

# Born to Win

## Christ Is Risen

by Ronald L. Dart

The events of the next few days are the *pivot* upon which eternity turns. The death of Christ, which we celebrate (and I suppose that is the word) with the Passover...but the Passover—that is the death of Christ and that which goes with it—is not *all*. Theologians refer to something they call “the Christ Event”. I’m not sure all that they mean by it; but it talks about, I think, the entirety of what Christ did, of his sacrifice, of his death, of his burial, but also of his resurrection. Because, in fact, of all these things, that thing upon which it *all* depends is *not* the death of Christ, it is the *resurrection* of Christ. For indeed, anyone—in fact *everyone*—can die. *Anyone* can suffer. But Jesus was *raised from the dead*. *Everything depends on that*. In First Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul takes pen in hand, as it were, to address this point; because for some strange reason the Corinthian church had just flat lost touch with this part of the Christ Event. He said,

### 1 Corinthians 15

KJ2000

<sup>1</sup> Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and in which you stand;

<sup>2</sup> By which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain.

Now notice, he said, this that “I have received and delivered to you” [v. 3] is that wherein “you are saved”. What is it?

### 1 Corinthians 15

KJ2000

<sup>3</sup> For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

<sup>4</sup> And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

<sup>5</sup> And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

<sup>6</sup> After that, he was seen of over five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep [*died*].

<sup>7</sup> After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

<sup>8</sup> And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one untimely born.

<sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

<sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Much of this that we’re reading now is a bit of a digression, but he’s coming rapidly to the point.

## 1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

<sup>11</sup> Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so you believed.

Now, the point.

## 1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

<sup>12</sup> Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

<sup>13</sup> But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

<sup>14</sup> And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

Christ could have suffered. Christ could have died. But if he did not rise from the dead, *your faith is vain*. There is no salvation. He said,

## 1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

<sup>15</sup> Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

<sup>16</sup> For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

“So I”, Paul says, “am a liar. All 500 of those people are liars. All 12 of the apostles are liars. Matthew’s a liar. Mark’s a liar. Luke’s a liar. John’s a liar. They’re *all* liars, if there’s no resurrection from the dead.” He said,

## 1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

<sup>16</sup> For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

<sup>17</sup> And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins.

<sup>18</sup> Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

Notice: Christ could have died and been buried, but if he was not raised from the dead, you are still in your sins. The Christ Event is *more* than the suffering and the death of Christ; it is also the *resurrection* of Christ.

Now, Jesus, when he was being challenged on some of these things, had somewhat to say about this himself. In Matthew the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter, and I’m going to begin reading in verse 38:

## Matthew 12

AKJV

<sup>38</sup> Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from you.

<sup>39</sup> But he answered and said to them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; [...]

What a slap in the face. He never seemed to hesitate to insult the Pharisees whenever it was convenient to do so.

## Matthew 12

AKJV

<sup>39</sup> [...] An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

<sup>40</sup> For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

<sup>41</sup> The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

Jesus looked back at Jonah's experience...and we, by the way, because of what he says here—that just like Jonas was *three days* and *three nights* in the belly of the whale, so the Son of Man would be *three days* and *three nights* in the belly of the earth—we believe that Jesus was crucified on Wednesday, buried at sunset on Wednesday; that he was three days and three nights in the tomb and rose about sunset on Saturday night, after those three days and three nights had passed.

But the sign was strongly connected to Jonah, so to be thorough, let's go back and take a look at the book of Jonah and see what it was. You all are familiar, I think, with how God had come to Jonah and said, "I want you to go to the city of Nineveh, and I want you to preach, 'Yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.'" So Jonah, instead of heading east toward Nineveh (northeast), headed *west* to flee and got in a ship, and took off across the ocean. And God sent storms after him, and the storms raged. The men in the ship thought they were going to die, until Jonah identified himself and said, "You'd better throw me over, because it's the only way you're going to live." They threw him over, and he went down into the sea [**Jonah 1**]. And Jonah prayed a prayer; it's found in the second chapter of Jonah, and it's interesting. He said,

## Jonah 2

AKJV

<sup>1</sup> Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,

<sup>2</sup> And said, I cried by reason of my affliction to the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and you heard my voice.

Here is an early reflection—an early anticipation, as a matter of fact—of the resurrection of the dead. He said, "you heard my voice *from hell*". It almost sounds, in fact, like Jonah *did die*. Now, he didn't—at least it *seems* that he didn't, because the great fish seems to have preserved him. And yet we also know that people die momentarily and are brought back. He said,

## Jonah 2

AKJV

<sup>3</sup> For you had cast me into the deep, in the middle of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all your billows and your waves passed over me.

<sup>4</sup> Then I said, I am cast out of your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.

<sup>5</sup> The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

<sup>6</sup> I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet have you brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

Remember that statement back in the Psalms:

## Psalms 16

KJ2000

<sup>10</sup> [...] neither will you allow your Holy One to see corruption.

Jonah also refers to this—the fact that “I was brought back from corruption.” These references are references to resurrection. As it said, “I preach that Christ was raised from the dead *according to the Scriptures*.” You can look in the Old Testament, and those references to the resurrection are scarce, but they are there. He said,

### Jonah 2

AKJV

<sup>7</sup> When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in to you, into your holy temple.

<sup>8</sup> They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

<sup>9</sup> But I will sacrifice to you with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD [*Jehovah*].

<sup>10</sup> And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah on the dry land.

An early, you know, reference to a resurrection of type—one that Jesus reached back to when they came to him and said, “What sign do you give us?” “There’s your sign. It’s the sign of the prophet Jonah. I’m going to die. I’m going to be in the grave for three days and three nights.” He didn’t say anything about resurrection, did he? Except by inference: if he’s only going to be there three days and three nights, *he is coming out*.

Now, this concept—this idea of the resurrection—is *critical* in the development of the gospel. There are, in the Book of Acts, several interesting speeches that are made, and oftentimes when we hit them, we read them rather rapidly; because they are familiar little bits of history. Lots of times you’ll read someone who will go back and recount all the way from Abraham to Moses, and Isaac and Jacob—all of the people down through Israel—and how that God brought them along, and brought them out of Egypt, and gave Israel life, and all the promises that were given. And in the process of recording all this, we tend to fade out a little bit on them and pass on to some other event. Well, this third chapter of Acts is a speech of Peter’s. First of all, it says in Acts 3, and verse 1,

### Acts 3

AKJV

<sup>1</sup> Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

<sup>2</sup> And a certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

<sup>3</sup> Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.

<sup>4</sup> And Peter, fastening his eyes on him with John, said, Look on us.

<sup>5</sup> And he gave heed to them, expecting to receive something of them.

This is *fascinating*, because here is a man who’s about to be healed who hasn’t *a clue* that he is. His faith is not involved. There is no anticipation, no expectation, not even *a plea* to be healed. He asks *only* for an alms.

### Acts 3

AKJV

<sup>6</sup> Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

The healing is, in a very real sense, a slight down payment on the resurrection. The wages of sin is death. The gift of God is eternal life, which comes in a resurrection. Sickness is also one of the results of sin. And in the same way that we are to be raised from the dead, healing is also possible through Christ. And these are here, again and again throughout the Gospels, to demonstrate the power to forgive sins and the power to *give life*.

### Acts 3

AKJV

<sup>7</sup> And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

<sup>8</sup> And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

<sup>9</sup> And all the people saw him walking and praising God:

<sup>10</sup> And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened to him.

<sup>11</sup> And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John [*He wouldn't let them go.*], all the people ran together to them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

<sup>12</sup> And when Peter saw it, he answered to the people, [...]

Now, here comes a speech. This is an *early* speech. Here's where we expect to hear what would Peter have to say to a gaggle of people who ran together because of a healing that had taken place. It's the gospel.

### Acts 3

AKJV

<sup>12</sup> And when Peter saw it, he answered to the people, You men of Israel, why marvel you at this? or why look you so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

<sup>13</sup> The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his Son Jesus; whom you delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. [*Oh, no, you wouldn't let him go. You wouldn't have that.*]

<sup>14</sup> But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted to you;

<sup>15</sup> And killed the Prince of life, whom God has raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

“You killed him. God raised him from the dead, and *we saw it*. Here we are. We're witnesses. You're going to get rid of the event? You're going to have to get rid of the witnesses.” Of course, it was not just them. There were 12 of them in particular who were *official* witnesses of the resurrection of Christ. They can kill one here and one there. It would have taken some kind of determined effort to track them all 12 down and get rid of them. And then there's that *500 people* who saw him at one time (and how many others, we're not sure). “You killed him...”

### Acts 3

AKJV

<sup>16</sup> And his name through faith in his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know: yes, the faith which is by him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Do you imagine for a moment that this man would have been healed if Christ had not been raised from the dead? Notice that in Peter's gospel, the resurrection from the dead—that God raised him from the dead—is *central* to the gospel message. On this day he gives them, of course, the message of repentance, and says,

**Acts 3**

AKJV

<sup>19</sup> Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

<sup>20</sup> And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached to you:

<sup>21</sup> Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

<sup>22</sup> For Moses truly said to the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up to you of your brothers, like to me; him shall you hear in all things whatever he shall say to you.

<sup>23</sup> And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

<sup>24</sup> Yes, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

[...]

<sup>26</sup> To you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

## Chapter 4:

**Acts 4**

AKJV

<sup>1</sup> And as they spoke to the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came on them,

<sup>2</sup> Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

Notice, the comment that is followed of the core of the message is that they “taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead”—*sorely* grieved by this. Now, of course, you had a split among them anyway as to whether there *even was* a resurrection from the dead, but to preach *through* Jesus the resurrection of the dead was another matter altogether. Now, notice, he didn’t say that they preached that *Jesus was raised*, but that they preached *through* Jesus the resurrection, which means that *we* are to be raised *through* him.

**Acts 4**

AKJV

<sup>3</sup> And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold to the next day: for it was now eventide.

<sup>4</sup> However, many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

<sup>5</sup> And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes,

<sup>6</sup> And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

<sup>7</sup> And when they had set them in the middle, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have you done this?

Here’s *another* chance to answer.

**Acts 4**

KJ2000

<sup>8</sup> Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, You rulers of the people, and elders of

Israel,

<sup>9</sup> If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the crippled man, by what means he is made whole;

<sup>10</sup> Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him does this man stand here before you whole.

There was *no way* to get away from it. They could deny it, they could argue with it, but the fact of the matter was they said it was Jesus who was raised from the dead who healed him. They told the multitude that. Then the rulers called them in, all the princes, all the chief priests, all the elders, and they said, “What have you done?” They said, “Look, it’s not us. It’s by the power of Jesus whom *you* killed and *God* raised from the dead that that man right there, whom you all know, who was in this temple laying, that *he* is here whole. Why? Because God *raised him from the dead*. That’s why.”

#### Acts 4

AKJV

<sup>11</sup> This is the stone which was set at nothing of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

<sup>12</sup> Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Now this isn’t just limited to Peter and the others. Turn back to Acts, the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter, because we’re not through yet, by any stretch of the imagination, with the effect of the resurrection and the *importance* of the resurrection to the gospel. In Acts, the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter, and beginning in about verse 26, it says,

#### Acts 4

KJ2000

<sup>26</sup> Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you fears God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

<sup>27</sup> For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets who are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.

<sup>28</sup> And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

<sup>29</sup> And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulcher.

<sup>30</sup> But God raised him from the dead:

<sup>31</sup> And he was seen many days of them who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

Notice again and again, you keep coming across this: witnesses, witnesses, witnesses, witnesses. And you remember that, whenever they had to replace Judas [Acts 1], Peter got up and made his speech and he said, “Look, it’s necessary. It was necessary that this happen to Judas. But it’s also necessary that there be 12 of us—that another be ordained in his place, with us, as a witness of the resurrection.” These men (and some others) were official witnesses of the resurrection of Christ. What do I mean “official”? I mean, you’ve got to have people designated to come forth in court to testify about certain things, and these men were those witnesses. And it keeps coming up again and again. “You can’t deny it. We are the witnesses. We’ve got *more* witnesses. You want to hear witnesses, we have witnesses. And you’ve got to hear us, and you’ve got to look us in the eye, and you’ve got to tell us that we don’t know what we’re

talking about—that we saw a man die on a stake, we saw him taken down, we saw him put in a tomb, and then we saw him alive. How about it!?”

Upon this witness, nearly everything that we believe and teach hinges; because the fact of the matter is that even the canon of the New Testament, even the authority of the New Testament books, hinges *entirely* upon the resurrection of the dead. It hinges *entirely* upon these witnesses who saw it and who wrote it down. And you’ve got to be prepared to call Matthew a liar, Mark a liar, Luke a liar, John a liar, having read their books, if you’re going to *deny* their testimony. And then here comes the Book of Acts, with all that Luke has to say here. Here’s the testimony of all these men who are quoted. Here’s the testimony of Paul, “one born out of due season”. You’ve got to read all his epistles and say, “Oh, well, Paul’s lying in his teeth.” And of course, these men and all their work was built upon the foundation of the Law and of the Prophets. And in a very real sense, our understanding of the Law and of the Prophets *hinges* upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because, you see, there are *all sorts* of ancient books of prophecy from different religions, but which ones have the kind of authority behind them that do those prophecies and prophets of our Bible?

### Acts 13

AKJV

<sup>30</sup> But God raised him from the dead:

<sup>31</sup> And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses to the people.

<sup>32</sup> And we declare to you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made to the fathers,

<sup>33</sup> God has fulfilled the same to us their children, in that he has raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, [...]

Now, this is a very interesting little passage here. He says, “What I am citing to you now—that Jesus was raised from the dead in accordance with what is written in the second psalm...”

### Acts 13

AKJV

<sup>33</sup> [...] You are my Son, this day have I begotten you.

<sup>34</sup> And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

Do you see what’s significant there? There’s something *very* important in that scripture: “this day have I begotten thee.” What’s that a reference to? Isn’t it the resurrection? Notice it’s got the resurrection *before* it, and it’s got the resurrection *after* it. He said he raised him from the dead according to the scriptures, according to this psalm; and this psalm (which is here translated into the Greek) says, “this day have I begotten thee”, and the word is *gennaó* [γεννάω, Strong’s G1080], which is precisely *the same word* that Jesus used to Nicodemus when he said, “You must be born again” [John 3]. The psalm, this reference in Acts, *all have to do with being born again*. And Jesus here, having been born of the flesh, was born of the spirit when and how? In the resurrection from the dead. This citation is absolutely inescapable. “You are my Son, this day have I begotten thee” is a reference to the resurrection.

### Acts 13

KJ2000

<sup>35</sup> Therefore he says also in another psalm, You shall not allow your Holy One to see corruption.

<sup>36</sup> For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, and was laid with his fathers, and saw corruption: [*His body rotted away in the grave.*]

<sup>37</sup> But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

<sup>38</sup> Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you



the forgiveness of sins:

<sup>39</sup> And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

It's through him. Oh yes, his death is essential. But folks, unless Jesus was raised from the dead, unless he ascended to the Father, unless his sacrifice was presented to the Father by himself—as in the Old Testament: all those sacrifices that people had to make, where they brought the animal to the temple, laid their hands on the head of the animal, cut its throat, and caught its blood in the basin... It was the high priest who had to go and sprinkle that blood upon the altar to be accepted of God—that the death of Christ, his sacrifice, his shed blood rolling out of his side, accomplished *nothing* unless he himself was *raised from the dead* and was *presented* to the Father as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world [**John 1:29**]. He, we are told elsewhere, ever lives to make intercession for us [**Hebrews 7:25**]. You cannot simply be cleansed and forgiven and be cleaned before God by a sacrifice, by a death. Not at all. It takes intercession. And in fact, for you and I, it takes *daily* intercession because of the weakness of the human flesh.

### Acts 13

AKJV

<sup>40</sup> Beware therefore, lest that come on you, which is spoken of in the prophets;

<sup>41</sup> Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it to you.

And in fact, most of them were *simply not able to deal* with the truth. And what truth was it that really bothered them? Well, we all know, I think, and understand it was the truth of the resurrection from the dead.

Later, when Paul is dragged up to Mars Hill by a bunch of Greeks who love “to hear or tell some new thing”, and they said, “Here’s a new philosopher.” He gets up there and tells them, “Look”, he said, “I was going through your town and...”

### Acts 17

AKJV

<sup>23</sup> [...] I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore you ignorantly worship, him declare I to you.

And he went right on through and told them about Jesus, and finally he came down and he said [vv. 31–32], “That Jesus, God has raised from the dead.” His *first* speech. And they thought, “He’s crazy. This babbler is preaching resurrection from the dead.” And many of them left. A few, though, said, “We will want to hear more from you about this matter.”

Now if you’ll turn back to John, the third chapter. This is that famous encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus. Not many things, really, are more fundamental to Christianity than this simple set of verses through here, and quoted again and again and again. In John 3, he says,

### John 3

AKJV

<sup>1</sup> There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

<sup>2</sup> The same came to Jesus by night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God: [...]

“That much we know.” Now, this is quite an admission, I suppose, on his part, but I honestly think it’s as much a *defensive* admission as anything else. Because to accept Jesus as a teacher come from God was one thing; to accept him as *the Son of God*, as *the Messiah*, was another thing altogether. So he was saying, “Okay, we know you’re a teacher come from God. We can’t get away from that...”

### John 3

AKJV

<sup>2</sup> [...] for no man can do these miracles that you do, except God be with him.

<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Now, what a *fascinating* little statement. Every time I read this, I’m struck by the fact that Nicodemus comes in here asking one question... Well, he doesn’t even ask a question, does he? He just sort of gets his introductory statement out of his mouth and Jesus *interrupts* him. He says, “Okay, I’m a teacher come from God; here’s the teaching: Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The word, *gennaó* again, is exactly the same word that we saw over in the Book of Acts mentioned, which was a translation from the Book of Psalms, that says, “You are my son. This day have I begotten you”, and equates it to the resurrection. If Jesus is using this in the same way (and he really is) then he is saying to Nicodemus, “Unless a man is raised from the dead, he *cannot see* the kingdom of God.” And the fact of the matter is, Paul tells us,

### 1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

<sup>50</sup> [...] that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption.

The fact is, you have got to become *spirit* in order to see the kingdom of God. That’s all Jesus is saying: unless you’re born again, you can’t see the kingdom of God.

### John 3

AKJV

<sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?

He understood what Jesus was talking about.

### John 3

AKJV

<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

That’s been interpreted in various ways as to whether “born of the water” means born of the flesh. Others have thought “born of the water” means born of baptism. Take your pick. That’s not the point. The point is that unless a man is born of the water *and* of the spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Now, does that mean receiving the Holy Spirit? Does that mean a kind of a regeneration inside of yourself to where you seem to be kind of like a new man, or you now have Jesus living in your heart, or whatever people have used to interpret being “born again”? He goes on to say,

### John 3

AKJV

<sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh; [...]

Now, I understand that, because that's what I am. I've been born of the flesh. I *am* flesh.

**John 3**

AKJV

<sup>6</sup> [...] and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Now, I know that I have God's spirit. I know that that Spirit is in me. I know that I have received the *gifts* of God's Holy Spirit. I know that I have been *moved* by the Spirit. I know that God's Spirit is with me and in me. But is that the same thing as saying that *I am* spirit? For indeed, if I claim to have been *born* of the spirit, then I am claiming to *be* spirit by what Jesus says here. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. I've got that. That which is born of the spirit is spirit. He says,

**John 3**

AKJV

<sup>7</sup> Marvel not that I said to you, You must be born again.

<sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wants, and you hear the sound thereof, but can not tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Now, according to that, I should be able to go through here and you should hear me pass and not see me. Like the wind going through—"What was that?" So far I do not seem to have made it. Generally speaking, someone by the time I get from here to there will have shook my hand, or said something to me, or grabbed me by the coat sleeve, or what have you. By and large, my impression as I wander amongst this group of people is that I have been seen. He says, the ones that are born of the spirit, you can't tell whence it's coming or where it's going. It's like wind passing through. That's what spirit, by the way, means. "Spirit" (*pneuma*) [πνεῦμα, G4151] is the Greek word for "wind". It's like the wind. Not me; I'm a little too heavy for that.

**John 3**

AKJV

<sup>9</sup> Nicodemus answered and said to him, How can these things be?

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things?

<sup>11</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and you receive not our witness.

"I've come here, and I've told you, and you don't get it."

**John 3**

AKJV

<sup>12</sup> If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

<sup>13</sup> And no man has ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

<sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

<sup>15</sup> That whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

The objective of what Jesus is doing is not simply to improve our life. It is not simply so that we can live a little longer on the earth. It is not to give us some kind of an extension of human life. *His* objective is that we should have *eternal life*. But we *know* that that doesn't seem to be working among us. In fact, you can go from church to church to church to church around this country and you're going to find a group of people who keep going to funerals, because people among them keep on *dying*. It hasn't *worked*, as far as that's concerned.

### John 3

AKJV

<sup>15</sup> That whoever believes [on Jesus] should not perish, but have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

What am I saying? I'm saying that without the resurrection *there is no everlasting life*. You die, we take your body out, and we bury it. You haven't gone to heaven to be with Christ. You will not survive throughout all eternity as an intelligent, creative being—sitting at the Master's feet, walking on streets of gold, looking up into the Master's face, reading harp music, singing songs in the heavenly choir. No. *Not without the resurrection from the dead*. And in truth, the resurrection is *absolutely meaningless* in the face of the immortal soul. If, when a person dies, he goes immediately to be with heaven (if that's where he's going), what in the world is the point? The Bible tells us again and again and again that we *depend* on the resurrection of the dead to live, and it is in Christ's resurrection that that becomes even possible.

### John 3

AKJV

<sup>17</sup> For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

<sup>18</sup> He that believes on him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

<sup>19</sup> And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Paul will later develop this concept a little further. We started in First Corinthians 15, let's go back there—not quite to finish there, but because we didn't finish with what he had to say on this subject. In First Corinthians 15, this time beginning in verse 19:

### 1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

<sup>19</sup> If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

And the fact of the matter is that Christianity—the acceptance of Christ and beginning to follow Christ—does not always make your life better. I really think sometimes, especially in these days of the preaching of the “Social Gospel”, that the objective seems to be of Christianity, “Well, let's make everybody's life better.” And to what extent someone's life *isn't* being made better, Christianity, people think, *isn't* working. Paul comes along and says, “Well, I'll tell you what, if we...” (that's us Christians) “...if in this life only we have hope in Christ Jesus, we are of *all* men most miserable.” Because, you see, the truth is that Christianity is often hard on people—that Christians often have to suffer...well, we basically *do* seem to suffer the same thing everybody else suffers, and in Paul's day and time they suffered *considerably more* than anyone else suffered. Christianity in those days was not viewed nearly so much as a way to get out of pain as a way by which people got *into* pain—for the acceptance, the acknowledgment of Christ brought persecution. It brought persecution in one part of the world from the

Jews; it brought persecution in another part of the world from the Romans. If all we have is here and now, folks, *it's not worth it*. What makes it worth it? He says in verse 20,

### 1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

<sup>20</sup> But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.

“First fruits”, what an interesting expression—interesting if you understand the *background* of it. You see, as we come down to the spring of the year (we were down in Israel about this time, in the old days), there would be growing in fields all over the place, barley, which had been planted earlier. It would be *green* during this month (because this month is called, actually, the month of “the green ears” [*abib*, אֲבִיב, H24]), and if it didn’t look like the barley harvest was going to make it, the priests would come along and say, “Put a 13<sup>th</sup> month in here.” That way it will be green in the first month; we’ll delay the beginning of the first month. So we’d be in the middle of the month of green ears, and there’d be barley coming ready right now that probably we could actually get out there and harvest if we wanted to. We could cut some and have some fresh grain and whatever we were going to do with it right now. The problem is that the Law said you can’t do that. In fact, you’re not supposed to eat any of this, or harvest any of this, until a sheaf of the firstfruits has actually been presented before God [**Leviticus 23:14**]. It’s called a “wave sheaf”. In other words, the priest goes in and waves it before God, presents it to God. And having presented the *firstfruits* before God, then you could go out tomorrow morning and you could cut, cut, cut; you know, do all your harvest. And we’ve got seven weeks of harvest through the grains that will come up in the spring, all the way down to Pentecost. You work six days harvesting and you rest the seventh. You work six more days harvesting and you rest the seventh, through all the seven weeks of Pentecost, actually leading up to “the Feast of Weeks”—seven of them, because each one of them involved a cycle of working six days and resting the seventh, working six days, resting the seventh.

Jesus, when he came out of that tomb, was going to be the first of the firstfruits. Truth is that we are *also* called the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb [**Revelation 14:4**]*—that is, those of us who are in the first resurrection. But Jesus was the first of all those. He goes on to say here,*

### 1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

<sup>21</sup> For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

<sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

<sup>23</sup> But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.

<sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

<sup>25</sup> For he must reign, till he has put all enemies under his feet.

<sup>26</sup> The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

I suppose there are times when your life is bad enough that death looks like a friend, because the truth is it is an end to pain. It is an end to turmoil, and hardship, and suffering, and frustration. It is an end to enduring the pain of knowing the people *you love* are in pain. It is peace, it is rest, and the Bible *does* call it sleep; and sleep is like an old friend when you’re tired. But the Bible says death *is an enemy*. It is going to, in fact, be the last enemy that will finally be destroyed,

### 1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

<sup>27</sup> For he has put all things under his feet. But when he said all things are put under him, it is

manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. [*He is not under Jesus' feet*]

<sup>28</sup> And when all things shall be subdued to him, then shall the Son also himself be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

<sup>29</sup> Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

Now, if you want to look for explanations of that, you'll find about a different one in every commentary you look at. I suspect that what Paul is addressing here...because his point is first of all, "Well, if the dead aren't risen, why this, why that, and why the other thing?" And now he is saying, "If the dead don't rise, why are there some people out there among you who are practicing vicarious baptism?" In other words, they're being baptized *for* somebody else. He's not saying it's a good idea. He's not saying it's efficacious or that it accomplishes anything. He's saying, if there's no resurrection, what are they doing that for?

### 1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

<sup>30</sup> And why stand we in jeopardy every hour [if there is no resurrection of the dead]?

<sup>31</sup> I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our LORD, I die daily.

He said, "Tell me something, folks, what do you think I'm doing this for? What's the point in my going through the agony that I'm going through? Why was I out there a night and a day bobbing around in the ocean, holding on to flotsam and jetsam with my life passing before my eyes, and freezing to death in the cold water [**2 Corinthians 11**]? What was I out there for? Why was I strapped up to this post and beaten with 39 stripes from the Jews several times? What's the point? Why was I beaten above measure by the Romans? Why did I have to fight with wild beasts over at Ephesus? What's the point in all this stuff if the dead don't rise?"

### 1 Corinthians 15

KJ2000

<sup>32</sup> If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what is the gain to me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die.

You might just as well enjoy it all, folks, if there's no resurrection. If all there is is the Passover—the death of Christ—if that's all there is, and there is no resurrection; if he didn't come up on the end of the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was beginning; if that didn't happen, there is no point in *any of this*. He said,

### 1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

<sup>33</sup> Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

<sup>34</sup> Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame. [*You ought to know better.*]

<sup>35</sup> But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

You're sure to ask this question. They're going to have this technical question, that little question, that little point about the resurrection. Notice his answer?

### 1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

<sup>36</sup> You fool, [...]

Paul doesn't beat around the bush a lot. Paul was a very difficult man in many ways. They say, "Okay, you say there's a resurrection. How are the dead raised up? What kind of body are they going to have?" He says,

**1 Corinthians 15**

AKJV

<sup>36</sup> You fool, that which you sow is not quickened, except it die:

<sup>37</sup> And that which you sow, you sow not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

<sup>38</sup> But God gives it a body as it has pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

<sup>39</sup> All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

<sup>40</sup> There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: [...]

And by that he means you've got stars that shine of their own light, and you've got terrestrial bodies—that is, earthly things like the moon—that shine with reflected light.

**1 Corinthians 15**

AKJV

<sup>40</sup> [...] but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

<sup>41</sup> There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differs from another star in glory.

<sup>42</sup> So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

I don't know a lot about the resurrection. There are a lot of things I'd like to know. You will have questions that I could never answer. But I can tell you this, he says: it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. When you go into that grave, and you're putting into your casket, and they close the thing up and put it in the ground, *your body is going to rot*. When you come *up* from the grave, you will no longer be subject to corruption. No decay.

**1 Corinthians 15**

AKJV

<sup>43</sup> It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: [...]

Now, we honor the dead, granted. We dress them up in their best suit, and powder their face, and put makeup on, and have the hair done, and make them say, "My, you know, sure looks like himself (or herself) lying there in the coffin." (Actually, in most cases, they look a little *better* than they did right toward the end of their life when all is said and done.) We try to honor the dead, but the truth is that no matter how you dress it up, when you're put under the ground, that is, in a sense, dishonor. He said,

**1 Corinthians 15**

AKJV

<sup>43</sup> [...] it is sown in weakness; [...]

Ha! How weak do you have to get? You know, when you can't get out of the bed, and somebody has to feed you, and somebody has to wash you, and as we go on toward the end of our lives, and we finally

are so weak we can't even take care of ourselves or feed ourselves anymore. We're put in the ground in weakness...

### 1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

<sup>43</sup> [...] it is raised in power:

<sup>44</sup> It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

There is, he says, by the way, a natural body and there is a spiritual body. He doesn't bother explaining. You know why he didn't explain? *Because he didn't know*. There are some things that are a little bit too far for us to reach. He told us what he knows.

### 1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

<sup>45</sup> And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

<sup>46</sup> However, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

You know, there's an interesting story right here, and one that would make a message all of its own: God did, with a certain set of beings, start with the spiritual. Angels, as far as we know, are created beings; and angels, as far as we know, are spirit beings. He *started* with them. And yet somehow the relationship that he is able to have with them is not the same. Somehow they are not able to *be* or to *do* or to *accomplish* whatever it is that God *wanted*; for he went beyond angels. And it's not as though he had tried something there that failed and decided to try something else. The Book of Hebrews makes it very *clear* to us that angels were created in the *first* place to be ministering spirits to *somebody else* [**Hebrews 1**]. And that somebody else was a group of people he calls the "heirs of salvation". Heirs, inheritors. When you inherit something, you inherit it from your *father*. He said angels were created in the first place to be ministering spirit to those who are the *heirs* of salvation. And so the heirs of salvation were created, not spirit, but flesh. He said you *start* with the flesh, and then *afterward* you have that which is spiritual.

### 1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

<sup>47</sup> The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven.

<sup>48</sup> As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: [...]

We're like Adam, you know; we get cut, we bleed. Our teeth decay. Our hair falls out. We get old and wrinkled, and we get to the place to where we get hurt a lot easier and it takes longer to heal. He said, on the other hand,

### 1 Corinthians 15

AKJV

<sup>48</sup> [...] and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

His face shines like the sun in its full strength [**Revelation 1:16**]. He never gets one day older; because he is light, you see, and light does not age.



**1 Corinthians 15**

AKJV

<sup>48</sup> [...] such are they also that are heavenly.

<sup>49</sup> And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

But, you see, *how do we do that?* How can you get from here to there? I have the image of the earthly right here—right here and now. He says I'm going to bear the image of the heavenly. How do I do that? There is only one way, folks. I've got to *die*, and be planted in the ground, and *this* has got to cease; and what will come up is something *new*, something *different*, something that is no longer weak, but that is *powerful*, something that's no longer dim, but is bright, something not weak, but strong.

**1 Corinthians 15**

AKJV

<sup>49</sup> [...] we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

<sup>50</sup> Now this I say, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; [...]

Which is *precisely* what Jesus told Nicodemus. Unless you are born of the spirit, you cannot *see* the kingdom of God; because that which is born of the flesh *is* flesh. That which is born of the spirit *is* spirit. Flesh and blood cannot *inherit* the kingdom of God. Flesh and blood cannot *see* the kingdom of God.

**1 Corinthians 15**

AKJV

<sup>50</sup> [...] neither does corruption inherit incorruption.

<sup>51</sup> Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep [*die*], but we shall all be changed,

<sup>52</sup> In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

<sup>53</sup> For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

<sup>54</sup> So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

<sup>55</sup> O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?

“You’ve lost it, haven’t you?”

**1 Corinthians 15**

AKJV

<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

Because the fact of the matter is it's the Law that helps us to understand what it is.

**1 Corinthians 15**

KJ2000

<sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, since you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

On that week of the death of Christ, when he had gone through so much with his disciples, and after he had the Passover with them that night—where he had given them a little bit of wine and a little bit of

bread and said, “Here, take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you”, and , “Here, drink this. This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for the remission of sins”; when he had gone and sung a hymn with them and they’d gone over to Gethsemane, they still did not understand. They still did not know. They did not have a *clue* that he was going to die. And if they didn’t know he was going to die, they could not have understood the resurrection; and, in fact, they did not. He had, in fact, told them. There was every reason why they *might* have known. I’m not going to say *should* have known, but I’m going to say there was every reason why they *might* have known. But they had to come to the place to where they knew he was going to die before the resurrection could have even meant anything to them.

So they sang a hymn together, went out to the Mount of Olives, and he prayed with his sweat like great drops of blood [**Luke 22:44**], and they dropped off to sleep. It must have come as a terrible shock to them when those soldiers showed up in the garden. Peter cut off the ear of one of them because he wasn’t going to let this happen. And Christ rebuked him for it, and healed the ear [**Luke 22:51**], and said, “Put up your sword.” He then fled, Peter did. They arrested Jesus. They grabbed hold of John Mark’s garment; and he ran off naked into the night, and left them holding his garment because he was so scared of what was about to happen [**Mark 14:50–52**]. And they all left Jesus there alone, every one of them—all of them who said they’d never leave him, and never forsake him, and never deny him, as Peter did [**Mark 14:29–31, Matthew 26:33–35**]. They were all gone. Peter followed them a little way. Like Jesus said, you’re going to deny me three times—he did. It happened just like he said. And all of them had to stand around, either near or far, the next day, and watch the humiliation—watch him put up on the stake, watch him die. All of them. And oddly enough, they weren’t even the ones who took him down and buried him. It was left to other people to do, notably Joseph of Arimathea. They arranged to get him in the grave; and rushed it, in fact, and put him in a tomb that was nearby—Joseph’s own tomb [**Matthew 27:60; John 19:42**]—because there wasn’t any other convenient, so they could get him buried before sundown [**Mark 15:42–43**]. They all saw where he was buried and went away. After the Sabbath, they bought spices, and prepared them [**Mark 16:1; John 19:39–40**], and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment [**Luke 23:56**]; and they came back early on a Sunday morning to... not to see whether he was there. They *expected* him to be there, because they had brought with them spices to anoint *the body* of Jesus. And they got there *and he was gone*.

It’s hard for us, I think, to understand, to grasp the confusion that must have generated among all of them. They had to begin to stop and think, “What is this?” And of course, at first, their first thought was, “Look, the Jews have stolen his body. They’ve taken his body and they’ve gone and moved it somewhere else.” And she was so brokenhearted, Mary, after it was all said and done. They went to tell Peter and the others...

### John 20

KJ2000

<sup>11</sup> But Mary stood outside at the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher,

<sup>12</sup> And saw two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

<sup>13</sup> And they said unto her, Woman, why weep you? She said unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

I gather she didn’t even realize they were angels or, if she did, the significance of what it meant that they were there.

### John 20

AKJV

<sup>14</sup> And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, Woman, why weep you? whom seek you? She, supposing him to be the

gardener, said to him, Sir, if you have borne him hence, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.

“If you just wanted to get him out of the tomb, let me know; I’ll take care of him.”

**John 20**

AKJV

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, Mary. [...]

And for the first time, she really looked at him, and said,

**John 20**

AKJV

<sup>16</sup> [...] Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

<sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, Touch me not [*Or “Don’t cling to me”*]; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: [...]

The significance of that, I think, misses a lot of people. The fact of the matter is that Jesus could not be detained at this point. Even whether he could be touched or not, he could not be detained, because he had something he had to do: He had to ascend to the father. Why? The answer is simple: Because this was the time of the presentation of the wave sheaf—that firstfruits that was cut from the barley harvest, that was waved before God. And Jesus, as the firstfruits from the dead—the first of the children of God—had to go and present himself before God at this time.

This resurrection of Christ, the events of the Sunday morning...you know, it’s not entirely surprising that the Christian people (some Christian people did, in years following this) would worship on Sunday. I don’t really see any earthly reason why they did *every* Sunday, but it’s certainly easy to understand why, on the day of the *wave sheaf offering*, when that fell on the Sunday especially, that they would have been meeting together or worshiping; because this is the time when they *first knew* of Jesus’ resurrection. It had nothing to do with the Sabbath day or any doctrine regarding the Sabbath day. What it has everything to do with, though, is the doctrine of, the appreciation of, the glory of the resurrection of the dead.

*Jesus died.* He didn’t faint. He didn’t pass out. He *died*. Jesus was *raised from the dead*. His disciples didn’t steal his body and hide it somewhere. No man who had ever committed a crime like that could have written Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans. They did all that, they suffered those things, for a lie? They laid down the gauntlet for everybody—Peter and Paul in particular do—and they say, “Folks, if there’s no resurrection from the dead—if Jesus wasn’t raised from the dead—then we’re liars. You can’t say that, ‘Well, we’re good teachers, but we were just mistaken.’ No! If Jesus wasn’t raised from the dead, we’re liars. Your faith is vain. You’re yet in your sins. And when *you* go to the grave, that’s where you’re going to stay.”

But glory be to God, we’re *not* going to stay there; and we’re *not* going to stay there because *Jesus is risen*.

Transcript of a  
sermon by  
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