

**THE RISEN SAINTS: WHAT DOES
SCRIPTURE REVEAL OF THEIR ESTATE
AND EMPLOYMENTS?
THE SEQUEL TO AN ESSAY ON THE
STATE OF THE BLESSED DEAD BEFORE THE
RESURRECTION**

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The risen saints: what does Scripture reveal of their estate and employments? The sequel to an essay on the state of the blessed dead before the resurrection by E. H. Bickersteth

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E. H. BICKERSTETH

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BY THE

REV. E. H. BICKERSTETH, M.A.,

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SOME time since I ventured to publish some thoughts on the testimony of Scripture with regard to the blessed dead before the resurrection. The question now suggested to the reader is designed to be a sequel to that investigation. It embraces the estate and employments of the saints, whether during the millennium or in the eternal ages beyond; for, as the word of prophecy certifies us, that holy Sabbath can only be introduced by the Personal Advent of the Lord, by the resurrection of those who sleep in Him, by the translation of those who are alive, and remain unto his coming, and by their eternal reunion in his presence.

The present is in more than one respect an easier inquiry than that regarding the

disembodied state. In the first place, the testimony of Scripture is here far more copious. And then there are but few of the exceeding great and precious promises describing the felicity of the blessed dead as they are now, which do not also embrace in their magnificent fulness the joys of the people of God, as they will be for ever. Thus, for example, with regard to the intermediate state, we read, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow along with them" (Rev. xiv. 13); they "live to God" (Luke xx. 38); they "depart and are with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. i. 23). But we cannot doubt that when this corruptible has put on incorruption, then in a more eminent degree will the people of God enjoy the Sabbath rest which remaineth for them, and reap the reward of their labours, and have the fruition of eternal life, and enter into the joy of their Lord. We may possibly be wrong in assigning some promises of felicity to the present condition of the blessed

dead, we can hardly err in ascribing all or most of them in the fulness of their meaning to that of the risen saints.

There are some who would foreclose any further investigation by saying, "We are assured that 'when we wake after his likeness we shall be satisfied;' why need we ask any more? is not this enough?" I answer, no: it is not enough; if more is revealed. For ALL Holy Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17). And again when it is urged, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them who love Him," they who bring forward this Scripture to condemn all attempts to search into the things to come, seem to forget that the apostle continues, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit" (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10). If we only cleave to GOD'S WORD WRITTEN, in humble dependence upon the teaching of the Holy Spirit,

we shall not go far astray. We may perhaps, in our shortsightedness, or in the feebleness of our faith, interpret as spiritual what is literal, or as literal what is spiritual. But God's word, unlike the baseless theories of human invention, will never lead us to idle dissipation of thought. It cannot err; it must stand for ever. The quickly coming futurity will soon more than vindicate every hope we have conceived from inspired prophecy; for, if we might venture to substitute *Scripturae* for *naturae*, in the well-known words of Cicero, *Opinionum commenta dies delet, Scripturae judicia confirmat.*

The witness of the Old Testament Scriptures, though the light is feeble compared with that of the New, is yet amply sufficient to refute those "who feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises." The tree of life was planted in Eden from the beginning; and though it is true man was soon driven from its precincts, its very name would be a symbol of immortality to the primeval saints. We