

"For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living". **Romans 14:9**

Whither Have the Dead Gone?

by Ray Prinzing

"I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive fore evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." [Revelation 1:18].

When faced with the question which we have used as "theme" of this message, our first reaction could be summed up in the words of the Samaritan woman, "Sir - the well is deep, and through hast nothing to draw with." But as we began to search the scriptures, and the Holy Spirit begins to quicken our understanding with glimpses of truth, we find precious hope and comfort concerning the realms beyond this earthly state.

The subject is indeed of interest, and might we say, a ray of light on these things can prove to be most valuable, for, as it has been aptly stated by one, "It is not possible to know if this life is truly a happy and prosperous one till we know how it terminates."

In presenting this brief message, we do not mean to be dogmatic, but rather desirous only of sharing what the Spirit has made real to our own heart. We realize it is but the first step in probing into these mysteries of the unknown, but may the Spirit of Truth guide us, and open up to our understanding more and more of those things which have been hidden from the unsanctified gaze of the wise and prudent, and yet are now revealed unto babes. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight." [Matthew 11:25-26].

Unseen Realm Called "Hell"

There are three Greek words which have been translated as "hell" in our commonly used King James or Authorized Version of the Bible.

HADES - meaning: the unseen state. And it corresponds to the Hebrew word "sheol," of the same meaning.

GEENNA - referring to the Valley of Hinnom, or Gehenna, which was the place of constant burning of refuse. So as such it stands in type for the place of purifying. It is referred to in the Old Testament by the name of TOPHET, located in the Valley of Hinnom, a place where many sacrifices were made and dead bodies consumed, or else were buried.

TARTAROO - the English form is Tartarus. Though this word isn't so well known, the meaning of it can best be obtained by a look at the verse where it is used, found in 2 Peter 2:4, to mean the abode where the wicked are sent and held until the hour of their judgment.

All three of these Greek words, HADES, GEENNA, and TARTAROO have been translated by the one Anglo-Saxon word of "HELL". There has, of course, been much confusion over this translating, using one word for three different words and their own peculiar meanings.

Added to all this we have another problem today, in that our own English words are changing their meanings over a period of years. For an example, we quote from a writing by Loyal F. Hurley: "Our old English word 'hell' is a derivative from the Saxon 'hillan' or helan,' or from 'holl,' a

cavern, anciently denoted the concealed or UNSEEN PLACE of the dead in general. In parts of England men still say, 'I plan to hell my potatoes,' meaning, to bury them in a hole or pit, that is, a covered place. And formerly a lover would take his sweetheart into a 'hell' to kiss her, that is, into a place where others could not see." unquote.

Thus we can see also how far we have come in changing even this word HELL from what it once stood for, until now by popular usage it has come to mean some place of torment, and for some it even includes the thought of the lake of fire, which terminology is used in the book of Revelation.

The Hadean State

Of the three words presented in the foregoing, the one we desire to consider in this study is the word HADES, as we endeavour to learn more about where our loved ones go when they die physically. Where do they go? They have gone into what has been commonly called during past centuries as "THE UNKNOWN," or, Hadean state. We know that they have not passed out of existence altogether, for man is not only a body and soul, but also spirit. And when the "spirit of man" passes from this present tabernacle of flesh, it goes into a realm unseen by the eyes of mortal man.

David, in speaking of it at the time when his first son by Bathsheba died, said, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." He knew there was a place where he would be able to join the spirit of this infant child. And likewise the phrase often used in the Old Testament of their being "gathered unto their fathers," meant far more than having their bodies buried in the same grave.

Jesus said to the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, nor in life beyond the grave, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. - Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? GOD IS NOT THE GOD OF THE DEAD, BUT OF THE LIVING." [Matthew 22:29, 31-32].

Now the word "hades" occurs eleven times in the Bible, ten times it is translated as "hell" and we list them.

Matthew 11:23, "shalt be brought down to hell."

Matthew 16:18, "gates of hell shall not prevail."

Luke 10:15, "shalt be thrust down to hell."

Luke 16:23, "in hell he lifted up his eyes."

Acts 2:27, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell."

Acts 2:31, "that his soul was not left in hell."

Revelation 1:1, "have the keys of hell and death."

Revelation 6:8, "was death, and hell followed with him."

Revelation 20:13, "death and hell delivered up the dead."

Revelation 20:14, "death and hell were cast into the lake..."

And just once HADES is translated as "grave," as given in 1 Corinthians 15:55, "O grave, where is thy victory." This word GRAVE literally means "unseen place."

Christ has the keys to the hadean state, and therefore it is no longer an unknown and fearful state. Once man felt terror and dread of this UNSEEN REALM, but now that we know that Christ is Victor over all, even Hades, we can be at peace, knowing that HIS PRESENCE PERVADES EVERY REALM, and whatever transpires in Hades will be according to the divine will of our God. There is nothing outside of the scope of Christ's dominion - and though we cannot see into the "unseen state" with our eyes of these mortal bodies, all is open before Him. Amen

Now Hades, as we have mentioned, means the "invisible" world of departed spirits. For the sake of our understanding, using terms we can comprehend, it appears a division could be made between the "positive" and the "negative" regions. The positive realm would be called PARADISE. Luke 23:43, "And Jesus said unto him... Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

The negative realm would be called TARTARUS. 2 Peter 2:4 "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell [Greek, Tatarus], and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment."

Death is a transition process, in that we "die" to one form of life, and live to another. Physical death becomes a release from the mortal, fleshly realm, so that we might enter into the next realm, the Hadean state, and remain there until we have a resurrection that lifts us up from among the dead, or shall we say, advances from that realm into an even more spiritual state.

We might point out that even be there a return into a body that can be manifested in this present realm of nature, it is not that same grossly material body of this earth's substance, for the word "resurrection" is a word in the Greek that means: "A RISING, OR STANDING UP," or, as we might say, AN ADVANCING.

"Some will say, how are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be... but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him." [1 Corinthians 15:35-38].

There are many types of bodies, terrestrial, and celestial. But suffice it for now to say that we find no scriptural proof of ever returning to these same bodies of earth, of this present substance. For even Jesus, after His glorious resurrection, was manifested in a body no longer subjected to this world's system and atom structure. He then had a body which could appear in the room, the doors being shut. It was a glorious body far beyond the realm of this corruptible.

Leading Captivity Captive

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison..." [1 Peter 3:18-19].

"And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." [Colossians 2:15].

"Wherefore he saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." [Ephesians 4:8-10].

This phrase, "leading captivity captive," is almost the same as the one in [Judges 5:12], in the song of Deborah, as she was leading the chorus of a victory song after the subduing of the armies of Sisera. We read of her singing, "Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam." What was she speaking of? Barak had gone out against the armies of Sisera - he captured the enemy, taking dominion over them with the sword, and all those that were captured alive were led back captive to his own land, thus he "led captivity captive." Parading back victoriously, in his train were all the captives which he had conquered of the armies of Sisera.

So also, my friend, the phrase in Ephesians 4:8, has the same meaning. When Jesus entered Hades, totally conquered the satanic host, as by His death on the cross, He "spoiled principalities and powers," and the He "made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them."

He went into the strong man's house, He conquered all of the principalities and powers and made a shew of it openly, with His enemies powerless to resist Him - He led those whom He had subdued captive. Thus through the power of His death and resurrection, Christ, as Victor, Having broken the bands which Satan had forged, opened the way for a free flowing from the heart of man back to his Creator. And then He freely "gave gifts unto men."

Ephesians 4:11-12, "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

When Christ conquered and led captivity captive, then having subdued the adversary, "destroying the works of the devil." [1 John 3:8], He turned His attention to the upbuilding of His own, reconciling, restoring, and so He gave gifts unto men. What gifts? Those ministries which would serve for "the perfecting of the saints," that there might be a building up of the body of Christ. In that HE GAINED THE VICTORY, in triumph He now divides the spoils with His own.

Christ not only went into the Hadean state and conquered principalities and powers, triumphing over them, but He came back and freely divided unto you and I the spoils of that victory. HE now is ready to impart unto us, share with us that same victory, so that "through Him," we might also prevail. "We are more than conquerors THROUGH HIM that loved us." [Romans 8:37]. And to manifest that He was able to divide the spoils, He gave gifts, Apostles and Prophets, Evangelists, and Teaching-Pastors (as the Greek text gives), whom He now endues with the same victory that He possesses, so that they will be able to build up the church into His full triumph, yes, into the fulness of His own stature. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." [Ephesians 4:13].

Christ recovered from the enemy everything man had been robbed of through he guile and deceit of the serpent. A tragic loss it was, by trickery and lies, as the Evil One caused man to forfeit and turn them over to him all the dominions which God has entrusted to man. But, praise the Lord, Christ has conquered that "strong one of evil," and now He is going back and restore to man that first dominion, plus added blessings.

Christ hath redeemed, bought back by His own blood, all that man lost through his fall into selfhood and sin.

In due time Christ will manifest His dominion and this victory over all, though for the present, Hebrews 2:8, states, "But now we see not yet all things put under Him." Yet methinks we are fast drawing nigh to that hour when it will begin to be made manifest. We are rapidly nearing the end of this present age, we are in the transition period, moving from one age into another, and in that new age to come there will be tremendous manifestations of His power and glory. More and more we shall find that Christ's dominion - all that He has secured for man, is going to become a

reality in literal manifestation, than we have ever hoped in our fondest dreams. To God be the glory and praise!

Departed Saints Are Still In Hades

That the saints do not go into the highest heavens immediately upon death to the physical body, is borne out by Acts 2:34, "For David is not ascended into the heavens but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool."

This verse is found in the message that Peter was giving unto the people on the day of Pentecost, when he was speaking of the glorious resurrection of the "Son of God." He was preaching of the One who walked those lonely shores of Galilee, the One who was "a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders which God did by Him in the midst of you." [Acts 2:22], the One whom the rulers of the people demanded should be crucified and hung on a tree; but, Peter went on, He arose from the dead, and is not seated at the right hand of God where HE shall sit until His enemies are made His footstool. Yet note - Peter said that "David is not ascended into the heavens."

Now, if Christ, as some suppose, had led out from that unseen world, Hades, all the saints, then surely David would have been released from that realm. But Jesus did not, for that was not His capture; He subdued all that belonged to the realm of the satanic principality and power. David is still in his place-- a good place we call Paradise. Might we say that it is a lot better there, than here where we are subjected to our mortal bodies, with all their limitations, pain and travail. Thus, people have dreams and visions of their loved ones in places so beautiful that they are hard to describe in words. MUCH OF THESE DREAMS AND VISIONS ARE IN HARMONY WITH THE SCRIPTURES, for believers are in the unseen world, Hadean Paradise. And furthermore, as God would minister unto a sorrowing heart, and grant such a vision, it would have to be a vision or dream accommodated in the comprehension of the one receiving it, and what they can understand as a place of rest and peace. But this does not mean that we dare base our doctrines upon "visions." We need to be firmly settled in the Word of God, Dreams, visions, experiences, were n ever meant to be the foundation of our faith. Upon His Word alone we stand! But we do praise God for the way He can condescend to men of low estate, and express to us in ways and means that we are able to grasp, to give us glimpses of greater realities.

Thus, only Christ hath ascended into the heavens; "Whom the heaven must receive until the time of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." [Acts 3:21].

Now we turn to John 3:13, and bear in mind this gospel was written by the apostle John after the Christ had ascended to the right hand of God. This one verse we are quoting was not spoken by Christ, but was inserted by John in his record of the time when Jesus was visited by Nicodemus. Quote: "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, BUT HE THAT CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN, EVEN THE SON OF MAN WHICH IS IN HEAVEN."

No man hath yet ascended into heaven, writes John, but the Lord Jesus Christ, who first came down and took on Himself the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The same did conquer death and come forth victorious, and now has gone back to heaven again.

This becomes even plainer when we remember that Christ Himself did not ascend into heaven immediately after His physical death, but after His resurrection. Jesus died and went into the Hadean state under the hold of the Usurper, but there He manifested His victory, was acknowledged as SOVEREIGN LORD, and He spoiled principalities and powers. Finishing His work in that Hadean realm, by resurrection power He returned in a new body to this earth, and

then went on to appear in heaven. It was as He was returning from Hades, that He appeared first unto Mary in the garden. And when she recognized her Lord, before she could begin to touch Him, "Jesus saith unto her, Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." [John 20:17].

How we love those words of Jesus, "My Father, and your Father; My God, and your God." Tell the brethren about it. Tell them that I am going to ascend to our Father, and then I am coming back to see them. Tell them that they should prepare to see Me in the place where I appointed them to go. (See, Matthew 28:16).

"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." [John 20:19]. Between the time of being seen first by Mary, and then later by the disciples, we note that Christ ascended to His Father and presented Himself as the Lamb that had been slain, and now is alive forevermore. Then He came back to meet with His disciples to declare to them how that He was indeed LORD OF HADES - having conquered death, proving that one could die and live again by the power of God. Yes, He told them to even touch Him so that they might know it was He.

He stayed a while, - "being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." [Acts 1:3]. But the thought we are after right now, is that Jesus ascended AFTER His resurrection, AFTER conquering death. Thus, we daresay, a resurrection change will have to be wrought out in us before we'll ever stand before the throne of the Father. But this doesn't mean that we shall all have to die physically first, for Paul states that some shall be alive and remain until the time of the end of this age, when He appears again. The Word tells us that Jesus Christ is going to appear, and "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." [1 John 3:2]. Then you will experience a resurrection change beyond anything that you can comprehend at this present time. We will have a resurrection indeed! It won't bring us out of some grave, if we are not physically dead at that time, but it will release us from this present corruptible body, and He will "change our vile body so that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself." [Philippians 3:21].

Weeping and Waiting In Hades

The full harvest of joy cannot come until the "age of the ages" when He makes ALL THINGS NEW. But this does not detract from the fact that Paradise is a blessed state; nor that Tartarus is a place where the wicked are further disciplined and corrected. But after all resurrections, then shall all men enjoy the glorious AGE OF THE AGES, the JUBILEE when all things are restored into His life and glory. However, there are resurrections prior to this ultimate, both for the righteous and unrighteous. Those who are fully surrendered to His Lordship, with all iniquity purged out, shall advance into new dimensions of His life, while those who need still further purging and correction will advance into those operations - some even to go through the "lake of fire" prepared for that specific purpose. But it will be a fuller state, either as greater measures of discipline upon the condition when each comes forth in their respective resurrection.

Nor does the fact that there are orders of resurrection change the complete overall picture. But to be in the first resurrection is to enjoy the good things of God sooner, and a guarantee that "on such the second death hath no power." [Revelation 20:6]. Even so, there is a greater blessing yet involved for those who have part in the "better resurrection," [Hebrews 11:35], for they shall share in the glorious work of reconciling the world to God, that He might be ALL IN ALL.

And the rest-- those who do not come up in this first resurrection, will wait out their time in the "Hadean" state until after the Kingdom age is over - "For the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." [Revelation 20:5]. And we might state that there will be some "weeping" while many wait out that time in the Hadean state, realizing that had they obeyed the truth they would not have had the door into the "kingdom" closed to them. But we can press the point even farther, for those who learn their lessons during that time of "Hadean life", and fully yield unto the Lordship of our Saviour, at the end of those years He will bring them forth - wipe all tears from their eyes, and they too, shall enjoy the life of the age of the ages. For God's purpose is progressive in the life of every man, and the Hadean state does not hinder any of this progress. We'll ponder more of this later.

The Spirit Continues To Work in the Unseen Realm

We know that the Spirit of Christ is daily ministering unto mankind in this present life, for He daily loadeth us with His mercies, goodness, grace, and love. With abundant compassion for all of His creation.

And, we believe that the Spirit of God also continues to work in the next state, where the departed spirits go, for we read of Paul's desire, in Philippians 1:23, "For I am a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ; which is far better..." And yet again, 2 Corinthians 5:8, "Willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

Some have supposed that as soon as you die, if you are a Christian, that you go to be with Christ, right into the highest heavens where He is, but, we have already pointed out by the scripture that no man has yet ascended into heaven. But you do go into a greater realm than this one, and there Christ will manifest Himself in an even further working. The release from this bondage of vanity, and this corruptible body, can prove to be just a progressive step, as one moves in yieldedness to the Spirit. Thus Paul desired to go on to the next state, realizing that it would be far better than this one of present travail. Hold with us a moment and we shall add further comment to that thought. But first take a look at the word "depart," which Paul desired to do, for in the Greek it means: TO LOOSE UP (as an anchor). That makes me wonder how much are we anchored to the things of this world's system, so that we have no burning desire to enter into a closer state of union, where our Lord is more real to us?

But we are willing rather to be absent from this body, and present with the Lord. The word "present" is also very interesting. According to Young's Concordance, it means: "to be among one's own people." (the Lord's saints)," IN PARADISE. How much it means to just be released from the filth of this world which man has so corrupted, and to get into that blessed company of Paradise. Quite a thought, isn't it? Perhaps that is what a lot of people feel would be heaven, though perhaps more correctly we could term it a "haven until."

For even the Hadean state of Paradise is not the final goal for which we are striving, it is only an intermediate state where the departed spirits swell until God's own plans and purposes have been wrought out, and then all progresses into that which lies ahead according to His purpose of the ages.

The record concerning Moses gives us more insight into the realm beyond, as a progressive place of development. For in Deuteronomy 32:48-52, we read how Moses was sent up unto Mount Nebo, to "behold the land of Canaan, which I will give unto the children of Israel for a possession." But he himself was not allowed to go in, "Because ye trespassed against Me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah..." when he smote the Rock twice, rather than just speaking to the Rock, while the Lord provided the water for the people. Therefore, "thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither..." Yet about fifteen hundred years

later, when Jesus took Peter, James, and John, up into a high mountain, and was transfigured before them, "Behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him." [Matthew 17:3].

Now, we have to conclude one of two things: Either God had lowered the standard and qualification, so that now Moses was able to appear IN THE LAND, or else, there had been a progressive purging in Moses so that now he was duly qualified - brought up to God's standard, and able to appear there. Since God does not change His standard of holiness, we must conclude that MOSES WAS CHANGED. A spiritual work had taken place in him, sin was blotted out - "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." [Psalm 32:1]. And now Moses was able to appear and commune with Christ concerning His "decrease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." [Luke 9:31]. But the point for now, Moses was there, on the mount with our Lord.

We glean a thought from the passage in Revelation 6:9-11, concerning the fifth seal. There we find the souls under the altar (not up with Christ, sharing His glory and throne), and what are they doing? Waiting and crying out, "How long, O Lord -?" That lets us know that you have emotions in the next world, with the departed spirits. It seems they were getting a little impatient, questioning how long it would be before the end would come to their waiting there.

Not only were they somewhat impatient at the time element (a common problem for us all, I am sure), but it reads on, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth." They were crying for vengeance-- thus they obviously were not yet made perfect in FORGIVENESS, and so there was more of the Divine inworking required, and they were ministered unto, for white robes were given unto them. New degrees of righteousness, deeper love, more forgiveness, ever more to be like HIM. Though they were anxious for some more progress, perhaps even longing for resurrection's dawning hour, yet they were told to rest yet for a little season, for there were still some others that would become martyrs, ever God's plans and purposed were fulfilled. But to cheer them up, to bless them, they were still some others that would become martyrs, ever God's plans and purposed were fulfilled. But to cheer them up, to bless them, they were ministered unto, becoming evidence of the Spirit's enrichment in the Unseen realm.

But there is still further proof in the Word of God as we turn to 1 Peter 3:19-20, "By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometimes were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."

1 Peter 4:6, "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

So again we see there has been quite a lot of activity in the Hadean state. When Christ died upon the cross, and went into the unseen world, He went to both parts, Tartarus and Paradise, for He said to the believing man on the cross, "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise," but He also entered the strong man's domain and broke his grasp upon the souls of men, then making an open shew to all of His triumph. He was able to declare Himself as the Lamb of God, slayer for the sins of the whole creation, and now the great Redeemer, the One who would ULTIMATELY bring every one and everything back into harmony with the Godhead again.

Therefore we can state-- Christ not only manifests in this life of His love and mercy, but also in the next realm. And of a truth, we believe that after the great times of judgment have passed, and all sin is conquered completely, then in radiant glory God will reign supreme in the age of the ages, while we fellowship with Him in that blessed harmony. So we see that the present Hadean

state is only a step toward greater manifestations of glory, when we shall come sinlessly into the age of the ages.

Life in the Unseen World

Physical death therefore can only separate us from an earthly body, we die out to this life, but we become more alive to the next state, the Hadean state. This next state will be one of two things, either becoming a place for further discipline, the process of judgment, or it can become a place of further growth and development into spiritual perfection.

No doubt many of those in Tartarus will have learned their lesson by the hour of the judgment before God's great white throne, and they will have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and won't need any further discipline. Others will need additional and severer correction, and so will pass on to the lake-of-fire experience for their additional purgings.

The day of Christ cannot fully consummate until that hour when all has been subdued and fully reconciled to God, so--until that time when the Godhead shall become all in all, Christ is still the Mighty Saviour, yesterday, today, and for the ages. And, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." [Philippians 1:6]. Yes, He that has begun a good in you will continue until it is brought to perfection, and a death to the physical body cannot thwart progress, since Christ holds the keys of death and hades, and HE is Victor over them both.

1 Peter 4:6, "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead..." This word "preached" is the same as the word used when Paul declared, "We preach Christ crucified..." Thus, also, the good news was heralded to those spirits in prison. For what purpose? That they might be judged according to men in the flesh. There was a judging taking place which He preached. What a revival that must have been - and it was successful, for we read that while they were judged according to the flesh, "they were QUICKENED according to God in the spirit." So, you say, that must be a doctrine of second change? NEVER! Salvation is never by chance, not first chance or second chance, it is only, and always, by the grace of GOD. God's gifts are never by chance. It was not chance that nailed Him to the cross. It was LOVE that foreordained the whole plan of redemption, and is now working it out to its glorious completion.

But consider also, though love will eventually subdue and conquer all, what a heat and fire some will have to endure before they finally yield to the love of the Saviour. Does not the same thing portray itself even in people today? The same boys that never darkened a church door in peace time suddenly find themselves crying out for mercy from God while they huddle in a foxhole on the battle front. What brought all of this about? Might we infer that the Lord brought a little pressure to bear on them, until they would turn and surrender to Him? Truly we serve a God who has specially designed His "ways and means committees" that can gain their attention, put a bend in their pathway, and draw them unto Himself. And we find that He is a mite difficult to ignore, when He is applying the pressure. He said He would "Draw all men unto Me." [John 12:32]. The Greek word for "draw" is "helko", which Strong's Concordance gives to mean: TO DRAW. Resistance might make for dragging, but surrender will come, and then we are simply drawn unto Him. "Draw me, we will run after Thee." [Song of Solomon 1:4]. Praise God!

Believers Become Ministering Spirits

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. [Revelation 14:13].

Those who "die in the Lord" obviously refer to those believers which have yielded their life to Christ, their will is His, and they acknowledge Him as sovereign LORD of their life. Total allegiance, they belong to Him! Then there are two words to be noted: labours" and "works," for they rest from their labours, but their works do follow them. The Greek word for "labours" used here is "kopos" meaning: a beating, wearying out work; and bespeaks of the toil of our earthly pain and travail. While the word "works" is "ergo" which means: acts, deeds, doings; and bespeaks of one's ministry as well. Thus we see that physical death releases us from all the toil and pain of the body, but the true call upon us, that ministry which He has imparted to us, FOLLOWS US into the realms beyond, where, at His direction, we might continue to serve Him, in a greater expression, to His glory.

Hebrews 1:14 speaks of His messengers, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

As John received his tremendous revelation concerning things to come, "When I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel (messenger) which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and OF THY BRETHREN the prophets, and of them which keep the saying of this book: worship Go." [Revelation 22:8-9].

We know that we are "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses..." [Hebrews 12:1], those whom the Lord uses to encourage and strengthen us. There is that blessed communion and fellowship of the saints - however, we do not worship them, nor idolize them, for we would look only "unto Jesus the Author and the Finisher of our faith," [Hebrews 12:2], and let Him provide the help we need through whomever He chooses. Yet it is a tremendous comfort to now that these godly men and women who have gone on before us, are also used in our upbuilding, that we might follow on to know the Lord in His fulness.

Conclusion

We are now living in a time of pressure unparalleled in all history. Yet many the Lord use this to draw many closer to Himself, before more heat is turned on, more pressure applied. May He speedily perfect that which concerneth us. Yet if it so be, that He does call us to Himself by the way of the grave, we know that this is not a hindrance to our progressive development into His likeness, for beyond the veil the work continues. We know not the hour of His appearing - it may be soon enough that many of us will not have to enter that Hadean realm, if we are looking for Him, waiting for Him. He will appear unto His own, and change their mortal bodies, fashion them anew lie unto His glorious body, bringing them into immortality, incorruption, the fulness of LIFE. He holds the keys of both death and Hades - HE is conquer over all, may He indeed be "LORD OF ALL" in our personal life, so that we might enter into the next age with Him, rejoicing in His purpose and plan for the Kingdom.

However, if He tarries, and we, or our loved ones do go by the way of the grave, we know that this does not hinder their progression, and when He does return, He will bring them with Him, and "together" we shall serve Him. Truly, IN HIM IS LIFE, and we need not fear death any longer. Amen!

THE RADIANCE OF HIS LIGHT

By Ray Prinzing

Beyond the veil of mortal frame
The radiance of His light,
Doth now the glorious truth proclaim
He conquers all our night.

And the shadows of the present
Can never dim the view,
Since Christ, the veil in two did rent,
And light came shining through.

And so although we walk the path
That leads beyond the veil,
We rest secure in Him who hath
The power to prevail.

For Christ, the Light illumines the way
Of holiness so pure,
Empowering us to take the prey
Which darkness would obscure.

And so it matters not even now
Which side the veil we stand,
The Light eternal doth endow
His own to understand.

And walking in the way He leads
Grows brighter day by day,
Since light the darkness supercedes,
Forevermore to stay.

And if it be that Paradise
Shall be my stepping-stone,
In faith I'll rest until the hour
I stand before His throne.

As it is always written in Ray's publications:

NOT TO BE SOLD - this book is given free, as a ministry of love. That which is contained therein cannot be valued in terms of material goods, but is shared with others because it has become life and light to us. May it be received in the same spirit of love in which it is shared. If there be any thoughts expressed that seem to be the result of only natural thinking, we trust that a little breath of kindness will blow the chaff away, that the kernel of truth might remain to bless.