

Resurrection

If we are to believe literally the prophecies of Scripture, we should expect that when Jesus comes again, the saints will come back to life in the flesh. Their bodies, buried in the earth and completely decomposed, will be reconstituted to their original state.¹ On the one hand, these prophecies are the Word of God, and as people of faith we must accept them. On the other hand, given the modern state of our knowledge, they do not make rational sense. This brings great confusion to the Christian faith. Therefore, it is important that we elucidate the true meaning of resurrection.

SECTION 1

RESURRECTION

Resurrection means to come back to life. To come back to life implies that we have been dead. To fathom the meaning of resurrection, we must clarify the biblical concepts of life and death.

1.1 THE BIBLICAL CONCEPTS OF LIFE AND DEATH

When a follower asked Jesus if he could go home to bury his deceased father, Jesus said, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead.”² From these words of Jesus, it is clear that the Bible contains two different concepts

1. 1 Thess. 4:16, Matt. 27:52
2. Luke 9:60

of life and death. The first concept of life and death concerns physical life. Here, “death” means the end of physical life, as was the case of the disciple’s deceased father who was to be buried. “Life” in that sense means the state in which the physical self maintains its physiological functions.

The second concept of life and death concerns those living people who had gathered to bury the deceased man, those whom Jesus called “the dead.” Why did Jesus refer to people whose bodies were alive and active as the dead? He meant that since they had not accepted Jesus, they were far removed from the love of God and were dwelling in the realm of Satan’s dominion. This second concept of death does not refer to the expiration of physical life. It means leaving the bosom of God’s love and falling under the dominion of Satan. The corresponding concept of life refers to the state of living in accordance with God’s Will, within the dominion of God’s infinite love. Therefore, even if a person’s physical self is alive, if he dwells apart from God’s dominion and is in servitude to Satan, he is dead as judged by the original standard of value. A similar conclusion can be drawn from the Lord’s words of judgment upon the faithless people of the church in Sardis: “You have the name of being alive, and you are dead.”³

On the other hand, even though a person’s physical life may have expired, he remains alive in the true sense if his spirit abides in the Kingdom of Heaven in heaven, a realm in the spirit world where God governs through love. When Jesus said, “he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,”⁴ he meant that those who believe in him and live within the realm of God’s dominion have life. Even after their physical bodies have returned to the soil, their spirits enjoy life in God’s dominion. Jesus also said, “whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.”⁵ In saying that believers will never die, Jesus did not mean that they would live forever on earth. Rather, he meant that those who believe in Jesus during their earthly life will obtain eternal life within the bosom of God’s love. They will be alive, both in this life and the next. Jesus’ words assure us that death, in the sense of the end of physical life, has no effect on our eternal life.

Jesus said, “Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it.”⁶ Those who transgress the Will of God in order to preserve the well-being of their flesh, though their bodies are alive, are dead. On the other hand, those who sacrifice their bodies for the sake of God’s Will are alive, even though their bodies are buried and decayed. They live forever as spirits in the love of God.

3. Rev. 3:1

4. John 11:25

5. John 11:26

6. Luke 17:33

1.2 THE DEATH CAUSED BY THE HUMAN FALL

We have learned that there are two different biblical concepts of death. Which of the two refers to the death brought about by the Fall of the first human ancestors?

God created human beings to grow old and return to dust; physical death was allotted to human beings regardless of whether or not they fell. Adam died at the biblical age of 930 years, and his flesh returned to dust; but this was not the death caused by the Fall. According to the Principle of Creation, the flesh is the clothing of the spirit. Just as one discards worn-out clothes, the flesh is to be discarded when it has grown old and weak. Only the unclothed spirit self then enters the spirit world and lives there eternally. Nothing material can live forever. Human beings are no exception; our bodies cannot live eternally. If human beings were to live on earth forever in the flesh, why did God create the spirit world as our final destination? The spirit world was not created after the Fall as a place for fallen spirits to abide. Rather, it is part of the original creation, created as the place where individuals who fulfill the purpose of creation will enjoy eternal life as spirits after their life on earth has come to an end.

Most people are attached to their earthly life. They regret its passing because, due to the Fall, they are ignorant of the fact that after they discard their clothes of flesh, they are meant to live forever in the beautiful and eternal spirit world. The transition from physical life to life in the spirit world may be compared to the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly. If the caterpillar had self-awareness, it might feel the same attachment to its limited existence, climbing about the leaves of a plant, as people do to their earthly life. It, too, would probably be reluctant to end its existence as a caterpillar, unaware that it is destined to enter a new phase of life as a butterfly, when it will enjoy fragrant flowers and sweet nectar to its heart's content.

The relationship between earthly existence and the life of a spirit is akin to the relationship of caterpillar and butterfly. Moreover, if there had been no Fall, earthly people would be able to relate with spirits just as naturally as they relate among themselves. They would know that death is not the final departure from their loved ones on earth. If people knew what a beautiful and happy world they will enter after they attain perfection on earth and die a natural death, they would look forward eagerly to the day they enter that world.

Since the Fall did not cause death in the sense of the expiration of physical life, we can surmise that what it brought was the other type

of death. Let us examine this further. God told Adam and Eve that on the day they ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they would surely die.⁷ Since God so warned them, it must be that when Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, they did in fact die. Yet Adam and Eve after the Fall continued their earthly life and bore children, who multiplied to form today's corrupt human society. We can conclude that the death caused by the Fall does not mean the end of physical life, but rather the descent from the good dominion of God into the evil dominion of Satan.

Let us draw additional support from the Bible. It is written, "We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brethren. He who does not love remains in death."⁸ Love here means the love of God. A person who does not love his neighbors with God's love is dead, even though he remains active and alive on earth. This is also the sense of the verses "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life"⁹ and "To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the spirit is life and peace."¹⁰

1.3 THE MEANING OF RESURRECTION

Many have hitherto believed that the death caused by the Fall was physical death. Consequently, they have interpreted the biblical concept of resurrection as revival from physical death, and believed that resurrection of the dead involves the biological regeneration of their decomposed bodies. However, the Fall of the first human ancestors did not cause this kind of death. According to the Principle of Creation, the human body was created to return to dust after it grows old. A decomposed body cannot be restored to its original state. Furthermore, it is not necessary for a spirit to take on another physical body when he is meant to enjoy eternal life in the vast spirit world.

Resurrection may be defined as the process of being restored from the death caused by the Fall to life, from the realm of Satan's dominion to the realm of God's direct dominion, through the providence of restoration. Accordingly, whenever we repent of our sins and rise to a higher state of goodness, we are resurrected to that degree.

The Bible illustrates the process of resurrection: "He who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come

7. Gen. 2:17

8. I John 3:14

9. Rom. 6:23

10. Rom. 8:6

into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”¹¹ Based on this verse, we can affirm that resurrection means to leave the bosom of Satan and return to the bosom of God. It is also written, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”¹² This verse means that because we inherited Satan’s lineage as a result of Adam’s fall, we are dead; when we return to the lineage of God through Christ, we shall be resurrected to life.

1.4 WHAT CHANGES DOES RESURRECTION CAUSE IN HUMAN BEINGS?

According to God’s Word, Adam and Eve died when they ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Nevertheless, no significant external change took place in them. At most there were momentary changes in their countenances due to the anxiety and fear they felt over having fallen. Likewise, no significant external changes should be expected to take place in fallen people when they are resurrected to the state prior to the Fall. One who has been reborn through the Holy Spirit surely has experienced resurrection. Compare such a faithful person to a robber: One has been resurrected to the level of being reborn into God’s realm, while the other is a spiritually dead person destined for hell. Yet the two people cannot be distinguished by their external appearance. One who believes in God according to Jesus’ teaching is indeed resurrected from death to life. However, one cannot discern any obvious change in his physical body before and after he received Jesus and gained life through resurrection.

Jesus was truly a man who fulfilled the purpose of creation.¹³ Nevertheless, judged by his outward appearance, Jesus was not noticeably different from ordinary people. If he had unmistakably displayed divinity in his outward appearance, then everyone around him would surely have believed in and followed him.

The changes a person experiences when he is resurrected and enters the governance of God take place in his heart and spirit. Having been liberated from Satan’s dominion, a resurrected person can unite with God in heart and acquire a divine nature. These internal changes also purify his body, transforming it from a haunt of Satan into a temple of God. In this sense, we may say that our physical body is also resurrected. We may compare it to a building which was previously used for evil purposes and is now used as a place of worship. Although there may be no change in its outward appearance, it is now sanctified as a sacred building.

11. John 5:24

12. I Cor. 15:22

13. cf. Christology 2.2

SECTION 2

THE PROVIDENCE OF RESURRECTION

2.1 HOW DOES GOD CARRY OUT HIS WORK OF RESURRECTION?

Resurrection means the process through which a fallen person is restored to the original state as intended by God. The providence of resurrection thus means the providence of restoration. Since the providence of restoration is God's work of re-creation, resurrection is a work of re-creation. Thus, the providence of resurrection is carried out in accordance with the Principle of Creation, in the following manner.

First, in the history of the providence of resurrection, many of those who were entrusted with a mission exerted themselves with utmost sincerity and faith to realize the Will of Heaven. Even though they may not have fully carried out their responsibilities, based on their devotion, they broadened the foundation upon which subsequent generations can form a relationship of heart with God. We call this foundation *the merit of the age* in the providence of restoration. The merit of the age has increased in proportion to the foundation of heart laid by the prophets, sages and righteous people who came before us. Therefore, resurrection is carried out based on the merit of the age.

Second, according to the Principle of Creation, it was God's responsibility to create human beings and give them His Word, while it was the human portion of responsibility to reach perfection by believing in and living according to it. Similarly, in conducting the providence of resurrection, God's responsibility is to give us His Word and guidance, and our responsibility is to believe and practice it in order to fulfill the providence.

Third, according to the Principle of Creation, a person's spirit can grow to perfection only through the physical self. Likewise, in the providence of resurrection, the resurrection of a spirit can be achieved only through earthly life.

Fourth, according to the Principle of Creation, a person is meant to reach perfection through the three ordered stages of the growing period. Therefore, the providence of resurrection for fallen people is also to be completed through three ordered stages, manifested as three ages in the providence of restoration.

2.2 THE PROVIDENCE OF RESURRECTION FOR PEOPLE ON EARTH

2.2.1 THE PROVIDENCE TO LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR RESURRECTION

God began His providence to resurrect fallen humankind in Adam's family. However, the providence was prolonged because those who were entrusted with accomplishing God's Will did not fulfill their responsibilities. Two thousand biblical years later, God chose Abraham to be the father of faith, and through him God's Will began to be accomplished. Consequently, the two thousand years from Adam to Abraham resulted in the establishment of the foundation upon which God could begin His providence of resurrection in the following age. For this reason, we may call this period the age of the providence to lay the foundation for resurrection.

2.2.2 THE PROVIDENCE OF FORMATION-STAGE RESURRECTION

During the two thousand years from Abraham to Jesus, God worked to raise people to the formation stage of resurrection. Hence, this era may be called the age of the providence of formation-stage resurrection. All people who lived on earth during this age could receive the merit of the age based on God's work of formation-stage resurrection. In this era, God gave the Law of the Old Testament. By believing in and practicing it, the people could fulfill their responsibility and be justified before God. Therefore, this era has been called the age of justification by works. The people of this era who practiced the Law in their daily life were resurrected in spirit to the formation stage and became form spirits. Upon their death, those who achieved the level of form spirits while on earth entered and abided in the form-spirit level of the spirit world.

2.2.3 THE PROVIDENCE OF GROWTH-STAGE RESURRECTION

Due to the crucifixion of Jesus, resurrection was left incomplete, and its completion has been delayed until the time of his return. The two thousand years since then have been a time of prolongation, during which God has worked the providence to resurrect people to the growth stage through spiritual salvation. Hence, this era may be called the age of the providence of growth-stage resurrection. All who have lived in this age can receive the merit of the age based on God's work of growth-stage resurrection. In this era, people are to believe in the New Testament Word, which God gave them that they might fulfill their

responsibility for the providence and be justified before God. Therefore, this era has been called the age of justification by faith.

Those who have lived in this era could be resurrected in spirit by believing in the Gospel during their earthly life. By being resurrected to the growth stage, they could become life spirits. Upon their death, those who became life spirits while on earth enter and abide in *Paradise*, the life-spirit level of the spirit world.

2.2.4 THE PROVIDENCE OF COMPLETION-STAGE RESURRECTION

The era when people are to be resurrected both spiritually and physically through the returning Christ and complete the providence of resurrection is called the age of the providence of completion-stage resurrection. All those who live during this era are to receive the merit of the age based on God's work of completion-stage resurrection. Christ at the Second Advent brings the new truth with which to fulfill the promises of the Old and New Testaments; it may be called the Completed Testament.¹⁴ Believing in this truth, people are to serve and attend the Lord on the earth, that they may fulfill their responsibility for the providence and be justified before God. Therefore, this era is called the age of justification by attendance. By believing in and serving the Lord and devoting themselves to his work, people of this era are to be fully resurrected both spiritually and physically, become divine spirits, and live in the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. When they shed their physical bodies, as spirits they will enter and abide in the Kingdom of Heaven in heaven, which is the divine-spirit level of the spirit world.

2.2.5 THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AND PARADISE

Some Christians have been unclear in their concepts of the Kingdom of Heaven and Paradise because they lack a full understanding of the Principle. Had Jesus completed his mission as the Messiah on earth, the Kingdom of Heaven on earth would have been established in his day. The Kingdom of Heaven in heaven would also have been realized at that time, once people of perfect character living in the Kingdom of Heaven on earth had passed into the spirit world as divine spirits. However, because Jesus died on the cross, the Kingdom of Heaven on earth was not realized. The earth never saw the appearance of people who had reached the level of a divine spirit. No one has ever become a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven in the spirit world, which was created as the

14. cf. Eschatology 5.1

home of divine spirits. Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven in heaven remains empty and incomplete.

Why then did Jesus indicate that whoever believed in him would enter the Kingdom of Heaven? The original purpose for which he came on earth was to establish the Kingdom of Heaven. However, due to the people's disbelief in him, Jesus died on the cross before he could establish the Kingdom. Jesus promised the thief who was crucified at his right side that he would enter Paradise together with him.¹⁵ The thief was the only person who believed in Jesus at the end, when everyone else had abandoned him. While Jesus had the hope of accomplishing his mission as the Messiah, he preached that people could enter the Kingdom of Heaven. But when he was at the point of dying on the cross without fulfilling this purpose, he told the thief that he would enter only Paradise. Paradise refers to the realm in the spirit world for those spirits who have attained the level of life spirits by believing in Jesus during their earthly life. There they remain in waiting until the day when the gate to the Kingdom of Heaven is opened.

2.2.6 SPIRITUAL PHENOMENA IN THE LAST DAYS

Adam and Eve fell at the top of the growth stage. Human beings are now being restored to the top of the growth stage through the providence of restoration, having passed through the Old Testament Age and the New Testament Age. The Last Days is the time when people return to the spiritual level reached by the first human ancestors just prior to the Fall. Today, being the Last Days, is the time when people throughout the world are reaching this level. Just as Adam and Eve prior to the Fall were able to converse directly with God, today many people on earth can communicate with the spirit world. The prophecy that in the Last Days, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams,"¹⁶ may be explained based on this insight from the Principle.

In the Last Days, many people will receive the revelation, "You are the Lord." Often these people will be misled into believing that they are the Second Coming of Christ. Why do they stray from the right path?

Upon creating human beings, God gave them the mandate to rule over the universe.¹⁷ Yet due to the Fall, they have been unable to fulfill this blessing. When fallen people are spiritually restored through the

15. Luke 23:43

16. Acts 2:17

17. Gen. 1:28

providence of restoration to the top of the growth stage, they will reach the level of heart comparable to that of Adam and Eve just before their Fall. God gives certain people who are at this stage the revelation that they are the Lord, in recognition that they have reached the level of maturity at which He had once blessed human beings with dominion over the universe.

Believers in the Last Days whose devout faith entitles them to receive the revelation that they are “the Lord” stand in a position similar to that of John the Baptist. John the Baptist came with the mission to make straight the way of Jesus.¹⁸ In the same way, these people of faith are given the mission to prepare, in their particular areas of responsibility, the way for Christ at the Second Advent. Since they are to act as the Lord’s representatives in their respective fields, God gives them the revelation that they are the Lord.

When someone who is gifted with spiritual communication receives the revelation that he is the Lord, he should understand this phenomenon through the teachings of the Principle. He should not act wrongly, mistaking himself for Christ at the Second Advent. Otherwise, he may end up playing the role of an antichrist. For this reason, the Bible contains prophecies that in the Last Days there will appear many antichrists.¹⁹

Spiritual mediums are often confused and fall into conflict among themselves, because the levels of the spirit world with which they are in communication and the content of the revelations they receive differ.²⁰ Although spiritually perceptive people are in contact with the same spirit world, because their circumstances and positions vary and their character, intellect and spirituality are at different levels, they will perceive the spirit world in different ways. These differences give rise to conflicts among them.

People who contribute to the providence of restoration usually are responsible for only a part of the providence. Focusing only on their vertical relationship with God, they are often not sensitive to their proper horizontal relationship with other spiritually attuned people. Strife can break out among them, as each thinks that the Will of God which he serves is different from that which the others are serving. Their conflicts are aggravated when each of them receives the revelation that he is the best. Yet God offers such encouragement to spur each on to do his very best in carrying out his particular mission within the greater

18. John 1:23

19. I John 2:18

20. I Cor. 15:41

providence. God also gives such revelations because each is, in truth, the one best suited for his respective area of mission.

In addition, when people of devout faith become spiritually open and reach the level of heart comparable to Adam and Eve just prior to their fall, they will face a test similar to that which Adam and Eve failed to overcome. If they are not careful, they may commit the mistake of the Fall. It is extremely difficult to overcome this temptation without understanding the Principle. Regrettably, many religious people have failed to overcome this test, nullifying in an instant accomplishments gained through years of devotion and exertion.

How can spiritually gifted people cope with these troubles? To accomplish the providence of restoration in a short period of time, God apportions different missions to numerous individuals and relates to each of them independently. It is thus virtually inevitable that conflicts break out among spiritually sensitive people. However, at the end of history, God will provide them with the new truth. The new truth will help them understand that the unique missions with which each has been entrusted are all for the sake of the same ultimate purpose of God. It will guide them to cooperate with each other and work in harmony to accomplish the greater purpose of the providence of restoration. In this era, all spiritually gifted people should cease their stubborn insistence that they alone have been serving the Will of God. They should search out the higher and more comprehensive words of truth which can help them correctly understand their positions and the true nature of their providential missions. Only then will they be able to overcome the confusion stemming from past horizontal conflicts. Only then can each arrive at the fulfillment of his individual path of faith and bring forth its beautiful fruits.

2.2.7 THE FIRST RESURRECTION

The “first resurrection” spoken of in the Bible describes the fulfillment of restoration for the first time in providential history. This will be accomplished through Christ at the Second Advent. He will cleanse people of the original sin and restore them to their true, original selves, enabling each to fulfill the purpose of creation.

The hope of all Christians is to participate in the first resurrection. But who in fact shall participate? It will be those who are the first to believe in, serve and follow Christ at the Second Advent. They will assist him in fulfilling all the indemnity conditions worldwide and in accomplishing the providence of restoration. In the process, they will be the

first to have their original sin removed, become divine spirits, and fulfill the purpose of creation.

Next, let us investigate the meaning of the 144,000 mentioned in the Bible.²¹ In order for Christ at the Second Advent to complete the providence of restoration, he must find a certain number of people who can restore through indemnity the missions of all the past saints who, despite their best efforts to do God's Will, fell prey to Satan when they failed in their responsibilities. He must find these people during his lifetime and lay the foundation of victory over Satan's world. The total number of saints whom Christ at the Second Advent must find to accomplish this task is 144,000.

In the course of God's providence of restoration, Jacob had twelve children with whom he set out on his mission to restore a family. Moses led twelve tribes in fulfilling the mission to restore a nation. If these twelve tribes were to multiply once more after the pattern of twelve tribes, they would total 144. Jesus, who came with the mission to restore the world, found twelve disciples in order to restore through indemnity, both spiritually and physically, the number 144. Yet due to his crucifixion, Jesus was able to restore it only spiritually. Jacob had twelve sons in order to restore through indemnity in his lifetime the vertical course of twelve generations from Noah, which had been claimed by Satan.²² In the same way, Christ at the Second Advent must restore through indemnity in his lifetime, both spiritually and physically, the long providential course since the First Coming of Christ, who has set up the spiritual pattern of 144 tribes. To accomplish this, he must find a required number of believers, corresponding to the number 144.

2.3 THE PROVIDENCE OF RESURRECTION FOR SPIRITS

2.3.1 THE PURPOSE AND THE WAY OF RETURNING RESURRECTION

According to the Principle of Creation, the growth of the human spirit requires two kinds of nourishment: life elements received from God and vitality elements received through give and take action with the physical self. Spirits can neither grow nor be resurrected apart from a physical self. Consequently, the spirits of people who died before they could reach perfection during their earthly life can be resurrected only by returning to earth and completing their unaccomplished responsibility through cooperation with earthly people. By assisting people of

21. Rev. 14:1-4, 7:4

22. cf. Periods 2.2

faith living on the earth to fulfill their missions, the spirits may complete their missions at the same time. Herein lies the meaning behind the verse which foretold that in the Last Days the Lord will come “with his holy myriads.”²³ We call this process *returning resurrection*.

How do spirits help people on earth fulfill the Will of God? When people become receptive to spirits through prayer or other spiritual activities, the spirits descend to them to form a common base with their spirit selves and work with them. Spirits perform various works. For example, they pour spiritual fire on earthly people and give them the power to heal diseases. They help people enter states of trance and perceive the realities of the spirit world. They give people revelations and the gift of prophecy. They can also give deep inspiration to the soul. In these various works, spirits act on behalf of the Holy Spirit, guiding people on the earth to accomplish the Will of God.

2.3.2 THE RETURNING RESURRECTION OF THE SPIRITS OF ISRAELITES AND CHRISTIANS

2.3.2.1 GROWTH-STAGE RETURNING RESURRECTION

Spirits of those who kept the Mosaic Law and worshipped God sincerely while living on earth during the Old Testament Age came to abide at the form-spirit level of the spirit world. After the advent of Jesus, these spirits all returned to earth and assisted faithful people on earth to accomplish the Will of God. By thus helping the people to attain the level of life spirit, they too received the same benefit: namely, they became life spirits and entered Paradise. We call this dispensation growth-stage returning resurrection.

Let us draw some examples from the Bible. Since Elijah appeared as a spirit before Jesus and his disciples,²⁴ it is clear enough that Elijah still lived in the spirit world. Yet Jesus referred to John the Baptist, who lived on the earth, as Elijah.²⁵ Jesus called him Elijah because in terms of their common mission, John’s body concurrently served as Elijah’s body. The spirit of Elijah descended to John the Baptist to help John fulfill the mission Elijah had left unfinished during his earthly life. This was Elijah’s returning resurrection.

It is recorded in the Bible that when Jesus died on the cross, many bodies of the saints rose from their tombs.²⁶ This verse does not mean

23. Jude 14

24. Matt. 17:3

25. Matt. 17:12-13

26. Matt. 27:52

that these saints' decayed bodies were regenerated, enabling them to rise up in the flesh. Rather, it describes the spiritual phenomenon of returning resurrection. The spirits of the faithful Jews descended to the earth from the form-spirit level of the spirit world where they had been living. They returned to help the believers on earth, who had the opportunity to benefit from the redemption by the cross, to believe in Jesus and become life spirits. In doing so, the returning spirits also became life spirits. If the saints had risen bodily from their tombs, as is literally written in the Bible, they certainly would have testified to the fact that Jesus was the Messiah. Would anyone then have dared to persist in disbelieving in Jesus? Moreover, their deeds and works would have been recorded in the Bible, yet we have nothing other than the vague report that the saints rose from their tombs. This was a fleeting spiritual phenomenon perceptible only to those believers whose spiritual senses were open.

Compared to Paradise, which people could enter by virtue of the redemption by Jesus' crucifixion, the region of the spirit world where the spirits of the Old Testament saints were staying was relatively dark and miserable; thus it was called a "tomb."

2.3.2.2 COMPLETION-STAGE RETURNING RESURRECTION

The spirits of people who believed in Jesus while they lived on earth during the New Testament Age became life spirits and entered Paradise after death. After the Second Advent, these spirits will all return to the earth to help faithful people believe in and attend the returning Christ. By thus helping people on earth to attain the level of divine spirit, they too will receive the same benefit and become divine spirits. When the earthly saints pass over to the next world and enter the Kingdom of Heaven in heaven, the returning spirits will also enter the Kingdom. This dispensation is called completion-stage returning resurrection. In this dispensation, the spirits not only help earthly people; earthly people also assist in the resurrection of the spirits.

Let us elucidate the following verse:

All these [saints of the Old Testament Age], though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised [permission to enter the Kingdom of Heaven], since God had foreseen something better [the Kingdom of Heaven] for us [earthly people], that apart from us they [spirits] should not be made perfect [citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven]. —*Heb. 11:39-40*

With this explanation, we can understand that this verse accurately depicts returning resurrection. It illustrates that spirits living in the spirit world cannot attain perfection apart from the cooperation of earthly people. Furthermore, it is written, “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”²⁷ This verse teaches that unless the believers on earth first loose what is bound, the spirits also cannot loose what is bound in them. Since spirits can be resurrected only by cooperating with believers on earth to whom they descend, Jesus gave the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to Peter, representing earthly believers, in order that he might unlock the gates to the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth.²⁸

2.3.3 THE RETURNING RESURRECTION OF SPIRITS WHO ABIDE OUTSIDE PARADISE

There are several classes of spirits who abide outside Paradise; each has a way to achieve returning resurrection. First, let us examine the returning resurrection of spirits who believed in religions other than Christianity during their lifetime. Just as any two people must first form a common base with each other before they can work toward a common goal, earthly people and spirits can work to achieve a common providential goal only when they first form a common base. Therefore, a spirit who returns to the earth for his resurrection seeks a counterpart among the earthly people of the religion in which he believed during his earthly life. A spirit descends to the person of his choice and guides him. When he helps that person fulfill the purpose of the providence of restoration, they both receive the same benefit.

Second, let us examine the returning resurrection of spirits who lived a conscientious life even though they did not believe in a religion. No one among fallen humanity embodies perfect goodness because no one has resolved the original sin within himself. Hence, a good spirit is only relatively better than an evil spirit. These good spirits descend to good people on earth and cooperate with them in order to help them fulfill the purpose of God’s providence of restoration. In the process, the spirits receive the same benefits as the people they have helped.

Third, let us examine the returning resurrection of evil spirits. In the Bible we read about the “cursed,” who are liable to “the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”²⁹ “His angels” here refers to evil spirits who live and work under the control of the Devil. The spiritual

27. Matt. 18:18

28. Matt. 16:19

29. Matt. 25:41

creatures commonly known as ghosts, whose features and identity are often unclear, are none other than evil spirits. Even evil spirits are able to receive the merit of the age by returning to the earth. However, the works of evil spirits do not always bear fruit and result in their receiving the benefit of returning resurrection. To receive such benefit, their works must have the effect of punishing earthly people, thereby enlisting their help in making indemnity conditions in accordance with God's plan to cleanse evil spirits through punishment. How, then, can the works of evil spirits result in casting judgment on behalf of Heaven?

Let us take an example. Suppose there is a person living on earth who, based on the merit of the age, is about to graduate from his current sphere of benefit to a higher sphere of benefit. He cannot graduate to the new sphere of benefit unless he first makes some condition of indemnity to remove the sins of the past. In the case of graduating from the family sphere to the clan sphere, a person must pay the debt of sin both for himself and for the ancestors of his clan. Heaven allows evil spirits to torment him as punishment for this sin. If he willingly endures the suffering given by the evil spirits and overcomes it, he will have successfully paid the indemnity through this condition and thus be entitled to enter the higher sphere of benefit at the clan level. The evil spirits who have tormented him receive a corresponding benefit. This is the way that, based on the merit of the age, the providence of restoration expands its sphere of benefit from the family level to the clan level, the national level, and the world level. Whenever humanity is to graduate to a higher level, the person leading the providence must make a condition of indemnity to resolve the sins which he or his forefathers have committed.

The works of evil spirits may help an earthly person fulfill indemnity conditions to purge his sin in two different ways. First, the spirit may trouble the earthly person directly. Second, the evil spirit may descend to the spirit self of another person living on earth who is about to commit a sin comparable to the sin of the person to be punished, and work through the second person to attack him. In either case, if the earthly person gratefully and willingly suffers the work of the evil spirit, he will make the indemnity condition to purge his and his ancestors' sin. This sin will then be resolved, and he will enter the higher sphere of benefit which has become available in the new era. Thus, the works of the evil spirit will have cast judgment on the person for his sin on behalf of Heaven. Consequently, the spirit will receive the same benefit as the earthly person; he, too, will enter the higher sphere of benefit.

2.4 THE THEORY OF REINCARNATION EXAMINED IN LIGHT OF THE PRINCIPLE OF RETURNING RESURRECTION

In seeking to fulfill the whole purpose of the providence of restoration, God has called upon many individuals and has apportioned to each a suitable mission. These individuals have passed down their particular missions to other individuals of similar character and circumstances, gradually fulfilling each area of mission over the long flow of history.

The providence of restoration begins with an individual, expands to the family, nation and world, and ultimately will bring restoration to all of heaven and earth. Although the mission given to each individual may be only a part of the greater whole, it also unfolds according to this pattern. Each mission begins at the individual level and expands its scope to the family, nation and world level. To take an example from the Bible, the mission begun with Abraham at the individual and family levels was passed down to Moses at the national level and to Jesus at the worldwide level.

Spirits who could not complete their missions during their earthly life must return to people on earth who share the same type of mission as they had during their lifetime. When a spirit assists an earthly person to fulfill God's Will, the person will fulfill not only his own mission, but also the mission of the spirit who has helped him. Hence, from the standpoint of mission, the physical self of the person concurrently serves as the physical self of the spirit. In a sense, he is the second coming of the spirit; hence he may sometimes be called by the spirit's name and appear to be the reincarnation of that spirit. In the Bible, John the Baptist was to have fulfilled the mission which Elijah left unfinished during his earthly life, since he received Elijah's assistance in carrying out his activities. Jesus called John "Elijah" because John's physical self concurrently served as the body of Elijah.³⁰

In the Last Days, certain people on earth are entrusted with missions on the worldwide level. They must inherit and complete the responsibilities of all the spirits of the past who were devoted to the same field. These spirits will descend to these people and assist them in order to complete the spirits' own unfinished work. Since the earthly people are, in a sense, the second coming of these guiding spirits, they may think that they are their reincarnation. Hence, in the Last Days there are people claiming to be the second coming of Jesus, the Maitreya Buddha, Confucius, the Olive Tree, or the Tree of Life. The Hindu and Buddhist

30. cf. Resurrection 2.3.2.1

doctrines of reincarnation interpret these outward phenomena but without the benefit of knowing the principle of returning resurrection.

SECTION 3

THE UNIFICATION OF RELIGIONS THROUGH RETURNING RESURRECTION

3.1 THE UNIFICATION OF CHRISTIANITY THROUGH RETURNING RESURRECTION

At the time of the Second Advent, all life spirits who dwell in Paradise descend to the people on earth who, by believing in and attending the Lord, can attain the level of divine spirit. By cooperating with these people to fulfill God's Will for the providence of restoration, the spirits can share the same benefit and enter the Kingdom of Heaven.³¹ Accordingly, all the spirits will descend from Paradise in that day and assist the believers on the earth.

Although the time of visitation may vary according to an individual's faith, inborn nature, and the accomplishments of his ancestors for the providence, sooner or later each believer will be guided by the spirits from Paradise to go before Christ at the Second Advent and devote their lives for the sake of God's Will. For this reason, Christianity is destined to be united.

3.2 THE UNIFICATION OF ALL OTHER RELIGIONS THROUGH RETURNING RESURRECTION

As explained above, all religions, which have sought the same ultimate purpose, are gradually coalescing into one cultural sphere based on Christian ideals.³² Christianity does not exist for its own sake, but has as its final mission the fulfillment of the purposes of all the religions in human history. Christ at the Second Advent, who is to come as the center of Christianity, is the person of the Maitreya Buddha who is to return according to the teachings of Buddhism, the True Man who is awaited in the Chinese religious tradition, and the Chŏngdoryŏng for whom many Koreans yearn. He is the central figure whose advent is expected in other religions as well.

Consequently, at the Second Coming of Christ, all spirits who believed in religions other than Christianity during their lifetime will,

31. cf. Resurrection 2.3.2.2

32. cf. Eschatology 4.2

like the spirits in Paradise, also return to earth to be resurrected, even though the timing of their return will vary depending upon their spiritual position. These spirits must guide the earthly believers of their respective religions to Christ at the Second Advent and assist them to believe in him and attend him in his work to fulfill God's Will. We can find a parallel example of this at the First Advent: the three wise men from the East, who were Zoroastrians, came in search of Jesus and worshipped him at his birth.³³ Accordingly, all religions will eventually be united around a revived Christianity.

3.3 THE UNIFICATION OF NON-RELIGIOUS PEOPLE THROUGH RETURNING RESURRECTION

Spirits who, in their lifetime, led a conscientious life but did not believe in any religion will also return to earth at the granted time to receive the benefit of returning resurrection. They will guide conscientious earthly people to seek out Christ at the Second Advent, attend him, and assist him in fulfilling God's Will.

The ultimate purpose of God's providence of restoration is to save all of humanity. Therefore, God intends to abolish hell completely after the passage of time necessary for each individual to make restitution for his sin. If hell were to remain eternally in the world where God's purpose of goodness is fulfilled, it would contradict the perfection of God, His ideal, and His providence of restoration.

Even fallen parents cannot feel joyful when one of their children is unhappy. Is this not even more true for God, our Heavenly Parent? It is written, "The Lord . . . is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."³⁴ Accordingly, hell cannot remain forever. No trace of hell will remain in the ideal world, which is the fulfillment of God's deepest desire. In the Last Days, when the time is ripe, evil spirits will descend to evil people on earth of the same spiritual level and assist them to accomplish God's Will. Indeed, even the demons testified that Jesus was the Son of God.³⁵

By participating in these various dispensations over a long course of time, all people will gradually converge toward the goal of God's ideal world.

33. Matt. 2:1-12

34. II Pet. 3:9

35. Matt. 8:29