believers, whereas the second resurrection is a resurrection of the unsaved dead, which will be raised in order to be judged at the Great

White Throne Judgment and cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15). However, it seems better to take the secret resurrection as a resurrection that *stands alone* and is *separate* from the first resurrection.

Most dispensationalists who see a distinction in Scripture regarding God's resurrection program (2 Tim. 2:15) teach that the "first resurrection" includes different groups of saved people (Church Age saints, Tribulation martyrs, Old Testament saints) and therefore must by necessity include the resurrection of Church Age saints. The implication is that there is an earlier phase linked to the first resurrection that has already occurred prior to the resurrection of the Tribulation martyrs (Rev. 20:4, 6) which will be a resurrection of Church Age saints. In other words, Church Age saints are considered part of the first resurrection, since they also rise first, before the second resurrection occurs, which results in the judgment of the lost (Rev 20:6). Of course, this is possible. However, it seems odd that John would view the first resurrection as including the New Testament saints, since the first resurrection was clearly taught in the Old Testament (Dan. 12:2), and since the mystery or secret about Church Age believers (being raptured and resurrected before the Second Coming) was not a revelation in the Old Testament (Eph. 3:9-10).

One should not read the sacred secrets of the Church's rapture and resurrection, which is only revealed in the epistles (1 Cor. 15:51-52), and seek to link it to the Old Testament truth about the resurrection. The truth regarding the birth, Rapture, and resurrection of Church Age believers is not found or taught anywhere in the Old Testament Scriptures. It was a complete secret that was not taught, revealed, or understood in any way (Eph. 3). Therefore, it's better to conclude that the Church Age saints are *exempt from the first resurrection*, which is linked to the Old Testament, and that Church Age saints take part in a *stand-alone* resurrection which was not part of any Old Testament revelation.

Robert Gromacki concludes:

"At this point, may I make a suggestion that the resurrection of the church dead not be included in the first resurrection. Posttribulationists have constantly accused us pretribulationists of teaching three resurrections. If the church age is a mystery, if the translation of living

church believers is a mystery, then maybe the resurrection of the church dead should also be part of the mystery era. This point needs further study and discussion.”

I agree with this conclusion of Dr. Gromacki. This is what I am discussing in this study. It's better to view Church Age saints as possessing a *stand-alone* resurrection which will occur separately from the “first resurrection” (Rev. 20:4-5). Only the Old Testament saints (Isa. 26:19-21; Dan. 12:2) and martyrs of the Tribulation Period (Rev. 20:4b) are associated with the timing of the first resurrection, which occurs after the Tribulation Period has expired. The conclusion that the Old Testament saints and Tribulation martyrs are part of the first resurrection has a clear contextual advantage over the Church as taking part in this resurrection. This is because the context of the first resurrection is always linked to the Second Coming of Christ, which follows the seven year Tribulation Period.

Excursion on the Resurrection of Old Testament Saints

The Old Testament Scriptures teach that the Old Testament saints, who lived prior to the Church-Age, will be raised at the Second Coming of Christ and they will immediately enter the Millennium after their bodily resurrection.

Daniel 12:1-2

“And at that time (*middle of Tribulation Period*) shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation *even* to that same time (*words Jesus quoted in Matthew 24:21*): and at that time (*during the severe persecution*) thy people shall be delivered (*rescued at the Second Coming*), every one that shall be found written in the book (*those who are still alive at the Second Coming*). And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake (*resurrection*), some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt” (*the Old Testament view of resurrection without the separating time element of 1,000 years – Rev. 20:1-5*)

The Scripture clearly reveals that Daniel's people (“thy people” - the Jews or Old Testament saints) will be raised in connection with Christ's Second Coming to earth. Daniel speaks of the future suffering of the

Jews during the Great Tribulation Period at the hands of the Antichrist in the same way Jesus did, as He foretold of the coming Jewish persecution.

Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24:21:

“For then shall be great tribulation (*severe birth pangs*), such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” The “beginning of sorrows” (*Matt. 24:8*) is reflected in the first three and one half years of the Tribulation Period, while the sorrow of the Great Tribulation Period (*the last three and one half years*) is comparable to women who experience great birth pangs associated with the birth of a baby (*Matt. 24:21*).

Sorrow is ahead for the Jewish people during the last three and one half years of the Tribulation Period. However, at the end of this time period the living Jews on planet earth, who are in Palestine (Zech. 12:10), will be delivered by the returning Messiah (“thy people shall be delivered” – Dan. 12:2) and also “at that time” (the time of the Second Coming following the Tribulation Period), when Israel is delivered from the Antichrist’s power, “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.” The time reference of this resurrection is contextually directly linked to the same time frame as the deliverance of Daniel’s people from the Antichrist which is the Second Coming and His return as the King, which follows the seven-year Tribulation Period. At this particular time, according to Daniel’s prophetic chronology, Jesus will return to resurrect and reward His Old Testament saints.

The prophetic Scriptures teach that the people of Israel (“thy people”) will be delivered by the intervention of Michael the angelic prince, who is Israel’s defender. In the Great Tribulation Satan will attempt to exterminate every descendant of Abraham (Rev. 12:15). This will be a time of great, unprecedented distress for Israel as Jesus also predicted in His prophecies of the End Times (Matt. 24:21). Satan’s attack against the people of Daniel will be part of his effort to prevent the return and reign of Jesus Christ.

Two things brought comfort to Daniel. First, there is the deliverance of Israel, Daniel’s “people.” This probably has reference to a national, physical deliverance from the authority and domination from Gentile powers, mainly the Antichrist. Those Israelites who are found in the

book of living (Ps. 69:28), who survive the Tribulation Period, will be delivered from the Antichrist's persecution. Of course, at the same time, there will also be a spiritual deliverance for the Bible teaches that "all Israel (believing Israel) shall be saved" at the Second Coming (Rom. 11:26).

The second fact that consoled Daniel is the promise that those Jewish saints that sleep, who have previously died, will be resurrected at this same time. Many Jews will lose their lives at the hands of Gentiles in the events revealed in Daniel chapter 11 and Revelation chapter 12, but they will be resurrected following this time of unprecedented trouble and great distress, or at the end of the Tribulation Period. They will be raised to join those Jewish brethren who have survived the Tribulation Period. This is clearly revealed in Daniel's prophecy and reminds us that the Old Testament saints (Dan. 12:2) and Tribulation martyrs (Rev. 20:4) will be raised at the time of the Second Coming ("at that time") and not at the Secret Coming (mystery return) of Christ for His Church Age saints.

Isaiah 26:17-19 also prophetically reveals:

"Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen. Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

Israel's experience during the coming Tribulation Period is comparable to a women passing through child birth. Experiencing pain associated with child birth is once again reminiscent of Jesus' description of this same prophetic time period (Matt.24:21). However, Isaiah also predicted that the Jews (Old Testament saints) would be raised from the dead following their time of suffering and persecution ("Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise") In other words, Isaiah's people would experience resurrection and blessing following their terrible time of judgment and persecution at the hands of the Antichrist. Once again, the prophets of old linked the resurrection of Old Testament saints as an event that follows Israel's suffering, after

the Tribulation Period has expired, and in conjunction with the Second Coming.

These verses in the Old Testament cannot possibly teach the “mystery” (secret teaching revealed in the New Testament) about the Rapture and the resurrection of Church-Age saints (1 Cor. 15:51-52). The truth about the resurrection of Church-Age believers was a mystery or hidden truth that was not taught in Old Testament revelation. This was a resurrection that was not taught, revealed, or understood by the prophets of old. Therefore, the mystery resurrection of Church-age saints cannot be in the writings or mind of either Daniel or Isaiah. Furthermore, we cannot read New Testament truth back into the Old Testament, which was intended for the Church. The Old Testament saints always viewed their resurrection and reward from the perspective of the Second Coming of Christ or the King’s return to the earth. This is why Jesus revealed that He would reward the Old Testament saints at His Second Coming to planet earth (Matt. 16:27).

There is a resurrection and reward that will occur in connection with the Second Coming of Christ. This resurrection and reward is distinct from the resurrection and reward of New Testament or Church Age saints which occurs at the Secret Coming of Christ for His Church, as outlined in the epistles (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 2 Tim. 4:8).

When reviewing the Old Testament viewpoint on resurrection, it does not seem wise to include the Church Age saints with the first resurrection, since the Church has nothing to do with any previous resurrection taught in the Old Testament. Also, the occupants on the thrones in Revelation 20:4 (Church Age saints) do not have to be linked to the first resurrection, like the Tribulation martyrs, since they have previously been raised (1 Thess. 4:16) and returned with Christ to earth (Rev. 19:14). In short, Church Age saints are *exempt* from the “first” resurrection. The Church is a *secret* resurrection (1 Cor. 15:51-52) which was not foretold by the prophets of old and therefore Church Age saints are not included in either the first or second resurrection mentioned in Revelation 20:4-6.

First Resurrection

Looks back to:

Resurrection of Old Testament saints

(Dan. 12:2; Isa. 26:19-21)

Looks Forward to:

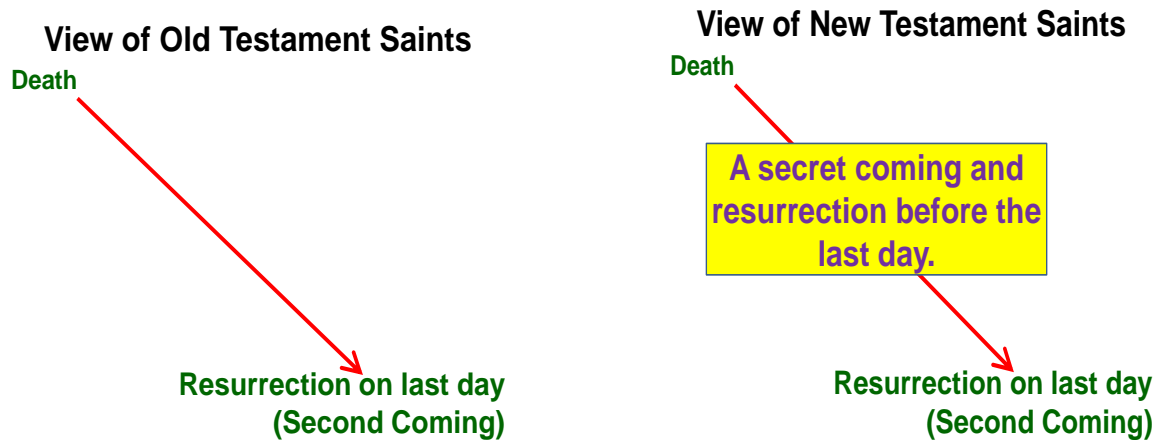
Resurrection of Tribulation martyrs

(Rev. 20:4, 6)

***Excludes the Secret Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:51-52)**

Since the Rapture and resurrection of Church Age saints was not foretold in the Old Testament, it's better to conclude that the "first resurrection" *bypasses the Church Age saints* and only looks backward to the resurrection of Old Testament saints (Dan. 12:2), which would include the resurrection of Tribulation saints, since the persecuted and deceased saints of Daniel's 70th week were seen to be part of the OT resurrection program (Dan. 12:1-2 with Rev. 20:4, 6). This particular resurrection phase (order) occurs at Christ's Second Coming. In between Christ's resurrection and the "first resurrection," which occurs at the Second Coming, is the secret resurrection of God's New Testament saints.

We must remember that the rapture and resurrection which is associated with the Secret Coming of Christ for His Church or Bride (1 Cor. 15:51-52) was NEVER mentioned in the Old Testament Scriptures by the prophets. However, the resurrection of the "just" or "righteous" in conjunction with Christ's Second Coming to earth was spoken about (Dan. 12:2; Isa. 26:19). The Secret Coming of Christ for His disciples, to take them back to Heaven instead of to planet earth, was not spoken about until John 14 and the epistles. Likewise, the secret resurrection of the Church Age saints was not mentioned in the Old Testament prior to the epistles. Therefore, it's best to conclude that the resurrection of Church Age saints, who are already resurrected and sitting on thrones (Rev. 20:4a), are not part of the "first resurrection," but they are part of what the Bible terms as a secret resurrection (not taught in the Old Testament Scriptures).



1 Corinthians 15:51-52

The term **“mystery”** refers to a **sacred secret** not foretold or revealed in the **Old Testament Scriptures.**

Church-Age saints will be changed via resurrection and Rapture BEFORE the last day and the Second Coming! This was a thrilling new hope and teaching given by Christ and the apostles. The Old Testament Scriptures revealed that Old Testament believers would die, and after a long period of time be resurrected on the last day, when the Messiah returns to earth in His Second Coming as Israel’s Deliverer (Dan. 12:1-2). The “latter day” (Job 19:25-27) and “last day” (John 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48) was the Old Testament perspective on the resurrection and was connected with the time that foreshadowed Christ’s Second Coming to earth. However, the mystery or secret that Paul reveals in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 is that New Testament saints do not have to wait until the last day (Second Coming) to get their new body. Their resurrection is linked to Christ’s Secret Coming which occurs before the last day and the Second Coming. Instead of waiting until the “last day,” New Testament saints can say, “Perhaps today!” We can eagerly await for the any-moment return of Christ (“Maranatha” – Our Lord cometh! - 1 Cor. 16:22).

New Testament saints could fully expect that Christ would return in their lifetime and change their natural state immediately into a spiritual

one. They could look forward to an instantaneous change in their bodies at any moment! This would occur as a result of a Secret Coming which would resurrect those who died during the Church Age, and transform the living Church Age saints who were looking for His coming (Phil. 3:20-21). The secret is out! Christ would return to take His Bride (New Testament Church) back to Heaven to be with Him (John 14:1-3). All those who have died, being part of the Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:23-25), and who are alive at this secret return (1 Cor. 15:51), would not have to wait for the “last day” or the Second Coming to get their new body.

In 1 Corinthians 15:51 Paul says, “Behold, I shew you a mystery...” This text of Scripture is speaking of Christ’s secret return and the unique events (a rapture and resurrection) that are associated with this return, as revealed or outlined in the New Testament. The New Testament teaches that there is a mystery which surrounds Christ’s coming as it relates to the Church Age and Church Age saints. The mystery involves a new secret teaching about Christ’s coming that was not previously known or revealed in the Old Testament.

If something is termed as a “mystery” in Scripture, then the *content* of its teaching could be referenced as a secret teaching which is now revealed. Furthermore, the *event* itself could be viewed as a secret event that has been revealed. Therefore, it’s not improper to term the Rapture as a “secret coming.” *It will not be a secret to others, when it happens, but it is a secret from the standpoint of prophetic revelation, a secret return of Christ not revealed in Old Testament revelation.* Christ will return to take away, resurrect, and transform His saints before the Second Coming and the Kingdom is inaugurated. This is the secret that is now openly explained.

One should be anxious to look inside the New Testament and find out what the secret is all about. This can be termed a “mystery” or secret resurrection (1 Cor. 15:51-52) because it was never mentioned in the Old Testament. Church truth was not taught in the revelation of the Old Testament Scriptures. The Thessalonians saints were sorrowing over their deceased loved ones (1 Thess. 4:13-14) because they had not yet fully understood about the “mystery” (secret) resurrection that would occur with their own “mystery” (secret) rapture and translation back to the Father’s House. The younger converts at Thessalonica

were concerned that their loved ones, who had died, would not be living at the time of the Rapture to experience the blessed hope of Christ's return and the subsequent redemption of their bodies. This is why they were sorrowing.

Paul needed to remind them that their deceased loved ones would share in this glorious event with them. Why didn't they know their deceased loved ones would share in this event with them? It is likely that these saints were still following the revelation of the Old Testament regarding resurrection on the "last day" which taught the subject of a universal resurrection prior to the establishment of the Kingdom and Millennium. In John 11:24 Martha said this of Lazarus: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

The view from an Old Testament perspective was that there would be only one universal resurrection that would occur at the same time (John 5:28-29) when Jesus returns in His Second Coming to earth. This is the only resurrection truth that was revealed by the Old Testament prophets.

Daniel 12:2

"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

Jesus also taught this Old Testament concept of resurrection before revealing His New Testament teaching on the resurrection program.

John 5:28-29

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

Acts 24:15 also reveals the universal concept of the resurrection:

"And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."

The prophets of old had tunnel vision when it came to understanding Christ's coming and resurrection program. It was taught that there was only one coming (the Second Coming) and one resurrection (a

universal resurrection – Dan. 12:3) in conjunction with Christ’s Second Coming to earth (Dan. 7:13-14). There were not many details regarding the resurrection program. It was dealt with in generalities until the New Testament revelation was given, specifically in the epistles.

The Old Testament saints looked down through the corridors of time with a veiled perspective of the future. They knew of the resurrection that would occur in relationship to Christ’s Second Coming to earth. However, the New Testament would bring God’s resurrection program out into the light and give new information for us today, as New Testament saints, regarding further details about the resurrection program. Progressive revelation in the New Testament reveals some new pieces to the resurrection puzzle. The truth about God’s resurrection program is added to and revealed in a more detailed manner.

Both Jesus and Paul taught something new in relationship to the return of Christ and resurrection program. The progressive revelation of the New Testament reveals that Christ would return and take His disciples to the place He had prepared for them in Heaven, which would occur seven years prior to the Second Coming to earth.

John 14:1-3

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

1. The pressure we face – “Let not your heart be troubled”
2. The preparation for the future – “I go to prepare a place for you”
3. The promised return – “I will come again”
4. The place of return – “that where I am there ye may be also”
(Jesus is obviously talking about Heaven since this is where He is preparing a dwelling place for us).

This is something new regarding Christ’s coming that was never revealed by the Old Testament prophets. Therefore, Jesus is speaking about a totally different return that takes place before the Second Coming of Christ to earth. It’s a return that will result in both living and

resurrection believers (Church Age saints) being transformed and then transported back to Heaven with new bodies.



Second Coming results in Old Testament saints staying on the earth (**Dan. 7:13-14**)

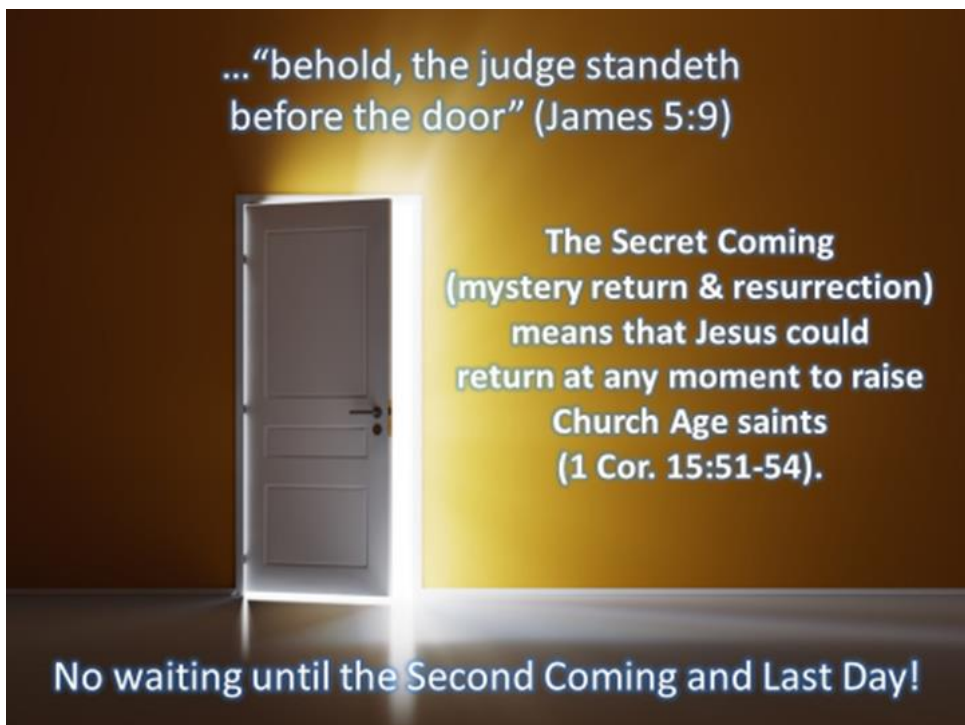


Secret coming (not revealed in Old Testament – **1 Cor. 15:51**) results in New Testament saints returning to Heaven (**John 14:1-3**).

Christ's Second Coming results in Old Testament saint staying on the earth with Christ but the new teaching about Christ's Secret Coming (a new teaching) results in New Testament saints returning to Heaven (the Father's House). These cannot be the same event! This is what Jesus revealed to His disciples and you and me today!

BEFORE the Second Coming and the "last day" (entrance into the earthly Kingdom) there would be a **Secret Coming** (not foretold in the Old Testament) that would physically transform both the living and deceased believers and result in them returning to Heaven with Christ. This is a completely new revelation that is termed as a "secret" (1 Cor. 15:51). The Old Testament revealed Christ returning to earth but not to Heaven. The Old Testament prophets and saints could only view their resurrection as occurring way into the future. It was predicted that they would be raised at the Second Coming. However, before they could be raised, Christ would have to come in his first coming (the birth of Christ) and then He would have to eventually return at His Second Coming. Therefore, from the perspective of the Old Testament prophets and saints, their resurrection could not occur instantly and at any moment. It would be untold centuries (thousands of years) before they would be raised from the dead. For them, it was like looking down a long hall of

time waiting for their resurrection to occur on what they viewed as the “latter day” (Job 19:25) and “the last day” (John 11:24) in relation to Christ’s Second Coming to planet earth and the inauguration of the Millennial Kingdom or the 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-7). Compare the Old Testament and New Testament viewpoint on the resurrection.



The good news is this. The New Testament revelation of the mystery (secret) revelation informs us that the Church Age saints do not have to wait until the “last day” (Second Coming resurrection) but will be raised at the Secret Coming which could occur at any moment or any day! This is the “mystery” or secret resurrection that was connected with the return of Christ in what we term as the Rapture. We do not have a hope that is centuries away but a blessed hope that Jesus could return at any moment (Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 16:22; Rev. 22:20) to resurrect and transform His saints and take them back to Heaven (the Father’s House) as Jesus spoke about in John 14:1-3).

1 Corinthians 15:51-53

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

“I show you a mystery” once again refers to a sacred secret regarding Christ’s coming that was hidden from the Old Testament prophets. It was a teaching about Christ’s return that was NOT revealed until the New Testament Scriptures were written, when additional information was given and God’s NEW perspective was taught regarding Christ’s coming and the transformation of the saint’s bodies.

Since the Rapture of living saints and resurrection of Church saints will occur before the Second Coming we can view this as a mystery or secret coming. Once again, it will not be a secret to others, when it happens, but it is a secret from the standpoint of prophetic revelation, a secret coming not revealed in Old Testament revelation. These verses (1 Corinthians 15:51-53) should be interpreted in light of Jesus’ promise to come back for His disciples and then return to Heaven (not to earth) as He revealed in John 14:1-3. The epistles primarily deal with this wonderful new revelation of Christ’s return for His Church (New Testament saints). We are given the promise of experiencing the transformation of our bodies at an earlier time than the Second Coming and then taken back to Heaven.

View of New Testament Saints

Death

A secret coming and
resurrection before the
last day.

Resurrection on last day
(Second Coming)

The Secret coming involves two events:

- a. Bodily transformation of Church Age saints by RAPTURE (“we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed” – vs. 51 and “we shall be changed” – vs. 52).

This is a “secret” or mystery translation of living saints never revealed in the Old Testament. Paul reveals “We shall not all sleep” (die). In other words, many saints will be alive when Jesus returns to take His Church (Bride) back to Heaven to live with Him in the Father’s House. And what is going to happen to the saints at this time? Paul says “and we shall be changed” (the living saints). In fact, Paul emphatically declares that both the living and dead will be changed (“we shall all be changed”).

Here is the new truth that is revealed to us today! Not everyone will die and need to be raised again at the Second Coming in order to have their bodies changed, as previously taught and understood in the Old Testament. A large number of saints will be instantaneously transformed while they are still living and then be transported back to Heaven to live with Christ (John 14:1-3). Paul is saying that the living

saints will be transformed and raptured from planet earth. They will be part of this glorious event (“and we shall be changed” – vs. 52).

“O joy! O delight! Should we go without dying!
No sickness, no sadness, no dread and no crying.
Caught up thru the clouds with our Lord into glory,
When Jesus receives His own.

O Lord Jesus, how long, how long
Ere we shout the glad song,
Christ returneth! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Amen. Hallelujah! Amen”

The translation and transformation of a living group of saints was never revealed in the Old Testament. This is all new truth and part of the “mystery” coming of Christ. There would be a bodily transformation of living saints that occurs before the Second Coming and “last day” which would result in them returning to the Father’s House (Heaven) instead of immediately returning to the earth.

b. Bodily transformation of Church Age saints by RESURRECTION
 (“and the dead in Christ shall be raised incorruptible” – vs. 52).

Paul also speaks about a “mystery” resurrection that will occur when Jesus secretly returns for His Church. In 1 Corinthians 15:51 Paul connects a resurrection with the mystery that was going to occur (“Behold, I show you a mystery”). He seems to include the resurrection of New Testament saints with the sacred secret that was now being revealed for he says that “the dead shall be raised incorruptible” (1 Cor. 15:52) and reminds us that “we shall all be changed” (including the dead saints).

This means that not everyone who dies will participate in the “last day” resurrection at the Second Coming. A group of New Testament believers will be raised at an earlier time and be transformed. They will not wait until the last day or Second Coming resurrection. They will be raised at a Secret Coming and different resurrection. Elsewhere the Bible reveals that the dead saints, which are part of the Church dispensation, will be raised when Jesus returns (1 Thess. 4:16; 5:10). This is a secret resurrection of believers that is not mentioned or found in Old Testament Scripture. The only resurrection that people knew

about in the Old Testament times was the resurrection on the last day (Job 19:25; John 11:24), which was a resurrection associated with Christ's Second Coming to earth, and His subsequent judgment and establishment of the Millennial Kingdom (Dan. 12:1-2; Isa 26:16-19; Rev. 11:18).

When Paul reveals that the "dead shall be raised" (1 Cor. 15:52) he reminds us that not only will the living saints be transformed and return to the Father's House (Heaven) but a secret ("mystery") resurrection and transformation of deceased saints would also occur BEFORE the Second Coming of Christ to earth. There would be a secret resurrection that takes place before the final resurrection on the "last day" at the Second Coming. This secret resurrection is not taught or revealed in the Old Testament. A large company of saints would be resurrected and return with Christ to Heaven as well. In other words, there would be a bodily transformation of deceased saints that occurs before the Second Coming and "last day" which would result in them returning to the Father's House (Heaven) instead of immediately returning to earth.

The mystery about this resurrection is that a special class of saints (Church Age saints) who are "in Christ" (1 Thess. 4:16) will be resurrected before the last day (John 11:24), or before Christ's Second Coming to earth, when the resurrection of the Old Testament saints will occur (Dan. 12:1-3). A distinct people will be raised at a distinct time and taken back to Heaven to live with Christ (John 14:1-3) instead of immediately returning to earth for the Kingdom. This is indeed a mystery or new revelation unrevealed by the Old Testament prophets. A different time and different location is linked to the mystery resurrection.

The mystery resurrection that is linked to Christ's secret return is a unique resurrection composed of Church Age saints only who are termed as being "in Christ" (1 Thess. 4:16). This is a designation for New Testament saints (1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Jude 1) who have a position or placement in Christ in the throne room of Heaven, whereby the Father sees them perfectly accepted before His presence through the merits of His own beloved Son (Ephesians 1:6). Being in Christ means that New Testament believers have the unique privilege of full and final acceptance in God's presence through the saving merits of Jesus Christ, whether they live or die. Old Testament saints

did not possess this unique position of being in Christ. Abraham, Moses, David, and Job were never said to be in Christ. You will search in vain to find this in the Old Testament.

Only Church Age saints are termed as being “in Christ” which is the unique position of God’s New Testament people, which is the Church, composed of both Jew and Gentiles. It is the organism of the Church, united to its Head, which is Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22-23). This company of saints today is distinct from the Jewish saints that we read about in the Old Testament (Eph. 2:12-16). The Church is not some kind of extension of the previous saints, or *spiritual Israel* (a new Israel), as some erroneous teaching suggests. The Church is a completely new body of believers incorporated into a new program of God for this Dispensation of Grace (1 Cor. 10:32; Eph. 3:1-6).

Being “in Christ” is definitely New Testament language for God’s New Testament saints (not Old Testament saints). Therefore, the resurrection that is related to Christ’s Secret Coming (1 Thess. 4:16) is a resurrection of New Testament believers, or those saints who have believed in Christ since the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), which was the time when the Church or body of Christ was formed (Acts 11:16-17; 1 Cor. 12:13), and when this unique position in Christ began (John 14:20).

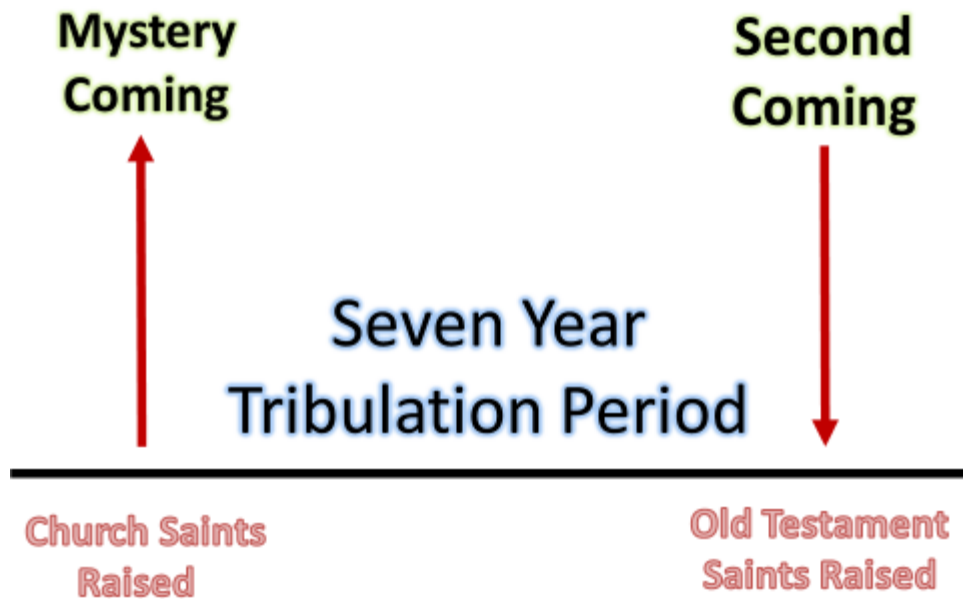
Teaching in Old Testament

- **No resurrection until Second Coming**
- **No transformation of living saints**
- **No return to Heaven – only to earth**

Teaching of New Testament

- **New resurrection at the Rapture (secret coming not revealed in O.T)**
- **New transformation of living saints**
- **New return to Heaven**

The participants in the new resurrection would only be New Testament saints (the Secret Coming and return to Heaven). The Old Testament resurrection would only consist of Old Testament saints (the Second Coming and entrance into earthly Kingdom).

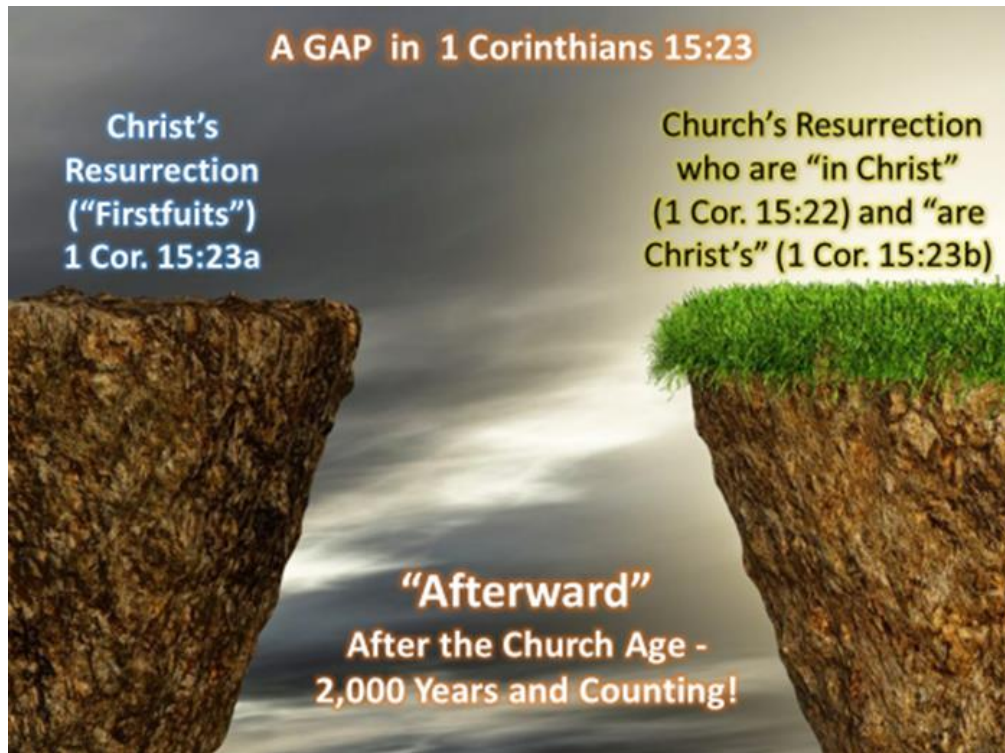


1 Corinthians 15:22-23 gives us the order of the resurrection program. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.”

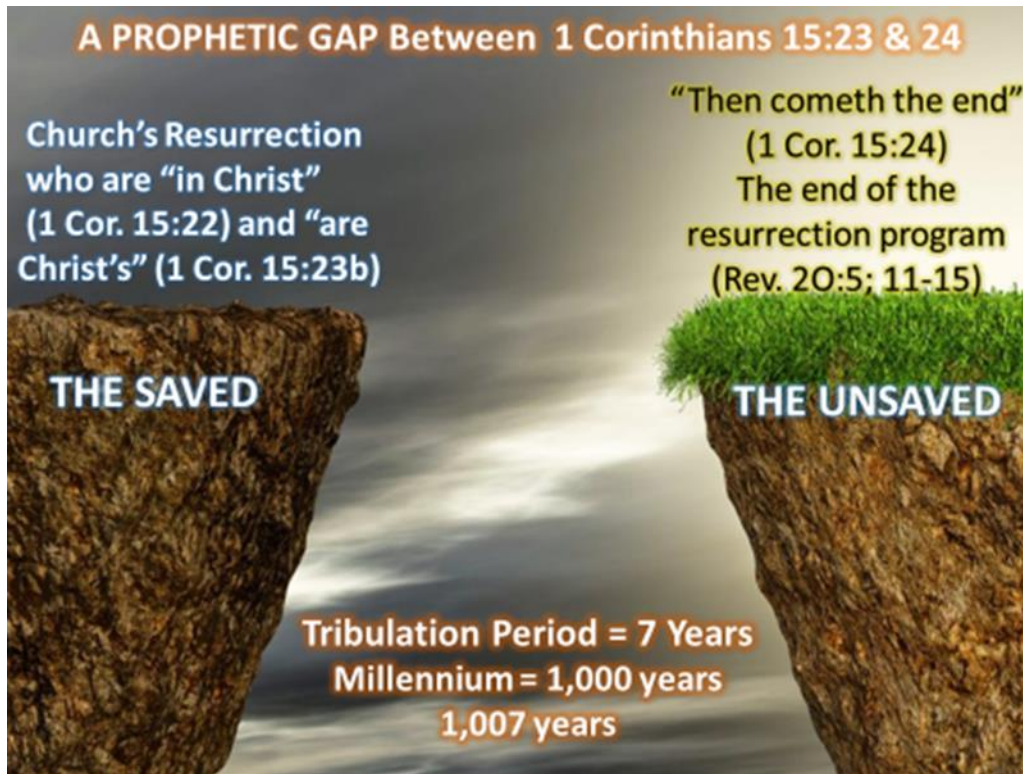
Again, when the Bible says, “every man in his own order,” it means there is a definite rank and order to God’s resurrection program. Not everyone will be raised at the same time as the amillennialist asserts. There is a definite order in God’s resurrection program. Those who teach a general resurrection discard the teaching about the Rapture of the Church and the various distinctions that the Bible and Dispensationalism makes between Church Age saints, Old Testament saints, and Tribulation saints. The eschatology of reformed teaching does not permit these distinctions; therefore, they must change their eschatology to fit into their theological grid.

Paul says that Christ arose first and “**afterward**” (after Christ’s resurrection and the Church Age expires, which is a historical gap of time that would exist, when the Church would be formed) “**they that are Christ’s**” (Church Age saints) would be raised “**at his coming**” (the secret coming of the Rapture of the Church). There is a definite order to the resurrection program. The Bible teaches that the secret

resurrection will occur after Christ's resurrection and become the first resurrection to occur after Christ's resurrection. Only one class of saved people will be resurrected at this time – Church Age saints.



1 Corinthians 15:24 concludes by saying, **"Then cometh the end."** This prophetic phrase could indicate the end of the resurrection program or the end of the heavens and earth. It's interesting that Paul never mentions the time element of how long it would be until the end comes. Paul does not deal with the time element between the Church's resurrection and the end of God's resurrection program which is associated with the closing of the Millennium and the beginning of the Eternal State ("when he shall have delivered the kingdom up to God"; "when he shall have put down all rule and authority"; "for he must reign till he put all enemies under his feet" – vv. 24b -25). However, other Scriptures clearly reveal that there is a prophetic gap of time that also exists between the Church's resurrection that occurs at the Secret Coming and the second resurrection of the unsaved, which takes place after the Millennial Kingdom has expired (Rev. 20:5; 11-15), just prior to the end of the world and commencement of the Eternal State (Rev. 21).



The end does not come immediately! There is an entire Millennium (1,000 years) between 1 Corinthians 15:23 (resurrection of Church Age Saints at Rapture) and 1 Corinthians 15:24 (end of the resurrection program). There is a definite gap of time between the resurrection of Church Age saints and the final resurrection of the unsaved, which will stand before the Great White Throne Judgment, and this prophetic gap consists of at least 1,007 years (the time of the Tribulation Period and Millennium). Therefore, when examining all the prophetic data of New Testament revelation, we must conclude that there is a time element of 1,007 years that exists between verses 23 and 24.

There is a gap of time that exists between the resurrection of Church Age saints and the resurrection of the unsaved before the Great White Throne Judgment, which occurs after the 1,000 years has expired (Rev. 20:6-7). The end does not come immediately. Paul never came to this conclusion in his eschatology. He was simply drawing together God's plan of the ages and resurrection program in one large sweep without filling in all the details. We must study all of the prophetic Word to get all the details related to God's resurrection program.

Paul skips over the first resurrection mentioned in the Book of Revelation (resurrection of Old Testament and Tribulation martyrs – Rev. 20:4), which is also part of God’s resurrection parade or order. Paul sees no need to mention this resurrection, since he was not giving detailed instruction about every event that would transpire in God’s resurrection program. In essence, Paul does not specifically mention the Church Age (Acts 13:46; 1 Cor. 12:13), seven-year Tribulation Period (2 Thess. 2:3; Dan. 9:27), or the 1,000 year reign of Christ (Rev. 20:1-5), so he can take us right to the end of the Millennium (“when he shall have delivered the kingdom up to God”), and the time when the second resurrection occurs (Rev. 20:6), which includes only the unsaved, who will be raised to stand before the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

Once again, the term “end” (1 Cor. 15:24) refers to the end of God’s resurrection program, with the resurrection of the unsaved dead, and likely includes the end of the present heavens and earth (2 Pet. 3:10), along with the commencement of the Eternal State, in view of what Paul said in this context (1 Cor. 15:28). This “end” comes following the Millennium or 1,000-year reign of Christ (Rev. 20:7-15). The “end” will come at least 1,007 years after the Rapture and resurrection of Church Age saints (secret coming).

So, the seven-year Tribulation Period and the one thousand years must be placed between verses 23 and 24, or between the resurrection of New Testament saints and resurrection of the unsaved. These resurrections do not occur together. In verse 23, we have the promise of the secret resurrection of Church Age saints, with a prophetic gap or parenthesis of time between verses 23 and 24, which takes us right to the end, when the unsaved dead will be raised, after the Millennium has expired (Rev. 20:6-7), and the end of the world will occur, ushering in a new heaven and earth (Rev. 21). This world and universe, as we know it, is coming to an end someday, after the Millennium has expired and runs its course of one thousand years. The climax of the ages is coming!

**1. Christ's Resurrection
(Firstfruits)**

**2. Secret Resurrection
(Church)**

**3. First Resurrection
(Old Testament and
Tribulation saints)**

III. The first resurrection

This is the third stage in God's resurrection program. The "first resurrection" (Rev. 20:4) is also linked to the Old Testament (Dan. 12:2) and Gospel accounts (John 6:39-40). It did not predict or anticipate the secret resurrection of the Church Age saints. It leaps over

the Church Age which has lasted for some 2,000 years already.

The First Resurrection Bypasses the Church Age Saints



I know that the first resurrection sounds like it should be first in the line but it is not since there was a secret resurrection that would occur before this particular resurrection.

The people included in the first resurrection consist of only saved saints. However, this resurrection was specifically linked to Christ's Second Coming to earth as it is in Revelation 20:4. The "first resurrection" is also explained as the "resurrection of life" (John 5:29), "the resurrection of everlasting life" (Dan. 12:2), "the resurrection of just" (Luke 14:14; Acts 24:15), and the resurrection on the "last day" (Job 19:25; John 6:39, 40, 44; 11:24). Again, this resurrection is part of the Old Testament revelation and occurs in conjunction with the Second Coming of Christ to planet earth, following the secret resurrection of the Church Age.

Two classes of saved people will take part in the first resurrection.

- Martyrs of the tribulation (Rev. 20:4-5)

These saints are viewed as being raised at Christ's Second Coming (Revelation 19).

- Old Testament saints (Dan. 12:1-3; Isa. 26:19; Job 19:25-26).

These saints are also raised in connection with Christ's Second Coming.

Jesus clearly taught that a resurrection (John 6:39-40) and time of reward (Matt. 16:27) would take place in connection with His Second Coming to earth as the Son of Man. John also revealed there would be a time of resurrection and reward in relationship to the inauguration of Christ's theocracy and Kingdom (Rev. 11:15-18). Paul believed that the Old Testament saints would be bodily raised to inherit the covenant promises given to them by God (Acts 26:6-8).

Two classes of saved people will take part in first resurrection.

Martyrs of the Tribulation
(Revelation 20:4-5)

Old Testament Saints
(Daniel 12:1-3; Isaiah 26:19;
Job 19:25-26)

These Old Testament passages cannot be taken or construed figuratively without doing violence to the whole principle of literal interpretation. Old Testament saints will be literally and bodily raised at the end of the Tribulation Period. The martyred tribulation saints and the Old Testament saints are part of the first resurrection which is portrayed as an Old Testament revelation.

Christ begins the resurrection parade. Then, the resurrection of the Church Age saints (the secret resurrection), who have lived within this present dispensation (Eph. 3:2), will follow in their time of resurrection (the secret resurrection), prior to the beginning of the Tribulation Period (1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Thess. 2:1-8; Rev. 3:10). Next, the Old Testament and Tribulation saints will be resurrected at the Second Coming (Rev. 19:11-16; 20:1-4). This is when the saints will really come marching in!

This will occur at the “first resurrection” which is linked to Christ’s Second Coming to planet earth (Rev. 20:4). It is the time when both the Tribulation martyrs and Old Testament saints will be raised, after the seven-year Tribulation Period has expired. This completes the parade of saved people being resurrected in God’s resurrection program which are the Church Age saints (secret resurrection) and the “first resurrection” (Tribulation and Old Testament saints).

One final question needs to be addressed about the resurrection order. What happens to those believers who enter the Millennium in physical bodies (Matt. 13:43) and those who will be saved during the Millennial Kingdom? When will their bodies be changed? Nothing is mentioned anywhere in Scripture regarding the resurrection of Millennium saints. This may be due to the fact that longevity of life will be restored and people, who follow the King’s rules, will live and exist for the duration of the 1,000 years (Isa. 65:20). Presumably, the saints of the Millennium, or 1,000 years will experience bodily transformation after the Millennium has expired, prior to the second or final resurrection of the unsaved and the commencement of the Eternal State. Their bodies will be changed for the Eternal Kingdom (Rev. 21-22).

The transformation of the bodies of millennial saints must occur sometime prior to God’s judgment of the earth by fire (2 Pet. 3:10-12) and the second resurrection (Rev. 20:11-15). The saved that are on the earth, after the Millennial Kingdom has expired (Rev. 20:7), will apparently be temporarily raptured to safety, while God destroys the earth (2 Peter 3:10-11), and then replaced on the earth for the Eternal State (Rev. 21). The mention of the “nations of them which are saved” (Rev. 21:24) and who “bring their glory and honour into it” (the city of New Jerusalem during the Eternal State), will evidently be the Millennial saints (people from among the millennial nations who are not numbered among Israel and the Church), whose bodies have been transformed and relocated to the earth after the destruction of the earth and Great White Throne Judgment.

The great masses of saved people who survive the Millennial Kingdom will apparently undergo some sort of bodily transformation that prepares them for the Eternal State. They will be like Adam and Eve prior to the Genesis Fall. They will be transformed human beings who will inhabit the new earth, which will actually be like a Paradise restored

(Rev. 22:1-5) throughout eternity. It's these earthly Gentile peoples who are separate from both Israel and the Church which the resurrected saints will rule over (Rev. 22:5).

IV. The Second Resurrection

1. **Christ's Resurrection**
(Firstfruits)
2. **Secret Resurrection**
(Church)
3. **First Resurrection**
(Old Testament and Tribulation saints)
4. **Second Resurrection**
(Unsaved)

Let's review the order of God's resurrection program one more time. The second resurrection (composed only of unsaved people) is actually the fourth and final stage in God's resurrection program. It follows the first resurrection (composed only of saved people).

Progressive revelation, as seen in the writing and completion of the New Testament (1 Cor. 13:10), and correctly dividing the Scriptures (2 Tim. 2:15), will definitely reveal to us the time element of 1,000 years between the first and second resurrections (Rev. 20:4-5). What the prophet of Daniel and Isaiah could not know, we do know! We have been given the New Testament Scriptures to reveal God's precise prophetic program for the resurrections. The pieces to the puzzle are put together when we study the completed New Testament revelation regarding the End Times.

Second Resurrection refers to the resurrection of the **unsaved before the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15).**

This resurrection occurs after the 1,000 year Millennial Kingdom.

It does not occur

("until the thousand years were finished" – Rev. 20:5)

The second resurrection is only for the unsaved and occurs after the Millennium or 1,000-year reign of Christ (Rev. 20:5). It will be a time

when the unsaved are resurrected to stand before the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:12-15).



Let's investigate this passage (Rev. 20:4-6) which is disputed and wrongly interpreted by the amillennialist (Reformed Theology). Reformed Theologians reject a secret (mystery) return of Christ which includes a rapture and resurrection of Church Age saints. They also reject a literal Millennium and teach a general resurrection of people, both the saved and unsaved, which occurs at the Second Coming. What do these prophetic texts really teach when taken literally and understood from a natural grammatical perspective? Let me give a running commentary on these verses and then explain them in more detail.

Revelation 20:4-6

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them (*raptured and resurrected Church Age saints of the Secret Coming who are already prepared to rule during the Millennium*): and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years (*resurrection of the saved, Tribulation martyrs at the Second*

Coming). But the rest of the dead (*the unsaved*) lived not again until the thousand years were finished (*the resurrection of the unsaved at Great White Throne Judgment - Rev. 20:11-15*). This is the first resurrection (*looking back to the resurrection of the saved Tribulation martyrs*). Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection (*composed of the saved Tribulation martyrs and also Old Testament saints – Dan. 12:2; Isa. 26:19; Job 19:25*): on such the second death hath no power (*the eternal separation from God in Lake of Fire – Rev. 20:14*), but they (*the resurrected Tribulation martyrs*) shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

- A. The "rest of the dead" (Rev. 20:5) refers to the dead bodies of the unsaved people of the Tribulation Period and all the past ages of history, whose souls are still imprisoned in Hades. Revelation 20:13 declares that at the end of the Millennium (following the 1,000 years), "hades" will deliver up these souls or spirits (the immaterial part of man which does not die). This event will occur so the spirit can be united with the body, which has been dead. Their bodies will be resurrected from their state of "death." The spirit will be once again united with the body and these unsaved people will apparently live again, following the 1,000 years (Rev. 20:5), in a body prepared for eternal suffering. Revelation 20:12, looking back to the "dead" of Revelation 20:5, also points to the bodily resurrection of the unsaved. These people were seen standing before God (Rev. 20:12). The only way a dead body can stand before God is through a bodily resurrection.
- B. This statement in Revelation 20:5 ("But the rest of the dead lived not again"), when used for the second resurrection, makes it very clear that both the first and second resurrections (Rev. 20:4-5) are referring to *bodily* resurrection. The second bodily resurrection looks back to the first and signifies that physical resurrection is in view in Revelation 20:4. You can't have a second without a first! The first resurrection is not a spiritual resurrection of the soul unto life (regeneration) as Reformed Theology claims. The understanding of the expression, "they lived" (Rev. 20:4), which is used in connection with the first resurrection, definitely points to the resurrection of the human body – not a spiritual rebirth as the amillennialist believes.

Alva McClain has observed:

“If the people involved were beheaded physically (Rev. 20:4a), and then lived again (Rev. 20:4b), common sense would suggest that they received back the same category of life that had been lost” (physical life).

Yes, common sense should dictate the meaning of this passage instead of allegorical nonsense! Here is another indisputable point. If these people were already beheaded for the cause of Christ, then why would they need to be regenerated?

Regarding Revelation 20:4, Paul Benware has stated:

“Since it is the physical death of these already-regenerated people that is being spoken of here, it must be their subsequent physical resurrection that is being discussed.”

It is a glaring inconsistency to interpret one resurrection as a spiritual birth (Rev. 20:4), while in the very next verse (Rev. 20:5), teach a resurrection that is physical. The flow of thought and connection with the previous verse cannot be missed unless one is committing unfair exegesis and ignores the sequence of the context.

The phrases "live again" (Rev. 20:4) and "lived not again" (Rev. 20:5) and "dead stand before God" (Rev. 20:12) would be meaningless unless they were terms used for the physical, human body. Since the soul cannot be physically killed (Matt. 10:28), only bodies can live again and stand before God. The same verb ("live" – Rev. 20:4) was used for Christ's bodily resurrection (Rev. 1:18, 2:8). When used in connection with physical death, the root form (zao – "live") is always used throughout the New Testament to describe physical, bodily resurrection (Rev. 1:18; 2:8; 13:14; 20:5; Matt. 9:18; 27:63; Mark 5:23; Luke 24:23; John 11:25; Acts 1:3; 9:41; Rom. 14:9; 2 Cor. 13:4). To state it simply, whenever "live" (zao) is used in the context of bodily death in the New Testament, it always speaks of bodily resurrection (John 11:25; Acts 1:3; 9:41). To change its meaning is to change the clear teaching and meaning of Scripture.

In short, the amillennial teacher, who does not believe in a literal 1,000-year Kingdom or Millennium over the earth, denies the literal nature of

the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5) and likens it to a spiritual birth (regeneration). He does this in order to deny Premillennialism, which teaches that Christ returns to establish a literal 1,000-year Kingdom or Millennium over the earth, and that resurrected people will take part in this literal Kingdom. This exegetical fallacy attempts to deny the first resurrection as literal, which then allows the would-be interpreter to espouse a theory of only one resurrection and a general judgment, at the end of earth's history, bypassing a literal Millennial Kingdom.

Essentially, those who reject a literal, earthly kingdom (the Millennium or 1,000 years) must allegorize the first resurrection. Amillennialists and Reformed Theology attempt to make the first resurrection a picture of regenerated people in order to escape the reality of literal, resurrected people ruling in a literal Millennium over the earth. However, the exegesis and meaning of bodily resurrection cannot be denied without destroying the obvious meaning of the grammar and literal understanding of this text.

One blunder leads to another. The allegorical interpreter then spiritualizes the thousand years of Revelation chapter 20 making it only a symbol and not a literal number of years. This false teaching claims many strange things. Some say that the thousand years refers to the saints reigning with Christ in Heaven, others say it points to the saints reigning with Christ now, as He is King over their hearts, while others claim the thousand years refers to eternity.

We must reject this spiritualization and allegorical approach to the Scripture, since we take the Bible to be literal and study each passage within its context. A thousand years means a thousand years! Resurrection means bodily resurrection! To come to any other conclusion is exegetical gymnastics and voodoo exegesis which distorts the clear revelation of Biblical truth (Matt. 19:28; 25:34).

Now let's consider some more details about the second resurrection. The second resurrection is elsewhere called the resurrection of damnation or judgment (John 5:29), the resurrection of unjust (Acts 24:15), and the resurrection of everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2). This resurrection occurs after the 1,000 year reign of Christ and is commonly described as the resurrection of all the unsaved dead before the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:12-15).

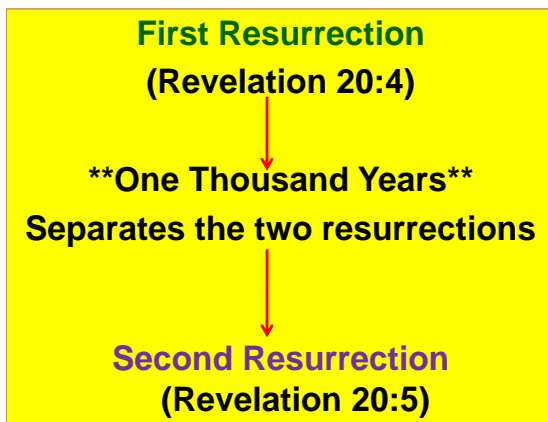
Revelation 20:5 says,
“But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.”

When the Bible states that the rest of the dead did not come back to life (Rev. 20:5b), it simply means the unsaved were not resurrected, during the period of the first resurrection; they were not resurrected until after the thousand years had expired (Rev. 20:7, 11-15).

There are four details about this resurrection.

- a. It's required after one thousand years

The second resurrection is one of the events that transpire after the Millennium is over. The Bible says “the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished” (Rev. 20:6) and “when the thousand years are expired” (Rev. 20:7). Earth's history will wind down quickly after the Millennial Kingdom.



Daniel 12:2 reads: “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

Jesus taught in John 5:28-29: “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have

done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

These references were given from the vantage point and understanding of the Old Testament prophets or saints and the limited knowledge they possessed about God's resurrection program. Jesus in John 5:28-29 was merely teaching the universality of the resurrection program as previously known and taught by the Old Testament prophets. However, as Jesus progressively reveals more truth to John on the Isle of Patmos, speaking to John about more

details regarding the End Times, we discover that 1,000 years exists between two separate or distinct resurrections (Revelation 20:5). The progressive revelation of the New Testament epistles (Corinthians, Thessalonians, Revelation) clarifies many details about the resurrection order and the specific events related to the End Times and God's resurrection program (1 Cor. 15:23-28, 51-52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 3:10; 20:1-5).

b. It's reserved for the unsaved

The "first resurrection" of saved people (Rev. 20:4) is contrasted to the second resurrection, described as "the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished" (Rev. 20:5). This refers to a physical resurrection of people that are unsaved. How do we know they are unsaved people? It's because the second resurrection involves a "second death," which the first group, saved people, escape (Rev. 20:6; 2:11). The second death is a fate only reserved for the unsaved (Rev. 20:14-15; 21:8).

c. It's a reuniting of the spirit and body

We have mentioned this already. The "rest of the dead" (Rev. 20:5) must refer to the dead bodies of the unsaved men and women of all the past ages of human history that will be resurrected (Rev. 20:12 – "the dead small and great stand before God"). This again refers to the death of their human body and how someday this body will be resurrected to be judged in the Lake of Fire.

The souls and spirits or immaterial part of these unsaved people are presently imprisoned in Hades (Luke 16:22-23). However, Revelation 20:13 declares that after the Millennium has expired (following the 1,000 years), "hades" will deliver up these souls or spirits (the immaterial part of man which does not cease to exist). This will occur so the spirit can once again be united with the human body (termed as "death"), which has been dead throughout the centuries of time. The dead bodies of all unsaved people, from the beginning to the end of earth's present history, will be miraculously resurrected from their state of physical "death." The spirit (termed as "hades" – where the spirit resides) will once again be united with the body and these unsaved people will "live again" after the Millennium (Rev. 20:5) in a body

prepared for eternal suffering. This is also what Revelation 20:12 teaches when it states: “the dead, small and great, stand before God.” Revelation 20:12 clearly points to the fact of a bodily resurrection of the unsaved. These people were seen standing before God which indicates a bodily resurrection to eternal damnation and judgment.

d. It's retribution for the lost

More specifically, the second resurrection is linked to what the Bible calls the “second death” (Rev. 20:6, 14). In the first death (physical death), the spirit and soul (immaterial part of a person) is separated from the body (James 1:26, II Corinthians 5:8, Acts 7:59, Philippians 1:23, Ecclesiastes 12:7). In the second death (Revelation 20:6, 14), man is separated from God spiritually and physically in a second or final way. The second death involves a person passing through a final and eternal separation from God's presence in relationship to both their spirit and body. In the second death, both the spirit and body are reunited (Rev. 20:13-14), in order to experience suffering, which is related to God's righteous vengeance and judgment. This second or final separation from God will result in judgment within another timeless existence (Rev. 20:14).

The unsaved people who are part of the second resurrection experience the fate of the second death (Rev. 20:6) in the Lake of Fire, which is described in the very same chapter (Rev. 20:15). This is not a general resurrection of the saved and unsaved, at the end of time, as amillennialism teaches. This is referring to a distinct and separate resurrection of the unsaved dead which transpires after the Millennial (Rev. 20:7).

How terrible it will be when the bodies of the unsaved throughout the ages of time will be resurrected to be judged and doomed forever in the Lake of Fire. Revelation 20:15 records these solemn words: “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”



“Oh awful day, who would not be,
Sheltered O Lamb of God in Thee,
Safe at Thy side,
While wild and loud the shrieks of that unnumbered crowd,
Shall rend the heavens and fill the skies,
Till judgment’s doom shall close their cries.”

This concludes our study of God’s resurrection program. In this study, we have discovered the details related to God’s resurrection program as outlined in the Bible. The interpreter of Scripture must be honest with the literalness of eschatological texts and not create manmade systems, which defy the literal nature of future events (seven-year Tribulation Period, first resurrection, Antichrist, Millennium, etc.). To allegorize these truths is to explain away God’s clearly revealed prophetic program and results in “handling the word of God deceitfully” (2 Cor. 4:2). God presents the resurrection program to us progressively throughout the revelation of the Bible. Only when the interpreter of Scripture studies the prophetic Word from a literal, progressive, and dispensational perspective can he arrive at the correct understanding of God’s resurrection program.