

# Resurrection.

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# RESURRECTION.

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RESURRECTION is one of the fundamental truths of Christianity. It is presented in two ways. First, the actual fact of dead persons being caused to live again, and secondly, the time or condition which is characterised by that fact having taken place.

Resurrection is the evidence of the power of God, and of victory over death. What is connected with man's sinful condition here is left behind, and it is for the believer the introduction into an eternal state of glory, and full conformity to Christ. It is the only ground on which God could have to say to man

for blessing after sin had come in. It is resurrection which practically introduces, as well as gives distinctive character to, "the age (or world) to come." Even Israel comes into its earthly blessings (figuratively at all events) on that ground, as we see in Ezekiel xxxvii., Daniel xii. and Acts xiii. 34.

At that time, and in that condition, every thing that has been obscure here, in the present order of things, will be made clear, and those who have suffered in faithfulness will meet their reward, whilst those relationships which are connected with a responsible life here in flesh and blood having come to an end, men are found in a condition suited to and capable of enjoying that which in the purpose of God is prepared for them.

References to this subject in the

Old Testament are somewhat obscure, but in the New Testament there are frequent references to it, both as a point of time (Luke xiv. 14) and as a condition of blessing.

Before taking up in detail the first point (the fact of dead men living again), which is the main object of these remarks, it is well to note that whilst the resurrection of the dead is referred to as a broad general fact covering all classes, there is also the division of it into two distinct parts, namely, the resurrection of just and that of unjust (Acts xxiv. 15), or the resurrection to life and that to judgment (John v. 29), and this distinction is made still more clear in Revelation xx., where after a statement of the blessedness of having part in the first resurrection, that is, that from among the dead (the resurrection of "the just" unto life), it is added that

“the rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years were finished.” In view of the common confusion in Christendom, where a general resurrection *at the same moment* of just and unjust is looked for, it is good to be clear that whilst scripture does speak in a general way of the resurrection of the dead, it also distinguishes the two parts of it. The same thing is true as to the Lord’s coming, which is frequently spoken of in a general way, but the two parts of it are distinguished and explained in 1 Thessalonians iv.

To turn now to the main object of these remarks, it is singular to note that whilst scripture speaks of the resurrection of the *dead*, it is much more common to hear those around us speak of the resurrection of the *body*. Indeed, in what is called the “Apostle’s Creed,” and in other parts of the

Liturgy habitually used in English churches, we find, "I believe in the resurrection of the body," and even, "I believe in the resurrection of the flesh." Now scripture undoubtedly uses terms which cover the resurrection of the body (see Matt. xxvii. 52), and any one who throws doubt upon it is in serious danger, but when it is found that a term which scripture habitually employs is neglected, and one is made use of that is not found there in that form, one may ask if it is not possible that what the Holy Ghost wishes to bring prominently before us is hardly sufficiently apprehended?

In order rightly to understand the expression we must have some definite thought of what *death* is in itself, that is, physically, apart from the fact that it is the judgment of God. When the Lord God formed

man of the dust of the ground, He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. It was in this way man became a living soul. He was a being of a special order, made in the image and likeness of God. He was set up on earth in flesh and blood, and *in that condition* he was adapted for the earth. In thus receiving from God the breath of life man became a being in moral and responsible relationship to God, and his existence is unending, though the condition (flesh and blood) in which it was set up is not so. When the breath leaves the body man dies. It is not that his existence comes absolutely to an end, but it does so in the condition in which God established him on earth as a responsible being. Death—the first death—brings man's life to an end in that condition, by separating the soul

from the body. Believers know from scripture that in such a case "the spirit returns to God who gave it," and that in the case of a believer it is "to depart and be with Christ," but so far as men—the world—see or know the inanimate body is laid in the grave, and there is the end of it. The world can only judge by what it sees, and to it the man has ceased to be. Abraham said, "Bury my dead out of my sight," and "pious men buried Stephen." We know that what truly represented them was no longer there at all, but what represented them in the eyes of men was their bodies, and they were laid in the grave. Thus it says in John v., "All that are in the graves." So far as men go, and the world, Abraham and Stephen were dead and gone, but they were still alive to God, "for all live to him." (Luke xx. 38.)



But it is the purpose of God to have men with Him, not only as *souls* but as *men*, soul and body as He made them, but it must be as risen, for in no other way could He have to say to man in blessing since sin came in.

In a coming day the mighty power of God will be displayed in setting up again as living men upon earth (though it may be only for a moment) those who had passed away from it by death. This appears to be the import of the expression, "the resurrection of the dead." As already said it is a general term, and includes those who, like Lazarus, were called back to a natural life in flesh and blood, as well as those who will be raised up from among the dead, as the Lord Himself has been, and even the wicked, as seen in Revelation xx., but the important thing is

to understand the use of the term itself.

When we have apprehended this, the natural mind is at once disposed to inquire, as the Corinthians appear to have done, "With what body do they come?" They must have bodies or they would not be *men*. The answer given in 1 Corinthians xv. is a rebuke both to the speculative inquiries of the human mind and to material infidelity. When the action of the mighty power of God is before us all human thoughts are vain. It is clear that the main thought in that passage is the immense contrast between the body laid in the grave and that which comes forth. What was sown in corruption, dishonour and weakness is raised in incorruptibility, glory and power. What was sown a natural body is raised a spiritual body. But

whilst, as the figure shews, what is laid in the grave is "not that body that shall be," it is evident that it bears a direct and close relation to it, even as the ear of corn that shoots out from the earth is in direct relation to the "bare grain" that was sown. The power that will change the bodies of the living saints (Phil. iii. 21) will doubtless act in a similar way as to the bodies of those in the grave, so that all may be found in a condition suited for their glorious future, being conformed to the body of His glory who will bring it all about. When the apostle speaks of "our house which is from heaven" what is in his mind is evidently that its characteristics are heavenly, and that it is suited for heaven, but not that it comes materially out of heaven.

Apart from positive statements

already referred to, there are many considerations which prove that there must be some direct relation between the body that was buried and that which comes forth—a *changed* rather than a *new* body. The bodies of saints have been indwelt by the Holy Ghost, they have been His temples, they are said to be members of Christ, they will be redeemed, and it is the deeds done in the body which come out at the judgment seat of Christ, but it certainly seems to be the desire of the apostles, and therefore the mind of the Holy Ghost, that the thoughts of the saints should be directed rather to the resurrection of *persons* than to that of *bodies*. Death is the proof of the victory that Satan gained through man's sin, but the resurrection of the *man* who dies—the reunion of soul and body—is the great proof of God's triumph

over sin, death and Satan. If the thought of the body being raised is the prominent thing, there is danger of material thoughts, or of unwholesome speculations.

There are many other deeply important aspects of resurrection, and in particular of the way in which it is exemplified in the case of the Lord Himself, but these remarks are limited to the point dealt with. Whilst the writer is conscious there may be defects in the manner of setting out the truth, it is hoped that what is said may be helpful in these days of open or disguised infidelity.

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