

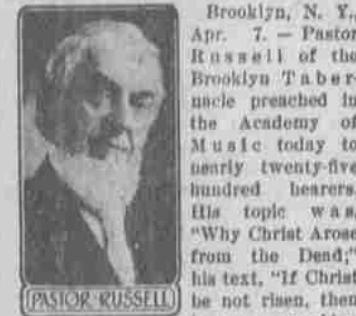
Pastor Russell's Sermon

WHY CHRIST ROSE FROM THE DEAD

What It Proved and What It Guarantees.

THE CORE OF THE GOSPEL.

Pastor Russell, in His Easter Sermon, Shows How the Errors of Pseudo Science Have Divided the Faith of God's People into Many Denominations—Explains the Doctrine of Resurrection as Presented by the Bible. The Soul, Not the Body, Comes Forth.



Brooklyn, N. Y., Apr. 7. — Pastor Russell of the Brooklyn Tabernacle preached in the Academy of Music today to nearly twenty-five hundred hearers. His topic was, "Why Christ Arose from the Dead," his text, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also vain; yea, and we are found false witnesses of God." * * * Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. (I Corinthians xv, 14, 15, 18.) He said:—

The faith once delivered to the saints by Jesus and the Apostles in respect to the resurrection of the dead has been very generally lost. Christian people profess a belief in the resurrection, because they find it stated in the Bible, yet they are continually in difficulty in their endeavor to make the Scriptural teaching on the subject square with some of the unscriptural theories received into the Church, and incorporated into many of the creeds during the "Dark Ages."

St. Paul warned the Church against these human philosophies, and called them "science, falsely so called," which makes void the Word of God. These errors have been instrumental in dividing the faith of God's people into six hundred different professions. If God's people could all come back to the simplicity of the Bible's teaching in respect to the resurrection of the dead, all of these differences would speedily disappear. God's Word would be seen to be beautiful and harmonious, satisfactory to the consecrated intellect, as none of our sectarian creeds are.

Really the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead has been repudiated by all denominations, not willingly, not intentionally, but perforce, as it were. An opposite theory received and entrenched in the minds gives no place for the doctrine of the resurrection, as the Bible presents it. Consequently we have twisted the doctrine of the resurrection and recite: "I believe in the resurrection of the body."

Yet even this perverted view of the resurrection is not satisfactory to those who hold it. They wish many a time that the doctrine of the resurrection were not in the Bible, so much difference does it cause. For instance, how inconsistent it seems that they should say, "I believe in the resurrection of the body," and then say, as many do, "Dying is but going home, getting rid of the mortal flesh, and being freed from its limitations. If it is a blessing to die and get free from the limitations of the body, how could it be a blessing to be reincarnated in the body, and be obliged to keep it through all eternity? Such is the inconsistency of the resurrection, however, from the general view.

The Bible Resurrection Reasonable. There is nothing inconsistent in the Bible presentation of the resurrection. Not from the Bible, but from men, comes the suggestion of the resurrection of the body. The Bible invariably refers to the resurrection of the soul. It is the soul that dies; as we read, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Adam was created a living soul, but his living soul came under the death sentence because he disobeyed God. It was his soul that was redeemed from death, not his body. "I will redeem thy life (soul) up the word of life to see if it is from the Hebrew word meaning soul, and if so, add the word soul after the word life, in parenthesis from destruction."—Psalm ciii, 4.

To accomplish this redemption we read that Christ Jesus "poured out His soul unto death." "He made His soul an offering for sin." Moreover, we are particularly told that it was the soul of Jesus that was raised from the dead: "Thou wilt not leave My soul in Sheol." St. Peter quotes this statement as prophetic of the resurrection of Jesus, that His soul was not left in Sheol; God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day. With what body do they come? is a totally different question. Some of the dead souls, in the resurrection, will come forth with spirit bodies, and others with human bodies, according to the Bible. But the important point is that it is the soul, the being, that comes forth, that is resurrected—not the body. If the soul dies, as the Bible declares, then manifestly the soul should be resurrected.

The difficulty with us has been that we "have made void the Word of God" by our "traditions." We received from the Grecian philosophers a tradition which Socrates and Plato both advocated, namely, that when a human being dies he does not really die.

The soul, it is claimed, cannot die, but, whenever the soul gets out of the body, the body dies. How strange it seems that we all, as intelligent, thoughtful beings, have accepted this heathen philosophy, without a word of Scripture for its support, and with hundreds of Scriptures to condemn it!

We can see how the heathen philosophers might be led to conjure up such a theory, because of their desire to believe in a future life, and because they had no revelation from God respecting a future life. They therefore tried their best to convince themselves that man really does not die—that no man can die. The Bible theory is the very reverse of this, namely, that a man is not merely a body, that he is a soul, a thinking, sentient being. Neither is he a bodiless being, and indeed he cannot be a being at all without a body. His body may change, as science declares it does gradually, hour by hour, until a complete change is effected in seven years.

Thus a man, a soul, a sentient being, may in a life of fifty years have sloughed off gradually sufficient matter to have composed seven bodies. But the moment the sloughing off of this dying matter and the substitution of living matter ceases, we have death; and as soon as the body dies the soul dies—that is, the intelligent being ceases. There can be no thinking without a brain, no breathing without lungs, no maintenance of life in any sense of the word without a body.

This would have been a total destruction of the soul had not God specially provided, as the Prophet declares, that He would redeem man's life (soul) from destruction, through the redemptive work accomplished by Jesus in giving His soul an offering for man's sin, and thus making possible man's resurrection from the dead.

It is in consequence of this Divine provision through Christ for a resurrection of humanity that the Scriptures speak of death as merely a falling asleep for a time, to wait for the new body in the resurrection, rather than to speak of us as dying as the brute beasts. The word sleep implies that in the Divine purpose a future life is intended, and will eventually be given.

"But Now is Christ Risen."

St. Paul does not leave the matter of Christ's resurrection undecided. He positively affirms that, "Christ is risen from the dead," and that, thus risen, "He is the First-fruits of those that slept," which implies that when He was raised the others still slept. Jesus slept a part of those three days, from the time He died until the Father raised Him from the dead, from Sheol, from Sheol, from the tomb, on the third day. He, as the First-fruits of the sleeping ones, is an example and a guarantee of the fulfillment of the Divine promise, that "there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust."

It behooves us to take a decided stand, either with the Grecian philosophers and their theories, or with the Bible. The two are in conflict and whoever attempts to hold both is in confusion. If the dead are not dead, then no human being is dead. And if no one is dead, how could there be a resurrection of the dead?

The inconsistency of the theory held respecting the resurrection of the body has invited a very reasonable and just criticism. The skeptic asks, "How could the body be resurrected, after it has gone to dust and after the dust has been scattered to the four winds?" They tell us of a grave that was opened near an apple tree, and it was found that a root from the tree had entered the coffin and practically absorbed the corpse, from which it had produced thousands of apples, which in turn had been shipped to various parts of the world, some of the poorer grades being fed to hogs, whose hams were cured and sent abroad and thus passed into other human beings, to become parts of still other human bodies. The question is a proper one, but it is an unanswerable one from the standpoint of our former misbelief and our poor attempt to combine human philosophy and Divine Revelation.

But such a question brings no consolation to the Bible student who follows the Scriptures alone. The Scriptures never speak of the resurrection of our bodies. They do tell of the resurrection of the soul, and that in the resurrection God giveth it (the soul) a body as it pleaseth Him.

How reasonable it will be for the world to be awakened in practically the condition in which they went down into death! And these will experience, if willing and obedient, a gradual resurrection or raising up to the image and likeness of Father Adam in his perfection. But some in the resurrection will receive spirit bodies like unto the angels, and some like unto the body of Christ in His resurrection, which Saul of Tarsus beheld—"shining above the brightness of the sun" at noonday.

The class that is promised a resurrection in spirit bodies is the Church—the saintly few who walk in the footsteps of Jesus. The begetting of the Holy Spirit which comes to these changes their nature from earthly to spiritual. If they are faithful to their covenant their resurrection will be to glory, honor and immortality, as explained by St. Paul in the context. Saying, "It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown an animal body, it is raised a spirit body."

This is a description of the resurrection which God has promised to all the members of the Body of Christ, which is the Church. St. Paul declares that the members of this Body fall asleep, to awaken in the glorious morning of the New Dispensation. But he adds, "We shall not all sleep."

—some will be alive and remain till the second coming of Jesus. These, however, will not take precedence over the sleeping ones, for, "The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain 'shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.' * * * because 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.' As the death of Jesus was absolutely necessary as the atoning price for human sin, so the resurrection of Jesus was absolutely necessary, that He might not remain dead through all eternity, but be glorified, and in due time, come again to effect the resurrection of His Church and, subsequently, the awakening and uplifting of all the families of the earth.

Hearken to the special promise made to the Church: "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." (Revelation xx, 6.) Also note the promise of the world's resurrection: "There shall be a resurrection, both of the just and the unjust." (Acts xxiv, 15.) Again, "They that have done evil" shall come forth, that they may enjoy a resurrection effected by "judgments," disciplines, chastisements, which will develop in them character; and the glory which will be attained will be perfect—a raising up to all at first possessed by Father Adam, lost through disobedience, and redeemed by the precious blood of Christ—John v, 28, 29, R. V.

"A Kind of First-Fruits."

Every Sunday is a memorial of the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, and if a proper conception of the Master's resurrection were kept in mind we would not think of quarreling with the expression "Easter Sunday."

But alas, this name Easter is associated with heathen philosophies and idolatries, which did so much to make the Word of God of none effect; and the fact should be noted that it is the name of a Greek goddess. The compromising spirit induced some of the early Church to admit the heathen philosophies and to commingle with these the inspired teachings of the Bible; but now there is the loud call to true Christians to rid themselves of science and philosophy "falsely so-called," and to return to the Biblical simplicity of the Divine Revelation.

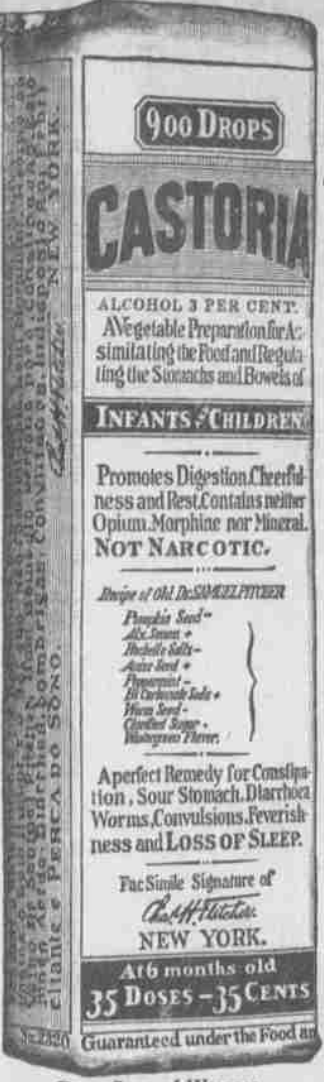
Of this Revelation alone St. Peter declares, "It is able to make you wise unto salvation," and to "give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." And again, "The Word of God is sufficient, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work." Let us today, then, rejoice in Him who died for our sins and who rose on the third day for our justification.

Let us rid our minds of the foolish thought that He did not really die, that He only seemed to die—that when the Roman soldiers crucified Him, He simply got out of His body, laughed at them, and said, "I have not died at all; I could not die; you could not kill Me." Let us remember rather the Divine Word on the subject: "Christ died for our sins"; "He poured out His soul unto death"; "He made His soul an offering for sin." Let us remember the assurance of the Bible that eventually "He shall see the fruits of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." Let us rejoice also in the assurance of the Apostle that His soul was not left in Sheol, Sheol, death, but that God raised Him from the dead on the third day.

Note an Additional Proof.

If Christ did not die, then the death penalty upon Adam and his race has not been met. Those who claim that He did not die, that merely His body died, are illogical. They profess to believe that Jesus accomplished for us a redemptive work, that He died, "The Just for the unjust." If Christ, the Redeemer, "poured out His soul unto death, and if His resurrection meant the recovery of His soul or being out of death, wherein is the logic in the declaration of some that it is not thus with the Church nor with the world? If Jesus did not go to Heaven when He died—if He went into Sheol, into the grave, into death, who has the temerity to say that others go direct to Heaven or Hell or Purgatory? Let us be consistent. The wages of sin is not Purgatory, nor a Hell of torture, in some far-off place. On the contrary, "The wages of sin is death." The Redeemer died and rose; and this is the assurance, that He who raised Jesus from the dead will raise us up also, by Jesus, through His spirit and power; and not only so, but also the world of mankind, all who were involved in the death sentence upon the first man.

Therefore, the entire world is included in the death payment made by the Great Redeemer, that "As by man came death, by a man also shall come the resurrection of the dead; for as all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive." But, says the Apostle, while every man who will come into Christ shall be made alive, each will come forth "in his own order." The Christ company shall come forth first—"the Church of the First-born, whose names are written in heaven." Afterwards will come those who will become His at, or during, His presence—during the thousand years of His Kingdom glory. The opportunity of that thousand years will mean to every man the privilege of coming into fellowship with the Redeemer and King, Emmanuel. Whoever will accept the opportunity will receive the blessing of an admission to Messiah's family. As the Apostle says, they will become His. Under His heavenly guidance and blessing and regenerating influence, all such may attain again to a full image and likeness of God, lost in Eden, redeemed at Calvary.



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