

God's Gift
of
Everlasting Life

A Compendium of
'*Conditional Immortality*'

- *Body, Soul and Spirit*
Death and Resurrection
Eternal Torment
Eternal Life

by

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PREFACE

We naturally cling to life. Ambulances, fire brigades, life boats, hospitals, all exist to preserve human life. But life at best is brief: to “lay hold on eternal life” is a supremely sensible achievement. Popular understanding concerning Bible teaching about a life to come is usually based upon inferential conclusions reached by leaping into the middle of the theme, in complete ignorance of the elementary factors essential to accurate knowledge. The most advanced problem in Bible psychology (the passage in Luke 16:19-31, about the Rich Man and Lazarus) is usually selected - by many who have never learned even the alphabet of the subject - to give triumphant proof of “the immortality of the soul”; blind to the fact that the word “soul” and the word “immortal” do not once occur there.

This treatise is the outcome of an earnest endeavour to view the subject comprehensively, from Genesis to Revelation; and to study intensively each passage that bears upon it however remotely, in order to secure understanding that will be as near to the mind of the inspiring Spirit as the finite human mind can achieve; and to perceive that consistent and harmonious vein of truth which must of necessity bind together God’s revelation to men. To present this theme with reasonable simplicity, yet with sufficient detail of elucidation as will enable the thoughtful reader to gather an accurate understanding of the more outstanding passages which bear upon this subject, is the writer’s aim. The author and publishers of this booklet will be interested to receive, and as far as possible to answer, questions, criticisms and difficulties, which may arise in the reader’s mind from its perusal.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

*How the Need Arose - Authority - A Useful Word Study - How Deception Entered -
- Who Possesses Immortality?*



HOW THE NEED AROSE

In these modern days, whose every waking hour is crammed with the worlds demands for our attention, all talk about God and a life to come, more than the merest mention, seems an unwarranted intrusion: most people avoid the subject most of the time. Yet the men in the submarine which refused to rise from the ocean floor, sang “Abide With Me”; and men of magnificent physique, operating powerful aeroplanes in the air battles of 1943, prayed as they flew, and said so on their return. When the threat of attack by Japan on New Zealand was at its height early in 1942, the attendance at one church was 187; two years later, when the threat had passed, it was five. And why? Because when the thought of eternity for the moment strongly overcomes the interests of time, an irresistible desire manifests itself, to be right with God. But to leave the issue to a moment of extremity is a tragedy: to grapple with it and have it settled once for all in God’s way, results in abiding joy and a heart at peace with Him, which enables this present life to be lived with far greater satisfaction.

But when awakened conscience enquires about this, there may be encountered many fascinating systems which claim to provide assurance for this life and for whatever is to come; such as Spiritualism, Theosophy, Christian Science, Mormonism. It is therefore useful to realise that all these claims, whatever their differences, have one fundamental factor in common: they are based upon the belief that each human being possesses in-herein ability to survive death; either in an indestructible soul, or in some form of continuity of personality which will at some time again become manifest. In contrast with them all there is one unique

proclamation, supremely demanding mankind's attention—and that is the Word of God, the Bible.

AUTHORITY

The Bible, however, is strangely repugnant to our human minds; therefore millions turn elsewhere. But the cause of the repugnance lies with us, as the Bible shows; for therein God humbles us to the dust, in order to raise us to glory. Every other system permits men to retain their natural pride, and pride appears to be the original sin, from which all other evils have blossomed forth. True wisdom will seek for truth; mere assertion is not necessarily truth; and the simple test of authority leaves the Bible in sole possession of the field. Proclaiming the Gospel of God concerning His Son, God's Word stands unique. It comes from the highest possible authority in the universe. "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me ... I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded" (Isaiah 45:5,12.) Test all other claims by this, "Who says so?"; and it will be found that behind them all are:

- (1) Human beings, who, however learned, know nothing more of things beyond this earth and this life than is common to all men, and that is, Nothing;
- (2) Invisible spirits, communicating through "mediums", concerning whom abundant testimony proves their utter untrustworthiness and deliberate deception;
- (3) Human claims to have received special revelations from invisible beings, such as "Mahatmas," "Ascended Masters," "Adepts," "Planetary Logoi," or similar entities. In most cases their "revelations" avoid mention of the possibility of the existence of one sole supreme Being superior to them towards whom they are found to be in opposition.

In every such case FAITH is demanded; in every such case the Bible is denied, opposed, set aside or deceptively supplemented. Now the Bible clearly claims to be a revelation from the Final Authority in the universe, and emphatically reveals an implacable enmity to God and His Gospel on the part of powerful beings in the unseen, seeking to capture unwary humanity in their toils: all these systems emanate from them. Let us there-for pay earnest heed to God's way of Life Everlasting for perishing mankind; that way is focused in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour.

Wisdom pervades God's Word, and perfect balance. Man therein is given his rightful place - lord of the earth, yet one with earthly creation; object of God's peculiar regard and love, yet entirely subject to His disposing, and possessing no inherent claims to divinity or immortality. The massive foundations of divine truths concerning the universe, this earth, and humankind, are laid in the Bible's earliest chapters; where two words stand out with particular significance for the understanding of God's Gift of Everlasting Life; these words are the words "living soul"

A USEFUL WORD STUDY

The popular idea of the "soul" is that each human being possesses an invisible, immortal part of his being, a part of the Divine Essence, distinguishing him from the lower creation; inhabiting his body while it lasts, and which, when that perishes, departs to realms unseen, to live for ever somewhere. Against that popular idea, a diligent search of the Bible teaching discovers a very different state of affairs, disconcerting and humbling, but true. The search is extremely profitable. It necessitates getting behind our English version to the Hebrew and Greek words in the original Scriptures (Old and New Testaments respectively): facilities exist for doing this; and by this means surprising truths emerge, correcting our ideas regarding "the soul", and bringing us to a more accurate understanding of what we are and what God has in view for mankind - the good and the bad. The Hebrew word "nephesh" and the Greek word "psuche" are the words in these languages for our English word "soul"; and in each of the

quotations which follow one of these words occurs, and is herein translated “soul,” no matter what English word is used in our popular versions. Thus God’s truth is brought out more clearly.

And so we discover with surprise that “souls” were created before mankind came into being at all. Thus Genesis 1:20, 24 says:

“And God, said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the living soul.”

“And God said, let the earth bring forth the living soul after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth.”

The fact is that the whole of the lower creation, fishes, birds, and beasts, were termed “living souls” before we ever read of a single human being.

Now we come to the description of the making of mankind. (The exploded fallacy of “Evolution” is ignored in this treatise. Direct creation at the hand of God is the only scientific solution of the question of origins.) “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7). “Living soul” is therefore not peculiarly man’s possession; the term reveals humanity as one with this earthly creation, and distinct from the celestial beings, of whom it is illuminatingly stated, “He maketh His angels **spirits**, and His ministers a flame of fire” (Hebrews 1:7). Souls are breathing creatures of flesh and blood upon this earth; spirits are a different creation, invisible to our human eyes. Men are never referred to in the Bible by the unqualified word “spirits”: their proper designation is “souls”. This is important.

HOW DECEPTION ENTERED

This world admittedly is full of tragedy; wars inflict immense sufferings and sorrows: discontent, trouble, lawlessness, selfishness, continually prevent real peace: death visits every home. How did it all originate? The Bible provides the only adequate and satisfactory answer. “By one man sill entered into the world,

and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”. (Romans 5:12). The initial tragic incident which introduced this incurable and continual epidemic is described in Genesis 2. The narrative is full of instruction; it is to be understood and received exactly as a literal narrative of fact.

Adam and Eve had access to the fruit of the tree of Life by which they could have been sustained continuously without ever dying at all. God laid upon them one commandment for obedience, with a penalty attached which they need never have incurred. This commandment they broke; and they were ejected from access to that Tree, after hearing the dread sentence, addressed to Adam, “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” (Gen 3:19). Having become a law-breaker, that is, a sinner, “The Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever” (Gen. 3:23, 22). The entertainment of sin actuating in the heart as a positive and destructive principle; the denial of access to the Tree of Life as a negative principle operating in the same direction, together nullified all possibility of living for ever. Thus, “All the days that Adam lived were 930 years: and he died” (Gen. 5.5). No other adequate explanation of sin and death in the human race exists. And the Gospel of the grace of God proclaims the reversal of this dread process, and the gift of righteousness and life to mortal, perishing mankind.

WHO POSSESSES IMMORTALITY?

Ever since Adam, therefore, lawlessness and natural repugnance towards God and His Word have more or less characterised every human being born, and have marked, by heredity, every human soul, even to the extent of a widespread, obdurate elevation of “the serpent” (who introduced sin and death to mankind) as the true benefactor of the human race! Here is the breeding ground for every trouble in the world. And one peculiar manifestation has been the stubborn determination of men to assure themselves that they can live this life better without God than with Him, and that they can live for ever despite Him. Among

the early writings belonging to very ancient times there are distinct traces of belief that each human being possesses an “immortal soul”. Ancient Babylonians and Egyptians believed it; later Greeks embraced it; the traditions of Jewish religious leaders adopted it - as contrasted with the truth of the Word of God of which they were the depositaries (Romans 9:4): it has wormed its way into the convictions of many Christians, and into embodiment in some Christian statements of faith. **It is fundamental to every non-Christian cult and every heathen religion.** But it is not found in the Word of God, and it simply is not true.

A brief investigation into the nature of the soul, as revealed in the Scriptures, is therefore a useful exercise. The compiler of a dictionary does not himself invent the meanings of the words he defines; but he concentrates in brief language the meaning of each word as currently used. The word “soul” occurs 860 times in the Bible. Its meaning as thus given by God can only be gathered through a study of God’s usage of it, And never once does God call the soul immortal, never-dying, or by any equivalent term. If anyone contends that the Bible teaches the immortality of the soul, the burden of proof lies with him to find it, not with those who deny it. Endeavour is made to gather it by inference or implication. But note well, that God does not leave His own immortality to be inferred or implied. “Now unto the King eternal, immortal (or incorruptible), invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever” (1 Tim. 1:17). “The King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality” (1 Tim. 6:16). “For lift up My hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever’ (Deut. 32:40). “The Father hath Life in Himself” (John 5:26). “Him that sat on the throne, Who liveth for ever and ever” (Revelation 4:9).

If God so emphatically states His own eternal nature; carefully refrains from speaking of immortality as an inherent possession of His creature, Man; and on the contrary says, “None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him ... that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption” (Psalm 49:7-9), it becomes all who profess to believe God’s Word to believe it in fact, and humbly rejoice in the Gospel of His grace that bestows the

ability to live for ever (and adds immense blessings thereto), on the basis of faith in the death of His Son Jesus Christ, for our ransom. To think otherwise is to side to that extent with the rebels of heaven and earth, some of whom almost defy God to do His worst, as in the famous poem, “Invictus”.

CHAPTER 2

The Soul

*The Nature of the Soul - This Perishing Soul - Some Curious Texts - Likeness and Image
- Wider Usage of "The Soul"*



THE NATURE OF THE SOUL

What then is the soul? The usual idea is expressed thus: "The soul is an active, thinking and immaterial substance: uncompounded, indivisible, incorruptible, indestructible, intangible, without exterior or interior surface, is not extended and can never come in contact with matter." The Bible doctrine of the soul is vastly different; and it is the true one. In the limited space available here, Bible quotations are selected to set forth as proper and adequate a representation of God's truth as possible.

That animals are souls is clearly testified. The righteous man regardeth the soul of his beast" (Pray. 12:10). How? By looking after its body "He that killeth the soul of a beast shalt make it good, soul for soul" (Lev. 24:18). This verse is a good illustration of the way in which the current English translation obscures God's truth about the usage of the word "soul". The Bible makes no distinction between the nature of the souls of men and animals. They are classed together in Numbers 31:28: "One soul of 500, both of the persons, and of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep." This verse bursts the bubble of human pride. Gods inspired Word alone reveals that hidden path of true understanding, from which human reckoning - ignoring God's truth - veers to one side or the other: either it thinks too highly of humanity, ascribing immortal souls and part of the divine essence as a natural possession, or thinking too lowly of mankind, reckoning them to have ascended from the apes. The Bible reveals mankind to be descended from a special creation from the hand of God; a candidate indeed for immortality; but not inherently possessing that attribute or any divine essence at all. Immortality

remains God's gift; to be acquired on conditions laid down by Him. Our wisdom is to pay earnest heed thereto, and lay hold on eternal life."

The soul is closely connected with the body. "Thy soul longeth to eat flesh." (Deut. 12:20): "that which every soul must eat" (Exodus 12:16). In fact, so closely is the soul connected with the body, that a soul can actually touch material things; and a dead soul can be touched by a human hand. "If a soul touch any unclean thing" (Lev. 5:2); "all the days that he separateth himself to the Lord he shall come at no dead soul" (Numbers 6:6): that is, the person referred to was not so much as to touch the dead body even of his nearest relation during the period concerned; but the dead person is designated "a soul". And so far is the Bible idea of the soul from indicating an invisible, untouchable phantom within the outer shell of the body, that when Joseph was put in iron fetters in prison in Egypt, it is written that "his soul was laid in iron" (Psalm 105:18).

THE PERISHING SOUL

The soul is emphatically mortal. It can die a very real death; that is the testimony of the Bible. "He spared not their souls from death" (Psalm 78:50); "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4). "I have occasioned the death of all the souls of thy father's house" (1 Samuel 22:22). Concerning Joshua's conquest of the city of Hazer it is written, "They smote all the souls that were therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them: there was not left any to breathe" (Joshua 11:11). (The reason for such a ruthless slaughter is a different study; when properly understood, the Bible needs no apology.) It is instructive to note that the Hebrew word for soul is distinctly connected with the Hebrew word "to breathe."

And the soul goes to the grave when the body is buried. "His soul draweth near to the grave" (Job 33:22); and the word translated "grave" is "shackath", and means the actual hole in the ground dug for the burial of the body. "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" (Psalm 89:48). The word translated "grave" here is "sheol," for which we need a new word in English like "gravedom".

The actual location of the soul within the body is indicated in this wonderful Book. “The soul of the flesh is in the blood ... it is the blood that maketh atonement **by reason of** the soul” (Lev. 17:11 R.V.). It is remarkable that biological science today has reached the conclusion that the life principle dwells in the bloodstream. More than 3,000 years ago the Bible stated this great secret of recent scientific discovery. How did the Bible know? It is “God-breathed.”

The plain fact is that in the Bible the word “soul” is used in a manner not common to English daily speech. “My soul” is simply an emphatic way of saying “ME” or “MYSELF”. When the rich fool (Luke 12:19) said, “I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years” a modern English writer would convey the same meaning in the words, “I will say to myself, George, thou hast much goods laid up for many years” (supposing his name was George). There is no thought whatever of a living entity separable from the body.

SOME CURIOUS TEXTS

To many estimable Christians who, through failure to investigate thoroughly and face the facts of the case, believe that the soul consists entirely of an immortal, invisible, intangible essence, which needs to be “saved” through receiving the message of the Gospel of Christ, a few passages of the Bible will come as a shock; for if their belief is true, whatever risks of physical violence a faithful Christian missionary can meet, his “soul” would be eternally saved. Yet of Paul and Barnabas the sacred Scripture says they were “men that have hazarded their souls for the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 15:26), in the perils of their journeys. This entirely agrees with Judges 5:18, “Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardated their souls unto the death,” in the dangers of war.

But strangest of all is to find Satan himself (if the popular notion of the soul be true) commanded by God to do the work of an evangelist! For concerning Job, God said to Satan, “Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his soul” (Job 2:6). And Lot said when he escaped from Sodom’s destruction, “Thou hast magnified Thy mercy, which Thou hast showed unto me in saving my soul” (Genesis 19:19); but

he was already “a righteous man” (2 Peter 2:7,8). Lot clearly referred to his bodily life.

We therefore come back to Gen. 2:7, and realise that when God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul - the term “soul” comprises all that is summed up in the individual personality; his body, his breath-life; his consciousness of being alive, and of the world around; his individual characteristics; all that distinguishes one from another; but with out any attribute of immortality whatsoever.

LIKENESS AND IMAGE

But some will say that the principle of immortality is conveyed in the fact that man, as distinct from the lower creation, was made “in the image and likeness of God” (Gen 1:26). Let him, however, look up a Lexicon on the Hebrew word for “image,” and he will find that in almost every occurrence there is indicated an image, an idol, a visible form; and never an inward attribute. The same is true of the word for “likeness.” How man was made “in the image and likeness of God” has to do with the fact that the living and true God is not an impersonal, intangible, all-pervading influence without definite being and location, but is a definite personal Being (although not visible to human eyes), Whose very photograph is verbally described in Daniel 7:9,10 and in Rev. 4:2,3: and also with the fact that the Son of God is “the Image of the Invisible God.” Mankind was made in the outward bodily likeness of that glorious Form assumed by the Invisible God to make Himself comprehensible to the creation He was about to bring forth (see Colossians 1 and Phil. 2:6). This outward majestic form of mankind distinguishes them from the lower creation, giving them immense superiority. But humanity does not possess God’s attributes of omnipotence or omnipresence; that is demonstrable truth: neither does humanity possess God’s attribute of immortality; that is revealed truth.

WIDER USAGE OF “THE SOUL”

In language, as centuries pass, there may be considerable changes, as in English: in any language there is apt to be development and usage: and this has occurred in the use of the word “soul” in the Scriptures, without in any way adding to it, later, that which it never possessed earlier, the attribute of immortality. Thus the word became expressive of the whole personality, the life and the senses, the development of individual tastes. “If your soul abhor My judgments” (Lev 26:15) is the very opposite of “Seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul” (Deut. 4:29). “Is not the soul more than the meat?” (Matthew 6:25); the purpose of life is more than eating or drinking, or display. But the soul needs the meat all the same. Thus the saying, “Whosoever shall seek to save his soul shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his soul shall preserve it” (Luke 17:33), is introduced by the words “Remember Lot’s wife” (v.32). Her interests, her sense life, were all in Sodom; she turned back (as she was being dragged from the doomed city) with longing towards them and that moment she died; she sought to save them and lost everything. On the contrary, Lot jettisoned all his interests in this life, and was rescued, with the possibility of a fresh beginning as a wiser man than to settle in such a wicked place. So when the Lord Jesus said in the parable about the rich fool, “This night shall thy soul be required of thee” (Luke 12:20), it simply means the same as happened to Lot’s wife; he would lose his life that night. The same language is found in Genesis 9:5 concerning a potential murderer: “At the hand of every man’s brother will I require the soul of man”; that is, the death sentence had to be inflicted. In neither case is there any implication of survival anywhere.

The Apostle Paul (next to the Lord Himself) is the supreme example of “losing the soul”; permitting all natural good in this life, all that would satisfy “soul life” to be laid on the altar of sacrifice for the service of Christ. “The salvation of the soul” has an application in this present life, in that the spending of one’s life in the service of the Lord Jesus is a definite preparation for eternal life and will be as treasure laid up for the enrichment of the life to come. In its ultimate application the salvation of the soul involves the swallowing up of the whole earthly personality (with all sin and infirmity removed) in the transformation which God

has promised into the glorious likeness of the Risen Lord (Phil. 3:20,21), into a “celestial body” (1 Cor. 15:40) suited to heavenly spheres; and a “spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:44), suited to take place in relation to “spirits”, that is, the celestial angels, and the great powers of the heavenly regions. This transformation appears to be the significance of that very difficult passage (difficult whichever way it is interpreted), 2 Cor. 5:1-9; to which further reference will be made herein.

“The soul” is primarily a word pertaining to this earthly life. It has no immortality; but God has promised great things to “souls” that believe in His Son as their Lord and Saviour.

CHAPTER 3

The Spirit

What is the Spirit? - Body, Soul and Spirit



WHAT IS THE SPIRIT?

It is commonly reckoned that soul and spirit are equivalent terms which can be used interchangeably: but a careful examination of Bible usage gives a different understanding. The Old Testament Hebrew word for “spirit” is “ruach”; its primary meaning is “wind”, and it is often so used. Naturally it is the word used for “breath”: it is common to animals and man. Thus the animals entered the ark (Gen. 7:15), “two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath (ruach) of life.” When a human being dies he expires, he breathes out his last breath. The Bible puts it thus, “his breath (ruach) goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” (Psalm 146:4): stated in other language, “Thou takest away their breath (ruach), they die, and return to their dust” (Psalm 104:29); that is plain, simple death. And that is exactly what is indicated in Eccles. 12:7, “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was and the spirit (ruach) shall return unto God Who gave it.” The spirit returning to God cannot possibly mean “going to heaven,” for the text makes no discrimination between good or bad. It cannot possibly include going to hell,” because that could not be described as “returning to God”.

There is positively no possibility of inherent immortality or ability to survive death attached to the human spirit according to Bible usage. Men and beasts “have all one breath” (ruach), or “one spirit” (Eccles. 3:19), “so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast,” in relation to the nature of the spirit, or in death. “As the one dieth, so dieth the other.” “Ruach” thus signifies an invisible force, such as the wind; and the same word is used to indicate angels and other unseen spirits, good and bad. “There came forth a spirit” (ruach) “and stood before the Lord,” in the assembled court of heaven (1 Kings 22:21).

The spirit of man is primarily his breath: but just as deep breathing helps, and shallow breathing hinders, vital living, so the human spirit can be strong or weak. The Queen of Sheba was so overcome at the realisation of all Solomon's wisdom and glory, that "there was no more spirit (ruach) in her" (1 Kings 10:5). Not that she expired, but she was struck speechless. On the other hand, when Jacob slowly realised that Joseph was not dead as he had thought, "the spirit of Jacob revived" (Gen. 45:27).

The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" (Prov. 18:14); that illustrates the nature of the human spirit exactly. So when Samson was dying of thirst and found water "his spirit came again" (Judges 15:19). It was not that some conscious immortal phantom part of his anatomy was departing from him; but he drew his breath more normally; he revived, and began again to take that interest in affairs which was being excluded by his fearful thirst and exhaustion.

Another descriptive word used in connection with man is the Hebrew word "neshamah," translated "breath", which occurs 24 times in the Old Testament, but which never carries the idea of immortality. Job 34:14 well illustrates its usage: "If He (God) gather unto Himself his (man's) spirit (ruach) and his breath (neshamah), all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust". The spirit and the breath are not the man any more than the steam is the engine. If human beings are to live forever, they must receive power to do so as a gift from God.

BODY, SOUL AND SPIRIT

For ordinary reading this study may appear abstruse and dry; but in the important search to know assuredly about God's Gift of Everlasting life it is well worth while. The three parts of the human personality can be illustrated by a household fire. The fuel represents the body; the flame is the soul, the life; the air rising up the chimney is the spirit, causing the fire to burn feebly or furiously. When the flame dies out it no longer draws the air and the fire is no longer a fire; only

charred fuel is left. So when death overtakes a human being the soul dies, the breath ceases, the dead body is all that is left. And that is the uniform testimony of the passages already quoted which speak of man returning to the dust. "But man dieth and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" (Job 14:10). That expresses the position exactly: where is he? Where is the flame when the fire dies out? That is exactly what happens to the human soul when death occurs. "The soul is dependent upon the union of body and spirit just as water is dependent upon the union of hydrogen and oxygen. Sever the tie that binds together the elemental substances, hydrogen and oxygen, and water no longer exists: sever the tie that binds together body and spirit and the soul vanishes; the man dies."

It is remarkable that Job, in the verses immediately succeeding, speaks of waking out of sleep, and resurrection, as the next event, and that in the distant future. Such passages are not inserted in the inspired Word of God to teach error: and nothing in the New Testament can alter or invalidate the testimony of the Old Testament as to the fundamental nature of the soul or spirit and the state of the dead, and the issue from the death state, Scripture is one consistent whole. Job had an expectation of eternal life though death meantime laid hold upon him. But it was through a Redeemer. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body; yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25,26). Here, in one of the oldest books of the Bible and of the world, is stated the great plan of redemption from God: the living Redeemer; the death state a sleep; resurrection for the redeemed, to a change to a bodily state in which he could look upon God. "O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that Thou wouldst keep me in secret, until Thy wrath be past, that Thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee: Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands" (Job 14:13-15). This, as we shall see, briefly states that which the New Testament expands into the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, the unspeakable gift of everlasting life to ungodly humanity who submit to the salvation provided through the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 4

Death

What Happens When We Die? - Is there a Spiritual Death? - Death is a Sleep



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE?

A champion sports player in America had a curious mentality. He entered every competition with his mind made up to lose. He entertained no inflated ideas of his own ability. The strange result was that he flung himself with such energy into his game that he usually won. The person who bravely faces the worst and settles once for all the eternal issue in the only satisfactory way - the Bible way - with no inflated idea of possessing an immortal soul, is in the best position to face this life's issues with peace and courage and come out more than conqueror. Upon this the Bible insists; not to make us gloomy, but to clear the way for the believer to grasp aright the wonder and glory of what God has in store for him. The investigation of the Bible teaching regarding the death state, therefore looked at as a foundation stone for the appreciation of the glory to follow, will not be reckoned a dry subject, but one of intense and serious interest. Let the reader brace his mind for a few intricate details, set forth in order to unfold as accurately as possible the principles of the theme.

The widespread belief in the immortality of the soul, in heathen and Christian communities alike, has its origin in words found in the Bible, beyond doubt; but they are the words of the Devil himself. God specifically warned Adam against eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and that disobedience would incur the death penalty. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Satan, as the Serpent seeking to deceive Eve, said (in outright contradiction of God Himself) "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). Serpent worship is almost universal; in civilisation far more than is generally known. The Devil's lie also finds widespread acceptance, because it is agreeable to fallen human nature. It is too humbling to human pride to think that when we die we are

absolutely helpless and hopeless to all eternity, utterly dependent upon God to exercise His power to restore us to life.

Again the Bible reveals a hidden path of wisdom, from which the human mind errs to one side or the other by ignoring or disbelieving God's Word. On the one hand is the erroneous belief in natural immortality, and the ability to survive death and even to defy God to do His worst; on the other hand there is the atheistic belief that death ends all for everybody, without judgment or reward or doom of any kind. But the Bible reveals that whereas in death man is utterly helpless, like a dead dog, yet there will be a resuscitation of every dead person, not by survival through inherent ability, but by RESURRECTION, by the putting forth of divine power. In death a man has no pre-eminence over a beast (Ecc. 3:19); but the very fact that God has announced for all mankind a resurrection, confers upon mankind a unique superiority over the lower creation and a dignity and importance which gives him immense pre-eminence over every created thing on earth.

So when Lazarus died (John 11) he was dead. He was not alive in any form anywhere; but the voice of the Lord Jesus restored him to living consciousness, healing his body to enable it to function once again. The popular notion that "you do not really die" (practically what the Serpent said to Eve), "in fact, you are more alive than ever" in some phantom form, somewhere, somehow, is contrary to Bible truth, which is the very unpalatable fact that "the dead know not anything" (Ecc. 9:5).

The precise rendering of the words used by God to Adam (Gen. 2:17) is "Dying, thou shalt die." Endeavour is made to show that this indicates "a spiritual death" because Adam did not die that very day, as the penalty threatened. But the form of the words is simply the Hebrew language way of speaking emphatically. For instance, the English language would say, "We saw certainly"; the Hebrew language puts it, "Seeing, we saw." The English translation, therefore, "Thou shalt surely die," is the exact English equivalent of the Hebrew meaning conveyed by the words used. There is no thought of "spiritual death" whatever.

What God did NOT say was, “Dying, thou shalt NOT die.”

A word of explanation about the thought of “spiritual death” will be appropriate here.

IS THERE A SPIRITUAL DEATH?

This word “spiritual” needs clearer understanding than is usually brought to bear upon it. The words “spiritual death” do not occur in Scripture; and what is intended thereby (as in 1 Tim. 5:6, where a worldly minded person is said to be “dead while she lives”) needs expression in different and more precise words than “spiritual death”. That wonderful chapter, 1 Cor. 15, gives light on this point. It is God’s great explanation of what happens after death (many shorter passages elsewhere consistently supplement it), so far as Christians are concerned. **It has not one word to say about the soul floating away to heaven when the body dies.** It clearly indicates the next event after death to be **resurrection**, which involves the restoration of the whole human being in bodily form. “The dead shall be raised incorruptible”. It is a theological education to realise that throughout the Bible, resurrection by the exercise of God’s power, and not survival by inherent human vitality, is the issue from the death state.

It needs to be realised that the Scripture here, as in many other places, speaks of man as one in divisible entity as in Gen. 2:7 and 3:19; so that when it says, “the dead shall be raised”, the reference is—not to the body as distinct from some supposedly separable soul—but to the complete anatomy of the person.

Referring to the death and resurrection of believers in Christ, therefore, it says, “It is sown a natural body: it is raised a spiritual body.” Now the word translated “natural” is the Greek word “psuchikon”, which means “pertaining to the soul”; we might fittingly invent a word and say “soulical”. And the passage goes on to say, “There is a soulical body, and there is a spiritual body”. And so it is written, “The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is

soulical, and afterwards that which spiritual” (v. 44-46).

It is evident, therefore, that Adam, the first man, was not given spiritual life to begin with; **he therefore could not die a spiritual death.** He received “soulical” life; and the nature of the death he died is given in the most simple, direct, and unmistakable language possible: “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen. 3:19). The word “thou” refers to the real man, the whole of him; one complete entity. He returned to the oblivion of the dust from which he was originally formed; that was the absolute end of him so far as any inherent ability in himself is concerned. That is what death is for all mankind. Thus also, although Stephen when dying said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59), the real Stephen did not go to heaven, as popularly supposed. For “devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him” (Acts 8:2). That which carried the identity of Stephen was handled by his friends and laid in the grave. That is exactly what Gen. 3 indicates.

And against this dark background of death and helplessness, there stands out in shining letters that “The Gift of God is Eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). The issues of the Gospel are not happiness or conscious torment to all eternity, but the straightforward issue of life or death for ever.

DEATH IS A SLEEP

If a man in death has no preeminence above a beast, why is the death state for humankind so often referred to in the Bible as a sleep? (The rather pointless objection is sometimes made to quotations from Ecclesiastes that the Book refers to “things, under the sun” (Ecc. 4:1). That phrase simply means “on the earth”, or “under heaven” (3:1). It makes no modification of the truths here expounded, and see Ecc. 12:10.) In natural sleep a person retains the principle of life and the inherent ability to awake without aid. But the Bible is clear that a dead human being has no power to become alive again. If the reader will turn to 1 Cor. 15 and read verses 12 to 19, the following argument will be found: Some deny that there will be such a thing as a resurrection; but if there be no such event then Christ

himself, Who certainly died, did not rise, and it is not enough to say that He went away in soul or spirit form apart from the resurrection of His body: if He did not have a bodily resurrection, then the whole Gospel falls to pieces: and if there is no resurrection of the dead and consequently Christ Himself was never raised, “then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished”; that is, those who believed the Gospel and died in the expectation of salvation through Christ Jesus, far from going to heaven or Paradise or anywhere in any soul or spirit form, **they are perished**; utterly undone; gone out of existence to a hopeless eternity.

Resurrection, then, is a fundamental and absolute necessity in the whole divine scheme concerning mankind. It is a theme seldom heard, simply because it does not fit in with the idea of the immortality of the soul. If souls are happy in heaven already, why a resurrection? But God has distinctly pledged Himself in His Word to the resurrection of all men. “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ (or “by Christ”) shall all be made alive.” (1 Cor. 15:22); and because of that, the word “sleep” is used as the most fitting word available to describe the state of the dead. Thus David says, “Consider and hear me O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death” (Psalm 13:3).

Consistently with that, a holy angel appeared to Daniel, and foretold that “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt”; and as to Daniel himself he said, “Go thou thy way till the end be: for Thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days” (Daniel 12:2,13). So the Lord Jesus spoke of the death of Lazarus, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may wake him out of sleep ... Then said Jesus unto His disciples plainly, Lazarus is dead” (John 11:11,14). And in 1 Cor. 15 we read, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed” (v. 51) giving the wonderful revelation that not all of mankind will pass through death. And in the companion passage of the like import we read, “Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him ... For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven ... and the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thess. 4:14,16). The necessity for the dead to awake arise before they can be taken “to meet the Lord in the air” along with those who are still alive, is made as clear as words can

make it.

So Stephen fell asleep, many of the Corinthians fell asleep, the fathers fell asleep—all these expressions and others like them are found in the Old and New Testaments concerning the death state. In 68 places (covering 4 Hebrew words), and 19 places (covering 3 Greek words), the state of death is indicated as a sleep. This, therefore, is the fundamental principle of the matter, and cannot be contradicted by such sayings as “Absent from the body; present with the Lord”; “desiring to depart and to be with Christ which is far better”; and “Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise”; and other texts which are quoted in the search for proof that the souls of the redeemed go immediately to glory when death comes. On the contrary, these passages are to be interpreted in the light of the basic, clear, and unalterable truths already established in the Word of God.

It is in the light of these truths, also, that the Lord’s words are to be understood when He said of Jairus’ daughter, “The maid is not dead but sleepeth” (Matt. 9:24). This was in keeping with what He said about Lazarus; because, in view of the restoration He was about to bestow, **to Him they were as good as already alive again**. That is the meaning of that passage so often quoted without its context, “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Matt. 22:32). The clue to this passage, as in others, is in the reference to resurrection in the immediate context. The Sadducees, who disbelieved in the resurrection altogether, sought to confound the Lord. And this saying of His was introduced by the words, “As touching the dead, that they rise” (Mark 12:26); THEREFORE “God is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him” (Luke 20:38). His word and purpose are so sure, that the patriarchs referred to shall be restored to live for ever, that their present sleep in death is only a temporary discontinuity of life, a mere nothing in the eyes of the Eternal God.

But there is no doubt about them being dead meantime. The Lord Jesus said so Himself. “Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead” (John 6:49); and that included Moses and Aaron. In contrast, He declared the Gift of Everlasting Life from God, “He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life ... I am

the living Bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever” (John 6:47,51). Here is the condition laid down for the acquirement of everlasting life; it is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is also the possibility stated that some who thus believe in Him might not die at all, exactly as 1 Cor. 15:51 makes clear. “This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die”” (John 6:50). But apart from being removed bodily from the earth without dying, and clothed with immortality that same moment, the normal course for the Christian is to die, and be raised from the dead; this principle appears in the context in John 6: “This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (v. 40). Here is the inescapable principle of resurrection.

CHAPTER 5

The Place and State of the Dead

Where are the Dead? - Sheol and Hades



WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

It may surprise the reader to be told that the subject of this chapter is of the utmost personal, social, financial, political, and international importance. If the Bible teaching on this subject were widely accepted, it would profoundly modify the whole face of the world's economics and politics. Roman Catholicism is a vast network of intrigue operating from the Vatican at Rome, holding millions in thrall to the idea that eternal salvation can only be secured through the operation of priests to forgive sins, and to voice incantations on behalf of those who have died, in order to procure them relief from the pains of an alleged "Purgatory." The Pope and his supporting officials exercise the most astute political diplomacy, with a view to obtaining dominion over the spiritual and material affairs of the world: so much so that their influence is a potent force demanding respect simply because of the numbers of their supporters in many lands. Roman Catholicism therefore exercises a sway in the counsels of nations all the more wonderful because it is not a nation, has practically no territory, has no army or navy or air force of its own; yet it dominates the thinking of multitudes, and has a power not to be opposed with impunity. And it is all based upon a LIE. That lie is the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the conscious state of the dead. It is a giant masquerade. Countless millions of pounds are paid by rich and poor to Roman Catholic priests; large tribute flows from every nation to the Vatican annually. It is the greatest financial swindle the world has ever seen. And it would cease, if the Bible truth on this subject were believed; for the dead, good, bad, and indifferent, are neither in heaven, hell, nor purgatory; nor can anything the living do, suffer or pay affect their present or future wellbeing. This subject is therefore of the utmost importance, even to the very practical issue of hard cash!

SHEOL AND HADES

Where then are the dead? Two outstanding words demand attention: “Sheol” (in Hebrew), and “Hades” (in Greek). The Old Testament covered about 4000 years of history before the New Testament was written; then Greek became the language of civilisation. The inspired writers of the New Testament used “Hades” when quoting from the Hebrew of the Old Testament. Therefore “Hades” carries the equivalent meaning of “Sheol”.

That statement is important; it is not to be reversed, because before the New Testament was written, Pagan Greeks used the word Hades in a manner very different from the Old Testament truth about Sheol. Hades, to their unenlightened minds, was a supposed place of departed phantoms of the dead, divided into different compartments: in one place there waited the phantoms of those for whom no proper burial rites had been performed; in another place were the Elysian fields of bliss; in another place was a dreadful abode of torment, where abandoned phantoms endured fearful pains.

The word “Sheol” occurs 65 times in the Old Testament, and nowhere does any of these Greek meanings adhere to it; therefore when the Holy Spirit adopts Hades in the New Testament to represent Sheol, it is to be understood that Hades carries with it the Old Testament meaning which God gave it, and not the Bible distorting meaning of the Greek pagan writers. (Readers of the Preface to the Revised Version of the Bible will note that the writers have erred on this point.) To grasp this is to avoid pitfalls of error.

Thus Jacob said, “I will go down into Sheol unto my son, mourning” (Gen. 37:35). “Sheol hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it” (Isa. 5:14). Sheol is always down, not up. The word has no proper equivalent in English, unless the phrase “the grave” used generally of the death state: “gravedom” would be an adequate rendering. It does not mean one particular place of burial, and is not confined to the land. It is the place of the

sleep of the dead. “Paradise” is never once connected with it, although the word Paradise occurs 26 times in the Greek version of the Old Testament. Nor is pain or torment connected with it in the Old Testament, or with Hades in the New Testament. It is sometimes translated “hell”, but readers should understand that the Authorised Version of the Bible was published in A.D.1611, and “hell” then signified a hiding place or covering. In the West of England the word is still used in its earlier meaning. A farmer goes to “hell up” his potatoes in a pit to preserve them during the winter, not to roast them in fire!

The most curious proof the Bible contains that “Sheol” is not used as a place of fiery torment is in the history of Jonah. That prophet was cast into the Mediterranean Sea; he was swallowed by a giant fish, which immediately dived far down. Jonah afterwards recorded what happened. “Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish’s belly, and said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and Thou heardst my voice” (Jonah 2:1,2). Here is “hell” in the heart of the sea! The word used is “Sheol”, a place of covering; “gravedom”, and that is what it means in its usage throughout the Old Testament; and that is the meaning of “Hades” in the New Testament every time. It is simply the death state. As to Luke 16:23 see page 50.**

Endeavour is made to prove that the body goes to the corruption of the grave, and the soul to Sheol in conscious life. The Bible denies that thought. “Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption” (Isaiah 38:17). This thought of the soul going to the actual pit of the grave, and “corruption”, is found elsewhere in the Old Testament. It is equivalent to “Sheol”, because Jonah went on to say, “Yet hast Thou brought up my life from corruption” (Jonah 2:6). His body went to Sheol, his life came back from corruption. It is evident that body and soul go together to the same place, whatever name is used for it; it is “the grave”.

Further, good and bad go there alike. “Let the wicked ... be silent in Sheol”

** See Chapter 7, under the subheading “The Rich Man and Lazarus”. (Editor’s note)

(Psalm 31:17). They are asleep in death, not living in torment in hell or purgatory; but waiting resurrection for their case to be arraigned and just punishment to be inflicted after judgment, not before it. Thus also the Psalmist declares, “The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence” (Psalm 115:17). “There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave (Sheol) whither thou goest” (Ecc. 9:10); this covers all humanity.

There are nearly 80 different Hebrew words used in the Old Testament, covering hundreds of occurrences, to signify putting to death; these are translated by such English expressions as “destroy, cut off, consume, perish devour, swallow up, quench,” and many other such words. Souls are said to be destroyed and perish. It is impossible here to expound all the ramifications of the usage of these words, but they have been examined by the writer of this treatise without anywhere finding justification for the popular notion of the immortality of the soul, the conscious life of the dead in bliss or torment; but rather that the emphatic Bible teaching is that the dead are dead, helpless, unconscious, good, bad and indifferent alike; and that the issues from death belong - not to an immortal soul - but to the Lord God Himself, and to His Son, Jesus Christ (Psalm 68:20; Rev. 1:18).

CHAPTER 6

Resurrection

*What is the Resurrection? - The Order of Resurrection - The Nature of Resurrection
- Many Difficulties Explained - "Desiring to Depart"*



WHAT IS THE RESURRECTION?

The Bible doctrine of the Resurrection involves so stupendous a miracle that the human mind either denies it or quietly ignores it as incredible. The Athenian philosophers derided Paul for mentioning it (Acts 17:32). Some Christian ministers carefully avoid it at funeral services, and when quoting from 1 Cor. 15:50-58 and 1 Thess. 4:13-18 they omit the texts which speak of it. **But it is there nevertheless**, for faith (which believes God) to accept, and thus honour Him. The popular belief in the immortality of the soul and its conscious life after the body dies, makes the idea of resurrection seem unnecessary. If the soul is happy in heaven without a body, why bother about a resurrection? But resurrection is the only means which the Bible indicates as the issue from death for human beings. It in means a resuscitation of the whole person, body, soul, and spirit. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." and immediately He raised Lazarus, body, soul, and spirit, from death (John 11).

Resurrection is not survival; it contradicts that idea. It utterly depends upon the exertion of God's power to bring it about. Man can do nothing to assist or prevent it. The Old Testament taught it. Job (who probably lived about the time of Moses) spoke of it (Job 19:27). Isaiah hails it: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust" (Isaiah 26:19). Other passages also indicate this understanding among Old Testament saints (as in Dan. 12:1-3 and 13). This great truth distinguishes the Word of God from every religious system under the sun. It is one of the most glorious proclamations involving absolute omnipotence on the part of Him Who declares it. None of the unholy inspiring powers of the Unseen acting behind the many

anti-Christian religious teachings in the world could possibly commit themselves to such a stupendous promise as the bringing back alive from death of the millions of humanity who died under all manner of conditions: ordinary death and burial; blown to pieces by explosions; burnt in fire; eaten by cannibals or wild beasts; swallowed by giant fishes; dissolved in chemicals. But God has committed Himself to bring it about: faith believes Him and rejoices.

The testimony of the New Testament is abundant. “The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28, 29). The resurrection of the dead is one of the six foundation stones of “the doctrine of Christ” (Hebrews 6:1,2). We ignore or deny it at our peril.

THE ORDER OF RESURRECTION

A careful study of Scripture on this subject reveals that the dead will not be raised individually when each person dies, but in great groups. “For since by man came death by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterwards they that ate Christ’s at His coming. Then cometh the end ... ” (1 Cor. 15:21-24). At the time of the Second Advent of Christ, Christians (and doubtless the saints of the Old Testament) will be raised from the dead to enter upon their eternal inheritance. In Rev. 20:5 we read of “the first resurrection”; the same chapter goes on to show that “the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished,” that is, until after the Millennial Reign of Christ has concluded. Then the whole of “gravedom” will yield up the dead remaining there, to stand before the Great White Throne and hear the Judge pronounce their sentence.

THE NATURE OF RESURRECTION

“But some man will say, How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they

come?” (1 Cor. 15:35). In the various demonstrations of the resurrection of the dead recorded in the Bible, it is manifest that the very body that died was restored to life; that was “resurrection”. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus was exactly that; so much so that He could show the nail marks of His crucifixion still observable in His hands and feet. It was “the very same Jesus.” “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me. and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have” (Luke 24:39). He was not a ghost, an immortal soul, an imperishable spirit; He was a resurrected MAN, retaining His recognisable identity. And He is the pattern of the resurrection of all them who are redeemed through Him.

But He was different, too. He was a demonstration of “a spiritual body,” though not “a spirit”: and just as angels can appear and disappear to human sight, and pass through solid matter at will (as lightning can), so He was not subject to the laws of matter or of gravitation, and could appear and disappear at will. He was also able to ascend to heaven; He had a “celestial body”; and that is exactly what is to be given, at their resurrection, to those who have received God’s Gift of Everlasting Life through faith in the death and resurrection of Christ. “The dead shall be raised incorruptible,” immortal, and that “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:52,53). “We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself (Phil. 3:20, 21).

What like is His glorious body? Here is the nearest description we have: “His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters; ... and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength” (Rev. 1:14-16). “Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). No prospect of bliss this life affords can equal the thrill that awaits the redeemed of the Lord in this great coming transformation: for this the dead peacefully await in

dreamless sleep; for this the living hope, that it may come in their time. As to the time when this will take place, that is a different subject altogether, involving the study of the Second Coming of Christ, not dealt with in this treatise; but it has not yet taken place.

MANY DIFFICULTIES EXPLAINED

To understand these great truths is to possess the clue to a better understanding of many difficulties in the Word of God. One passage from which the immortality of the soul is sought to be inferred, is 2 Cor. 5:1-9: -

“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven; if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up for life ... Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord ... We are confident ... and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

“There you are, you see” (we are told), “absent from the body, present with the Lord”. What can that possibly mean but that the soul goes away, consciously alive, when the body dies, and is present with the Lord apart from a bodily resurrection altogether?” Let some things be noted: -

(1) It is remarkable how this passage (like others) is seized upon to prove the immortality of the soul without regard to the Bible teaching about the soul.

(2) It is to be observed that neither “soul” nor “spirit” is mentioned in the whole passage.

(3) If these deductions from this passage are true, they contradict abundant and

clear teaching about the soul and the death state.

(4) They also contradict the argument of 1 Cor. 15 that if there be no resurrection of the dead then even Christians are “perished”, a term inapplicable if their souls were consciously “with the Lord”.

(5) The immediate context contains a clear reference to resurrection, which is joined on to this passage by a conjunction “Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you” (2 Cor. 1:14); “for which cause we faint nor, for though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day” (v. 16).

(6) This passage occurs in SECOND Corinthians; it cannot contradict FIRST Corinthians in which resurrection is proven to be a fundamental necessity for life after death.

(7) It is remarkable that the words, “that mortality might be swallowed up of life” (2 Cor. 5:4) are exactly in line with 1 Cor. 15:53,54, “This mortal must put on immortality ... Death is swallowed up in victory,” IN RESURRECTION, not by soul-survival.

(8) The result is to be “present with the Lord”. Now 1 Thessalonians was written earlier than 2 Corinthians. In 1 Thess. 4:13-18 Paul had described precisely how Christians are to be “present with the Lord”; there the dead are spoken of as “asleep”, but not hopeless; at the Lord’s Coming, He would descend from heaven, the dead would **rise** first (to bring them to earth’s surface and to a living state); then they and the living Christians would be caught up together in the clouds; “and SO shall we ever be WITH THE LORD.” “SO” means “in this manner”. Surely then, Paul would not contradict himself a few years later, and indicate in 2 Cor. 5 that he expected to be “with the Lord” in an immortal soul apart from resurrection altogether!

It is quite true that the expressions about “being found naked” are difficult for us

to understand, from any angle of interpretation which strives to have regard to all the facts; but in broad outline they cannot possibly be taken to contradict the abundant teaching on life and death and resurrection.

“DESIRING TO DEPART”

The very same procedure of interpretation applies to Phil. 1:20-24, including the words “having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.” Again an “immortal soul” is read into the passage; but ...

(1) Neither soil nor spirit is mentioned;

(2) Resurrection is in the context, “if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Phil. 3:11) why this desire, if his soul would be far better off with Christ whenever he died?

(3) Here again are the notable words “with Christ”, written some years after 1 Thess. 4 with its revelation as to the only manner in which dead believers can be “with the Lord” - by resurrection.

Thus it becomes clearer still that “Everlasting Life” is a Gift from God; not something we inherently possess; and the outlines of the Gospel stand up sharp, clear, and unmistakable; “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

CHAPTER 7

Eternal Conscious Torment

The Destiny of the Unsaved - Divine Justice - The Wicked in Death and Resurrection
- *Special Passages Considered - Everlasting Burnings - The Undying Worm*
- *Torment with Fire and Brimstone - Eternal or Age Lasting -*
- *Further Special Passages (Paul in Paradise, Christ and the Dying Thief, The Rich Man and Lazarus)*
- *Other Passages*



THE DESTINY OF THE UNSAVED

One outstanding need for an enquiry like this arose from the emphasis once laid in Gospel preaching (and still heard in some quarters) upon the idea that the souls of the unconverted would roast in hell fire torments to all eternity without hope or relief. This dreadful teaching frightened some into a real saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; there is no doubt about that. That was Mary Slessor's experience: but she said she would never preach it to others. The lurid passages penned by Godly men to describe the torments of hell amaze us today. One may not be surprised at a Roman Catholic priest writing of "the little child in the red hot oven; hear how it screams to come out; see how it turns and twists itself in the fire"; but it shocks us to find Godly Protestant ministers writing thus: "The torments in hell will be immeasurably greater than being in a glowing oven, a brick kiln, or fiery furnace," and speaking of the saints in heaven rejoicing at the sight! And Godly parents not pitying their children though seeing them tormented through millions of years Charles Spurgeon, too, used his eloquence to the same effect: "See how his tongue hangs from his blistered lips! How it excoriates and burns the roof of his mouth, as if it were a firebrand! ... When the damned jingle the burning irons of their torment they shall say, For ever!" And the Scotch poet, Pollok, wrote: "Like a cinder that had life and feeling seemed his face, with inward pining to be what he could not be."

From these dreadful sentiments thoughtful Christians revolted and asked **Is it**

true? How can it possibly square with the justice of God, to say nothing of His love? IT CANNOT. Even human justice does not torture the worst criminals, but takes much trouble to submit them to a painless death. The Bible reveals that the wicked are to stand before the Great White Throne, far in the future, for judgment: only vindictive cruelty would torture them meantime, before they are judged.

So men commenced to study the subject, where such a study should always commence, at the beginning of the Bible; to see what the soul is, that is supposed to bear this torment; to see if it survives death; and if it **can** be subject to such treatment; and if God says He will do so. The result was the emphatic conclusion that it was a horrible error, foisted upon humanity by the father of all such errors, the Devil.

DIVINE JUSTICE

“One of the first principles of justice requires that parties threatened with a penalty for transgression should have the fullest opportunity of understanding what the penalty is. God, accordingly, speaks to Adam of death as a thing whose nature Adam knew. Now Adam knew very well what death was in one sense and in one sense only. He knew it to be the law of the lower creatures, and to consist in the loss of their being and existence. He knew nothing of any other senses of death, such as “death in sin” or “death to sin,” for, in his innocence, he did not know what sin was at all. Still less did he understand by death an eternal existence in agony.” The only kind of death known to Adam was the only kind of death which God referred to. It could not possibly be otherwise. Human Jurisprudence wisely declares that when a man is incapable of knowing the nature of a penalty he cannot be subjected to it. Shall mortal man be more just than God? If a penalty of £10 is indicated for exceeding a speed limit, can I be fined £1,000 for doing so? The penalty threatened is always the maximum, and cannot be exceeded in justice.

Adam was the representative Man. In his sin we were involved. The penalty he

incurred falls on us too. The New Testament echoes Genesis 2, saying, “The wages of sin is death”. So wrote Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles. And one of the notable things in this connection is that Paul could say to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:26, 27), “I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” Yet not once in all his writings or recorded speeches does he mention hell fire or Gehenna; and only on one occasion does he refer to Hades (1 Cor. 15:55). The great majority of the world’s population are Gentiles. The teaching of eternal hell-fire torment for the unsaved is the swing of the pendulum from the perpendicular of divine truth away to the right; balanced on the other hand by the teaching which makes out that everybody (including the Devil) will ultimately be saved, which is the swing of the pendulum away to the left. The true perpendicular is the doctrine of “Conditional Immortality,” God’s Gift of Everlasting Life on condition of faith in the redemption purchased by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, for sinners.

THE WICKED IN DEATH AND RESURRECTION

When the wicked die, their state is exactly that of the righteous. “What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?” (Psalm 89:48). “Sheol” occurs 65 times in the Old Testament; its direction is always down, for good and bad alike, never up. The whole person goes there, body and soul, even parts of the body are specified, and weapons of war; so Sheol refers to “the grave”, and that alone. It is a place of entire insensibility and inactivity. “The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.” “The wicked shall be silent in darkness” (1 Samuel 2:9). “There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest” (Eccles. 9:10). That refers to good and bad alike, in Sheol. There is no hell fire or purgatorial purification.

But, “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). To bring a dead person to judgment requires resurrection, “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall

come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28, 29). As has already been shown, those who have in this life laid hold upon God’s Gift of Eternal Life will be raised to that life at the Second Advent of Christ; the rest of the dead, after 1,000 years’ reign of Christ (Rev. 20:5).

Then comes the Judgment of the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11-15), when “the dead, small and great, stand before God.” Nothing is said about their state; they cannot possibly be raised to immortality like the saved (1 Cor. 15:52); they must be simply restored to life as Lazarus was, able to die again. Nor is it said that all who stand before that throne are wicked and doomed; the company will include those who die during the Millennium, probably including many righteous. While there is no justification for belief in any “second chance” after death, it is to be observed that the words are very specific, not wholesale; “And if any one was not found written in the Book of Life he was cast into the lake of Fire.” Just all that lies in these words as to the basis of judgment, we are not told precisely: but while the means of execution is dreadful, the end is clear. “The Lake of Fire” probably consists of the earth itself consuming in fire as the Judgment proceeds (Rev. 20:11 and 2 Peter 3:10). The end is the Second Death. It is a return to oblivion, from which no resurrection is revealed.

SPECIAL PASSAGES CONSIDERED

The Witch at Endor. Having laid the foundation for a true understanding of the Scripture testimony on this important theme, it is now possible to apply it to passages of peculiar difficulty, in addition to those already dealt with. One of the most mysterious is in the incident of King Saul’s appeal to the witch (1 Sam. 28:1-20, 1 Chron 10:13,14). Saul had forsaken God. True, he “enquired superficially” of God, but got no answer; therefore he “enquired earnestly” of the witch. His action constituted “an unpardonable sin.” In the witch’s house a mysterious being appeared and gave an answer to Saul’s enquiry. The following points demand attention:

(1) Samuel was dead (v. 3) some years previously. And despite the record of this incident, Solomon, knowing the Scriptures, wrote (less than 80 years later), “The dead know not anything” (Ecc. 9:5). Spiritist mediums the equivalent today of the woman at Endor then: they have “famliar spirits—demons who impersonate the dead and come at their bidding. Saul was disguised; he asked for Samuel to be brought up. The woman would go through the usual procedure of trance mediumship; but then something happened which affrighted her immensely. “When the woman saw Samuel,” The narrative quietly indicates that it was Samuel who appeared, and the words spoken sound exactly like his, and they came true. But note ...

(2) He came **up**, not down from heaven;

(3) He appeared as he had died, an old man;

(4) He said, “Why hast thou disquieted me?” as if he had been asleep, not consciously alive in Paradise or heaven;

(5) It is not to be thought that God would suffer His holy prophet to be at the behest of a witch, who by her occupation was under sentence of death by His law (Ex. 22:18, Isa 8:19,20);

(6) No mention is made of Samuel’s soul or spirit.

“And Samuel said to Saul ... Tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me”; good and bad alike in one place, the grave. Either God seized an evil spirit and made it speak His words, as He seized the false prophet Balaam (Num. 23:26), and that contrary to the usual procedure familiar to the witch; or else God caused Samuel to rise from the dead and appear there; to return to the grave immediately afterwards. This latter explanation is more probably correct. Whether Saul saw Samuel or not is not clear, but the seance would be held in darkness.

The spirits in Prison (1 Peter 3:18-20; 2 Peter 2; Jude). Christ preached to the

spirits in prison . This is superficially taken to mean that He preached the Gospel to the unsaved dead and gave them “another chance.” But careful study reaches a very different conclusion.

(1) Human beings are never referred to in the Bible by the unqualified word “spirits”; they are “souls”. Angels and demons are called “spirits”.

(2) Those to whom Christ preached had lived at one particular time in earth’s history, “while the ark was preparing.”

(3) The word for “preach” is not the word meaning “preach the Gospel”. It means simply “to proclaim” something not stated.

(4) The imprisonment of sinful angels connected with the days of Noah is indicated in 2 Peter 2. “For if God spared not the **angels that sinned**, but cast them down to Tartarus (this is the only place this word. is used in the New Testament), and delivered them into **chains of darkness**, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world ... bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly” (2 Peter 2:4; 5).

(5) Jude gives similar testimony: “And the angels which kept their first estate, but left their own habitation (this word seems to indicate a spiritual body), He hath reserved in **everlasting chains under darkness** unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrhah ... going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example” (Jude 6,7).

(6) The record of the days of Noah reveals this: “And it came to pass ... that the Sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose ... There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that ... mighty men which were of old, men of renown” (Gen. 6:1-4).

(7) Angels are called “Sons of God.” “Where wast thou when I laid the

foundations of the earth? ... When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4,7).

The meaning therefore is clear. While Noah was building the ark, evil angels appeared in the likeness of humanity (consider Acts 14:11); married wicked women; produced giants; and were arrested and placed in suitable confinement, in darkness, awaiting their final judgment. To them, Christ, immediately He rose from the dead, "quickened by the Spirit," went and proclaimed something. Why He went and what He proclaimed we are not told. The most probable explanation is this; that the action of the angels was not capricious, but a planned assault upon the human race, so to involve them as to make impossible the coming of the promised "Seed of the Woman"; or else it was an endeavour to produce a superior race who would largely overcome the penalties inflicted upon Adam and his descendants.

Being cut off from contact with universal affairs, these were the only spirit beings unaware of the resurrection of Christ; that great victory over him who had the power of death, the Devil, and the guarantee of the final crushing of the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). Therefore Christ demonstrated His triumph by appearing in person, showing that their efforts had been in vain. The passage has nothing to do with the human dead. Most of the early Fathers who mention this passage agree with the view here given; this shows the early prevalence of this belief, drawn from the Scriptures.

It may be here said that 2 Peter 4:6, "For, for this cause was the Gospel preached to them that are dead ..." has no connection with "the spirits in prison." The passage can only mean that the Gospel was preached to men while they were alive; during which time also, while others judged them according to the flesh, they lived according to God in their inward man. Now they sleep in death awaiting the reward of their faith. This same idea, of the Gospel preached to one now dead, but **while he was alive**, is voiced in Gal. 3:8, "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, "In thee shall all nations be blessed."

EVERLASTING BURNINGS

The passage already quoted from Jude refers to the people of Sodom and Gomorrha “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire”. The incident is recorded in Gen. 18 and 19. Fire and brimstone were showered upon these cities from heaven by God: the people were burnt to death. The region is that of the Dead Sea; no such fires now burn there; its shores are strewn with salt. The “eternal fires” have gone out long ago. Nothing is said about “souls” or “spirits”. Their bodies could not long endure such an infliction. It is clear that the meaning is that the effects of the fire are eternal, that is, “age-lasting.” The persons referred to will come up in the resurrection of the dead to stand before the Great White Throne. The wages of sin, no matter how bad, is death, not eternal torment, if God is keeping the sinners of Sodom in fiery torments since the days of Abraham, then He is inflicting an enormous penalty of which they were never warned, and which the sins of this brief life could never deserve.

“Our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29). The redeemed can bear that holy and awful Presence; but of the wicked it is written: “The wicked shall perish ... they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away” (Psalm 37:20). Here is a picture of utter destruction, not preservation, in fire.

These considerations throw light on Matt. 25:31-46, where the nations are arraigned before the Lord immediately after His Second Advent. Probably selected representatives are meant; not every single soul of all the nations of the world. These are judged, not according to the Gospel at all, or as to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; but solely as to their treatment of Jews. No “souls” or “spirits” are referred to, nor is resurrection in view. It is ordinary mortals, still in the flesh, who are thus brought to judgment. Those who have maltreated the Jews are thus sentenced: “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”. “These shall go away in to everlasting punishment; but the righteous unto life eternal.”

Where that fire is we are not told; it may have a connection with Isa. 34:9,10,

which foretells “everlasting fire” in the land of Edom, set ablaze at the Second Advent. But in any case there is no possibility of human beings living there for more than a few minutes. The punishment is “age-lasting”; those who suffer it will come up again at the judgment of the Great White Throne to hear their final destiny; they will not be in torment meantime; they will be dead. “Everlasting fire” is the means of inflicting capital punishment.

As to “the devil and his angels” we are not told much about them: Satan will be cast into “the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:10) after the Millennium: but later, in the new heavens and the new earth “there will be no more pain,” and we must conclude that the lake of fire and all therein are utterly abolished to all eternity.

THE UNDYING WORM

These considerations naturally lead to Mark 9:42-48, “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 Gehenna, “into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” No such thing was ever uttered by Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles: these words were spoken by Him Who said, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel.” The whole passage is illuminated by reference to Jeremiah 7:31,32: “And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire: which I commanded them not, neither came it to My heart.” (How could eternal fiery torment, then, be inflicted by One Who thus spoke?) “Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place. And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away.”

Here is “Gehenna,” “the Land of Hinnom”: it is immediately outside of Jerusalem. And that it will be so used immediately after the Lord’s Return when the saved Jews will “enter into life,” is vividly depicted in Isaiah 66:23,24, where

we find the very language the Lord: “And it shall come to pass, that ... shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.”

Here is the undying worm and the unquenchable fire; but they feed on **carcasses**, not on immortal, tormented souls. The Lord Jesus did not mention souls or spirits, but referred to those Jews who would be in and around Jerusalem in those dread days of trial immediately before His Advent; warning them to stand fast against all evil, and be among those who would see the glorious Millennial reign; with the alternative of finding their place among the carcasses in that awful valley. It is not the souls of the wicked that are undying and unquenchable; it is the worms and the fire, which have so much to consume that they continue their work for a very long time. If this refers to immortal souls then immortal spirit worms will be needed to feed on them; which reduces the idea to absurdity!

TORMENT WITH FIRE AND BRIMSTONE

In Rev. 14 there is a very dreadful warning. “And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the Beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he 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 for ever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the Beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name” (v. 9-11).

(1) The time is “The Day of the Lord” (Rev. 1:10); that short, terrible period of judgment immediately preceding the Lord’s Return (compare Isaiah 2:10-22 and Isaiah 13).

(2) A limited class is referred to - those who worship the Beast and his image and receive his mark.

(3) There is no mention of soul or spirit or of dead persons; these are human beings of flesh and blood.

(4) They are not said to be “cast into” fire and brimstone. The small word translated “with” is of wide application, and it could quite well be rendered “by fire and brimstone”: it might be showered upon them, causing them burns on skin and clothing, preventing sleep while the torment lasts.

The people concerned are Satan’s super loyalists. It may be they are those referred to in Isaiah 28:15, who boast that they have made a covenant with death and gravedom, so that “when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto” them. There are depths of Satanic powers in Black Magic. Fire walkers, through some strange power reposing in certain incantations, are able to walk barefooted over red-hot stones, and suffer no hurt. As the Gospel light wanes, the darkness of the Evil One increases. These things are becoming more and more opened up to the public. It may well be that those referred to in Rev. 14 have so practised these incantations (and a fire walker said if he practised them long enough he could be immune against fire for the rest of his life), that they reckon themselves immune to the worst that God can do; and this infliction of fire and brimstone is laid upon them until the immunity wears off and they feel the power of the judgment of he Lord.

In any case, there is no thought of immortal souls or undying spirits being tormented in hell fire here. It is human beings in flesh and blood. The duration of the worship of the Beast and his image cannot exceed three and a-half years at the most; and it may be that the words, “no rest day or night,” refer to successive relays of these image worshippers brought under torment, rather than the duration of the suffering of every individual.

“The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.” Isaiah 34 speaks of

the smoke of the fire of pitch and brimstone going up for ever. “For ever” implies a very long time, but not “never ending” At the very latest extreme, there will be introduced a new heaven and new earth, where there will be no more pain (Rev. 21:4); and it is unthinkable that God should carry over into that new universe a hell of fire with burning souls to suffer for all eternity There is neither justice nor common sense in such a thought. God’s dictum stands true: “The wicked shall perish; into smoke shall they consume away.” “He preserveth not the life of the wicked” (Job 36:6); “All the wicked will he destroy” (Psalm 145:20).

ETERNAL, OR AGE LASTING

Christians are often distressed at the thought that “eternal” does not necessarily imply “never-ending.” God is eternal; can He come to an end? Eternal life is promised us; can we not be sure of its endlessness? The Scripture uses terms suited to our finite comprehension. We cannot comprehend eternity past that had no beginning; or infinite space. If we stand on a hill top we scan the horizon; we cannot see beyond it, yet we know there is vast distance beyond. “Eternal” indicates the horizon of our comprehension, past or future. An interesting comment is found in 2 Samuel 7:16-19. God promised David “Thine house and Thy kingdom shall be established for ever,” David worshipped the Lord, saying, “Thou hast spoken of thy servant’s house **for a great while to come.**”

“The eternal God” will endure to the farthest point of our comprehension in eternity future. What then? He is also “incorruptible” (1 Tim. 1:17), and “immortal” (1 Tim. 6:16). These terms assure us of His unending Being. And what of ourselves? Will “eternal life” possibly end? Another term is also used, even these very two terms used of God Himself; God’s gift to mortal men, of everlasting life, will include “incorruptibility” and “immortality” (1 Cor. 15:53). These terms assure us of life that will never end. And when “the ages” and “the ages of the ages” have run their course, we still shall LIVE.

FURTHER SPECIAL PASSAGES

Paul in Paradise. Lifting our eyes upward to heavenly things we remember 2 Corinthians 12:1-4, where Paul speaks of “visions and revelations of the Lord.” “I knew a man in Christ above 14 years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth); such an one caught up to the third heaven ... into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”

- (1) There is no reference to soul or spirit.
- (2) There is no reference to the death state.
- (3) It is contrary to all Bible teaching about the human, soul or spirit to reckon that either could be consciously alive in Paradise apart from a body.
- (4) It is vain to argue that it was Paul’s soul or spirit which thus visited Paradise; for he himself says he did not know; so neither does anyone else.
- (5) He was caught away to the third heaven; that is the New Heaven and New Earth which are to be introduced after the judgment of the Great White Throne (Rev. 21); he saw a vision of things future, as John was carried away (Rev. 1:10).
- (6) He was in Paradise; now this word occurs 26 times in the Greek Old Testament; about half of these occurrences refer to the Garden of Eden; every one of them refers to a domain, with trees and flowers. Solomon said, “I made me gardens and Paradises” (Eccles. 2:5), as Eastern monarchs did. The word has nothing to do with dead people at all; it indicates a place of life and bliss. The Tree of Life was in the original Paradise, the Garden of Eden. It is last seen in Rev. 22:2, in the New Jerusalem. That is the Paradise of God, to which the Lord Jesus referred in Rev. 2:7, where the Tree of Life is. Paul was given to see the same vision as John saw.

(7) As to the manner in which the vision was conveyed, he could not tell (a) whether he saw it like a powerful dream within his own head, as Nebuchadnezzar saw the vision of the image in Daniel 2; or (b) whether he saw it with his physical eyes, as something outside of his body, as Daniel saw the “vision” of the angel (Dan. 10:4-8). Doubtless John and the other prophets could have voiced the same perplexity regarding many of their visions, only they have not so expressed themselves in writing. There is no thought of a separable soul or spirit here.

CHRIST AND THE DYING THIEF

This leads to the well-known saying of the Lord Jesus to the malefactor on the Cross (Luke 23:39-43). The poor man had said to the Lord, “Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom”; and the answer was, “Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.” When and where is the fulfilment of this promise?

(1) To take this to mean that the Lord and the man went together to Paradise that day is to contradict the rest of Scripture regarding the dead.

(2) The Lord that day went to “the heart of the earth” (Matt. 12:40).

(3) Paradise is certainly not there. The word “Paradise” is not a translation; it is practically the same in the Greek of the New Testament. It occurs 26 times in the Greek Old Testament, and never once refers to a place of the dead. The Lord went to Hades at death, not Paradise. “His soul was not left in Hades, neither did His flesh see corruption” (Acts 2:31).

(4) Paradise is not a compartment of Hades as sometimes taught. Such a thought is found in Greek pagan mythology; it is utterly foreign to the Word of God.

(5) Paradise means a domain with trees; it is frequently used of the Garden of Eden; it is once translated “forest”.

(6) The man asked for a place in the Kingdom. The Lord promised him just that; for “Paradise” is used twice to describe the glory of the coming Kingdom, in Isaiah 51:1,3: “Hearken unto Me, ye that follow after righteousness ... For the Lord shall comfort Zion ... He will make her wilderness like Paradise, and her desert like the Paradise of the Lord.”

(7) The term Paradise is also used in connection with the New Jerusalem. If the man ultimately receives an inheritance there, it will still be within the scope of the promise made to him.

(8) When Christ met Satan in the wilderness He quoted thrice from Deuteronomy (Luke 4:1-13). That Book contains 42 occurrences of a solemn assertion like that which the Lord used here; such as “The commandments which I command thee **this day.**”; “Judgments which I speak in your ears **this day.**”

(9) Our modern punctuation was not introduced until the 9th century.

(10) It is evident, from the considerations of the nature of soul and spirit, the state of the dead, of Hades and Paradise, and this form of solemn assertion, that what the Lord intended to convey to the malefactor was this: “Verily I say unto thee today, With Me thou shalt be in Paradise”; thus promising to this wicked man, who exercised such amazing faith in the Lord as King of the Jews (viewing the superscription over His head on the Cross), and in His resurrection, and confessing Him as Lord (Romans 10:9), a glorious resurrection to eternal life.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Perhaps the most redoubtable stronghold for the teaching of the immortality of the soul and the eternal torment of the wicked is the passage found in Luke 16:19-31, about the Rich Man and Lazarus. It is too long to quote here in full; the reader is requested to peruse it. The following brief elucidation will enable a right view to be secured:

(1) It is undoubtedly a parable; it is the last of a series of five parables, commencing at Luke 15:1, the first alone being so described. The fourth begins with the very same words as this one, “There was a certain rich man”; that is The Parable of the Unjust Steward. The five form a series: The lost Sheep; The Lost Piece of Silver; The Lost Son; The Lost Temporal Situation; The Lost Destiny.

(2) The context is important; “The Pharisees turned up their noses at Him” (Luke 16:14). Christ never appeased such conduct; He met it with more difficult words.

(3) If taken as a literal statement of fact (as it must be in order to teach that unsaved dead people go immediately into fiery torments), it contradicts all the Bible teaching about the death state, which is a sleep. Psalm 88 is a wonderful commentary on this passage. David said, “My life draweth nigh unto Sheol,” “the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps,” under God’s wrath; but strange to say, not in fire; or the writer could never say, even figuratively, “Thou hast afflicted me with all Thy **waves**”. Here is **water** connected with the wrath of God in Sheol!! And v.12 is notable “Shall Thy wonders be known in the dark? and Thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?” or “Thy faithfulness in destruction?” (v.11). But in this very passage in Luke 16 God’s faithfulness is distinctly declared in Hades; for Abraham is made to recommend the hearkening to Moses and the prophets as sufficient to warn against the fate of the Rich Man; and in Moses and the Prophets there is no warning at all of such a fate as this passage indicates, if taken literally. Deut. 32:22, with its reference to fire burning to Sheol beneath, is far too vague a passage to constitute a warning of so fearful a penalty as eternal conscious torment in hell.

(4) There is no mention of souls or spirits.

(5) Nothing is said about their respective moral or spiritual states, good or bad. It is not to be presumed that Lazarus was good (though he had “received evil things”) and the Rich Man bad (though he had received “good things”).

(6) Abraham himself was dead. “He died, and was gathered to his people” (Gen.

25:8). Now his people had been idolaters (Josh. 24:2), thus bearing out the Bible testimony that “They all go unto one place” at death, that is, to gravedom.

(7) If this passage is to be taken literally, then the dead festering corpse of Lazarus was laid by the angels on Abraham’s breast - a most ridiculous and disgusting gift! The Rich Man, however, died, and was buried; and is spoken of as being in Hades.

(8) Finding himself alive in Hades and tormented in flame, he had a very strong case against the righteousness of God, for in all the Scriptures God had never warned him of such a destiny, but had consistently revealed that “the wages of sin is death”: death inflicted by various means, it is true, many of them painful, but with the sleep of death ending all pain at last.

(9) Greek mythology depicted just such a place for the dead; a felicitous compartment for the approved; a place of torment for the disapproved: and Jewish tradition, which so often contradicted Scripture truth, had adopted this myth in place of the clear Scripture teaching that the dead are dead.

(10) It is evident that the significance of the passage must be found by reckoning it a parable; that significance need not be confined to one lesson only; there are probably several lessons.

(11) The Rich Man depicts the rich Pharisees, who scented to reckon that their riches constituted a visible mark of the favour of God, ensuring felicity in the life to come. The parable took up ironically the drapery of their tradition by which they had set aside God’s truth, to clear away the veil of this very tradition, that they might realise God’s way, that only those of clean hands and pure heart shall receive the blessing of the Lord (Psalm 21:1-5). Lazarus depicts the publicans and sinners (Luke 15:1) who, though full of spiritual sores by their sins (Isaiah 1:6), were listening to the Lord’s gracious call, “Come now and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow (Isaiah 1:18), and who were “going into the Kingdom of God,” before the religious rulers of Israel

(Matt. 21:3).

(12) Or the Rich Man may depict Israel, spiritually rich in possession of the oracles of God (Romans 9:1-5), and Lazarus may represent the Gentiles, like the Gentile woman (Matt. 15:21-28), picking the crumbs of blessing from beneath Israel's table. Israel "died" at the destruction of Jerusalem, and the nation has been in "torment" ever since: but the Gentiles were "laid in Abraham's bosom," becoming, through faith in Jesus Christ, "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

In any case, to take this passage as teaching soul-immortality and eternal torment is to ignore and run counter to the whole teaching of Scripture. In any case, the essence of the passage was a warning to evil-minded Pharisees of a coming complete reversal of conditions, entirely unexpected by them because they had unbelieving minds and hearts towards God's Word and towards His Son.

OTHER PASSAGES

Some brief remarks on a few more passages must bring this treatise to a close though many other interesting portions remain unmentioned.

"He led captivity captive" (Eph. 4:8). From this it is alleged that when Christ ascended He emptied the Paradise compartment of Hades of all the Old Testament saints and took them to heaven. The passage can mean no such thing, for ten days after the Ascension, Peter in the power of the Holy Spirit distinctly said that David was still in his grave, and was not ascended into the heavens (Acts 2:29-34 and 13:34-37). This saying probably refers to the Lord's triumph over the invisible hosts of darkness; the principalities and powers which He "spoiled" at the Cross and of whom He made an open show (Col. 2:15), in a triumphal procession in the skies, unseen by mortal sight. The quotation comes from Psalm 68:17-20, which refers to angelic chariots, and the whole scene may be hinted at in Psalm 24:7-10, in the entry of the King of Glory through the everlasting doors of heaven.

The Dead speak to the Dead (Isaiah 14:9,10). Here dead kings are represented as addressing another dead king newly come to his end. Here seems to be a direct conflict of teaching. “The dead know not anything,” said Solomon (Ecc. 9:5); the dead talk to one another, says Isaiah. Which is right? The whole tenor of Scripture, already recounted, shows that the dead are unconscious in death. Isaiah therefore speaks figuratively here, as he did also in verse 8, when he represents **fir trees** talking! Nobody need be deceived; it is a perfectly legitimate rise of language. Natural observation shows that firs and cedars cannot talk; Scripture revelation shows that dead people cannot talk either! But this vivid figurative language powerfully emphasizes the lessons conveyed.

This forms a precedent for the conversation in Hades between the Rich Man and Lazarus already considered. Ezekiel 32:21 is thus also explained: “The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of Sheol.”

Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-8). Elijah did not die; he went up in a whirlwind into heaven (2 Kings 2:11); but Moses actually died, and God buried him (Deut. 34:5,6). Peter says he was an “eyewitness” of the scene (2 Pet 1:16), which must therefore have been actual and not visionary. Moses must therefore have been raised for that occasion. This is probably the reason behind the altercation between Michael and Satan (Jude 9), “disputing about the body of Moses.” Michael is found connected with resurrection, in Daniel 12:1,2. Moses must have returned to the death state, like others temporarily resurrected; for the Lord Jesus is the firstfruits of resurrection to incorruptible life (1 Cor 15:20, Acts 26:23). There is therefore no thought of a dead soul or spirit appearing without a body.

A few other texts may be very briefly mentioned:

2 Chron. 21:12, “a writing from Elijah the prophet.” Where Elijah then was we do not know; at any rate he was not a bodiless soul or spirit, and the writing may have been prophetically prepared before Elijah left the earth, after the manner of the letters to the Seven Churches in Asia, written 1900 years ago and still

awaiting the establishment of those Churches in “The Day of the Lord,” and even referring to one of the members by name (Rev. 2:13).

Isaiah 57:2 seems to speak of the dead walking in his uprightness.” The Revised Version makes h clear; it is those who, while alive, walked in uprightness, who enter into peace, or “depart in peace.”

Jeremiah 51:39 seems to indicate that some will never be raised from the dead at all; but the reference to “a perpetual sleep” simply indicates the infliction of death in their drunken orgies, from which (unlike a drunken slumber) they will not awake.

Daniel 12:2: Some shall be raised “to shame and everlasting contempt.” The shame will he experienced by those raised indeed; but the “everlasting contempt” is a state of mind exercised by others towards them, not necessarily requiring the eternal existence of those contemned.

Lev. 22:11. “If the priest buy any soul with his money” - he does not buy a ghost! “He shall eat of it” - it is an animal for food that is meant.

Psalms 55:15. “Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell.” This simply means, “Let them go down alive into the death state. An actual instance of this can be read in Numbers 16:33, where the earth opened and Korah and others were swallowed up alive - the earth closing up again immediately. The idea of hell torment is not in view at all.

Ezekiel 13:18-20. Women hunting souls! A very eerie business, if the soul is a ghostly phantom! “The hunting of souls” is simply a powerful reference to ensnaring people with div nations, to lull them into a false sense of peace and security with God, when in fact their sins were such as to provoke God to destroy them. This is a terrible characteristic of Spiritualism. “Will ye save the souls alive?” means, “Are you able to give them continuing life when I determine that they shall die?” The primary meaning of hunting souls” is found in 1 Samuel

24:11: Thou huntest my soul to take it,” said David to Saul. Saul did not try to get a phantom part of David put into a ghostly cage; he was hunting David to kill him.

Matthew 16:18. “The gates of hell shall not prevail against” the Church. This gives the impression that the devil and his angels shall not prevail against the Christian faith. That is undoubtedly true, but is not the truth indicated here. They are not in hell, but are free in the heavenly places! (Eph. 6:12, Rev. 12:7-12). The meaning is that death shall not triumph over the members of the Church because a glorious resurrection will be their portion. This also throws light upon ...

Matthew 10:28. “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.” This apparently contradicts Joshua 11:11, where “souls” were smitten and utterly destroyed. The Lord’s intention, however, is clear, that those who lost their lives for the cause of Christ will be raised again to immortality and glory, in a resurrection which all their enemies can not prevent. “Fear Him Which is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.” God can impose an irrevocable destruction, which no existing power can reverse. But it is destruction, not preservation in torments, which is to be feared, and it is more awful, for it is just and reasonable.

Matthew 6:25. “Take no thought for your soul, what ye shall eat.” The soul is the conscious sense of life; “nor for your body, what ye shall put on.” This passage has curious bearing upon ...

Revelation 6:9-11. “The souls under the altar.” The scene appears to be in heaven. The word “souls” must be here used of “human beings”; a reference which can be better appreciated if we remember that John’s vision of heavenly things and heavenly beings unveiled innumerable “spirits” (Rev. 5:11). He himself was the only “soul” there, and he now beheld with peculiar interest human beings like himself seen there for the first time in the whole panorama being unfolded before him. “And white robes were given unto every one of them.” Now if these were ghostly phantoms, how could they put on these white robes, unless they were

ghostly robes? The interested reader will find a remarkable commentary on this idea in the narrative of the visit of Aeneas to his father among the “shades” in Virgil’s “Aeneid.” The hero tried to clasp his ghostly father, only to find his arms meeting in mid air, having clasped nothing! Surely that is not the state of the blessed which God has in view for His redeemed. To reach heaven from the death state they must have been resurrected; and this agrees with Rev. 20:4,5, “The souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus ... They lived and reigned with Christ 1000 years. This is the first resurrection.”

1 Peter 1:9. “Receiving the end of your Faith, even the salvation of your souls.” This constitutes “a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”; and the salvation is “ready to be revealed in the last time,” which is to be brought” at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” It has nothing to do with souls floating away to heaven when the body dies. It agrees with 1 Cor. 15:51-58.

2 Kings 2:15. The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha.” Elisha was not burdened with Elijah’s ghost; but God infused into Elisha’s nature the spiritual power which had actuated the older prophet, in aggressive boldness for the things of God.

Hebrews 12:23. “The spirits of just men made perfect.” There are multitudes of “just men” alive now; believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, justified by faith in His blood, reckoned “just” or righteous by God; whose “spirits” are not by any means “perfect”; their dispositions and failings need much “perfecting” before they are fit for the eternal state, like the place in the Heavenly Jerusalem alongside of “an innumerable company of angels” of which the verse speaks. There, nothing that defiles shall have any place (Rev. 21:27). The time referred to is future, as Hebrews 11:40 makes clear: “God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect”. The spirits of many of the just men of Hebrews 11 certainly needed perfecting before being fit for the New Jerusalem; but entry thereto will be by resurrection, in one great company, at the same time of the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Psalm 31:5. Into Thine hand I commit my spirit.” “The comments on the death of Stephen already made will elucidate this passage.

1 Timothy 6:16. “The King of kings and Lord of lords, Who only hath immortality.” This is conclusive. Anyone claiming to possess immortality in any form must prove that he is King of kings and Lord of lords! Immortality is a gift to be received from him on His terms. But this passage impinges upon ...

Luke 20:36. “Neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels” This seems to imply that angels cannot die, and are therefore immortal. Matthew 22:30, however shows that equality with angels refers to the matter of marriage, for both “the sons of the resurrection” and the angels are “Sons of God” (RV. and Job 38:7). Probably the phrase “neither can they die any more” should be read as if in brackets, thus limiting this expression to resurrected human beings only.

2 Timothy 1:10, “Jesus Christ, Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.” This means that incorruptible life is revealed through the Gospel; it is not an inherent possession of any human being. And the Lord Jesus is a pattern of it; in Himself death is abolished; and all who trust in Him shall be like Him.

Romans 2:9. “Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.” Along with this read Matthew 13:42: “And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth,” Here is tribulation and anguish indeed, but it ends in death, when “soul and body” are destroyed. This is a sample (before the Millennium) of what the Lake of Fire will be like after the Millennium but then the final end is the second death; not eternal life in fiery torments. The “soul,” the whole sense life, will suffer; the tribulation and anguish, while it lasts.

Rev. 20:10. “The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” This is at the end of the Millennium; the beast and false prophet were cast into the fire 1000 years earlier. There is no word for “are”

in the Greek original; there is no verb there at all; it is left to be understood: and the grammatical requirement is that the previous verb be supplied here also, making it read: “where the beast and the false prophet were cast.” Daniel 7:11 clearly states that: “the beast was slain” - evidently by being cast alive into the fiery lake.

The beast and false prophet are mentioned in Rev. 13; they are special beings, semi-super-human, or at least specially devil-energised beyond anything the world has ever known before. Whatever mystery attaches to the verse, their fate is not to be interpreted as the fate of all the unsaved. Nor does “for ever and ever” indicate an interminable destiny. Literally it is “for the ages of the ages”; and “ages” can have an end; so that when in the new heavens and new earth there is “no more pain,” we must conclude that this torment has ceased to be, and those tormented have been put out of existence.

Deut. 32:22. “Fire ... shall burn unto the lowest hell.” This passage has already been mentioned; it does not indicate that “hell” has fiery torments at all. The expression is simply “unto Sheol beneath.” The whole chapter is a warning of God’s wrath upon Israel for their sinfulness; its terms are limited to that nation and to Israel’s land, Palestine (for “the earth” can well be translated “the land,” one particular country). The whole context has to do with the infliction of judgments upon human beings in flesh and blood yet with the added warning that even death shall not avail to enable sinners to escape God’s just wrath. (See also Amos 9:1-5).

CONCLUSION

There has thus been reviewed in brief the evidence for the strong conviction that the human soul is not immortal, despite all current and ancient tradition and philosophy to the contrary. Let it once more be emphasised that in an issue so solemn, the **authority** upon which one's belief is reposed is of paramount importance. Theologians and philosophers, however learned and eminent and morally worthy, are no more equipped with inspired vision into the Unseen than ordinary human beings; scientific investigation can provide no evidence upon which to base a dependable conclusion; Spiritualism is so soaked in deceit that to trust its utterances is supreme folly. Nor are priests or "Fathers", bishops or canons, Popes or prelates, in possession of any more valid information. "Reincarnation" is a myth: "Rosicrucian" and other Eastern mysteries are but "will-o-the-wisps" leading their followers into bottomless bogs.

The writer of this book does not know of any of the world's religions, ancient or modern, great or obscure, which does not absolutely depend for its very existence upon man having in himself the ability to survive death in some form, Not one of them can point to a Supreme Authority who impressively undertakes to bring forth from the death state human beings who have died without life in themselves. Take away that belief and such religious systems collapse.

The One True and Living God alone, who has given us the Bible as His sole and complete revelation, pledges His omnipotence that it shall be done; and, that the ability to live for ever remains His gift, to be granted to human beings on His conditions, which require faith, in the Lord Jesus Christ His Son as Saviour from sin through His blood shed on the Cross. The Word of the Living God, the Bible, is our sole and sufficient Authority. He Who created the world and all that is in it, knows our frame - body, soul, and spirit - and what happens when death comes, and what future awaits human beings: and that Word has been carefully studied for the conclusions herein presented.

By these conclusions, made with utmost endeavour towards accuracy, the Gospel is rid of that dread burden which has deeply troubled many Godly men and women, and has given many scoffers a bludgeon wherewith to belabour the Christian Faith - the doctrine of the eternal conscious torment of the unsaved.

The Gospel's straightforward simplicity - the divine Gift of the ability to exist for ever (in contrast with the Second Death, from which no resurrection is ever indicated), to which is added perfect physique and glory, honour, and gladness incorruptible to all eternity - commends itself to every human soul - it is Divine.

This study shall not have been in vain if the reader is enabled to view afresh "God's Gift of Everlasting Life"; to see its plan and procedure; to understand his own helplessness in sin and death: to see in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, voluntarily yielding His life on the Cross and rising again from the death state, a Saviour from sin by redemption through His blood; the Giver of Life, not merely the Bestower of Happiness added to a life inherently possessed. The supreme importance of heeding the Gospel while this life lasts will therefore be apparent. And if, added to these results, the reader obtains a clear conviction that the end of the unsaved is death, and not eternal torment in never-ending fire; that the death state is a sleep, so that the doctrines and practices of Spiritualism, and the teaching of Purgatory, are false - then the labour of writing this treatise will be sufficiently rewarded.