

“Watchman, what of the night ?”



“The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you, the hour and the end!” Ezekiel 7:6 (Moffatt)

► THIS ISSUE'S READING

**“THE BIBLICAL TESTIMONY
CONCERNING THE
SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S
RESURRECTION 'ACCORDING
TO THE SCRIPTURES'” -1-**

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Editor's Preface

The principal topic of consideration for this bi-monthly's focus will be the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The New Testament declares that Christ's resurrection was foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament):

"And [Jesus] said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. ...

"Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day" (Luke 24: 44, 46, emphasis added).

"For I (the apostle Paul) delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15: 3-4, emph. added).

Unquestionably, the raising of Jesus to everlasting life following His sacrificial death on the cross is the very climax of His earthly salvific work as the Messiah. So vital to the Christian faith is the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead - and more specifically, our Lord's resurrection - that the apostle Paul uncompromisingly wrote under inspiration:

"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resur-



rection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." (1 Corinthians 15: 12-19).

It is quite astounding that "some among" the church at Corinth were saying "that there was no resurrection of the dead." Paul himself testifies in this letter to the Corinthians that the resurrected Christ "was seen of Cephas (Simon Peter), then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also ... " (Ibid. 15: 5-8). In light of this evidence, whatever the exact reason for this denial of resurrection, it is not to be necessarily understood as a repudiation of life after death, or even a rejection of Christ somehow surviving His death. The Roman world of the first century was heavily impacted by Hellenistic (Greek influenced) thought and culture. Even Christians, both Jewish and Gentile, would have been affected to some extent by this ideological element. Predominately, and in contrast to the Christian belief of the bodily resurrection of the *whole* person (body and soul), the Greek view of conscious existence (life) understood that a dualistic tension/antagonism existed between the body (material/evil) and the soul (spiritual/divine). To them the body could not be conse-

crated and therefore did not survive death because it was matter, the source of all evil. Accordingly, the Greeks generally believed that the soul did survive death because it was spiritual, divine-like and therefore possessed an inherent immortality. However for them the immortality of the soul involved the complete dissolution of the body at death in order to free the soul from the confines of the body as the body was considered the prison-house of the soul. In the Greek mind, getting rid of the body at death was actually the beginning of immortality. Proverbs and sayings among them such as "The body is a tomb" and "I am a poor soul shackled to a corpse" were relatively common. The ancient classical Greek philosopher Plato understood that the body was the antithesis of the soul. The body is the source of all weaknesses as opposed to the soul which alone is capable of independence and goodness. This contempt for the body that existed among practically all the Hellenistic groups made the resurrection of the body undesirable and thus unthinkable. Largely due to this, some of the philosophers from various sects of these groups grew opposed to Christianity thereby becoming outspoken antagonists of bodily resurrection of the whole person. The worst of these, Celsus, a second century A.D. Platonic philosopher, wrote the following misinterpretation and caricature that his assessment of this Christian doctrine supposedly revealed:

"It is folly on their part (Christians) to suppose that when God, as if He were a cook, introduces the fire (which is to consume the world), all the rest of the human race will be burnt up, while they alone will remain, not only such of them as are then alive, but also those who are long since dead, which latter will arise from the earth clothed with the self-

same flesh (as during life); for such a hope is simply one which might be cherished by worms. For what sort of human soul is that which would still long for a body that had been subject to corruption? Whence, also, this opinion of yours is not shared by some of the Christians, and they pronounce it to be exceedingly vile, and loathsome, and impossible; for what kind of body is that which, after being completely corrupted, can return to its original nature, and to that self-same first condition out of which it fell into dissolution? Being unable to return any answer, they betake themselves to a most absurd refuge, viz., that all things are possible to God. ...

"For the *soul*, indeed, He might be able to provide an everlasting life; while dead *bodies*, on the contrary, are ... more worthless than dung." (emph. added).¹

Now, plainly, this is a gross misrepresentation of what both Jesus and Paul taught about literal bodily resurrection (compare John 12: 24 with 1 Corinthians 15: 35-44). However it is highly interesting that over a century later Celsus wrote that there were "some of the Christians" denying bodily resurrection on the same grounds cited by Greek philosophers. By this time, Christian theology was beginning to be infiltrated by the philosophy of these same pagans who were all promoting some form of dualistic natural immortality of the 'soul' apart from the body. It is not surprising that post-Apostolic Christianity began, along with many other borrowed heretical falsehoods, to amalgamate these teachings into an apostate form of Christianity - most of which has come down to our time.

With these write-ups we will present the biblical understanding of the bodily resurrection of the dead in light of Christ's resurrection as to both the event and its timing.

"The Importance Of Christ's Resurrection From The Dead 'According To The Scriptures'"

Overview And Insights From The Old Testament On The Resurrection Event —

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them ...

"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 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 ...

"And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And ... the woman ... took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." (Genesis 1: 27; 2: 16-17; 3: 4-6).

The aftermath of humanity's first parents' resistance and transgression of God's expressed will proved to be disastrously tragic as the inspired record states:

"And unto Adam [God] said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life ... till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return ...

"And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: *and he died.*" (Ibid. 3: 17, 19; 5: 5, emph. added).

Moreover, the Bible also testifies that (nearly) all of Adam's posterity suffered the same result - they too, with the notable ex-

ception of Enoch, *all died*. (Ibid. 5: 6-31, emph. added).

Many centuries later, the New Testament confirms this universal fate of the human race as follows:

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, *who is the figure of him that was to come*. ... " (Romans 5: 12-14, emph. added).

This "figure of him that was to come" that the apostle Paul speaks of in this passage was revealed to Adam and Eve in the aforementioned third chapter of Genesis right after they committed their act of transgression, but just before God affirmed the inevitable death sentence that their action had brought upon themselves and the rest of humankind. Addressing the instigator behind Adam's offence - Satan, who used a "serpent" as a medium of his deceit (see Revelation 12: 9; 20: 2) - the Scripture declares:

"And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed ... And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Genesis 3: 14-15).

Clearly, right in the midst of what was an extremely bleak and utterly hopeless outlook for the continuing existence of the human race, God acted by stepping into the breach that sin had caused with this announcement. The enmity (hostility/hatred) that He would put between "the serpent" (Satan) and "the woman" (humanity) through "her seed" (a

singular male offspring) would result in adversarial conflict that would "bruise [the] head" of the serpent/Satan (a fatal, unrecoverable deathblow). The hope that this promised prediction (prophecy) instilled in the hearts of the fallen pair can be seen in Eve's declaration upon the birth of her first son:

"Later, Adam had sexual relations with his wife Eve. She became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, 'I have given birth to a male child—the LORD. [d]'" (Ibid. 4:1, ISV).²

Though the translation and meaning of this text is a subject of much debate, the ISV rendering of the ending sentence in verse one discloses the following in footnote [d]:

"d. Genesis 4:1 Or *child with the LORD*; the Heb. lacks *with* "

While practically all modern language translations supply additional wording like the term "with," as the alternative rendition of this passage indicates, the footnote also denotes that the Hebrew text "lacks" this added wording here. The omission of supplemental words into the text of Genesis 4: 1b by the ISV translators has also been supported over the years by a number of competent and notable Bible commentators and scholars. All this considered, it appears that when Cain was born, Eve apparently believed that because he was the first man (male) to be born on the earth he would be the leading, preeminent, and principal One. Undoubtedly, she assumed Cain would be the Seed of the woman and that she, herself, was that woman/mother. Therefore her assertion: "I have given birth to a male child—the LORD," evidently shows that Eve understood that the promised male descendant of human lineage would be, in some way, divine ("the LORD"). Accordingly, this insight regarding the coming Deliverer was correct and in this aspect

reveals the seemingly clear understanding that Eve had of the promise/prophecy in Genesis 3: 15 - though her application that this was referring to Cain was terribly mistaken! However, the important point to recognize is Eve's acknowledgement concerning the significance of this promise of the special divine-human 'Seed of the woman' coming to "bruise" (strike a deathblow) to the head of Satan thereby delivering humanity from the sentence of death caused by their sin. This 'hope,' as men further populated the earth, became known as the Messianic hope and was entrusted to a faithful line of chosen men who passed it down from generation to generation throughout Antediluvian salvific history. (see for example, Genesis 5: 3-32; 1 Chronicles 1: 1-4). After the Noachian flood, beginning with Noah's son Shem, the chosen line continued down through the generations of salvific Old Testament history to the time of Abram /Abraham and his immediate posterity (Genesis 11: 10-26; 1 Chronicles 1: 24-27, 34). Finally, from there, the chronological record moves centuries further onward up to the coming (Advent) of "Jesus, who is called Christ (Messiah)." (Matthew 1: 1-16).

Since biblical revelation is progressive: "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4: 18) and as a fuller comprehension (both experientially and historically) of the Messiah's deliverance unfolded in greater detail, the later inspired record comments more definitely on that which had been successively proceeding in Scripture earlier. Thus, the New Testament succinctly links the Deliverer's victory over Satan and death in Genesis 3: 15 with the Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead:

"For since by man came death (compare

Genesis 2: 16-17; with 3: 6-7; with 5: 5), by man came also the resurrection of the dead (compare Job 19: 25-27; with John 6: 39-40, 44, 54; 11: 25-27). For as in Adam all die (compare Genesis 3: 19; with Job 34: 15; with Ecclesiastes 3: 19-20; with Hebrews 9: 27), even so in Christ shall all be made alive (compare John 5: 26-29; 11: 25-27; with Revelation 1: 18)." (1 Corinthians 15: 21-22).

For instance, the truth that the promise and hope of Messianic deliverance from death would ultimately occur through the re-creative power of God to restore uncorrupted the whole person through a literal bodily resurrection (Greek, *ἀνάστασις*, *anastasis* - "stand up [stand again], a resurrection, a raising up, rising") was embraced by Jesus in a contention that He had with the Sadducees, a first century A.D. Jewish sect that denied bodily resurrection. Directing their attention to the biblical text found in Exodus 3: 6, He reprovably told them:

"And as touching the dead, *that they rise*: have ye not read *in the book of Moses*, how in the bush God spake unto him (*Moses*), saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err." (Mark 12: 26-27, *emph. added*).

Is it not telling that, according to the Savior, the post-Antediluvian history in the time of the Exodus shows that Moses understood the incident at the "bush" as a declaration by God of the resurrection of the dead? It appears that Moses, at least to some degree, had a fuller understanding of the Edenic hope centuries *later* than did the pre-Antediluvian inhabitants. However it also shows that the concept of deliverance through a literal bodily resurrection was advancing forward centuries *earlier* than the

Messiah's supreme revelation given in His own person. Consider that even before Moses, Abraham expressed a knowledge of this truth when he was commanded by God to offer his son Isaac in sacrifice on mount Moriah. Upon traveling with "two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son" to reach the designated site:

"... Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again unto you." (Genesis 22: 3-5, *emph. added*).

Since Isaac was to be offered "there for a burnt offering," not only would this have meant his death upon an altar but an entire consumption of his body by fire as well. (see Leviticus 1: 3-9). Yet Abraham told his young men that he and Isaac would "come again unto you." That this statement was an expression of faith in a bodily resurrection from the dead is plainly confirmed in the New Testament as follows:

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that *God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.*" (Hebrews 11: 17-19, *emph. added*).

Another person who similarly expressed a resurrection hope around this time was the patriarch Job:

"But man dieth, and wasteth away ... So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live

again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands. ...

"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." (Job 14: 10-15; 19: 25-27).

Many years later, in the days of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, the Scriptures testify of three occurrences of a literal resurrection of dead persons. First, the son of a widow woman in Zarephath:

"... the son of the woman ... fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, ... art thou come unto me ... to slay my son? And he said unto her, Give me thy son ...

"And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, ... unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth." (1 Kings 17: 17-19, 21-23).

Next, a Shunammite woman's son who had died:

"And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD. ... and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm ... and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. ... And when [the Shunammite woman] was come in unto him, [Elisha] said, Take up thy son." (2 Kings 4: 32-36).

Finally, a rather 'curious' resurrection of a deceased man abruptly cast into the "sepulchre of Elisha":

"And Elisha died, and they buried him. ...

"And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that ... they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet." (2 Kings 13: 20-21).

Later yet, Isaiah explicitly prophesies of God's deliverance of His people through a literal bodily resurrection:

"He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. ...

"Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." (Isaiah 25: 8; 26: 19, *emph. added*).

Lastly, the book of Daniel gives what is perhaps the most definitive Old Testament testimony concerning literal bodily resurrection from the dead:

"And at that time shall Michael stand up,

the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people ... and at that time thy people shall be delivered ... And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Daniel 12: 1-2, *emph. added*).

Plainly, the Old Testament from the earliest times progressively reveals the literal bodily resurrection of the dead. Unfolding within the context of deliverance promised in Genesis 3: 15, the truth of the resurrection event - both the reality of rising unto temporal mortal life again in the former pre-Messianic era, and the future hope of rising to immortal life during the coming Messianic age - is successively set forth in the Hebrew Scriptures.

» *To be Continued.*

1. A. Cleveland Coxe, D.D., *ANTE-NICENE FATHERS, Volume 4* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994; "Origen Against Celsus" - Book 5, Chapter 14), 549. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04165.htm>

2. *The International Standard Version Bible* (Bellflower, CA: The Isv Foundation, Davidson Press LLC; Release 2.0, Build 2014.01.14 edition - July 13, 2013). <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%204&version=ISV>

*All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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