

Assurance of the Resurrection

*“As in Adam all
die, even so in
Christ shall all be
made alive.”
—I Corinthians*

15:22

THE BIBLE FROM THE FIRST

to last holds out a doctrine that is found nowhere else, and one which is contrary to the theories of men, that a future life for the dead will come through a resurrection. All of the divinely inspired writers expressed their confidence in a Redeemer, even declaring that in the morning when God calls them from the tomb, they shall come forth and the wicked shall no longer hold rulership of the earth. “Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.” (Ps. 49:14) The ‘morning’ will bring dominion to the righteous, and redemption from the power of the grave. The prophets teach the resurrection of the dead, and the writers of the New Testament base all of their hopes of a future life and blessing upon it. The Apostle Paul wrote, “If the dead rise not, then is not Christ

raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.”—I Cor. 15:16-18

OUR LORD’S RESURRECTION

Consider the resurrection of Jesus from the dead of which Paul spoke. “What is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.” (Eph. 1:19,20) Our Lord proclaimed his own death by crucifixion, and subsequent resurrection, to his disciples, saying, “The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again” (Luke 24:7), “That he should be the first that should rise from the dead” (Acts 26:23), “The firstborn among many brethren.”—Rom. 8:29

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was even more than an awakening from the sleep of death. It was an exaltation to the highest plane of life in the entire universe—the divine. It has been described as, “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” (Eph. 1:21-23) “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that

in all things he might have the preeminence.”—Col. 1:18

While we cannot comprehend the power involved in such a mighty act as this, we can and should rejoice in the many assurances by the Word of God that this power stands pledged to help us in our every time of need. This power is provided to us not in an unconditional way, but in proportion to our faithfulness in laying down our lives as co-sacrificers with Jesus. It is to this important thought that Paul refers, when he said, “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.” (Phil. 3:8) He then clarified, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”—vss. 10,11

The mighty power of God gives us the necessary strength to lay down our lives, if we yield ourselves up daily as living sacrifices to him. The Lord does not use his power to force his people in the doing of his will. If they show a willingness to sacrifice, he provides the opportunity and the necessary strength to endure the trials which the refining work of his acceptance may entail. The Apostle Peter expressed the proper sequence of thought concerning this matter. He wrote, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”—I Pet. 5:6,7

TWO CLASSES RESURRECTED

Paul gives us a complete discourse on the subject of the resurrection in his letter to the brethren at Corinth in I Corinthians 15:12-28. First, he proves that faith in a resurrection is part of Christian doctrine, without which the entire fabric of it would be senseless. Secondly, having proved the doctrine, he shows that our Lord's resurrection is God's guarantee of a resurrection to the entire human race, for which Christ died. He goes on to prove this fact and its reasonableness by saying, "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." (I Cor. 15:21) By Adam came death to the whole human family, so by the man Christ Jesus the resurrection blessing is made applicable to all.

It is important to note that although a full resurrection to perfection is made applicable to all the human creation, it does not follow that all will obtain the blessings that will be available under the administration of Christ's future and glorious kingdom of truth and righteousness. It is only for those who successfully pass a judgment or trial to prove their worthiness of it under God's righteous conditions. A New Covenant arrangement is to be made applicable to the entire human family, and the terms will be such that all may avail themselves of the offer available in Christ. All who put their trust in Christ will be made alive, or fully escape the death sentence. The apostle explains, "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."—vss. 22,23

THAT WHICH EXCELLETH

When Paul wrote that he counted all things but loss and dross that he might know the power of Jesus' resurrection, he undoubtedly had in mind the power of the Heavenly Father which is awaiting his people while they are laying down their lives as fellow sacrificers with Jesus, and also the further and ultimate use of that power on behalf of the church in the first resurrection. The faithful church's future inheritance is also one of glory, "For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth."—II Cor. 3:10

All of the present advantages of health, comfort, prestige, or worldly joy will be nothing when compared to the spiritual glory. We should, as Paul did, consider all else as loss and dross as we think about what has been promised to all that have been called to glory. However, it is only if we have fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, as the apostle said. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." (Phil. 3:7-11) We will experience the mighty power of God to raise us

from the dead and exalt us to his own right hand with Christ. It is far more wonderful than the human perfection to which mankind in general will be restored, obtaining an even better resurrection than that of the faithful Worthies of Old.

LIGHT AFFLICTION

Writing on this subject, Paul tells us, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (II Cor. 4:17,18) He is showing us that only those who are fully consecrated will understand and appreciate our heavenly calling in Christ Jesus, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."—Rom. 3:25,26

The apostle shows us that of those who come into Christ and into the household of faith, there will be more than one class. The firstfruits class, the faithful members of his body, will be first in order and the first in rank. Because associated with Christ in sacrificing during this present Gospel Age, they will have part in his resurrection which is the chief resurrection. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ

was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”—Rom. 6:3-5

The call to the first or chief resurrection began centuries ago when our Lord Jesus—the head of the church—arose from death. Paul explained, “Every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” (I Cor. 15:23) As the ‘firstfruits’ of the sleeping ones, Jesus is an example and a guarantee of the fulfillment of the divine promise that “there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.” (Acts 24:15) Since, then, a little flock of believers has shared in justification by faith in the Redeemer’s sacrifice, and then have consecrated themselves to the Lord and become joint-heirs with Christ, Paul writes, “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”—Gal. 3:29

COMFORTED BY GOD

They have been begotten and quickened to this course of action by the exceeding great and precious promises of God. “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.” (Rom. 6:8,9) This is a further example of the mighty power of the Heavenly Father. This power concerning the resurrection of our Lord Jesus fortifies us against every assault of the Adversary. It replaces fear with courage, and it gives renewed strength to the weary. However, this power of the

resurrection does not isolate us from our necessary trials and experiences, nor spare us from suffering for righteousness sake. This power will help us to wait on the Lord and to patiently endure unto the end, for in sorrow it will be our comfort.

This is indeed the blessed hope and inheritance of all of the people of God who desire to continue to walk in the footsteps of our dear Lord Jesus. These were sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which by God's Word and providence bears witness that they are accepted in the Beloved. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." (Rom. 8:14-19) "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; because we shall see him as he is."—I John 3:2

He shall put down all rule, authority, and power to teach righteousness, truth, and love. "For he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet." (I Cor. 15:25) His kingdom having been arranged for the very purpose of releasing those who shall desire to be in harmony with God, will be made fully aware of his real character and plan.

A STANDING OR RISING UP

In the Bible, the word resurrection is found only in the New Testament and is the translation of the Greek word *anastasis* which means to stand, to rise up, awaken, or restore. Other Greek words are used when referring to the temporary awakening of those who had been awakened and who afterward died again. This can be illustrated in the case of Lazarus and others where neither the Greek word *anastasis*, nor its English equivalent resurrection, is used. "Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead."—John 12:1

The ransom given by our Lord once for all secured a resurrection (*anastasis*) for all. To define that word as only signifying a reawakening to a brief life only to die again would be to limit God's power. The true meaning of the word contains the thought of a full restoration of all that was lost. Mankind lost human perfection, and has been on a downward spiral which has led to moral decay, sickness, sorrow, and ultimately death. Our Lord Jesus died to recover all that was lost, and the promise of a resurrection is therefore the promise of the restoration of what was lost and redeemed. The Prophet Isaiah said, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because he hath anointed me to preach the good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."—Isa. 61:1

To appreciate the full force of the word *anastasis*, which points to restoration or rising up, we

must remember how far man has fallen into death. Full restoration which has been secured for mankind by their Redeemer, will be a full and complete raising up of all that was lost. By the perfect man Adam came death, and along with it all the degradation which the word implies including mental, moral, and physical, culminating in utter dissolution or loss. Through the willing sacrifice and subsequent resurrection of the world's Savior our Lord Jesus, a full raising up to the grand heights of perfection and to the image and likeness of God will be enjoyed by all the willing and obedient of the human family under the administration of The Christ.

RETURN TO PERFECTION

The Millennial Age is to be the resurrection day for the world of mankind, but it will be optional with each individual whether or not they attain the grand perfection provided for all in Christ. When the dead rise they will have to cooperate in matters pertaining to their own resurrection to perfection, or else never obtain it. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." (Eccl. 9:10) "For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" (Ps. 6:5) This work will be done by their glorified Redeemer, who declared, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice."—John 5:28

What a blessed confirmation, that all in their graves shall be awakened in the resurrection of the

dead. There will be two classes who will be awakened, and under different conditions. As our Lord proceeds to show, saying that those consecrated ones who are acceptable to God through Christ and are resurrected, come forth from death with a perfect life. They will receive the divine nature over which death will no longer have any power or control.

The remainder of mankind will be awakened to a judgment, or trial period, during which they will have an opportunity for a full raising up, but they must conform to the discipline and chastisements of that thousand-year judgment day during Christ's future kingdom. They will have the best conditions in which to learn of the Heavenly Father through the guidance of his glorified Son. The prophet has written, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall blossom as the rose. . . . Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. . . . And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; . . . And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."—Isa. 35:1-10

This wonderful passage of scripture reveals how the earth is to be brought to the perfection that God had primarily designed for it. The earth will once again become a happy home and a beautiful paradise for mankind. Messiah's kingdom will not only uplift humanity, but will also bring blessings of perfection to the earth. God has foreseen all the necessities of his plan and will make ample provision for all the needs of his human creation. He has

promised to deliver mankind from Satan's power and his blinding influence.

The blessings of Christ's future kingdom will ultimately open the eyes of the blind, and all ignorance and prejudice will be removed. All shall come to an accurate knowledge of the Truth concerning the divine character and attributes, and especially God's love. As a consequence, the true knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth "as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. 11:9) Not only will their bodies be blessed, but also their minds and hearts will be similarly freed from the bondage of sin. This is the ultimate goal and great work of the Millennial Kingdom. With the kingdom established, blessings of peace, joy, and life will begin to flow out to the world of mankind. We rejoice that God has a plan for the entire world of mankind, which includes an end to all of the things which have separated them from his love. "They shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying Know the Lord: for all shall know me from the least to the greatest."—Heb. 8:11

"I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any

more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.”—Rev. 21:1-5

Mankind will once again have dominion over the earth, and will be able to live on a restored perfect earth in peace and joy forever. It will be based on the words of our Lord, who said, “Thou shalt love the Lord your God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”—Mark 12:30,31

Love is the principle grace that mankind will have to learn and put into practice. “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Rom. 13:10) All who desire to live on a perfect earth forever will have to attain to this love. The mark of character, which is that which the law of God places as the condition for life for his human creation to be acceptable to him, is that of perfect love. Ultimately this law must govern all of God’s intelligent creatures who will obtain everlasting life. When man is completely restored to the image of God, every man will love him and his beloved Son.

RESURRECTION AND LIFE

At the time of Lazarus’ death, Jesus sought to comfort his grieving sister Martha. “Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”—John 11:23-26 ■