

Answers to Correspondents

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Question:

When will those who are spoken of as "Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb" be raised and translated?

Answer:

In replying to this question at least three Scriptures come to mind:

1) Hebrews 11: 40, "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

2) Hebrews 12: 23, ". . . and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

3) Revelation 20: 4, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and (those) which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years was finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection; on such the second death has no power."

From the first quotation we learn that the Old Testament worthies will be made perfect when the New Testament saints are perfected. This being made perfect is to exchange the disembodied condition for the embodied condition.

The second quotation declares plainly that in the present time, and subsequent upon our Lord having obtained an eternal redemption, the Old Testament saints are now, as to their spirits, in the good of redemption — being perfect. Nevertheless, they await our being perfected, which we shall be at the coming of our Lord. Then, according to Philippians 3: 20, 21 our change will be effected — we shall have bodies of glory like to our Saviour. Then, too, they shall be made perfect, bodily, for there will be no disembodied spirits in glory.

"We shall not all sleep, but we shall *all be changed*" (1 Cor. 15: 51).

This chapter teaches that mankind is divided into two races. God by His grace and power has brought about a transfer from Adam to Christ, "In the Adam all die, in the Christ shall all be made alive. but every man in his own order; Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." Surely the Old Testament saints belong to the latter — "those that are Christ's at His coming"! It may rightly be said that the theme of 1 Cor. 15 is bodily death and consequently bodily resurrection — for death only touches the body and resurrection applies only to the body.

As to the final quotation, please note only three classes are mentioned.

- a) The throne seated ones;
- b) the martyrs of chapters 6 and 13;
- c) The rest of the dead.

The "throne seated and the "martyrs" have their part in the first resurrection (Rev. 20: 6). The rest

of the dead live not again until the thousand years are finished, then they all shall be raised to stand before the Great White Throne to receive final and eternal punishment — "and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire".

Where, then, are the Old Testament saints? Obviously among the "throne seated" ones! How and when did they get there? By the translating power of the Lord Himself at the rapture (1 Thess. 4: 13-18). We conclude then that: "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb" are Old Testament saints such as the "friends of the Bridegroom" in John 3. Little wonder that John Baptist added, "This my joy therefore is fulfilled."

Question:

Recently I heard a speaker say that Daniel would sleep in the dust till he should stand in his lot at the end of the days. I always understood that the first resurrection embraced both Old Testament and New Testament saints. I would like a little light on this matter, please.

Answer:

I nowhere read in Daniel that the prophet would, "sleep in the dust till he would stand in his lot at the end of the days." I do read that, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12: 2). As to the prophet himself, "go thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days" (12: 13).

Israel sleeps, nationally, among the nations today, despite whatever is happening in Palestine. The national death of Israel is not unknown in prophetic Scriptures. See, for instance, Isaiah 26:2-19 — where national death and national resurrection are treated; also Ezekiel 37: 1-14. This it is of which Daniel treats, note there, this national revival follows the time of unparalleled trouble. This ties up with our Lord's prophetic description in Matt. 24: 29-31.

When Daniel stands in his lot at the end of the days, I doubt not he shall have changed his vantage point. Having lost earthly blessing he shall have gained heavenly. Fresh from the marriage supper of the Lamb he, with many, shall witness the descent into the air, out of heaven from God, of Holy Jerusalem, "having the glory of God" (Rev. 21: 9-12).

Question:

Would you, please, explain 1 Peter 3: 19 — Preaching to the spirits in prison. And, also 1 Samuel 28: 11-14. Was it Samuel who was brought up? A. P., N. Ireland.

Answer:

Taking 1 Peter 3: 19 first, let us set out the statements relative by citing the New Translation of J.N.D.

"For Christ indeed has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in flesh, but made alive in (the) Spirit, in which also he preached to the spirits (which are) in prison, heretofore disobedient, when the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was preparing" (1 Peter 3: 18-20).

(Please read also Genesis 6: 3, 4; 1 Peter 1: 10-12; 2 Peter 1: 21; 2 Peter 2: 5; Hebrews 11: 7.)

Please note that the preaching of righteousness by Noah, while the ark was preparing, was "in the Spirit of Christ." This explains how Christ *in the Spirit* preached in Noah's day.

The question asked, probably arises from an error, only too commonly held, that our Lord went into the prison to preach to spirits held there. The tense used is important to the understanding of the passage. Note, therefore, that these imprisoned spirits were *not* such when they heard the preaching. *They were in their bodies.* The Spirit of Christ, in the preaching of Noah, warned them of the coming flood — the judgment of God upon the world that then was because of the appalling wickedness then prevalent (Gen. 6: 5-12). So then, Christ preached to them by His Spirit, in Noah, during the period of God's long suffering. At the time Peter's first Epistle was written, they were — as to their spirits — in prison having been carried away — in their bodies — by the waters of the flood, because of their wanton disobedience. Hence the warning to the mockers of Peter's day (and ours) who scoffingly asked, "Where is the promise of His coming? for from the time the fathers fell asleep all things remain thus from the beginning of the creation. For this is hidden from them through their own wilfulness . . . the then world, deluged with water, perished" (2 Peter 3: 4-6; and Luke 17: 26, 27).

The foregoing leaves a solemn question with our readers; Is it really to be thought that if our Lord had actually gone and preached to the spirits in prison, His preaching would have been confined to those who were disobedient in Noah's day? A second opportunity of repentance is not any time given to such as refuse the testimony of God. Read, 2 Thess. 1: 7-10 and Chapter 2: 8-12.

Turning now to the matter of the "Witch of Endor" and the question "was it Samuel who was brought up?" Please note — we do not read she brought Samuel up! We do read she had a "familiar spirit." Such were undoubtedly diabolically empowered to impersonate dead persons. When the witch of Endor saw Samuel *himself* rising from the earth, she gave a loud shriek of terror, indicating that Samuel's appearance was entirely unexpected by her. The familiar spirit was rendered impotent by the power of God. He, in the exercise of His super-abounding power had *brought Samuel up from the grave* for the express purpose of pronouncing the impending doom of Saul, the king whom the people had chosen, and whom he had earlier abandoned. So, Samuel, the prophet, divinely raised for the occasion, said, "Tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me" (see 1 Samuel 31: 2-6 for the fulfilment of this; also read 1 Samuel 28: 11-20). The witch was as much surprised as Saul at the appearance of Samuel. She obviously had *no part* in bringing him up — this was by the direct intervention of God.

Let us remember that Satan has terrific power and that he has an army of demons under his control and at his command. He is thus able to impersonate, to imitate; but he can neither create nor annihilate.

We would utter a word of solemn warning to any of our readers who may be tempted, in this day of increasing Satanism, to dabble in the occult. This so-called "Spiritualism", or more properly "Spiritism," is of Satan, the deceiving devil, and has its origin in the abyss (Isaiah 8: 19, 20 refers).

Samuels' words to Saul, "Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?" would indicate the dead have neither pleasure nor desire to be contacted by the living.

Question:

"Knowing that Christ having been raised up from the dead dies no more. Death has dominion over Him no more" (Romans 6: 9)

Does this imply that death had, at some time, had dominion over Him?

Answer:

Not at all! We must remember, as the questioner remarks in his quotation from John 10: 17, 18, "death had absolutely no claim or power over Him."

Why then did He die? For sins — the fruit; and sin — the root. For this He had come into the world — had become incarnate.

He did not die as we die, we cannot help dying, for in our case "the wages of sin is death". The sentence passed by God on Adam was "In the day that thou eatest of it thou shalt certainly die" (Gen. 2: 17). Adam ate in disobedience and in consequence "by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death; and thus death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5: 12).

So our Lord was exempt from death, for the consensus of Scripture testimony concurs in declaring His sinlessness, viz.: 1 Peter 2: 22, "Who did no sin." 2 Corinthians 5: 21, "Him Who knew not sin," and, 1 John 3: 5, "in Him sin is not." "He gave Himself." "Christ died for us." "Christ died for our sins."

Mr. Darby has written: "No one takes His life from Him; He gives it up, but at the moment willed of God. He is abandoned in fact to the effect of man's iniquity, because He came to accomplish the will of God; He suffers Himself to be crucified and slain. *Only the moment He yields up His spirit is in His hands . . .* He works no miracle not to die, but He works a miracle in dying. He acts according to His divine rights in dying." (Col. Writings. Doctrinal No. 3. vol. 10 page 182.)

Thus death had no dominion over Him *except as He submitted to it*. Having done so He is finished with that responsible order of life to which death applied. To which, in you and me, sin attached. He, as raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, has forever left that condition to which death's dominion related, into which He had once voluntarily entered. So, "Death has dominion over Him no more."