

1 Corinthians - Commentaries by Cyrus Ingerson Scofield

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth: Ten Outline Studies of the More Important Divisions of Scripture, Two Resurrections (15:13-14)

The Bible teaches in the clearest terms that all the dead will be raised. No doctrine of the faith rests upon a more literal body of Scripture authority than this, nor is any more vital to Christianity: "But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. 15:13-14).

But it is important to observe that the Scriptures do not teach that all the dead are raised at one time. A partial resurrection of saints has already occurred: "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matt. 27:52-53).

Two resurrections—differing in respect of time, and of those who are the subjects of the resurrection— are yet future. These are variously distinguished as "the resurrection of life" and "the resurrection of damnation," as "the resurrection of the just and the unjust." The following Scriptures refer to this important event:

"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" (John 5:28-29). If it be objected that the word "hour" indicates a simultaneous resurrection of these two classes, it is answered that the "hour" of verse 25 has already lasted eighteen hundred years. (See also "day" in 2 Peter 3:8; 2 Cor. 6:2; John 8:56.)

"But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:13-14). In this passage, our Lord speaks of the first resurrection only. In 1 Cor. 15 the distinction further appears: "For as in Adam all die, even so in 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" (vv. 22-23).

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thess. 4:13-16).

This "resurrection of life," of "the just," of "the dead in Christ," is that of which Paul speaks in Phil. 3:11 (RV): "If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead" (not "of the dead" as in the KJV). The resurrection of the dead would imply that all the dead were raised simultaneously; but "from the dead" necessarily implies a selection, that some of "the dead" remain. Literally it is "the resurrection out of the dead ones." If the Apostle had in mind a resurrection of all the dead, how could he speak of attaining it "by any means" since he could not possibly escape it?

In Rev. 20:4-6 the two resurrections are again mentioned together, with the important addition of the time which intervenes between them: "And I saw thrones, and they that 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 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 were finished. Thus is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." In verses 12 and 13 the second resurrection is "unto damnation."

The testimony of Scripture, then, is clear that believers' bodies are raised from among the bodies of unbelievers, and caught up to meet the Lord in the air one thousand years before the resurrection of the latter. It should be firmly held that the doctrine of the resurrections concerns only the bodies of the dead. Their disembodied spirits are instantly in conscious bliss or woe (Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8; Luke 16:22-23).

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth: Ten Outline Studies of the More Important Divisions of Scripture, Jew, the Gentile and the Church of God, The (10:32)

Whoever reads the Bible cannot fail to perceive that over half of its contents relate to one nation, the Israelites, and that they have a very distinct place in the dealings and counsels of God. Separated from the mass of mankind, they are taken into covenant with Jehovah, who gives them specific promises not given to any other nation. Their history alone is told in Old Testament narrative and prophecy other nations being mentioned only as they touch them.

It appears, also, that all the communications of Jehovah to Israel as a nation relate to the earth. If faithful and obedient, the nation is promised earthly riches and power; if unfaithful and disobedient, it is to be scattered "among all people, from one end of the earth even to the other" (Deut. 28:64). Even the promise of the Messiah is of blessing to "all the families of the earth."

Continuing his research, the student finds much in Scripture about another distinct body called the Church. This body also has a peculiar relation to God, and, like Israel, has received from Him specific promises. But there the similarity ends, and the most striking contrast begins. Instead of being formed of the natural descendants of Abraham alone, it is a body in which the distinction of Jew and Gentile is lost. Instead of the relation being one of mere covenant, it is one of birth. Instead of obedience bringing the reward of earthly greatness and wealth, the Church is taught to be content with food and raiment, and to expect persecution and hatred. Just as Israel is connected with earthly and temporal things, so is the Church connected with spiritual and heavenly things.

Further, Scripture shows the reader that neither Israel nor the Church always existed. Each had a recorded beginning. That of Israel he finds in the call of Abram. Looking then for the birth of the Church he finds (contrary to his expectations, for he has probably been taught that Adam and the Patriarchs are in the Church) that it certainly did not exist before, nor during the earth-life of Christ, for he finds Him speaking of His Church as yet future when He says, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18): not have built, nor am building, but will build.

He finds, too, from Eph. 3:5-10, that the Church is not once mentioned in Old Testament prophecy, but was, in those ages, a mystery "hid in God." He finds the birth of the Church in Acts 2 and its termination on the earth in Thessalonians 4.

The student also finds, in the scriptural division of the race, another class, rarely mentioned, and distinguished in every respect from either Israel or the Church the Gentiles. The comparative position of the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church may be briefly seen in the following Scriptures:

The Jew

The Gentile

The Church

Rom. 9:4-5

Eph. 2:11-12

Eph. 1:22-23

John 4:22

Eph. 4:17-18

Eph. 5:29-33

Rom. 3:1-2

Mark 7:27-28

1 Peter 2:9

Comparing, then, what is said in Scripture concerning Israel and the Church, the student finds that in origin, calling, promise, worship, principles of conduct, and future destiny, all is contrast.

Calling

ISRAEL

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee" (Gen. 12:1).

"For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land... a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness" (Deut. 8:7-9).

"And he said, I am Abraham's servant. And the LORD hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great" (Gen. 24:34).

"The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face" (Deut. 28:7).

"And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail, and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath" (Deut. 28:13).

CHURCH

"Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (Heb. 3:1).

"For our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20 RV).

"Begotten unto a lively hope... to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4)

"Unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place" (1 Cor. 4:11).

"And Jesus... saith unto His disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:23).

"Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" (James 2:5).

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:4).

Of Course it is not meant that a godly Jew did not, at death, go to heaven. The distinction is that the incentive to godliness in his case was earthly reward, not heavenly. Needless to say, in this dispensation, neither Jew nor Gentile can be saved except by the exercise of that faith on the Lord Jesus Christ whereby both are born again (John 3:3,16) and are baptized into that "one body" (1 Cor. 12:13) which is "the Church" (Eph. 1:22-23). In the Church, the distinction of Jew and Gentile disappears (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:14; Eph. 2:11, "in times past Gentiles"; 1 Cor. 12:2, "when ye were Gentiles").

Conduct

The contrast between Israel and the Church further appears in the rules given for the conduct of each.

ISRAEL

"When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee... thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them nor show mercy unto them" (Deut. 7:1-2).

"Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe" (Ex. 21:24-25).

CHURCH

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44).

"Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat" (1 Cor. 4:12).

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:39).

Worship

In the appointments for worship we find another contrast. Israel could worship in only one place, and at a distance from God only approaching Him through a priest. The Church, by contrast, worships "wherever two or three are gathered," has "boldness to enter into the holiest," and is composed of "priests." (Compare Lev. 17:8-9 with Matt. 18:20; Luke 1:10 with Heb. 10:19-20; Num. 3:10 with 1 Peter 2:5.)

Future

In the predictions concerning the future of Israel and the Church, the distinction is still more startling. The Church will be taken away from the earth entirely, but restored Israel is yet to have her greatest earthly splendor and power.

CHURCH

"In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3).

"The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

"For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory" (Phil. 3:20-21 RV).

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:6).

ISRAEL

"Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:31-33).

Of the seven promises to Mary, in these verses, five have already been literally fulfilled. By what rule of interpretation are we authorized to say that the remaining two will not be fulfilled?

"Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up" (Acts 15:14-16).

"I say then, Hath God cast away His people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin... I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy... For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. 11:1, 11, 24-26).

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people... And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11:11-12).

"For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob" (Isa. 14:1).

"Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt: but, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither He had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers" (Jer. 16:14-15).

"Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in Mine anger, and in My fury, and in great wrath: and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God" (Jer. 32:37-38).

It may safely be said that the Judaizing of the Church has done more to hinder her progress, pervert her mission, and destroy her spirituality than all other causes combined. Instead of pursuing her appointed path of separation, persecution, poverty, and nonresistance, she has used Jewish Scripture to justify her in lowering her purposes to the acquisition of wealth, the use of an imposing ritual, the erection of magnificent churches, the invocation of God's blessing upon the conflicts of armies, and the division of an equal brotherhood into "clergy" and "laity."

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