

# KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

*"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."*

## FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

### Part 223

#### THE FIRST RESURRECTION (continued)

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the *souls* of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus...and they *lived* and reigned with Christ a thousand years...*this is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power*” (Rev. 20:4-6).

Surely there is not a believer drawing breath who fails to perceive at least in part the truth that lies hidden in these inspired words of the apostle, “*For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory*” (I Cor. 15:53-54). Paul tells us that this **corruptible** must **put on incorruption** AND this **mortal** must **put on immortality**. Then to drive home the significant point that there are **two resurrections**, the first and the second, he reiterates again the **dual** operation of our change into spiritual beings, saying, “So when this corruptible **shall have put on incorruption**, AND this mortal **shall have put on immortality**, THEN shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, **Death is swallowed up in victory!**” Simply stated, these two statements are not just two ways of saying the same thing; putting on incorruption and putting on immortality are not the same. Incorruption is one thing, immortality is quite another thing, and only when both of these operations of God are accomplished in us will the resurrection be complete!

Oh, what a stormy sea the world has sailed from Adam’s transgression until now! What indescribable travail the earth has seen under the curse of *bondage to corruption!* And not just man, not alone the earth, but the *whole creation* was made subject to this vanity and it is the whole creation that groans with a sort of universal travail, waiting for the sons of God to reach the glory and honor of adoption, waiting for the transfigured family of sons at last to speak the wonderful words of life and deliverance (Rom. 8:18-25). In the throes of corruption all things are propelled by the swirling momentum of the *downward spiral* to destruction, utterly helpless and powerless to invent any method of preventing the ultimate catastrophe.

The dark foreboding and terror of every creature and all things is not unlike that of the victim of punishment by the Hohenstaufen house in Germany. One of the methods of punishment, it is said, was to incarcerate the victim in a luxuriously appointed room. Instead of feeling any special remorse, he was rather delighted with his good fortune. In a day or two, however, the prisoner realized his illusionment. He noticed,

as he arose each morning, that the walls had slightly contracted. At first he could scarcely conceive of it. He examined the space closely and found his fears verified. He watched the movement very closely, and sure enough, they were gradually contracting. In oiled and silent grooves these heavy metal walls were gradually drawing closer and closer. He was startled, and placed all manner of objects here and there to check the oncoming tide. But it was all in vain. The walls were irresistible in their progress. It dawned upon him that this beautiful luxurious room was a deceptive snare.

When he realized that this comfortably and beautifully furnished room was to be his death cell and the place of his doom, invariably the perspiration poured out of his temples and he cried out frantically for help. But no response came. The metal walls simply gave back a hollow echo and continued to draw closer. When the furniture had been demolished by the pressure and the walls had come so close he could not do anything but stand upright, he placed his back to the wall, and bracing himself with his hands and feet, he tried with one superhuman effort to withstand his doom. But the walls were not to be gainsaid; they were not to be denied of their prey. Finally the walls crushed him to death. Is this not the sense of every man who beholds the ravishing power of *corruption* in his soul and body? As old age appears, with its multiplied physical weaknesses, degeneration, ailments, and limitations, they feel themselves crowded to the wall and think they are daily approaching their fatal and final end. Unable to make any further resistance, they passively submit themselves to the inevitable and slip away quietly from this world. Behold in this, my friend, the awesome power of the BONDAGE OF CORRUPTION!

The crumbling ruins of ancient civilizations buried beneath the swirling sands of ages bear silent testimony to the unrelenting *power of corruption*. Proud empires which like the towering mount Everest dominated the lives and fortunes of multitudes of men and vast stretches of global real estate, have disappeared from even the memory of those now dwelling upon the earth. In the afterglow of a thousand battlefields, in the shattered dreams of kings and world conquerors, in the light of treachery, moral decay, and spiritual bankruptcy, the word of God standeth invincibly true. Mighty empires and nations that with the vaunted pride of wealth, commerce, education, refinement, and disciplined armies controlled the souls of men have all eventually fallen and crumbled to dust beneath their own weight, becoming like the dust of a summer threshing floor and the wind blew them away.

The universe itself is no less subject to the bondage of corruption. As an article in *Discover* magazine reported, six or seven billion years from now the sun will begin to die, but it will not die alone. When the sun runs out of hydrogen fuel at its core and begins burning the hydrogen, helium, and heavier elements in its outer layers, it will swell tremendously, expanding out to earth's orbit. In its death throes it will swell into a red giant star, engulfing and incinerating Mercury, Venus, and Earth. Life on earth — if indeed any still exists — will surely end. A like fate awaits every star and planet in every solar system in all the two hundred billion known galaxies that make up the universe. Everything is winding down and burning out. In the light of this solemn knowledge let us prayerfully reflect upon the Holy Spirit's message of hope and deliverance, "For the earnest expectation of the creation *waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God*. For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the *creation itself SHALL BE DELIVERED FROM THE BONDAGE OF CORRUPTION* into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the *whole creation* groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but *ourselves also*, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption (placement in full, mature sonship), to wit, *THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY*" (Rom. 8:19-23).

Lift up your heads and rejoice! O creation — the sun will *not* burn itself out, the earth will *not* be incinerated, the universe will *not* collapse, the myriad worlds scattered through space will *not* pass away, civilizations will *not* forever continue to corrupt themselves and collapse into the dust and oblivion, and men will *not* unendingly continue to sink into moral morass and march inexorably toward death and the grave,

***because creation itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption INTO THE GLORIOUS LIBERTY OF THE SONS OF GOD!*** What a word that is! What a hope! *Universal deliverance from the bondage of corruption! The reversal of the Second Law of Thermodynamics!* No wonder the earnest expectation of all creation WAITS FOR THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SONS OF GOD!

Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither does corruption inherit incorruption, says the scripture. The message is clear — *we must be changed!* That is what it means. Mortal flesh and corrupted blood cannot inherit the kingdom realm of God. “Inherit” means “to receive or obtain, as property, rights, or duties, from an ***ancestor*** or ***predecessor***; to derive or acquire, as traits or characteristics, ***through heredity.***” When the Holy Spirit tells us that flesh and blood cannot “inherit” the kingdom of God, and that corruption cannot “inherit” incorruption, He is not telling us that flesh and blood cannot *receive, obtain, or partake of* the kingdom of God, neither is He saying that corruption cannot *receive, obtain, or partake of* incorruption. Oh, no! It’s not a question of *receiving* — it’s a matter of *inheriting!* In other words, the ancestors of your flesh and blood cannot pass the kingdom of God on to you. You cannot receive it from flesh and blood. Flesh and blood have no power to communicate the kingdom of God to you. In like manner, the realm of corruption cannot pass along incorruption to you. You cannot receive incorruption out of, or from, corruption. Corruption has no power to communicate incorruption to you. It should be obvious, then, that incorruption must come from a HIGHER REALM! That corruption can indeed become the recipient of incorruption is made crystal clear by the words of Paul when he says, “For this corruptible ***must put on incorruption...***and when this ***corruptible shall have put on incorruption,*** then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written...” Oh, yes — corruption can receive into itself the power and victory of incorruption — it just cannot “inherit” it from the corruptible realm! That is the mystery.

No one can deny it — we must be changed, spirit, soul, and body! Only by a mighty quickening of divine life can soul and body partake of incorruption and immortality. The word of God has made it very clear that our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, “shall *change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself*” (Phil. 3:21). If He cannot change our vile body then He cannot change anything anywhere. If He cannot subdue our soul and body unto Himself, unto His realm of spirituality and the kingdom of God, then how can it be said that He will “subdue all things” unto Himself? Therefore, the body of glorification is not *another* body — it is *this vile body* changed, subdued, and re-fashioned. Oh, the wonder of it!

The kingdom of God is the realm of incorruption ***and*** immortality! To enter that realm and partake of its glories and powers we must be changed! We must put on incorruption! We must put on immortality! The only way we can experience the fullness of the kingdom of God with our whole being is for us to be changed. Although we began in some small way to *see* the kingdom when we were first born again, and through the experiencing of Christ began to *enter* into the kingdom, and now by faith and obedience are beginning to *possess* our land, the fullness of the kingdom can only be experienced by being changed into the incorruptible and immortal life of Christ. The corruption of these carnal minds cannot inherit incorruption, and the mortality of these flesh and blood bodies cannot inherit immortality. If we are to rule and reign with Christ in His incorruptible throne of glory and power, we must be laid hold upon by the life and power from that incorruptible realm. We must be changed into His image and likeness. Nothing short of this divine nature can handle such power and glory without prostituting it!

Let me make very plain that all who are experiencing the mighty working of the life of Christ within have indeed already ***escaped corruption!*** That will sound incredible and unbelievable to many who read these lines. I do not say that your body has in any measure, at this present time, escaped mortality. But I must point out that corruption is not the same as mortality, although these terms are often used interchangeably by religious people. They do not bear the same meaning at all! As I mentioned earlier, corruption and mortality are not two ways of saying the same thing. On the one hand, mortality is the *state* of being liable to death. On the other

hand, corruption is the *process* by which both sin and death work. We are mortal *because* we are corruptible, but we are not corruptible *because* we are mortal. In physical terms (although the truth runs deeper than this) we can illustrate by saying that the *aging process* is corruption, whereas mortality is the *condition* that underlies the aging process, and the final result of the aging process.

The word of God does not tell us that any man besides our Lord Jesus has yet escaped **mortality**. “Keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who **only hath immortality**, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto...” (I Tim. 6:14,16). The apostle Peter does tell us, however, that the saints of God have been made partakers of the divine nature, “**having escaped the corruption** that is in the world through lust” (II Pet. 1:4). Having ESCAPED! Having escaped CORRUPTION! Having escaped the corruption that was brought into the world through lust, by the lust or **desire** of mother Eve when she “saw the tree that it was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be **desired (lusted after)** to make one wise” (Gen. 3:6). Two thoughts present themselves. First, not only did mother Eve bring corruption into the world through her lust, but that same corruption is perpetuated in the world through **our** lust! Second, lust, or desire, is a function of the **soul**, revealing the great fact that corruption is rooted in the **soul**, whereas mortality is rooted in the **body**! Another confirmation of this truth is found in the words of Paul when he says, “For to be **carnally minded is death**.” In other words, death springs from the root of the carnal mind. Death does not produce the carnal mind, rather, the carnal mind produces death. To deal with death you must first deal with the carnal mind! In the same way, mortality is the product of corruption. It is impossible to deal with mortality without first dealing with corruption! Now — the carnal mind is of the **soul**, whereas mortality is of the **body**. Can we not see, therefore, that the only way for this mortal to put on immortality is for this corruptible to *first* put on incorruption! It is infinitely necessary that every member of God’s elect understands this order, for it clearly reveals why in the closing chapters of the Revelation the **resurrection of the soul precedes the resurrection of the body**. The resurrection of the soul is the *first resurrection*! Deal with the soul, deal with the carnal mind, deal with the desires and emotions of the flesh, deal with the corruptible nature — raise this up into the life of God — and the transformation of the mortal body will follow. Does that not explain why so many who have earnestly sought to appropriate the promises of eternal life and thus lay hold upon **physical immortality** have failed and gone by way of the grave? No doubt they were seeking to immortalize the body without first ridding the soul of all its corruption! They were trying to enter into the glory of the second resurrection without first experiencing the fullness of the **FIRST**!

What does this wonderful truth mean to us? Where and when and how have we escaped the corruption that is in the world? Ah, my beloved, corruption is the *process of dissolution* that leads to death, the *downward spiral* by which all things in the universe are being reduced to a worse state or inferior condition. All organisms age and grow old. All food spoils. All mountains erode. All mechanical things wear out. All societies break down in moral decay. Every kingdom and empire weakens and finally collapses. Every spiritual movement, historical and current, eventually stagnates and goes into apostasy. Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse. Suns and stars burn out and self-destruct. There is a universal law of corruption, the bondage that enslaves every visible and invisible thing in the cosmos. The movement is always down, down, down!

And that’s how it was in my life until that blessed day when Christ appeared and I was born again by the **incorruptible seed** of the word of God that liveth and abideth forever. A divine and incorruptible life was raised up from Christ within my spirit and injected into my soul and in that wonderful moment old things passed away and all things became new. By that heavenly and divine intervention my course was changed, my direction reversed, my movement turned up-side-down. Instead of continuing the downward journey, I commenced an upward climb. And now I can truthfully and joyfully testify — I am no longer getting worse — I AM GETTING **BETTER**! Oh, yes! I AM GETTING **BETTER**! I am now learning of Christ. I am growing up into Him in all things. I am renouncing the hidden things of darkness. I am putting on the mind of Christ. I am receiving His chastisements and experiencing His dealings. I am submitting *my will* more and

more to *His*. I am tasting the powers of the world to come. I am apprehending His righteousness, peace, and joy. I am eating His flesh and drinking His blood. I am overcoming sins, weaknesses, unbelief, problems, fears, and obstacles of every kind. I am putting off the old man, and putting on the new man. Daily, continually, progressively, unceasingly, from glory to glory, I AM BEING CHANGED! No longer am I being reduced to a worse state and an inferior condition — I am now being transformed *by the renewing of my mind* into a **better state**, into a **superior condition!** I have escaped the irresistible downward plunge — I have thus escaped CORRUPTION! I am now incorruptible — on my way **up** instead of **down!** Is my soul fully resurrected, raised up into His perfection, standing up again in the full power of HIS LIFE? I cannot confess today that the work is complete, but there is no doubt about it, my soul is in the process of RESURRECTION!

This truth of incorruption is far too important to be passed over without earnest consideration. The wonderful truth is that incorruption *leads to* immortality. This corruptible (nature of the soul) must put on incorruption *before* this mortal can be empowered to put on immortality. This is the precise and significant order in the word of God. God's purpose in man's redemption is not just to deliver us from the power of the grave, but to recreate us, to make a new creature of us, a new kind of man in the image of Him who created us. Having been molded and fashioned after the image of the first man, we have now begun to put off that likeness and to put on the image and likeness of the second man, the Lord from heaven. We must put off the image of the earthy, and put on the image of the heavenly; we must be changed from the natural, earthly, living creatures we first were to be re-fashioned as spiritual, heavenly ones. This is not an option, it is a **must**; it is not discretionary, it is mandatory if we are to inherit the kingdom of God. "*For this corruptible must put on incorruption.*" So the scripture declares, "*And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*" My! what a purpose this is. It staggers the imagination to contemplate such a change; but change we must if we are to inherit the promises. And this work does not begin in our body — it begins in the soul! "*This is the first resurrection.*"

Incorruption is the process of man's "fall" being REVERSED! If one is watching a recorded program on his television set and decides to stop and rewind it to see a scene again, he is simply reversing what he has previously seen with his eyes. It is comical sometimes to see the people running backwards, and bodies rising from the ground to the roof of a building. You can see a vase that was smashed into a thousand pieces put together again, or a car that wrecked, back up and become as it was before. Whatever you saw was restored to its beginning by passing through the motion in reverse. And this is exactly what *incorruption* is: THE FALL OF MAN IN REVERSE! It means a progressive rising up again into that oneness in God that man once knew in His bright beginning. The order of Adam first being created in the image and likeness of God, made alive, walking and talking with God in the kingdom of heaven; then sinning, afterward becoming more and more estranged in his mind, more and more earthly minded, more and more vile, and finally dying — this order now put in reverse! From that death we stand up again in the spiritual life of the Christ within. Then we proceed to obedience, eating and drinking of Him, overcoming, putting on the mind of Christ, minding heavenly things, and transformation into the image of God — and the **last enemy** that shall be destroyed is **death!**

Little wonder that the sublime statement follows John's declaration that the resurrection of the soul is the "first resurrection" as he proclaims, "**Blessed and holy** is he that hath part in the first resurrection" (Rev. 20:6). BLESSED and HOLY! Indeed! Oh, my soul! Yes, my beloved, the first resurrection is the only resurrection that can make one both blessed *and* holy. The resurrection of the body can make you glorious, immortal, and powerful, but that alone can never make you **holy**. Interesting that John does not say, "Bright, beautiful, without sickness, weakness, pain, or fear of dying is he that hath part in the first resurrection." That is the kind of comment that should be given were the first resurrection a *bodily* resurrection. But he doesn't say that. No! **Blessed and holy**. Only the transformation, the incorruptibility, the standing up again in the image and likeness of God in your **soul** can make you **HOLY!** Isn't it wonderful!

When we were first begotten of God we were not "changed" or made "immortal" at that time, but when

that birthing of God's Spirit took place, the life of Christ *began* to be raised up in us. In that blessed moment the ego of old Adam laid down in us and died, while the new creation man was conceived in the womb of our flesh. Corruption began to *put on incorruption!* Truly the resurrection had dawned within our bosom. But our outer-man bodies saw no change. The soul within, which first died in that long ago Eden, centuries before Adam's body died, has been quickened by the spirit of life from God and caused to stand up from the realm of separation and death. We have had the life of God deep within in our spirit but have been dead to it, but now our soul has heard the voice of the Son of God and we are experiencing the awakening and rising up again of our minds, emotions, wills, and desires into the mind, emotion, will, and desire of the Christ. Through the process of incorruption all the spiritual faculties that were lost in the fall of Adam are being restored to the elect by the operation of God. All that was lost shall be regained! It is more than merely coming to life again, it is the orderly restoration of the totality of our original state of being including all the spiritual and soulful faculties, capacities, abilities, and all wisdom, knowledge, love, joy, peace, faith, power, righteousness, and virtue. Such awesome powers do not belong in a mortal body, nor would we want an immortal body apart from these powers! That is why God has arranged that the final, ultimate, crowning event of this restoration will shed itself in the REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY. At that blessed moment we shall have *fully inherited* the kingdom of God! "*The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*"

The spiritual world of the kingdom of heaven is a world with which we become familiar as we walk in the Spirit of God and experience more and more our union with the Father; a world so wonderfully real that all who once have had their eyes opened to it beg to remain within its celestial precincts, never more to return to the lowly estate and level of the natural man. It follows of necessity that man's being, because it is unsuited to the spiritual world, must be changed by the power of God. A bird would need a mighty change to be able to live under the water, or a fish to live in the air; but the Lord promises a much more striking change to those who are predestinated to be manifested as the sons of God with power.

With what anticipation do we wait for this glorious manifestation! Meantime we are taught to believe: "We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body..." This is not meant merely for revelation, to be left for the future; for the full development of our life in sonship we must seek to enter into it and appropriate it. We do this as we learn to triumph over death on every level. We do it as we learn to look to Christ as the Lord of both soul and body, claiming their entire consecration, securing here and now victory over the terrible dominion sin has had in both soul and body. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15). We do it as we allow the powers of the coming age to possess us, and to lift us up into a life in the heavenly places, to enlarge our hearts and our hopes, and to anticipate here and now, the things that have never entered into the heart of man to conceive.

Sons of God! Seek after *incorruption* and *immortality*. Let this be the crown of your life in sonship. Do not seek immortality in your body first, or only, apart from incorruption in your thoughts, emotions, desires, ambitions, will, purposes, hopes, dreams, attitudes, and actions. Seek to live an *incorruptible life*, walk an *incorruptible walk*, as that which will lead you to glory and immortality. Nothing will prepare you for immortality more than faithfulness in every step of putting on the MIND OF CHRIST. The experience of His power to make you holy in spirit, soul, and body, will quicken you to a power that shall not cease its work until the sin that causes death has been abolished in your being. As you seek to experience within yourself to the full, the power of HIS TRANSFORMING LIFE, your heart will be enlarged to see the position the sons of God have been destined to occupy in the universe, as having all things made subject to them, and you shall for your part be fitted to live worthy of that high and holy calling! Can you not see how it is that *incorruption leads to immortality*? Immortality is the ultimate end of the process of incorruption, just as human maturity is the end of the process of physical and emotional development. In short, seek the *first resurrection* as that which prepares you for, and leads to, the *second resurrection!*

This glorious realm of immortality that lies beyond the power of temptation, sickness, sorrow, and death

belongs to the sons of God; but, blessed be God! it is likewise the hope of ALL CREATION. The creation itself *also* shall be delivered from the *bondage of corruption* into the liberty and glory of the children of God! Oh, yes! Those are not empty words, but words of divine inspiration and eternal hope! Creation groans to be *delivered* — and creation is not groaning for another revival, nor for another evangelistic crusade, nor for another healing campaign, nor for more gifts of the Spirit, nor for more apostles, prophets, and teachers, nor for a more powerful global Christian television network. You see, beloved, for two millenniums we have had revival after revival, move after move, healing upon healing, signs, wonders, and miracles, crusade after crusade, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers and none of them has ever brought forth the fullness of the kingdom of God on earth, nor has even one of them or all of them together ever delivered the creation from the bondage of corruption! Who can contradict this? The creation continues to groan in its bondage and we ourselves, groan within ourselves, as we wait for the disclosing of our sonship — the redemption of our bodies! It is not another “patch-up” job we want, not another band-aid on sin and death, not a re-run of previous moves of God which have blessed the called-out, but a full and complete and eternal deliverance from the whole dreadful realm of limitation, imperfection, sorrow, and death!

Jesus is the first of the firstfruits of this glorious victory. The manifest sons of God are the firstfruits, redeemed from among men (Rev. 14:5). All creation is the great harvest that follows! It was necessary that after having lived in the flesh and overcome all things, Jesus should be resurrected Himself by the power and glory of the Father, that He might be able then to minister even that resurrection life to a firstfruit company; that they, in turn, apprehending all that pertains to that life, might be able to minister it to the rest of creation. For this creation waits expectantly!

When a child I read in the Bible  
Something about a judgment day;  
I thought it meant we would stand before God  
And be judged in a literal way —  
But that’s all passing away.

I see its meaning in spirit now,  
And today is the judgment day.  
His word is sharp and judges us all  
By condemning or blessing our way —  
And this will not pass away!

I believed when the great trumpet sounds  
It would be a literal horn,  
Piercing our ears with terrific scream,  
Ushering in eternity’s dawn —  
But that’s all passing away.

I see its meaning in spirit now:  
That trumpet sound is a message new,  
To awake the souls who are spiritually dead,  
And with new life and power endue —  
And this will not pass away!

I read how the dead would all come forth;  
The tombs all bursting, I could see;

Releasing the dead of all ages  
So they could then with the Saviour be —  
But that's all passing away.

I see its meaning in spirit now:  
Those dead ones are the souls of men  
Who are raised by Christ in power here,  
From graves of carnal corruption of sin —  
And this will not pass away!

All this I saw through these eyes of flesh,  
Supposed it of natural things spoke:  
Forgetting His words are *spirit and life*,  
As He clearly told us in the Book —  
But that's all passing away.

I see its meaning in spirit now:  
The vision to me has come clear;  
He's opened my spiritual eyes to see  
Truth in more grandeur and light appear —  
And this will not pass away!

— Reba McMurry

Though few Christians and almost no preachers understand it, again and again, on numerous occasions, and in diverse manners, we read in God's word of two resurrections, or the dual aspects of the resurrection within our lives. There is an interesting passage in the ninth chapter of Mark's Gospel which throws divine light on this subject. The opening verses contain the record of Christ's transfiguration; and then we read, "*As they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying within themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from (Greek: ek, from among) the dead should mean.*" The disciples felt that there was something special, something entirely beyond the ordinary orthodox idea of the resurrection of the dead, and verily so there was, though they understood it not at the time. It lay beyond their range of vision at that moment.

Fortunately, Paul gives us some vital information concerning this resurrection "out from among" the dead, without which we would be very much in the dark. He tells us just how he was planning to be included in it! He also tells us how others came to be included in the same class with him, and he states that the revelation concerning this great attainment and the way into it, is the sign of spiritual perfection (Phil. 3:11-15). But the popular teachers of our day have totally missed these great truths. Let us with shoes removed from our feet and with head bowed low consider them prayerfully and carefully. They are of the utmost importance to every apprehended son of God. Paul informs us that he had given up the world, including that religious world he had grown up in, he had given up everything, that he might suffer with Christ, with his nature transformed to die even as Christ died, "IF BY ANY MEANS I might attain unto the resurrection *out from amongst* the dead" (Phil. 3:11). In our King James Bible this is rendered, "the resurrection *of* the dead," a pathetic, and altogether misleading translation.

A moment's just reflection will suffice to convince the reader that the apostle is not speaking here of the broad truth of "the resurrection of the dead," inasmuch as everyone must rise again! "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15). In the Greek language of the New Testament the resurrection "of the dead" is *nekron* or *ton nekron* and is applied to all classes of people because

all will be raised. The term merely establishes the fact that all men will be raised, but says nothing respecting either the *time* or the *manner* of their rising. But the term used by Paul in Philippians, chapter three, is *ek nekron* — literally, “out from among the dead,” and is not once applied to the unjust or the ungodly, or even in any general sense of resurrection. This phrase is used altogether forty-nine times in the New Testament, to wit: thirty-four times, to express Christ’s resurrection, whom we know was literally raised “out from among the dead.” Then the term is used three times, to express John the Baptist’s supposed resurrection, who, as Herod thought, had been raised “out from the dead.” Then three times, to express the resurrection of Lazarus, who was also in a literal way raised “out from the dead.” And finally, three times it is used to express *spiritual life* “out from among” those who are still dead in trespasses and in sins. In this connection Paul admonished the Roman believers, “Yield yourselves unto God, as those who *are alive from (among) the dead*” (Rom. 6:13). In Acts 4:1-2 the Sadducees were grieved because Peter and John “preached, through Jesus, **THE RESURRECTION WHICH IS FROM AMONG THE DEAD.**” It was more than just the idea of resurrection they objected to, but specifically that some could even *now* experience, through Jesus, this resurrection “out from the dead.”

The resurrection of which Paul spoke was certainly not just the general resurrection of either saints or sinners. Paul knew that he was a saved man, and as such knew there was positively no way he could escape the resurrection of the just. Now, if the resurrection was just one single, instantaneous event, for either saint or sinner, as the church systems teach, then all of Paul’s *strivings* were altogether uncalled for and useless. Just being saved would unquestionably have secured it for him! Isn’t that what the churches say?

But no — Paul was not striving in vain; and unto the saints at Philippi he penned these enlightening words, “*But whatever former things I had that might have been gain to me, I have come to consider as one combined loss for Christ’s sake. Yes, furthermore I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege — the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth and supreme advantage — of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, of perceiving and recognizing and understanding Him more fully and clearly. For His sake I have lost everything and consider it all to be mere rubbish in order that I may win Christ, and that I may actually be found and known as in Him, not having any self-achieved righteousness that can be called my own...but possessing that genuine righteousness which comes through faith in Christ...for my determined purpose is that I may **know Him** — that I may progressively become more **deeply and intimately acquainted with Him...that I may in the same way come to know the power outflowing from HIS RESURRECTION;** and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed into the likeness of His death, in the hope that **IF POSSIBLE I MAY ATTAIN TO THE SPIRITUAL AND MORAL RESURRECTION THAT LIFTS ME OUT FROM AMONG THE DEAD EVEN WHILE IN THE BODY.** Not that I have **already attained** this ideal or am **already made perfect, but I press on** to lay hold of and make my own, that for which Christ Jesus has laid hold of me” (Phil. 3:7-12, Amplified). What a word!*

Oh! dearly beloved brethren, consider with me the ingredients contained in Paul’s striving to be fully in that resurrection which is “out from among” the dead. Though he had been quickened by the Spirit of God, he said that he could not say that he had **already attained**. Then he associated this resurrection with **being perfect**, which he says he wasn’t yet. Some of the qualifications for this resurrection were **genuine righteousness of Christ** inworked in his life; **progressively knowing Christ in richer and deeper and fuller measures;** and **progressively experiencing the power outflowing from CHRIST’S RESURRECTION.** Ah, this is a resurrection which is progressive, which perfects one, which enables one to put on the righteousness of Christ, which comes through intimacy of fellowship and vital union with Christ, and which can be experienced while still living in a mortal body! Does that not identify it as that resurrection of the **soul** which John witnessed on Patmos! There can be no doubt — **THIS IS THE FIRST RESURRECTION!**

Yes, my friend, the resurrection “of” the dead is one thing, but the resurrection “out from the dead” is a mightily different thing. If **all** the people in a building leave it at the same time, it is the coming out “of” the

company; but if only *some* of the people leave, their's is a coming out "from" the rest of the company. It was for this resurrection "out from" the dead, until all the soulical death of his life would be transformed, that Paul longed continually. This was the bright and blessed hope that shone upon his soul and cheered him amid the sorrows and trials, the toils and the difficulties, the buffetings and the conflicts. Every person who physically dies, both saint and sinner, must eventually experience the process of resurrection, thus being in that general classification of the resurrection "of" the dead, for as in Adam ALL die, so in Christ shall ALL be made alive. There is no possible way of avoiding it! God will pursue you to the deepest hell to call you forth! But to be a partaker in the resurrection "from among" the dead, that, Paul tells us, is a special blessing and distinction for those who follow on to *know* the Lord.

The resurrection "from among" the dead has already begun. It started two thousand years ago! Our Lord was the first of the firstfruits of this company. He was PERFECTED IN HIS SONSHIP. He said, "As the Father has life in Himself, so has He given the Son to have life in Himself." He already possessed that life, that perfection, that glory, before His death and bodily resurrection, so that He said, "No man *taketh my life from me; I lay it down.*" He was the first of the firstfruits of the *first resurrection!* There has been a few, a little remnant all through the centuries who strove for and attained to this position. And there is a little remnant alive today who belong to this same company and who will now STAND UP AND COLLECT THEIR SPIRITUAL FACULTIES, transformed fully into the image and incorruptibleness of God by the power of the indwelling Christ. But mark: the way into this great privilege is through death: death to self and the world, beheaded, knowing Him in the fellowship of His sufferings, made conformable unto His death. Blessed be God! this process has already begun, and it is working mightily IN US!

To be continued...

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