

The Fifth Beatitude In Revelation

The fifth beatitude is found in the twentieth chapter of Revelation. The world sees several puzzling problems in this chapter. People ask; "Is it referring to literal or spiritual times and events? How many deaths and resurrections are there? How can everyone be a priest? Who appoints priests anyway? And is there to be a thousand-year reign of Christ on this earth?"

The world has these and more questions because the world fails to read and interpret scripture as the Spirit intended. Most of the puzzles the world finds in scripture come from a desire to have a physical interpretation from a description of spiritual things. But as noted in previous articles, Revelation can only be interpreted from scripture, not the thoughts on humanity (Isaiah 55:8-9). Other scriptures mention death, resurrection, priests, priesthood, and reigning. Many of these passages give insight into the meaning of the spiritual uses of these words in our text.

The following highlighted areas will serve as an outline for this article.

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

First, there are four kinds of death mentioned in the New Testament. The first two forms of death will happen during a person's physical existence

- As sin caused Adam and Eve to become separated from God, our sins cause us to become separated from, or dead to God (Isaiah 59:2).
- Being human and mortal, we will become separated from this existence in physical death (Hebrews 9:27).

The second two forms of death occur only in the spiritual life.

- Death to sin occurs in baptism (Romans 6:2-3).
- Death, because of sin occurs at the final judgment (Revelation 20:11-15).

The first spiritual death is the separation from the world and its sin in baptism and allows one to be raised into a new life of service to God (Romans 6:3-7; 8:8-11). The second spiritual death is the separation from God for eternity and is the punishment for all unrepentant enemies of God (James 4:4; Revelation 20:11-15).

Second, there are two resurrections described in the New Testament.

- The resurrection into a new life occurs when one comes up out of the waters of baptism (Romans 6:4-5). Everyone does not experience it. Only those that accept the gospel, turn from the world, and obey Christ's commandments, will be baptized (Acts 2:41; 16:31-34). This resurrection from the first death into a new life in Christ allows for the new creature to do what God wants rather than what the world and Satan want (Ephesian 2:10; Romans 12).
- There is also a worldwide resurrection when Christ returns (Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29). There is no choice of accepting or rejecting this resurrection for all those who die a physical death. "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment..." (Hebrews 9:27).

To the individuals raised into a new life in Christ, the second death has no power because they are alive with Christ. This was promised by Jesus in John 12:26: "...where I am, there My servant will be also."

The individual who has been raised with Christ dies no more (Romans 6:9-11). That individual rising from the waters of baptism becomes a "priest" to perform "good works" that have been planned out for them. Priestly service in this earthly life is doing as Christ directs, and duties praising God in heaven for eternity will be learned there.

Peter refers to those in Christ as a "holy priesthood" (1Peter 2:5, 9). Paul pleads with the brethren to be "living sacrifices" (Romans 12:1). As the priests in the Old Testament offered the sacrifices and cared for the temple as God commanded, the priests of Christ have duties within His church. The Hebrew writer has this to say. "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:15-16). And again in Hebrews 4:14, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."

The period of service in prophetic, apocalyptic literature is "1000 years." The complete number ten, showing a full quantity, multiplied three times, giving the "four square" or perfect structure. It refers to the long-suffering nature of God who extends this physical existence so that all who will believe and obey have the opportunity. During this time, separated from the world, but living in it as brethren and fellow heirs with the King, we "Reign with Him" by working in the Kingdom.

In reigning with Him, He is the High Priest, and we are the priests. John writes of this Great High Priest in Revelation 1:5-6, "...the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us (a kingdom of) priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Are you dead to the world, raised with Him to serve Him as a priest on earth now, so that you may serve Him throughout eternity?