

## THE GOD OF THE LIVING.

"Why is it said that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, when just before He is declared to be the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob? I believe the text, but should be glad to have it made more plain through the pages of PRESENT TRUTH."

HERE we must learn, as elsewhere, that the answer lies in the text itself. Of course other texts serve to make it plainer; but in every case the very text over which we stumble has within it the way out of the difficulty.

Plainly stated the case is this: God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are dead; yet God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Strange it is, indeed; yet there is no contradiction, and it is not a puzzle, but the statement of a glorious truth.

The first thing to do in the case of any difficult text is to find what is the subject of discourse. Here we find that it is the resurrection of the dead. Jesus was teaching the people, and the priests and scribes had tried by trickery to entangle Him, so that they could accuse Him, and had failed." Then came to Him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; "and they presented a hypothetical case, which they thought would either force Jesus to deny the resurrection or else would bring Him in conflict with the teachings of Moses.

But Jesus was equal to the occasion. He convicted His opponents of ignorance of that which they professed to know, and then proceeded to give positive Scripture proof of the resurrection of the dead, saying, "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him." Luke 20.27-38.

When it is said that God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and is not the God of the dead, but of the living, there is no denial of the fact that the patriarchs are dead. That we know, because the Scriptures plainly tell us that they died. But they will live again; their life is hid with Christ in God, and is as secure and sure to them as if they were now in possession of it. God "quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things that be not as though they were." Rom. 4:17. With Him the thing that is to be is the same as that which now is; for He inhabits eternity, and the future is present to Him.

God is "the living God," and He gives life to all. That which is extinct has no connection with Him. There are people now on earth as there always have been, who do not claim Him as their God, and whom He does not acknowledge as His people. Those who know not God will at the last day be destroyed for ever, with no hope or possibility of a resurrection. It is plain that He will not then be their God; they will have nothing to do with Him, and hence their destruction. It is practically the same with the wicked who now lie in their graves: they will certainly be raised, but not to life, and it is as though they were already extinct. When they lived they were "without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12), and, dying the same way, it is evident that He is not their God. But it is not so with the righteous. There is hope in their death. They "sleep in Jesus" (1 These. 4:14), and their life is just as

sure as is the life of Jesus; for He Himself is their life. Therefore God, who is the God only of the living, calls Himself their God. He is "not ashamed to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city."

This is the ground of the Christian's hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively [living] hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Peter 1:3. This is the power that has overcome, and still overcomes, the world. The power of the resurrection of Jesus is the power of the Christian life—the secret of holiness. Being crucified with Him, we nevertheless live, because He lives. And just as the righteous who have been dead thousands of years, are alive in His thought, so that state of perfection which is designed for us is ours now in Christ.

This is the secret of calling those things that be not as though they were. It is the victory of faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and when we believe in the Lord with all our heart, the good thing longed for is ours. Heaven itself comes down to us, and imparting the power of its glory to us, lifts us up to its level, so that while still on earth, we sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

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Present Truth, Vol. 17, No. 32, (August 8, 1901), pp. 501-502.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Article copied and verified from the original.