

DEATH AND THE RESURRECTION

DEATH IS NOT a *sleep*; it is *destruction*. Dead bodies decay because the work of destruction is progressing in them. We say that mortification sets in; that is, the destruction of the tissues goes on until everything that had life in that body has perished. This process of decay is common to both man and beast, and also goes on in the vegetable world. As the Scriptures say, "That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth the beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast....All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."--[Eccl. 3:19,20](#).

Very few people seem to realize what is meant by the term "soul." The Scriptural teaching is that man IS a soul, not that he HAS a soul. In [Gen. 2:7](#) we read, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man BECAME a LIVING SOUL." The Word of God speaks of both man and beast as *souls*. (See [Num. 31:28](#).) Body, soul and spirit are in combination in a living organism.

A dog has a body; a dog has a life--a vitalizing principle; and aside from this life-principle and organism, a dog has a personality. One dog differs from another; one may be a bulldog, another, a lap-dog in a fashionable family. Each animal has his own joys and sorrows; but whatever he is, these things go to make up the experiences by which a dog would recognize himself.

So it is with a human being. There is a body and a life principle, the *union* of which makes the soul. His experiences [R5166 : page 24] --his home-life, his education, his environment, his travels, his finances, his private affairs--all go to make up his personality. It is not his body, but his soul that has these experiences. As two dogs under different experiences would have very different personalities, so with human beings. All the different experiences of life help to make them happy or unhappy, learned or ignorant, wise or unwise.

IN DEATH WHAT PRE-EMINENCE HATH A MAN?

What is the difference between a brute soul and a human soul? The human soul has a higher organization of body and brain, which constitutes him an individual of a higher order; and not only has he a better brain by Divine appointment, but he was not made like the brute beast to die after a brief period of years. Man was made to live forever.

In Eden, man came under the sentence of death, as the penalty for disobedience. The entire race has been born in a dying condition. Each human being receives a *spark of life* from his parents, without which the *body* would return to *dust*. When man dies, his *personality*, which is the result of his hereditary and prenatal influences combined with his experiences, *perishes*; for it *cannot exist* without a *body*. As the Scriptures declare, "In that day his THOUGHTS *perish*"; for "the *dead* know not *anything*"; "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." --[Psa. 146:4](#); [Eccl. 9:5,10](#).

The question then arises, Does man die in the same sense that the brute creation does? We answer that so far as man himself is concerned, he would be as dead as is the beast, if God had not made an arrangement by which humanity will have a future life. God intends to restore to life, not the *body*, but the *soul* that died. The soul that went into death is the soul that was redeemed by Jesus.--[Psa. 49:15](#).

Through the resurrection, God has arranged to show His love for the world. It is written, "When the fulness

of time was come, God sent forth His Son" ([Gal. 4:4](#)); "Who gave Himself a Ransom for all" ([1 Tim. 2:6](#))-- "for every man." ([Heb. 2:9](#).) Every man has gone into death or is going there; and unless a redemption had been provided, there could be no resurrection. So the Apostle Paul explains that, "since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order."--[1 Cor. 15:21-23](#).

This making alive will be the resurrection of the dead --not of those particles of matter which have gone to fertilize a tree and then through its fruit become a part of another organism, but the resurrection of the *being*--the soul. In the resurrection, "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him." ([1 Cor. 15:38](#).) To the individual, it does not matter what *particles* compose his new body. What he is interested in is the resurrection of his *soul*--his being --his personality. That restoration is the all-important part of the resurrection.

God has given the assurance that He is able to restore mankind; and we who believe His Word do not think of man as dead in the same sense as is the brute. On the contrary, we allow the beast to pass into oblivion, but we think of man. For our dead we raise a memorial, remembrance, of the body which represented the personality dear to us. Our faith assures us that the *personality* is not *extinct*, but that it will have a resurrection. The respect which we show to our friends and loved ones in their sepulchers indicates our faith in their future life through a resurrection of the dead.

ADAMIC DEATH SCRIPTURALLY CALLED SLEEP

In the Scriptures, God sets forth the thought that the dead are asleep. Since He is the One who has the Power and the Purpose to raise the dead, He can speak of them in this way. Their bodies have indeed gone to dust, but they as individuals are known to God. To raise men from the dead and to give them back the very thoughts which they had before death will be a stupendous work, which only the Wisdom and Power of the Almighty God can accomplish. Those alone who have confidence in the promises of God can speak of their loved ones as asleep in death.

The Scriptures speak of the Ancient Worthies as asleep. We read that "David slept with his fathers." ([1 Kings 2:10](#).) The same statement is made of all of the kings of Israel, whether good or bad. St. Stephen, stoned to death, "fell asleep." ([Acts 7:60](#).) St. Paul says, "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him....We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede--go before] them which sleep...and the dead in Christ shall rise first."--[1 Thess. 4:14-16](#).

In the morning of that glorious Day when the Sun of Righteousness shall rise with healing in His beams, all that God has promised for that blessed time will come to pass. ([Mal. 4:2](#).) Meantime, the dead are awaiting that Day during which "all that are in the graves shall hear His voice [the voice of the Son of Man] and shall come forth." ([John 5:28,29](#).) In this sense of the word, therefore, we speak of the dead as asleep. Our Lord Himself used this word in speaking of Lazarus. He said, "Lazarus sleepeth." When by their reply the disciples showed that they did not understand, Jesus said unto them plainly, "Lazarus is dead."--[John 11:11-14](#).

HEAVENLY PHASE OF THE RESURRECTION

From one standpoint, all mankind fall asleep to wait for the morning of the great Millennial Day, when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise. The resurrection will come to every member of the human race; but as no two individuals have been in the same degree of degradation, some will rise more rapidly than will others. The Scriptures seem to indicate that there will be several classes in the resurrection. One of these is designated the "First Resurrection," that is, the chief, or most important; and it will consist of those who are to be associated with our Lord in His Throne. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the First Resurrection; on such the Second Death hath no power, but they shall be Priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."--[Rev. 20:6](#).

This description excludes the Great Company and applies merely to the Little Flock, "partakers of the Divine nature." ([2 Pet. 1:4](#).) Other Scriptures seem to show us that the Great Company class will attain to spirit perfection in their resurrection; and therefore we might think of theirs as a second resurrection--second in order, in glory and in preference. These two classes compose the "Church of the First-borns, which are written in Heaven." ([Heb. 12:23](#).) The difference between them is merely that the Little Flock were zealous to go forward and perform what duties and privileges they saw, while the Great Company were less zealous and less loyal in sacrifice, although they would suffer death rather than deny the Lord or His Truth.

This distinction is set forth in the typical arrangement of the Law Covenant. As the tribe of Levi was called [R5166 : page 25] out from among Israel for a special work, so the Church of the First-borns are called out from among mankind, as the antitypical Levites. The priestly tribe of Israel was divided into two classes, the priests and the Levites, and likewise the Church is composed of two classes. Of these, only the "more than conquerors" ([Rom. 8:37](#).) will become "partakers of the Divine nature" and have the preeminence. The Great Company will not attain to this honor.

We are not able to distinguish who are the "more than conquerors." The Great Company are identified with the Little Flock both here on earth and also in Heaven. Both classes are of the "First-borns." As the Apostle James says, we are "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." ([James 1:18](#).) To illustrate this thought, let us consider a bed of strawberries: These berries are among the first fruits of the season, yet even among them we find that some berries ripen sooner than the rest of the crop. These early-ripe berries may be said to be the first-fruit of the first-fruits. So with the Little Flock.

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EARTHLY PHASE OF THE RESURRECTION

In the Scriptures, a third class of faithful servants of God are mentioned. Many of these are called by name in the Epistle to the Hebrews. We refer to the Ancient Worthies, who lived and were found faithful before the coming of our Savior. These did not have the opportunity of walking in the footsteps of our Lord and so did not have the "high calling." These are said to receive "a better resurrection" than will the rest of mankind ([Heb. 11:35](#)) --better, not in the sense of belonging to the spirit plane, but in that it will be an instantaneous raising to human perfection, whereas the remainder of the race will require a thousand years during which to come back gradually to the original condition lost by Adam.

At the beginning of the reign of Christ, the Ancient Worthies will come forth perfect human beings--mentally and physically--that their bodies may correspond with their moral development. If they had scars, these will be theirs no longer; if they had blemishes, these will have disappeared. It is not easy for us to picture to ourselves a perfect man, for we have never seen one, and all around us are various degrees of imperfection. But we know that a perfect human being will be perfect in form, feature, voice, sight, hearing, taste, and in all other organs, as well as in mind.

Last of all, "the residue of men" will come forth, "every man in his own order." ([1 Cor. 15:23](#).) Their awakening will merely bring them forth from the tomb in the condition in which they entered it; for in the grave, "there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom." ([Eccl. 9:10](#).) This awakening is not the resurrection, but merely the preliminary step toward it. The Greek word rendered "resurrection" is *anastasis*, and means literally "a standing up again." Adam fell, and ever since "the whole world lieth in wickedness"--literally, "in the wicked one." ([1 John 5:19](#).) The standing up again is, therefore, a return to the perfection lost in Eden; for the world of mankind the resurrection is the Restitution. --[Acts 3:19-21](#).

During the thousand years of Messiah's reign, the resurrection of the world will be in progress. The work will not be done by the Father directly, but will be committed to the Lord Jesus ([John 5:28,29](#)), and will require

the whole thousand years for its completion. At the end of that Millennial reign the world of mankind will be perfect, as was Adam in his creation. All God's work is perfect.--[Deut. 32:4](#); [Gen. 1:31](#).

As previously stated, the Ancient Worthies, as a reward for their faith in God, will come forth to a better resurrection than will other men. The remainder of the race will come forth in practically the same condition in which they went into death. They will know nothing more, nothing less than when they died; their personality will be the same. As for their bodies, we cannot suppose that these will be perfect, for if mankind were thus brought back from death, they would not know each other. If all should be brought forth of one color, or if all should have the same style of features, they would not be recognized. On the other hand, they will come forth, neither gasping for breath, nor in fragments, as if blown to pieces by an explosion or eaten by an animal, but in what formerly was their usual health.

Mankind recognize each other by certain physical traits as well as by mental and moral characteristics. If in the awakening a man were given a perfect form or a properly balanced brain, he would not *know himself* on coming forth from the tomb. His very thoughts would be different; there would be nothing by which memory could identify him. Humanity will be raised from the tomb in the condition suggested by our Lord when He said to the man with a withered hand, "Stretch forth thine hand!" And he did so; and his hand was restored whole *as the other*" ([Luke 6:10](#))--complete--not in the full sense of the word, but enough so to have a new start in the new life.

SHAME AND CONTEMPT WILL BE PURGED AWAY DURING THE MILLENNIUM

The Savior makes an atonement for the sins of mankind for the very purpose of giving them a trial for life, an opportunity to demonstrate whether, under the favorable conditions of the Messianic Kingdom, they will choose righteousness and life or unrighteousness and everlasting death. The Scriptures seem to imply that there will be a great deal of shame and contempt properly attaching to those who will not have come into full accord with God.--[Dan. 12:2](#).

During the thousand years of trial, very many will purge themselves of this shame and contempt. Thus we may suppose that, as the years go by, the shame will gradually cease and the contempt will die away. We see this point illustrated in the case of Saul of Tarsus. When he learned that he was fighting against God, he was very much ashamed of the course which he had taken. As gradually he manifested his loyalty to God, he purged himself of this shame and contempt. St. Paul's valor and zeal in the service of the Lord offset the things which he did ignorantly as Saul of Tarsus. His shame, therefore, has passed away.

The world will awake from the dead in this condition of shame and contempt. But gradually the obedient will arise from this state to the original perfection of the image of God. The wilfully disobedient, on the contrary, will not rise. They will sink lower, until finally they will go into everlasting destruction, or as St. Peter says, "As natural brute beasts...shall utterly perish in their own corruption."--[2 Pet. 2:12](#).

At the First Advent our Lord did most of His healing on the Sabbath Day, thus foreshadowing the work of healing which He will do for the world in the great antitypical Sabbath--the Millennium. Mankind will come forth from the tomb free from their previous condemnation, with human bodies in proper condition, so that their friends will recognize them as formerly; but they will have weaknesses--physical, mental and moral.

God has provided everything necessary for the resurrection of mankind--not only the Ransom-price, but also **[R5167 : page 26]** Christ's Mediatorial Kingdom. The uplifting influences of the incoming Age will be open to every member of the race, whether great or small, rich or poor. But their acceptance or rejection and the rapidity of their progress will depend upon their personal interest in the matter. Those who refuse to advance and who show no desire for their own development, will be cut off in Second Death.

There is no reason why those who will not make progress should be allowed to live on indefinitely. The same Justice which declares that only those who are in perfect accord with God shall have everlasting life, will not permit those to live forever who continue to be imperfect. Such will indicate by their attitude that they are not in harmony with righteousness, and will be justly classed as wicked. Of these it is written, "All the wicked will He destroy."--[*Psa. 145:20*](#).

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