

**The Word of Truth Ministry Presents
Special Full Length Studies
#SS20**

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

Otis Q. Sellers, Bible Teacher

{Ed. Note: These six messages were broadcast over Radio Station WAIT, Chicago, in April, 1943. Their contents of are as follows:

- ** *The Resurrection of the Dead***
- ** *GOD's Word Concerning Man's Nature***
- ** *GOD's Word Concerning Death***
- ** *Death, Burial and Resurrection***
- ** *What Saith the Scripture***
- ** *The Resurrection of CHRIST***

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

In this broadcast I bring the first of a series of six messages on the great scriptural truth of the resurrection of the dead. In these messages great care will be exercised in order that words and terms shall be used very accurately in order to obey Paul's admonition in 2 Timothy 1 :13, "**hold fast the form of sound words.**"

The great truth of the resurrection of the dead is a divine truth. It is not found in man's religions or in his religious beliefs, unless those have been in some way touched by the Word of God. This truth is peculiar to the Word of God alone. Therefore, in dealing with these things, they must be presented in complete harmony with the great principle set forth in **1 Corinthians 2 :13:**

"Which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual"

Among men we find the phrase "the resurrection of the body" used continually. This phrase never appears in the Word of God. The phrase used consistently in the Bible is "the resurrection of the dead." This teaches us that it is the dead who are raised, and not just some part of man called the body.

In insisting upon the use of the God-breathed words "the resurrection of the dead," it does not mean that I believe that resurrection is not literal and actual. I do believe that man is raised from the dead actually, literally and bodily. But since it is man that dies, it is man that is raised from the dead.

We must never permit anyone to take from us the words that God has used, then put into our mouths the words they would like for us to use. Over and over the Spirit of God inspired men to speak of "the resurrection of the dead." He never inspired them to speak of "the resurrection of the body." These facts make it quite simple for us to choose the path of faithfulness to His words, and to obey the admonition of Jeremiah, **"he that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully."** Jer. 23 :28).

I well know that the Scripture states, **"it is raised a spiritual body"** (1 Cor. 15 :44). I believe this, but this has no bearing upon the subject before us. I am dealing with man's phrase "the resurrection of the body," and God's phrase "the resurrection of the dead." It is my choice to speak God's thoughts after Him in His own words, and I do not hesitate to call upon all who deal with these things to do likewise. If one believes he is speaking God's truth, but finds it difficult to express it in God's words, then he needs to regard with suspicion that which he holds to be the truth. God's truths can always best be expressed in His words.

The importance of the truth and the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is seen in the fact that it permeates the whole scheme of divine revelation. If it is eliminated, the whole Bible becomes a meaningless book. One writer, who is not too friendly toward this great truth, has declared "that if at any time it should come to be recognized that the resurrection of Jesus never happened, the Christian faith would necessarily come to an end." This is true. Jesus Christ was **"raised again for our justification"** (Rom. 4:25), and apart from His resurrection there could be no justification. His death would have been in vain. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is an essential part of the gospel, as stated in **I Corinthians 15 :4. If Christ be not risen, our faith is in vain and we are yet in our sins. If the dead rise not, then even those who sleep in Christ have perished. 1 Cor. 15 :18.**

It is true that the Christian faith would come to an end if it should be proved that Christ did not rise from the dead. However, the Christian faith faces no danger from this side, for the enemies of the faith will never be able to prove that His resurrection never happened. But there is a greater danger present in which the great scriptural truth of the resurrection of the dead is being surrendered or traded for a purely human teaching concerning *immortality*, wherein resurrection is unnecessary and

meaningless. In view of this danger, the man of God needs to give much consideration to the Biblical revelation of the great truth of the resurrection of the dead. We can well apply the words of Paul to this matter:

"Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip (or, slip away from them)." Heb. 2:1.

It is a positive fact that men are slipping from this great truth, and this great truth is slipping away from them. The ears of men are being turned away from the great truth of resurrection to some fable about immortality. The only thing that can stop this apostasy is for men who profess faith in Christ to turn to the Word to discover anew and afresh God's great revelations concerning the resurrection of the dead.

In his final book, published soon after his death, Dr. J. Gresham Machen, recognized as an outstanding leader among Presbyterian fundamentalists, makes the following statement:

"The Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body is very different from the Greek idea of immortality," Quoted from *The Christian View of Man*.

I heartily agree with this. The one would exclude the other, they are so different. Therefore, it is imperative that everyone who professes to have a love for the truth to examine his beliefs and discover whether it is the Christian view of resurrection that he holds, or is it merely the Greek idea of immortality. Many have been unwittingly spoiled by the Platonic philosophy. Practically all church theology is in harmony with the Greek idea of immortality, in that it affirms a future life upon the assumed idea that man is immortal. The Word of God affirms a future life upon the great truth that there is a resurrection of the dead.

Job asked the question: **"If a man die, shall he live again?" Job 14 :14.** My answer to this is, "Yes, positively yes!" Man that dies will live again. This is not only my belief, it is also my hope. There is nothing beyond the moment of death for me if there is no resurrection of the dead.

Job's question is made to be a very foolish one by those who insist that man does not die at all. Those who hold the Platonic idea of immortality would answer this by saying that man lives again since he does not really die. The Bible answers it by presenting the great truth of resurrection. Therefore, the full answer to the question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" is, "Yes, he will live again when he is raised from the dead." The false answer to this question denies the fact of death. The true answer

admits the fact of death, but proclaims the truth of resurrection.

The Greek philosophy of immortality makes resurrection unnecessary, a nonessential and an anticlimax. If, as so many hold, death is merely the entrance into a larger, fuller life, if the dead are not dead at all but fully alive, then resurrection of the dead is entirely superfluous, coming too late to do the work that death has already done.

Just as long as men allow themselves to be spoiled by the Greek philosophy of immortality, just as long as they remain ignorant of the simple Bible truths concerning the nature of man, just as long as they are ignorant of the divine revelation of the state of man between death and resurrection, even so long will it be impossible for men to properly understand and appreciate the majestic revelation of the resurrection of the dead. In view of this, it becomes necessary to deal with these things before we can approach this great truth. Since we are not dealing with some human idea about resurrection of bodies, nor with the resurrection of the living, but with the resurrection of the dead, this cannot be made plain or understood until we know the meaning of the words *death* and *dead*.

As an approach to the consideration of these truths, I ask you to consider these great Biblical facts.

In Isaiah 38 we read of the sickness of King Hezekiah. It was a sickness unto death. Isaiah the prophet went to him with a message from the Lord saying:

**"Thus saith the Lord, set thine house in order: for thou shalt die and not live."
Isa. 38:1.**

These words, the very words of Jehovah, make it plain that if Hezekiah died, he would not live, and if he lived, he would not die. Such statements seem almost childish, yet they must be made since so many do not believe them. In the Word of God *death* and *life* are the two great opposites, and the one is entirely opposed to the other. No one can be *dead* and be *alive*. No one who is *alive* is *dead*. These great facts cannot be denied by calling in those passages where the word *dead* is used in a figurative sense, such as Matthew 8 :22 and 1 Timothy 5 :6. Both of these passages deal with living people, therefore, the word *dead* is used in them as a figure of speech. They were dead to certain things, just as we are dead to sins. Nevertheless, we are alive. Anyone knows that the living can be dead to certain things, but this does not mean that one can be both *alive* and *dead* when we face these terms in their primary and literal meaning.

Certain other Biblical facts, bearing upon this theme, are set forth in Acts 2. There Peter quotes a passage from the Psalms which the Rabbis had always taught referred to David (Acts 2 :25-27). In order to refute this, Peter shows that these words cannot speak of David, for they speak of someone who is in the heavens. He boldly states that **David is both dead and buried, and that his monument was well known among them (Acts 2:29)**. He further states that **"David is not ascended into the heavens"** (Acts 2 :34). It is plain to see that these words of David are about the most unorthodox statements that one could make. Yet they are found in the Word of the living God.

I have no desire to take certain passages and to build some doctrine upon them. I have called attention to Isaiah 38 and Acts 2 solely for the purpose of bringing to the mind of my hearers two examples of the language used in Scripture in regard to life, death, and the state between death and resurrection. If one will read the Bible through, he will discover that every statement in it concerning these things is set forth in language which is contrary to the commonly accepted viewpoint. This alone is enough to demonstrate the need for complete reexamination and restudy of these great subjects. Our own language should conform to the language of the Word of God. When it does, we will have assurance that we speak God's truth upon these things.

GOD'S WORD CONCERNING MAN'S NATURE

The importance, the necessity, the majesty and the grandeur of the great truth of the resurrection of the dead will never be understood or appreciated by those who do not understand the accurate Biblical testimony concerning the nature of man. As long as men hold the unscriptural idea that the true man is something called a soul which inhabits the body until it is released by death, they will never appreciate the great truth of resurrection of the dead. Therefore, it is necessary that one study in this series be devoted to a brief presentation of the testimony of the Scripture concerning the nature of man.

In **Genesis 2:7** we read the first statement found in the Word concerning the nature of man. There the Creator tells us of the creature that He made.

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul"

This passage is one of utmost importance. It is a direct statement concerning the subject we are considering. It is not the complimentary close of an epistle from which we must draw some inference. It is cause for thanksgiving that it is so simple and direct in its form, and that no serious objections can be raised concerning its translation. It tells us *how* man was made, it tells us *what* he was made of, and it tells us *what* he is. It is the testimony of the Maker in regard to the work of His hands. And it cannot be denied that the Maker of man is the One best able to inform us as to the nature of that which He made. All who receive this testimony can rest assured that they are in possession of the truth.

Genesis 2:7 is the earliest and certainly the fullest account that God has given us concerning the nature of man. This passage demands our closest consideration.

It should be noted carefully that we are told that the Lord God formed *man*. It was a human being He formed. This can be received and believed, or it can be rejected and altered to fit in with some human opinion. It was not a spirit, it was not a soul, it was not a spirit being, it was not an angelic being that He formed. It was a man. It was not a habitation or a house for man to move into, it was a man.

Some will insist that it was not a man that God made, but only a body. I freely admit that it was a body, yet God says it was a man, and I believe it was a man. God could have said *body*, but He did not do so. He had the word *body*, but did not use it. He used the word *man*, and that is exactly what He meant.

We are also told that God formed man of the dust of the ground. Man was not created out of nothing. God used material and this material was dust or soil. This truth is emphasized and enforced by the words God used in **Genesis 3 :19, "till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken, for you are dust, and unto dust you will return."**

In view of this testimony, it is exceedingly plain that whatever it was God formed of the dust, that was the man. It is useless to deny this and insist that the man is something else-something not made of soil. If we do this, we break with the Word of God in the opening chapters, and this throws us out of harmony and in to conflict with all the rest that God has written. If man refuses to be taught by the Word in Genesis 2, there can be no value in any further study. If he rejects God's earliest statement concerning man: he may just as well reject every other statement of God concerning man.

The great truth set forth in Genesis 2:7 is primary and fundamental. If it is not understood and received, the rest of the Bible cannot be understood. Those who reject this testimony must twist everything that follows it in order to try to adjust the Word to their conceptions. Let us believe God! He says He formed *man* of the dust of the ground. This is the truth, and he who believes it believes the truth.

After God made man of the dust of the ground, He performed another act. **He breathed into his (the man's) nostrils the breath of life.** The result of this divine operation was that man became something which he was not before. **Man became a living soul.** Therefore, the opening witness of the Word of God concerning man is that *he is a soul*.

That man is a soul is a truth that very few understand and very few believe. They reject it because they do not understand it, and they will not give the study and prayer required to enter into a knowledge of it. In place of the Biblical truth, they hold the human philosophy that man has a soul and that this soul is the real or true man.

This idea does not have its origin in the Word of God. The Greek philosopher Plato, over three centuries before Christ, taught that the true man was something called a soul which for some reason had *become* united to a body. This union Plato considered to be an evil, and he regarded death as a blessing in itself, for it dissolved this undesirable union and freed the soul from that which was only a burden to it. This is the Platonic view of man's nature, but it is not the teaching of the Word of God. There we learn that God made man of the dust of the earth, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul.

The divine truth concerning man's nature which first appears in Genesis 2:7 is repeated in **1 Corinthians 15 :45.**

"And so it is written, the first man Adam became a living soul."

If this simple statement were accepted as truth, if it were followed out to all its conclusions, it would revolutionize our thinking concerning the nature of man. It would drive every man away from the Platonic philosophy and send them to the Word of God. It would open up new avenues of Bible study that would lead to much blessed truth.

If man **is** a soul, then he cannot **have** a soul. If he has a soul, then he is not a soul.

The Word of God reveals that fundamentally, primarily and basically we are men. It was a man that God made-not a body, not a soul, not a spirit. He made man of the dust of the earth. No revelation could be more explicit than this. God used a very plentiful, common and lowly material. Out of this material He made a wonderful and marvelous creature having many aspects.

As to form, dimensions and organization man is a body. This is the most prominent aspect of his being. He does not have a body, he is himself a body. Man became a body when God made him with form, dimensions and members. When we speak of man's height or weight, we speak of him as a body. Animals also have this aspect, it seems that angels do also, but spirits do not. We quite often speak of men as bodies, using the terms somebody, anybody or nobody. This designation is correct and is commonly used in legal language. And, who has not sung, "If a body, meet a body, comin' through the rye?"

Man, being a body, can be called a body.

As to his senses and activity, man is a soul. When God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, man became a living soul. He became a creature that could see, hear, taste, smell, feel and move about. Apart from the breath of life man would still be a man, but not a living soul. We often speak of men as souls. We compliment them by saying they are good souls or pity them by speaking of them as poor souls.

As to reason and faith, man is a spirit. Spirit is one aspect of his being. By this I do not mean that man has a spirit, or that he is a spirit being. Man is a human being, he is not a spirit being, and he never becomes a spirit being.

In the Word of God we find three great classes of created beings clearly set forth. These are spirit beings, angelic beings and human beings - called spirits, angels and men. We find our place in one of these classes. And, in view of the awful confusion and ignorance that prevails, it is necessary to emphatically state that we are neither angelic beings nor spirit beings. We are human beings -the highest order of all created beings.

Strange indeed is the idea that many seem to have that God made a man with a view of later changing him into an angel or spirit. Many people believe that death will transform children into angels and men into spirits. This is foreign to the Word of God, yet multitudes persist in such beliefs. I am convinced that the whole burden of divine revelation teaches that what we are in life, we will also be in death and in resurrection-human beings. I never expect to be an angel or spirit. I never want to be an angel or spirit. **In God's order of creation I am a man, a human being, and that**

is what I will always be.

Men speak of "disembodied spirits" without a vestige of proof that such a thing exists. There is no such thing as a "disembodied spirit" known to Scripture. There are evil spirits that have sought embodiment in human beings, and some of these have accomplished their foul purpose. When our Lord came upon these wicked spirits, He cast them out. Or, we may more accurately say, He disembodied them. This is the nearest thing to a "disembodied spirit" that can be found in the Bible.

The terms *spirit*, *soul* and *body* when used of men are highly expressive. They are essential if we wish to properly represent the various aspects of man. For example, often in speaking of men we find that in order to properly represent him we need the word husband or father. A man can be both a husband and a father, but this does not mean that these are parts of the man. They describe a certain aspect of the man—even the man himself.

Once we have recognized the truth of Genesis 2 :7, and have learned from the Word of God just what man is, we have made the first advance that is necessary in coming to an understanding of the resurrection of the dead. Man is a soul. A soul is any being that has senses and can move from place to place without being attached to the earth. Since man can see, hear, smell, taste and feel, and does not need to be rooted in the soil, he is a soul.

But, someone is sure to object, this makes the soul of very little importance.

My answer to this objection is that in the Word of God it is the man that is important. Orthodox theology tells us that man is made of three parts, only one of which is of any great importance, that part called the soul. It is held that the part called the body can be done away with and there will still be a complete and perfect man.

That is not the testimony of the Word of God. It was a *man* that God made, a *man* that sinned, a *man* that needed a Savior, and it was a *man* for whom Christ died. Death passed upon all men, and it is the man that dies. And, most glorious of all, it is men who are raised from the dead.

GOD'S WORD CONCERNING DEATH

God's answer to death is resurrection. Whatever death is, resurrection is the opposite. Whatever death does, resurrection will undo it. Therefore, what we believe concerning death will have a profound influence upon our belief concerning resurrection. If we possess God's truth concerning death, we can go on to God's truth concerning resurrection. If we are in error in regard to death, then we will have to wrest the truth of resurrection to make it fit our false ideas.

A clear example of this is seen in the erroneous idea that death touches only one part of man, the part called the body. This is followed by the idea that resurrection touches only one part of man. The Bible testimony reveals that both death and resurrection touch the entire man. This is the whole burden of Scripture. It does not need to be proved by certain selected passages, and it cannot be disproved by quoting passages. It is man that dies and it is man that is raised. This is actual, literal and bodily. Nevertheless, it is the whole man, and not some part of him.

The Bible does not divide man into separate parts. True, it speaks of him as body, soul and spirit. It also speaks of him as heart, soul, mind and strength. These are all aspects of the man and they are not separate parts of which the man is formed. I am a husband, father, brother and son. These words express aspects of my life. However, these are not separable parts of me, and even though I am all these things yet I am one man. And if the man is not there, none of these things can be there. When the man dies, all these aspects die.

The dictionary defines *death* as being the complete cessation of all vital functions. Orthodox theology defines it as being the separation of something called the soul from something called the body. These two definitions place before us two ideas usually connected with death, the ideas of *cessation* and *separation*. When the subject is considered from the Biblical standpoint, the ideas the Word of God is that of *return*. In fact, God emphatically declares that death is a *return*.

The first reference to death in the Word of God is found in the commandment concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In **Genesis 2 :17** we read:

"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

The words *surely die* in this passage are two forms of the same Hebrew word. A more accurate translation would be, **"in the day you eat of it, dying you will die."** This means that the process of death would begin to work in Adam and continue until it consummated itself in the fact of death. This is precisely what happened to Adam, **and it is what happens to each one of us upon whom death has passed.**

I would like to ask every reader to ask himself and to honestly answer this question. What did Adam understand by the threat of death in God's commandment to him? Could he have possibly thought by the word *die*, God meant he would take him out of his body and take him to heaven or send him to hell? Of course not!

I firmly believe that Adam understood the exact nature of the penalty which God threatened in His commandment. It is a fixed principle of justice that man must be able to understand the nature of the penalty exacted from him for the commission of any crime. However, if Adam did not understand it, it was made unmistakably plain to him by the words God spoke after he had sinned.

"In the sweat of your face you will eat bread, until you return unto the ground; for out of it you were taken: for you are dust and unto dust you will return."
Genesis 3:19.

Note carefully the emphatic statements made in this passage: **Until you return to the ground, Out of it you were taken, You are dust, Unto dust you will return.**

Since God means what He says and says what He means, how could Adam have understood from these words, or how can you, I or anybody else understand from them that God meant to take him out of his body and take him to heaven.

In this passage we learn the real meaning of death. It is a *return*. At Adam's death, the work of creation which God had performed for him went into reverse. God had made him from the earth, then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and he became a living soul. This is the creation of man, and if the process is reversed you have man's death. If the breath of life (also called spirit) returns to God from whence it came, and the man returns to the ground from whence he came, that is the death of man. This is the testimony of **Ecclesiastes 12:7** where, after four things are mentioned which symbolize death, it says:

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it."

At death no part of man or the man as a whole enters into any new, strange or unknown condition. The man comes from the soil, he is soil, and he returns to it. The spirit (breath of life) which made the man a living soul was with God before it was

given to man, and at death it returns to God who gave it.

These statements will cause numerous questions to arise in the minds of those who have never considered these things. And some will repudiate the truth because of their questions. They should realize that every one of their questions is an avenue that will lead to truth. Someone will ask, "What becomes of the soul? Where does it go?" Have they ever asked what becomes of the husband when the man dies? Where does the husband go? Others will make a *spirit being* out of the *spirit* that returns to God and become lost in their own confusion. This is a fatal error. Nothing but confusion can come from the idea that makes man to be a spirit being that has possessed a body for a time. I would warn all that there will be no miraculous gift of wisdom for them which will answer all questions and clear away all difficulties. They must wait upon the Lord before His Word if they are ever to have their questions answered.

If there were no resurrection of the dead, death would be the end of man. It would be the loss of all that he ever was. It would be his destruction. God would lose nothing, but man would lose all. Only resurrection can take man out of that state that death brings him into.

The very fact of resurrection tells us plainly that death is not man's end. Death is only for a time. It is not eternal, it is not man's destruction. My history as a living soul will come to an end at death. I will return to the soil and the life that God has loaned me will return to Him. My history as a living soul will begin again on the day of resurrection. Glorious day! How I thrill to think of it! False teaching has led many to believe that the day of death is the day we begin to live, but God forbid that I should believe this lie of Satan. No page will be added to my history, no matter how long I am in the state of death. There will be no work, knowledge or experiences. All these will begin again on the day of resurrection. In the years or centuries that intervene between the day of my death and the day of my resurrection, I will live in the memory of God. Just as the child who has died lives in the memory of the mother, even so we will live in the memory of God.

The testimony of Genesis 3 :19 is so explicit that all who read it must confess that Adam is now in the soil, else they do not believe the word of God. This is the verse that tells us where he is, and there is no other verse that provides any information concerning him.

"Then," some will ask, "you believe that the soul sleeps between death and resurrection?" I answer, "Before God, I do not believe this." Another will ask, "Then you must believe that the dead are unconscious?" Again I answer, "Before God, I do not believe any such thing." I do not believe in soul sleep, and I know that the words *conscious* and *unconscious* can only be honestly applied to the living. I believe that a

man can be alive and conscious or alive and unconscious, but when he is dead he is neither conscious or unconscious. He is dead, and only resurrection will release him from this state.

The first mention of death in the Word of God reveals to us that it is a penalty to be exacted for the violation of God's command (Gen. 2:17). The second mention of it describes the exact nature of this penalty and teaches us that death is a return (Gen. 3:19).

In Romans 5 we learn that by one man sin entered into the world and brought death as its companion and fellow. We are further told that death passed upon all men. The truth of this finds abundant confirmation in human experience.

Popular theology teaches that the word *death* has one meaning when it is used in connection with animals and an entirely different meaning when used of men. The Scriptures teach that in the matter of death man is not superior to the beast. As one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath of life, and man has no preeminence above a beast. They all go to one place, they are both of the dust and they return to the dust. See **Ecclesiastes 3 :18-20**. Solomon asks if anyone can say that he knows that the spirit of man goes upward at death, while the spirit of the beast goes downward to the earth. **Ecclesiastes 12 :21**. No one can say that they know this, for it does not take place. Man and animals both return to the dust at death. The spirit of life which both possess returns to God who gave it. The real difference between the death of a man and the death of a beast is that death marks the end of the beast, while man will live again in resurrection.

The orthodox idea is that in death the body is but a garment laid aside from use, or a dwelling abandoned, while the wearer of the garment, or the dweller in the house, supposedly the real man, has gone elsewhere. But this is not what we find in the Scripture. The very opposite view is there taken. The body, dead and lifeless though it be, is there looked on as the man. This is the uniform unvarying testimony of Scripture. Thus, when we read of death and burial throughout the Scripture, we invariably read that Sarah, Abraham, Jacob, or Moses are buried in the grave. The Bible does not speak of them as having gone anywhere or as being anywhere except in the grave. The person, the individual, the man, he who was once alive, is spoken of as lying in the grave.

Note the following statements, which each reader can easily multiply by a hundred:

"And Sarah died. . . and Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave." Genesis 23:2 and 19.

"Then Abraham gave up the ghost and died. . . and his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him." Genesis 25 :8-9.

"So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt." Genesis 50 :26.

"So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab." Deut. 4:5-6.

God's truth concerning death, like His truth concerning sin, is not pleasant truth. God never intended that man should find any comfort in it. He would have us find our consolation, not in sin and death, but in Christ our Savior from sin and our redeemer from death. He would turn us to the One who is the resurrection and the life. Our entrance into His presence will not be by means of the enemy death, but by means of resurrection through Christ.

DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION

The records of death and resurrection in the New Testament are full of informative teaching. These are narratives of facts. They were recorded for our instruction, and the simplicity of their witness is such that their message cannot be misunderstood, unless that misunderstanding is willful and deliberate.

When our Lord sent forth the twelve disciples, He commanded them to **"raise the dead"** (Matt. 10 :8). This act was intended to be a testimony to the blessings that were possible from the One whom they proclaimed. It appears in a list of other blessed and merciful acts such as healing the sick, cleansing the lepers and casting out devils. Each one of these acts was a positive favor, a positive blessing. One act delivered a man from sickness, other acts delivered men from leprosy, demons and death.

But if death is such a blessed thing, who would want to be delivered from it? If these dead were happy in heaven or in bliss in paradise, why remove them from such a blessed state and bring them back to this sin-cursed earth? Who could feel grateful to anyone for having done them such disfavor? Is it not plain that resurrection was no blessing, if death were the entrance into a larger and fuller life? If, through death, one has reached a place and state of blessing, he could not thank anyone who took him out of it.

In Romans 5 death is declared to be the companion of sin. In Matthew 10:8 it is placed in the same category as sickness, leprosy and demons. In 1 Corinthians 15 it is set forth as an enemy to be destroyed.

The Raising of the Widow's Son

In Luke 7 :11-15 we have the record of the raising of the widow's son. From it we learn much about resurrection. Each word needs to be carefully considered.

And it came to pass the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and much people.

Now when He came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

And He came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still.

And He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak And He delivered him to his mother.

The words, "there was a dead man carried out," are an exact expression of the truth. These are not the words of man's wisdom. They are the words of the Holy Spirit. They are not the carelessly chosen words of a man. They are the inspired words of God.

When the Lord spoke to him, He said "Young man, I say unto thee arise." And the faithful record tells us that "he that was dead sat up."

In the light of these emphatic statements, let the following question be honestly answered. Was this a dead man, or merely a dead body that the man had gone out of? Did our Lord speak to a young man or a body when He said, "Young man, arise?" Was this man dead or alive?

There is yet another truth to be learned from this portion. Here we have a positive picture of the resurrection of one who was dead. There is an entirely erroneous conception of resurrection which makes it to be simply the restoring of bodies which long ago were mingled with and lost in the dust. This conception seems to arise from thinking of resurrection in connection with our common method of burial, a method unknown in the Bible. This is not the meaning of resurrection and it should not

dominate our thoughts of it. Resurrection has to do with restoring to life and activity the actual person who died.

This young man's resurrection had nothing to do with taking some elements from the earth and shaping them into a body again. It had to do with restoring him to life and activity. This is seen in the words "he that was dead sat up and began to speak"

The truth of resurrection does not set forth that the very elements that made up man at the time of his death shall be taken from the earth and be formed into a body again. I am not today composed of the same elements I was seven years ago. Nevertheless, I am the same man. Therefore, it is not necessary or even desirable that I in resurrection be composed of the identical elements as I am at the moment of death. The necessary thing, the important thing and the desirable thing to me is that it shall be Otis Sellers, actually, literally and bodily.

The Raising of Lazarus

One of the most important passages in the New Testament bearing upon this subject is the record of the death, burial and resurrection of Lazarus as set forth in **John 11**. In this we have a narrative of facts. John gives a detailed account of events which happened before his eyes. Lazarus was sick, and his sisters sent word to the Lord Jesus reporting his illness. When He heard of it, the Lord Jesus declared that this sickness was not unto death, but for the glory of God and of the Son of God. Some sicknesses do end in death, and the dead await resurrection, but this was not to be so in this specific illness.

After two days had passed, our Lord announced to His disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of his sleep." The disciples misunderstood His figure of speech by which He referred to *death* by the figure *sleep*. They took Him literally, but there was no excuse for any misunderstanding of His words. Nobody would go on a journey to awaken a sick man out of his sleep. The Lord corrected them immediately by saying plainly, "**Lazarus is dead.**"

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, He found that Lazarus had been "in the grave four days already." Martha told Him that if He had been there her brother would not have died. Jesus said unto her, "Your brother will rise again."

All the language of this chapter is in complete harmony with the truth of the Bible concerning death and resurrection. Lazarus was sick. Lazarus died. Lazarus was in the grave four days. Martha said "my brother" in speaking of his death, and the Lord said "your brother" in speaking of his resurrection.

Our Lord asked, "Where have ye laid him?" Martha said, "Lord by this time he

stinketh: for he has been dead four days." And, as if to climax the force of the truth, our Lord cried into the tomb, "Lazarus come forth." And the inspired word tells us, **"he that was dead came forth."**

No matter how strongly the "orthodox" may insist upon their taking God at His Word, they believe very little of John 11. They do not believe that Lazarus was dead, they do not believe that he was in the grave for four days. They interpret all this as referring to something they call the body, and they do not believe that this was any part of the real Lazarus.

Those who hold the traditional views of death are at a loss to explain where Lazarus was for the four days that elapsed between his death and resurrection. Furthermore, they cannot explain why he never gave any report of his experiences while in the state of death. Those who have been taught by the Word of God the awful truth as to the nature of death have solved these problems. They know very well that "the dead knoweth not anything." They know that **"there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave."** See **Ecclesiastes 9:5-10**.

The Raising of Dorcas

One more account of death and resurrection in the New Testament needs to be thoughtfully and carefully considered. It is the raising of Tabitha, or Dorcas, as set forth in **Acts 9:36 to 43**. This record is one of major importance, inasmuch as this incident took place five years after the resurrection of Christ. Luke, the physician, tells us that this woman was sick, and that she died.

Now according to the popular view, which holds that death is to be "absent from the body," this woman was not dead at all. She was merely absent from her body. And, since they insist (and misquote a passage to prove it) that **"to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord,"** this woman had gone to be with the Lord. Therefore, in the language of popular theology, this woman had "departed to be with Christ," she had "gone to be with the Lord," she had "gone from earth to heaven:" she "was present with the Lord," she was "happy with Christ."

If these things were true of Dorcas, then not one of them should be changed. No one should desire them to be changed. And if they are changed, it is a positive disfavor and not a blessing. If resurrection reverses them it becomes the meanest trick ever played upon a person, just like curing a person of leprosy and then afflicting him with it again.

But, not one of these things were true of Dorcas. She had not gone anywhere. She had not gone from earth to heaven. She had died, she was in the state of death, and she

was in an upper room at Joppa awaiting burial. When Peter came, he kneeled and prayed and turned to the body and said, "**Tabitha, arise.**"

Some will ask immediately, "Why does it say he turned to the body?" My answer is, why do you say, "There is nobody home," when your knock remains unanswered; or say to the floorwalker, "Will you have somebody to wait on me," when you desire service in a store? A person can be called a body, a person is often called a body, and you and I do it almost every day.

When Peter turned to the body, he said, "**Tabitha, arise.**" She opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

If the popular theory of death is followed out to all its conclusions, this act of Peter could only mean that he took her out of heaven, away from Christ, returned her to her body, and life on earth again. If this is what happened, then her friends should have wept at the misfortune visited upon her.

But, no such thing happened. Resurrection is a blessing, not a curse. It delivers from death, and it does not snatch men out of heaven to bring them back to earth again. It is only when we realize and accept the awful truth revealed in the Scripture concerning death, that we enter into and appreciate the glorious truth of resurrection.

Resurrection is **not** *reincarnation*, in which man is reincarnated in his body. It is *re-creation* in which man is again taken from the dust and given again the breath of life (spirit) so that man again becomes the very living soul that he was before.

"But," someone will object, "Tabitha and Lazarus were not in the dust." They did not need to be in the dust. They were dust. Man returns to the dust the moment he dies. He does not need to be buried in it in order to return to it.

If it were not for the fact of resurrection, man's death would be his end. It would be his destruction. **Destruction is the state of death when no resurrection is in view.** But death is not man's end, for he goes into it with resurrection in view. The wicked would prefer to remain dead, but they will not. The righteous hope to be raised, and they will. Resurrection does not depend upon redemption, forgiveness or salvation. With Paul, we believe in a resurrection both of the just and the unjust.

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE

Ezekiel 37

In **Ezekiel 37:1 to 10** we find the account of a vision, commonly called the vision of the valley of dry bones. In verses 11 to 14 we have the explanation or interpretation of the vision. Some expositors, embarrassed by the simple, factual language of these verses, go on to explain this explanation or to interpret the interpretation. This is going beyond what is written. Let us consider God's explanation of the vision.

Then He said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel:

behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: We are cut off for our parts.

Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of our graves,

And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.

These words of Ezekiel were spoken to a disappointed and discouraged people. They said that their hope was lost. It seemed so far away that they felt it could never be realized. But God tells them that even though the promises made to Abraham's seed could not be realized in their lifetime, they would be realized in resurrection. He would take them out of their graves and bring them into the land of Israel. This was the hope that fired the heart of every true Israelite. It was this promise that caused Martha to say to the Lord Jesus, "**I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.**" It is only in resurrection that God can fulfill the promises made to Abraham and his seed.

Mark 9 :1-10

In the record of the transfiguration as set forth in Mark 9:1 to 10 we read that the Lord Jesus charged the disciples that they should tell no man what they had seen "till the Son of man were risen from the dead." In the Greek this reads "**risen from among**

the dead." This strange statement caused great surprise among the disciples, so they treasured the saying among themselves and questioned what "the rising from among the dead could mean."

The term "resurrection *of* the dead" indicates a general resurrection in which all the dead ones would be raised. The disciples were familiar with this. The term "resurrection *from* the dead" indicates a selection in which certain are raised from the dead ones. This term was also familiar to the disciples. But the term "resurrection *from among* the dead" was new to them, and it caused great wonderment in their midst. This term indicates a further selection.

However, this is not the place to enter into a study of the order and the subjects of the various resurrections. The thing that I would emphasize is that the language used to describe our resurrection as well as the resurrection of Christ demands that we be raised from among the dead and not from among the living. If the dead are alive, then we will not be taken from among the dead, therefore, all the language used to describe our resurrection and the resurrection of Christ is meaningless. He expressly stated that the Son of man would rise from among the dead. Not just a body, but the Son of man Himself.

John 5

In John 5 :25 our Lord stated that the hour is coming when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear will live. The disciples were told not to be surprised at His words, for, He added, "**the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment.**" John 5 :28-29.

If the righteous dead go at once to be with Christ, they certainly hear His voice while with Him. How then can it be that at some future time they will hear His voice and live? How can one experience the resurrection of life if he is not dead? These words of our Lord clearly indicate that He had dead men in mind when He spoke, and not just dead bodies. He regarded them as being dead and in their graves.

1 Corinthians 15

This chapter is commonly called the resurrection chapter. Resurrection is its one great subject, and from it we can learn more about resurrection than from any other portion of the Word of God. It opens with a statement that it is a declaration of the good news which Paul had proclaimed to the Corinthians. His message had centered in Christ, and he had declared the death of Christ, the burial of Christ, and the

resurrection of Christ. They had received his message, they stood upon it, and they had been saved by it. But, it seems that a number of the Corinthians were *unbelieving believers*. They accepted the resurrection of Christ as a truth, they proclaimed it as a truth, but by some other declaration they denied it. They accepted and believed the truth that Christ rose from the dead, yet they said there was no such thing as resurrection from the dead. That which they affirmed in one message, they denied in another message. We marvel at their inconsistency, but most Christians today are even more inconsistent.

The average Christian says that he believes that Christ died for our sins, He accepts and proclaims this as truth. However, when we press upon him the question whether he really believes that Christ actually died, he admits reluctantly that this is not at all what he believes. He does not believe that Christ died, but that He simply moved out of His body and left it hanging upon the Cross while He, accompanied by the penitent thief, went to paradise. He does not believe that Christ was dead for three days and three nights, for he holds that He was busily engaged in some nether world activity which is vaguely described as preaching to the spirits in prison- - a term lifted from the Scripture.

The "orthodox" would take issue with Mary in her statement, "**they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.**" They would correct her, and say that it was not her Lord, that it was only His body.

Paul's words would not be acceptable to the "orthodox." He preached that Christ died, that he was buried, that He rose from the dead on the third day, that He was seen by Cephas. The "orthodox" will admit that it was Christ who was seen of Cephas, but they insist it was only something called His body that died, that was buried and that rose again on the third day.

Paul challenged the Corinthians by asking them **why they preached that Christ rose from the dead, and then said that there is no resurrection of the dead. 1 Cor. 15 :12.** They were like the ministers of today who urge upon their hearers the necessity of believing in the heart that God has raised Christ from the dead (Rom. 10 :9) while at the same time they insist that He was not dead for three days and three nights.

If we deny, by word or attitude, the resurrection of the dead, we deny the whole scheme of salvation. If there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. If He be not risen, all preaching in His name is in vain, and even the faithful Apostles must be branded as false witnesses. They testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up, if the dead rise not. 1 Cor. 15 :14-15.

Paul faces this whole matter fearlessly. He was a realist who saw things as they were, and did not permit himself to see them falsely, that is, as he would like for them to be. He does not temporize or compromise. **He insists that if the dead rise not, Christ is not risen; and if Christ be not risen, faith in Him is meaningless, and all who trust in Him are yet in their sins. But, what is more terrible, if the dead rise not, those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.**

1 Cor. 15 :16-19.

At one time in his experience Paul had fought with beasts at Ephesus. He declares that this was all a mistake if the dead rise not. He should not have undergone such suffering. The thing to do is eat and drink if the dead rise not. Just live for today, if the dead rise not. 1 Cor. 15 :32.

Christendom as a whole believes that even if there should be no resurrection of the dead, it would matter very little. They hold that the dead entered into a larger and fuller life "through the door of death," and they are now enjoying the fullness of blessings. To them, resurrection can add nothing. If it takes place, very well, but if it never takes place the righteous dead will be supremely happy in heaven and the wicked dead will be sorely punished in hell. However, this is not the testimony of the Word of God. It reveals that the dead are awaiting resurrection, and if the dead rise not, then even the dead in Christ have perished.

Death with no resurrection in view is destruction. This is the lot of those who die the second death.

Before me, as I write, are three pamphlets. They are titled *Where are the dead? Are the dead alive?* and *Can the living talk with the dead?* These are written from the orthodox viewpoint, and the authors struggle to prove their views. It is a struggle indeed. These writers are quite well satisfied that they have annihilated all opposition to their views. However, they know they write for those whose views are already fixed. The one who desires truth finds these pamphlets to be very illogical. They do not answer these questions.

How simple these questions become when we bow our stubborn wills and accept the testimony of the Word of God. The first question is answered by 1 Corinthians 15 :18. The dead in Christ are in a state that is of such nature that if there is no resurrection of the dead, they will have perished. The second question is answered by the very logic of the case. If they are dead, they are not alive. If they are alive, they are not dead. Cannot these writers see that if they should prove that the dead are alive, they have also proved that the living are dead? The third question is simple indeed. The living cannot talk to the dead. The writer of the pamphlet on this subject attempts to prove that living ones in heaven cannot talk to living ones on earth. Then at the end he decides that he has proven that the living cannot talk to the dead. The awful wave

of spiritism which seems to habitually engulf the world at the end of each great war can be stopped dead in its tracks if men of God will preach the truth of God that the dead are dead until resurrection.

1 Thessalonians 4

At one point in his ministry it became the duty of the Apostle Paul to speak words of comfort to the saints in Thessalonica whose loved ones had fallen asleep. He could have been a false comforter and spoken to them smooth words that were not the truth. He could have told them that their loved ones had "departed to be with Christ," that they had "gone to be with the Lord" or that they were happy in heaven." If these things had been true, they would have been the most solid words of comfort and consolation that he could have spoken. But he does not tell them this. He desires that they shall not sorrow as those who have no hope, then he sets before them their hope. The Lord was to descend from heaven, the dead in Christ were to rise first, then with the living they were to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. By this they were to be with the Lord.

If man goes to be with the Lord it will be by one of two ways. Either by rapture or by resurrection. He will not go to be with Him through death. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to comfort one another with these words.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

One of the better spiritual songs, very popular in evangelical churches, has for its first verse and chorus the following words:

Low in the grave He lay - Jesus my Savior!
Waiting the coming day - Jesus my Lord!
Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes;
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever with His saints to reign.
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

These studies are not the place for me to enter into any teaching concerning the person and nature of Jesus the Christ. I believe that God is One. But He has manifested Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and that the crowning manifestation of Himself was in the Son. As the pre-existent one, the Son had no beginning, but as the

human one, He did have a beginning. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. He was born as a man, He lived as a man, and He died as a man. There is no Scripture that teaches that Christ moved into a human body at birth, that He abandoned it at death, and then returned to it in resurrection. At all times between the moment *of* His birth and the present time He was and is now completely identified with that which some men insist was only His body.

In the course of His ministry He showed His disciples how he must suffer, be killed, and be raised again on the third day. He used the words "the Son of man must be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," and "the Son of man be risen again from the dead" in speaking of His death and resurrection. Never once did He infer that something could happen to His bodily aspect that did not happen to Him.

Therefore, we sing the truth when we say that He was in the grave. We speak the truth when we say He arose from the grave. The religious world can sing this and put their own interpretation upon it. I believe it to the letter.

In the record of the death of Christ we find the statements that Joseph begged the body of Jesus from Pilate, and after Pilate gave him permission he came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. Some would make out of this that the Spirit intended to convey to us the idea that it was no longer Jesus-it was only His body. However, this is not possible, for as if to expressly guard against any such idea it says, "and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid: There laid they Jesus." See John 19:38 - 42. How true it is-Low in the grave He lay, Jesus my Savior." If men do not believe this, then they should be honest and quit singing it.

When Mary came to the sepulchre on the morning of His resurrection she reported to Peter and John, "**They have taken away my Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him.**" John 20:2. When the disciples were sore perplexed at this strange turn of events, the two heavenly messengers said to them:

Why seek ye the living among the dead? . He is not here but is risen. Luke 24:5-6

And if we ask why He was not among the dead, the answer comes back, "Because He had risen." If He had not risen, He would still be among the dead. .

Over and over again men of God make the emphatic declaration, "We do not worship a dead Christ." This is true, we do not worship one Who is dead. But it must always be kept in mind that the only reason we have for saying this is because He arose from the dead. Apart from resurrection, He would not be alive. And once. we enter into the state of death, .apart from resurrection we will never live again.

Truth, at times may be bitter, but it is never disappointing. Let us face the facts. If

there is no resurrection of the dead, our loved ones have perished. You can chisel on that tombstone, NO HOPE, if the dead rise not. But before that radical step is taken, let us hear His words:

**"I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for ever more."
Rev; 1 :18.**

**"These things saith the first and the last, which was. dead, and is alive." Rev.
2:8.**

"Because I live, ye shall live also." John 14:19.

THE END SS20