

Comments on

“Raised To life”

Among recent publications for distribution is a booklet entitled “Raised To Judgment” by Michael Ashton claiming to be the Bible teaching about resurrection and judgment. The booklet represents the Christadelphian belief on the subject and their interpretation of Scripture. The booklet surely has the blessing of their members; for it is issued by the Christadelphian Publishing Office in Birmingham. A reply to this booklet by Brother Phil Parry now follows:

But is it Bible teaching? Is it not rather Christadelphian theorising? Surely judgment precedes resurrection. How could Jesus know who to raise from the dead unless this had been categorised before-hand by judgment?

If resurrection concerns only the responsible to God, who defines the measure of that responsibility? Whether it be unto eternal reward or unto judicial death? (The second death). The faithful mentioned in Hebrews 11 obtained a good report by their faith and works. Who says so? The writer of the epistle. By what authority? The authority of God and His Word. “Without faith it is impossible to please Him.” - Hebrews 11:1,2,& 6. Verse 16 gives their judgment from God, “wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”

Jesus also confirms the judgment of God on the Patriarchs before the Moses mission began, but this was to show their worthiness of resurrection (raised incorruptible). “Now that the dead are raised even Moses shewed at the bush... God is not the God of the dead but of the living.” This then is the judgment; they (the Patriarchs) live unto Him.

I agree with Michael Ashton, the writer of the booklet, that there is as he puts it,

“probably no better way for us to learn more about this wonderful and comforting Christian hope and associated teaching concerning God’s judgment of man, than to examine it through the preaching of the Apostle Paul. He too was persecuted and imprisoned for the things he preached, but while in custody would not be silenced and continued to speak, even to his captors, of the hope which filled his own heart.”

Now while the writer may appear to be giving Paul due praise for refusing to be silenced, it also reflects badly the attitude he and his community together with their predecessors have adopted towards those humble Christians who defended Paul's teaching and those who still do so at the present time, refusing to be silenced, for they have no false theory of the judgment or of the resurrection Paul taught the Corinthians which the writer of the treatise definitely shows himself to have through Christadelphians theorising.

When Paul declared “The dead shall be raised incorruptible,” (1 Corinthians 15:52), he had in mind the words of Jesus, “Now that the dead are ‘raised’ ... God is not the God of the dead but of the living” - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all of like faith – “for they all live unto him.” 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18, “Wherefore comfort ye one another with these words.” This is the pre-resurrectional judgment the Bible teaches through holy men moved by the Holy Spirit, the word which is Spirit and Truth. Can Michael Ashton or anyone else refute the fact that John 5:17-30 is a judgment? Especially verses 24 to 29?

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the

Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

If he accepts verse 28 as it reads will he not be forced to the conclusion that all in the graves will hear His voice and come forth? What then of his responsibility theory? Evidently he is forced to make a judgment because I know that his community do not believe that all that are in the graves will rise. Is not this pre-resurrectional judgment on their part? It certainly is, and the following remarks on pages 7 and 8 confirms this very fact.

On page 8 under the heading “Daniel’s Prophecy” the writer uses the word “categorisation,” and in so doing confirms what he has said on page 7 under “Isaiah’s Commentary,” that certain ones – ‘dead’ and ‘deceased,’ “shall not live nor rise - the memory of them is forgotten - but not so with God’s people including Isaiah.”

Here again he is supporting a pre-resurrectional judgment; exactly what I said he would be forced to do with John 5:28, by adding in brackets “not all,” when quoting Daniel 12:2. If “all” in the graves or in the dust of the earth do not rise, who makes the judgment or decision concerning those who will, whether to everlasting life or to shame and everlasting contempt? Obviously Daniel teaches a resurrection of the just and the unjust. The writer’s set pattern makes it simultaneous through Christadelphian theorising and obligation to set rules of men. The Bible teaches two resurrections separated by period of time from the second coming of Christ when there will be a resurrection of the just, i.e. “Those who are Christ’s at his coming;” and at the end of the thousand years reign, a resurrection of the unjust who are amenable to a Judgment of condemnation, their names not being in the Book of Life. Of the former Jesus says, John 5:25, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not coming into condemnation but is passed from death unto life.” John 6:39,40; and 44-47 nullifies any thought of judgment for everlasting life for those spoken of in the category Jesus refers to.

Paul also is very much in harmony when he treats of this category only as being predestinated and raised incorruptible. See Ephesians 1:6-12; 1 Corinthians 15:50-52. Paul is obviously speaking only of those whom God has accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead and neither can die any more. They have been already judged worthy to obtain a Kingdom or inheritance incorruptible that cannot be moved or destroyed.

One does not have to be worthy to obtain the Christadelphian version of resurrection, because all are equal before passing the Judgment Seat; they are all of corruptible bodies fashioned from the earth afresh or living at the time and some are faithful and some unfaithful. Worthiness or vice versa is no bar in this case. But Jesus speaks of a worthiness before resurrection, not after it. In “Anastasis” John Thomas goes a little further than Michael Ashton by saying “At resurrection unto judgment they come forth in re-created corruptible bodies like Adam’s at his creation.” Taking into account the Christadelphian and almost universal mistaken theory that Adam’s nature was changed to a sin-defiled compound styled “sin-in-the-flesh” or condemned-nature; mortal because of Sin; it is strange to find re-created “very good bodies as Adam’s at his creation, and those who are alive and remain having bodies of a compound I have just described as “condemned nature” in the Christadelphian idiom, standing to be Judged as to whether their bodies should be changed from condemned nature or not, the re-created ones already standing in an uncondemned nature.

This is the chaotic nonsense taught by the precept of men. Men who have to resort to an invented doctrine of process resurrection because of a preconceived and false theory of the Bible’s teaching of Judgment of the Household of God and judgment upon those who are by enlightenment amenable to the “second death,” through denial of the faith and adverse conduct.

Page 10:- “Alive at the coming of the Lord.”

The writer says

“In this programme, special arrangements have been made for those who will be alive when Christ returns.”

It is very remarkable that he fights shy of these very arrangements by partly quoting from 1 Corinthians 15 without giving the reference. Is he afraid people will read that “the dead in Christ will rise incorruptible” or that they may turn to Paul’s words on the same subject in his epistle to the 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 thus making void and false the theory of a process resurrection involving judgment similar to an Assize Court? The writer should answer plainly the question I put to him, “Do those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, who are caught up to meet Him and remain with Him, and can it be a comforting thought if they are unawares until passing the scrutiny if their Judge whether they will evermore be with the Lord?”

Page 9. I think “Human Myths and Bible Truth” calls for some comments after considering the writer’s reference to the common belief of the immortality of the soul and then continuing, as he thinks, to give the contrasts between Human Myths and Bible Truths listed Numbers 1 to 7 as follows:

No. 1. “Man is born mortal, a dying creature inheriting his nature from all his ancestors back to Adam.”

I believe this of man and all natural creation but why does he not mention or include the other species? And again, what does he mean by “back to Adam”? What stage in Adam’s history does he believe man goes back to seeing he believes Adam’s nature was changed from what he was at creation? And if changed, why did the rest of creation remain unchanged and yet die? Do we have to refute 1 Corinthians 15:44-49 as Christadelphians do? Paul mentions only two natures from the first man to the risen Christ, natural first, then spiritual second.

No. 2 “Man is sinful. All men are tempted and, with the single exception of the Lord Jesus Christ, commit sins transgressing God’s laws.”

This to me is very debatable. I could agree that man through Adam’s transgression was “constituted” a sinner but this does not make every man a transgressor. I agree that all men are tempted; so also was Eve and Adam in their “very good” nature, but this did not make them or their posterity “sinful.” There is no definite Biblical proof that all men except Jesus transgressed God’s laws. The exception in the case of Jesus was that He was born free of the Federal condemnation “passed upon” all men (not infused into their nature, as taught by Christadelphians and the Apostate Churches). Enoch needed redemption, but can it be said he was “sinful” or “transgressed” God’s laws? There are many more examples in the Bible. If Jesus was an exception why do you print matter like “Redemption in Christ Jesus” where the author states plainly of Jesus that by His action of allowing Himself to be lifted upon the tree He transgressed the law of Moses and so was a debtor to the whole Law and cursed by it? Perhaps you should reflect more on these facts.

No. 3. “All men die, from illness, accident, murder or old age.”

This is a strange and marvellous confession coming from a Christadelphian whose teachings maintain that men die as a penalty for Adam’s sin and not because Adam was created capable of illness, accident, murder or old age; - remember Abel was murdered, many after him could have died through illness, accident, murder or old age; in fact Adam died of old age at 930 years. Abel did not die because he was a sinner, but because he was righteous; there was therefore injustice in his murder, even more so with Jesus our Lord, yet you maintain there was not. See “Redemption in Christ Jesus” by W.F.Barling.

No 4. “Death is total unconsciousness. No longer energised by breath, and the body decomposes to the earthy elements from which it is made.”

I agree with the writers' description of the death state as he has stated in No. 4 concerning Human Myths and Bible Truth.

No. 5. "God will raise from the dead all who know Him and His laws."

The question to be put against this superficial statement is, When? As I have pointed out, some dead will be raised incorruptible and Jesus also said it is life eternal to know God and Jesus Christ whom He sent, which in effect necessitates knowing His Laws. But I doubt whether this is what the writer has in mind seeing that he believes in a simultaneous resurrection if all responsible, believers and unbelievers, faithful and unfaithful, for he goes on to explain his theory at number 6 which reads as follows:

No. 6. "By the Lord Jesus Christ, and at His return to the earth, God will Judge those who have been raised. Some will be granted immortality. The rest will return to their graves for ever."

So that he implies there must be two ways of knowing God and if we do not know Him and His Son as He has revealed it to His servants by His Spirit Word, then life eternal is not for us; we shall not be in the first resurrection on which the second death hath no power. But I notice the writer speaks of a very lenient fate for those who are rejected. "They will return to their graves for ever." No Lake of Fire? No second judicial death? Here is a grave and serious contradiction for we are told that the blessed and holy are those of the first resurrection and that it is given unto them to judge the world as priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years. The rest of the dead who obviously are not the first fruits, that is, Christ's at His coming, do not live again until the thousand years are finished. There will be no doubt some alive at Christ's coming who according to Jesus' own words will feel that they have been missed out, and feeling they have had the Truth, will say, "Lord, Lord, have we not preached in Thy name? and in they name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them: Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:21-23). There have been certain people professing to know Jesus and Paul through their Gospel, but have been considered as having evil spirits, for example the man blind from birth; they cast him out as evil; the man who knew and believed Jesus and Paul but whom certain vagabond Jews, exorcists, made mockery of such, and adjured the adverse spirit in the name of Jesus whom Paul preached to come out of him. The wording of this is in Acts 19:10-20 and there is a very important lesson to learn, both in acts of casting out and of having books and literature which misrepresent and bear false witness and do not stand the test of the Spirit Word. Verse 19, What a profit was made! Fifty thousand pieces of silver. No evil spirit can honestly say "Jesus I know and Paul I know, but who are you? "By their fruits ye shall know them."

No. 7. "The immortalised believers, the saints or sanctified ones, will live and reign with Christ in God's Kingdom upon earth."

Again we accept No. 7, without doubt as a Bible Truth. We now wish to consider Bodily Resurrection commencing on page 11.

After a description of the Bodily resurrection of Jesus (flesh and bones) I presume he dare not say "energised by spirit," the writer goes on to say:-

"It is no use for us to question the ability of the all-creating God to raise decomposed bodies, for He first formed man from the dust of the ground and can therefore re-form many men and women who have since that time returned to the dust from which they were made. The similarity of the time of resurrection and judgment to Adam's own experience is very revealing. He was not created immortal. There was a choice before him to obey God or his own desires."

The only similarity I have learned from Scripture is the standing again after dying with Christ to be in the related position Adam had with God before he sinned and with a choice before me (as Adam had) to obey God as a son by adoption and grace or count the blood of Christ whereby I have been sanctified to walk in newness of life, an unholy thing.

True belief, understanding, and baptism is therefore the figure of death unto the dominion of sin and likeness of the glorious resurrection of Christ. He rose incorruptible, flesh and bone - no blood; that was given, poured out for all men, whom God concluded under Adam's sin, the Sin of the world. The similarity I see is that those in this position who through perseverance in striving to please God and maintain their sonship, and the Priesthood and age-lasting judgment of Christ at God's Right Hand to help and intercede on their behalf - the old man cannot be resurrected after being crucified, it must be the new man which after God is created in righteousness. This is the first-fruits resurrection at Christ's coming. Those who have sown to the Spirit while walking in the Spirit, raised incorruptible as Jesus was by the glory of the Father. Therefore those who sow to the flesh will consequently of the flesh reap corruption. This is a separate resurrection, a standing again for Judgment before God on the Great White throne, out of those things recorded in the Books; not the Book of Life. Those whose names are in the Book of Life are already judged worthy, otherwise their names would have been blotted out of it.

There is contradiction and error in what the writer says of Jesus under the heading "The Just Judge," page 12:

"As a human being in the line of Adam the one event that cometh on all came upon Jesus and He was crucified as a result of the machinations of men who were unable to accept His unimpeachable goodness. Because of His life of obedience the grave could not hold Him - God raised Him from the dead and on account of His righteousness granted Him immortality. Because of His victory over death, there is a guarantee for His disciples to share in His triumph..."

The writer is saying here that the death of Jesus was no more than "the one event that cometh to all..." Do all die a "sacrificial death" to take away the sin of the world? Jesus Himself said "The Son of man came to give His life a ransom for many." Did He mean His righteous life? Definitely not. He gave His natural life in the blood, and rose without that blood in a body energised by spirit. The victory of Jesus was not over death but over sin. He suffered death - He tasted death for every man - He came for that purpose - He needed no redemption by virtue of His begetting of the Father. Only in this was and His sinlessness could it be said that "the grave could not hold Him," after He had voluntarily given His life as the Lamb of God.

How is the writer able to condemn those who crucified Jesus for His unimpeachable goodness when all through the history of His community this unimpeachable goodness has been denied to Jesus by virtue of His physical nature? Here of course, they have to invent a dual Christ wearing the robe of condemnation but exhibiting a character of righteousness so that what God should have raised from the grave was a disembodied character, and not a body of flesh and bone that saw no corruption.

Jesus was not given immortality wholly on account of His righteous deeds, eternal life is a gift of God, not of works but the desire to know Him and please Him. The position of Jesus was unique. He was Son of God by begetting, and He maintained His Sonship by obedience to His Father's will and in that will was something concerning Jesus in which all other men could take no part. This was His sacrifice to pay the debt of natural existence owed by Adam and on account of which all in his loins were allowed to be born under that debt with a possible and present typical removal of it in the offering of animal sacrifices in faith. Jesus was born free of this debt and His sacrifice could not be therefore for Himself and others, but only for others as the anti-typical lamb without spot and without blemish. It is difficult to conceive why the writer quotes Romans 6:3-5 and yet believe in a corruptible resurrection of those who have been faithful unto death (asleep in Jesus), for it is obvious Jesus did not rise in flesh and blood, but incorruptible, so in like manner those in Him will rise.

A tenet of Christadelphian teaching is that Adamic condemnation is an element in the physical flesh termed mortality so that baptism has not and cannot, in my view, remove that condemnation. The same physical body that rises from the water is the same which was immersed. So it will be with their version of resurrection. The physical condemnation will not have been removed as it should have been by dying with Christ in Baptism; so they stand before Him still condemned yet professing they are in Him. In the present tense Paul says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, for the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ hath made me free from the Law of Sin and Death." "But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit" Romans 8:1,2. Read Romans 8 and see if you can understand Paul's reasoning on the basis of Christadelphian teaching. Surely on the basis of the Spirit's teaching we must conclude that at the coming of Jesus His reward is with Him to give to every man according as his work shall be (Revelation 22:12); this I believe is a recompense for good conduct only, for as Jesus said to certain ones who did good to those who were too poor to return the compliment, "Seek not to be recompensed, for they cannot recompense thee, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the Just." If Michael Ashton's version of resurrection of just and unjust simultaneously is correct, why did not Jesus confine His statement to "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection"? The obvious answer is that the recompense or reward He speaks of is at the resurrection of the just only - an adverse recompense must therefore be at a resurrection of the unjust.

From Death To Life

Under this heading and considering what the writer has said, it is not surprising to find him refuting what Jesus and His apostles considered as "a passing from death to life" which definitely takes place at true and valid baptism into Christ. He turns it into a process and contradicts what he has hitherto been saying about being raised to judgment. He in effect leans more to the pre-resurrectional view of judgment which decides whether those who had or have passed from death to life, have faithfully maintained that state of Grace or have allowed their names to be blotted out of the Book of Life, but he is incorrect in saying that his theory of "The Judgment is, however, only a part of the process of leading faithful men and women from death to Life." I must remind him that "Passing from death to Life," is not a process but a present reality, even Dr. Thomas realised this but when he wrote this fact, he seemingly failed to see that in his own words, "Those baptised into Christ passed from under a sentence of death to a newness of life" experienced no physical change of nature but a legal and moral change." See Elpis Israel, "The Constitution of Righteousness," page 118. I also marvel at the writer giving all this due praise to Jesus in being "the Way, the Truth and the Life" while the basis of faith of his own community asserts that He was under condemnation and needed redemption from it; how then could He be "The Life" if as Dr. Thomas affirms, there must first be a passing from under "a sentence of death" to "a sentence of life"? Is it not evident that by Divine begettal Jesus was never in the former position and that natural death or corruptibility is not the sentence of death passed upon all men? Until you accept this as Bible teaching you will never fully understand nor appreciate The Atonement. The writer goes on to interpret Daniel not according as the cover of his booklet claims, i.e., Bible teaching, but his own theory of simultaneous resurrection of just and unjust, to a judgment which is not even stated. Daniel mentions nothing about acceptance at the judgment, but he does say that many who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake. This awakening is divided into two groups. The one group awakes to everlasting life; the other group awakes to shame and contempt. Now until judgment on both groups has been passed they are still in a state of sleep according to the writer, so how would they hear their judgment and the voice of the Judge? David said, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness" - Psalm 17. That is, in the image of the invisible God, even Jesus, the firstborn of every creature, Colossians 1:15.

Of those who are regarded as God's sons, the prophet Isaiah declares "Thy dead shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise, awake and sing ye that dwell in dust." People dwelling in dust cannot sing until they are wakened from the dust, and if the prospect of judgment and consequent uncertainty awaited them they would not have much cause to sing.

What of the Christadelphian Hymn No. 237? Have you been singing a lie all these years as suggested in verse 4? “But this we know, when he appears we’ll bear his image bright.”

I could go on and on but I am afraid that Michael Ashton and many more of his community will miss the day of opportunity under which heading he concludes his treatise with the words of Felix to Paul, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient time or season, I will call for thee.” Acts 24:25.

We can if we wish, do the same. We may convince ourselves that there will be “a convenient season” at some time in the future, but we shall be wrong. As the apostle Paul said writing to believers in Corinth, “Now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation.” 2 Corinthians 6:2.

Unfortunately I have had experience of people in this very category, the majority calling themselves Christadelphians of its various divided sects and professing to have the Truth, unlike Felix.

It appears these people are afraid and do not wish to know anything to spoil ignorant bliss. My aim and that of our fellowship has been to convince people that it is a matter of life and death and too important to put off to another day, as Michael Ashton concludes. But will be and his members be asking for oil when it is too late? The opportunity was there in 1873 and was rejected, even as the Jewish rulers accepted Barabbas in preference to the Son of God. To the moral standards of following Christ as mentioned in his book I have no objection, and I uphold their possibility and necessity, but in the words of Paul, “What does it profit me if the dead are not raised?”

And may I add, “What does it profit me if I am not raised incorruptible at Christ’s coming?”

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” Psalm 116:15. So also must be their raising to everlasting life for they all live unto Him.

Phil Parry.