

Q: You say that the Rapture takes place before the Tribulation period. But I have heard other Messianic leaders say that Revelation 20:5 proves that the Rapture/Resurrection takes place after the Tribulation period. How would you respond?

Point 1. The Bible is clear that the Rapture takes place at the same time as the Resurrection.

“15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first [Resurrection]. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up [Rapture] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 (NKJV).

Point 2. Messiah likens harvesting souls for the Kingdom to a Biblical harvest period.

“Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” John 4:35 (NKJV)

Point 3. A Biblical harvest period has three phases – firstfruits, the main harvest, and the gleanings.

“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.’” Leviticus 23:10 (NKJV).

“‘When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the Lord your God.’” Leviticus 23:22 (NKJV).

Point 4. Messiah Yeshua is the firstfruits of the Resurrection.

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Romans 8:29 (NKJV).

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” 1 Corinthians 15:20 (NKJV).

“But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.” 1 Corinthians 15:23 (NKJV).

Point 5. A sheaf is a bunch of stalks bound together, so others had to be resurrected with Messiah almost 2,000 years ago.

“50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. 51 Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were

split, 52 and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.” Matthew 27:50-53 (NKJV).

Point 6. The LORD’s acceptance of the firstfruits indicates His acceptance of the whole harvest.

“9 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 10 “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. 11 He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.” Leviticus 23:9-11 (NKJV).

Point 7. The main harvest of souls occurs at the Rapture/Resurrection when the Last Trumpet sounds. The raptured/resurrected saints are from all nations.

“15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 (NKJV).

“50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” 1 Corinthians 15:50-53 (NKJV).

“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.” 2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.” Revelation 4:1-2 (NKJV).

“9 And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, 10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.”” Revelation 5:9-10 (NKJV).

Point 8. In Revelation 20, the first resurrection is complete when the Tribulation martyrs, who were saved after the Rapture, are resurrected as the gleanings of the harvest.

“4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 But the rest of

the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 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 20:4-6 (NKJV).

Point 9. The prophet Isaiah told us almost 4,000 years ago that the main harvest of the Resurrection would take place before the Tribulation period. And a true prophet of God, like Isaiah, cannot be wrong.

“21 And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’— 22 when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.” Deuteronomy 18:21-22 (NKJV).

“19 Your dead shall live; Together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of herbs, And the earth shall cast out the dead. 20 Come, my people, enter your chambers, And shut your doors behind you; Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, Until the indignation is past. 21 For behold, the Lord comes out of His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; The earth will also disclose her blood, And will no more cover her slain.” Isaiah 26:19-21 (NKJV).

Point 10. Messiah described the same marriage chambers as Isaiah 26:20 above, and promised to come receive the Believers to Himself and take them as the bride to the marriage chambers.

““Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 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. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” John 14:1-3 (NKJV).

Point 11. The catching away of the Believers to the wedding chambers – our gathering together to Yeshua -- must take place before the indignation (Hebrew *za'am* – Tribulation period during which the LORD pours out His wrath) according to Isaiah. Paul confirms this.

“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 (NKJV).

Conclusion. As the Biblical harvest is in three distinct periods separated in time but inseparable in purpose – firstfruits, harvest, and gleanings -- even so the first resurrection is in three distinct periods. Messiah and those resurrected with Him in Matthew 27 are the firstfruits of the resurrection. When God accepted the firstfruits of the resurrection, He accepts the entirety of the first resurrection – the resurrection of life. The main harvest is the Believers from all ages who

were not part of the firstfruits but are saved before the Last Trumpet sounds. (The Last Trumpet is another name for the Feast of Trumpets during which the awakening trumpet blast will sound and the door to heaven will open.) They are in heaven singing praises to Messiah Yeshua for saving them by His blood from all nations -- Revelation chapter 5 -- before the first seal is opened in Revelation chapter 6 to begin the Tribulation period. The 144,000 of Revelation chapter 7 will lead multitudes to salvation during the Tribulation period. These new Believers were not saved when the Last Trumpet sounded in Revelation chapter 4. Many of these new Believers will be beheaded for their faith by the minions of the False Messiah. These are the gleanings that are resurrected in Revelation chapter 20 to complete the first resurrection. The unrighteous dead are not raised from the dead until the second resurrection after the Millennial Kingdom so they can stand judgment at the Great White Throne judgment only to then be cast into the Lake of Fire which is the second death.