

IS DEATH EXTINCTION?

THE spark of animal energy which God supplied to Adam and which he in turn dispensed to his offspring and which was forfeited for him and his posterity by his act of disobedience, passes at death from the individual, as absolutely as it does from a brute beast. But the word "life" as used in a large number of instances does not stand merely for the spark of animal energy, but is a synonym for *soul* or *being*.

In God's purpose and arrangement this *being* has not in death become *extinct*, because he has provided for it a future. There is, however, no sentient being in the sense of consciousness, or knowledge, or appreciation of pain or joy, or of any other experience, but the Divine Creator who first gave being has declared that in the case of Adam and his children it is his purpose to provide a Redeemer through whom all may be restored as completely as before they came under the death sentence. The world, which does not recognize God or his power, and which has no knowledge of the promise of resurrection through the merit of Christ's redemptive work, might properly enough speak of one in death as being as extinct as a dead animal; and this is the standpoint of the agnostic; but by believers instructed of God respecting his purpose in Christ, and the resurrection of the dead, eventually, and the opportunity of eternal life to every one, this matter is to be viewed from the same standpoint that our Lord viewed it when he said, "To God all are alive"-- that is, God purposes their awakening, and speaks of the present condition of Adamic death as merely a suspension of life, and not as extinction.

WAS CHRIST EXTINCT DURING THE PERIOD OF HIS DEATH?

It may be asked, Was not our Lord extinct from the time of his death until his resurrection? The Scriptures tell us that the man Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom for all--a corresponding price. Again they tell us that "Christ died for our sins," and that he "arose again on the third day." But we do not understand that the One who arose was the same in all particulars as the One who died. He was "put to death in flesh"; he was "quickened (made alive) in spirit." In his case, therefore, the matter may be viewed from these two standpoints, viz., he *died* in the flesh, as a man, and as a man has never come to life again, and he never intends to use again, for himself, those manhood qualities. He has been raised from the dead a Spirit--"Now the Lord is that Spirit"--and this glorious Spirit Being whom "God has highly exalted and given a name above every name," is the One who will ultimately bless the world; he has the authority to do this great work in due time.

This power and authority rest in the fact of his sacrifice. The manhood that he laid down, in *death*, relinquished, he is to give ultimately to Adam and all his race in harmony with the Apostle's statement that "as by man came death, by man will come also the resurrection of the dead," and "as all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive," all who will come into relationship and harmony with God, through Christ, during this age or the Millennial Age.

We see that the Church, the Body of Christ, has *now* the imputed merit of his sacrifice to cover all its imperfections and blemishes, enabling them to offer a sacrifice acceptable to God, holy in his sight, that we, by suffering with our Lord, might be accounted worthy to reign with him.

We see that God's arrangement was that our Lord Jesus should first sacrifice his human nature at Jordan. He was reckoned dead from that time forward, throughout the three and a half years of his ministry, as well as during the three days he was in the tomb. He was dead so far as his earthly life was concerned, for he had

fully surrendered this. At the time he made his consecration God gave him the holy Spirit and the Scriptures *explain* that this impartation of the holy Spirit signified a begetting of the spirit to a new life; in other words, that a new life there began. That new life developed during the three and a half years; and so with us. From the time we make our consecration and receive the begetting of the holy Spirit, this new life develops and progresses, only that with our Lord the progress was much more rapid in the graces, in all knowledge and harmony with the Father and in the development of himself as a New Creature and in enduring all the necessary tests and trials, because *we* are handicapped by the imperfections of the flesh, while he was perfect.

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THE LIFE OF THE FLESH VS. THE LIFE OF THE NEW CREATURE

But as it is true with us that the New Creature thrives in proportion as the old creature dies, so it was with our Lord Jesus. He was coming nearer to perfection as a New Creature with every trial and every victory. He was approaching that standard which the Father would approve in the great High Priest and Head of the New Creation, until, at the time of his death, his words were, "It is finished"--his sacrificing of the flesh was finished, and that life which he had consecrated to sacrifice three and one-half years before and which was reckoned as passed away at that time, actually ceased on the cross. The New Creature was not brought forth in the birth of the resurrection, until the third day, but it was there in the Divine sight; it was "not possible that he should be holden of death." The whole matter was in harmony with the Divine plan. As he was *born* from the dead on the third day he must have been *begotten* previous to that birth, and his begetting was, as we have seen, at Jordan, when the Spirit of God was seen descending in the form of a dove.

So, then, coming to the direct question, there are two standpoints of viewing the whole matter and to ignore either would not be wise. That physically our Lord died, lost the spark of life and all conscious existence as absolutely as any others lose it, or as any brute beast ever lost it, there can be no doubt. But the important point is as respects his *soul* or *being*. He never forfeited his *right to life* and it was when he made a consecration of it to death that the Father gave him the new life, and this resurrection life he lived during the three and one-half years of his ministry. The New Creature was counted alive from the Divine standpoint, as in the type he is pictured as the great High Priest in the Holy, offering incense. Just so it is with us, his followers. We are counted as risen with him from the time we make our consecration and are begotten of the holy Spirit. We are not only *dead* with him, but we shall *reign* with him, and we are *risen* with him through faith in the operation of God's power. If we were to lose faith in this operation of God's power we would then be taking our place with the world, for they ignore this power. It is for us to maintain the standpoint of faith, and, while recognizing the facts as respects the real spark of life and its extinction, to recognize also the Lord's Word and to count, as does God, the things that are not yet completed as though they were accomplished.

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"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs
And works his sovereign will.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain."

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