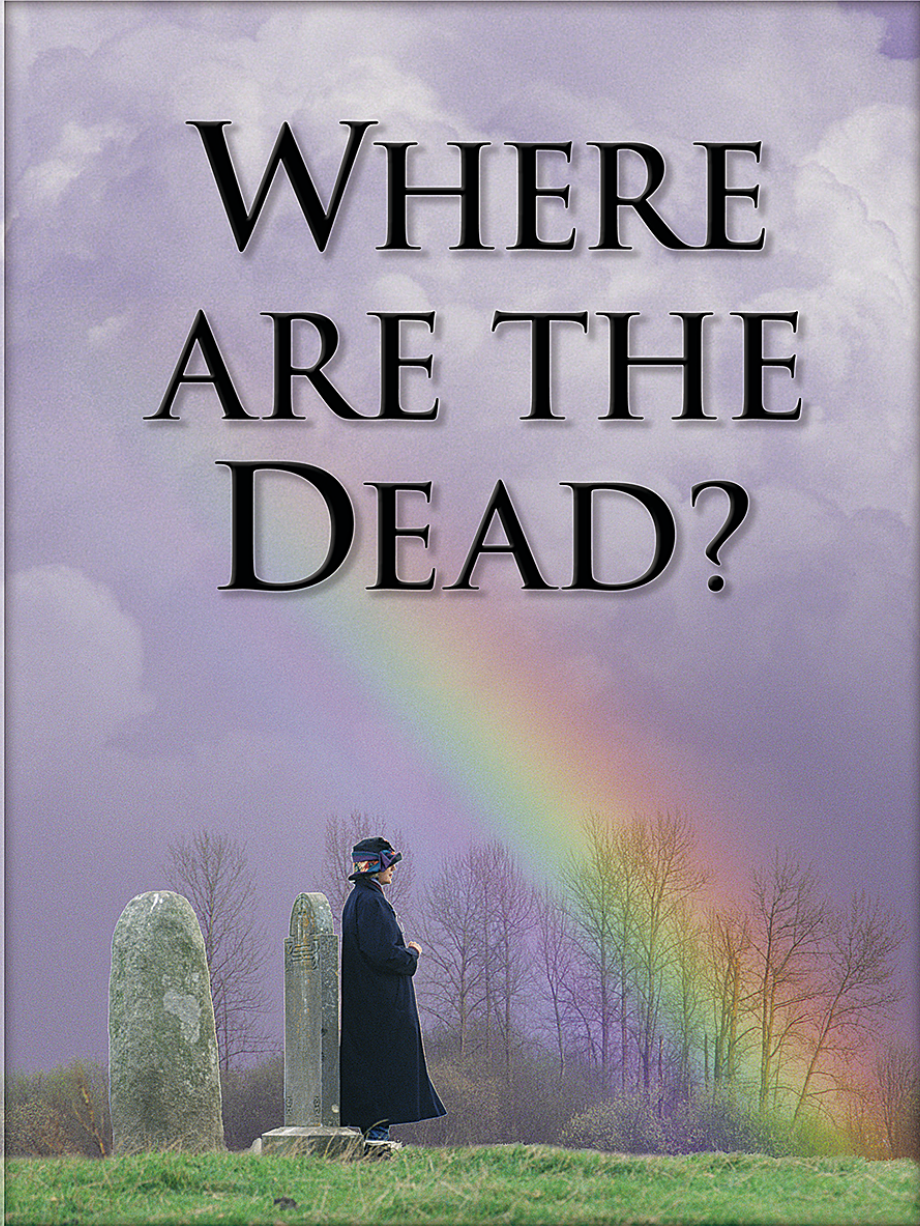


WHERE ARE THE DEAD?



WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

Where are our friends and our neighbors, the holy and the unholy, the civilized and the vile?

The proper answer to these questions stands related to our own destiny, colors and influences our theology, and the entire trend of our lives! The correct answer gives strength, confidence, courage and assists towards the spirit of a sound mind!

"Men and brethren, let me freely speak to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. For David is not ascended into the heavens." (Acts 2:29,34)

"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man." — John 3:13

For someone to declare themselves uninterested in this subject would be to proclaim themselves idiotic — thoughtless. If the ordinary affairs of this present life, food, raiment, finance, politics, etc., which concern us but for a few years, are deemed worthy of thought, study, how much more concern should we have in respect to the eternal future of ourselves and neighbors and mankind in general?

Of course, so important a question has had the most profound study, ever since the reign of Sin and Death began six thousand years ago. By this time the subject should be threadbare. The entire world should be so thoroughly informed respecting this question that there would be nothing new to say and nobody curious to hear. But the large audiences of intelligent, thoughtful people which come to hear, and which listen with breathless interest to what we have to say, imply that after all the study the subject has had, but few are thoroughly satisfied with their conclusions.

The Agnostic Answers the Question

Before presenting what we claim is the Scriptural and only satisfactory answer to our query, we think it but proper respect to the intelligence and thought of our day and of past centuries to make general inquiries on the subject and have before our minds the most profound thoughts of the most astute thinkers of our race. We cannot, however, go into this matter elaborately and give lengthy quotations. We must content ourselves with brief, synoptical answers, which will be stated kindly and truthfully, and with a desire not to offend anybody, however much we may disagree with his conclusions. We recognize the right of to do their own thinking and to reach their own conclusions, whether these agree with our conceptions or not.

We begin our examination by asking our agnostic friends, who boast of their untrammled freedom of thought, "What say you, Free-thinkers, in reply to our query, 'Where are the dead?'" Their answer is, "We do not know. We would like to believe in a future life, but we have no proof of it. Lacking the evidences, our conclusion is that man dies as does the brute beast. If our conclusion disappoints your expectations in respect to having joy for the saints, it certainly should be comforting to all as respects the vast majority of our race, who certainly would be much better off perished like the brute beast than to be preserved in torture, as the majority believe."

We thank our agnostic friends for the courteous reply, but feel that the answer is not satisfactory, either to our heads or to our hearts; which cry out that there must, or should be, a future life; that the Creator made man with powers of mind and heart so superior to the brute that his pre-eminence in the Divine plan should be expected. Furthermore, the brevity of the present life, its tears, its sorrows, its experiences, its lessons, will nearly all be valueless, useless, unless there be a future life — an opportunity for making use of these lessons. We must look further for some more satisfactory answer to our question.

The Heathen Answer to Our Query

Since three-fourths of the world are heathen, the weight of numbers implies that they next should be asked for their solution to the question — Where are the dead? Heathenism gives two general answers:

(1) Prominent are those which hold to Transmigration. These reply to us, "Our view is that when a man dies, he does not die, but merely changes his form. His future estate will correspond to his present living and give him either a higher or a lower position. We believe that we lived on earth before, perhaps as cats, dogs, mice, elephants, or whatnot, and that if the present life has been wisely used, we may reappear as men of nobler talents, as philosophers, etc.; but if, as usual, life has been misspent, at death we will be remanded to some lower form of being — an elephant or a worm, perhaps. It is because of this belief that we are so careful in respect to our treatment of the lower animals and refuse to eat meat of any kind. Were we to trample ruthlessly on the worm, our punishment might be a form in which we ourselves should be treated ruthlessly after the change which we call death."

(2) The other large class of heathen believe in a spirit world with happy hunting grounds for the good and a hell of different torments for the wicked. We are told that when people seem to die, they really become more alive than ever; and that the very minute they cross the river Styx they go to the realms of either the blessed or the ever doomed, and there are steps or degrees of punishment and reward. We inquire, "Where did you receive these views?" The answer is, "They have been with us for a long, long time. We know not where they came from. Our learned men have handed them down to us as truths, and we have accepted them as such."

But heathenism's answer is not satisfactory to our heads and hearts. We must look further. We must not trust to speculation. We must look for divine revelation; the message from Him with whom we have to do — our Creator.

The Catholic Answer to Our Question

Turning from heathenism we address our question to that informed one-fourth of the world's population known as Christendom. We say, "Christendom, What is your answer to the question?" The reply is, "We are divided in our opinion, more than two-thirds of us holding the Catholic and nearly one-third the general Protestant view." Let us hear the Catholic view (Greek and Roman) first then, because age, as well as numbers, suggests such precedence.

"Catholic friends, Give us, please, the results of your labors and studies, the conclusions of your ablest thinkers and theologians, in respect to the revelation which you claim to have from God on this subject: Where are the dead? We will hear you thoughtfully, patiently, unbiasedly." Our Catholic friends respond: "Our teachings are very explicit along the lines of your question. We have canvassed the subject from every standpoint in the light of divine revelation. Our conclusion and teaching are that when anyone dies, he goes to one of three places: first, the saintly, of whom we claim there are but a few, go immediately to the presence of God, to heaven. These are referred to by our Lord, saying, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:27) Those who faithfully bear the cross are the "little flock," the "elect." Respecting these Jesus says, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth to life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:14) These saintly do not include our clergy, not even our bishops, cardinals and popes; for you will find that when any of these die, it is a custom of the church that masses be said for the repose of their souls. We would not say masses for any we believe to be in heaven, because there surely is repose for every soul; neither would we say masses for them if we believed them to be in eternal hell, for masses could not avail them there. We might remark, however, that we do not teach that many go to the eternal hell. It is our teaching that only incorrigible heretics — persons who have had a full knowledge of Catholic doctrines and who have willfully and deliberately opposed them — these alone meet the awful, hopeless fate.

Millions to Purgatory

"The dead in general, according to our teaching, pass immediately to purgatory, which is, as the name indicates, a place of purgation from sin, a place of penances, sorrows, woes, anguish indeed, but not hopeless. The period of confinement here may be centuries or thousands of years, according to the deserts of the individual and the alleviations granted. If you would know more particularly the Catholic teaching on this subject, we refer you to the writings of one of our great Catholics, the noted poet Dante, a loyal Catholic, at one time an abbot, who died in a monastery with the full rites of the church. Dante's poem, "Inferno," graphically describes the tortures of purgatory, as we understand the matter. You can procure at almost any library an illustrated copy of this great Catholic poem. Dore, the artist, was also a prominent Catholic and he portrayed Dante's poem vividly and truthfully. The illustrations show the torments of purgatory vividly — how the demons chase some until they leap over precipices into boiling water. They ply others with fiery darts. Others are burned with heads downward; others with feet downward in pits. Some are bitten by serpents. Still others are frozen. We advise that you see Dante's work, "Inferno," because it gives our Catholic view of the proper answer to your question, Where are the dead? The vast

majority are in purgatory. The billions of the heathen are there; because ignorance does not save, does not qualify for the heavenly condition. All who enter heaven must previously have been fitted and prepared in a manner impossible to the heathen. Millions of Protestants are there. They could not enter heaven, except through the portals of the Catholic church; neither would God deem them worthy of eternal hell, because their rejection of Catholicism was due to the confession of faith under which they were born and environed. Nearly all Catholics go to purgatory also, because, notwithstanding the good offices of our church, our holy water, confessions, masses, holy candles, and consecrated burying ground, nevertheless, not having attained to saintship of character, they would be excluded from heaven until the distressing experiences of purgatory would prepare their hearts for heaven. We hold, however, that for the reason stated, Catholics will not need to remain as long in purgatory as will the Protestants and the heathen."

We can thank our Catholic friends for so kind a statement of their case. We will not ask them where their purgatory is, nor how they obtain the details of information respecting it, because such questions might offend them, and we have no desire to offend. We merely wish for their ripest, clearest, maturest thought respecting our question. We regret to say that the answer is not all that we might have hoped for in clearness and reasonableness and scripturalness. Our hearts are heavy with the thought that our poor race, by reason of original sin, is already, as the apostle says, a "groaning creation," and the present life of a few years is full of trouble. It is saddening, discouraging to all of us, to think that when present trials and difficulties are past, of being obliged, even for centuries (not to mention eternity), to have such awful experiences as Dante portrays, even though those centuries of anguish would purge us and fit us for the Divine presence of heavenly glory. It may seem strange to some theologians, but it is nevertheless true, that the answer of Catholicism to our question is not much better than the answer of heathendom. Neither our heads nor our hearts are yet satisfied. It cannot be wrong to look further for something more satisfactory.

The Protestant Answer to Our Question

Many of us in times past have been inclined to boast a little of Protestant "breadth of mind," "intelligence," "education," etc. May we not reasonably expect from Protestants a clear, logical, satisfactory answer to our question? Having found all the other answers unsatisfactory, and having now come to the one-twelfth portion of our race which has had most advantage every way, we might reasonably expect to find in its answer the quintessence of wisdom and proof from every quarter and from every age. But what do we find, dear friends? We find the very reverse! We find that the voice of Protestantism as a whole (barring numerically insignificant denominations) giving the most absurd answer to my question that could be conceived — an answer which is put to shame by the Catholics, the heathen and the agnostics. Is not this marvelous? Can this be? It is written, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Prov. 27:6). Bear with me, therefore, while I expose to you the weaknesses of our position as Protestants; not with a view to our vexation and shame, but with the thought that our intelligent investigation of the subject can be turned to our advantage and enable us to know the Truth and to lift the true, Divine standards before the people, to the intent that we and all may come to clearer views of our heavenly Father's character, purposes and future dealings with our race.

Permit us as gently as possible to touch this sore spot. The removal of the bandages and the cleansing of the sore may cause us pain, but the investigation should be helpful, nevertheless. We got our name, Protestants, from the fact that our intelligent and well-meaning forefathers, who were Catholics, thought that they discovered inconsistencies and unscripturalness in Catholic doctrines in which they had been reared. They protested against these, and hence came the name Protestants. We cannot defend all that they did to their enemies nor all that their enemies did to them.

One of their points of protest was that our forefathers could find nothing of purgatory anywhere on earth, nor any declaration respecting it in the Bible. With a simplicity that is certainly marvelous to us, they concluded that they would merely pick up their views of purgatory and throw them away forever. This left them heaven and hell, into one of which, they said, every member of the race must go at death and there spend his eternity. Quite evidently these well-meaning forefathers of ours were not as long-headed, far-sighted and logical as we might have expected them to be, when they did not perceive the difficulty into which they were walking. Rather we should say, perhaps, that they did see something of the difficulty, but viewed matters differently from what we do. The theory of Calvin and Knox prevailed at that time amongst Protestants and led each denomination to hope that it was God's "elect" (Titus 1:1) and that it would constitute the "little flock" (Luke 12:32) who would go to heaven, while all the remainder of mankind would be consigned to an eternity of hellish torture.

No longer does either Catholic or Protestant pray,

"God bless me and my wife,
My son John and his wife,
Us four and no more."

Both Catholics and Protestants, looking back to that period which we often term the "dark ages," have reason to give thanks to God for the anointing of the eyes of our understanding, which enables us, we believe, to think more logically than our forefathers. Even those of us reared under the doctrine of predestination have lost the idea that the heathen were passed by because they were predestined to damnation; instead, those who accepted the Westminster confession of faith are today the most zealous in the preaching of the Gospel amongst the heathen by missionary effort. We are glad of this. It is a sign that our hearts are in truer and nobler condition, even though our heads have not yet gotten into proper adjustment with our hearts; and we still look at crooked doctrines and endeavor to imagine them altogether straight.

Theoretically Protestant doctrines stand with the Bible and with Catholics and declare that heaven is a place of perfection; that there can be no change to any who enter there; hence, that all trial, all refinement, all chiseling, all polishing of character must be accomplished in advance of an entrance into the abode of the saints. In a word, we agree that only the saints will ever enter there, the "pure in heart" (Matt. 5:8), the "overcomers" (1 John 4:4), the "little flock" (Luke 12:32), who now walk in the footsteps of Jesus. What about the remainder of mankind? Ah! there is difficulty. Our larger hearts will not consent that all except the saints must spend an eternity of torture, though this is the

logic of our creeds. Our hearts protest, saying that three-fourths of humanity today are heathen and that fully that proportion of humanity altogether have never heard of God and the terms of salvation.

The Best of People Perplexed

Our creeds perplex us; for, as our hearts will not permit us to think of these poor creatures going to an eternity of misery, neither will our heads permit us to say that they are fit for heaven. Indeed, it would be at variance not only with the Scripture, but also with reason itself, to suppose heaven with three-fourths of its inhabitants unregenerate in every sense of the word. Our forefathers merely spoiled things for us when they threw away purgatory and kept the remainder of the arrangement. If we must object to purgatory as being unscriptural, must we not equally object to the eternal torment of all the families of the earth as being unscriptural, especially when the Bible declares that "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 28:14) through Christ — blessed with a knowledge of the Truth and opportunity to come into heart harmony with God and attain everlasting life through Christ. I believe that it is necessary to press this point of the unreasonableness of the eternal torment doctrine. Nevertheless, I will remind you of what our prominent Protestant theories are on the subject:

(1) The Calvinistic thought is that divine wisdom and power planned for mankind in advance — knew of the fall of man in advance, and prepared therefor by the creating of a great place called *hell* and the manning of it with fire-proof devils for the torment of the race — all except the "little flock" (Luke 12:32), the "elect" (Titus 1:1). Love and justice were left out of this calculation.

(2) The other prominent Protestant theory, the Arminian, held today probably by the majority, insists that both love and justice created the world and arranged the torment, and that wisdom and power were not consulted; hence that God has gotten into difficulty, while endeavoring to do justly and lovingly by his creatures; because lacking in power to render the needed aid.

The entire difficulty, dear friends, is that, in our reasoning on the subject, we have merely asked the opinions of men and have not sought the Word of the Lord.

Let us consider the clear, plain, reasonable, just, loving and wise program of our heavenly Father. It has been so long overlooked, so long buried under the rubbish of human tradition of the "dark ages" that today "Truth is stranger than fiction." Well did our Lord through the prophet declare:

"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." — Isa. 55:9

What Say the Scriptures?

All of the foregoing theories, be it noticed, are based upon the assumption that death does not mean death — that to die is to become more alive than before death. In Eden it was God who declared to our first parents, "Thou *shalt* surely die" (Gen. 2:17). It was Satan who declared, "Ye shall not surely

die (Gen 3:4). Notice that the heathen, as well as the Christians, have accepted Satan's lie and correspondingly rejected God's truth. Do they not all agree with the serpent's statement, "Ye shall *not* surely die"? Do they not all claim that the dead are alive — much more alive than before they died? This, dear friends, has been our common point of mistake. We have followed the wrong teacher, the one of whom our Lord said, "He abode not in the Truth," and that he is the father of lies. — John 8:44.

These false doctrines have prevailed amongst the heathen for many, many centuries, but they gained an ascendancy in the church of Christ during the "dark ages" and had much to do with producing the darkness thereof. If our forefathers had believed God's testimony, "Thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17), there would have been no room for the introduction of prayers for the dead, masses for their sins, frightful thoughts respecting their torture. The scriptures agree from first to last that "the dead know not anything" (Ecc. 9:5) and that "His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them" (Job 14:21). It is the scriptures that tell us where the dead are and their condition; that they are experiencing neither joy nor sorrow, pleasure nor suffering; that they will have no knowledge of anything done under the sun until their awakening in the resurrection. Remember the wise man's words, "Do with thy might what thy hand findeth to do, for there is neither wisdom nor knowledge nor device in (sheol) the grave, whither thou goest." (Ecc. 9:10) Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament it is written of both the good and the bad that they fell asleep in death. The apostle speaks of those who "sleep in Jesus," (1 Thes. 4:14) and of those who have "fallen asleep in Christ" (1 Cor. 15:18) who, he declares, are perished, if there be no resurrection of the dead. Could they perish in heaven or in purgatory or in a hell of torment? Assuredly no one so teaches. They are already in a perished condition in the tomb; and the perishing would be absolute, complete, unless a resurrection be provided for their deliverance from the power of death. Hence we read, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not *perish*, but have everlasting life."

In a word, then, the Bible teaching is that man was made superior to all the brute creation — in the image and likeness of his Creator; that he possessed life in a perfect degree in Eden and might have retained it by full obedience. But in his trial, his testing, he failed and came under the death sentence. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, dying thou shalt die." (Gen. 2:17) There the dying began, which, after nine hundred and thirty years, brought father Adam to the tomb and involved all of his children in his weaknesses and death sentence. He died in the very day, which the Apostle Peter explains was not a twenty-four hour day but a thousand-year day, saying, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years." (2 Peter 3:8) During six of these great days the death sentence has brought man down in some respects to the level of the brute and left him without hope of future life, except as God might take compassion upon him and bring him some relief. This was hinted at in the statement that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. It was yet further elaborated to Abraham saying, "In thee and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed." — Gen. 28:14.

Death, Not Torment, the Penalty

Note well the mistake made in assuming eternal torment the wages of original sin, when the scriptures explicitly declare that "The wages of sin is death" — not eternal torment. (Rom. 6:23) We search the Genesis account of man's fall and the sentence imposed, but find no suggestion of a future punishment, but merely of a death penalty. Repeating it the second time the Lord said, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Gen. 3:19) But he said not a word respecting devils, fire and torment. How, then, did the Adversary deceive our fathers during the "dark ages" with his errors, which the apostle styles "doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. 4:1)? Note the fact that none of the prophecies mention any other than a death penalty for sin. Note that the New Testament likewise declares the same. St. Paul, who wrote more than one-half of the New Testament, and who assures us that he did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), says not a word about torment. On the contrary, discussing this very matter of sin and its penalty, he says, "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." (Rom. 5:12) Note that it was not eternal torment that passed upon one man nor upon all men, but death. If someone suggests that death would not be a sufficient penalty for sin, all we would need to do would be to point him to the facts and thus prove his suggestion illogical. For the sin of disobedience Adam lost his paradisaic home — lost eternal life and divine fellowship, and instead got sickness, pain, sorrow, death. Additionally, the billions and billions of his posterity, disinherited so far as the blessings are concerned, have inherited weaknesses, mental, moral and physical, and are, as the apostle declares, "A groaning creation." — Rom. 8:22.

God's Penalty a Just One

Let no one think the *death penalty* unjust and too severe. God could have blotted out Adam, the sinner, thus fulfilling the sentence. He could have blotted out the race instantly. But would we have preferred that? Assuredly not. Life is sweet, even amidst pain and suffering. Besides, it is the divine purpose that present trials and experiences shall prove useful as disciplines; to prepare us for a wiser course than father Adam took, when we shall be privileged to have a further individual trial. Our race would have been without hope of future existence, just as agnosticism claims, had it not been for divine compassion and the work of redemption.

Notice again why our Lord *died* for our redemption and see in that another evidence of the penalty. If the penalty against us had been eternal torment, our redemption from it would have cost our Lord that price. He would have been obliged to suffer eternal torment, the just for the unjust. But eternal torment was not the penalty; hence Jesus did not pay that penalty for us. Death was the penalty and hence "*Christ died for our sins.*" "He by the grace of God" tasted "*death for every man*" (Heb. 2:9). Whoever could pay Adam's penalty could settle with divine justice for the sins of the whole world, because Adam alone had been tried — Adam alone had been condemned. We, his children, were involved through him. Behold the wisdom and the economy of our Creator. The scriptures assure us that he condemned the whole world for one man's disobedience, in order that he might have mercy upon all through the obedience of another — Christ. We were condemned to

death without our consent or knowledge. We were redeemed from death without our consent or knowledge.

Someone may inquire, "Are we, therefore, without responsibility? Will there be no individual penalty upon us for individual wrong doings?" We answer, "A just recompense of reward" (Heb 2:2) will be meted out to all. But our eternal destiny can be settled only by ourselves, by our individual acceptance or rejection of the grace of God. The scriptures clearly inform us that every sin, in proportion to its willfulness, brings a measure of degradation which involves "stripes," chastisements, corrections to regain the lost standing. (Luke 12:47,48) Thus the more mean and more wicked a man or woman may be, the greater will be his or her disadvantages in the resurrection time, and the more he will then have to overcome to get back to all that was lost in Adam and redeemed by Christ.

"And the Dead Came Forth"

At his first advent our Lord's miracles foreshadowed the great work which he, with his glorified Church, will accomplish for the world during the Millennium — then all the sick, lame, blind and deaf will be revived and, if obedient, will be brought ultimately to full perfection. The disobedient will be destroyed in the Second death. The most notable miracle which our Lord performed was the awakening of Lazarus, his friend. Jesus was gone several days when Lazarus took sick and, of course, knew about the matter. Nevertheless, Martha and Mary sent him a special message, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." (John 11:3) They knew of Jesus' power to heal, even by the word of his mouth. They had faith that if he could help strangers, he would surely be glad to assist his friend. But Jesus remained where he was and allowed Lazarus to die and a rude shock to come to the dear sisters. Then he said to his disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." (John 11:11) Then, coming down to their comprehension, he added, "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there." — John 11:14,15.

He was glad to let his friend fall *asleep in death* because it would provide a special opportunity for a special miracle. Then, with his disciples, he began the three-days' journey to Bethany. We cannot blame the sorrowing sisters that they felt hurt that the Messiah should apparently neglect their interests. They knew that he had the power to relieve them. Martha's gentle reproof was, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." (John 11:21,23,24) Notice that our Lord did not say, "Thy brother is not dead; thy brother is more alive than he ever was; he is in heaven or in purgatory." Nothing of the kind! Purgatory had not yet been invented, and he knew nothing of it. And as for heaven our Lord's testimony is, in our text, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven." Martha was also well informed. The errors of the "dark ages" had not yet supplanted the truth. Her hope for her brother was the Scriptural one — that he would rise in the resurrection, in the last day, the Millennial day, the seventh of the great thousand-year days from creation.

Our Lord explained that the power of resurrection was vested in himself, that he was there with her, and could give relief to them without waiting. Martha told our Lord that it was too late, that

putrefaction had set in by this time. But Jesus insisted on seeing the tomb and when he arrived at it, he said, "Lazarus, come forth." And we read, "He that was dead came forth." (John 11:43,44) Mark well that it was not the living that came forth, but that Lazarus was really dead. Mark well that he was not called from heaven nor from purgatory.

"All That Are in Their Graves"

What Jesus did for Lazarus he intimated he would ultimately do for Adam and his entire race. Note his words: "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." (John 5:28,29) Does this astonish us? If so, the reason is not far to seek. It is because we have gotten so far away from the teachings of the Bible — so fully immersed in the "doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. 4:1), so fully to believe in the serpent's lie, "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4) — so blinded to the Lord's declaration, "Thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17), and "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

The remainder of John 5:29 explains that there will be two general classes of the dead to come forth. The first, those who have had their trial and who have passed it successfully; the second, all the remainder of mankind who have thus far failed to have divine approval. The approved will come forth from the tomb unto a resurrection of life — perfection. The disapproved will come forth unto a resurrection of judgment (see Revised Version). The coming forth is one thing. The resurrection is another. The apostle explains that they will come forth, "every man in his own order." (1 Cor. 15:23) On thus being awakened the privilege will be theirs of rising, up, up, up out of present degradation, mental, moral, physical, to the glorious perfection which father Adam enjoyed in the image and likeness of his Creator. The uplifting or resurrection work St. Peter refers to as the "restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21).

Not Universalism Either

Nor does this mean universal everlasting life, for the scriptures declare that such as refuse to profit by the glorious opportunities of the Millennium, such as refuse to be uplifted to perfection, shall be destroyed from amongst the people in the Second death — "They shall be as though they had not been." (Obadiah 16) Our Lord entered the synagogue at Capernaum and, being asked to read the lesson, chose Isaiah, the sixty-first chapter. He read respecting himself and his work — that a part of it would be to open the prison doors and set at liberty the captives. We are well aware that our Lord did not open any of the literal prisons, such as John the Baptist was confined in. He made no effort to succor him. The prison-house which Christ will open is the great prison-house, the tomb, which holds billions of our race. At this second advent, our Lord will open this great prison-house and allow all the prisoners to come forth, just as truly as he did in the example — in the case of Lazarus. Nor will he call them from heaven, purgatory and hell, but, just as he declared, "Lazarus, come forth," "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth" (John 5:28,29).

Where Are the Dead?

My dear friends, you had before your minds the answers to our question from the highest to the lowest earthly authorities. None of them was satisfactory. Now you have heard the testimony of God's Word — the divine declaration as to "Where are the dead?" Harkening to the voice from heaven we are assured that they are really dead and that all their hopes as respects the future are centered, first upon the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus, accomplished at Calvary, and secondly, upon the work or resurrection which, at his second advent, he is to accomplish for those whom he redeemed. If perchance you have a shade of disappointment as respects a saintly brother or sister, father or mother or child who you hoped was already in heaven, then as a consolation look at the other side of the question — behold how many of your loved ones, kith and kin, friends and foes and neighbors, according to your theory and all the prevalent theories, have been suffering untellable woe since their death and would be suffering similarly for long centuries to come — consider the relief of mind and heart you get from the knowledge of the truth: that they are not alive anywhere, but simply dead, or more poetically, they are "Asleep in Jesus," in the sense that he is their Redeemer, in whom all their hopes of a future awakening reside.

Present Your Bodies Sacrifices

Just a closing word! Our subject would lack a proper finish if we did not explain scripturally why God has delayed the world's blessing, the resurrection, nearly two thousand years since the death of Jesus. The reason is such a glorious one! It must appeal to every true Christian heart and make it glad. It is this:

God purposed the selection of the Church before the blessing of resurrection should go to the world. This Church is called sometimes "the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27), which is the church of which Jesus is the head (Eph. 5:23). Again, it is styled "The Bride — the Lamb's Wife" (Rev. 21:9). Ever since Pentecost the heavenly Father has been drawing believers to Jesus' side. After having been justified through faith in the precious blood, they have been invited to become Jesus' disciples, his followers, to walk in his steps, to lay down their lives in the Father's service, as Jesus did, and to develop in their hearts the fruits and graces of the holy Spirit to such a degree that they might be called copies of God's dear Son.

The promise to these is not the resurrection of restitution promised to the world during the Millennium. On the contrary, these have a "heavenly calling" (Heb. 3:1). After their consecration, they are begotten of the holy Spirit and then instructed in the school of Christ and submitted to trials and disciplines in various ways, for the purpose of chiseling and polishing their characters as New Creatures. These are a "little flock" (Luke 12:32), gathered one here and one there; "saints" (Rom. 1:7) from all denominations and from outside of all denominations, for "the Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Tim. 2:19). When the predestined number of the "elect" (Titus 1:1) shall have been selected and polished, the present age will end. Our Lord will come in second advent glory and power. His elect Bride will constitute the First Resurrection class, from earthly to heavenly nature, "changed in a moment," for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." — 1 Cor. 15:50-52.

Then will come the holy, invisible Millennial Kingdom and the binding of Satan and the destruction of his unholy, invisible kingdom, and the setting loose of agencies for the enlightening and uplifting of the whole race.

Those of you who are already the Lord's consecrated saints, lift up your heads and realize more fully than ever before the glorious fullness of the heavenly calling, of which you have been made partakers. To others who have the hearing ear and appreciate this high calling we way, Permit the love of God and of Christ to constrain you (2 Cor. 5:14) and become disciples indeed of Jesus, laying aside every weight and every besetting sin, and entering the race and pressing with vigor to its end and crown of glory! (Heb. 12:1)

For a deeper discussion and a comprehensive outline of God's Plan for all People please see our publication, *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, available to order or download at our website, <http://www.bibletoday.com/>.