

# Present Truth

2 Peter 1:12

Dear Readers,

December 2000

*"Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."* (1 Corinthians 1:3) God's Word says grace and peace be unto you. That is a powerful statement, for His Word is full of power. (Hebrews 4:12) It is the same Word that said, "Let there be light," and what happened? There was light. This same Word says to you now, "Let there be grace and peace unto you." Accept His Word as it is in truth, the Word of God, and you will have grace and peace. Praise God for that gift. May God's grace and peace truly be unto you now. I pray that you will be blessed by the articles in this issue.

## The Necessity of Faith

by Ellet J. Waggoner

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Romans 14:23) Therefore it is that "being justified"—made righteous—"by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)

Faith, not works, is that through which men are saved. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8, 9)

"Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Romans 3:27, 28)

The gospel excludes boasting, and boasting is a natural consequence of all attempts at justification by works; yet the gospel does not exclude works. On the contrary, works—good works—are the one grand object of the gospel. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10, with margin)

There is not the slightest contradiction here. The difference is between our works and God's works. Our works are always faulty; God's works are always perfect. Therefore, it is God's works that we need in order to be perfect. But we are not able to do God's works, for He is infinite, and we are nothing. For a man to think himself able to do God's works is the highest presumption. We laugh when a five-year-old boy imagines that he can

do his father's work. How much more foolish for puny man to imagine that he can do the works of the Almighty.

Goodness is not an abstract thing. It is action, and action is found only in living beings. And since God alone is good, only His works are of any account. Only the man who has God's works is righteous. But since no man can do God's works, it necessarily follows that God must give them to us, if we are saved. This is just what He does for all who believe.

When the Jews in their self-sufficiency asked, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" Jesus replied, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (John 6:28, 29) Faith works. (Galatians 5:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:3) It brings God's works into the believing one, since it brings Christ into the heart (Ephesians 3:17), and in Him is all the fulness of God. (Colossians 2:9) Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8), and

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therefore God not only was but is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. So if Christ dwells in the heart by faith, the works of God will be manifest in the life, “for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:13)

How this is done is not within the range of our comprehension. We do not need to know how it is done, since we do not have it to do. The fact is enough for us. We can no more understand how God does His works, than we can do those works. So the Christian life is always a mystery, even to the Christian himself. It is a life hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:3) It is hidden even from the Christian’s own sight. Christ in man, the hope of glory, is the mystery of the gospel. (Colossians 1:27)

In Christ we are created unto good works which God has already prepared for us. We have only to accept them by faith. The acceptance of those good works is the acceptance of Christ. How long “before” did God prepare those good works for us? “The works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall”—i.e., they, the unbelieving, shall not—“enter into my rest.” (Hebrews 4:3-5) But “we which have believed do enter into rest.”

## The Sabbath

The Sabbath, therefore—the seventh day of the week—is God’s rest. God gave the Sabbath as a sign by which men might know that He is God and that He sanctifies. (Ezekiel 20:12, 20) Sabbath-keeping has nothing whatever to do with justification by works, but is, on the contrary, the sign and seal of justification by faith. It is a sign that man gives up his own sinful works and accepts God’s perfect works. Since the Sabbath is not a work but a rest, it is the mark of rest in God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

No other day than the seventh day of the week can stand as the mark of perfect rest in God, because on that day alone did God rest from all His works. It is the rest of the seventh day, into which He says the unbelieving cannot enter. It alone of all the days of the week is the rest day, and it is inseparably connected with God’s perfect work.

On the other six days, including the first day of the week, God worked. On those days we also may and ought to work. Yet on every one of them we also may and ought to rest in God. This will be the case if our works are “wrought in God.” (John 3:21) So men should rest in God every day in the week, but the seventh day alone can be the sign of that rest.

Two things may be noted as self-evident conclusions of the truths already set forth. One is that the setting apart of another day than the seventh, as the sign of acceptance of Christ and of rest in God through Him is in reality a sign of rejection of Him. Since it is the substitution of man’s way for God’s way, it is in reality the sign of man’s assumption of superiority above God and of the idea that man can save himself by his own works. Not everyone who observes another day has that assumption, by any means. There are many who love the Lord in sincerity and who accept Him in humility, who observe another day than that which God has given as the sign of rest in Him. They simply have not learned the full and proper expression of faith. But their sincerity and the fact that God accepts their unfeigned faith does not alter the fact that the day which they observe is the sign of exaltation above God. When such hear God’s gracious warning they will forsake the sign of apostasy as they would a plague-stricken house.

The other point is that people cannot be forced to keep the Sabbath, inasmuch as it is a sign of faith and no man can be forced to believe. Faith comes spontaneously as the result of hearing God’s word. No man can even force himself to believe, much less can he compel somebody else. By force a man’s fears may be so wrought upon that he may say he believes and he may act as though he believed. That is to say, a man who fears man rather than God may be forced to lie. But “no lie is of the truth.” Therefore since the Sabbath is the sign of perfect faith, it is the sign of perfect liberty—“the glorious liberty of the children of God”—the liberty which the Spirit gives, for the Sabbath, as a part of God’s law, is spiritual. And so, finally, let no one deceive himself with the thought that an outward observance of even God’s appointed rest day—the seventh day—without faith and trust in God’s word alone, is the keeping of God’s Sabbath. “For whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”

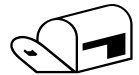
(This article was taken from an article by E. J. Waggoner printed in the August 17, 1896 issue of the *Bible Echo*. It is also found in the book, *Lessons on Faith*, by A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner on pages 75-78. *Editor*)



Ellet J. Waggoner 1855-1916



## Letters from our Readers

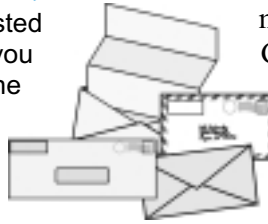


"While broadening my thirst for knowledge I came across the book 'America in Prophecy.' Very impressing—quite interesting. To my disappointment I had to return it unfinished. Could you please send it to me, and any other book that E. G. White has written. Thank you and God bless."

*New Jersey*

(This 642 page book is available for a suggested donation of \$3.50 per book plus shipping. If you would like the book but are unable to help with the cost it will be sent to you free of charge.

*Editor)*



"I appreciate very much your publications and all the work you do there at Smyrna. May God continue to bless you in abundance. I'm looking forward to the next camp meeting."

*Colorado*

"You have a good message that we feel we may understand more.... Please provide us with 'The Formulation of the Doctrine of the Trinity.'"

*Zambia*

"Thank you much for your continued faithfulness in sending out the monthly publications. I can not think of one in which God did not provide a blessing."

*Colorado*

"Hello! I am writing because I am interested in getting the *Present Truth* monthly newsletter. Brother \_\_\_\_\_ has been sharing a lot of materials from you that's all in the Bible. My eyes have been opened about the trinity doctrine and the truth Sabbath which is Saturday. Could you please send me some pamphlets of various subjects and the 'America in Prophecy' book, and your Bible studies on last day events. Thank you for sharing the truth."

*Ohio*

"I want to thank you again and everyone else at Smyrna Gospel Ministries and the *Present Truth* for all the literature I have received. You have really opened my eyes to see the truth in God's Word. As you may know I'm in prison, and there are many men in here who do not know the truth in God's Word. So please pray for me that God uses me with your literature and the Bible to save souls from death. (James 5:20)... Thank you so much! Also please accept this \$ as my tithe. As soon as I get a prison job I will send my tithe on a regular basis."

*Ohio*

"I do hereby request your assistance in spiritual growth with the aid of your religious books, especially the Great Controversy and the last day events and many others."

*Zimbabwe*

"Your book 'A Time to Choose' has opened my spiritual understanding. As a protestant, I think that I have known the truth, not knowing that it's very far from me, but I thank God who through your wonderful book of truth

direct me to His great light. In fact I had been seeking to understand the mysteries in the book of Revelation and Daniel, but they are hidden from me. Now, having bought the truth I will not sell it. I have decided that I and my house must worship the living God on His own day, i.e. I have changed now from Sunday to Sabbath, I and my house. But my problem is this. By the grace of God I am the president of the above named assembly, now that I have seen this Sabbath truth, I want to change the church to Sabbath. My fear is, I don't know if you will educate me more on the Sabbath truth. This is the reason I decided to write to you, so that I will know where

I stand. If you will educate me on the truth, please write to me for an instant action. But as it is new, my spiritual growth, life, and salvation is in your hands. As for me, I and my house has decided to worship God both in life and death. If you will help us with some Sabbath manuals and relevant books for church teaching.

"Again this book 'A Time to Choose.' I want bulk supply for distribution please. While replying send up to 100 copies to me first, no matter the cost. Then tell me the cost of 3000 copies and how to send the money to start with. In all whatever you decide on me for the sake of this truth I must take it. Bear in mind, your reply will encourage me more in the faith."

*Nigeria*

"In the last [few] days I have printed out many of your Newsletters and some books from the Homepage. They help me to understand better the truth about God and to prepare a material in Hungarian."

*Hungary*

"Please take our name off your mailing list as we don't read the publication. Thank you."

*Illinois*

"I would like to be on your mailing list. Please add me."

*Florida*

"I read your *Present Truth* paper through a friend, and since she has been away for the summer, it is only now that I am reading your August 2000 issue. I enjoy the paper a lot, and feel that you are being used of the Lord to bring all of the flock of God to a deeper understanding of the personhood and sacrifice of our wonderful Saviour. However, in this issue, I was a little disturbed by the reply you gave on page 6 about using the name Yahshua and the Tetragrammaton. I feel that you omitted the main arguments for using God's name. It was obvious you were trying to downplay their importance because of this, and I cannot help but cry out and respond."

*Tennessee*

(Thank you for sharing your concerns. I will be responding to them in next month's issue.

*Editor)*



# Nature and Destiny of Man

by Uriah Smith and James White

(The following article deals with a subject (the state of the dead) which we have not covered since 1998. For a thorough study on this subject please refer to the June and July 1998 issues of *Present Truth*. We also have these studies in tract form. If you would like to receive them, please contact us and request the tracts entitled "What the Bible Says About Hell" and "The Reward of the Wicked." *Editor*)

The long digression through which we have passed on the Sabbath question, should not cause us to forget that the subject still under consideration [In previous lectures by the authors] is the third angel's message of Revelation 14. We have been led to an examination of the Sabbath question from the fact that that message brings out a class distinguished as commandment-keepers; and we have found that to be thus distinguished we must keep all the commandments of God, besides the faith of Jesus; for while we can be commandment-breakers if we break only one of them, to be commandment-keepers we must keep them all. There being no controversy on any point but the Sabbath, that must be the distinguishing commandment. And such in our investigation we have found it to be; for it is an institution which had its origin in the beginning, and from its very nature must exist without change to the end; and the fourth commandment of the decalogue confines us to the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath. The great Sabbath reform is borne upon the front of the message; and it is bringing out a people of whom it can truly be said, "Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

The message also brings to view the punishment of those who reject the message and practice the sins against which it warns us; and this will, therefore, next engage our attention. It says of those who worship the beast and receive his mark, that they "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation;" and they "shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."

This is considered one of the strong texts to prove the eternal misery of the lost, and consequently the immortality of the soul. The whole question, therefore, of the nature of man, the condition of the dead, and the destiny of the wicked, comes up for examination.

Is the soul immortal? What saith the Scripture? The word "immortal" occurs but once in the English version of the Scriptures; 1 Timothy 1:17; and there it is applied, not to man nor any part of man, but, to God. The original word, however, from which this comes, *aphthartos*, occurs seven times in the New Testament; and in the six other instances of its use it is rendered incorruptible, but is never applied to man. Its entire use is as follows, the rendering of the word being in italics:

- Romans 1:23, the glory of the *incorruptible* God.
- 1 Corinthians 9:25, crown; but we an *incorruptible*.
- Chapter 15:52, dead shall be raised *incorruptible*.
- 1 Timothy 1:17, unto the King, eternal, *immortal*.
- 1 Peter 1:4, to an inheritance *incorruptible*.
- Verse 23, *incorruptible*, by the word of God.
- Chapter 3:4, that which is *not corruptible*.

It will thus be seen that in Romans 1:23, it is applied to God; in 1 Corinthians 9:25, to the crown of immortality which we seek; in 1 Corinthians 15:52, to the incorruptible bodies we receive in the resurrection; in 1 Peter 1:4, to the future inheritance of the saints; in verse 23; to the principle by which conversion is wrought in us; and in 1 Peter 3:4, to the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which we put on through Christ.

But, although man is nowhere called immortal, is not the equivalent declaration somewhere made that he has immortality? The word immortality occurs in the English Scriptures but five times; but it comes from two words in the Greek; and these occur in the aggregate eleven times. The first of these, *athanasia*, occurs but three times, and is every time rendered immortality as follows:

- 1 Corinthians 15:53, this mortal must put on *immortality*.
- Verse 54, shall have put on *immortality*.
- 1 Timothy 6:16, who only hath *immortality*.
- In these instances the word is applied to what we are to put on in the resurrection, and to God, who, it is declared, is the only one who by nature hath it. The word, *aphtharsia*, occurs eight times as follows:
  - Romans 2:7, glory and honor and *immortality*.
  - 1 Corinthians 15:42, it is raised *incorruption*.
  - Verse 50, doth corruption inherit *incorruption*.
  - Verse 53, must put on *incorruption*, and
  - Verse 54, shall have put on *incorruption*.
  - Ephesians 6:24, love our Lord Jesus Christ in *sincerity*.

- 2 Timothy 1:10, brought life and *immortality* to
- Titus 2:7, uncorruptness, gravity, *sincerity*.

In all these instances it will be seen that the word is not once applied to man, but to that for which we are to seek, to that which we obtain by the resurrection, to our love to Christ, to what Christ has brought to light, and to the doctrine we are to cherish. The way in which these words are used is very significant, and should have great weight in deciding this question.

### *Soul and Spirit*

There is another fact perhaps more stupendous still. The words, soul and spirit, so often in modern theological parlance joined with the words, immortal, deathless, and never-dying, come from two words in the Hebrew, *nephesh* and *ruach*, and two corresponding words in Greek, *psuche* and *pneuma*; and these words are used in the aggregate in the Old and New Testaments seventeen hundred times, and yet not once are the terms immortal, deathless or never-dying, applied to them, or any other term which would convey the idea of an imperishable nature or continued existence in either the soul or spirit.

But man was made “in the image of God,” Genesis 1:26, therefore, say our popular theologians, he was made immortal. But this image did not consist in immortality any more than it did in omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, or any other attribute of God. It had reference to outward shape and form and certain other personal characteristics; for God is a person and has a form. Philippians 2:6; Hebrews 1:3; Revelation 5:1; Daniel 7:9; Exodus 24:10; 33:20-23. Where the word image is used in a figurative sense, it is applied to something which we do not possess by nature, but which we must put on. Colossians 3:10, explained by Ephesians 4:23, 24.

It is further said that when God created man, he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, or, as it is interpreted, imparted to him a deathless spirit, or immortal nature. Genesis 2:7. But this breath of life cannot denote an immortal soul, unless we admit that immortality is also an attribute of the brute creation; for all animals have the same breath of life. Genesis 7:22. If it be urged that the word life in Genesis 2:7 is plural, “breath of lives,” from which some attempt to argue both the animal life and immortality, we reply that the word is also plural in Genesis 7:22. and in Genesis 2:9.

But man became a “living soul,” which proves that he was endowed with an immortal soul. We answer, not unless we are willing to grant the same to all the lower animals; for they are all called by the same Hebrew terms. In

Genesis 1:22-24, the “living creature” is from the same Hebrew words that are translated “living soul” in Genesis 2:7. And in verse 20, the word “life” is from the Hebrew “soul,” margin, and in Revelation 16:3 we read about “living souls” in the sea.

### *A Departing Soul*

Genesis 35:18: “And it came to pass as her soul was in departing; for she died.” The word here rendered soul, *nephesh*, is sometimes rendered breath, and Parkhurst, the distinguished lexicographer, says that it should be so translated here. A parallel case is found in 1 Kings 17:17-24. “The soul of the child came into him again.” Verse 22. We are told in verse 17 what it was that had left the child. It was his breath; and this, the breath of life, returned, and he lived again.

### *The Spirit Returns to God*

Ecclesiastes 12:7: “The spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” Very well, what is this spirit, or what did God give to man? The only record we have of man’s creation says that God gave him the “breath of life.” How could the breath of life go to God? It could go to him in the same sense in which it could come from him. But if we say, according to the popular view, that the spirit goes to God as a separate conscious, intelligent entity, *it commits us to the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls; for, on that ground, it must have come from him in the same condition.*

### *The Spirit of Man Goes Upward*

Ecclesiastes 3:21: “Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?” The spirit of man goes upward to God who gave it. Whether the man was the vilest of criminals, or whether he was the most righteous saint, his spirit goes back to God who gave it. Man will live again, hence it is necessary for God to keep the record of what that man was like. A beast, on the other hand, will not live again, so his spirit goes down to the earth, never to be revived.

### *Samuel and the Witch of Endor*

1 Samuel 28:3-20. It was not Samuel’s immortal soul which appeared on this occasion; because it was an old man covered with a mantle that came up; and immortal souls are not of that age or form, nor clothed in that manner. Again this old man came up out of the earth, but immortal souls are not down there, they’re up in Heaven, we are told. Moreover it is not probable that God, having prohibited necromancy, this pretended communication

with the dead, and having forsaken Saul so that he would not answer him by prophets, nor in any legitimate way, should now permit this abandoned woman to summon at will the soul of his servant Samuel from the upper sphere. The whole transaction was simply a piece of ancient spiritism, Satanic deception played off upon God-forsaken Saul.

### *Man Cannot Kill the Soul*

Matthew 10:28: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Because the term soul is used here, and it is said that it cannot be killed, the conclusion is at once drawn that here is an immortal part of man that lives right on in death. But this text is conclusive against the immortality of the soul, whatever it is, in as much as it is a declaration that God will destroy in hell the souls of all those who do not fear and serve him. And it does not necessarily prove an intermediate conscious state; for the word soul here is from *psuche*, which is forty times rendered life in the New Testament, and the word to kill, may be rendered to destroy. Now what has the Christian which man cannot destroy? man can destroy the body, he can deprive us of our life here; but he cannot deprive us of our future life, which we have by the promise of the Son of God. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." 1 John 5:11. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Colossians 3:3. This life man cannot touch this soul they cannot destroy.

Matthew 10:28, furnishes an excellent comment on Matthew 10:39. Thus, "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." The word here rendered life is *psuche*, the same that is rendered soul in verse 28. He that findeth his *psuche*, life, shall lose his *psuche*, life. What does this mean? Simply this: He that seeks, at the expense of truth and moral integrity, to save his life, *psuche*, here shall lose his life, *psuche*, in the world to come; but he who is willing to lose his life, *psuche*, here, willing that men should destroy it, for the sake of Christ and his truth, shall find his life, *psuche*, in the world to come. Here is the *psuche*, life, soul, which man cannot destroy, and therefore we are not to fear him, for our present life is of no account compared with the eternal life of Heaven: but God can deprive us of this future life, and him we are therefore to fear, instead of fearing men. There is therefore no conscious state brought to view here between death and the resurrection.

### *The Transfiguration*

Matthew 17:1-9. On the mount of transfiguration Moses and Elias appeared with Christ. Moses had died hundreds of years before this; hence it is claimed here was his immortal soul. But this will not do; for this was a representation of the kingdom of God, 2 Peter 1:16-18, and there will be no disembodied immortal souls there. We claim that Moses had been raised from the dead, and was there in his resurrected body, as a representative of all those who will be raised from the dead, as Elias was a representative of those who will be translated without seeing death. Dr. Clarke, and other commentators, admit this. The allusion to the body of Moses in Jude 9, proves this. The only objection to it is that Christ was to be the first to rise from the dead.

In the 88<sup>th</sup> Psalm, we read concerning Christ that He was "free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand." (Psalm 88:5) Christ was counted with the transgressors whom the LORD remembers no more. This can only be those who suffer the "second death;" those who will be as though they had not been. (Obadiah 16) Christ is called the "first begotten of the dead." (Revelation 1:5) Was Christ the first one who was raised from the dead? No! Moses was raised from the dead long before Christ and so was Lazarus and many others. The only way I can understand this verse is that Christ was the first, and only one who was raised after suffering the "second death."

The scene of the transfiguration to be accounted for, demands the resurrection of Moses. And the objections all being removed, that hypothesis stands.

### *Christ and the Sadducees*

Matthew 22:23-32: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead but of the living." From this it is claimed that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, though their bodies had been laid in the grave ages before, were still alive when Christ spoke these words, and it must have been as disembodied spirits in the spirit world. But hold on a moment, this was not the point under discussion. The question up for discussion was the resurrection which Christ taught and the Sadducees denied. They bring up the case of the woman who had had seven husbands, and inquire whose wife she shall be (not whose wife she now is in the spirit world, but whose she shall be) in the resurrection when she is raised, and all the seven men who had been her husbands here, are raised also.



Christ first nullifies their objection by telling them that in the resurrection we are raised to a higher state of being, and the marriage relation no longer exists. Then he appeals to a source of authority which they acknowledged, the writing of Moses, to show that their doctrine of no resurrection, and consequently no future existence, was contrary to their own scriptures. "But as touching the resurrection of the dead [that is, that the dead will be raised, which you deny] have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." These words are found in Exodus 3:6; and let it be marked that they were not spoken while Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were living, but to Moses, long after they were dead. Now if they were forever dead, as the Sadducees believed, then God called himself the God of something which did not exist, which would be an impeachment of his wisdom and power. But if they were to have a resurrection and future existence, God could still call himself their God; for he to whom both past and future are an eternal present, can speak of "those things that are not" (but are to be) "as though they were." Romans 4:17. These words of God respecting Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, were therefore, under the circumstances, conclusive proof that they will live again; and if they, then all the righteous dead; and hence the doctrine of Christ against the Sadducees was maintained. But no conscious intermediate state is here taught.

### The Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31: "The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." With the utmost confidence it is claimed that this was the rich man's soul; but the narrative says nothing about his soul. The word rendered "hell" is *hades*, but *hades* is not the place of punishment, not the hell, *gehenna*, of the wicked. It is simply the place of the dead, where all alike go, both righteous and wicked. The narrative says nothing about the soul of Lazarus, but says that he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. When do the angels carry the saints into the kingdom of God? At the second coming of Christ, but not before. As literal events, this scene must have its location beyond the resurrection, and hence prove nothing respecting the intermediate state. But if it is not a literal narrative, it is simply a parable; and then it proves nothing for consciousness in death; for in a parable language is used figuratively, and life and intelligence are attributed to inanimate objects; and no doctrine can be based on parables; it must have the most literal and explicit language.

The narrative of the rich man and Lazarus is a parable; for it stands in connection with a notable list of narratives which are all acknowledged to be parables. Its object was to rebuke the Pharisees for their covetousness, verse 14, and to correct their false idea, that riches in this world were a mark of God's favor, and a sure passport to bliss hereafter. And having represented the rich man as awaking from his terrible delusion, and desiring that his brethren might be informed, it is shown that Abraham does not send one raised from the dead to instruct them, but refers them to Moses and the prophets. While the Jews were thus referred to Moses and the prophets more especially in reference to future reward and punishment, modern theology needs to go to Moses and the prophets for instruction respecting the place, *hades*, where this scene is located.

What have these inspired writers told us about *hades*, and the condition of those who go there? The word in Hebrew which corresponds to the Greek word *hades*, and means the same thing, is *sheol*. This word is used sixty-five times in the Old Testament, and is translated hell and grave thirty-one times each, and pit three times; and we are taught respecting it, 1) That all alike go there. Numbers 16:30, 33; Psalm 89:48. 2) That the whole man goes there. Genesis 42:38; Psalm 30:2, 3; Acts 2:27, 31. 3) That it holds dominion till the second coming of Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:51-55. 4) That it is located in the earth beneath. Ezekiel 31:15-18. 5) That the righteous dead do not praise the Lord there. Psalm 6:5; 146:1-4; Isaiah 38:10-19. 6) That the wicked are all silent there. Psalm 31:17; 1 Samuel 2:9. 7) That it is a place of silence, secrecy, sleep, rest, darkness, corruption and worms, in which there is no work, device, wisdom or knowledge. Job 4:11-19; 17:13-16; Ecclesiastes 9:4-6, 10.

We have also in the Old Testament, representations precisely similar to this in Luke 16, respecting the inhabitants of *sheol*. Multitudes who have gone down to the grave through the oppression of tyrannical kings, are represented as lying with their swords under their heads, and worms covering them, and yet as rising up and paying mock obeisance to their oppressors when they come into *sheol*, and taunting them with becoming weak as themselves. See the address to the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14:9-11, and the lamentation for Egypt in Ezekiel 32:18-32. So in the case of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man in *hades*, where, as they were fully instructed, there was no knowledge, consciousness, nor life, is nevertheless represented by the figure of personification, as living and acting as there represented. And the object

was to show that the next state of being after the present (passing over the intermediate unconscious state) will be one of torment and suffering to the ungodly, covetous rich man, but one of happiness and bliss to the righteous poor. With the language of the Old Testament before them respecting *sheol*, and the parables respecting the kings of Babylon and Egypt, the Jews would readily understand it. It was not given to show the nature of *hades*, nor the condition of those who go there, and hence is not to be used for that purpose.

### *The Thief on the Cross*

Luke 23:39-43 is supposed to contain another strong proof of the conscious state of the dead, in the words of Christ to the thief on the cross. The thief's request was, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." To which Christ made answer, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." How could the thief be with Christ in paradise that day, it is triumphantly asked, unless by means of a disembodied conscious spirit? If he was to be with him in paradise that very day, it must have been in the form of an immortal soul, unless he had been raised from the dead, or been translated. But there is a strong objection to the common view of this matter. That is that Christ did not go to paradise that day. When this proposition is established it destroys entirely the popular view of the passage; and we know that Christ did not go to paradise that day; because he told Mary, on the day of his resurrection, three days after his crucifixion, that he had not yet ascended to his Father. But where his Father was there was paradise. 2 Corinthians 12:2, 4; Revelation 2:7; 22:1, 2. He had not therefore at that time been to paradise; and consequently the thief could not have been with him in paradise on the day of his crucifixion.

If, then, the Lord did not go to paradise that day, how can the passage be explained? Place the comma after to-day, instead of before it, and all is clear. With this change, Christ does not say to him that he shall be with him that day in paradise, but he simply says to him that day that he shall be with him in paradise when he comes in his kingdom, and this is just what the thief requested. As to the punctuation, we have a right to make this change, if the sense demands it; for the punctuation of the Bible is but the work of men and of comparatively recent origin, the comma in its present form not having been invented till the year 1790. A parallel expression is

found in Zechariah 9:12. Some Greek manuscripts, according to Griesbach, place the comma after to-day, in Luke 23:43. Thus punctuated it is consistent with itself and with other scriptures.

### *Absent from the Body*

In 2 Corinthians 5:8 Paul says: "We are confident, I say, and willing rather, to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." This text is urged with great assurance as proving a conscious intermediate state. But the essential point in the argument is lacking; for Paul does not say that we are present with the Lord just as soon as we leave the body. Granting that by absence from the body he means our condition in death, he does not tell us how long it is after we are thus absent from the body that we are present with the Lord. The first part of the chapter explains this verse. In our earthly house of this tabernacle, in this present mortal state, we groan, desiring, not to be unclothed, as we are in death, but to be clothed upon with our house from Heaven, or to reach the eternal immortal state promised to the believer. And when we reach this, "mortality is swallowed up of life." Verse 4. But when is mortality swallowed up of life? When all that there is mortal is made immortal. Paul had written to the Corinthian church very plainly on this subject in his first epistle. He had spoken about this mortal being made immortal, and this corruptible being made incorruptible, which is the same thing as mortality being swallowed up of life. And when is this? Not when we die,

but at the last trump, when Christ appears, and the dead are raised. 1 Corinthians 15:52-55. Then is the time when we are present with the Lord, not before, nor by any other means. John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

### *In the Body and Out*

In 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, Paul speaks of a man, "in the body or out," he could not tell which, caught up to paradise, &c. Here, it is said, such a condition is recognized as "out of the body." Very well, what does it mean? Believers in the immortality of the soul say that it means that the soul or spirit is separated from the body. But what condition is a person then in? According to popular theology, the person is dead when he is out of the body; for the separation of soul and body is death. Now what is Paul's subject? Visions. Verse 1. He here describes the visions with which he had been favored; and while he was in vision he did not know whether he was in the body



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or out. If he was out of the body, according to our friends, he was dead; and when he came into the body again he had a resurrection. Do they believe that Paul, when he had a vision, died, and was raised from the dead when he came out of vision, or that he designed to teach that such a condition of things was possible? They must accept this absurdity, or surrender this text.

### *Departing and Being with Christ*

Philippians 1:21-24: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." The only way in which this text can be made to do service in behalf of the conscious intermediate state is to connect the being with Christ immediately with the departing. But Paul does not so connect them. The next thing of which the person is conscious after departing is being with Christ. But this does not preclude the idea that a long space might be passed over in unconsciousness. And such a period the apostle would of necessity pass over in silence, as it is an utter blank to the individual, and the change from one state to the other seems to him to be instantaneous. Bishop Law says: "The Scriptures, in speaking of the connection between our present and future being, do not take into the account, our intermediate state in death; no more than we, in describing the course of any man's actions take into account the time he sleeps. Therefore the Scriptures (to be consistent with themselves) must affirm an immediate connection between death and the Judgment."

Paul has in other places told us very definitely when we go to be with Christ. Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54; Philippians 3:20, 21; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 2 Timothy 4:8; Hebrews 11:39, 40. His testimony in Philippians 1:23, must not therefore be interpreted in such a way as to contradict these statements. Hence it cannot be used in support of the theory of the conscious intermediate state.

### *Spirits of Just Men Made Perfect*

Paul uses this expression in Hebrews 12:23; and this is supposed by some to be a confirmation of the idea of the separate conscious existence of the spirit of man. But Paul speaks of no such thing. He does not speak of spirits made perfect, but of men made perfect. And when are men made perfect? If we take it in the absolute sense, it is not till after the resurrection, when the body is redeemed, and mortality is clothed with immortality. Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54; Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2. If it is in an accommodated sense, then it must refer to the perfection of Christian character we are able to acquire under the gospel, through the offering of Christ. Many,

following Dr. Clarke, think it refers to this, as Paul is here setting forth the superiority of the blessings and advantages we enjoy under the gospel, over those enjoyed under the former dispensation. But in either case this scripture would have no bearing on the question of consciousness in death. It is either fulfilled entirely in the present state, or it has its application beyond the resurrection.

### *The Spirits in Prison*

1 Peter 3:19: "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison." This is supposed to be a strong text in favor of the intermediate conscious state of the dead; for here were spirits in prison, supposed to mean in the grave, or in death and they must have been conscious and intelligent, because they were preached to. We inquire who these spirits were? The following verse says: "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing."

The persons meant by the word spirits are therefore the wicked antediluvians (before the flood). But what is meant by their being in prison? In Isaiah 61:1 is found a prophecy concerning the work of Christ, and it is said that he should proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. This prophecy is quoted by our Lord himself in Luke 4:18 and an application made of it to his own work. The situation of the antediluvians while Noah was preaching to them was similar to that of those to whom Christ preached. They were in darkness and error and under the condemnation of death. Therefore the antediluvians may likewise have been said to be in prison, while Noah was preaching to them.

We inquire further who it was that preached to these spirits? It was Christ. When did he preach? In the days of Noah while the ark was preparing. Through whom did he preach? Through Noah. Dr. Adam Clarke takes the same view of this passage, that the preaching was done by the spirit of Christ in Noah. It therefore has no bearing upon this question of the intermediate state of the dead.

If it be supposed that the term "in prison" means that they are dead, there is another way to look at this verse. Peter wrote that Christ "preached [past tense] unto the spirits in [present tense] prison." It is obvious that Jesus preached to these people through Noah (1 Peter 1:11). The preaching was done long ago while Noah was still alive. There is nothing in the verse that requires that these antediluvians were being preached to while they were in prison, but they were preached to in the past, while they were still alive, but they are now in prison, or dead.

There are some absurdities connected with the common view which deserve to be noticed. If these spirits were the spirits of the wicked antediluvians, and the preaching was done by the spirit of Christ while his body lay in the grave, these spirits were then in hell; and we inquire, Why should the spirit of Christ go down into hell to preach to the antediluvians? Could they be benefitted by it? Here is a difficulty which popular theologians are not able to solve.

But further, before the preaching is spoken of, the quickening or resurrection of Christ is brought to view, verse 18, therefore it could not have been by the disembodied spirit of Christ that this preaching was done while he lay in the grave.

### *The Souls Under the Altar*


Revelation 6:9: "And when he had opened the fifth seal I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for their testimony which they held." Here it is claimed are souls brought to view in a disembodied state, conscious, and active, crying unto God for vengeance. These souls were seen under the altar. What altar? Evidently the altar of sacrifice where they were slain. Is there such an altar as that in Heaven? and are the saints there shut up under such altar? Dr. Clarke says this altar was upon the earth, and that these souls were the victims of papal persecution; and they are represented as having fallen down by the altar where they were slain. But if they are not conscious in Heaven, it is asked, how could they cry to God for vengeance? We answer, By the figure of personification, just as Abel's blood is represented as crying to God, or the stone out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber, spoken of by Habakkuk 2:11, or as the wages of the laborers spoken of by James 5:4.

These souls cried for their blood to be avenged; but do immortal souls have blood? And who were those upon whom they called for vengeance? Their persecutors. And where were these persecutors? If dead, according to the popular view, they were in hell. And as that view further represents, they were right before the face and eyes of those saints in Heaven. This, it is claimed is taught by the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. How then could they call for vengeance upon them? Was it not vengeance enough for them to be tormented in the flames of hell? How amiable does this make these righteous souls appear! And if we say that those persecutors were not then dead, in the natural course of thing they would soon be in hell, tormented, it would seem, as fiercely as any one could wish. Such is the absurdity that is attached to the popular view of this text.

But how, it is asked further, could white robes be given unto them? These could not have been given them until after their judgment, which takes place after their death. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Hebrews 9:27. We find, therefore, in this testimony no evidence for the doctrine of the conscious state of the dead.

In Revelation 19:10 and 22:9 John fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who was employed in giving him his revelation. In restraining him, the angel said, "See that thou do it not, for I am thy fellow servant and of thy brethren, the prophets." Here it is claimed that the angel asserted that he was one of the old prophets, of course communicating with John in his disembodied state. But the angel does not say this. He says simply, "I am thy fellow servant and the fellow servant of thy brethren, the prophets." He had been employed in imparting divine revelations as he was now doing to John.

### *"Gathered to his People"*

We notice one more text that is supposed to teach the conscious intermediate state of the dead. Genesis 25:8: "Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people." It is said that Abraham was not buried where his fathers were buried, therefore, this could not apply to his body, but it must be that his spirit went to be with the spirits of his fathers in the spirit world. We therefore inquire where his fathers were? We learn from Joshua 24:2 that his fathers were idolaters and died such. They were, consequently, according to the popular view, in hell. Now if the spirit of Abraham went to be with the spirits of his fathers, he went, according to this view, inevitably to hell. But the theory which leads to such absurdity must be abandoned. We have a parallel expression in the case of David. Paul says in Acts 13:36, that David was laid unto his fathers—which of course means the same as being gathered to his people; but Paul continues—after he was thus gathered unto his fathers, he saw corruption. This explodes the idea of the conscious existence of the soul in the spirit world. 

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# Destiny of the Wicked

by Uriah Smith and James White

We have now examined all the more important texts that are supposed to teach the consciousness of the dead between death and the resurrection, or such as are used as objections to the view that man has not by nature an immortal soul. With a brief examination of the positive testimony of the Scriptures on this point we shall pass to the other branch of the subject, namely, the destiny of the wicked. The sentence which God pronounced upon transgression in the garden of Eden was death. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." After Adam had sinned and the sentence was to be put into execution, God addressed Adam thus: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return."

What part of Adam was addressed by this language? Was it the body or the soul? We are told that the soul is the intelligent, responsible part of man that incurs guilt by transgression and is entitled to reward for obedience. But that part which did transgress was addressed in this sentence; and the personal pronouns, thou and thy, are five times used in addressing this sentence to Adam. Certainly this must have been the intelligent, responsible man, and the sentence pronounced upon it was, "Dust *thou* art and unto dust shalt *thou* return."

If it is said that this refers simply to the body, then we ask if the same personal pronoun *thou*, used by Christ in his address to the thief on the cross, meant simply his body. If it did not there, it does not here. Our friends must be consistent in their interpretation of the Scriptures.

The penalty pronounced upon Adam, in which we are all involved, can therefore be understood in no other way than as meaning the reduction of the real responsible man to the dust of the ground, to a condition of utter unconsciousness.

## The Resurrection

There is another doctrine taught in the Scriptures which has an important bearing upon this question, and that is the resurrection of the dead. It is over and over again stated in the word of God, that there is to be a resurrection of the dead. But what need is there of this, if the soul exists in a conscious, intelligent condition without the body?

William Tyndale says: "And ye in putting them (souls) in heaven, hell and purgatory, destroy the argument wherewith Christ and Paul prove the resurrection."

Andrew Carmichael (*Theology of the Scripture*, Volume 2, page 315) says: "It cannot be too often repeated: If there be an immortal soul, there is no resurrection; and if there be any resurrection, there is no immortal soul."

Dr. Muller (*Christian Doctrine of Sin*, page 318) says: "The Christian faith in immortality is indissolubly connected with a promise of a future resurrection of the dead."

Again, death is compared to sleep, and there must be some analogy between the state of sleep and the state of death. And this analogy must pertain to that which renders sleep a peculiar condition. Our condition in sleep differs from our condition when awake simply in this, that when we are soundly asleep we are entirely unconscious. In this respect, then, death is like sleep, that is, the dead are unconscious, and without the resurrection they will forever remain so.

Speaking of the dead man Job says, 14:21: "His sons come to honor and he knoweth it not of them." David says, Psalm 146:4: "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Solomon spoke to the same effect as his father David, Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6: For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything; also their love and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun." Verse 10: "There is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." Evidence like this can neither be mistaken nor evaded. It is vain for the immaterialist to claim that this applies to the body only, in distinction from the soul, for they do not hold that the body of itself thinks or has knowledge while the person lives. therefore, without a resurrection the dead will forever remain without knowledge.

The dead are not in Heaven nor in hell, but in the dust of the earth. Job 17:13-16; 14:14; Isaiah 26:19.

The dead have no remembrance of God and do not, while dead, render him praise and thanksgiving. Proof: Psalm 6:5; 115:17; Isaiah 38:18, 19.

The dead have not yet ascended to Heaven. Acts 2:29, 34, 35.

And finally, Paul, in his masterly argument on the resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:18, makes this conclusive statement: "If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." If the souls of the dead live right on are they



perished? What! perished and yet alive in a larger sphere? Perished? and yet enjoying the attendant blessings of everlasting life in Heaven? Perished? and yet at God's right hand, where there is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore?

Bishop Law says: "I proceed to consider what account the Scriptures give of that state to which death reduces us: and this we find represented by sleep; by a negation of all life and action; by rest, resting-place, or home, silence, oblivion, darkness, destruction and corruption."

Christ says, John 6:39, that of all that was given him, he would lose nothing, but would raise it up at the last day, showing again that it was lost unless it should be raised up at the last day.

It is thus demonstrated that the two doctrines of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the dead cannot exist together; but the Bible does sustain the resurrection of the dead, and, as we may therefore expect, gives no countenance to the other.

### Future Judgment

There is still another doctrine of the Scriptures which has as decisive a bearing upon this question as the preceding, and that is the doctrine of a future Judgment for man. If men when they die go directly to Heaven or hell, accordingly as they have lived righteous or wicked lives, it follows that they are all judged at death. Then we ask, What necessity is there for this general future Judgment which is made so prominent a doctrine of the Bible? Is it for the purpose of correcting mistakes that may have been made in the first judgment? Can it be supposed that some have been in hell who ought to have been in Heaven, and some in Heaven who ought to have been in hell, and that this Judgment is to correct these mistakes? If not, why have this Judgment at all? And if so, what guarantee have we that mistakes will not be made in this final Judgment, and some be sent to hell for all eternity who should be in Heaven, and some retained in Heaven who are deserving of the punishment of hell? Such must be our conclusion if we hold to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; but such a conclusion is a libel upon the government of God and an insult to the justice of Heaven.

### A Spirit Hath Not Flesh and Bones

Luke 24:39. "For a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

From this definition of a spirit by Christ, it is concluded that a spirit cannot be a real, tangible being, and hence must exist in the disembodied state, as popularly supposed. But to what did Christ have reference by the term spirit? What did the apostles suppose they had seen?

The 37th verse says they were affrighted and supposed they had seen a spirit. On this verse Griesbach puts for the word spirit, *phantasma*; but the meaning of *phantasma* is an apparition, a ghost. It is evident that Christ used the term spirit in the same sense. Not that there was any spirit of that kind, but he wanted to show them that such a spirit as they conceived of was not then present before them; for such a spirit had not flesh and bones as they saw him have. The word *pneuma*, to be sure, is here used; but this has a great variety of meanings and while it may be employed, perhaps, to express such a conception as the disciples had then in mind, we are not to understand that the word cannot be used to describe bodies like that which Christ then possessed. Bloomfield on this verse says: "It may be added that our Lord meant not to countenance these notions, but to show his hearers that, according to their own notions of spirits, he was not one."

### Sadducees and Pharisees

Acts 23:8. "For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both." Paul declared himself in verse 6 to be a Pharisee, and in telling what they believed, in verse 8, it is claimed that Paul ranged himself on the side of those who believe in the separate, conscious existence of the spirit of man. But does this text say that the Pharisees believed in such a thing? Three terms are used in pressing what the Sadducees did not believe; namely, "resurrection, angel and spirit." But when the faith of the Pharisees is stated, these three terms are reduced to two: the Pharisees confess both. Both means only two, not three. Now what two of the three terms before employed unite to express one branch of the faith of the Pharisees? The word angel could not be one, for the angels are a distinct race of beings from the human family. Then we have left, resurrection and spirit. The Pharisees believe in angels, and in the resurrection. Then, all the spirit they believed in, according to this testimony, is what is connected with the resurrection, and that, of course, is to a spiritual body which we are endowed. If any who say that the word *both* sometimes means more than two, and quote Acts 1:13 as proof, we reply, that the word *both* in Acts 1:13 is not the same word translated *both* in Acts 23:8. The word *both* here means just two, no more nor less.

### Destiny Beyond the Resurrection

We have now examined briefly the testimony of the Bible in regard to the nature of man and his condition in death. The only remaining branch of the subject, namely, his destiny beyond the resurrection, next claims attention. From the evidence already presented, it is clear that the

final doom of the wicked cannot be endless suffering, because we have seen that man has no immortal element in his nature. It only remains therefore that we take up those passages which are supposed to teach eternal suffering and see if they can be harmonized with the scriptures already examined.

It may be remarked first, that the immortality of the soul leads to some very grave conclusions. For instance, the punishment of the sinner is set forth as being eternal; and if the soul cannot cease to be conscious, the doctrine of eternal misery inevitably follows. On the other hand we read of a time when every intelligence in the universe will be ascribing honor, blessing and praise to God. And if the soul is immortal, we are just as clearly taught by this, the universal restoration of all the race. Christ says, speaking of the wicked, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," but he adds immediately, concerning the righteous, "but the righteous into life eternal." Here the same word is used in reference to the punishment of the wicked that is used to measure the life of the righteous. The punishment of the wicked therefore is eternal; and this overthrows universalism and the restoration view of Origen. How then can this scripture be harmonized with the declaration just quoted, that all living shall finally bless and praise the God of Heaven? The harmony is found in the nature of the punishment. This the Scriptures show to be death; and this view overthrows alike the restoration view of Origen and the eternal hell of Augustine.

We will now examine those passages of scripture which are put forth as evidence that the punishment threatened to the wicked is eternal misery.

### Daniel 12:2

"But many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The objector couples the shame with the contempt and makes both to be everlasting; but the Scripture does not so express it. It is the contempt and that only that is said to be everlasting. The contempt is an emotion exercised not by the wicked, but by the righteous. The Syriac reads, "some to shame and the eternal contempt of their companions." The shame they will feel for themselves, which shows that they are raised to consciousness; but the contempt is exercised by the righteous so long as they hold them in remembrance at all. This text therefore furnishes no proof of the eternal suffering of the wicked.

### Matthew 25:41

"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Wicked men are not

said in this text to be everlasting; and this destroys all the force of the passage for the popular view. Not even the devil is said to be everlasting; but only the fire. And in what respect is this everlasting? Not in its process of burning, but in its effects. Just as we read in Hebrews 5:9 of eternal salvation; in Hebrews 6:2 of eternal judgment; in Hebrews 9:12 of eternal redemption. Not a salvation judgment and redemption that are forever going forward, but never accomplished, but such as are eternal in their effects.

### Matthew 25:46

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." As we have said, the punishment and the life mentioned in this text are of equal duration. But what is this punishment? The Greek word here used for punishment is *kolasis*, which is defined a curtailing, or pruning. The idea of "cutting off" is the prominent idea. The righteous go into everlasting life, but the wicked go into an everlasting "cutting off," from something. What is that? Happiness? No, but life or existence such as is given to the righteous.

But how, it will be asked, can death be an everlasting punishment? It is well understood that death is considered the highest punishment that can be inflicted in this world. And why? Because it deprives the individual of all the blessings of life which he might have enjoyed had he lived. So in the case of the wicked at the final judgment. They are cut off from the eternal blessings of life in the kingdom of God which the righteous enjoy; and hence it is to them an everlasting punishment.

### Mark 9:43, 44

"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched." Twice in verses 46 and 48 our Lord repeats this solemn sentence against the wicked. The word here used for hell is *gehenna*, a word used to designate the valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem. The use of this word throws much light upon the passage before us; for in this valley fires were kept constantly burning to consume the bodies of malefactors and the filth of the city, which were cast into it, and what the fire failed to consume, the worms preyed upon and destroyed. The figure then to which Christ called the minds of his hearers was that of complete and utter destruction.

With such language and such figures the Jews were familiar. Isaiah and Jeremiah frequently used them. The Lord, in Jeremiah 17:27, said that he would kindle a fire in

the gates of Jerusalem which should not be quenched. 2 Chronicles 36:19, 21 records the fulfillment of this. It was simply a fire which burned until it had entirely consumed the gates of Jerusalem. Psalm 37:20 says that the wicked shall consume into smoke. Malachi 4:3 says that they shall be ashes under the feet of the righteous. Ezekiel in Chapter 20:47, 48 speaks of unquenchable fire in a similar manner.

But the Lord, in the passage under consideration, undoubtedly borrows the language he uses from Isaiah 66:24. But here in Isaiah those that are subject to the unquenchable fire and the undying worm are not living persons but dead bodies. So the Jews would understand Christ, by these terms, to threaten complete and utter destruction against the wicked. Eusebius even uses the same terms, unquenchable fire, in reference to the martyrdom of Christians.

## Jude 7

“Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” What is said to be eternal in this text? Not the people, not the suffering, but only the fire. And why is this called eternal? Simply because it is eternal in its effects. Sodom and Gomorrah will never recover themselves from that destruction. 2 Peter 2:6 says, “And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.” This text therefore proves, not that the wicked will be punished with eternal conscious suffering, but with an utter consumption, even as Sodom was consumed.

## Revelation 14:11

But two or more texts remain which are urged in favor of the doctrine of the eternal torment of the wicked. These both are found in the book of Revelation. The first is in Revelation 14:11, being a part of the third angel’s message: “And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”

We first inquire of whom this is spoken? It is only of a particular class, those “who worship the beast and his image.” This, therefore, is not decisive relative to the

punishment of the wicked in general. But we inquire further, Does it mean eternal torment for those of whom it is spoken? As was said of the language quoted from Mark 10, so it may be of this. It is not original with the New Testament, but is borrowed from the Old. In Isaiah 34:9, 10 the prophet, speaking of Idumea, says, “And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up forever; from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever.”

There are but two ways in which this language can be understood, and in one of these ways it must be understood. It refers either to the literal land of Edom, east and south of Judea, or it is a figure to represent the whole world in the day of final conflagration. But in either case the meaning of the language is evident. If the literal land of Idumea is meant, and the language has reference to the desolations which have fallen upon it, then certainly no eternity of duration is implied in the declaration that “the smoke thereof shall go up forever;” for the judgments that fell upon that land have long since ceased. But if it refers to the fires of the last day, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also, and the works therein shall be burned up, even then, the terms must be understood as denoting only limited duration; for from the ashes of the old earth, after a suitable lapse of time, through the working of Him who maketh all things new, there shall come forth a new heavens and a new earth according to the declaration of Peter, which shall be the eternal abode of the righteous.

As we thus see that the terms, as used in the Bible, denote limited duration, we inquire if the lexicons define them in the same manner? The terms used are *aion* and *aiionios*. *Aion* is defined by Greenfield, Schrevelius, Liddell and Scot, Parkhurst, Robinson, Schleusner, Wahl and Cruden, as meaning finite duration as well as infinite. The term seems to imply primarily, simply duration or the flow of time; but the extent of that must be defined by other terms. When it is applied to objects which we are told will endure absolutely without end, as God, Christ, angels, the saints’ inheritance, and immortal beings, it means unlimited duration; but when it is applied to objects which we know will come to an end, it then covers only the length of time during which those things exist. Dr. Clarke in his closing remarks on 2 Kings, 5th chapter,



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gives us this rule for the interpretation of the words forever and ever. He says they “take in the whole extent or duration of the things to which they are applied,” If, therefore, we find other declarations stating positively that the wicked will come to an end, and we do find multitudes of such, then this term forever, or forever and ever, applied to them, must signify only the length of time during which they exist.

The second word, *aionios*, is subject in all respects to the same definition and rule which was noted above in reference to *aion*.

## Revelation 20:10

The second passage, Revelation 20:10, being exactly parallel to the one found in Revelation 14, is explained in the same manner. Revelation 14:11 doubtless applies at the beginning of the thousand years, when the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire burning with brimstone, as stated in Revelation 19:20; while the passage in Revelation 20:10 refers to a similar scene of destruction visited upon Satan and all his hosts at the end of the thousand years.

Having now examined all the texts supposed to teach eternal misery, and having found that all are easily harmonized with the view of the destruction of the wicked, and that some are even the strongest testimony for that doctrine, we now look at a few of the passages of the Bible which speak positively of the doom of the lost:

## Ezekiel 18:26

“When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.” Here two deaths are brought to view: the first death in sin, and the other a consequence following that; a death for sin. We have seen that the first death leaves a man unconscious in the grave; and the second must leave him in the same condition, with no promise of a resurrection.

Paul says in Romans 6:23, “The wages of sin is death;” and James (1:15) corroborates this testimony in saying, “Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Death cannot, by any proper definition, be made to mean continuance if life. “The death that never dies” is a contradiction of terms.

## Conclusion

Here are some of the declarations of the Bible respecting the wicked: They shall be destroyed, Psalm 145:20; they shall perish, John 3:16; they shall go to perdition, Hebrews 10:39; they shall come to an end, and be as though they had not been, Psalm 37:10, Obadiah 16; they are compared to the most inflammable and perishable

substances, as a potter’s vessel, Psalm 2:9; beasts that perish, Psalm 49:20; a whirlwind that passeth away, Psalm 68:2; a waterless garden, Isaiah 1:30; garments consumed by the moth, Isaiah 51:8; thistle down scattered by the whirlwind, Isaiah 17:13; the fat of lambs consumed in the fire, Psalm 37:20; ashes, Malachi 4:3; wax, Psalm 68:2; tow, Isaiah 1:31; thorns, Isaiah 34:12; exhausted waters, Psalm 58:7.

In the New Testament they are likened to chaff which is to be burned entirely up, Matthew 3:12; tares to be consumed, Matthew 13:40; withered branches to be burned, John 15:6; bad fish cast away to corruption, Matthew 13:47, 48; a house thrown down, Luke 6:49; the old world destroyed by water, Luke 17:29; the Sodomites destroyed by fire, 2 Peter 2:5, 6; natural brute beasts that perish in their own corruption, 2 Peter 2:12, etc.

Finally, the teaching of the Bible on this subject may be summed up in this proposition: The wicked shall be consumed and devoured by fire, Isaiah 5:20-24; Psalm 37:20; Revelation 20:9. The word, in this last reference rendered devoured, says Prof. Stuart, “is intensive, so that it denotes utter excision.”

In the light of these testimonies from the Scriptures we can readily understand how it is that the wicked are to be recompensed in the earth. Proverbs 11:31.

Coming up in the second resurrection at the end of the thousand years, they surround the beloved city, New Jerusalem, then descended from Heaven, and their fearful retribution then overtakes them. This is the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men, described by Peter, 2 Peter 3:10, 12; and this is the fire that melts the earth and the elements with fervent heat.

We can also understand how the righteous are recompensed in the earth according to the same passage in Proverbs 11:31; for they, after the destruction of the wicked, go forth and take possession of the earth made new as their eternal inheritance.

We can also understand how and when Revelation 5:13 is to be fulfilled; for now we have a universe clean and pure. Satan and all his followers are destroyed, the last taints of the curse and the least stains of sin are all wiped away, and all creatures raise their voices in the glad anthem of universal jubilee, ascribing “blessing and honor and glory and power unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb forever.”


There is something most dishonorable to God in the idea that sin, introduced contrary to his will, must continue to all eternity. Its origin and its temporary continuance we can explain on Scriptural and rational principles; but its eternity, never.

With this view of eternal misery there is the most fearful discrepancy between the sins of this finite life and the eternal suffering visited upon them; hence divines are driven to say that the sins will continue in hell. Benson says that they, (sinners) “must be perpetually swelling their enormous sums of guilt and still running deeper, immensely deeper, in debt to divine and infinite justice.” This represents the sinner as being able to accumulate his load of guilt faster than God can devise terrors and judgments adequate to their punishment. But the Bible says that we are to give an account for the deeds done in the body, or in this life only, and be rewarded according to our works here. God has made no provision for the eternity of sin, but has devised the most effectual means to prevent it.

The philosophical objections, resting on the ground of immateriality, and that matter cannot think, the capacities of the soul, and the analogies of nature are disproved by an examination of the powers and capacities of the brute creation. It is said that immortality is assumed in the Bible; or as Bishop Tillotson says, “taken for granted.” But it cannot be taken for granted any more than the immortality of Jehovah; and that is expressly revealed.

It is said again, that annihilation is impossible. We answer, True, in reference to matter, as matter, (that is, we have no evidence that God will annihilate matter, though

he could do so if he chose), but not in reference to intelligent and conscious beings. And we claim that the wicked are to cease to be, only in this respect.

It is said that this doctrine has an evil tendency. If so, let the objector show us the infidels, criminals, profane, wicked and corrupt persons in the ranks of the friends of this doctrine. The truth is just the opposite of this. Multitudes, in the light of this teaching, are able for the first time to exclaim that they can harmonize the ways of God with reason and revelation; and therefore can believe the Bible to be his word. 

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