

To Obtain Christ by Attaining to the Out-Resurrection

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:11; Rom. 8:11; Rev. 20:6

CHRIST ATTAINING TO THE OUT-RESURRECTION

By incarnation the Lord Jesus took on human nature. He put on a body of blood and flesh. Did this body belong to the old creation or the new creation? Blood and flesh are part of the old creation. First Corinthians 15:50 says that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." This includes the flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus. The principle here is that nothing which belongs to the old creation has anything to do with the kingdom of God. Therefore, the body taken on by the Lord Jesus belonged to the old creation. We should not think that Christ was never in the old creation. According to Colossians 1:15, Christ was the Firstborn of God's creation. His physical body belonged to the old creation and, living in a carpenter's home in Nazareth, He lived in the environment of the old creation. During His years on earth, the Lord Jesus lived a human life.

Was the Lord's human living part of the old creation or of the new creation? Although the Lord Jesus had a body of flesh and blood belonging to the old creation and although He lived in the environment of the old creation, the life He lived did not belong to the old creation. On the contrary, the life lived by the Lord Jesus belonged wholly to the new creation. But how could He, a person with a body belonging to the old creation and dwelling in the environment of the old creation, live a life that belonged to the new creation? He could do this by continually dying to His old creation body and environment and living to God. This was the way He lived a life belonging entirely to the new creation. We should not think that the Lord Jesus died only when He was crucified. No, He began to die, to live a crucified life, as soon as He was born. The Lord surely lived a human life, but it was a crucified life. By living a crucified life He died to the old creation. (**Gen. 1:1, Luke 2:48-49, John 6:57, Gal. 6:15, 2Cor. 5:17**)

One day, with the help of Satan and his followers, the body of the Lord Jesus was put to death actually and absolutely. Then His old creation body was buried in a tomb. Eventually, He took the old creation upon Himself as a burden and nailed it to the cross. After three days this body was resurrected. Now in resurrection Christ is absolutely out of the old creation and in God. All He is, all He has, and all He does are in God. This is the significance of the out-resurrection.

The common meaning of resurrection is that something dies and comes to life again. Lazarus was resurrected in this way. (**John 11:43-44**). Was the resurrection of Lazarus a case of the out-resurrection? No. Even though Lazarus was raised from the dead and came to life again, nothing of the new creation was wrought into him. Instead, he continued to be a person in the old creation. At most, Lazarus experienced restoration; he was restored from death to the natural life. But he was neither regenerated at that time nor did he receive a new constitution. The fact that Lazarus died again, and his once-resurrected body was laid once more in a tomb, proves that he was not brought into the new creation through his rising in John 11. Although Lazarus was resurrected, he neither left the things of the old creation nor was he brought into God. At the end of the coming age all the dead unbelievers will be resurrected. Nevertheless, that resurrection will not bring them out of the old creation, and it will not bring them into God. There was a great difference between the resurrected body of Lazarus and the resurrected body of Jesus Christ. The resurrected body of Lazarus was unchanged; it still belonged to the old creation. But the resurrected body of Jesus Christ was changed both in nature and in form. As a body in the old creation, it was a body of flesh and blood, but as a body in the new creation, it became a spiritual body. This incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Christ has become a seed sown into us. The Christ we have received is not a natural Christ, but a resurrected and transformed Christ. The Christ we experience today is a Christ altogether in the new creation.

PAUL'S GOAL TO ATTAIN TO THE OUT-RESURRECTION

Paul's endeavor was to attain to this outstanding resurrection of Christ. According to his vision and experience, Paul realized that God's intention in the universe is altogether related to something which is

new, something in resurrection, but resurrection in a very particular sense. There is only one kind of resurrection which brings us out of the old creation and into God, and this is the resurrection of Christ. Thus, Christ's resurrection is the outstanding resurrection. Christ is the unique One to pass out of the old creation and to enter into God. In the foregoing message we pointed out that Christ lived in an old creation body and environment for thirty-three and a half years. Through His death and resurrection He left the old creation behind and was brought into God. Did Paul expect to return to the tomb once he obtained the out-resurrection? Certainly not! The resurrection Paul was pursuing in Philippians 3 was something absolutely apart from the old creation and in the new creation. What Paul terms the out-resurrection refers to a resurrection out of the old creation and into the new creation.

According to grammar, the out-resurrection in verse 11 is the goal of what Paul is seeking in verse 10. In these verses Paul says, "To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means I may attain to the out-resurrection from among the dead." In verse 10 we see that Paul aspired to know Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. He wanted to know Christ, experience Christ, and enjoy Christ. Paul's goal is found in verse 11—attaining to the out-resurrection. In fact, this is the goal not only of verse 10, but also of verses 8 and 9. Paul counted all things refuse in order to gain Christ (v. 8) and be found in Him (v. 9), to know Christ, the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, that he might attain to the out-resurrection.

WE ATTAINING TO THE OUT-RESURRECTION

Can we reach the goal of the out-resurrection in this age, or can we only run the race and hope to reach the goal in the coming age? Some may think that we must wait until the coming age to reach the goal. But if we do not arrive at the goal in this age, we shall not attain to it in the next age. We must endeavor to arrive at the goal during our lifetime. In 1:21 Paul says, "To me to live is Christ." This Christ was his goal. Furthermore, for us to live should also be the out-resurrection, for the very Christ whom we should live is Himself the out-resurrection. This means that day by day we should live Christ by living the out-resurrection. In this way, we live a life absolutely out of the old creation and in God. Have you ever asked yourself how much of your daily conversation is natural and how much is in the out-resurrection? Although you may not speak in an evil, slanderous way, your talk may be natural. You may speak many positive things, but your words may be spoken in a natural way, not in resurrection. It is easy to improve our character, behavior, ethics, or morality, but it is extremely difficult to live in resurrection.

Paul knew from experience that it is not easy to live a life which is wholly out of the old creation and in God. In 1:21 he could declare, "To me to live is Christ." But in chapter one, we simply have the declaration, not the explanation or definition. In chapter three we see that to live Christ is to live the out-resurrection and that this should be our goal. Our deeds and words must be in resurrection. If a certain deed is not in resurrection, we should not do it. If a certain word is not in resurrection, we should not say it. The question is not whether a particular thing is right or wrong, but whether or not it is in resurrection. Even our love needs to be in resurrection.

In the out-resurrection there is no element of the old creation. Instead, everything is full of the divine element. This is the reason that people sense God when they are with a person who lives in the out-resurrection. The living of such a person, his deeds and words, is in resurrection. This is the out-resurrection in our daily life. In Philippians 3 Paul was pursuing this kind of living. This is what he had in mind when he declared that his desire was to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and by any means to attain to the out-resurrection. Not regarding himself as having attained, he pursued toward the goal of the out-resurrection. Just as the goal is the out-resurrection, so the prize is also the out-resurrection. The goal is for us to gain, whereas the prize is for us to enjoy. We may reach the goal in this age, (Rom.8:11) but we shall enjoy the prize in the coming age. (Rev.20:6)