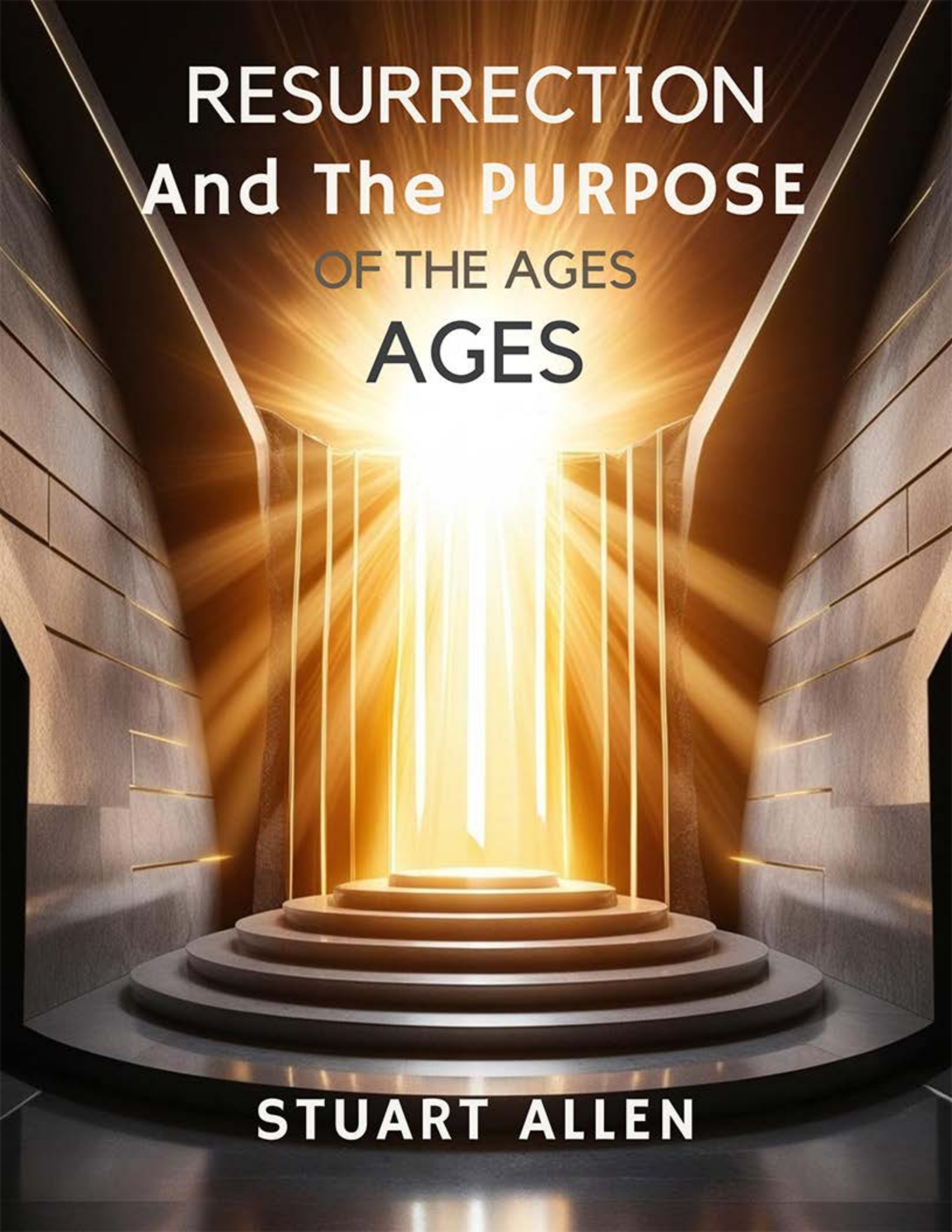
RESURRECTION
And The PURPOSE
OF THE AGES
AGES
STUART ALLEN

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STUART ALLEN

Author of

Letters from Prison
The Unfolding Purpose of God
On Reading the Bible
The Interpretation of Scripture
The Early Centuries and the Truth
The Lord Jesus Christ, God or only Man?
The Early and Pastoral Epistles of Paul
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Resurrection and the purpose of the Ages

In Ephesians 3:8-11 the apostle Paul refers to the unfolding of the dispensation of the Mystery (secret) 'according to the eternal purpose which He (God) purposed in Jesus Christ our Lord'. Sometimes it is necessary to sacrifice the magnificent prose of the Authorised Version in order to get nearer to the meaning of the original Hebrew and Greek. A more literal rendering of verse eleven would be 'According to the purpose of the *ages* which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord'. The ages are the great platform of time on which God is working out a mighty plan embracing heaven and earth, centred in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Bible is God's record of this plan, revealed step by step according to His matchless wisdom. A careful study of the New Testament shows that this mighty purpose is said to be *by, through, in* or *with* Christ and we do well to realise that there is no phase of it that is not essentially connected with Him and His atoning death and resurrection. In fact we can say that the truth of resurrection connected with the Lord and His redeemed people is the basis which holds this great plan together. What a pity then that this doctrine has been practically jettisoned by modern Christendom or mere lip service paid to it! How many Christian preachers and expositors give it a place in their ministry apart from Easter Sunday? Yet the apostle Paul did not hesitate to write to the church at Corinth: 'If Christ be not raised, *your faith is* VAIN; ye are yet in your sins'. Such was and still is the hopeless position of living believers apart from the resurrection of the Lord. And what of God's children who have died? 'Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are PERISHED'. This is strong language, but the apostle was dealing with truth so fundamental that it was warranted. Let us notice the various ways in which the great truth of resurrection impinges upon the purpose of the ages.

(1) *The Lord Himself*.-It is hardly possible to read the eleventh and twelfth chapters of Matthew's Gospel without realising that events recorded there were working to a climax. The Lord had come to His earthly people Israel and presented His credentials as Messiah by working daily in their midst the very miracles that the Old Testament had predicted He would accomplish at His advent. He was indeed a man 'approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs' as Peter expressed it (Acts 2:22). But in spite of all this, unbelief was doing its deadly work in the hearts of the people of Israel. 'Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not' (Matt. 11:20). 'And He did not many mighty works there because of their *unbelief*' (Matt. 13:58). This unbelief was such as to cause the Lord to marvel (Mark 6:6). He had presented Himself in His threefold capacity as Prophet (Matt. 12:41), Priest (verse 6) and King (verse 42) and yet they had the impertinence to ask for a sign:

> 'But He answered and said unto them, An evil, and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth' (12:39,40).

Later on, the Lord referred again to Jonah as being the only sign that would be given to that unbelieving generation (16:4). Apart from the fact that the Saviour set His seal upon the truth of Jonah being swallowed by the great fish, it is evident that there was more in this incident than appears on the surface. Too often it is understood to mean that Jonah was miraculously preserved *alive* inside the fish and afterwards vomited upon the dry land. In which case one might well ask how the prophet could be a true picture of the *death* of the Lord Jesus and His entombment for three days and three nights? Jonah does not hesitate to describe the belly of the sea monster as 'sheol' the grave (2:2 translated 'hell' cf. Psa. 16:10) and 'shachath' corruption (2:6). This word is rendered the 'grave' in Job 33:22. The belly of the fish was as the *grave* to Jonah. Moreover the 'as' and the 'so' of Matthew 12:40 would lead one to believe that Jonah, after uttering the prayer recorded in chapter two of the prophecy, actually died and was brought to life again when given up by the great fish, so becoming a perfect type of the Lord's death and *resurrection*.* This occasion in the Lord's ministry was not the only time that He stressed His resurrection as a sign to those who would not believe.

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* We are aware that some Christian expositors would not go as far as this, but we ask the reader to test what is written in the true Berean spirit.

'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. . . . but He spake of the temple of His body' (John 2:19-21).

Not only was the truth of His death and resurrection a stone of stumbling to His enemies, but His own disciples failed to grasp the significance of these great truths.

'And 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 with themselves, questioning one with another what the *rising from the dead should mean'* (Mark 9:9,10).

But the most majestic reference to the truth of His resurrection during His earthly life was given by the Lord Jesus to a sorrowing woman, distraught with grief at the loss of a loved one. 'Thy brother shall rise again' (John 11:23) was the greatest comfort that He could give to Martha on the death of her brother Lazarus. Then followed: 'I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live' (25). To the believer who is instructed in the Word, this has always been the only ground of his hope for time and for eternity. 'Because I live, ye shall live also' (John 14:19). After the glorious statement of John 11:25 which proclaims Him to be the I AM - Jehovah of the Old Testament - Who has the keys of death and the grave we come to the opposite extreme in verse thirty-five which is the shortest verse in the Bible. 'Jesus wept'. Here we have the sublime mystery of godliness - God manifest in the flesh. He Who was truly God was also truly human and only as such could He be the Redeemer of sinners.

(2) *Resurrection and the Gospel*.-In the fifteenth chapter of first Corinthians Paul gives the basis of the gospel that he preached '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' (3,4) and in Romans 4:24,25 he declares that the righteousness of God is 'for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that *raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead*; Who was delivered for our offences, and was *raised again* for our justification'. It is evident that the resurrection of Christ held a vital place in the gospel that the apostle ministered. While it is important to stress the *death* of Christ as the one offering for sin - for 'the wages of sin is death' (Rom. 6:23).- yet this is only half the truth, for of what use would a dead Christ be as a Saviour? The pouring out of His precious blood on Calvary's Cross would be valueless apart from His present resurrection life.

'I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore,' (Rev. 1:18).

'Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost (literally to all perfection or maturity) that come unto God by Him, seeing He *ever liveth* to make intercession for them' (Heb. 7:25).

He has entered into heaven itself '*now* to appear in the presence of God *for us* ' (Heb. 9:24).

Many a Gospel message has been spoiled and robbed of its power by omitting the great truth of resurrection. To multitudes of unbelieving people Jesus Christ is merely an historical figure Who walked this earth some 2000 years ago and is now dead, buried and finished. In testifying to the gospel of His grace we must present Him as a *living Saviour*, One Who is vitally interested in each person and One to Whom all shall one day give account (Rom. 14:10-12). In Romans 10:9 the apostle states 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that *God hath raised Him from the dead*, thou shalt be saved'. While we have no mention of Calvary here, it must be included, inasmuch as the lesser is included in the greater. It is possible to present the work on the cross *without* resurrection, but it is not possible to set forth the resurrection of Christ without implying all that was accomplished on the cross for sinners.

When we come to the types of atonement and cleansing in the Old Testament it is manifestly impossible for an animal to represent at one and the same time both the death and the resurrection of the Lord. Consequently we have two types in Leviticus 14 and 16 to set forth this double truth. In the case of the cleansing of the leper, two birds alive and clean were to be brought to the priest. One was to be killed and then we read:

'As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hissop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water ... and shall let the *living bird loose into the open field'* (Lev. 14:6,7).

The living bird was identified with the slain one by being dipped in its blood, showing that it was two aspects of the same work, and then released *alive*, a picture of death and resurrection. The same truth is set forth in the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus describing the day of atonement. Aaron was commanded to take two goats, one which was offered as a sin offering (16:9) and the other was let go *alive* into the wilderness (16:10,22).

The New Testament commentary on this chapter is found in Hebrews:

> 'But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come . . . neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us' (9:11,12).

The fulness of His antitypical work is then summarised under three appearings:

He *hath* appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (His atoning death) (Heb. 9:26).

He *now* appears in the presence of God for us (His resurrection and ascension) (9:24).

He *will* appear the second time without sin unto salvation (His second advent and the hope of the believer) (9:28).

In our presentation of the redeeming work of Christ let us make sure that we present the *full* gospel of His grace and rejoice not only in His death as our substitute, but in the glorious fact of resurrection in that He ever lives to make intercession for us.

(3) *Resurrection and Promise*.-We who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ rejoice in the precious promises of God which are yea and amen in Him - but do we realise how much they owe to the truth of resurrection? It would be difficult to find a promise in the New Testament that has not this fundamental truth either directly associated with it or in the background. It is noteworthy that the first occurrence of the word promise occurs *after* the resurrection. 'Behold, I send the *promise* of My Father upon you' (Luke 24:49).

We see the outworking of the Divine promises backed by resurrection power clearly exemplified in the life of Abraham. In Genesis 12:1-3 and 15:1-6, God made a promise to Abraham that through his seed He intended to bless the whole world. Now although the promises of God are *sure*, they are not necessarily put into operation straight away and this is where faith is exercised and the believer is disciplined in order that he may grow in grace and in the knowledge of the ways of the Lord. Abraham and Sarah had to wait until, humanly speaking, the fulfilment of the promise seemed impossible. During this time they had to learn that they were dealing with God 'Who quickened the dead' (Rom. 4:16,17) and that resurrection power infinitely transcends all the limitations and the inability of the flesh.

> 'And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body *now dead*, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the *deadness* of Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had *promised*, He was able also to perform' (Rom. 4:19-21).

Isaac, the child of promise, was a literal example of resurrection power in operation. Nor was this the last time in Abraham's life that he was to learn the exceeding greatness of this power. The climax of this man's experience came when at length he was asked by God to give back the son he had waited for so long, the one who had become so precious to him. The Epistle to the Hebrews makes it clear how the patriarch's faith was able to stand so severe a test:

> 'By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that *had received the promises* offered up his only begotten son . . . accounting that God was able *to raise him up, even from the dead*; from whence also he received him in a figure' (Heb. 11:17-19).

Abraham knew that the power that had conquered the deadness of his own body could bring his own son back to life and his implicit trust in resurrection power is seen in the narrative in Genesis 22:4,5:

> '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 to you*,'

and this in spite of the fact that he was intending to sacrifice his son. Now these things are written for our learning and encouragement. The power that conquers death and that wrought so wondrously for Abraham has not changed. It is indeed 'to us-ward' who believe (Eph. 1:19,20). As this age draws nearer to its end and the times grow darker with increasing difficulties and problems, the need for a practical experience of the inworking of this supreme power grows greater and greater. There is scarcely a child of God to-day who is not being tested in one direction or another and the only way that we can say with Paul that '*in* all these things (not exempt from them) we are more than conquerors' (Rom. 8:37), is by drawing on the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10) resident in our ascended Saviour and Head, by simple childlike faith. Then and only then, shall we be able to rise above the difficulties with which we are beset and live to glorify Him in our daily life and witness.

(4) *Resurrection and Prophecy*.-The promises made to Abraham in Genesis 12 and 15 are revelations of the Divine plan as regards the earth. This man's descendants were to be God's agents for world-wide blessing, with the consequences that the Old Testament from this point onwards is really a record of God's preparation of this people for the role they were to perform in His purpose and their reaction to His leading and guidance. The record is largely a sad one, for God's revelation is one thing, and human response often quite another. Israel's failure under the Judges and the Kings is black indeed, ending with seventy years' judgment in Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar. The restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah was only a partial recovery spiritually and when in the fulness of time their King came to them in the flesh, it was only a little flock who were ready to receive Him. The official verdict of the nation was 'we will not have this man to reign over us' (Luke 19:14) and they crucified their Saviour and their King. Such was the greatness of the Lord's mercy that, in spite of the enormity of their crime, He was ready to pardon their sin, and during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles, His longsuffering again waited for their response to the Divine offer of restoration through Peter's lips in Acts 3:19-26. The Lord's longsuffering waited in vain and His verdict on Israel at this particular time is found in Romans 10:21, 'all day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people'. Acts 28 sees the terrible warning of Isaiah 6:9,10 at last fulfilled with its consequent blinded eyes, deaf ears and a non-understanding heart, a condition which has characterised the Jewish race all through this present dispensation. But is this the end of the story for Israel? There are some who would not hesitate to say that it is. Such would assert that the promises to Israel are fulfilled in a spiritual way through the Church. But do these people realise the consequences of what they teach? If this is so, then the 'I wills' of Genesis 12 and 15 have been broken and this cuts at the very foundation of *our own* faith, for it means that God has broken His word and if this is true, what security have *we* as members of His Body, relying by faith on the same word? We would rather believe God than man, however eminent he may be. The Scriptures declare that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (i.e. change of mind on His part, Romans 11:29). God has never varied His plan for world blessing through the Jew and not a single Scripture, taken in its context can be brought forward to substantiate the idea that the Church has taken over this prerogative of Israel. Moreover such a teaching nullifies the truth of the Ministry of the New Covenant which Jeremiah 31 emphatically asserts belongs to Israel the nation, when at last they shall be given an understanding heart and shall be My people again (verses 32-36). Romans 11:27 alludes to this time and it is linked with the return of the Lord Jesus Who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob (26). But before this can happen, we find that a representative number of the earthly people must return to their land, rebuild their temple and restore their sacrifices even though still in unbelief. As the dispensation of the Mystery closes, this movement amongst the Jews begins and Ezekiel 37 foretells this period. The people of Israel are likened to dry bones - withered and lifeless - and as Ezekiel prophesies, sinews and flesh come upon them and finally 'breath came into them and they lived and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army' (Ezek. 37:9,10). It is the spirit of resurrection that animates them, for we read in verses 12-14:

> 'Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, *I will open 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 your 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'.

The quickening of Israel is by resurrection power and whether we deal with individuals or with the chosen nation, we cannot get away from this fundamental fact.

The days that we live in are solemn indeed, but to the humble student of prophecy they are thrilling as well - for we can see the *beginnings* of Ezekiel 37 taking place under our own eyes. Something has happened to the Jew which has not been since the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, namely they have acquired *national* status again in their land. The importance of this from a Scriptural standpoint should be evident. There are stirrings amongst the dry bones now and while as yet they have no spiritual life, the time cannot be very far distant when the power of resurrection will begin to operate in them and they shall live.

Since Calvary there has been a converse action going on with regard to Jew and Gentile. During the Acts, as the chosen people sink deeper into unbelief and darkness, the Gentile comes more and more to the fore, till at last in this present dispensation, the Gentile is right in the forefront, the Jew far off in unrepentance and hardness of heart. As the dispensation of the Mystery closes, the reverse takes place, the Jew comes back to the light and finally takes the place that God intended that he should, namely to be *first* amongst the nations. And here we get resurrection power operating again, for Romans 11:15 declares 'If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the *world*, what shall the receiving of them be, but *life from the dead?*' First of all Israel themselves experience the working of resurrection and then, in their turn, they become the means of resurrection life to a world sunk in sin, death and darkness.

Let us take heart as we see these things happening which not only confirm the truth of the Word of God, but assure us that the day cannot be far distant when our own hope shall be realised and the church of the One Body joined to its Head in glory and manifested there (Col. 3:1-4).

(5) *Resurrection and Hope*.-When we consider the Scriptural basis for life after death, or the hope of the believer, we reach a point where resurrection comes right to the forefront. With whatever company of the redeemed we are dealing, hope is clearly the realisation of some promise of God or the fulfilment of a calling. The apostle Paul links the two together:

'And now I stand and am judged for the *hope* of the *promise* of God unto our fathers' (Acts 26:6).

To Israel after the flesh, the promises pertained in a special way (Rom. 9:4). As we have stressed previously, God has planned that Israel as a nation shall be a means of blessing to the whole world, and as such they shall be the premier nation.

> 'The LORD shall make thee the *head*, and not the tail; and thou shalt be *above only*, and thou shalt not be beneath' (Deut. 28:13).

While Israel forfeited any claim to such an exalted position by their sin and disobedience, yet under the new covenant of grace they will realise the fulness of God's purpose. At that time Isaiah 61:5-9 shall be true of them:

> 'And *strangers* shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the *alien* shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But *ye* shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call *you* the ministers of our God: *ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles*, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. . . . their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them *shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed'*.

When all this has been accomplished for the earthly seed of Abraham and the Divine *promise* put into effect and become literally true, Israel will have realised their *hope*.

Coming to the Church of the One Body we find no future blessing in an earthly sphere, but a revelation of a mighty purpose to bless all such in the heavenlies far above all where the ascended Lord Jesus is now seated (Eph. 2:4,5). This favoured company has been 'made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the holiest of all in light' (Col. 1:12). *Now* we walk by *faith*, but when this has become literally true and we enter into our heavenly inheritance, our hope will have been realised. But we may ask, how will this hope and the hope of other callings be fulfilled? The Scriptural answer is that there are only two ways: (1) for living saints it will be the Lord's coming or the manifestation of His glory; (2) for those of the redeemed who have died, *it will be resurrection*. The Word of Truth knows no other way to glory, and hope that is based on anything else, however ancient, learned or sincere it may appear, will surely lead to deception and delusion. To substitute any other conception for the great truth of resurrection as the hope for children of God who have died, is to miss the way and to build on a foundation of sand.

Let us come to the ministry of the Lord Himself. We have seen that the Lord's greatest comfort to a sorrowing woman was to remind her that her brother would *rise again* (John 11:23). What an opportunity the Saviour had for telling Martha that Lazarus was consciously in glory, if this had been the truth! And if that was so, was it an act of love that brought him back from the unutterable bliss of heaven to a world of sin, death and darkness? But we go further. In the sixth chapter of John's Gospel we have a record of the Lord's discourse to the multitudes who followed Him. He gave them precious truth and revealed Himself as the Bread of Life (6:35) and promised the believer that he should never hunger or thirst (6:35) and then added the following:

> 'And this is the Father's will . . . that . . . I should lose nothing, but *should raise it up again at the last day'* (6:39).

Nor is this all, for verse forty continues:

> 'And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: *and I will raise him up at the last day*'.

And further on:

> 'No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: *and I will raise him up at the last day'* (6:44).
>
> 'Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and *I will raise him up at the last day'* (6:54).

So we find that the Lord four times over, emphasises *resurrection as the hope of the believer*. To those who are pleased to remind us that we should return to the 'teaching of Jesus' we are glad to say that we stand foursquare on this precious hope that He has given. But do they? To all such we would say - do *you* really believe what the Lord Jesus Christ taught here or have you substituted something other than the truth of resurrection for your hope? If so it is a vain one. But this is not all. We have been dealing with the hope for believers who have died. Does the Lord deal with hope from the standpoint of His children who are alive when He returns again? The answer is yes, He does. In John 14:3 we find the following:

> 'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; *that where I am, there ye may be also*'.

It is the believer's greatest joy to look forward by faith to the time when he will be with his Lord. How is that going to be accomplished? By death say multitudes of Christians; by My coming again, says the Lord Jesus. Which are we going to believe? When we come to the epistles we find the same truth. It is well to remember that 1 Thessalonians 4 was not written to give a dissertation on the doctrine of the Second Advent, but to comfort those whose loved ones had fallen asleep, that they should sorrow not as others who had no hope. The Lord would surely return 'Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and *so shall we ever be with the Lord'* (17). The word *so* is *houtos* meaning *thus* - or *in this way*. In *this* way (i.e. by the Lord's coming) shall believers be with the Lord and we have no right to substitute any other way. The Thessalonians were exhorted to comfort one another with these words and we look in vain for death or any other conception to be presented as a hope by the apostle. Rather is he promulgating exactly the same truth as we have seen that the Lord Jesus proclaimed, namely that resurrection and His coming again was not only the true hope of the living Christian, but also the hope for those who had died. But, it will be objected, what about 2 Corinthians 5:6 and Philippians 1:23? To begin with, we would emphasise that both these verses have *contexts* and if these are carefully considered, they only confirm what we have already stressed. 2 Corinthians 5 commences with the word 'For', reminding us that there should be no chapter break, but that the apostle is continuing the argument developed in chapter 4. Verse 14 reads 'Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus *shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you*'. So the presentation of the believer to the Lord is vitally linked with resurrection. Paul now refers to the earthly body as our 'earthly house' (1) and contrasts it with the resurrection body as 'our house which is from heaven' (2). But what about the time in between when this earthly house shall be dissolved (i.e. death) and we are clothed upon with our heavenly house? (i.e. resurrection). This can only refer to the death state and it is figuratively described as being 'naked' or 'unclothed' (3 and 4). Now the apostle definitely asserts that *he did not desire to be unclothed* (4) but He *did* desire to be clothed with the heavenly house

(resurrection) and so avoid being 'naked'. In plain words - he did not look forward to the death state as a hope, but rather wished to avoid it. The eye of faith looked on to the glorious time of resurrection when mortality would be swallowed up of life (4) and this statement takes us to 1 Corinthians 15:54 'Death is swallowed up in victory', and when is that? 'When this corruptible *shall have put on* incorruption, and this mortal *shall have put on immortality*' (54) at the change in the 'twinkling of an eye' (52) and when the dead shall be 'raised in incorruption' (42). Again we are forced back to the great basis of resurrection for the dead and change for the living as being the true hope of the believer.

Coming to the crucial verses of 2 Corinthians 5, namely verses 6-8, we are now in a position to understand the apostle's meaning. 'Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, (i.e. our earthly house) we are absent from the Lord ... we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, (i.e. our earthly house) and to be present with the Lord' (i.e. with our heavenly house of resurrection for as we have seen, Paul above all wished to avoid being naked - the unclothed state of death). To misquote verse eight as 'absent from the body is to be present with the Lord' apart from resurrection is to reverse the apostle's meaning and comes perilously near to handling the Word of God deceitfully. It is nothing more than a flagrant example of making the Word of God fit the creed, instead of making the creed fit the Word.

The great truth of resurrection has been the hope of believers from the earliest times. If we go back to the oldest book in the Bible we find Job stating that his hope was in a living Redeemer and 'though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet *in my flesh* shall I see God' (Job 19:26). And so it always has been for the believer who fastens his faith to the Word of God rather than to the opinions of man.

(6) *Resurrection and Prize*.-We must now give a consideration to Philippians 1:21-23. Article XX of the Church of England states 'it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written, *neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another*'. While we do not bind ourselves to the 39 articles, we do believe that the above quotation is according to the mind and will of God as it applies to the passages already referred to in the epistle to the Philippians. We have seen that the witness given by the Lord Jesus and the apostles constantly directs the mind to resurrection and the Second Advent as being the only hope for the redeemed. This being so, it would be strange, to say the least, if the apostle Paul in the Philippians contradicted all that had been written before by himself and others and proceeded to teach that death was the hope of the believer, which immediately ushered him into the presence of the Lord. Yet this is the 'orthodox' view, and it does not seem to matter to those who hold it that they are interpreting Scripture as being repugnant to other passages. These must be swept aside, and the orthodox view kept at all costs. It is so 'comforting' we are told. However, we do not write for such, but for those who above all want Truth, whether this contradicts preconceived notions or not. All who follow this way will avoid wishful thinking and be content to base their views on the Word of God and not isolated passages torn from their contexts. It is well for us to remember that Philippians 2:4 is one of the key thoughts of the epistle:

'Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things *of others*'.

In other words, *unselfishness* is the fruit of the Spirit which is stressed here. And in order to exemplify it, concrete examples are brought forward by the apostle. First of all that of the Lord Jesus Who thought not of Himself, but for our sakes left the glory that was His by right and stooped so low as to die the death of a criminal, that all who trust in Him should not die eternally. Next Timothy is cited, of whom Paul writes: 'I have no man likeminded, who will naturally *care for your state'* (2:20). Then Epaphroditus: 'For the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, *not regarding his life*, to supply your lack of service towards me' (2:30). In chapter one the same spirit is manifest. The apostle, instead of bemoaning his lot in his Roman prison, declares that even this has turned out to the futherance of the gospel (1:12). And even if some were preaching Christ of envy and strife, the fact remained that the person of the Lord was coming to the forefront: 'What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice' (1:18) and then follows verse 20 in which Paul declares 'so now also *Christ shall be magnified* in my body, whether it be by *life*, or by *death*'. All thought of self and self advancement has been laid aside by this great servant of the Lord. His one ambition was to put the Lord Jesus Christ first and to glorify Him. Even when Paul talks of departing and being with Christ or remaining in the flesh, he still unselfishly says that he knows he would continue with them for *their* futherance and *their* joy of faith, not his own (verse 25).

What does he mean by departing and being with Christ? In spite of having taught that resurrection and the Lord's coming would unite the believer with his Lord - *so* (in this way) would he ever be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:17), it would appear on the surface that here, the apostle of the Gentiles was contradicting this definite teaching, by asserting that death, without resurrection, was his hope. However this is not true if the *whole epistle* be studied and the remoter context be taken into consideration. In chapter 3 verse 10 we read:

> 'That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain *unto the resurrection of the dead*. Not as though I had already attained ... '

On the surface this passage presents an insuperable difficulty. It would appear that Paul, although a saved man, was not sure of being raised from the dead if he should die, but he longed to *attain* to resurrection. If this is true then it strikes at the very root of all Christian hope, for if such a saint as the apostle was in doubt of resurrection, we may be sure that the average Christian of to-day stands very little chance of experiencing it. But this is impossible. Resurrection was part of orthodox Judaism. 'I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day,' said Martha, referring to her dead brother (John 11:24). It was the Sadducees, the rationalists of that time who rejected this truth; 'the Sadducees which say that there is no resurrection' (Matt. 22:23).

The difficulty of Philippians 3:11 lies in the English translation and not in the original Greek which reads 'that I might attain unto the *out* resurrection, that one which is *out* from dead ones'. The double emphasis on the preposition *out (ek)* makes this phrase unique in the New Testament.

We leave the human creeds to talk of one general resurrection. The Word of God teaches no such thing. 'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive: But every man *in his own order*' (or rank) 1 Corinthians 15:22. There is a resurrection of believers which is their *hope*, for the gift of eternal life necessitates life from the dead. There is another resurrection which is *out from the dead*, leaving others behind, which is connected with personal worthiness and faithfulness in service. To this aspect of truth the Lord Jesus was referring when He said in Luke 20:35:

> 'But they which shall be accounted *worthy* to obtain that world, and *that resurrection which is out from dead ones* (literally) neither marry nor are given in marriage'.

This is a *selective* raising from the dead and must not be confused with the one that the Lord referred to in John 6:40. The context there will show that personal worthiness does not enter in. Resurrection in this passage is the logical end to all who simply 'believe on Him' and receive eternal life.

We are now in a position to understand the apostle's desire in Philippians 1:23. He had a deep longing to be with the Lord in His exaltation in the heavenly places far above all (Eph. 1:20-23; 2:5,6). The same deep longing is expressed in Philippians 3:11 by the phrase 'if by any means I might attain'. He greatly desired to participate 'by any means' in this special 'out-resurrection' for he knew that only in this way could he be with Christ which is far better. Nothing that Paul writes in this epistle could contradict the definite teaching he had given in previous letters on this subject. It is merely wishful thinking that lifts Philippians 1:23 out of its context and the theme of the epistle in order to find some ground for its beliefs. What these people do *not* realise is that they glamorise death which is represented in Scripture as *an enemy* to the last, and they open the door to the Devil's deception in all its various manifestations such as Spiritism, Mariolatry, Reincarnation, Purgatory, all of which are variations of the old lie in Eden: 'thou shalt *not* surely die' (Gen. 3:4).

Let us learn to distinguish between the resurrection which is connected with the *hope* of the believer apart from works, and the special out-resurrection which is linked with growth in grace, faithful service and if need be suffering in view of the '*prize* of the high calling' (Phil. 3:14). While the epistle to the Hebrews does not minister to the same calling as Philippians, yet it is evidently running along parallel lines. The writer urges his readers who were saved and 'partakers of the heavenly calling' (Heb. 3:1) to go on to full growth (perfection, 6:1). They were not to lay again foundation truths such as 'the doctrines of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of *resurrection of the dead*, and eternal judgment' (6:2). In chapter 11 we have examples of those who did this and learned not only what is meant to be saved by faith, but to *live* by faith (10:38) and to suffer for Christ's sake. Like Moses, they had

respect unto the recompense of *reward* (11:26). They even accepted torture - *that they might obtain a better resurrection* (11:35).

If God's Word assures us that one resurrection can be *better* than another, it surely behoves us all to search our own hearts whether we are qualifying for the inestimable privilege of attaining to the out-resurrection, out from among the dead (Phil. 3:11). But whether it is as an introduction to our *hope* or our *prize*, resurrection is our Scriptural key that unlocks life after death. To miss this is to throw away or lose God's key, and there is nothing that can be a substitute for it. We can definitely state as a Scriptural axiom that *there is no way out of the grave for a believer or unbeliever except by resurrection.* We challenge anyone to find one Scripture that, when taken in its context, proves otherwise. Let us hold fast to the truth and have a hope that is based on the revelation of the Word of God, not on human opinion or tradition, lest we deceive ourselves and be ashamed before Him in that day when we shall see Him face to face.

(7) *Resurrection and Service*.-In considering the way in which the basic truth of resurrection enters into the plan and purpose of God, we should fail if we omitted to consider how it is woven into the present walk and witness of the believer. 'Saved to serve' is a good motto and one that expresses truth. The Church of this present dispensation is designated the Body of Christ and, just as in the human body there are no useless members, each one playing its necessary part in the health and activity of the body, so it should be in that redeemed company of which the Lord Jesus is the Head. The apostle Paul in Colossians 1:9 prays that all such should be 'filled with a knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding'. This means that there is a practical outworking of Truth in divinely appointed service for every member of the Body. Merely to accumulate Scriptural knowledge is dangerous and unprofitable if it does not eventuate in a daily life and Christian witness in harmony with our high calling. We should never forget that the reception of light and truth brings a corresponding responsibility in the sight of the Lord to pass on to others what we have learned. This is the way the Body is going to grow and exhibit that wonderful unity that Ephesians 4:15,16 describes:

> 'But speaking the truth in love, may *grow up* into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth (or literally every joint of the supply) ... maketh increase of the body ...'.

The joints themselves, the individual members, supply nothing. That supply comes from the Head alone and the joints are merely channels to convey something of His fulness and truth to other members. Every time we receive light on the word, the sense of responsibility should never be absent, but should drive us to our knees to seek the Lord's guidance into practical avenues of 'working out' what He has graciously 'worked in'. At the very outset of his Christian life Paul realised this, for among his first recorded words after his conversion was the famous question, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' (Acts 9:6). With some, however, it is not so much that they do not *know* the Lord's will in service, but they shrink from what it will cost them or feel their inability to carry it out. We should face this issue squarely, and realise that creature strength is useless here. And yet how often have we all attempted the Lord's work in the power of the flesh and failed! Even the great apostle was on the same level as the humblest believer when it came to power for service. Listen to his words in 2 Corinthians 3:5, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our *sufficiency is of God*'.

We are inclined to invest Paul with superhuman qualities, so it is good to realise that he was a person of like limitations as ourselves. When he wrote to the Galatian believers he made a tremendous declaration in the twentieth verse of the second chapter, 'I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live'.

How was this seeming paradox explained? If he was a crucified man he was dead, and yet he declares 'I am alive'. This being so, the resurrection power of the risen Christ must have been operating in his experience, so that he could say 'Christ liveth in me'. When later on he was writing his second letter to the Church at Corinth, he speaks of his experiences in Asia and declares he was 'pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in *God Which raiseth the dead:* Who delivered us ... ' (2 Cor. 1:8-10).

It was glorious resurrection power which overcame all the apostle's limitations and enabled him to triumph in the midst of superhuman difficulties. In the eleventh chapter he is compelled to write of things about which he would rather have kept silent. His apostleship had been challenged and he had been compared unfavourably with

the Twelve. He was forced to boast 'foolishly' in his sufferings and labours for the Lord Jesus Christ. And as we read verses 22-28, do we not feel a sense of shame and realise afresh how very little our Christian profession has cost us? Humanly speaking the long list of terrible experiences he endured for Christ's sake was beyond the strength of the human body to withstand. Yet he triumphed through them all to the glory of God. He knew in his experience the truth of the promise of Romans 8:11, '*He that raised up Christ from the dead* shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His spirit that dwelleth in you'. Again we see resurrection power in operation overcoming the failures and weaknesses of the human body, so that the believer is able to accomplish the Lord's will. This wondrous theme is further elaborated in the epistle to the Philippians. In chapter 4, verse 11, Paul states 'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content'. Our English version is not strictly accurate. The apostle did not say that he was *content* with every experience he passed through. The Greek word *autarkes* means *independent* and whatever extremes of circumstance that came his way, whether being abased or abounding, whether being full or hungry, whether having everything necessary or suffering need, he was *independent* of them all. How could this be? The next verse (12) shows the way. He tells us that he had been 'instructed'. Here the word is *mueomai* which is linked with *musterion*, giving the word mystery or secret. It has the thought behind it of being *initiated into a secret*. We are dealing now not with the secret concerning the church, but the secret of being able to triumph over all circumstances, trials, difficulties, and come through to the glory of God. This secret is fully made known in verse 13, 'I can do *all* things *through Christ* Who strengtheneth me'.

Note not *some* things, not just the things that we think we are capable of, but *all things* that the Lord in His wisdom and love may ask us to do for His sake. Have we not sometimes shrunk back from some aspect of service, because we felt utterly unable to accomplish it, or perhaps through some fear of the consequences such a work would bring? Here is the glorious answer. The ascended Lord Jesus is waiting and ready to strengthen us with resurrection might so that we can carry out all things to His glory. No wonder that in the first prayer of Ephesians recorded in chapter one we have the following:

> 'That ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of His power *to us-ward who believe*, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, *when* He *raised Him from the dead*, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all ... ' (18-21).

We live in an age of power. Man is wresting secrets from nature and getting to know more and more of the huge reserves of power inherent in matter and this to his own undoing. But however great atomic energy may be, there is one thing it cannot do, it cannot give life to a corpse or *conquer death*. Nothing less than resurrection power is sufficient for this tremendous task and we may be sure that the power that conquers the last enemy, death, is more than a match for any difficulties, dangers or tests that we may undergo in this life. Why then do we fail so often? The apostle stresses that it is to 'us-ward *who believe*'. Is it not lack of trust, absence of appropriating faith in this almighty storehouse of energy, that is at the bottom of all our troubles? It is only when we rely moment by moment with childlike faith on resurrection power that we can say 'I can do *all things*'. We can understand now why Paul wrote in Philippians 3:10 'that I may know Him, and *the power of His resurrection*'. This should be our aim too if our service is going to count at all in the practical working out of the truth of the Mystery.

As we look back on our findings in previous articles, we trust the reader has realised how the great and fundamental truth of resurrection enters into the warp and woof of the purpose of the ages. That which orthodoxy to all intents and purposes casts aside becomes the very basis of God's almighty plan to bring all things to perfection. Summing up we have found that:

(1) Resurrection is the basis of the gospel of God's grace.

> 'If thou shalt believe in thine heart that God hath *raised Him from the dead*, thou shalt be saved' (Rom. 10:6-9; 1 Cor. 15:2-4,14).

(2) Resurrection is behind the promises of God.

> 'Abraham . . . a father of many nations, before Him Whom he believed, even God, Who *quickeneth the dead*' (Rom. 4:16-21; Heb. 11:18,19).

(3) Resurrection will accomplish the restoration of Israel and world blessing.

'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' (Ezek. 37:12-14).

'What shall the receiving of them (Israel) be, *but life from the dead?*' (Rom. 11:15).

(4) Resurrection, connected with the Lord's return, is the hope of the believer.

'Every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and *I will raise him up at the last day*' (John 6:39,40,44,54; 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

'Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet *in my flesh* shall I see God' (Job 19:25,26).

(5) An out resurrection is revealed as the gate-way to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus for the believer.

'If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead (literally, attain unto the out-resurrection out from among the dead)' (Phil. 3:11).

Similarly in the Acts period believers were led to look away from the earthly calling to a heavenly one, the New Jerusalem, whose final destiny is the new earth to which it descends (Rev. 3:12; 21:2,10). This is the 'city' and 'better country' of Hebrews 11:9,10,16, and for them there is a 'better resurrection':

'Others were tortured, . . . that they might obtain a *better resurrection*' (Heb. 11:35).

(6) Resurrection power enables the believer to triumph over all circumstances and render acceptable service to the Lord.

'The exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, . . . which He wrought in Christ *when He raised Him from the dead*' (Eph. 1:19-23).

'That I may know Him, and the *power of His resurrection*' (Phil. 3:10).

What more can we say then? Here is the means by which we may each one become *more than conquerors* in our daily experience until that time when, with the Psalmist, we can say:

'I shall be satisfied, *when I awake, with Thy likeness*' (Psa. 17:15).

To the reader therefore we repeat, hold fast to the fundamental truth of resurrection. Let not tradition rob you of it, *for in losing this you lose your all*.

'If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised ... then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ ARE PERISHED' (1 Cor. 15:16-18).

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