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DEATH SWALLOWED UP

“Then shall be brought to pass the saying, which is written: Death is swallowed up in victory.” 1 Cor. 15:54. The apostle has just led us down the stream of time, to the resurrection of the church, when they who sleep in Jesus awake immortal, and the living members of His body are changed to His likeness, and together are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And here he quotes from Isaiah 25:8, saying, that then that prophecy will be fulfilled, not that it is fulfilled by the resurrection of the saints, but that it “*then*” begins to be fulfilled. The bruising of *satan* (“under your feet”), Rom. 16:20, and the destroying of death, have both been deferred until the *body of Christ* (the church) is complete. With the *first resurrection*, that company, “the Royal Priesthood,” is complete, and their work is before them. That work includes the binding of Satan, the *destruction of death; i.e.*, the “swallowing up of death in victory,” and the restoration of mankind to harmony with God, and to that condition of life enjoyed before sin entered—a condition of at-one-ment.

This work of restoration apparently occupied all of the thousand years (Rev. 20:4), since it is called “the times (years) of restitution.” Just as death, like a huge monster, has devoured the human family gradually for six thousand years, so

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death is to be destroyed gradually (“swallowed up”) during the millennial reign, until, at its close, He shall have completely destroyed death, and him that has the power of death, that is, the devil.

That this is the apostle’s thought may be seen by referring to the prophecy from which he quotes. After describing the coming time of trouble in grandly awful and symbolic language, and the exaltation of the kingdom when “the Lord shall reign in Mount Zion,” continues: “And He will destroy in this mountain (kingdom) the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory.” Thus our work is seen to be two-fold—destroying and removing sin and its effects, and thus restoring to man happiness, purity, and all that was lost through sin. But while *our work* really comes in the next age, let us not forget that if we are in full sympathy with the object of “our high calling,” we will be interested in doing all in our power, in the present age, to counteract sin, and to restore mankind to harmony with our Father. We are thus ambassadors for God, as though He did beseech them through us: We ask them in Christ’s stead; be ye reconciled to God. 2 Cor. 5:20.

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