


INTRODUCTION

This is a genuine **ABC** production  authored by *Bob Coffey* and may not be reproduced or transmitted in any manner for financial profit

As a sequel to half a dozen papers on other and often apocalyptic themes I settled to draw together what can be known from scripture about our beginnings in the Life of the world to come. The general theme of this paper is Resurrection but I have found that Resurrection in scripture is not an isolated theme as taught by Jesus. For instance, Jesus taught that He could not be seen simply as "the Resurrection" without being seen as "The Life" and I have been persuaded of the need to take in other themes in this paper. "Judgment" is a theme I could not avoid nor could I readily side-step the Pauline handling of the topic of "our body from heaven." Further I found myself compelled to work through the concepts of spirituality and physicality as touched on within New Testament narrative. I have sought to be faithful to what biblical text specifically says. It has to be confessed that as to the nature and timing of many biblical events and the state and progress of the church triumphant in heaven down through the centuries of the Christian Church from the age of the Apostles and even now as it awaits the Second Advent there is far less perspicuity than we could wish.

I have set out relevant material on the Resurrection in 8 chapters:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 Christian Belief | 5 Life and Resurrection-exploratory |
| 2 Resurrection Narratives | 6 Exegesis of John 5 |
| thoughts | Christians in death |
| 3 Riposte to the apparent "loss" of | 7 Awakening and Anastasis |
| 4 John 5-a momentous canonical | 8 Examination of Pauline Principia |
| verdict | |

Nowhere does the doctrine of resurrection demand an "intermediate state" which imposes on us Greek philosophical categories of bodiless spirits.

We are each as believers in the *bodily resurrection* in the hands of our LORD. We have given Him the right" to make us *in His likeness* and He has given us the Holy Spirit *the guarantee* of our Resurrection life. There is no surer or more joyous hope than to be with Christ. Many believers face death with great uncertainty. Insofar as this uncertainty comes from want of teaching it is my hope that this study will bring help with some specifics. To know Jesus better is our proper aim. To secure a better resurrection was the aim of the earliest followers of Christ. **TO DEPART TO BE WITH HIM IS BY APOSTOLIC COMMENDATION "VERY FAR BETTER."** Let us give ourselves to better things and receive the welcome word of the *Hebrew writer* who encouraged the church at Jerusalem after the death of James the Just to spend time with the Master like James did and look for the city that has foundations where our forerunner and Elder Brother who was also James' brother has gone.

**Sincerely anticipating the return of Jesus and our gathering unto Him,
Westgate Study Paper No.3**

Bob Coffey, Westgate, Christmas 2010

1 CHRISTIAN BELIEF

Biblical and apostolic doctrine deserves the consent of all Christian people. In respect of matters anent Resurrection I have made brave to set down in outline what might be considered essential to the common faith and what might be equally valid but not of the essence of accepted doctrine because of lesser perspicuity.

CHRISTIAN DOGMATIC

It is elementary to understand that Awakening and Resurrection have to do with Judgment and then the final estate of those judged.

1. The resurrection of the dead (including the Christian dead, the Jewish faithful of all ages and the unrepentant dead)
2. That Christ descended into Hades (in line with preparing judgment and warning the spirits in prison to live in the light of that judgment)
3. That Christ shall come again (to catch away His church in the circle of the trumpet call of God.)
4. That all Christians shall appear before the Bema of Christ to give account and to submit to His appreciation of our life and works
5. That the rest of the dead appear before the Great White Throne judgment (This great assize differing from 4. above)

BIBLICAL DOCTRINE – NOT OF LIKE PERSPECUITY

1. The ordered march of saints to glory over the Christian centuries
2. The time span of the Bema judgment – as to whether co-ordinate with 1 or executed in one late season of judgment
3. The state of just men made perfect – whether Spirit or "perfect" as in body soul and spirit"
4. The first Resurrection at the return of Christ or as a streaming of the "awakened" and risen" ones – Christ the first fruits, then each in order and then they that are Christ's at his coming.
5. The Resurrection of Old Testament saints under the Father's prerogative that also raises the dead. cf Abraham's bosom – Jesus "God is not the God of the dead but the Living" and the "Leading of Captivity captive"

THE WELCOME HOME AND CLOTHING OF SAINTS WHO DIE

Huge conceptual problems face the theology of the intermediate state.

(1) The defense of the existence of part – humanity in paradise – our fellows of whom Paul says they are "far better" have not souls or bodies if the exegesis of the proof text drawn from Hebrews 12.23 is pressed to do service to demonstrate that their state is of such sort.

(2) They will have to hear the call of Christ twice to be completed though scripture affirms that call is not repeated for anyone – Our LORD says in John 5

"The hour is coming and now is when THE DEAD WILL HEAR THE VOICE OF THE SON OF GOD and those WHO HAVE HEARD ONCE will live."

on or as in eternal spring like life [*ζωω*]."

(3) They would appear to be clothed upon by their body from heaven and then obtain **another body** at the return of Christ; an anomaly the exponents of this seem to have overlooked or see as a mystery.

(4) The opportunity for each believer to "give account" to Christ is driven by this view into what must be so short time with Christ it would compare unfavourably with a modern GP's standard 5-7 minutes. There is no point in coming back with the notion that it is a kind of e-mail process or that it can be over in a flash in eternal time. We know our LORD'S pastoral and caring heart too well to concede some trifling interview. Besides who could believe that Christ will leave His children in eternity for hundreds or thousands of years to confer with others without first Himself sharing our history of love and work from our lips and hearing our deepest concerns and deepest joys. To facilitate such a face to face we should require memory and conscience and the ability to exercise will and understanding and a body in which to stand before Him.

(5) Finally Hebrews 12.23 tells us the persons who are currently with Christ in the New Jerusalem or Paradise context are "perfect" – not just in the moral sense. The Greek term TELOS speaks of a man or woman whose body is fully developed and ready for marriage. Paul's word to the Corinthians in Chapter 5 affirms his desire expressed there in line with God's provision of a "body from heaven" – the divine endowment at death.

(6) "Awakening" relates to "Resurrection" as waking up relates to rising from bed. To die for the saint is "to awake in His likeness". Such saints as go before have preceded us to understand the change we can only know at death or the rapture. Is "awakening" exclusive of bodily life and *ipso facto* of resurrection style life?

(7) The lesson we learn from John 5 and from the Apocalypse is that divine judgment is intimately related to Resurrection. Both are related to the participation of the present earth in the judgment scenario and the participation of the New Jerusalem and New heaven and Earth in the life of those who receive new bodies. Without making this connection the "harrowing of hell" seems obtuse. Without the judgment aspect which bears upon the reward of servants the parabolic teaching of our LORD in respect of stewardship would also seem redundant. The five diadems of the New Testament and the 7 commendations of the victorious ones in the Churches of Apocalypse 1-3 relate to the judgment of saints. "Standing in our lot" may further relate to the position of the saints of God in the final disposal of the affairs of Christ in his Kingdom. Once we have encountered our LORD we shall know what He would have us to do. So:

LET US LABOUR FOR THE. MASTER FROM THE DAWN TILL SETTING SUN
LET US TELL OF ALL HIS WONDROUS LOVE AND CARE
THEN WHEN ALL OF LIFE IS OVER AND OUR WORK ON EARTH IS DONE
AND THE ROLL IS CALLED UP YONDE.R I'LL BE THERE

2. NOTES ON RESURRECTION NARRATIVES

The student of Awakening Resurrection and Judgment should study the following passages if possible with original language tools to hand.

DANIEL 12

Daniel 12 1 b-3 and 11-13 as basic to "sleeping in dust" and "the rising of Old Testament saints" needs exploration.

JOHN 5

The most critical set piece of scripture is John 5.19-30 which gives us emphatic teaching on the situation now existing with respect of

[a] "crossing over" from death to life and

[b] The **hour** that "is coming and now is" when the dead hear the Son's voice and the hearers will live and

[c] The **hour** is coming when ALL in the graves hear his voice and come out – those who have been inspired to good to enjoy life and those who have done their own thing to reproach and the power of the Son to raise up "whom he will." I commend the reader to the accompanying exegesis of John 5 in this connection. The "hour" when laced to "judgment" has at once mighty dramatic effect and age-long relevance. We are not I would urge being told of 2 periods 60 minutes worth of divine action. What is in mind is far rather the application of Christ's authority to a whole day's work of judgment. A Jewish day consisted of the 1st 2nd 3rd and 4th hours.

1. The finish of the O.T. age (cf Christ's visit to the spirits in prison) [b]
2. The church Age (cf Christ's Ascension with first fruits of the saints) [b]
3. The Millennial age (cf the trumpet call, catching away & Kingdom of earth) [c]
4. The final judgment of the Great White Throne (cf The Great White throne judgment) [c]

1 CORINTHIANS 15

The major narrative is Paul's extended development of the theme of "Resurrection" in 1Corinthians15. A detailed exegesis is given in Part 8 "Principia"

2 CORINTHIANS 5

Paul expands his treatment of "Resurrection" in 2 Corinthians 5.1-10 where he uses the terms:-

(1) "Being at home" with the LORD,

(2) "Death is swallowed up of life",

(3)

"The Spirit's deposit of guarantee" and

(4) "Appearing before the bema of Christ" to receive what is due us

ACTS

(a) The witness of Stephen in Acts 7 51-53 is important

(b) Paul's statement before Felix in Acts 24 14-21 is worth noting.

1 PETER 3 18-22

In 1 Peter 3.18-22 Peter asserts in line with what the Master must have shown the early believers: –

(a) That the LORD during the 3 days his body lay in the tomb was in Hades,

(b) He preached to the imprisoned spirits who refused Noah's message

In 1 Peter 4.3-6 Peter further explains that the LORD went to Hades – and among the wicked dead that he might cause them to live after death in the world of departed spirits in a way that recognises the true God and that they might later be judged as men

in the flesh. The latter suggests they recover a natural body of flesh in which later they face the second death.

1 THESSALONIANS

(a) I Thess. 4.13-18 contributes much on "sleeping" and "awaking." The significance of the "Loud command", "the archangel's voice" and "the trumpet of God" are of vital importance. The "bringing with Him" of saints poses an issue to be resolved. The precise sense in which we are to take "the dead shall have risen first" is important. The singular N.T. reference to the "meeting in the air" cannot be missed.

(b) The "apocalypse of the LORD from heaven" deserves attention. The concept of "everlasting destruction" and also the meaning of "shutting out from the LORD'S presence" of those who disobey the gospel invites consideration.

JUDE

Two complex comments in Jude 6 and 12-13 on the "everlasting chains" and "blackest darkness" present detail on the related issue of judgment as it affects angels.

THE APOCALYPSE

(a) The LORD as the I am and the coming one who was dead and is alive for ever and has the keys of death and hell makes 7 relevant promises to *the overcomer*; the definition of which might be compared with Romans 8 28-30 with some note taken of "love" for the LORD

1 He will be given the right to eat of the tree of life in Paradise

2 He will not be hurt at all by the second death

3 He will be given some hidden manna and the white stone

4 Christ will give him authority over nations to rule them with an iron sceptre – he will dash them to pieces as pottery in line with the Father's authority and I will give him the morning star. We might explore if this is "victory over Lucifer" or "resurrection" or "Christ Himself" who is "the bright and morning star".

5 Christ promises not to blot his name from the book of life but to acknowledge it before the Father and his angels

6 Christ further promises to make him a pillar in the temple of God—he won't leave that temple (cf Apocalypse 21.22 "The LORD God and the Lamb are the temple) – upon him will be written the name "my God" and of the "New Jerusalem" which is to come "out of heaven from God" and the "new name" Jesus gives each overcomer

7 He is further promised a seat on Christ's throne just as Jesus who overcame sat with the Father

(b) The statement about the white-robed multitude in 7.9-17 needs to be studied

(c) The 144,000 redeemed with their unique song and Nazarite life-style who ever follow the Lamb and are "first-fruits" (possibly of the soon to follow conversion of all Jews to Christ) is worthy of attention

(d) The judgment of the great white throne in 20.11-15 warrants attention

(e) Vital references to the Holy City and the lake of fire lie in Apocalypse 21 1-8

3. EARLY DEATHS AMONGST BELIEVERS IN THE FIRST CENTURY CALL FOR A DOCTRINAL RIPOSTE

PAUL SPEAKS OF RESURRECTION

Whereas Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18 re-assures the church that the saints who have recently died are "sleeping" and the LORD will awake them he does not tell the Thessalonians when or where they will be back in action or resurrected. What he does say is that they are "with the LORD" (v.14), and he urges that "we (all Christians taught of Christ) believe that. As further assurance he tells them that they should not be disturbed as if the Resurrection as it affects them has already happened – because there are three unmistakable accompaniments which certainly have not happened – namely "the Lord's loud command", "the archangel's voice" and "the trumpet of God."

PAUL GOES BACK TO JESUS' WORD

Something else he does say is valuable. He adds what he calls the LORD'S own word. This word gives rise to the assurance that "we who are alive and remain or survive shall not "prevent" or "go before" those who sleep. This brings Paul back to the teaching of Peter and of John and since Paul does not quote at any length we need to look at what John wrote because we have no access to what Peter communicated to Paul when Paul went to Jerusalem to "fill up his grasp and historical understanding" of the LORD'S life excepting what we read in 1 Corinthians 15 as it may relate to that interview.

PAUL AND THE RELAY OF HISTORY

Before we leave Paul as he grapples with the issue presented by Thessalonica let us look again at the term he chooses for precedence – the word "prevent". This idiom means to "outstrip" as if any number of persons were running in a race or long distance event and then many were under starter's orders later in a relay – (at the Parousia) would not catch up on or get ahead of the former batch of runners. Now if the dead in Christ who "were under starter's orders" so early made it home there are many issues that emerge, one is, Where are they – in Sheol – Paradise – the New Jerusalem – the Father's house? Another is "in what condition are they? Are they disembodied spirits? Have they obtained their body that is for eternity? Are they sleeping or wholly inactive? If they arrived home incomplete what will be our equivalent state when we reach home?

LOOKING AT A DEVELOPING N.T. TOPIC

The book of Hebrews which may bear the autograph of Barnabas presents a contrasting focus on prayer and expectation of Christ's coming in place of the emphasis elsewhere in Paul on baptism repentance and resurrection. This writing emerges at the occasion of the death of James the Just AD 63-4 and the gospel of John which – even if it had an earlier Hebrew edition was issued at Ephesus circa AD 90

BARNABAS? (HEBREWS) A FASCINATING RE-ALIGNMENT OF THOUGHT

Faced with similar circumstances as Paul spoke into at Thessalonica *Barnabas by tradition the writer of "Hebrews" does not use specifics of resurrection but rather our "catching away" and the appearing of Christ and the hope of entering the New Jerusalem as his encouragement.* This along with the consolation of a marked emphasis on fellowship and prayer are his answers to the need of the hour. He points believers in Jerusalem at the time of the death of James the Just to the LORD'S coming and to heaven. He reminds them that "We are looking for the city that is to come" (Hebrews 13.13) and that our LORD Jesus is "sat down in heaven" (1.3). He reminds those in earthly Jerusalem to "fix their eyes on Jesus" who is building his house – the people of God. He believes that teaching about resurrection and judgment is elementary or basic. (6.1-3). What he seems to be saying is that the early church should not become bogged down in wondering why saints die and wondering when the trumpet will sound for resurrection. He believes that the promise to Abraham foresees "many descendants" (Genesis 22.17& Hebrews 6.14) and reminds the saints at Jerusalem that Jesus as a Melchisadekian is able to save all who come (7.25). He is convinced that all things tend one day towards the "fullness of the Jewish nation" as a Christian nation (8.10-13) and He will appear the second time to save those who are waiting for Him (9.28). The time when His enemies are made his footstool (10.12-13) must be awaited – be it long or short.

(a) THE HEBREW WRITER'S PLEA FOR CONTINUED PRAYER

He counsels prayer and conference and worship 10.19-25 as the Day of Christ's appearance draws nearer – and again in 10.37 he quotes Habakkuk 2.3-4 as he counsels the saints at Jerusalem bereft of James to look prayerfully to Christ's soon appearing.

(b) THE HEBREW WRITER ENCOURAGES US TO LOOK TO JESUS AND THE CITY THAT HAS FOUNDATIONS WHERE OUR LORD IS ENTERED

Paul's significant reference to the "catching away" of Enoch in 11.5 and to the death of the old world of Noah in 11.7 and his further in reference 11.10 to "looking for the city that has foundations" are unmistakable signs of how his purpose of mind is to concentrate the church's attention on Christ's appearing and getting to the "better country" of heaven (11.16).

He tells of how the ancients suffered horribly as did just James who was clubbed to death by a butcher after he had been pushed from the wall of Jerusalem. He tells the saints that "the present created things" will all be removed that the heavenly may take their place (12.27). Again in 13.13 he concludes with a reminder that Jesus like James suffered outside the walls and he urges the Jews to keep outward looking and thankful now that Timothy has been released and likewise face the Gentile world with courage "looking for the city that is to come."

JOHN THE DIVINE.

John the apostle faced with persecution and the death of saints does fairly similar things in the Apocalypse. He also wrote the gospel as a companion treatise from Ephesus and recorded the LORD'S specific words in John 5 about "resurrection" and it is to "resurrection" as a source of consolation and biblical teaching we now turn.

SLEEPERS WILL HAVE BEEN ALREADY AWAKENED

All through the Resurrection narratives of Paul we are faced with huge verbs in the passive and indicative moods. In this context we have two bruisers to conjugate **κοιμηθωμεθα** and **αλλαγησωμεθα** (a) a weak future passive delivers the meaning "We will not all have fallen asleep" and (b) a future on the middle voice stem telling us that those gathered from heaven and earth at the trumpet "will all be changed". Since the clauses in the subsequent text with the exception of a pause for breathe at the word "trumpet" carry on in one sentence to include two other big verbs we had best include them too. When the trumpet sounds the dead will have been raised **εγερθησονται** incorruptible and we shall be changed. **αλλαγησωμεθα** – that's it! Now the "future perfect" tells us that "raised" people many of whom had long since departed and though seen as changed at the point of the "voice of command" and "trumpet call" their state long before descending with Christ would appear to be that new body state enjoyed in eternity.

COMBATING THE IDEA OF LOST SAINTS – THE THEOLOGICAL BLACK HOLE PAUL REFUSED TO CONCEDE

Paul is very clear, "If the dead are not being raised, neither has Christ been raised". (1 Corinthians 15.16) but this alternative leaves us with the depressing result and logical alternative that the dead are really lost. (Aorist indicative – "they themselves have just gone – perished!") Moderns would put the argument like this – **the saints who have died since Christ are not raised or not lost but instead they are in a cosy if somewhat coy intermediate state. This rather contrived position is acutely weak, having** neither the backing of Paul nor of biblical text and being an obvious cousin of the "purgatory" concept, a kind of Protestant casuistry – it were better forgotten.

BACK TO BIBLE ORDER AND CERTITUDE

So far is it from the case that such are lost that Paul can say affirmatively that they "will have been made alive, they are and "have been" brimming with life beyond, every single one of them" (1 Corinthians 15.22) It is in this context that the apostle brings out his trump card to explain that Christ took some with Him in ascending, some have gone since in their marching order, and we might add that the like has been taking place throughout church history and when our LORD returns at the Parousia the last church "TAGMA" or division that battled the devil in this long theatre of war will go home in triumph, then comes renewed divine theocracy, the long intended teleological resolution, involving the Kingdom of God on earth. The submission of every foe accompanied by final judgment, this world aflame and perishing and the appearance of the New Jerusalem and all things new sets the scene for the glorious heavenly rule of Father and Son throughout eternity.

ABSENT FROM THE BODY PRESENT WITH THE LORD-WHICH IS VERY FAR BETTER

HE. HAS SOUNDED FORTH THE. TRUMPET THAT SHALL NEVER SOUND
RETREAT

HE IS SIFTING OUT THE HEARTS OF MEN BEFORE HLS JUDGMENT SEAT

O, BE SWIFT MY SOUL TO ANSWER HIM- BE JUBILANT MY FEET
OUR GOD IS MARCHING ON
GLORY, GLORY HALLELUJAH
GLORY, GLORY HALLELUJAH
OUR GOD IS MARCHING ON

4. JOHN 5

A MOMENTOUS CANONICAL VERDICT

This chapter holds the truths to which of necessity the church must turn to better understand the ETERNAL GOD in relation to life and eternity. It has telling implications for our understanding of "Life" conjoined with "Anastasis." I have always loved John 5.24 – it has been the sheet anchor of all that I believe about assurance of salvation and the eternal state. In working through the New Testament on the doctrine of Resurrections (beyond which interestingly the Hebrew writer passes on smartly to larger considerations of the eternal city and our Melchisadekian priesthood which is laced to the Millennial and Eternal) I believe John chapter 5 is the conceptual junction of all teaching on Life ahead as Christ portrays it.

PAUL'S RELIANCE ON THE WORD OF THE LORD

I commend to the bible student the study of what Paul says in Thessalonians (circa 52 A.D.) and subsequently in his first letter to Corinth 5 years later. You will find Paul makes significant use of "passive" verbs when he factors in the Anastasis concept that is congruent with that abundant and full Life that our LORD promises believers who enter His presence. Paul's "BIG WORDS" as I call them affirm his understanding of the LORD'S will.

OF TIMES AND SEASONS-PAUL AND JOB

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15.12-58(NB 22)

1. ALL IN CHRIST WILL HAVE BEEN MADE ALIVE.

It is necessary to conjugate ζωοποιηθῶσονται at to understand that Paul is looking forward to the completion and backward to the process. **BY THE TIME OF THE RETURN OF OUR LORD PAUL IS CONFIDENT CHRIST WILL BE COMING BACK WITH THE SAINTS COMPLETE IN THEIR SPIRITUAL BODIES AND HEIGHTENED PHYSICALITY.** Even if he himself should not survive as he puts it he is looking not for nakedness of spirit but for **HIS BODY WHICH IS FROM HEAVEN.** There are dilemmas to be faced and enigmas to be thought about at this point.

(a) *Dust to dust* – is this really dust to dust and back to skin transformation? I think not. The death of this body is the end of mortality for believers. The swallowing or change is the gifting to the soul and spirit of a new body. We sow in weakness; we recover in power through *Anastasis – Life*. To go one question further "Is it set in stone that the saints who come with Christ will rise from their tombs on earth or will they come as the Church Triumphant from heaven to rejoin the church militant at the meeting in the air?"

(b) Job said **"in my flesh"** or as the Hebrew *rsbm* might be better rendered **"without my flesh"** shall I see God. When we add that "flesh and blood cannot inherit eternal life" and that "no man can see God and live" we are in a conceptual morass without the heightened physicality which Paul speaks about and terms "life and immortality" which is also latent in the LORD'S statement about "life" and the LORD'S **DEMONSTRATION OF THAT LIFE AND IMMORTALITY IN HIS ANASTASIS-LIFE**. So Job by divine inspiration contemplates the enigma of how he shall meet and see God in flesh, not, he thinks, the diseased or decaying flesh to which he applies the potsherd.

Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4 13-18

2. All through the Resurrection narratives of Paul we are face to face with huge verbs in the passive tense. In this context (cp 1Cor.15.52) we have two bruisers to conjugate **κοιμηθησομεθα** and **αλλαγησομεθα** – a weak future passive and a simple future deliver the meaning *"We will not all have fallen asleep"* but *"we will all be changed"*. Since the clauses in the subsequent text with the exception of a pause for breathe at "trumpet" carry on in one sentence to include two other big verbs we had best include them too. When the trumpet does sound *"the dead will have been raised εγερθησονται incorruptible and we shall be changed."* **αλλαγησομεθα** – *that's it! The change as it affects the Church.*

Triumphant would appear to be in the past and as it affects the church militant it has to be at the time of the Rapture. The terms "in a moment" and "in the twinkling of an eye" associated with Paul's statement seem a priori to confirm the idea that all are changed simultaneously, but is that so? Can we discard the "we shall have been awakened"? Does the instantaneous phraseology relate to the "Catching away" and the "changing of our lowly bodies" in the circle of the Rapture event or can it also be applied to earlier times when in a similar way believers at death undergo identical change.

Does immortality or Life await the rapture? Does our incorruptible immortal body from heaven abide apart from our spirit in the case of glorified believers until that time?

3. In 1 Thessalonians 4.15 Paul asserts that what he sets out for the assurance of the early church is *according to the word of the LORD*. For such reason we have to assume either that there is material he obtained from Peter when he "learned historical details" from Peter or there is other material which was common knowledge among the apostles.

4. From Peter Paul could certainly learn more detail about how the risen LORD lived as He moved among the disciples and so better understand the nature of that likeness with which we shall be clothed. But that is not, I think, the nub of the matter or the direction we need to look for a better understanding of Life and Resurrection. For this reason I wish to turn your attention to the beloved disciple in an exegesis of John Chapter 5. This passage serves to throw some further light on the interim between the Apostolic Age and the Rapture as it affects those who die in the LORD.

5. LIFE AND RESURRECTION - EXPLORATORY THOUGHTS

MARY SAID "I KNOW HE WILL RISE AT THE LAST DAY"

When our LORD was gently teasing Mary in the context of the Resurrection of Lazarus toward a belief in a reversal of corruption of flesh without immortality he issued the fascinating statement "I am the Resurrection and the Life". Mary like many Jews and Pharisees was convinced that Lazarus would "rise again" within the economy of the last day – literally "in the house of the last day". Our LORD brought her up with a start when He spelt out His power to raise the dead and said "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Christ proceeded to show the power that lay in His command and in the Father's consent.

At other times Christ startled His hearers by saying "God is not the God of the dead but of the living". He was constantly pointing out that as the Father raises the dead and that also the Son has this power in himself by consent of the father and by prerogative.

CHRIST THE FIRSTFRUITS

Many Gentile theologians have stated that the Jewish believers abide in Sheol till after Christians are all raised. Because Christ is the "first-fruits" from the dead we are not committed to anything of the sort. All believers, irrespective of their era, may as surely be in Paradise. Christ spoke to the spirits in prison but that action does not refer as I understand it to the righteous dead. If the thief on the cross is in paradise why is Abraham or David not there? If Stephen is there why is Enoch not there too? No-one can affirm or deny these questions readily; indeed they may carry something of the reason why Paul fell silent about Paradise.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

Where is Elijah? Where is Enoch? Where are those who came from their tombs after Christ's resurrection and went into the Holy City and were seen of many in Matthew 27.53 (cf Matthew 4.5)? Was Paul caught up to paradise in the body or in the spirit? Certainly his ears heard words from there and his experience included matters not for revelation.

RESUSCITATION RESURRECTION TO DIE AGAIN VIS A VIS IMMORTALITY AND INCORRUPTIBILITY

Let us take one step back to broaden the subject. When the widow of Zarephath's son was raised it appears more like modern resuscitation – but when Lazarus and the Widow of Nain's son or even Jairus' daughter and Dorcas were raised it appears we are facing the reversal of the body corrupting process and a process of "Life-giving" generally graced with the term "resurrection". However we would not be happy if that is exactly what will happen to us when we are perfected. What we are being shown in these events is that our LORD JESUS is the "Life-giver" and that the way the dead are raised differs. The resurrection of Christ and that of Lazarus materially differ. Further we cannot dare state that Christ's body knew corruption as did the body of Lazarus. The mystery of the "flesh and bone" of our LORD is the actuality of our own eternal hope. We shall be like Him. So to summarise "all that variety of demonstration of

divine power that is involved in Resurrection and Life is the prerogative of Christ and as Paul says in its ultimate glorious demonstration it definitively involves "change".

6. EXEGESIS OF JOHN: 21-29

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATION-GOD'S HOURGLASS

*The NIV abandoned the word "hour" as a translation of $\omega\pi\alpha$ in the Greek original. This in the normal defense of accuracy one would call into question – but the Hebrew uses the words *ta* (time) and *my day* in verses 5.25 and 28 respectively. Modern Hebrew has the loan-word *h[ʌ]* but it is very rarely used in the O. T and fairly infrequently in the Modern Hebrew N.T. (only in Daniel 3.6, 3.15, 4.16, 4.30 and 5.5 for it is Chaldee and comes from the idea of "a glance" at the clock. The words by which translators reflect Jesus usage in the NIV are "time" or "day" as above. If the Greek $\omega\pi\alpha$ time at a glance" or "suddenly" is preferred that is fine and also faithful to the Greek received text. Peter does use "hour" in Mark 15.25 and our LORD Himself uses it 5 times in His parable of the "householder" in Matthew 20. Henry Alford's comment on the first "awake" is that "it is not brought into operation till the day of Pentecost but he confines the first "awakening" to "spiritual awakening" not "bodily awakening", The subsequent "hour" in v.28 Alford agrees concerns what he calls the "general resurrection" but hastens to add categories of believers and unbelievers and gets in a mix-up with the first resurrection which must be 1000 years earlier if we read our Apocalypse correctly, and not a segment of the general resurrection.*

INTRODUCTION TO JOHN 5 1-20 IN PRECIS

Our LORD visited Bethesda, a sort of hospital in Jerusalem popularised by the tradition of an angel's annual visit and the hope that at least one seriously ill patient would be miraculously healed by entering the water from one of the five porches immediately after the angel disturbed the water. Jesus drew attention to his otherworldly powers by entering the hospital complex and healing a man whose illness stretched back 38 years. Thus He showed Himself capable of reversing bodily processes and bringing well-being to man, but He fell foul of the Jews because He did it on the Sabbath; a day they believed God appointed for rest.

The answer that Christ gave the persecuting Jews in respect of His deity when He performed this miracle on the Sabbath day opens out to a full-scale presentation by our LORD of ways in which His divinity affects man's immortality and judgment. For their part the Jews queried His prerogative to heal or to change the use of the Sabbath.

(1) Our LORD in disabusing them of their notion set out to describe the larger purpose which He shared with the Father. He as much as told the Jews "You have seen nothing yet!"

(2) The Father loves the Son and shows Him all he does – and the Son engages with Him.

(3) He urged that raising the dead was a matter of the most intimate co-operation of the Father and the Son and that in this the divine will was one.

(4) He further stated that the Father had given all judgment (literally the preparation making and execution of judgment [*ποιεω*]) into the hands of the Son that the Son should have divine honour – and failure to honour Christ would be deemed disdain of God.

(5) Then our LORD embarked on His incomparable statement on RESURRECTION AND LIFE – a statement so succinct that it is incredible so much and so many facts vital for theology should be packed into such a concise statement.

JOHN 5 19-29 BASED ON THE HEBREW N.T. RENDERING GOD'S WORKS PAST AND PRESENT

"Verily, verily the Son is not able to execute a matter of business or legal matter at will from his understanding without seeing the manner and purpose of that for which the Father strives so hard – for that which He does the Son does alike and after Him (in sort and style) For the Father loves the Son and shows Him everything that He is doing. And He will show Him greater works than these that they may be a miracle or distinguished in your eyes."

GOD IS CONSTANTLY RAISING THE DEAD 21-23

Jesus never constrained belief in the resurrection to its demonstration within the N. T framework-much less the last judgment setting. He insisted that God continually raises the dead. This should put serious questions in the minds of those who argue that resurrection began with the resurrection of our LORD.

For as the Father causes their raising and continually gives divine life to the dead (*Piel of **hyh***) so the Son also gives the life of God to whomsoever He wills or pleases. And the Father will not judge a single man. He has certainly altogether given His entire judgment (process) or forensic cause into the power of the Son that all should glorify the son in exactly the same way as they should glorify the Father. Whoever it is that does not glorify the Son he is not glorifying the Father that sent Him.

CHRIST CONTINUES TO RAISE THE DEAD 24

Verily, verily I am saying to you "Whoever sharpens his ear to my word and believes in Him who sent me – there is age-long or eternal life rich, full and secure for him and he will not enter or go before to be involved in the judgment but he has passed over from death to immortality" [*myy*] – so used in Genesis 2.9 & 3.22 & 24 and in related passages where the "breath" of the "eternal" is given – which seems not to link with the seal of God, so there is no natural immortality but rather a spiritual immortality in Christ's redemptive act by the Spirit of God. When God said to Adam "Dying you shall die he did not mean "You will be alive in another form!" That was rather the line that Satan took with Adam "you will not surely die". Paul states that the Spirit is the guarantor of Eternal Life. If man could initially become bereft of the Spirit and renewed by the Spirit there is great importance to be attached to how we act in respect of the Spirit of God. David said "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me" as if such a terrible condition bothered him. The sealing of the Spirit in Ephesians 1 is connected

to a calling unto "holiness and blamelessness in covenant love and clearly affirms the saint's security]

A BETTER DAY IS DAWNED – CF PAULS "VERY FAR BETTER"

"Verily, verily, I am saying to you that the opportune time or proper or even "happy" time [*T*] cf also *HT*[] will come [*Tab* future indicative] and also has come and the dead [*mytm* -those" about to die" and" dying" as well as "those who have died"] will hear and obey the voice of the son of God and the obedient living will live – or will live on for ever." [*The expression is like an ace-card over against the word God spoke to A dam-"dying you shall die" – which is the measure of spiritual disobedience with the resultant reign of death. This is the obedience housed within the continuing reign of life in believers.*] "for as when or according as the Father has life from the fountain of His **being or mighty form**" [*The Hebrew word speaks of "Skin bottle" and hence is used of body but its main meaning is to "tie up" so that the sense is "as the Father ties up life in Himself" so He has given... ntn cf Judges 16.5 – where Samson gave to Delilah the great secret of his strength-but the context is different since the gift is granted under much constraint*] – He has given... Himself to **belong** to the Son to **belong** to Life **belonging to Him** or to "tie up" life in Himself (Literally "Life" "of the reviving") from the fountain of His body and form." [*The "three belongs" say categorically that the Son of God can create "spring" again in the lives of the dead – only it is an eternal spring-time*]

"And also He has given him power or ability or all the means in his power to prepare and administer [*hc*] judgment for He is the son of Adam." *Notwithstanding the continuing human nature of Christ He is the Plenipotentiary of all judgment.*

SURPRISE ON A PAR WITH THAT MARY HAD TO COPE WITH IN JOHN 11

"Do not be surprised [*The form of the Hebrew verb hmt in the N. T is as in Habakkuk 1.6-"Do not be utterly amazed"*] – Christ is now about to utter one of the 14 most powerful statements ever made. Do not be so utterly amazed as to keep wondering that is "accept it simply" for behold the Day has come [*the Qere reading assumes the word in its fuller form which is found for example in Genesis 7.13 "Noah entered into. the ark"*] when all the dwellers who have settled down in the tomb will hear his voice and they will arise or be caused to arise [*||*] [*y-both significances come into play*] Those who have done good, lived happily and profitably will stand to minister (normally *dm*[] intimates ministry before a king) or be appointed belonging to eternal life and those who have done evil will be appointed or remain for judgment." *There is in this expression the option of two quite different events in time. The word "rise" or "appointment" may be rendered" appointed whilst waiting", a nuance that the Greek does not have. This nuance solves at a stroke the "time factor" inherent in the judgments, for the "Bema judgment" of the believer is certainly not delayed until the millennium is over and the spiritually dead are brought before the "Great White Throne".*

In this matter of huge surprise to hearers – namely, as our LORD brought forward the resurrection era right into the present matching it to the "last hour." He knew it to be essential that His presentation on judgment and resurrection was prefaced with a

definitive comment fully acknowledging that His statement was an assault on current thinking and that "awakening" or "resurrection" could immediately occur was bound to create immense surprise.

RENDERING OF THE GREEK N.T. SENSE ABRAHAM'S BOSOM-TESTIMONY TO "GOD OF THE LIVING"

The Father raises (ἐγείρω literally "awakens") the dead and generates or gives life, and the Son makes alive those whom he chooses to make alive according to his desire or delight. In some sense not readily debatable Christ asserted that God was not a God of the dead-so men and women have lived in His presence and in Hades or Sheol from the earliest deaths on earth. (Matthew 22.23, Mark 12.27 and Luke 20.38.) The Father has designated the Son "judge of all" so that all who live might honour the Son as they honour the life-giving Father. Anyone who fails to honour the Son diminishes the honour of the Father who sent Him as Saviour.

THE POWERS OF CHRIST EXTEND IN ALL DIRECTIONS

Christ took authority over judgment and requested that saints should see the Glory in his High Priestly prayer (cf Stephen's death as a token of this experience), made His classic visit to Hades and declares his exhaustive powers to awaken the dead and judge all mankind.

Jesus said "In very truth I tell you that he who hears my word and trusts in the one who sent me has eternal life and **WILL NOT COME INTO JUDGMENT** but is passed from the state of death to the state of Life." This word of Christ is proof patent that genuine faith in the redemptive work of Christ renders complete the certainty that a believer will be given a new body and be in no danger of the crisis or "depart from me" reproach in judgment. *The first facts that our LORD teaches are that the future is*

not a question of what death might do or judgment might bring for with faith "Life Eternal" as the end and "faith" as the means to that end are within the eternal decree.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST SUFFICES FOR LIFE FROM THE DEAD

Our LORD continues "The hour *is coming* and *now is* when **THE DEAD WILL HEAR THE VOICE OF THE SON OF GOD** and they **WHO HAVE HEARD ONCE** will live on or as in eternal spring like life [**ζαω**]. *"The hour has particular reference to the LORD'S atoning death and that "forsakenness or utter aloneness in respect of the Father" that is reflected in the dereliction cry. That experience reflects what it is to be separated from God and under judgment and it is the key to understanding judgment in relationship with resurrection - a theological approach which has been virtually lost to the modern church. [ωρα John 5.15, 7.30, 8.20, 12.23, 12.27, 13.1, 17.1) Our LORD does not rigidly relate the giving of Life from the Dead to the "catching away" nor is this promise tied to mortal Anastasis. This promise is related to "living on and on."* [**ζησονται** – living not to die again) *Testimony lies here if any is needed that there are those who have heard the voice of Christ at death and are enjoying life in the presence of the LORD.*

CHRIST'S POWERS ARE ABSOLUTE

Our LORD adds "As the Father has Life in Himself (in the circle of His own being) so He has provided for the Son to have Life in himself – and he has provided for Him to bring about and devise under his authority the judgment because (as firstborn) he is the heir of mankind. There is a close relationship between judgment and the resurrection.

We forget this connection too easily. It was after his atoning death that our LORD advised the ungodly imprisoned in Hell that as holder of the keys he would call them to judgment with which notice came the demand to live in the fear of God. In the same way he brought with Him to paradise those in Sheol. These actions underline the pivotal nature of the hour of which Christ spoke.

A MYSTERY WRAPPED UP IN AN ENIGMA

*The LORD develops the theme further. "Do not wonder at this" he says, namely at the fact that Christ was given the remit of setting out the manner and order in which mankind will be judged. In this Judgment connection Jesus goes on to say "The hour is coming [Greek *ερχεται* "is coming"– imperfect) in which **ALL THAT ARE IN SEPULCHRES WILL HEAR HIS VOICE** and will march out in procession (cf Paul's **TAGMA OR ORDERLY BATTALIONS**) – those who have done ethical and good things under inspiration into **Anastasis of Life** but those who have acted according to their own mind and will and done "tawdry things" into **Anastasis of crisis** or condemnation. The fact that all will hear does not imply that all will hear at once but simply that none, good or bad, will fail to hear as is appointed. Nor was our LORD necessarily ruling out the fact that believers who died would be with Him where He ascended beholding the glory of the Father after His resurrection, in fact He was ruling **IT IN**.*

ANTINOMY

There are apparent antinomies in these statements, that is, events that seem to defy one another in a manner that does not subscribe to the understanding of the Resurrection or awakening of saints as a prelude to the Rapture nor to the treasured notion of a single Day of Judgment for saints and sinners. I suggest the following resolutions.

YOU AND I ONLY NEED TO HEAR THE CALL TO OUR NEW STATE ONCE

*Jesus said in His continuing statement to the faithful that those who once for all hear the voice of the Son of Man (5.25) are made alive, presumably when they are called home. Yet it remains true that all who remain in the graves shall hear His voice. The easiest way to understand this is to subsume 29a under 25. The aorist participle of the verb "**to hear once**" *ακουσαντες* bids us understand that those who have listened to the voice of the Spirit in the response of faith and hear the home-call of the Son of Man at death enjoy fullness of life in heaven. The "dead" who fail to believe upon hearing His voice would not be raised to Life immortal – but physically so that their tombs and graves and resting places in the sea will be evacuated at the time of the Great White*

Throne judgment. Their resurrection and their destiny are very different from that of believing saints.

THE MARCH OF SAINTS INTO LIFE

*The victory benefits of the death of Christ for saints are not from a close reading of scripture to be presumed to be subject to postponement until all those in the graves hear the voice of the Son of Man. The scripture appears to prove the converse—that the benefits of Christ's redemption including "immortality of the soul" and a "house not made with hands" or "body from heaven" are given at death. This view is virtually irresistible and those who challenge it on grounds of Hebrews 12.23 making "the spirits of just men made perfect" an article of faith need to realise that the Perfection or completion involved in **τέλειος** is more corporeal than moral in general usage. Besides—our immortality is guaranteed by the deposit of the Holy Spirit. (2Corinthians 5.1-5). If it be objected that the dying saint does not hear the voice of Christ or enter immediately in fullness into His presence one has only to look at Acts 7.54-56 with Philippians 3.14 "the upward call" of God and Hebrews 3.1 to realise this is just not so. Is the tender voice of Christ in death not as effective in appointing us to inherit our "body from heaven" as the **ΚΕΛΕΥΣΜΑΤΙ** or "loud command" of 2 Thessalonians 4.16?*

*Further detail on the "March of saints into **Anastasis** of Life" may be found under the short study on **PRINCIPIA** in respect of the "body from heaven" and "the house not made with hands eternal in the heavens"*

THE BEMA JUDGMENT

That the companion apocalyptic literature of John spaces the treatment of the righteous dead at the Bema from the assize to which the unrighteous are called by a thousand years creates a further antinomy. [Apocalypse 20.5 and 11-15] The Bema judgment of saints may equally be related to their home-call and because the "hour" instances dramatic immediacy or suddenness it may apply at different times to different groups.

All we need to know is that the believer receives his or her reward or rebuke prior to the wedding banquet and that this bears no immediate time-conjunction to the judgment of the great white throne is so certain it could almost be made an article of faith.

THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S JUDGMENT

John 5 is specifically aimed at explaining the power of Christ to give eternal life and to judge mankind. The fact is that (a) by faith in Christ's atonement judgment in the matter of sin unto condemnation is passed over and (b) through His home-call before Him and our subsequent Bema appearance our sins of commission and omission respectively are dealt with.

JUDGMENT ALL INCLUSIVE

Just as the hour of Christ's suffering to atone with its decreed purpose and the filling up of that suffering in the church has spanned millennia so the hour of judgment with its preparation and execution must be understood to extend from the visit of Christ to

Hades through the sessions of the "Bema judgment" to the time of the Great White Throne – during which period or interval no-one and no created being will escape the awesome appearance before Christ in judgment of one form or other-neither man nor angel nor demon.

7. AWAKENING (TO LIFE) AND ANASTASIS

1 CORINTHIANS 15

SOME MAY SAY CHRISTIAN FAITH IS QUEUE JUMPING

*Christian belief is in Christ "The Resurrection and the life". We believe we shall be "clothed upon" with immortality and "the house made without hands in heaven" "reserved for the believer" (2Cor5.1 ff) in the voice and home-call of Christ who said to Daniel "You will rest and at the end of days you will "awake" to receive your allotted inheritance." But it was our LORD Jesus Himself who also encouraged Miriam, the sister of Lazarus to the forefront of faith her belief in "awakening" with the words "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Paul also assures Christian believers that to be absent **FROM THE BODY** is to be present with the LORD. However, like Paul, **WE HAVE NO** desire to be unclothed but clothed upon and so at departure to make sweet arrival and live better **IN THAT BODY** prepared which is implicit in our heavenly heritage.*

This shall my song in eternity be
O what a wonder that Jesus loved me
Jesus loved me Yes Jesus loved me
Jesus loved even me.
When by His grace I shall look on His face
That will be glory - be glory for me

THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE FUTURE STATE

Assuming that a fair date for the writing of 1 Corinthians is 57AD, and our LORD'S ascension was 27 years in the past and not many of the 500 witnesses of His death had yet died, only a few "had fallen asleep." Nevertheless Paul had already been faced with the concerns of new Gentile churches trying to think out what happens after death. He also faced the Athenians and Corinthians with their sophistication and in this Greek context gives his best explanation of the future state of believers. Paul's written doctrine of Resurrection sets out principles which are apt enough to form a nucleus of Christian teaching and belief on the subject of Resurrection especially when allied to the further refinement of 2 Corinthians 5.1-5

PAULINE FRAMEWORK

- *CHRIST WAS RAISED THE THIRD DAY AS SCRIPTURE PROPHECIED
- *SIX SPECIFIC HISTORICAL APPEARANCES ARE RECOUNTED
- *IMPLICATIONS OF RESURRECTION DENIAL ARE DEALT WITH
- *CHRIST IS DECLARED THE FIRSTFRUITS
- *ALL IN CHRIST **WILL HAVE BEEN MADE ALIVE.**

It is necessary to conjugate ζωοποιηθῶσονται aright as above to grasp truth.

***THE REIGN AND RUIN OF DOMINION OF SATAN & DEATH**

Each element of the pre-millennial vista is precisely known to and taught by the apostle Paul – the rapture, rule and dominion of Christ followed by the destruction of Satan, the end of this world and the inception of the Father's kingdom to which Christ submits His government.

***HEROISM AND CHALLENGE OF THOSE WHO HAZARD THEIR LIVES AS BELIEVERS IN RESURRECTION**

(a) The Baptism in place of the Dead

(b) Strife for the gospel is worthwhile

P AULINE PRINCIPLES IN PRECIS (1CORINTHIANS 15 35-44)

Paul proceeds to a twelve-fold analysis of Resurrection, how it takes place and he supplies helpful analogies which go some distance to make it plain to comprehend.

1 The NEW BODY is by **God's determination** based on the seed, cf God's book Foolishness of imagining the old husk comes back. Paul uses an agricultural analogy "Ours is not the body that shall be" God is the *farmer – creator* and He gives to the seed its correct body.

2 The flesh of the new body is not the same, and this is well understood through observing the flesh of man, animals, birds and fish – a naturalist analogy 39

3 The body will have new powers and possibly luminosity, an altogether new splendour – and this time the analogy is taken from astronomy – like the stars bodies will differ in splendour 40-41

4 The dishonorable weak body we now have will be glorious and strong 43

5 The perishable body we now have will be imperishable

6 The body will be spiritual not natural – not based on earth or dust

THE APOSTLE WRITES LIKE AN ANTOROPOLOGIST 44-49

Paul here states that we are made after the likeness of the heavenly man whereas whether in this life or resurrection those not in Christ bear Adam's image

7 Resurrection is not flesh-blood based; neither can it be carbon based and so subject to decay either; flesh & blood cannot enter heaven for it has neither rights nor capability for that realm.

Paul now brings in *the laws of inheritance*. The corruptible has no right of heir ship to the incorruptible. 50

8 The essential change 51

9 The central mystery – timing of change and resurrection 51

In the circle of an atom- an eye twinkle-at the trumpet call 52a

10 The trumpet call – does it signal imperishability and change? 52b

(a) Implications for the dead

(b) Implications for those living at the time

11 **Victory** – *when is it achievable?* 53-58

(a) It is essential that this corruptible (I myself – Paul) put on incorruption

(b) It is essential that this mortal dress in immortality

Victory – *what the cross has done?*

(c) The verb **ενδυσασθαι** "clothed upon"

(d) When incorruptibility and immortality come about both Isaiah 25.8 and Hosea 13.14 will have been fulfilled.

12 Does Paul's statement "To God be thanks who is giving us the victory through our LORD Jesus Christ" and his encouragement that believers are labouring toward it means that at their passing it is a reality?

THE OPEN SECRET 51-52a

Timing plays a very important part in apocalyptic and indeed in general development of the plan of salvation through its Jewish roots in the bloodline of Christ. First there was Abraham and the patriarchs-then the remarkable Salmon family of Judah involving Rahab and later Boaz and Ruth. These earlier eras focused in time on the royal house of David. By far the most glorious moment of all was the birth of our LORD in Bethlehem. In the Gospel of John our LORD Jesus then focused all eyes on "the hour" of His redemptive passion. If there can ever be anything quite like that it is our "out-redemption" and its accompaniment, the Resurrection. We do well to enquire of what time and circumstance was Paul speaking?

BIG WORDS

All through the Resurrection narratives of Paul we are faced with huge verbs some of which, significantly, are in the past tense. In the Corinthian text we have the two verbs **κοιμηθησομεθα** and **αλλαγησομεθα** – a weak future passive and a future middle stem verb delivering the meaning "We will not all have fallen asleep" but "we will all be changed". Two other big verbs are used by the apostle as we read further in the text. When the trumpet does sound the dead will have been raised

εγερθησονται incorruptible and we shall be changed. **αλλαγησομεθα**. The action of these verbs tells us that those who are "raised" and those who are "changed" people will join at the point of the "voice of command" and the trumpet call" – **some from earth and from Glory some! The former exactly match "those who march out of their graves into life" in John 5.28.**

HISTORICAL CONTEXT HELPS

In 1 Thessalonians 4.16 Paul makes an initial reference to the trumpet of God. This "voice sounding loud" was heard at Sinai. Paul uses the word **σαλπιγγι** in conjunction with the "voice of the LORD." The idea of the "last trumpet" is a give away – because the Roman legions were well known for their "waking trumpet", their "preparation trumpet" and their "marching" trumpet, which was called "the last trumpet". Could the trumpet be calling saints in view of a muster? When we reflect on v23 we do indeed have a "battle order" word. It would seem that the church is envisaged as being marched off, but not into battle, rather away from battle and into "victory celebrations". This "muster" involves those "present with the LORD" and those "present in the body", but the latter will be changed and all will proceed to glory.

THE OTHER TRUMPET SETTING

In 52AD Paul was at Corinth. Just 5 years before he had written to comfort the church he founded at Thessalonica, a church convinced that Christ should have come again

before dear believers from among them "fell asleep" so very clearly the issue of the growing distance from Christ's ascension was creating concerns of its own at a very early stage. Was it not time for the trumpet? While we will re-visit this context elsewhere in these studies it has to be said that the teaching Paul gives to Corinth should be read in the light of what he said earlier on the same subject.

So what did he say? He said that the Thessalonians should not weep hopelessly like pagans for God through his son Jesus would lead *εξει* those who slept with Himself as the bridegroom who loves His bride; it would be a bit like a departure for the marriage banquet – good to be early. Then he applies something he knows Jesus said – the word of the LORD, and adds "We who are left around shall not prevent those that have fallen asleep for the LORD shall come with a "shout of command" "the archangel's voice" and "the trumpet of God." He stresses that there are three hallmarks of the genuine return of the bridegroom – it is just not true that Jesus has arrived silently. He then emphasises that the dead in Christ "will have risen" first.

SURVIVING CHRISTIANS

Significantly he twice mentions "surviving" Christians *περιλειπομενοι* who live until or at those days of the Trumpet. Such believers as are then alive will be caught up to "happen upon the LORD in the air." Clearly this reference from five years back can be coupled with the idea of "ranks" [1Corinthians 15.23] of believers "meeting Christ in the interim before the "trumpet call" so that Paul begins to see a long line of those who leave earth for paradise as an ever growing stream by now and recognises that the grace of God that brings salvation is extending over time to reach the nations.

FIRST GENERATION AMBITION LAUDABLE BUT NOT THE FULL PLAN

The first generation of Christians is traditionally thought to have divided the world between them to reach the utmost parts. They first set out to fulfill the plan of Jesus "This gospel shall be preached in the entire world" but they must have begun to realise there was an even grander long-term plan in the mind of God. The question for us is "Where does that put resurrection?" Are the sleepers changed? Have they got new

bodies from heaven? Is that what Paul meant by his statement in 2Corinthians 5.1-2 when he speaks of our awaiting *οικητηριον* [**FIXED DWELLING**] to replace our *σκενη* or temporary body tent? Could it just conceivably be that he is saying that he does not want to be found naked? Or remain as an unclothed spirit for ages till the rapture! But why "found naked"?

WHAT OF THE DEAD WHO HAVE DIED IN THE LORD?

The apostle is looking back from the final trumpet towards where he is positioned in history and telling the Corinthian Christians that at the blast of the trumpet however many have died (he uses the euphemism "fallen asleep") all will have been changed. One gets the impression Paul expects this event much sooner than two millennia plus later-in fact possibly in the lifetime of his readers. This time factor brings with it the issue of what happens to the saints before they are changed or before the trumpet call a thousand years later? Are their *souls sleeping* as the 7th day Adventists surmise? Are they *in a holding intermediate state* adduced by Protestant biblical scholars? Are they already in Paradise? Are they *disembodied spirits* like the spirits in prison whom Jesus

visited immediately after He died in Sheol? Are we like these disembodied ones to have identikit bodies again? Conversely, are saints who have died completed already and waiting on the trumpet call? Have they been given bodies from heaven? More complex still have they received bodies from heaven whilst awaiting other bodies which will come out of the graves at the trumpet call for the church at the rapture? As we go further let us look at how the Apostle Paul explains the concept of "being Clothed upon" with **OUR BODY WHICH IS FROM HEAVEN.**

§ EXAMINATION OF 12 PRINCIPLES OF RISEN LIFE

(1) A BODY OWING NOTHING TO DUST

We have little option but to believe that the body of Christ was changed much as ours may be at his coming. Our Orthodox Fathers taught that Christ took to himself "a true body" like ours but we learn from the Psalmist that it did not suffer corruption and we learn from the N. T. text and indeed from Zechariah the prophet that it bears the marks of His crucifixion. Christ's body was terribly marred though scripture gives us to understand that it was incorruptible – "Thou shalt not suffer thine holy one to see corruption" (See Psalm 16.10, Acts 2.27,31 & 13.35). Paul assures us that we can expect to be clothed with our body from heaven – 2 Corinthians 5.4. This is guaranteed and not subject to surmise. When the bible tells us that this body returns to dust (Gen. 3.19, Job 34.15, Ps 104.29, Ecc.12. 7) and the spirit to God who gave it we are not to infer that this carbon dust reconstitutes. It passes through many physical changes as Job well understood when he spoke of worms carrying it away and I think he would have gently smiled at anyone who presumed to suggest it would constitute the foundation of our new body. What Job actually said was "Apart from my house of flesh" I will see God. No Christian need yield on the doctrinal truth of the bodily resurrection nor can any believer insist on an eternal dust body bound together in the present anatomic and atomic structure. None can point to a guarantee in scripture of

this present body being so re-constructed any more than the New Earth will be a material replica of the present one which will be burned up.

We cannot say that our new body will depend on oxygen but we know we shall speak. We cannot insist that our new body has an identical stomach and draught but we shall eat. We cannot say that our new body will be balanced by inner ear fluid but we shall walk. We cannot say that our new body produces marrow but we shall have bones as our LORD had. Carbon based bodies are not suited to the glorious setting of immortality-simply because they are naturally subject to decay and disintegration.

(2) NEW FLESH

Our LORD said "Flesh and blood cannot inherit eternal life". We are not headed for an eternity of cuts blood pressure, anemia and transfusions. Nor are we going to experience a welter of skin conditions that flesh is heir to. Conversely, Jesus said "A Spirit has not flesh and bone as you see I have". There is the proof that we shall have both skin and bone. The character of the skeletal infrastructure of the "new body" is one mystery and the nature of the skin another. Perhaps the apostles would have been able to tell us more but we must live by faith till then content that "without my flesh" in its decaying mode I shall see God.

(3 &4) GLORY OR LUMINOSITY (43A)

*We are told we shall be as the angels. They are described as shining creatures. It is believed that Adam and Eve lost something of the aura of originality when they sinned. Something of the sort may lie behind Paul's comparison with the stars. Daniel¹² gives us further strong grounds for believing that there will be a new radiance about the heavenly body. It will possess "glory" **δοξα** and shed its dishonour **ατιμια** nothing of its sorry state and indignity will remain-it will be all honourable.*

(5) IMPERISHABLE (42)

*Our present body decays and is also subject to seduction which very often leads to physical undoing. We shall be awakened imperishable **αφασια** – both "uncorrupted" and "incorruptible" Augustine put it – "Non posse peccare" – we shall sin no more.*

(6) POWER INSTEAD OF WEAKNESS (43B)

Daily we are reminded of the "weakness" of our present bodies. When Paul says that we shall pass away in weakness but be awakened in power (15.43) he is fully aware of that feebleness of frame that precedes death – that sluggishness of mind that develops in later days and the disease and faintness that comes with age and decline. He stressed that we shall wake with bodies characterised by a dynamism that is maintained and that can rise to any task that is demanded of them.

(7) SPIRITUAL

It is at this point we encounter the density of Paul's argument for a very different body. He tells us that Adam was our Father by procreation but he was not a "Spirit life-maker." We have first borne similitude to Adam in being Physical – a word which is indicative of the "animal nature" of Homo Sapiens – of our utter dependence on "breathing" and our very determined "will" selfish "desire" and unruly "passion."

(8) CHANGED

*We shall not sleep in death (passive), some believers will remain alive on earth till Christ comes. Nevertheless we shall all be changed (indicative). Paul is saying that those immediately changed will greet those long since in Christ's presence and all alike will undergo change into His image. This is called "an open secret". The word **αλασσω** is not a mix - and - match word, it means we will have "received one thing in place of another" not a bit of both. In this like those who barter one commodity for another we give away our old body for a new body. At the Rapture or when we are called to Christ this takes place with immediacy.*

***Εν ατομα εν ριπη οφθαλμου εν τη εσχατη σαλπγγι** In a split second – the atom being the smallest particle then known – we shall be changed. **In the twinkling** of the **eye** or swift sweep of the eye lash we shall be changed (future indicative). We shall all be comprehended in the swiftness of change. When our LORD comes with the trump of God **we shall all be in the circle** of those who are changed. Some from earth and from Glory some – but changed with exactly the same immediacy whether at death or at the rapture.*

(9) THE LIVING AND DEAD – MYSTERY OF WAKING & CHANGING

*For the trumpet shall sound and the dead **shall have been raised** incorruptible and we **shall be changed** or have swapped what we have for what we shall be given. Paul is careful to show that the dead will have undergone their awakening or have entered their new state previously. He does not distinctly say "We shall all be changed at that moment" but what he does say is that we shall all be there at the rapture and in the circle of the "changed" ones. The enduement of the Christian dead when we awake in His likeness is, as I understand it, just as that of the living that runs later in the race (1 Thessalonians 4).*

(10) INCORRUPTIBILITY & IMMORTALITY

*It is essential to living in the Holy City with Christ that this corruptible and this mortal change. Paul sees this change as essential to him. The necessity is "enduement" and the verb is aorist middle suggesting not two activities of the redeemed but one only. Thus if we are "clothed upon" as in 2 Corinthians 5 with our bodies from heaven we shall not, I think, be re-clothed at the rapture. It might seem possible to argue from vv52-53 that those who live with Christ are **incorruptible but not immortal** and that "immortality" is a second garment but the single "when" **οταν** in verse 54 disables this argument. This "when" is charged with immense significance!. Paul allies it to the time when he is unclothed and clothed upon.*

(11) VICTORY

When "this corruptible" and "this mortal." shall be clothed in the capacity to remain beyond corruption and death then "victory" will be complete. Death will have been drunk like a beverage-gulped down like a city overwhelmed by earthquake-sunk like a small boat or consumed like a talent of wool in a dress. Better still in the O.T. terms of Isaiah 25. 8 – He will "swallow up death". As the NSJ puts it He will be as a "conqueror" overwhelming a city and all opposition – completely and perpetually.

(12) VICTORY – DEATH AND HELL ARE THE LOSERS

Where O death is your quarrel now – Where is your strife? Where is your big battle for man? Where, O death, is your sting? Where O Hades is your quarrel and strife and where has your battle got you? Sin is the sting, and law enforces it but by the gift of God's grace ours is "the" victory of all time – the final victory. The silence of Death and Hades to the question posed in this ancient text of Isaiah and in Paul's Corinthian text is deafening. They are no more. Christ has conquered.

CONCLUSIONS

I SPEAK AS A MAN BUT SUBMIT AS MY PROFOUND BELIEF THAT:

1. We shall receive a body from heaven upon "awaking" in our heavenly inheritance.
2. We shall hear at death the upward call as the saints at the rapture hear the voice of Christ's command. Each saint hears this call but once.
3. We shall be present alongside those who are changed when the trumpet sounds in the fellowship circle of the trumpet – the church triumphant and militant.

4. We shall not at any time be spirits without the soul affording us self-conscious attributes of memory conscience understanding and will – nor indeed without a true body as is appropriate to our continued likeness to Christ.
5. We shall "appear" before the Bema of our LORD at His call in a priority meeting with Him that has to do with His loving interest to hear us and to speak earnestly of our life's story as He discerns and appreciates it.
6. We shall occupy places prepared by Christ in the Father's house and behold the New Jerusalem as it is now having our part in God's praise and glorious fellowship and preparation for the inception of the Millennium and the LORD'S wider administration of grace and justice.
7. We shall be as angels of God as to relationships whilst retaining humanity in our souls and like Christ we shall have both physical and moral incorruptibility.

APOCALYPSE 1.18

Jesus said "I am the living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! I hold the keys of death and Hades."

*There's Victory in Jesus my Saviour for ever
He sought me and He bought me with His own precious blood
He loved me e'er I knew him and thus He drew me to him
He plunged me for victory beneath the cleansing flood.*

MARANATHA -UNTIL HE COMES!

Bob Coffey

Aramaic Bible Companion Study