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Special Full Length Studies

#SS19

THE RESURRECTIONS

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It is the promise of our God that He will raise the dead. He will yet do a work that when completed, all the descendants of Adam who have lived and died will have experienced resurrection from the state of death. This experience will be the portion of **"both the just and the unjust,"** as Paul so emphatically declares in Acts 24:15. The time will yet come when all who have died because of what Adam did will be made alive because of what Jesus Christ has done. Through His work upon the Cross He purchased another life for every man. Therefore, in the final accounting no one will have suffered irreparable loss because of what Adam did. If any man ever perishes, it will be due to his own sins, not due to Adam's sin.

There are many passages in Scripture which have a bearing upon and which give testimony concerning the resurrection of the dead. The work of the Bible student is to gain an understanding of every fact revealed in these passages, then hold these facts until they can be resolved into an honest summary of truth. Many attempts have been made to do this, but as a rule when the teaching is weighed it is found wanting. It often fails to make room for all the facts revealed in the Word, or else it contradicts some of the facts that are found there. Facts are stubborn things. They will not go away no matter how persistently we ignore them. The truth we hold must accord with and must incorporate all the facts.

If we go back a hundred years or more it will be found that the prevailing popular view at that time concerning the resurrection of the dead was that the Bible taught one "general resurrection." This teaching was widespread, and it was generally accepted throughout Christendom. This being an exceedingly simple theory, it was an ideal teaching for the educated clergy to hand down to the ignorant laity, most of whom could neither read nor write. However, this theory did not include all the facts of Scripture and it was diametrically opposed to some of the facts. Therefore the time came when it was vigorously and successfully challenged. The very fact that the Word of God declares that **"the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished"** (Rev. 20: 5) made it impossible for many to believe in one general resurrection. They could not reconcile this plain statement of fact with the popular theory of a general resurrection, so the popular theory had to be revised, enlarged, and

altered to take in the positive declaration of Scripture.

This is the way it should ever be, but alas it is so seldom this way. And while it would be difficult to say just who it was that first dared to challenge the commonly held view of a general resurrection, the one who did is deserving of great honor.

An Advance in Truth

This revision and enlargement led to the idea of two future resurrections, one before the thousand year reign of Christ, and another at the close of that period of time.

There can be no question but that this was a step in the right direction. This theory of two future resurrections became the avowed teaching of the premillennial school of thought. This is the Darby Scofield teaching, and it has been generally accepted by that large company whom we might well designate as the dispensational premillennialists. It fit in quite well with their understanding of the order of events when God resumes His prophetic program.

However, this theory of two resurrections was not without its difficulties and contradictions. It has all the redeemed raised at the second coming of Christ, but it makes no arrangements for those faithful martyrs who will lay down their lives in the great tribulation.

Men like A. E. Booth recognized this difficulty, and those who have access to his dispensational chart will find on it a special resurrection for the tribulation martyrs. This resurrection, according to Booth's chart, is to be seven years after the one called "the first resurrection." This, beyond all question, made three resurrections, but it seems that Booth was reticent to admit this.

H. A. Ironside also seems to have faced this difficulty, but was anxious to avoid any theory that would increase the resurrections to three in number. In his chart, which is a part of his exposition of the book of Revelation, it will be found that he adds another resurrection, but calls it "the completion of the first resurrection." Thus he also makes the first resurrection to be in two groups seven years apart. This was also the teaching of Scofield as an examination of his note on *Resurrection* on page 1228 of the *Scofield Reference Bible* will show.

Many careful students of the Biblical truth concerning the resurrections have felt that it is not necessary to interpret the word "first" in Revelation 20:5 in an absolute sense; that is, that it need not mean first in number and first in order, as if there could be none raised before this. They know that the word translated "first" here can mean "former" as it is so translated in Acts 1: 1 and Revelation 21:4. They know that the

covenant which is called the first in Hebrews 8: 7 was not the first covenant that God ever made with man. The Abrahamic covenant preceded the Sinai covenant. Neither do they feel that the resurrections must be limited to two, as some have felt it necessary to do; even going so far as to teach three resurrections while insisting it is only two.

Those dispensationalists who hold to the Acts 28:28 dispensational boundary line have always refused the bondage of only two future resurrections. Some have taught four future resurrections. This, for quite a few years was the writer's position, but it is a position that he found to be untenable and unsatisfactory as knowledge of the facts of God's Word has increased.

It now seems that many of our difficulties in regard to forming a satisfactory theory of truth concerning the resurrections arises from the fact that we have always tried to make it one, two, three, or four companies, with every member of each company arising from the dead at the same split second of time. This has been true of every theory propounded so far, and it has been fruitful of many difficulties.

In the "general resurrection" idea, every man who had ever lived and died was to be raised at the same moment of time. The *just* were not to precede the *unjust* for all were to be raised together.

When men advanced from this theory to the idea of two companies, they still had every member of the first company raised at the same instant, and every member of the second company arising from the dead simultaneously a thousand years later. However, as already mentioned, some found this rigid classification to be untenable, so they made the first resurrection to be in two groups, seven years apart

When men, as a result of coming to recognize God's present calling of believers in this dispensation of grace, went on to teach four distinct resurrections, they still had every member of each company being raised at the same moment of time. We failed to see that the moment of a man's resurrection would be based upon the place of service he is to fill, and that these places of service differ widely in the same calling.

If the United States were to call up another army out of its great pool of reserves and registered men, the time of a man's call and the date he was to report would most certainly depend upon the service he was to perform. It would result in nothing but confusion to call the privates first. Furthermore, it would also create great confusion if in discharging an army the officers were sent home first.

We must not try to restrict God to raising every member of a calling at the same split second of time. Neither must we insist that every calling shall be a special company in resurrection. We must let God determine the order, for this is exactly what He is going to do.

However, while we must leave the order within the resurrections to God, He has given us a revelation that the dead are to be raised in certain companies. It is these companies that are our special interest in this study. Within these companies, God Himself will fix the order. Therefore, if any reader of these lines is determined that for a company to be raised from the dead, the whole company must be raised at the same moment, he will find no help in the balance of this study.

Three Companies

After careful study of all the passages in the Old and New Testaments that have to do with the resurrections, the conclusion has been reached that there is one position which will include every fact. This can be simply stated in these words: The dead are to be raised in three great companies. When these three companies have been raised, God will have fulfilled to the letter His great promise made through Paul in I Corinthians 15:22, wherein we are told that because of what Jesus Christ has done, all will be made alive.

In order that the reader may have these three resurrections before him, they will be briefly set forth at this point, after which they will be taken up separately for a more detailed examination.

1. **First**, there is that great company that is to be raised from the dead in the day when our God governs the earth. This resurrection will bring certain men back to the earth in order that they might live upon and serve God on the earth in the day of His government. None of the consequences of Adam's sin will any longer appear upon the earth when God governs. **There will be many orders in this resurrection and it may cover a span of quite a few years.** This is the resurrection that Jesus Christ had reference to when He said "I will raise him up **IN (not, at) the last day.**" John 6:40.

2. **Second**, there is that company which is to be raised from the dead at the coming (parousia) of Jesus Christ. This is a martyr group, and it will be composed entirely of those who lay down their lives in the uprising against God's government. Paul speaks of this resurrection in I Thessalonians 4: 16. This company, it seems evident, will rise as a unit. They go to meet the Lord in the air to accompany Him on His descent to the earth. These resume their lives upon the earth under the previous physical conditions in order that they might participate in all the joys of Christ's millennial presence and reign.

3. **Third**, there is that resurrection which will take place at the close of the thousand years. This is the final company raised. It includes all who have not been raised in the two previous companies. There is no evidence that this company comes forth as a unit. It seems that the God of order will bring forth each man when it comes his time to have his day in court.

We will now examine these three companies in more detail.

Resurrection Under God's Government

When the Lord Jesus Christ sent forth the twelve disciples to herald that heavens' government was at hand, He told them that in connection with their proclamation to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out devils (Matthew 10:7-8). These miracles were performed to show some of the things that could be expected under heavens' government. And while this was not the orderly resurrection that is to take place when God governs the world, it did lead the people to expect that the time of heaven's government would be a time of resurrection. .

After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, **'many bodies of the saints which slept arose'** (Matthew 27: 52) . This was a great demonstration that heavens' government had begun, even though it was only in a stage comparable to the blade stage of growing grain. In view of this great sign that announced the beginning of heavens' government upon the earth, it is entirely logical that men would expect a greater company to be raised when that government moved out of the blade stage into the "ear" stage (See Mark 4: 26-29).

In Matthew 8: 11 we have the words of the Lord Jesus that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens.

Since Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are dead (See Genesis 25:8, 35:9, and 49:33 if proof of this is needed) they will need to be raised from the dead if they are to take their place under heavens' government. Those who come "from the east and the west" will also be resurrected men. We can rest assured that among those who "come from the east" will be the wise men who came to Jerusalem after the birth of Jesus Christ. Just think what a story these men will have to tell, and think of the contribution they can make to the accurate knowledge of the ways and works of God. Every human tradition about the birth of Christ and the visit of these men will have to be revised to conform to their testimony. One of the constant joys of living under God's government will be to hear or to read what men such as these have to say.

While resurrection is only inferred in the passages we have *just* considered, it is directly stated in John 6:40, 44 and 54 .. **I will raise him up IN (not, at) the last day,**" is the thrice repeated statement in this one chapter.

The phrase "**the last day**" that is found in these passages has troubled many. Taking the word *last* to mean *final*, they have tried to make this to mean "the last twenty-four hour period of time before eternity begins." But this statement need give no difficulty for the word *last* need not mean the final. It was constantly used idiomatically among the Hebrews to denote the ensuing day or the resultant day. See Matthew 12:45 and 27:64 where it is used in this manner, also II Peter 2:20 where it is translated "**latter end.**"

Our Lord sought to instruct His disciples that His government was to go through a night period. In this night period those who confessed Him would probably be put to death. This was fulfilled in the Acts period. When Paul wrote Romans, very late in the Acts period, he declared that "**the night is far spent, the day is at hand**" (Rom. 13:12). However, the dawning of the day was suspended, and the righteous dead still await the resultant *day* when God's government will be resumed upon the earth. They will be raised "in the last day."

This resurrection under God's government is also set forth in John 5:28, 29. It is called there "the resurrection of life." It is so designated because those raised are to be brought back into a situation that is characterized by life, not by death.

When Lazarus was raised from the dead, if he looked about, which he most certainly did, he saw a company of people in whom death was working. The very scene he came back to had death written over it and upon it. But this will not be true of those raised under God's government. They will come back to a scene which is characterized by life, a scene in which none of the consequences of Adam's sin will be apparent. If in that day death works in anyone, or anyone dies, it will be due to their own sins, not due to the curse that passed upon all men because of Adam's sin. Has the reader ever meditated upon the joys and privileges of living upon an earth that is characterized by life and not by death; where men are alive and living, not alive and dying?

This resurrection under God's government is set forth in Luke 14:14. In this passage the Lord spoke of men being "recompensed at the resurrection of the just." And when one of them that sat at meat with Him heard these things, he said unto Him, "**Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.**" Luke 14: 15. This remark was not out of place. It shows that "the resurrection of the just" is a part of God's government. Any man who has the privilege of being upon earth when it is governed by God is blessed indeed.

In I Thessalonians 4: 14 a positive reference is found to this resurrection under God's government. It is there held out as a source of encouragement to those whose loved ones and friends had laid down their lives in faithfulness to Christ. Specifically this refers to the martyrs of the Acts period. They laid down their lives in the night period of God's government.

They would be brought back to life to participate in the glories of the day period. They had been called in relationship to God's kingdom, and their resurrection will be to that kingdom (I Thess. 2: 12). They had suffered in order to be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, and they were not to lose out on this because they had laid down their lives in faithfulness (II Thess. 1:5).

There is another resurrection set forth in I Thessalonians 4:16, and the student should be very careful not to confuse these two. It seems strange that so many students can make a sharp distinction between the two resurrections in John 5:29, and yet are unable to see that there are two distinct resurrections in I Thessalonians 4: 13-16. The first of these two will be raised under God's government, the second will be at the *parousia* of Christ.

The companies set forth in John 5: 29 are the first and third companies. Those set forth in I Thess. 4:13-16 are the first and second companies. In John the second company to be raised is not mentioned. In Thessalonians the third company to be raised is not in the picture. In Revelation 20:4-5 the second and third companies are before us but the first company is not mentioned. Passages such as these show the need for rightly dividing the word of truth. To rightly divide is not an easy task..

God's Hope Held Out To Men

The fact that God is to govern the world is one of the major themes of Scripture. This great truth has been lost, due to the fact that the truth of the second coming of Christ has been superimposed upon it. This government is not dependent upon the King being personally present upon the earth. It is dependent upon the Lord Jesus being on His throne in the heavens. See Psalm 103: 19. The time will yet come when all men on earth can shout for joy saying, "**The Lord reigneth**" Psalm 93: 1; when they can "**say among the nations that the Lord reigneth**" Psalm 96:10. In that day all the blessed results that are attributed to the reign of Christ will be blessed realities.

In all times and under all conditions, God has held out to every man the opportunity of living upon this earth when He governs. He has not always held out to men the opportunity of obtaining eternal life, neither has He always held out to them the hope of immortality and incorruptibility. He has not held out to all men the opportunity of being a part of the government out-calling or the grace outcalling. These are special or added privileges and blessings that are held out to men only under certain conditions and at certain times. These things are over and above the basic privilege of living upon the earth when God governs.

This basic privilege or blessing has always been the opportunity held out to all men. All anyone has ever needed to do to lay hold of this blessing is to bring *into* his life some thing or quality which would mark him out as one who has "done good." If these words are true of him, he will be raised from the dead to live upon this earth when our God governs.

The Scriptural phrase "done good" is used here in order to have an all inclusive term. **It** has no connection with "salvation by works." The term comes right from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is not left to man to say what is good. When a man believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, that man has "done good." When Abraham believed God, he was marked out as a man that had "done good." There are many things that would mark a man as having done good. Peter said "in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him." Acts 10:34-35. Cornelius and his house had done this thing, and were guaranteed a place in the resurrection of life. However, Peter went to them with a message that would add to this the gift of eternal life.

Every man who has lived upon this earth since Adam down to those living upon it today must bring *into* his life some quality that will mark him out as one who has done good. In connection with this I would speak personally. My own sole claim to having "done good" is that thirty-six years ago I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, received Him as my Lord and placed my trust in Him as my Savior. This marks me out as one who is to live upon this earth when God governs. However, because of the time in which I believed and the conditions under which I believed, I am also marked out as a part of God's grace calling. If God's government should begin tonight, I will awaken tomorrow in possession of immortality, incorruptibility, and eternal life. And because of a graciously given position among the super-heavenly ones, I would find that every avenue and aspect of divine knowledge has been made open and accessible to me, and I would under God's direction begin upon this earth the "good works" for which I have been created anew in Christ *Jesus*. I would so partake of the substance or essence (body) of Christ that I would become in fact His substance (body). If this sounds like boasting, then let it be noted that my boast is in Christ, not in myself.

If God should today break into the stream of history and impose His government upon the world, it would then be the immediate work of God to *judge* the living and the dead. To *judge* is to fix or determine the order. This is the truth declared **in II Timothy 4:1 where Paul declares that Christ will *judge* the living and the dead at His appearing (epiphaneia) and His kingdom.** This would necessitate that the personal history of every man in the state of death should be reviewed by God. This is not to determine guilt or punishment. It is to determine if there has been anything in a man's life that would qualify him as having "done good" in the sight of God. This judgment will determine if a man is to be raised in the firstfruit company and what will be his order or place in that company.

In matters such as this God alone can decide. However, at this point it might be helpful if we ourselves review the lives of some men on the basis of their recorded history and see if we can discover in their lives those things that would mark them out for resurrection in the firstfruit company. This will help us to understand the infinite variety of ways in which men have "done good" and have marked themselves out to live upon the earth again in the day that God governs.

Adam

When God created Adam, He pronounced him "**very good.**" Gen. 1: 31. Yet he was neither immortal nor incorruptible. He could sin and he could die. He was warned that the consequences of sin would be death. The moment he sinned, death began to work in him, and he knew that it would continue to work until he returned to the dust. However, after his sin a definite act of faith came into his life. God had spoken to him about "the seed of the woman," and he took God at His word and responded by calling his wife's name Eve, because, said he, she is to be the mother of all living. This act of faith moved God immediately to cover their nakedness, and there can be no doubt but that it marks them out to live again upon this earth when God governs. Men who take God at His word and respond to it are the kind of men God wants upon the earth when His kingdom is a reality.

Cain and Abel

There can be no question about the future of Abel. There was a great act of faith in his life. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh. *See* Hebrews 11: 4. Abel's act of faith brought something into his life that even though he is dead his act still speaks to God. When God *sets* the order for the dead at the beginning of His government, Abel's faith will speak and God will answer.

The man Cain must *be* left to God's adjudication. The record of his life is not complete. Did he ever "do well" and find acceptance with God? Did he ever seek and find forgiveness for the murder he committed? No one can say. *We* will have to wait and *see* if he is upon the earth when God governs.

Abraham and Abimelech

Passing over the obvious cases, let us consider the record of two men, Abraham and Abimelech. It will *be* left to the reader to read carefully the twentieth chapter of

Genesis at this point. Abraham was a sinner to whom God had spoken, giving him explicit instructions and promises. *He* believed God and his faith was put to his account for righteousness. Abimelech was a man who feared God and worked righteousness, a thing that any man upon earth at that time could have done. This made him acceptable in the sight of God.

Abraham had responded to a message from God, but Abimelech had acted upon the light of his conscience. Abraham had *been* given much light and truth and from him much was expected. When God spoke to him he stood *between* two things—great blessing or great guilt. *He* believed God and became the possessor of a promise of great reward. Both of these men will live again on this earth when God governs.

Many Others

Consider also the Pharaoh who showed great favor to Joseph and his brethren; consider Hiram, king of Tyre, who was ever a lover of David. These men have marked themselves out for life upon this earth when God governs because they blessed the seed of Abraham. Then, there is the Queen of Sheba, that remarkable woman who "came from the uttermost part of the earth *to* hear the wisdom of Solomon" (Matt. 12:42). This indicated to the Lord what she would have done if she had been alive when *He* was upon the earth. His own words indicate that she will live again when God raises the dead.

The Men of Nineveh

The book of Jonah gives us the full record of these *men*. They were citizens of an exceedingly wicked city. However, when Jonah proclaimed the destruction of their great city, they turned to God in the hope of averting the disaster. They not only saved their city, but they marked themselves out for life upon this earth under God's government. Their attitude toward the preaching of Jonah was to God a clear indication of the response they would have made if they had heard the greater message of Christ. He declared:

The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. Matthew 12 :41.

These men, wicked though they were, demonstrated that they would submit when they heard a message proclaimed by a man sent from God. This simple fact marks them out as those who will live again upon this earth when God governs.

The Position of Those Raised

While the men of Nineveh will be raised from the dead and return to life under previous physical conditions to participate in the blessings of God's government, they will not be in possession of many of the blessings which God has at times held out to men. They will not possess eternal life, nor will they be immortal. However, death will not be working in them, for they will be in much the same condition that Adam was before he sinned. And one of the rich blessings that will be theirs is to live out their lives in harmony with **Paul's words in Romans 2:6-7**.

Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life.

These words cannot be declaring the principle by which men obtained eternal life at the time Paul wrote them. Neither do they set forth a rule for obtaining eternal life now. But they do set forth a principle that will be in effect "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (Romans 2: 16). God never held out to Adam any opportunity to gain eternal life. He did hold out to him the opportunity of living again, of being raised from the state of death. When Adam lives again he will then have the opportunity of obtaining eternal life by patient continuance in well doing. Let no one ever think that there are no goals to be reached and nothing to be gained in the life to come.

This Is Not Incredible

"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" This was the challenge Paul hurled at Agrippa, and it is a challenge that needs to be hurled at every believer today. Let us face the fact and be prepared in mind and heart for it. If God's government should begin today, not many months would pass before we would see the reappearance upon this earth of men such as Adam, Abel, Abraham, and Abimelech. We would see the men of Nineveh and the queen of Sheba. We would see the twelve Apostles as they return to life to take their place upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. These will all be present upon this earth when God governs. In fact, one of the outstanding features of God's government will be the reappearance upon this earth of, individuals who have long been in the state of death. Everyone of these will have their contribution to make to the life, thought, and knowledge that will characterize the earth when God governs. These are a part of that great "firstfruit" company of which Jesus Christ Himself is the first of the first' fruit." See Exodus 34:26.

The Little Children

In this company will be found the resurrection of a group concerning the destiny of which few have ever dared to be explicit. Here, let us say, is a child, only a few days or a few years of age. It was born, even as all men are born, with death working in it. This is not because it had sinned, or because it was born a sinner. This death which works in it passed upon all men because Adam sinned. And, as so often happens to our great sorrow, the death that worked in it came to a speedy consummation. Its short span of life came to an end. It had been a living soul, but now it is dead. It never knew its left hand from its right, never sinned against God, never did harm to man. It never had a chance to live, never had the opportunity of bringing into its life anything that would mark it out as one who had "done good." The question that presses upon us is what will its destiny be. When will it be raised from the dead?

The answer to these questions are given without hesitation. These little ones who never had the opportunity to live upon this earth will have that opportunity in the day that God governs. They were robbed of that opportunity because of the effects of Adam's sin. They will be given that opportunity because of the righteous work of Jesus Christ. They died because Adam sinned. They will live again because Jesus Christ died.

Therefore to every mother who asks, "When will I again clasp my little one in my arms?" we can say with assurance, "In the day that God governs the earth." Let both father and mother make sure that they will be there to receive it.

Little children make perfect subjects for heavens' government. In fact, men must become like them before they can enter it. Matthew 18:3. Little children have implicit faith in what they are told and they trust the one who tells them. In reference to them Jesus Christ said "**of such is the kingdom of the heavens.**" Matthew 19: 14. This seems to mean "to them belongs the kingdom of the heavens."

This is the promise of Christ that they will be there. They will not be deprived of that which belongs to them. When God reviews their short lives, nothing will be found in them that will bar them from life under God's government. They will live again when His kingdom comes. They will not be given eternal life, immortality, or incorruptibility. Nevertheless, they can obtain these things by "patient continuance in well doing" as they live their lives under the benevolent conditions that will characterize the earth when God governs. If they should be restored to parents who possess these blessings, the child can grow up to honor the parents who possess these things.

Under God's government the increase in population is not to come from the multiplicity of births, as it is today. It will be through resurrection. There will be births, but the multiplicity of births is not a part of God's original plans. This is a part of the adverse judgment that God pronounced upon Eve. "I will greatly multiply thy conception," was God's word to the woman. This curse is to be lifted under God's government, when all the adverse effects of Adam's sin will disappear.

The Grace Calling

The goal of God's government will be to produce upon this earth a people who know Him and understand Him, a people with whom He can dwell, and among whom He can center all His activities. This goal is revealed in Revelation 21: 3, and it is reached through two great periods of divine activity. The first period precedes the second coming of Christ, and the second period follows His coming. The first can well be called His pre-advent kingdom, and the second can be called His post-advent kingdom. In the first period He governs from the heavens, and in the second period He governs upon the earth. In these two great periods God is going to produce a people who know Him and understand Him. This knowledge of Him will come from experience, observation, education, and training. God will reveal Himself, He will make Himself known.

In order for a man to fully know and understand God, he must know Him as the God of every grace and as the Judge of all the earth. He is the God of grace and the God of government. Blessed is the man who will be permitted to learn of Him when He governs. Twice blessed is the man whose learning continues through the millennium. Infinitely blessed will be all who reach the new heavens and new earth.

When God governs the earth there will be among men two outcalled companies who will fully express the God of grace and the God of government. We need to mark well the fact that there must be among men a full witness to the God of grace in the day when He governs. This company completes the expression of God, and it is composed of those whom God has brought into relationship to Himself in this the dispensation of the grace of God. We are the grace calling, not the kingdom calling. We are not destined to serve God in government. We are predestined to give witness to His grace in the day when He governs. We are to extol the glories of His grace, and He will display the transcendent riches of His grace in us. This is the good work that God foreordained we should do, and it is the work we will do when God governs. Paul's letter to the Ephesians tells us these truths.

If we should be among the living when God establishes His government upon the earth, we can expect to enter at once into all the blessings promised to our calling. Thus with His equipment and under His direction and blessing we can begin our work

for Him, bringing into being a witness to His grace to balance His display of government. There will be no unbalanced testimony in the day that He governs.

If we should be among the dead when God imposes His government upon the earth, then it will be necessary for God to raise us from the dead. He has promised us that when Christ who is our life shall be manifested that we also shall be manifested with Him in glory (Col. 3: 3). We can depend upon Him to keep this promise. And since God has promised us eonian life before eonian times begin (Titus 1:2), and because of the hope held out to the grace calling of an "our resurrection out from among the dead" (Phil. 3: 11), and because of the vital importance of the future service we are to perform (Eph. 2: 7 -10), we can rest assured that those who make up the grace calling will be restored to life as soon as God begins His reign.

There are thousands of avenues of truth that could be explored in relationship to this theme, but this must be left to the reader. Let us go on to consider the second company to be raised.

The Resurrection at the Second Coming

Under God's government men are expected to learn righteousness, and to make God's righteousness the motivating principle of their lives. After they have lived long under His benevolent rule, they are to be tested by an "**hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth**" (Revelation 3: 10). It seems that once again men are permitted to choose their own way and to order their own lives, in order to see what way they will take and what they will do. As a result of this testing, "**many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly**" (Dan. 12:10). There is an uprising against God's government (Psalm 2:2, 3), and an attempt is made to wipe out the key personnel of Israel's government. The situation thus created will be one wherein faithful men who cannot take up weapons (Matt. 26:52, John 18:36), are persecuted by men who have dared to take them up. The outcome will be that many will lay down their lives in faithfulness to God. Of this company it is said:

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Revelation 14:13.

However, these martyrs will not remain long in the state of death, for they are to be raised at the second coming of Christ. This is the second company to be raised. **One of their special rewards and honors will be to ascend to meet the Lord in the air as He moves toward the earth to begin His thousand year period of personal presence upon it.**

This resurrection is set forth in many passages. It is mentioned in I Corinthians 15: 52, where it is revealed that a great company who under God's government have

earned incorruptibility and immortality will be granted these blessings at the moment this resurrection takes place.

It is this resurrection that is referred to in I Corinthians 15: 23 where we read, **"they that are Christ's at His coming"** (parousia). It is also set forth in I Thessalonians 4: 16 and again in Revelation 20:4. An examination of the last mentioned passage in its context will show very definitely that this is the resurrection of a martyr group. John describes them as being those **"that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast. . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."** Revelation 20:4. Then after having set forth the restoration of these martyrs to life, he goes on to say,

"This is the first resurrection." This company is identical with that one set forth in I Thess. 4:16.

It is a very popular mistake of interpretation that makes the resurrection of I Thess. 4: 16 to be the hope of all the righteous dead from Adam. This rapture and resurrection has to do only with the government ecclesia, those who were called "unto His kingdom and glory." I Thess. 2:12.

The Final Company

"The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Rev. 20:5.

This is John's explicit testimony. It marks out for us the final group to be raised. This company should not be referred to as "the wicked dead" although all wicked men will be raised in this company. There will be many in this group who cannot be classified as having "done good" nor having "done evil". By this is meant that they have done nothing that would mark them *out* for the firstfruit company, and neither have they been guilty of those capital sins for which men will be sentenced to the second death. The fact that a man is not raised until this final resurrection does not indicate that he will be cast into the lake of fire. This is a "resurrection unto judgment" and it is not unto doom. The facts that are brought out before God's great white throne will determine the destiny of those who stand there. However, even if those who are raised in the final resurrection should escape the penalty of the second death, they will have missed the experience of the pre-advent kingdom and the post-advent kingdom. They will have missed both sessions of God's great school, and will not be qualified for a place on the new earth. If the earth were the only place in God's universe we would need to be concerned about their future location. But since it is not, we will leave their destiny to God.

The Witness of I Corinthians 15

The three companies which have been set forth in this study are in complete harmony with Paul's great revelation in **I Corinthians 15:23, 24**. **There we read:**

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

This is a concise epigrammatic setting forth of, the three great companies in resurrection. However, this passage has been so poorly translated and so badly misinterpreted that its truth has been lost. An entirely new consideration of this passage is a vital necessity. A complete exposition of text and context is not possible in this study, but certain lines of truth will be examined and the student can carry on his own study with these points in mind.

In any objective study of this passage it will need to be recognized that the translators of the *King James Version* were men who believed in and taught a general resurrection. They held that all the dead would be raised in one great company. When they came upon this passage, they could do nothing else but translate it in harmony with their own beliefs and teachings. Therefore the Greek was so rendered that it would set forth only one company in resurrection, "**they that are Christ's at His coming**." The *King James Version* rendering of I Cor. 15:23,24 stultifies the message that Paul was seeking to convey to his readers. We need to uncover the truth from the tradition that has been heaped upon it.

Consider first of all the word *order* in verse 23. This word in the Greek is a very simple word, the meaning of which can be easily established. It is an ancient military term, which even though it is found only once in the New Testament, was used many times by classical Greek writers. It means a number set in the same position; therefore, a group, a class, a company. If the student or translator has no axe to grind, the meaning of this word is quite plain. It means a *company* and was constantly used of a definite band or group of military personnel.

There is an ellipsis of the verb in verse 23 which needs to be supplied from the preceding statement. This would make it to read: But each shall be made alive in his own company. The word *but* here is used in the same way as if we were to say, "I will do it, but in my own way."

Having declared that the scope of resurrection is as wide as the death that came through Adam's sin, Paul adds the qualifying statement that this will be accomplished by each man being raised in (not, with) his own company. Following this statement Paul sets forth three companies as follows:

1. A company called "firstfruit anointed" (*aparche christos*).
2. A company that is Christ's at His personal presence (*parousia*).
3. A company called "the end" (*to telos*).

These according to Paul are the three companies that are to be "made alive". The inclination of some readers may be to reject at once the interpretation set forth above. We are so prone to like loose-fitting, familiar understanding of passages, that any suggestion of something different seems to pinch us at once. They may charge that we have taken Christ out of this passage. But we must never hesitate to take Christ out of places where men have put him in.

It takes a measure of courage and deep conviction to challenge and deny an interpretation that is almost universally held throughout Christendom. However, the facts in the case force the admission that the words *aparche christos* in verse 23 do **not** refer to the Lord Jesus Christ. **There are five good reasons for not believing this.** Therefore, if any care to criticize the teaching of the writer on this point, let them note carefully these five reasons.

First, Paul is setting forth *companies* to be raised, and the lone person of Christ is not a company. The word *tagmati* cannot be used of a single person, it must be used of two or more persons or things that are set in the same position.

Second, *Jesus* Christ cannot be the first one. to be "made alive in Christ:" It does not make sense to speak of Christ having been made alive in Himself. Since Paul is here setting forth the companies to be made alive in Christ, Christ cannot be either the first of these companies or one of them.

Third, *Jesus* Christ is not included in the word all when we read "**in Christ shall all be made alive**"

Fourth, the verb *zoopoiethesontai*, here translated "shall be made alive" does not in this passage accord with Christ. This verb could have been used of Him before His resurrection, but it could not have been used of Him twenty-five years after He had been raised from the dead.

Fifth, there are only two words in this statement (*aparche christos*). These are not a complete thought. The translators usually take care of this by adding the definite

article and rearranging the Greek words. This results in the translation "Christ the firstfruits," but this is not the correct method of supplying the ellipsis or omission. In all cases of ellipsis the thought should always be completed by bringing into it the dominant thought of the preceding statement. In this passage it is the *companies* to be raised. This would make it to read, firstfruit anointed company. This preserves the order and emphasis of the Greek, and it supplies the ellipsis from the context. But when the ellipsis is supplied in this manner, it makes it impossible that the words *aparche christos* should mean the Lord Jesus Christ.

This company called here the "firstfruit anointed company," is the great company that is to be raised from the dead in connection with God's government of the earth. And while many objections can be raised to the interpretation of *aparche christos* that has been presented, most of these have been anticipated. However, it should be carefully noted here that the writer's belief in a resurrection under God's government is not based upon his understanding of the Greek phrase used here. That would put the cart before the horse. His interpretation of *aparche christos* is based upon his belief in a resurrection under God's government, a truth revealed and established by many passages. (the writer here acknowledges his indebtedness to Mr. Emil Wuinee of Pittsfield, Mass, who 15 years ago pointed out that *aparche christos* could not mean "Christ the Firstfruits". He held that it meant the "anointed firstfruit class").

The first objection usually raised to this interpretation is that Christ is called "firstfruit" in verse 20, and that this title belongs to Him alone.

It is most certainly true that Christ is called "firstfruit of those who are sleeping" in verse 20. This statement follows the emphatic declaration, "**But now is Christ risen from the dead,**" a declaration that puts Him outside *of* the companies that are yet to be made alive because *of* His great work. However it is not true that the title *firstfruit* belongs to Him alone. Epanetus was the firstfruit *of* Asia unto Christ (Romans 16:5). The house *of* Stephanas was the firstfruits *of* Achaia (I Cor. 16:15). Those whom James addressed in his epistle are said to be a "kind *of* firstfruit *of* His creatures" (James 1: 18) . The 144,000 *of* Revelation 14:4 are said to be "**the firstfruit unto God and to the Lamb.**" These facts show that the designation "first-fruit" is used in various ways and *of* various companies, each occurrence regulated by the context.

In I Corinthians 15:20-24 the resurrection *of* Christ, is set forth and He is declared to be the firstfruit *of* those who are sleeping. Here Paul sets forth a finished work that is history. Next he sets forth a resurrection *of* a firstfruit anointed company which is not history. Thus it becomes plain that Jesus Christ is "the firstfruit *of* the firstfruit." This Old Testament phrase explains how the term "firstfruit" can be used both *of* Christ and *of* the first great company to be raised *from* the dead.

The second objection usually raised is that the *Greek* word *christos* always means Christ, it being so translated in every New Testament occurrence.

It is true that it is always so translated, and it is also true that in most occurrences it means the Lord Jesus Christ; however, there are several places where such arbitrary translations place upon the student a crux *of* interpretation which he cannot get rid *of* apart *from* abandoning the traditional rendering. Revelation 11: 15 is one *of* these. There it speaks *of* "**the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ.**" To the one who has believed in Jesus Christ as Lord and who has received Him as such, this is an impossible rendering. But when we translate it "Jesus Christ **and His anointed**" then the *problem* disappears. These anointed ones here are His designated ones, those to whom He gives power over the nations (See Rev. 2:26). In that government *of* God which precedes the millennium, Israel alone will have a divine governor in David. In the millennium all nations will have divine governors. All human government comes to an end at the personal presence *of* Christ. Men will still govern, but their government will be out *of* God, therefore, divine.

The word *anointed* has taken on a religious significance which usually makes it to mean to have been endowed with power. Strictly speaking the word means to officially designate, to mark out, to set apart. See II Cor. 1:21.

In view of these facts it becomes evident that we will be seeing the truth that Paul sought to express in the words *aparche christos* when we see in them the first great company to be raised from the dead. To us the words "firstfruit anointed" may seem to be obscure, but they were not obscure to those who first read his words. They would not have taken them to mean Jesus Christ, since Paul prefaced them with a verb that designated a future act and said, "**Each man will be made alive in his own company.**"

Again it needs to be emphasized that this firstfruit anointed company includes the grace calling. Those saints who are to extol the God of grace and the grace of God in the day when He governs the world will be raised in this company. The calling of this segment of the firstfruit company was still a secret when Paul wrote these words. However, no new company in resurrection was needed in order to include us, no more than a new work on the Cross is needed for our salvation. He included us in His death. He included us in the first great company to be raised. Our lot is cast with this company, a company designated by God to live upon this earth and to serve Him upon this earth in the day when He governs.

After the firstfruit company has been raised from the dead, the next great company to be raised is the company designated as "**they that are Christ's at His coming (parousia)**," This company has been considered earlier in this study, and needs only to be mentioned here.

One point can be added. This company is not in the state of death when the firstfruit company is raised. It may even be that they are born and live their entire lives under God's reign. But they lay down their lives as martyrs in the uprising against God's government which occurs just before His second coming. There can be no doubt but that this is the company set forth in Revelation 20:4. Following their resurrection it is declared that "the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." This is in harmony with Paul's summary of the three companies in I Cor. 15:23, 24.

The third company to be raised is hidden from us by the *King James Version* of I Corinthians 15:24. It reads, "**Then cometh the end.**" The Greek literally translated here would read "thereafter the end." The words "the end" are, in the Greek, *to telos*. These words appear many times in the New Testament, and they always have to do with the subject of the passage in which they appear. Since the subject here is the companies to be raised, these words refer to that final company that brings God's work of raising the dead to completion. The phrase *to telos* is used several times in *The Iliad* by Homer in describing the last company of an army or body of soldiers to return from the war. We have no right to read into this anything about "the end of the eons" or some idea about a goal being reached. These things are not in the context. The subject is the companies to be raised and here Paul sets forth the end company. This company is raised at the end of the thousand years, at the very time when Christ shall begin the processes that will abrogate all sovereignty, authority, and power.

A Better Resurrection

A word needs to be said about the "better resurrection" of Hebrews 11:35. Since resurrection takes a man from the state of death and restores him to life it would seem impossible for one resurrection to be better than another. Therefore, it would seem that the only meaning these words could have would be for one to be raised to greater honors, greater blessings, or greater rewards.

The Out-Resurrection

Paul's phrase in Philippians 3:11 is not as simple as some dispensationalists would have us think that it is. The Greek here reads *ten exanastasin ten ek nekron*. Some take these words to set forth a new and special company to be raised. The writer has tried to do this himself, but the idea will not stand the test of critical study.

There are many places in the New Testament where *ek* occurs as the first syllable of a word and then recurs in the phrase that follows, just as it does in "the out-

resurrection out from among the dead," This shows it to be a very common construction in the Greek. Matthew 7:5 is a pertinent example of this. The Lord Jesus exhorted men to *out-cast* the beam *out* of their own eye in order that they might be able to *out-cast* the mote *out* of their brothers eye. No special significance can be attached to this double occurrence of *out* except that it makes the statement doubly emphatic.

In view of this it is evident that we will be reading too much into Philippians 3: 11 if we make it to teach a special resurrection of a special company. Since Paul declares that his goal was "the high calling of God," we are safe in saying that he was seeking to be raised to a place of service in that calling which is the highest of all callings. Paul would abandon his place in the kingdom calling for a place in the grace calling. He preferred the intimate service of extolling the God of every grace to service in relationship to the Judge of all the earth.

The Resurrection Body

Among professing Christians will be found a great many unproved and unscriptural notions held by those who have done no more than receive without investigation that which they have heard someone else say. This is especially true when it comes to the resurrection of the dead. It is held that at death that which is called the body of man remains on earth in the grave while something called the soul enters into heaven. Then at resurrection the soul is supposed to enter again into some kind of an ethereal body which in no manner resembles the body made of soil in which the soul is supposed to have lived during the time of its earthly sojourn. This ethereal body is referred to as a spiritual body, or a glorified body. This idea of bodies that are supposed to be like ether or of "fire-like substance," as one describes them, is rankly theosophical and absolutely anti-scriptural. These bodies are supposed to be invisible and immaterial. They are to have no blood, no flesh, no bones, and are supposed to be able to pass through material substance as easily as gas can pass through a screen door.

All these imaginary ideas of the resurrection body would quickly disappear if men would carefully consider the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is the firstfruit from among the dead, and this is a pledge of what the harvest will be. Two women, we are told, held Him by the feet and worshipped Him (Matthew 28:9). He walked with two disciples as they went to Emmaus (Luke 24: 15) . He said to the assembled disciples:

Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when He had thus spoken, He shewed them His hands and his feet. Luke 24: 39,40.

And while they still could not believe it for joy and were full of astonishment, Our Lord saw fit to add to the demonstration.

He said unto them, Have you here any meat. And they gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them. Luke 24:41-43.

Only an unbeliever would demand more evidence than this that our Lord was raised with a material body that could be embraced, handled, and examined; and which could and did partake of food. These things reveal the character of His resurrection body, and they tell us what will be the character of our bodies in resurrection.

The dead are to be raised. The dead are to live again. The life to come is to be a continuation of the life we have known here. We are to resume our lives under the same physical conditions that we now know. The great difference will be that in the resurrection, all the adverse effects of Adam's sin will have been removed.

The End SS19