

ARRANGEMENT AND END OF THE AGE
Including Ranks in the Resurrection
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"By faith we apprehend that the ages have been framed by the saying of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Hebrews 11:3 (Greek text)
God is above and before all. The Divine plan of the ages was settled in the Divine Council before time began. That plan had a beginning; it is having an unfolding; and it will have a consummation. God used men to announce the beginning operations of His plan. He used others to announce the progress and developments thereof; and finally, He employs still others to make known the culmination of that plan. As there were stages of progress in the beginning, and also in the development of this plan; so there are stages in the consummation of it.

We are in the sixth dispensational day of God's great plan. And more; we are in the end of this age - sunset is nigh. This age is over nineteen hundred years long, and it had its beginning in the first advent of Christ and the advent of the Holy Spirit. The stages of the ushering in of this age were marked by the offer of the Gospel of the Kingdom to Israel; their rejection of it; and the gift of salvation offered to the Gentiles, along with the "mystery of Christ," once hidden in god, but revealed to the apostle Paul. The progress of this age is marked by the Gospel being spread to all the world, and by the decline of Christianity. Now at the end of this age, there is a revival of the study of God's Word, the infusion of the Spirit and renewing of the spiritual gifts, the repetition of world-wide missionary effort, by the announcement of the soon coming of Jesus and by the dealings of Providence with the Jews.

There is constant progress in the deep study of God's Word, especially in view of the second advent of the Lord. This brought about particularly the sovereign operations of the Holy Spirit, which is emphatically and sovereignly due. As there has been an unfolding of the plan of the ages; so there is an unfolding of God's Word for "the time of the end."

Not only do we see a vast difference between the ministries of Peter and Paul, but also as truly a difference between their respective rewards and the reward of those who follow their teachings. And more: there are also stages of experiences among those who receive Paul's Message. As John writes to "children," "young men," and "fathers", so we find saints today in these various stages of growth.

CARNAL BELIEVERS

Likewise, we find different degrees of yieldedness to God among those who are born of the Spirit. There are the "carnal" who "walk as men," envying and strife and factions being manifest. I Corinthians 1:1-3. This seems to embrace the majority of believers, although some of them may surprise themselves as knowing the Scriptures and as being authorities therein. There are also degrees of carnality. Some are very fleshly; some moderately so, now and then showing some spirituality; and others only tinged with carnality. There are also various kinds of fleshiness. Some yield to their animal propensities; some yield to intellectual reveries and research; others are borne away with music and art; and still others are religiously fleshly, going to extremes in physical demonstrations and in their zeal, putting forth what they call the truth.

Doubtless, the most unpardonable religious flesh is that which claims to know the truth and understand the Word of God, but is indifferent to it, or compromises it, or makes merchandise of it. They may be dry, lifeless, orderly, intellectual, authorized, religious flesh, so scriptural and tame that no fault can be found with it except that it is formal and powerless. This is the saddest, the most to be feared, the hardest from which to be delivered.

The scathing warnings of the Apostle Paul are directed against all forms of fleshiness among those who claim to be his followers. Mark this well, Beloved, he earnestly and constantly seeks to lead us on, pointing out every kind of side track, by making plain the true track for the racer who desires to run. How eagerly we should study his letters!

SPIRITUAL BELIEVERS

There is also the less conspicuous company, the "spiritual" who "discern all things, yet are discerned of no man." I Corinthians 2:15, 16. These are by far the most necessary, being in closest fellowship with the Lord, and they are most useful. They learn to walk in the Spirit; to be led by the Spirit. They become God's dependable ones, because to them is made known the will and purposes of God. They understand what He is doing and why, and also what He means to do in the future. They find out what part they have in the moving drama and gladly perform that part by His enabling.

There are no doubt, three distinct stages among the spiritual, corresponding with the three degrees of Divine will - "that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Romans 12:2. These seem to agree with John's expression of family growth - children, young men, and fathers. Jesus also spoke of three degrees of fruitfulness - 30, 60, and 100 fold. Some believers begin to be spiritual early, though they are only children in grace. They grow rapidly in spirituality, strength, and usefulness as they grow in the understanding of the Truth. They pass on into young manhood. The first stage would be in the good will of God; the second in His acceptable will, going on toward His perfect will, even into full growth. This is expressed in Romans 8:14: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." There are no doubt, degrees of God's perfect will also; from assurance to confirmation, then on to maturity. This is comparatively a small company. The spiritually mature look down the line and understand who is who, and why they are, where they are, and what they are - "discern all things." They truly "discern the signs of the times." They are not occupied with passing events, simply to have something to talk about, or to exploit their knowledge, or gifts; but all their knowledge and wisdom combine to fit them for their place in the drama of the ages to come. Truth is exceedingly real, precious, and practical with them. The voice of God as revealed through His Word is everything to them. These are indeed the men of God, who "live not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Jesus Himself, lived by the powerful Word of His Father. David, in ecstasy cried out, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste; yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." Psalm 119:103. The weeping prophet fed on God's Word - "Thy words were found and I did eat them, and thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts." Jeremiah 13:16.

DIFFERING WITHOUT DISCORD

Each prophet under the old covenant had a distinct message for his particular time; even contemporary prophets had truth revealed to them that others did not announce, but there was no contradiction in their messages. They did not rehash one another's findings, as men do today. Each heard the voice of God for himself; hence, there was a continual unfolding of truth and of the will of God.

It seems today that some men claim to be authorities in Bible interpretation and put limitations to one another by agreeing with one another - a sort of Scripture- interpretation Union. They denounce light that others may obtain. Despite this conceit that cries, "We are the people, wisdom will die with us" (Job), God continues to lead others into more truth. He is revealing Himself and unfolding His will for this present time to simple-hearted ones who dare to "go unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." God so definitely reveals Himself to individuals that they cannot be mistaken. The rebuke of learned Bible expositors cannot turn them aside. For example: some leaders decry divine healing, saying, "The age of such miracles is past." They also denounce the infilling of the Holy Spirit as fanaticism along with speaking in tongues, and count it as the work of the devil. Nevertheless, the teachable ones break the power of Satan by faith and are healed, bring healing to others also. They also push through form and ceremony and receive the glory, even the Spirit and glory of God. Paul's teaching may seem only a theory to many who know little or nothing of actual victory over sin and the flesh. Others are proving the practical power of our position under grace (Romans 6), and experience the joy and glory and all-sufficiency of the Christ within. Hallelujah! These people also purpose to win in the Christian race.

THE TRIUMPHING TRUTH

"I press toward the mark for the Prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14. The aforementioned blessings are not all there is. Calvary, Pentecost, healings, and victory are only means to a climacteric end. That end is not that we may get to heaven when we die, or translated when Jesus comes. Is heaven itself the reward? Heaven is only the destination. Most certainly there is "an inheritance reserved in heaven for" some. (1 Peter 1:3-5). Some believers find this out now, and seek to know what that inheritance is and for whom it is reserved, and how it is to be obtained. But when we start searching for our blessings in Christ, we meet the "elders," the "doctors," the "expositors," who cry as Eliab did against David - "I know thy pride and naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle." In modern parlance, we might hear, "You think you can teach us!" How strange, indeed, that anyone should suppose that God cannot teach anyone except himself, or those of reputed authority. "The Word of God is not bound." Neither is God limited in His revelation of truth to certain men. It is not our aim to convince anyone that we are right in our views. We only desire earnestly to "give

a reason for the hope which is in us," from plain scriptural statement. We mean to chase away any possible mist that may befog any honest, hungry heart. We are not sent to flog the faltering, or the faithless. God will attend to that in due time; but it does behoove us to "feed the flock of God." This revelation He gave to us years ago, His Name be praised! If we can point out from God's immutable Word a transcendently brilliant star of promise and hold it in the heavens in irresistible splendor, and induce, or encourage poor, weak, timid, care-worn, thorn-torn saints to hitch their wagon thereto; we shall be unspeakably glad. We are assured that the star is there and God will be eternally and far exceedingly glorified above all other honor in those who run after and seize hold of that glorious Prize. We are running, and we have company. We are beholding and are being changed from glory to glory. I may call that star "the riches of the glory," which some saints will enjoy with Christ, and I mention, as the Scripture portal, Paul's own words

A BETTER RESURRECTION

The Word clearly teaches the "first resurrection," which includes all believers who are in the grave. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." Revelation 20:5. All believers are blessed because they are in Christ, and they are holy because they are of Christ. They have a holy nature and a happy standing. Paul tells us all about this first resurrection in I Corinthians 15. There is nothing said about the resurrection of the wicked dead in this chapter. Therefore, these two resurrections are distinct. The second resurrection embraces only the wicked dead, or those who experience the "second death," eternal damnation.

The first resurrection began with the raising of Jesus Christ, "the first-fruit of them that are fallen asleep," (I Corinthians 15:20), and of those "after His resurrection" (Matthew 27:53), and it will be consummated with the end of the Millennium. See Revelation 20:5, 6. Life will be prolonged, and death will be restrained for believers during the thousand year's reign; but not until the last earth-dwelling believer will have "put on immortality" at the end of the millennium, will the words absolutely be fulfilled, "Death is swallowed up in victory; O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (I Corinthians 15:54, 55).

It is also clearly stated that certain saints "were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." Hebrews 11:35. Those were Old Testament believers. Were those "the bodies that came out of their graves after" Christ's resurrection? (Matthew 27:52, 53). Was the privilege of being raised when Christ was raised the "better resurrection" for them? It would seem to be so; for they were raised nearly two thousand years ahead of the rest of the Old Testament saints, who will come up out of their graves at the revelation of Jesus. (Daniel 12:2; Romans 11:25).

It cannot be disputed that there is such a thing as a "better resurrection." If some under the Old Covenant saw such a prospect; why should it be thought improbable that saints under the New Covenant may enjoy a similar resurrection? Were there not two distinct companies then, one which refused deliverance in order to obtain something better, and one which accepted deliverance, but missed the better? What was the distinctive mark of difference? It was suffering, expressed by "torture."

Amos 9:6 is a remarkable citation in point. "It is He that buildeth His stories (spheres, or ascensions) in the heaven and hath founded His troop in the earth ... The Lord is His name." Mentioned here are places for companies in heaven, and a company in the earth. Different spheres call for corresponding companies to fill them. Amos saw the troop on earth; but He saw only the abode of heaven-dwellers, not the inhabitants. To Amos, that was wonderful; to us who believe it, this is glorious. Hence, we inquire, Who shall inhabit those respective spheres, ranging as stories one above another as in a building? Doubtless, Paul's "high calling" gives the answer in a general way in distinction from those who shall constitute the "troop on the earth." Amos 9:6 is a remarkable citation in point. "It is He that buildeth His stories (spheres, or ascensions) in the heaven and hath founded His troop in the earth ... The Lord is His name." Mentioned here are places for companies in heaven, and a company in the earth. Different spheres call for corresponding companies to fill them. Amos saw the troop on earth; but He saw only the abode of heaven dwellers, not the inhabitants. To Amos, that was wonderful; to us who believe it, this is glorious. Hence, we inquire, Who shall inhabit those respective spheres, ranging as stories one above another as in a building? Doubtless, Paul's "high calling" gives the answer

in a general way in distinction from those who shall constitute the "troop on the earth." Is there anything in the New Testament corresponding with the different spheres of Amos? Yes, we are credibly informed that "there is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another of the

stars; and one star differs from another star in glory." I Corinthians 15:41.

Here are at least four different glories, all on the celestial plane. Is it farfetched to say that this is what Amos wrote about? Though he did not understand, the Spirit did. This suggests at least four immense stories, or ascensions, in God's Church triumphant - two star-stories, a moon-story, and a sun-story. Note that the troop on earth is already a fact - "hath founded;" but the stories are in process of construction - "He buildeth." This is marvelous! Are the above statements only flashes of fancy? Did Amos and Paul write simply to entertain curious students? Or do they not show us what awaits faith in God's promises?

Where Some Differ From Us

"So also is the resurrection of the dead." Those people who disagree with ranks in the resurrection do not deny the above facts about the different glories; but they fall out with us about the manner and time of reaching their respective spheres, or glories. We shall therefore proceed to show by simple, but invincible Scripture statements that they who shall occupy those spheres, will arrive there at different times, hence, in different ranks. The respective place of every believer is determined by certain conditions during the Christian's life. My attitude to God and to His Truth, determines into which sphere I shall land, and of course, determines in what group I shall be raised. The Old Covenant believers determined by their attitude and obedience, whether they would have part in a good, or a BETTER resurrection. Told In Type "And last of all He was seen of me also, as one born out of due time." I Corinthians 15:8. Bible students agree that this chapter begins with the announcement of the four fundamental facts of the Gospel - "Christ died for our sins, was buried, rose again, and was seen (appeared)." The last two items are the essential features of this chapter. Christ's appearance to Saul while he was enroute for Damascus, is regarded as a type of Christ's final appearance to Israel as a nation. If Paul's experience, recorded in this chapter, is typical, why are the other five appearances not typical? If they are not typical, why do they occur in this particular chapter? Why are they associated with Paul's vision of Him, in the very order of the different companies - the Church people first, then Israel? Be it noted that all six of these appearances were on earth. And if Paul is type of Israel, and the other five are typical of the Church, why were there five distinct groups who saw Jesus at five different times? If the Church will be raised in one group, why are there five groups in this type? Consider also that Jesus made appearance to the five companies because they had already believed on Him, even as He will appear to the different ranks of the Church in the end time. He appeared to Saul that he might believe, even as He will to Israel at the end. From every angle, we have an accumulation of powerful proof that these appearances of Christ announce the resurrection of the saints in ranks of groups.

1. Positively stated. "in Christ all shall be made alive, but every one in his own order." I Corinthians 15:22, 23. The word "order" is from the Greek word, "tasso," meaning, "to arrange, put in order, draw up in line," and is translated "corps, division, band, rank, cohort." Note the clear distinction in the above citation - "all made alive;" but not made alive in only one band; but each in his own band, or rank." If this does not mean different and distinct companies, it is absolutely meaningless. "Each" is in distinction from "all," that is, from all the sainted dead, and not in distinction from Christ as one rank and all the saints together as another rank. Mark this, distinction is made IN the resurrection, not afterwards. Saints will be raised in different grades, because they are in different companies before they die. The majority of believers are carnal; few are spiritual. It has truly been said, "Saints are finding their ranks now." People determine their respective orders by the way they live here. And can anyone deny that Israel will be in their own rank in distinction from the Church? Note carefully Daniel 12:1, 2.

Israel cannot be raised until after "Jacob's trouble." An objection is raised that there cannot be a "split-resurrection;" that is, the body of Christ cannot be cut up into sections. I ask the objector if Christ is not part of the One Body which has many members? And was He not raised over 1900 years ago? Such logic would require that all the Church to be raised when He was. How much easier it is to believe plain Scripture statements than human logic. "As all die in Adam" (but they do not all die at the same moment); "so all in Christ shall be made alive" (but not necessarily all in the same moment). "Christ the first-fruit," nineteen centuries ago (which must include some Old Testament saints); "afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." The phrase, "at His coming," literally means, "in the presence of Him," which covers a period of time extending from the moment He takes His throne in the air until the end of the Millennium. During the early part of that "presence", the saints will be raised in different companies, and living saints in the same order or

rank will be changed and caught up with them when Jesus shall call with a "shout of command." If we do not listen to His voice today in smaller matters, how shall we ever hear that particular "shout of command" to be raised or translated? God is both logical and orderly.

2. The manner of the resurrection. The critic cries, "How are the dead raised? and with what body do they come?" I Corinthians 15:35. As usual the Spirit anticipates objectors and answers more than is apparently asked. The answers given here by the Holy Spirit amazingly clarify and confirm our view of the resurrection.

A. Varieties of seeds. I Corinthians 15:37, 38. Varying values of the resurrected bodies of believers are certainly taught by different kinds of seeds. "It may be of wheat, or of some other grain." Does not wheat differ in value from corn or barley, though all are good for food? "God giveth it (each seed) a body as it hath pleased Him, and to each seed its own body." Wheat does not spring up from a corn grain, nor does corn come from a barley grain. Neither will a second-rank believer have a first-rank body in the resurrection. Likewise, wheat is kept in the wheat bins and corn in corncribs. Wheat is sown in one field, barley in another, and corn in still another. These seeds are all good, but they vary in their goodness and usefulness; so there are varying values in resurrected bodies. All believers' bodies will not be "fashioned like unto the body of His glory," that is Jesus' glory. His glory is distinctly sun-glory (I Corinthians 15:40, 41); but there will be lesser glories - the glory of the moon, and the glories of the stars - and some bodies will share in these respective lesser glories.

B. Kinds of flesh. Flesh is flesh; but "all flesh is not the same flesh." There are four kinds named here - the flesh of men, of beast, of fish, and of birds. The word for beasts in this Scripture is not "therion," (wild beasts), but "ktenos," (domestic animals), as cattle and sheep; so that good flesh is meant in each case. But these also differ in value, which certainly carries the same thought as to glorified saints as did the different kinds of grains. There are four grades of flesh given here, because there are among believers at least four ranks, or orders. As with the seeds, so with the flesh, all refer to the resurrection; for verse 42 declares, "So also is the resurrection of the dead." Does not the Holy Spirit mean to teach here that there are different companies of believers, who have differing experiences, which of necessity cause variations in fellowship? Do men associate with cattle? Do sheep have fellowship with fish? Do fish keep company with birds? Though they are all good flesh, yet they do not fully understand one another. Men because of their superior intelligence understand beasts and birds, and are glad that they are neither; but the latter cannot understand the former. Likewise, the spiritual ones discern the carnal; but the carnal never discern the spiritual. "He that is spiritual discerneth all things; yet he himself is discerned of no man." I Corinthians 2:15.

Birds and cattle cannot understand how fish can live in water; nor do fish see how these can live out of the water. The Holy Spirit has drawn these analogies. Can we treat them lightly? If we do, we are the losers. As there are varying degrees of fellowship during life on earth; the resurrection will not change them. It cannot put them all into one grade, or rank. Jesus is even now walking as Judge among His people and separating them into different grades. Revelation 2:1

Why Divisions Today?

Friend, do you not see an analogy which explains the lack of fellowship among believers today? Do you exclaim, "Far-fetched"? Wait a moment. Does not God call His people cattle and sheep? Does He not say, "I judge between cattle and cattle," thus making distinctions between His own people? (Ezekiel 34). Does not Jesus liken men to fish in saying, "I will make you fishers of men"? And are they not also likened to "fowls of the air"? (Acts 10:12). Certainly, there are ranks, differing from one another, even as men differ from animals, and animals from one another. If God's people are divided in fellowship now, how can they be raised from the dead, or translated in equal fellowship? If the bodies of believers today do not enjoy equal victory over sin and sickness, how can they experience the same kind of a resurrection? If some do not lay hold of the "preserved blameless body" (I Thessalonians 5:23), how shall they share in the highest resurrection glory? If we do not agree on the voice of God's Word now, how shall we agree when the trumpet sounds?

The apostle's position here is exceedingly sensible, yea, absolutely necessary. If these four kinds of flesh do not teach diverging degrees of Christian experience, necessitating diverging orders in the resurrection; what do they teach? Be it still remembered that "so also is the resurrection of the dead" I Corinthians 15:42. As truly as there are different kinds of flesh, and they do not easily associate with one another; so there are different classes of believers, and they will be raised as they died, even in the same class. There is no meaning to Paul's language about the kinds of

seeds and kinds of flesh, if the fact of ranks is not the meaning. Believers are finding their respective ranks today. They are choosing them by their acceptance or rejection of the Truth. They refuse the first rank by denying a difference, and choose a lower rank by their walk. It costs something to accept Christ as Savior and renounce the world. Some go this far, but no farther. It costs more to receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit as the early Church did at Pentecost. Some go this far, but no farther. Many of these do not even walk in the power of the Spirit whom they have received. Some are carried away with their gifts and successes, and become lifted up with pride; hence, never grow in Christian experience. It costs still more to accept Paul's message of absolute grace; because as truth deepens, the circle narrows. This message is expensive to the flesh, because all the expenses of salvation were paid by Christ's death, leaving no expense bill for the sinner to pay. He is required only to believe on Jesus. Since the old creation wants credit for doing something, this message of Grace is unsavory meat for some people. There are those who accept the initial truth of salvation by grace; but go no further. They remain "babes in Christ" because they do not "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." II Peter 3:18. Such growth makes the flesh retire; but the new man, the inner man, grows in spirituality. There must be a progress, a growth, a full-growth into maturity. If Christians die in babyhood, they will be raised in babyhood with a baby-like immortal body. Some believe that because they accept absolute grace, they will share equally and co-jointly with Christ in all His glory, no matter what their walk may be. Is it any wonder that this sweet message is held in ridicule and disrepute? It is all of grace - the provision, the offer is all absolutely of grace; but it is also just as absolutely true that we must lay hold of the offer. The trees may be bending with luscious fruit; but it will do me no good if I do not appropriate it. The bleeding woman pressed her way through the crowd to touch the hem of Jesus, the Healer. Then, and then only was the hemorrhage stanching. Accordingly, there must be a pressing on to full development.

This means self-denial, sacrifice, suffering, dying daily, "fighting the good fight of faith." In initial salvation, we get victory over the world - "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" I John 5:5. But if we do not go on and learn the way of victory over the flesh, we will soon lose our victory over the world. By experience, we learn the subtlety and trickery of our own flesh, and that sin, dwelling in it, causes us the trouble. We begin by counting with God, reckoning the old man dead, off the scene, and ourself the new self; alive unto God through Christ. As we go further and reckon Christ to be our life; we will gain victory over our own flesh and possess the secret of victory over all flesh. But every forward step narrows our circle of friends, separates us more from this present age, makes us appear more strange and peculiar, and arouses the adversary against us. Nevertheless, we are going on, going and growing.

IN THE HEAVENLIES

"God raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenlies and Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2:6. Still we are moving on. The Divine elevator has landed us on the tablelands of glory. Here begins our fight with Satan himself. Saints who accept their place in the heavenlies, have a conflict to which other believers are strangers. It is Ephesian believers who "wrestle not against flesh and blood (having already gained victory over this), but against principalities, against powers, against the world rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spirituals of the wickedness in the heavenlies." Ephesians 6:12 (Gr.)

We march and shout at our Leader's command, which only can win the place that Satan now holds in the heavenlies. Here is our real conflict. We know very little of the devil and his wiles; we learn very little of actual victory over him until by faith claim our God-given place in the heavenlies with Christ. They who pursue this highest sphere experience the hottest conflicts. They feel most keenly the widest separation. They are the least understood and the most misrepresented. The division between people under law and those under grace, at first, rends our hearts because of

the separation; but then we realize it can be no other way, they cannot blend.

As we see those who have embraced grace, then draw back because of the "giants" in the land, we are overwhelmed with grief. "A sword pierces through" our own soul. A new and greater victory has to be won. Of course, the circle becomes most narrow, the journey most lonely, the criticism most severe; but also the assurance becomes most complete, the joy superabounding, the hope "unspeakable and full of glory." We see as God sees and feel as He feels. Even though our faith and conviction are strengthened in every area, yet our pain is aggravated

to learn that some saw their privileges, but turned away; not because they saw differently (as they say), but because they were not willing to "suffer the loss of all things that they might win Christ."

Such saints become selfish, carnal, and lose the real power and joy of the Lord. Oh, the unspeakable loss; the eternal loss! Over these also, Jesus weeps, crying, "How oft would I ... but ye would not." And we weep too.

PAUL PRESSING ON

"If by any means I may arrive into the out-resurrection of the dead ones." Philippians 3:11, Gr. Paul practiced what he preached. He wrote to the Corinthian assembly describing the nature and glories of the resurrection. Years later, he wrote to the Philippian assembly that he was stretching after the highest glory. In Philippians 3, the apostle was gazing upon a goal and a prize to be obtained. What was that goal? Was it his standing in Christ? By no means. He did not obtain his standing by running, but by faith - faith in Christ's resurrection long before had given him his perfect standing - "He was raised for our justification." Romans 5:25. That standing guaranteed him a resurrection; for only those who are accepted in Christ can ever hope to be raised in Christ. By having a standing, he was aiming for a goal in view of obtaining a prize. An "out-resurrection," "a better resurrection," was that goal. An out-translation is the goal for us who live today, because Jesus is coming soon. Now, while his resurrection as a saint depended upon his standing; his part in the out-resurrection was dependent upon his state. Obtaining the Prize was dependent upon his state. Therefore, he sought by all means to bring his state in line with his standing. Hence, he said, "I count all; I suffered the loss of all" as worthless, to be found in Christ, clad in His righteousness as a means to a definite consummation. He saw that only through his being stripped of every vestige of self-righteousness, could he hope to reach the goal in sight. Furthermore, between this standing in Christ's righteousness and the coveted goal, he found a three-link chain - "That I may know Him, know the power of His resurrection, and know the fellowship of His sufferings." Philippians 3:9-11. This chain expresses his state. His standing came as a result of accepting Christ as his Savior; but he must bring his state in these three particular aspects, up to his standing, in order to reach the goal, the out-resurrection. He must arrive at this goal in order to obtain the Prize. Philippians 3:14. Nay, beloved, his standing was not the goal, much less was it the Prize. This out-resurrection of Paul's (and of all those in his rank) corresponds beautifully with the "better resurrection" of those Old Testament saints of Hebrews 11:35. Suffering the loss of all is the price of both. That the apostle was expecting to be raised in a rank some time earlier than the rest of the Church must be the meaning here. He did not need to run to have part in the first resurrection; all believers will share in that, because they belong to Christ. They are "blessed and holy" (Revelation 20:5). Our standing in Him assures of a resurrection in Him; but suffering with Him obtains "a better resurrection," a resurrection out from others who shall be raised later. Hence, the out-resurrection is the goal where the Prize is reached by the believing dead. And since the resurrection is to take place at the coming of Jesus, an out-translation, a translation ahead of the rest of the Church, is the goal for the Prize to be won by living saints. This is also logical. Philippians 3:20, 21, shows it to be Scriptural - "Our commonwealth exists in the heavens, from whence also we look for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Anointed, who will transform the body of our humiliation, for it to become conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working of His power even to subdue to Himself all things." (Greek). this corresponds with I Corinthians 15. Note that while all shall be changed, only those who run for the Prize in keeping with the rules for the racers can hope to have bodies of glory like Jesus' body of glory: that is, those who know by experience the fellowship of His sufferings shall know the fellowship of His glory, of which their glorified bodies shall partake. That joint-suffering is expressed by "being conformed to His death." Philippians 3:10. His hope was to pass through the portal of either an out-resurrection, or an out-translation, in response to the first trumpet blast of command. In Peter's epistles, we read

frequently of "suffering and glory;" but never of a higher glory dependent upon a deeper suffering. The glorified body of the reigning Queen, the Bride of Christ, certainly must be conformed to that of the King, her Bridegroom. Be it also noted that it is expressly stated that Christ is able to "subdue" or to bring down "all rule and power and authority" in us, and according to this very mighty working, which is going on in the racers (Philippians 2:13), the winners in the race will be awarded that transcendent glory co-jointly with Christ. Oh, we stand amazed at such a prospect!

RANKS IN REVELATION

In John's vision of the end time, we see five different companies in heaven. (1) The four living ones and twenty-four elders - Chapters 4 and 5. (2) The great multitude of tribulation saints - Chapter 7. (3) The manly son - Chapter 12. (4) The two witnesses - Chapter 11. (5) The overcomers over the anti-Christ - Chapter 15.

It may not be clear when these groups arrive in heaven; that the second group arrive after the first. Some may contend that John only saw them later. It is believed by many that they arrive there after the tribulation. This we cannot accept for a moment, though it would be a proof of ranks. However, that the other three companies arrive in heaven many months after the first one (chapter 4) and at times succeeding one another becomes plain by study. The beast will reign 3 1/2 years, his dominion ending 250 days before the end of the allotted 7 years. The manly son, called "our brethren" (chapter 12:10, 11), will be born (a company caught away to heaven), before the beast takes the throne. Satan must be cast out of heaven before the beast can begin his reign. These three things occur before the middle of the week, or seven years. In the middle of the week, the beast will kill the two witnesses, who will be caught up to heaven three days later - chapter 11. Some time later, during the reign of the beast, another company will get victory over the beast and his image, and will be seen standing on the sea of glass. Let us tabulate these dates thus - (1) The Four Living Ones and 24 Elders will be caught up before the week begins, or when Jesus takes His throne. Chapter 4. These are not two companies, but one company seen in two aspects - worshipers and rulers. (2) The Innumerable Company, tribulation saints, will be caught up probably a year or so later - chapter 7.

(3) The Manly Son will be caught up 250 days before the middle of the week - chapter 12. No doubt this Man Child represents the 144,000 who are sealed in chapter 7. The first three groups compose the Church. The other two are of Israel.

(4) The Two Witnesses will be caught up at the middle of the week - chapter 11.

(5) The beast-overcomers will be caught up about the middle of the week, perhaps with the two witnesses - chapter 15.

Here are five distinct groups who arrive in heaven at different times, covering a period of possibly three and one-half years. Daniel's figures, compared with those of John, give us this data without imagination.

When we consider the divergences between these several companies, we find added evidence of our view. The first rank are in Christ's throne as well as around it. They are never called servants. They worship; have crowns and reign. They occupy places of trust in heaven, assisting the Lord in executing His judgments in the earth. These only are with Him from the beginning of His reign in heaven - chapter four.

The second crowd have victory palms, but no crowns. They stand before the throne, never seen falling down in worship; never occupy any office of authority.

The third rank are the man-child (lit. a manly son), twice called 'child.' The first two companies call them, "our brethren," and rejoice that they overcame the accuser, by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony. These are self-sacrificing on earth - "they loved not their lives unto the death." They shall "rule (lit. shepherd) the nations with a rod of iron." These are not necessarily grown up into mature manhood in Christ; but they are a strong company. A 14 year old boy may be stronger than a man 50 years old, but he is not as wise, nor as useful. This third company no doubt completes the catching away of the Church. The fourth group, the two witnesses, and those on the sea of glass are distinctly Kingdom saints. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." That is, to press toward the goal for the Prize. With such a dazzling star of hope and such invincible proofs of its existence in heaven, let us not be turned aside by any critic, nor daunted by any hardship, nor slowed down by any halfheartedness: but let us "so run that we may obtain." And "whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule: let us mind the same thing." Philippians 3:14-16.

A SUPPLEMENT

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee OUT OF the hour of trial, which shall come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Revelation 3:10, 11. Greek.

(1) "The great tribulation" (Matthew 24:21) will be localized to Palestine, and has direct reference to the Jews. Compare Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 12:1, 2; Isaiah 26:20, 21. Study these and other Scriptures and see for yourself. The "great tribulation" in Revelation 7:14, is not the local tribulation of Matthew 24. It would be impossible for the innumerable company to be assembled in Palestine; and that innumerable company are "of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues." They are the greater portion of the Church, or Body of Christ. And note another very important fact - "these are they which come (or, are coming) out of great tribulation." John saw them in vision, while they were ascending out of the world-wide hour of trial, and not as having already come out of it.

They will not pass through it, or "endure to the end" of it. (Matthew 24:13) That endurance is local, referring to the Jews in the land of Palestine; and that salvation is from physical death, because they will accept Jesus as their Savior and Messiah. They will cry out to Jehovah and He will deliver them from the destructive cruelty of the nations. No one is ever saved from sin by endurance. "By grace are ye saved through faith."

(2) Revelation 3:7-13 is addressed to a company of choice saints, against whom there is not the slightest blame. They are the assembly in Philadelphia, which means "brotherly love." Five forceful commendatory facts are said to them and about them, which are not said of any other churches, except Smyrna. (A) "I have set before thee an open door." (B) "No man can shut it." What door can be meant but the door into heaven, through which they will escape the world-wide tribulation of verse 10? These are stubborn unconditional statements spoken by the Head of the Church, who is even now walking as Judge in the midst of the seven churches, or throughout all Christendom. (Revelation 2:1).

(C) "For thou hast a little strength." Christ is the life and strength of all brotherly-love saints. They have none of their own. (D) "And hast kept my Word - the Word of my patience" (V. 10), which refers directly and particularly to the coming of the Lord and our preparation to meet Him. (E) "And hast not denied my name." Observe that the two facts about the open door are occasioned by these three facts. Pergamos holds Jesus' name in profession; but denies it in conduct. Philadelphia reveres His name in testimony, in song and in a separated walk.

(3) Now comes the glorious promise because of this group's whole-hearted love for Christ: "I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial." He will not allow Philadelphia saints to get into the period of tribulation or trial. He will call them home through the "open door" into heaven.

How do they become Philadelphia, or brother-love believers? They see these precious truths of Divine grace and believe them. They live in hope of their fulfillment. They see a promised crown ahead, and seek to earn it by suffering with Christ. John wrote, "He that hath this hope set on him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." (1 John 3:3). They see, that by meeting certain conditions, we may miss the "great tribulation" into which the innumerable company will enter. They behold an out-resurrection for Paul and those who have gone by way of the grave - (the Smyrna group) and an out-translation for Philadelphia saints.