

# EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT

**AN APPEAL DIRECT TO THE WORD**

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## **PREFACE**

The present day is called the Day of Enlightenment, and it is indeed a time of great and increasing knowledge on many subjects, the Holy Scriptures included. That this should be so is not to be wondered at, for the Prophet was caused by the Holy Spirit to predict the circumstances which surround the present generation (Daniel 12: 4,9-10).

But, notwithstanding the great increase of knowledge, there is still much misunderstanding of very important subjects, 'Everlasting Punishment' being one of them. Largely on account of misunderstanding this subject, the loving character of the Heavenly Father is often grievously misrepresented by those who would not for a moment willingly do so. The same misunderstanding causes Christians to be perplexed and placed at a disadvantage, while infidels grow bolder and more scornful, and sceptics become confirmed scoffers.

Let it be clearly seen from the Scriptures that 'Everlasting Punishment', mentioned in the Bible as the penalty for wilful sin under enlightenment, is not that 'eternal torment' which has filled the minds of so many Christians, and a new song will be put into their mouths, even the loving kindness of our God, while the seat of the scornful will be overturned.

Should these pages be permitted, under divine blessing, to bear some small part in making clear the truth on this important subject, and so of increasing love and reverence for God, their object will be attained. With prayers that it may be so, this 'Appeal direct to the Word' is sent forth.

Melbourne, January, 1911. E. C. and R. B. HENNINGS.

## **PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION**

In the four years since the first edition of this 'Appeal direct to the Word' was issued over fifteen thousand copies have been circulated. This has been done largely by recommendation from one to another. Many have written to express their thankfulness to God for having through this means been delivered from the God-dishonouring tradition of eternal torment, for they have been led to see that the Bible does not teach it. So long as they thought it was in the Bible, they felt compelled to believe it, and feared to do wrong by opposing it. But now they are anxious to help others to the same enlightenment.

The first edition has been revised, and new matter has been added. We trust that enough has been said on each point to enable the reader to find additional corroborative Scripture references, and by the aid of the Holy Spirit to divide the Word of truth rightly - distinguishing between prophecy and fulfilment, history and doctrine, plain statement and allegory or parable, and placing each in its proper age and dispensation.

That the second edition may be used of the Lord to even a greater extent than was the first, is the hope and prayer of

THE AUTHORS. Melbourne, July 1, 1915.

## Punishment for Sin Essential

That sin and crime deserve punishment is a truism recognised in all forms of government among men, from the lowest to the highest. There may be differences of opinion as to what constitutes a misdemeanour or a crime, and as to the nature and severity of the punishment to be inflicted, but it is agreed that the necessity for the protection of life and property lays upon all in authority the obligation of punishing offences against society, whether the social arrangements be primitive or complex. In extreme cases in uncivilised lands, the infliction of the death penalty is often accompanied or preceded by cruel tortures, but in civilised lands it is regarded as sufficient to rid society of undesirable characters in as painless a manner, and with as little admixture of vindictiveness, as possible.

All students of Scripture recognise that true wisdom among men comes from God. He it was who first pronounced the death penalty for infraction of His command (Genesis 2:17; 3:19,22-24), and who has enforced its execution upon our race for thousands of years (Romans 5:12). He it is who announces that His determination is to have ultimately a clean universe by the destruction of the wilfully wicked; and not only so, but that every secret thought and pernicious word and act shall be brought into judgment. And He it was who prepared for the children of Israel under Moses a code embodying the inflexible *"life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth"* (Deuteronomy 19:21; see also Matthew 5:38), the justice of which is recognised by all to this day.

The difficulties of the student in connection with this subject are many. On the one hand he admits that God has the right to require obedience of all His creatures, and that disobedience deserves punishment; but on the other hand his whole nature revolts against the popular teaching that the God of love and mercy and goodness has prepared a place in which the vast majority of our race are to be subjected to unspeakable torture throughout an infinite eternity, without one moment's mitigation of the severity of their pains. The pity of it is that, while the Scriptures contain not one word of support for such a theory, the Bible is made the peg upon which to hang the awful teaching; and everyone who dares so much as to question the theory is intimidated by threats of finding himself in the midst of that torment when his life on earth is ended. Would that the truth could be known, that God's holy character might be cleared of this unwarranted aspersion, and that His glorious purpose of love and mercy might be fully realised and rejoiced in by all His people!

### Three Alternatives are Open

to the one who questions the prevailing teaching, that eternal torment awaits all the unsaved. The first, which is being adopted by many, is to reject the Bible altogether, because it is supposed to teach a doctrine to their minds more monstrous than they would care to attribute to a fiend. The second, which other large numbers have adopted, is to assert that as the Bible teaches it, they must believe it, and therefore they refuse to discuss the matter, or even to consider the evidence that the Bible itself can be explained and understood more satisfactorily without that doctrine. The third, and by far the best method, is to search the Scriptures themselves, to compare Scripture with Scripture, and to discover, if possible, just what the Bible does say on Life, Death, Punishment, and related subjects.

The first alternative involves too hasty a disposal of the whole question, while the second is the method of the ostrich, which hides its head rather than face the situation. The third is the only course worthy of a sincere inquirer after the truth, who is willing that God be proved true though thereby every human theory be shown to be false. God's character cannot be worse than that of the most kind-hearted and just of His children; the authority of His Word cannot be injured by candid investigation of its parables, symbols and prophecies, as well as its threats and promises, and its moral teaching; God's purposes cannot be altered by attaching to His Word meanings He never intended, and widely circulating the same. Nor will indolence or fear be sufficient excuse for failure (on the part of His children with Bibles in their hands) to learn and to proclaim the truth on so important a subject. No task can be fraught with more blessing than prayerful, patient study of that Word, which is *"able to make thee wise unto salvation"* (2 Timothy 3:15), and which is sufficient that the man of God be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Part of the blessing that comes from patient study is the realisation that the teaching of eternal torment is not to be found in the Bible. The Parable of the Rich man and Lazarus is commonly supposed to teach everlasting misery for the unsaved, but we believe that candid consideration of all non-parabolic and non-symbolic statements concerning future punishment will assist to an understanding of it and of all other passages of a parabolic or figurative character.

Because the parable begins, *"There was a certain rich man"* and *"there was a certain beggar"* (Luke 16:19-20), it is considered by some to mean that two such men really existed, and that the account in Luke 16 describes their actual experience after death. But such a view overlooks the fact that it was our Lord's custom to relate His parables as though they were accounts of actual occurrences; *"a certain rich man"* (Luke 16:1)", *"a certain beggar"* (Luke 16:20), *"a certain priest"*

(Luke 10:31), "*a certain Samaritan*" (Luke 10:33) and so on. The same method is pursued in fables, which are written as though the conversations between the animals involved had actually taken place; whereas everyone knows that both the action and the conversation of the tale are a device to point a moral.

This is not said in order to put our Lord's parables on a par with fables, but merely to indicate that a parable is a story told to illustrate a spiritual truth, and that the more circumstantial the story the more impressive the truth.

### **The Gospel is Good Tidings**

To any who have read thus far, and who still feel timid about investigating the subject of Future Punishment, we would say, "*Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*" (Luke 2:10). Do not let anyone persuade you that your craving for good tidings of God's mercy and love towards His creatures is an evil craving to be put away; but rather thank God that your mind is already sufficiently enlightened and your heart sufficiently enlarged to enable you to apprehend that much of God's true character; and thank God that you have sufficient confidence in Him to believe that He will reveal to you His loving purposes if you go about learning them in the right way. And pray, also, that His Holy Spirit may fill your heart to overflowing with the same beneficent love toward the weak and erring that He has shown towards you, so that you may never again misrepresent Him or frighten them with the false theories of the dark ages.

How did the teaching of eternal torment originate? Largely through the introduction of Grecian philosophies into Christianity in the early centuries of our age. Symbols and Parables, instead of being interpreted by such Biblical methods as would bring out the Truth, were taken literally in order to support the pagan mythology incorporated by apostate bishops and priests. For illustration of Old and New Testament use of symbols compare Jeremiah 11:4 with Matthew 3:12; 13:42, and see the explanation in Bible Talks for Heart and Mind.

To disbelieve the tradition of men concerning the eternal torment of the vast majority of our race does not necessarily involve one in Universalism, or Unitarianism, or other unscriptural philosophies; nor does it require one to assert that an unbeliever may live as indulgently as he please, and still enter heaven on equal footing with the believer. To discard this error, attached by men to the Gospel, is rather to reveal the Gospel in its original form of "*good tidings*", and to enable one to study with unbiased mind the Lord's own explanations as to what "*good tidings*" means. Such passages as denote grades of punishment according to the degree of light sinned against can be given due weight (Matthew 11:22,24; 12:31-32; Hebrews 2:3), as well as those which declare the extreme penalty for wilful sin after full knowledge (Hebrews 6:4-8; 1 John 5:16; Revelation 21:8).

The Gospel is thus found to be good tidings of a Saviour Whose mission is to deliver His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21; Luke 2:11), not to encourage or excuse them in sin. In order that they may receive this deliverance, and the eternal life which He has in His power to bestow, it is necessary for them to believe on Him, and to obey Him in whatsoever He shall say unto them (Acts 3:19-23; Hebrews 5:8-9). There is *"none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12).

The Gospel furthermore declares that His Kingdom is to be established under the whole heaven (Daniel 2:44; 7:27), that the eternal destiny of each individual member of our race is not a matter of chance but of the Lord's deep concern, that having all power in heaven and on earth He will see to it that each member of the race for which He died shall have the fullest opportunity for coming to the knowledge of the truth, either in this life or in the next (1 Timothy 2:4-7), that certain limited punishments are inflicted for correction, and that the extreme penalty, symbolised by *"the lake of fire"* (Revelation 21:1-8), is pronounced only against the perversely rebellious and disobedient.

### **The Effect of the Truth**

It is thought by some that to publish abroad the fact that the Bible does not teach eternal torment will encourage sinners to greater excesses, and deprive Christians of a necessary stimulus to faithfulness. In regard to the latter, it may be said that love to God, gratitude for the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and anticipation of the joys of the Kingdom, are the acceptable motives for service, not fear of punishment. As to unbelievers, for many centuries the effort has been made to frighten them into a profession of one form or another of Christianity, by threats of future woe, with very poor results. The notion that God purposes to torment His creatures, far from having a deterrent effect upon the evil natures of men, has had the very reverse, inclining some to practise now upon their fellow-men the cruelties which they are told await them after death; while others cultivate the disposition of vindictiveness, and still others say that if such a fate awaits them they will enjoy to the utmost the pleasures of the present.

Our Lord prayed that His disciples might be sanctified by the truth. Such an error as eternal torment cannot sanctify the hearts and minds of kind-hearted, reasonable beings. If some of those who hold it are sanctified, it is by virtue of the truth held on other subjects, rather than by reason of the error held on this; for the more of the mind of Christ they receive through the study of the divine Word, the meditation upon His virtues, and the practice of holiness, the more will they be inclined to hope and believe that God's purposes will prove to be better than their fears. Many are ashamed of the teaching, and prefer not to refer to it. The right and the only satisfactory way is to see that it is not in the Scriptures, and openly to repudiate it, taking a firm stand for the Truth revealed by the Gospel of Christ, as the Apostle said;

*"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. FOR THEREIN IS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED ..."* (Romans 1:16-17).

The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel, is the Apostle's statement. And so it is. The Gospel discloses a just penalty for the sin committed in Eden; just penalties for individual transgressions arising out of that original transgression, and a just penalty for wilful sin against light and knowledge. The Gospel also provides a way by which God can be just, and yet the justifier of Him who believes in Jesus (Romans 5:12; Hebrews 2:2-3; Romans 3:26).

## The Old Testament on Punishment

The first mention of punishment in the Old Testament is that pronounced in Eden; *"in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"* (Genesis 2:17). This penalty was duly inflicted after the transgression; *"for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"* (Genesis 3:19).

As a consequence of that penalty, not only did our first parents die, but all their posterity since have died, are dying at the present time, and will continue to die until God intervenes, as He has promised to do. 'What is the state of the dead?' is therefore a question in which every person is interested, not from idle curiosity, but because, having been created reasoning and inquiring beings, the desire to know what follows departure from this life is as legitimate as desire for knowledge on other subjects. And God, who made man what he is, has given in His Word the information necessary to satisfy that desire.

The only source from which reliable information as to the state of the dead can be obtained is the Bible. And the original manuscripts, or even ancient copies, not being accessible to the average inquirer, he must gain his knowledge either from Hebrew and Greek versions in use in the universities and theological schools, or from translations. Of the latter the King James' Version is in common use in English-speaking countries, and is a remarkably good translation. But the Revised Version and other modern translations throw light on a number of passages by a more exact rendering of the original; hence are useful for comparison.

### Gathered to His People

In considering the nature of the penalty pronounced in Eden, we have not only the statements already quoted, to help us, but also the comments made by Moses (who wrote the first five books of the Bible) in connection with recorded deaths. Moses, being specially inspired by the Holy Spirit, would be certain to tell the truth, as would the other prophets of the Old Testament and the Apostles of the New Testament. Of Adam and his descendants, including righteous Noah, it is simply stated that they lived so many years, and then *"died"* (Genesis 5). Of Enoch it is said, all his days were 365 years, and he *"was not"* (Genesis 5:23-24). Of Abraham, Isaac, and others we read;

*"Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people"* (Genesis 25:8).

*"And Ishmael ... gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people" (Genesis 25:17).*

*"And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him" (Genesis 35:29).*

Jacob expected to go to *"the grave"* (*sheol*), to meet his son Joseph, whom he supposed to be dead (Genesis 37:35). As he neared the end of his life he said; *"I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers"* (Genesis 49:29). *"And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people"* (Genesis 49:33).

By comparing the passages concerning Jacob's expectations and his death, we find that *"gathered to his people"*, *"gathered to his fathers"*, and to go to *"the grave"* [Hebrew *sheol*] are different expressions meaning the same thing; namely, that he died.

*"Gave up the ghost"* is in the Hebrew a primitive root meaning 'breathed out', and refers to the last expiration. The use of the word *"ghost"* is entirely unwarranted, as no corresponding word occurs in the Hebrew.

The Lord sent a message to Josiah, king of Judah, *"I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave"* [Hebrew, sepulchre, or tomb] *in peace"* (2 Chronicles 34:28). Here again, *"gather thee to thy fathers"* and *"gathered to thy grave"* are two expressions signifying practically the same thing, though in this instance the individual grave or tomb is referred to. All the fathers were in the grave; and to be gathered to the fathers would mean to be gathered to the grave. David the good king and Ahab the wicked king, both *"slept"* with their *"fathers"* (1 Kings 2:10; 22:40). Men of faith and men without faith, kings and their subjects, all went to the same place: namely, to the grave, the condition of death. And the reason for this was that the penalty pronounced in Eden was being executed upon all.

It should be noted that in no reference to the death of Bible characters, whether good or bad, is the thought expressed that they have gone down to a place of torment, or conscious suffering of any sort. Even the word *"hell"*, as used in the Bible, has not that meaning, as we shall see by looking at every text in which it occurs. Thus, given a full consideration of the subject, it will be seen that a terrible nightmare has been foisted upon and has deceived many devout Christians, whereby they have been caused grievously to misrepresent the loving character and designs of our gracious heavenly Father. As this, becomes clear to the reader, he will gladly shake off the fetters of a horrible superstition, and will rejoice in the vindication of the divine character of love and goodness.

### Definition of the Words

In the Old Testament the word "*hell*" is a translation of the Hebrew word *Sheol*. In the New Testament "*hell*" is used to translate three different Greek words: *Hades*, *Gehenna*, and *Tartaroo*. *Hades* is the Greek word used in the New Testament to translate the Hebrew word *Sheol*. This is strikingly shown in Acts 2:27,31, "*Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hades*", "that his soul was not left in *hades*"; verse 27 being a quotation from Psalm 16:10, "*Thou wilt not leave my soul in sheol*" and verse 31 the Apostolic explanation of the meaning of the Psalm. *Sheol* and *Hades* both mean concealed, hidden, or covered, and there is nothing in either word to indicate that pain is being suffered, or pleasure enjoyed, or sensation of any kind experienced. "*The grave*", meaning usually the state of death, but sometimes an individual tomb, is the English equivalent for *Sheol* and *Hades*.

Unfortunately, the KJV translators did not adopt a uniform translation for these important words. They translated *Sheol*, in the Old Testament, "*grave*" 31 times, "*hell*" 31 times, "*pit*" 3 times, and they translated *Hades*, in the New Testament, "*grave*" once, "*hell*" 10 times, these being the total number of occurrences of the words *Sheol* and *Hades* in the Bible. The English words "*pit*" and "*grave*" need no comment, except that when "*grave*" is used as a translation of *Sheol* or *Hades*, it is nearly always to be understood in the general sense above mentioned; that is, the 'state of death'.

Concerning the word 'hell', it is worthy of note that it did not always have the fearful meaning which now attaches to it. 'Hell' is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *helan*, meaning to cover, or conceal. Some centuries ago 'hell' meant concealed, hidden, or covered, and it was then an excellent equivalent for *Sheol* and *Hades*. In those days the word 'hell' was in common use in England in the following manner. To 'hell' a house meant to put a roof on it; that is, to cover it. The farmer 'helled' his turnips, and so on; that is, he buried them in a pit, as was then the custom, in order to protect the vegetables, from the winter frost. But the builder did not eternally torment the house, nor did the farmer subject the turnips to endless misery. They merely covered or concealed them. The word 'helmet', a covering for the head, is also derived from the Anglo-Saxon *helan*. These remarks about the meaning of the word 'hell' should be verified by consulting any unabridged dictionary of the English language. It will then be seen that this word has experienced a change of meaning, and that it did not always convey the idea which a false theology has succeeded in attaching to it.

It may be remarked, in passing, that the word 'hell' is not the only English word which is now used with a different meaning from that which originally belonged to it. The unabridged dictionaries reveal obsolete meanings to many words; that is, meanings formerly in use, but now unused, and, in many instances, forgotten. The word "*prevent*" in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 has, for this reason, been replaced by "*precede*" in the Revised Version, but in the days of King James 'prevent' was used with the meaning of 'go before' or 'precede'.

### **"Sheol" Translated "Grave"**

In the following 31 places the English word "grave" is used to translate *Sheol*. Read them carefully, and the comments following, and see how evident it is that *Sheol* means the state of the dead, and how wrong any other definition would be.

#### **Jacob in "Sheol"**

*"He [Jacob] refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave [sheol] unto my son [Joseph] mourning" (Genesis 37:35).*

*"And he [Jacob] said, My son [Benjamin] shall not go down with you; for his brother [Joseph] is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave [sheol]" (Genesis 42:38).*

*"Ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave [sheol]" (Genesis 44:29).*

*"and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave [sheol]." (Genesis 44:31).*

No one believes that Jacob supposed his son Joseph to be in a condition of eternal torment, or that Jacob expected to go down to a similar condition. Yet it was recognised that Jacob would go down to *Sheol*, whither he supposed Joseph had preceded him. The above four texts, being the first occurrences of the word *Sheol* in the Bible, give excellent evidence that *Sheol* does not mean a place of torment; it means simply the death state.

#### **Bringing Up from "Sheol"**

*"The Lord killeth, and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave [sheol], and bringeth up" (1 Samuel 2:6).*

The latter part of this verse should provide food for thought and comfort; because those who believe that *Sheol* means a place of eternal torment see no prospect of "bringing up" any who go down there.

#### **Going to "Sheol" in Peace**

*"Let not his [Joab's] hoar head go down to the grave [sheol] in peace" (1 Kings 2:6).*

*"His [Joab's] hoar head bring thou down to the grave [sheol] with blood" (1 Kings 2:9).*

Supposing *Sheol*, here translated "grave", to mean a place of eternal torture, the first of these verses would need to be read. 'Let not his (Joab's) hoar head go down to eternal torture in peace'. How unscriptural, absurd, and positively ridiculous the theory of eternal torture is, can be realised by reading some of these texts in the manner that the theory would require; viz., substituting the words, 'eternal torture', for each occurrence of the words, "the grave," "the pit," and "hell."

### **Consumed Like a Cloud**

*"As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave [sheol] shall come up no more" (Job 7:9).*

Job was not contravening- the hope-of the resurrection, which is taught elsewhere in his book (Job 14:10-15), he was merely saying that whoever goes into death has departed from present scenes and activities. A dead person does not travel backwards and forwards between earth and elsewhere. The spiritualists believe so, but the-Bible, does not teach it.

### **Job Prays to be Hidden from Wrath in "Sheol"**

*"O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave [sheol], that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past" (Job 14:13).*

Evidently Job did not think of *Sheol* as a place of unspeakable torments, for he prayed that he might be hidden there from the wrath of God. Job was already-tormented with boils. Would he pray to be taken to something worse?

### **Consumed as Snow Waters**

*"If I wait, the grave [sheol] is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness" (Job 17:13).*

*"They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave [sheol]" (Job 21:13).*

*"Drought and heat consume the snow waters: so doth the grave [sheol] those which have sinned" (Job 24:19).*

Not only does *Sheol* consume the sinners, but as we have seen in the case of Jacob, and shall see again, it consumes the righteous as well.

### **No Remembrance in "Sheol"**

*"For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave [sheol] who shall give thee thanks?" (Psalm 6:5).*

Observe how *Sheol* is associated with 'death', in the manner usual in Hebrew poetry. The Psalmist desired that his life might be spared, because if he were dead, or in *Sheol*, he should not be able to give thanks to God.

*"O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave [sheol]: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit" (Psalm 30:3).*

Observe how the word "*pit*" is used as a corresponding term to *sheol*. In this instance "*pit*" is from the Hebrew word *bowr*.

### **"Sheol" is Silent**

*"Let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave [sheol]" (Psalm 31:17).*

*"Like sheep they are laid in the grave [sheol]; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave [sheol] from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave [sheol]: for he shall receive me. Selah" (Psalm 49:14-15).*

In the resurrection morning the upright shall have dominion over the masses of mankind, who will then be brought out of *Sheol*, in order that they may be instructed by the then ruling saints in the knowledge of the truth, and may, if obedient, be granted everlasting deliverance from *Sheol*.

### **No Work, Device, Knowledge, nor Wisdom in "Sheol"**

*"and my life draweth nigh unto the grave [sheol]" (Psalm 88:3).*

*"What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave [sheol]?" (Psalm 89:48).*

*"Let us swallow them up alive as the grave [sheol]; and whole, as those that go down into the pit [bo-wr]" (Proverbs 1:12).*

*"Four things say not, It is enough: The grave [sheol];... " (Proverbs 30:15-16).*

*"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is NO WORK, NOR DEVICE, NOR KNOWLEDGE, NOR WISDOM, IN THE GRAVE [SHEOL], WHITHER THOU GOEST" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).*

Notwithstanding the plain testimony of the Bible, a good many think there is a great deal of *work* and knowledge in *Sheol*, and that *Sheol* is filled with devices, contrived by diabolical wisdom to perpetuate and increase the sufferings of the hopeless wretches therein confined. How horrible! Why cannot they let God be true?

### **No Praise in "Sheol"**

*"For love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave [sheol]" (Song 8: 6).*

*"Thy pomp is brought down to the grave [sheol]" (Isaiah 14:11).*

*"I shall go to the gates of the grave [sheol]" (Isaiah 38:10).*

*"For the grave [sheol] cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee" (Isaiah 38:18).*

Death is strong, and *Sheol* is cruel, because they rob us of our loved ones, and we cannot call them back. In Isaiah 14:11 the destruction of the city of Babylon is foretold. Isaiah 38:18 shows that Hezekiah expected to go to *Sheol*.

## **The Fall of Assyria Foretold**

*"In the day when he went down to the grave [sheol] I caused a mourning" (Ezekiel 31:15).*

### **"Sheol" is to be Destroyed**

*"I will ransom them from the power of the grave [sheol]; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave [sheol], I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes" (Hosea 13:14).*

If *Sheol* be a place of eternal torment, who will be tormented after they are ransomed from the power of *Sheol*? And where will the eternal torment be when this is fulfilled; *"O Sheol, I will be thy DESTRUCTION"*? Repentance hid from God's eyes does not mean that God will spurn sinners who repent. It means that He will not repent or change from His determination to destroy *Sheol*.

*"Our bones are scattered at the grave's [sheol's] mouth" (Psalm 141:7).*

Above are all the places where *Sheol* is translated *"grave"* in the Old Testament. They show clearly that *Sheol* is not a place of flame made vocal with the shrieks of the damned. *Sheol* is the condition of death; it is dark, and silent.

### **"Sheol" Translated "Hell"**

In reading the following 31 texts the original significance of *"hell"* in the old English should be borne in mind, as well as the evident meaning of *Sheol*, as seen in the 31 places already examined.

*"For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell [sheol], and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains" (Deuteronomy 32:22).*

Taking verse 21, *"I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people"* in connection with this quotation, and noting the Apostle's application of it in Romans 10:19, it appears that in verse 22 the Lord's anger against the Jews is foretold. How this came upon them, and the completeness of the destruction it wrought, will be seen in considering the trouble that came upon the 'Rich Man' of the Parable (Luke 16:19-31).

*"The sorrows of hell [sheol] compassed me about; the snares of death prevented [preceded; literally, came to meet] me" (2 Samuel 22:6; Psalm 18:50).*

Death and *Sheol* are here pictured as enemies which sought David's life.

### **"Sheol" is Destruction, not Torment**

*"It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell [sheol]; what canst thou know?" (Job 11:8).*

*"Hell [sheol] is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering" (Job 26:6).*

Observe how in this last verse *"hell"* and *"destruction"* are shown to be identical. If *"hell"* be *"destruction"*, it is not torment.

### **The Wicked Turned Back to "Sheol"**

*"The wicked shall be turned [literally, turned back] into hell [sheol]" (Psalm 9:17).*

Consideration of Psalms 9 and 10, which in some versions are joined so as to make one Psalm, seems to indicate that the Psalmist was not here referring to the future punishment of the wicked, but to the deliverance, wrought by the Lord, from the oppressors, who came against the Psalmist from nowhere and returned again to obscurity. It is quite significant that in the elaboration of this thought the oppressor is called *"the man of [literally, "from"] the earth"* (Psalm 10:18).

### **Christ's Soul Not Left in "Sheol"**

*"For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [sheol]; (Psalm 16:10).*

A prophecy concerning Jesus. Does anyone suppose that He went to be tormented? No! The Bible teaches that He died, and that God raised Him from the dead (Acts 2:27-32; 3:15; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

### **Let Them go Down Quick into "Sheol"**

*"Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell [sheol]" (Psalm 55:15).*

It should be noted that any Christian who loves his enemies could not pray for even the worst of them that they might *"go down quick"* into eternal torment. Thus is it shown again that *"hell"* is the grave, the condition of death.

### **Delivered from "Sheol"**

*"and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell [sheol]" (Psalm 86:13).*

*"The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell [sheol] gat hold upon me" (Psalm 116:3).*

Observe that the succeeding verses of the Psalm show that the Psalmist felt these *"pains"* while he was alive, and that the Lord heard his cry, and delivered him, so that he did not die at that time. All the pains and aches of mankind are evidence of death working in them.

### **Sleeping in "Sheol"**

*"if I make my bed in hell [sheol], behold, thou art there" (Psalm 139:8).*

It is not to be supposed that the Psalmist contemplated removing his sleeping apartment to such a place as many think *"hell"* to be. He was using figurative language, as in the first part of the verse (see Acts 2:34 in this connection), and also in the following verse, in which he speaks of taking *"the wings of the morning"*. The expression, *"If I make my bed in hell"*, refers merely to falling asleep in death, and being laid away in the hidden, concealed, covered condition of *Sheol*, the grave. *"Thou art there"* refers to the fact that God's power is able to reach even to *Sheol*, whence the sleeping ones shall come forth in the resurrection day; for *"there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust"* (Acts 24:15).

### **"Sheol" is the State of Death.**

*"Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold, on hell [sheol]" (Proverbs 5:5).*

*"Her house is the way to hell [sheol], going down to the chambers of death" (Proverbs 7:27).*

*"the dead are there ... her guests are in the depths of hell [sheol]" (Proverbs 9:18).*

In these three verses *Sheol* is associated with death in the manner usual in Hebrew poetry.

### **"Sheol" is Destruction**

*"Hell [sheol]" and destruction are before the Lord: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?" (Proverbs 15:11).*

*"The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell [sheol] beneath" (Proverbs 15:24).*

*"Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell [sheol]" (Proverbs 23:14).*

*"Hell [sheol] and destruction are never full" (Proverbs 27:20).*

There is nothing in the above to suggest that *"hell"* is a place of torment, or anything except what has already been seen, viz., that *Sheol*, *"hell"*, is the grave, the state of death.

### **"Sheol" Enlarged**

*"Therefore hell [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" (Isaiah 5:14).*

*"Hell hath enlarged herself"* is a figurative way of predicting the destruction of many people.

*"Hell [sheol] from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming" (Isaiah 14:9).  
"Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell [sheol]" (Isaiah 14:15).*

This passage (Isaiah 14:9-15) should be read entire, noting the fact that in verse 11 *Sheol* is translated "grave", as cited previously. Remember also that the reference is to the destruction of Babylon.

*"Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell [sheol] are we at agreement" (Isaiah 28:15).*

*"And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell [sheol] shall not stand" (Isaiah 28:18).*

This is another example of *Sheol* being associated with death in the manner usual in Hebraic poetry. Note also that the connection between 1 Peter 2:5-8 with Isaiah 28:16. It is not in the power of man to avert death, neither should death be called in to destroy his enemies. Nor can man by a bargain with death perpetuate his own institutions beyond what the Lord allows. But God has laid a sure Foundation Stone which shall never be moved; that is, Christ Jesus, and by Him both death and *Sheol* shall be abolished. (See 2 Timothy 1:10.)

*"And thou ... didst debase thyself even unto hell [sheol]" (Isaiah 57:9).*

This is a striking picture of the moral deadness of idolatrous Israel.

### **Assyria in "Sheol"**

*"I cast him down to hell [sheol]" (Ezekiel 31:16).*

*"They also went down into hell [sheol] with him" (Ezekiel 31:17).*

These two verses describe in symbolic language the destruction of the nation of Assyria, as does a previous example where *Sheol* is translated "*the grave*".

### **Dead Soldiers and their Weapons in "Sheol"**

*"The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell [sheol]" (Ezekiel 32:21).*

*"And they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell [sheol] with their weapons of war: and they have laid their swords under their heads" (Ezekiel 32:27).*

These two verses are symbolic descriptions of the destruction of Egypt and other nations. The fallen mighty speak out of *Sheol* only in a figurative sense, as the blood of Abel was said to cry out from the ground (Genesis 4:10). They call to Egypt to join them in *Sheol*.

No one ever heard of a dead soldier taking his weapons to a supposed place of eternal torment, but the weapons of a dead soldier have often been buried with him in his grave.

A prophecy depicting God's anger against Samaria, for the wickedness of the Ten-tribe kingdom.

### **Where Was Jonah's "Sheol?"**

*"out of the belly of hell [sheol] cried I" (Jonah 2:2).*

When Jonah prayed, he was not in a place of eternal torment, though he was covered up, hidden, concealed in the great fish (Jonah 2:1).

*"he ... enlargeth his desire as hell [sheol]", and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people" (Habakkuk 2:5).*

Another prophecy against a covetous and ambitious nation

All the texts in which *Sheol* is translated "*hell*" have now been examined, and they have been found to agree perfectly with those in which *Sheol* is translated "*grave*." Evidently, then, a great error has been made in defining 'hell' as a place of eternal torment. 'Hell' is the grave, the state or condition of death, to which all mankind go when they die.

### **"Sheol" Translated "Pit"**

*"But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit [sheol]; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord" (Numbers 16:30).*

*"They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit [sheol], and the earth closed upon them; and they perished from among the congregation" (Numbers 16:33).*

The transgressors, Korah and his band of rebels, went down quick into the pit (*Sheol*) formed by the earth opening beneath them, and so they were covered, hidden, or concealed, but they did not go to a place of eternal torture.

### **Rest for All in "Sheol"**

*"They shall go down to the bars of the pit [Sheol], when our rest together is in the dust" (Job 17:16).*

*"Let then my limbs sink down to the nether world: truly in the dust alone there is rest for all" (Job 17:16, Leeser).*

Those who believe that *Sheol* means eternal torture should ponder well the statement here made that the "*pit*" (*Sheol*), or "*nether world*", means a state of "*rest together in the dust*", "*rest for all*". So, the patriarch in his trouble said at the beginning of his lamentations;

*"There the wicked cease from troubling; And there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; They hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there; And the servant is free from his master"* (Job 3:17-19).

### **No Hint of Eternal Torture in the Old Testament**

Every place in the Old Testament where the word *Sheol* is found has now been examined. Not one of them even hints at eternal torture. But the Old Testament comprises fully two-thirds of the inspired Word of God; and, if eternal torture of sinners were part of the divine purpose, it would be incomprehensible that there should be no allusion to it in the Law, the Prophets, or the Psalms. Especially peculiar would it be that there was no mention of such a purpose to Adam and Eve before they sinned. Neither was there anything said to them of such a punishment after they had sinned, when sentence was being pronounced. In plain terms it was stated that they should die: they should not be allowed to eat the fruit of the trees (or grove) of life in the garden, lest they live; and ultimately they should, after a life of toil, return to the ground out of which they had been taken (Genesis 2:17;3:19,22-23).

Thus does the Old Testament describe the penalty for sin; but not one word does it say about eternal torture. Praise God for this relief from one of the blackest of the traditions of the dark ages!

## The New Testament on Punishment

It is admitted by many that the Old Testament does not teach eternal torture, while they claim that the New Testament does teach it. If this were so, the New Testament would be in opposition to the Old Testament; in which event if one were the Word of God the other could not be. But the New Testament is most emphatic in its declaration that the Old Testament is the inspired Word of God (2 Peter 1:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:15-17). Examination of the New-Testament teaching on Punishment shows that there is no conflict between the Old and New Testaments; the New Testament abundantly confirms the teaching that has been found in the Old Testament texts on *Sheol*. Let it be well understood, then, that preaching eternal torment is not a good work for the man of God, because neither the Old nor the New Testament furnishes authority to do so.

### "Hades" Translated "Grave"

In reading the passages containing the word *Hades*, it is to be remembered that the word *Hades* is the New Testament word corresponding to *Sheol*, and that *Hades* means exactly the same as *Sheol*. This has already been mentioned in comparing Psalm 16:10 with Acts 2:27,31, but as the point is very important, the student is again reminded of it.

*"O death, where is thy sting? O grave [hades], where is thy victory?"*  
(1 Corinthians 15:55).

The agreement of the New Testament teaching with that of the Old Testament is here shown. The Apostle breaks forth into joyful praise and thanks to God, as he contemplates the fulfilment of Isaiah 25:6-9, which he says is to be accomplished after the Gospel Church shall have put on immortality and incorruption (1 Corinthians 15:54).

The word *Hades* occurs 11 times in the New Testament, but only once is it translated "*grave*", as above. How much more consistent the translators would have been, had they also rendered the other 10 occurrences "*grave*"! On the other hand, what a message of hope they would have sounded to all who consider 'hell' a place of unending pain and misery, had they rendered *Hades* 'hell' in 1 Corinthians 15:55; "*O hell, where is thy victory?*" Thus would be given the intimation that God will gain a victory over 'hell' by liberating its prisoners. This is just what the Lord Jesus is commissioned to do with His "*keys*" (Revelation 1:18).

### **"Hades" Translated "Hell"**

*"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell [hades]: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day"* (Matthew 11:23).

*"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell [hades]"* (Luke 10:15).

Capernaum had been *"exalted unto heaven"* in the greatness of the privileges that had been vouchsafed them in having so many of our Lord's mighty works done there. The wealth of the testimony given them should have been accepted into good and honest hearts, and the citizens of Capernaum should have become believers in and followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. Instead, they rejected Him; wherefore their city was marked out for ruin and destruction, and it has indeed been *"brought down to Hades"*. See, under *Sheol*, instances of Old Testament cities brought down to destruction for their perversity.

An interesting question is suggested by the latter part of this verse. Why did not God send Jesus to Sodom, if His going there with mighty works would have saved those people? Did God wantonly destroy the Sodomites when He knew how He could have saved them? And why was Jesus sent to Capernaum that did not believe, when not sent to Sodom that would have believed? Why were the *"mighty works"* apparently wasted on Capernaum which despised them, when they might have been done in the presence of Sodom that would have repented? What is believed to be the Scriptural answer to this important question involving the reputation of the Almighty for kindness and fair dealing is given in Bible Talks for Heart and Mind.

### **The Gates of "Hades"**

*"and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell [hades] shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18).

From the beginning the forces of destruction have been raging against the Lord's people; but they have not succeeded in destroying the Church. Neither will the gates of *Hades* prevail against the individual over-comers, because all who sleep in Jesus shall be brought with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14).

*"And in hell [hades] he lift up his eyes"* (Luke 16:23).

For comment on this, please see the explanation of the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, in following pages.

### **Christ's Soul in "Hades"**

*"Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [hades]" (Acts 2:27).*

*"He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell [hades]" (Acts 2:31).*

Does anyone suppose that Jesus would be tormented? No! The Bible teaches that He died, and that God raised him from the dead.

### **The Keys of "Hades"**

*"I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell [hades] and of death" (Revelation 1:18).*

Because our Lord Jesus, by His death on the Cross, purchased all, He became the Lord of dead and living (Romans 14:9), and, having the "keys", symbolic of authority, He will call forth all that are in the graves (John 5:28). Those who have done good will come forth to life, those who have done evil will come forth to be judged. The word "*damnation*", used in the KJV of John 5:29, is wholly incorrect. The word "*judgment*" should have been used, because the reference is to the thousand years' judgment, or reign, of Christ; which implies that the present life has not concluded the Lord's dealings with them.

This is shown in John 5:30, where the same Greek word is properly translated "*judgment*". In the same sentence the corresponding verb is used, and is translated "*judge*", the clear teaching being that the 'judgment' to be reached by the process of 'judging' will depend upon the conduct of the resurrected ones under the reign of the great Judge: "*as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just;*" (John 5:30; see also Revelation 22:12). The office of Judge, occupied by our Lord, was prefigured in the judges of Israel, who were rulers over that nation. Some ruled for forty, others for eighty years. See book of Judges. Our Lord's rulership of a thousand years will be just as practical and much more effective.

*"And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell [hades] followed with him" (Revelation 6:8).*

This is a symbolic description of events in connection with the history of the Church during the Gospel or High Calling age.

### **"Hades" to be Destroyed!**

*"and death and hell [hades] delivered up the dead which were in them" (Revelation 20:13).*

*"And death and hell [hades] were cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:14).*

This is the climax! Let those who believe in eternal torment ponder well this passage, and let them consider these questions. If 'Hell' — *Hades* — means eternal torment, where will the eternal torment be when 'Hell' is burned up in the lake of fire? And where will the eternal torment be when is fulfilled that blessed promise - "*neither shall there be any more pain*" (Revelation 21:4)?

When Death and *Hades* have delivered up the dead called forth by the Lord's voice, they will have served their purpose as the punishment for Adamic sin; and, being no longer required, will be destroyed, together with all other institutions out of keeping with the "*new heaven*" and "*new earth*" (revelation 21:1), for "*the former things are passed away*" (Revelation 21:4), and there shall be no more death, neither shall there be any more pain (Revelation 21:4).

Every Bible reference to *Sheol* and *Hades* has now been examined, and it has been seen that these two words are equivalent to each other, and that they mean that which is hidden, concealed, covered, dark, and quiet. There is no activity, knowledge, nor sensation in *Sheol*. In short, *Sheol* and *Hades* signify nothing more nor less than the grave, or state of death. All mankind go there, both good and bad; all are to come forth from there at the call of Jesus, for "*there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust*" (Acts 24:15).

The references have been invariably to the King James Version of the Bible. On this subject the Revised Version, instead of being helpful, as it is on many other subjects, is open to serious criticism. The Revisers were learned men; they knew all that is stated in the foregoing pages about *Sheol* and *Hades*; but instead of giving plain definitions of these words, and adopting a uniform translation of them throughout the Old and New Testaments, the Revisers have, in many instances, merely transferred the words *Sheol* and *Hades*, without giving any definition at all. This is greatly to be regretted, for the Revisers have thus neglected a grand opportunity to shed much needed light on a most important subject, and to remove from the Divine Name the foulest blot that Satanic ingenuity has cast upon it.

### **Other Words Translated "Hell"**

The understanding of this subject would have been greatly simplified had only the word *Hades* been translated "*hell*" in the KJV of the New Testament, even though the three words, "grave", "hell" and "*pit*" were used in the Old Testament as translations of *Sheol*, for then the reader would have constantly before him the word which in the New Testament corresponds with the Old Testament *Sheol*, and would understand that both *Hades* and *Sheol* refer to the condition of death or destruction which came on our whole race through the disobedience in Eden. But the matter has been complicated by rendering two other Greek words "*hell*", whose meanings are totally different from each other, as well as different from *Hades*. These two Greek words are *tartaroo* and *Gehenna*.

The Revised Version might have rendered signal service here, but instead of doing so perpetuates the erroneous translation of *Gehenna* by the word "*hell*"; which, as already shown, is used in the New Testament to translate the Greek *Hades*, corresponding to the Hebrew *Sheol*.

### **"Tartaroo" Translated "Cast Down to Hell"**

*"For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell [tartaroo], and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Peter 2:4).*

Reference is here made to the angels that sinned before the flood in not keeping their first or angelic estate, but preferring to live as men, which God had not authorised them to do (Jude 6; Genesis 6:1-2). On account of their sin, these angels were cast into prison (1 Peter 3:19). They were not cast into a place of eternal torture, neither were they condemned to be stokers, as some have thought. Neither were they cast down to 'hell'; that is, to *Sheol*, or *Hades*: for the grave is the penalty for the sin of human beings only. The sinning angels were not sentenced to death. The prison, or *tartarus*, into which they were cast was the atmosphere of this earth, the "*chains*" being darkness of mind and deprivation of association with human beings in the manner told of in Genesis 6. *Tartarus* is the noun corresponding to the verb *tartaroo* in this passage.

That the atmosphere of this earth is the prison, or *tartarus*, into which the sinful angels were cast, is apparent from the fact that they were here at the time of our Lord's first advent. He frequently came in contact with them, and cast them out of afflicted persons (Matthew 8:16; Mark 5:1-20). Here it was that our Lord visited the spirits in prison, and by His sufferings, His death, and His resurrection, preached to them the marvellous sermon on the value of obedience to God (1 Peter 3:18-20). We believe the disobedient, cast down angels are still here, masquerading sometimes as spirits of deceased human beings, thus deceiving the devotees of spiritualism into believing that their deceased friends are able to communicate with them and advise them in regard to their affairs; whereas the Bible says, "*the dead know not any thing, ... the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished*" (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6); "*there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave [sheol, hades, 'hell'], whither thou goest*" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

The sinning angels are not permanently incarcerated in their *tartarus*; the text says they are "*reserved unto judgment*". The judgment of the angels is to take place in the next age, under Jesus, the great Judge, who will have His church with Him in the throne (Revelation 3:21; 1 Corinthians 6:3). According to the favourable or unfavourable decision then reached will the angels be severally dealt with, either to be

gathered into God's favour, through Christ, or to be destroyed (Ephesians 1:10; Matthew 25:41).

The word "*hell*" should not have been used in 2 Peter 2:4, because its equivalent Greek word, *Hades*, is not in the text. A more suitable word would have been 'the deep', as used in Luke 8:31. This "*deep*" was not a compartment in the 'infernal regions', as many suppose, but earth's atmosphere.

### **"Gehenna" Translated "Hell"**

In the following 12 references, the word "hell" occurs as a rendering of *Gehenna*. *Gehenna* is the Greek form of a combination of Hebrew words meaning 'valley of Hinnom'. The valley of Hinnom was a deep and narrow ravine, with steep, rocky sides, outside Jerusalem. In ancient times the god Moloch had been set up in this valley, and the children of Israel committed abominations in connection with its worship, among other things causing their children to pass through the fire burning before the idol (1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; Jeremiah 7:31). Josiah rendered the valley ceremonially unclean, and from that time it was used as the garbage destructor of the city (2 Kings 23:10,13-14; 2 Chronicles 34:4-5).

Besides the ordinary refuse, it was the receptacle for the corpses of criminals, who, by being cast into that place, were deprived of a tomb, which could be marked and remembered, and who therefore can be said to have died twice, physically and also to memory. This is the aspect of *Gehenna* that needs to be most considered, for herein is it a type of that "*lake [or valley] of fire*", outside the New Jerusalem, which in Revelation is called "*the Second Death*" (Revelation 20:10,14). In the valley of Hinnom, fires, re-inforced by brimstone, were kept burning, to insure the destruction of all cast into it. That which lodged on a ledge, or in a crevasse, thus being beyond the range of the "fire", would breed worms, which would ultimately completely consume it. The figure of the brimstone is carried forward into the "*lake of fire*" to emphasise the thoroughness of the destruction intended.

The fires burning in the valley of Hinnom were never 'quenched', because the objective of the fire was to burn up whatever was cast into it, and to quench or put out the fire would be to frustrate its objective. In this sense the fire was 'everlasting'. It was also 'everlasting' in its effects, since the refuse destroyed could not be recovered. Nevertheless, the fire did ultimately go out, for there has been none there for some centuries. But the going out of the fire did not reproduce the objects burned up.

Torment was not implied in the valley of Hinnom. The criminals were not cast into it alive, but only after they had been executed. Similarly, "*the lake of fire and brimstone*", which is the Second Death, does not imply torment, nor does it imply necessarily two deceases. After the manner of the valley of Hinnom, its type, it

teaches the thoroughness of the destruction of the wilfully wicked, in that even the memory of them shall perish. It was with the valley of Hinnom, a familiar sight to the Jews, that our Lord enforced His warnings to them of the consequences of wilful sin; and it was doubtless with the same valley in mind that Jude refers to certain reprobates in the Church as "twice dead" (Jude 12).

### **Danger in Speech**

*"but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell [Gehenna] fire" (Matthew 5:22).*

How careful the child of God should be of his speech lest he thereby place himself in danger of *Gehenna*, the Second Death, from which recovery will be impossible (Matthew 12:37).

Here we must again call attention to the carelessness or prejudice of the translators. The incorrectness of using the word "*hell*" in connection with "*fire*" is obvious; for *Sheol*, or *Hades*, is 'dark', 'silent' etc. Fire is correctly associated with *Gehenna*; and *Gehenna* is a figure of the Second Death, whereas *Sheol* and *Hades* refer only to the Adamic death.

### **Cutting Off the Hand and Foot, and Plucking Out the Eye**

*"And if thy right eye do cause thee to offend, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell [Gehenna]" (Matthew 5:29; margin).*

*"And if thy right hand do cause thee to offend, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell [Gehenna]" (Matthew 5:30; margin).*

*"And if thine eye offend thee [literally, "cause thee to stumble"], pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell [Gehenna] fire" (Matthew 18:9).*

*"And if thy hand offend thee [cause thee to offend], cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell [Gehenna], into the fire that never shall be quenched" (Mark 9:43).*

*"And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell [Gehenna], into the fire that never shall be quenched" (Mark 9:45).*

*"And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell [Gehenna] fire" (Mark 9:47).*

Here again *"hell"*, which is the English for *Sheol* and *Hades*, is wrongly associated in the KJV with fire, since it signifies the dark and silent condition of the grave. When our Lord spoke of the *"fire that never shall be quenched"*, He did not assert that there was fire in *Hades*; but, as before explained, He used the name *Gehenna*, with which and its uses the Jews were familiar.

### **"Their Worm Dieth Not"**

In the passage in Mark (9:43-48) undue emphasis is laid on *"fire"* and *"worms"*, possibly because some ancient copyist in his zeal inserted the words more often than the Lord spoke them. The two oldest Greek manuscripts, the Sinaitic and the Vatican, and the Revised Version, omit all of verses 44 and 46, and the last clause of verse 45, *"into the fire that never shall be quenched"*. The words *"hell fire"* in Matthew 18:9 and Mark 9:47 are literally in the Greek, 'the *Gehenna* of fire', and the words, *"into the fire that never shall be quenched"*, were used only once by our Lord (Mark 9:43), while the words, *"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"*, were used only once (verse 48). The passage is exceedingly emphatic even without the unauthorized repetitions.

The *"worm"* and the *"fire"* are to be understood as a reference to the valley of Hinnom; to the fires kept burning to destroy the rubbish, and to the worms which breed in such places. These worms were not immortal worms, but of the sort to be seen to-day whenever and wherever garbage is allowed to accumulate. Used figuratively, the *"worms"*, as well as the *"fire"*, symbolize destruction; for in a rubbish tip the worms do not disappear nor the fire go out while a vestige of garbage remains. These familiar, everyday facts were used by our Lord to illustrate the absolute destruction of the wilfully wicked and perverse.

Isaiah refers to the valley of Hinnom, though without mention of the name;

*"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"* (Isaiah 66:24).

Although this passage is sometimes referred to by Christians as authority for teaching an immortal soul, a careful reading of it fails to reveal such a meaning. *"Their worm"* has no more reference to the soul than has *"their fire"*. Besides, it is the carcasses of the men that are described as devoured by the worms and fire of Hinnom, and *"all flesh"* are represented as looking upon and abhorring these transgressors. As Isaiah 66:22 refers to *"the new heavens and the new earth"*, when the worship of the Lord will be universal, it is plain that verse 24 refers, under the symbolism of *Gehenna*, to the Second Death which will be the everlasting punishment of the wilfully wicked.

What, then, was the lesson our Lord intended by His reference to the eye, hand, and foot? It was this.

Even if one were to pluck out the offending eye, and cut off the offending hand and foot, he might still have the desire to possess the thing which he had seen, or the desire to do wrong with his hand, or to go somewhere he should not. Under the new arrangement, or New Covenant, which has superseded the Law Covenant, the desire in the hearts or minds of God's people to do wrong is counted for sin. This being enunciated in Matthew 5:27-28, one must understand that in Matthew 5:29-30, above quoted, the Master was using the "eye", the "hand", and the "foot" as symbols of desires and practices.

This teaching was addressed directly to Jews; but the principles of it apply also to Gentile believers. If any of the Christian's desires or practices be fleshly, they cause him to stumble in his course along the narrow way to life. Such desires must immediately be plucked out of the Christian's heart, and such practices must forthwith be cut off, lest the flesh overcome the spirit, and the Second Death [*Gehenna* in the above reference] ensue; for it is written:

*"For the minding of the flesh is death; but the minding of the Spirit is life and peace."  
"For if ye [brethren] live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify [literally, 'make dead'] the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:6,13; margin).*

The way to kill "*the deeds of the body*" is to pluck them out, and cut them off; and this is what every Christian has to do, if he would enter into eternal life. And it is better for a Christian to be thus 'maimed', or deprived of some of his fleshly desires and habits, than it is for him to live a 'fully rounded- out' or 'natural' life, according to fleshly standards, and miss the eternal life. The narrow way is indeed the way of self-sacrifice, as it is written;

*"And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:38,39).*

Well will it be for us all, if we heed the solemn words, and lose our life - "eyes" and "hands" and "feet" - for Christ's sake.

In the last three verses quoted, the teaching is that, as the worms were not disturbed in their work of consuming the carcases cast into the valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem, and as the fires in that valley were never quenched, but were intended to consume utterly whatever was cast into them, so absolute destruction

awaits those who now, after full enlightenment and opportunity, indulge the flesh, and despise the blood of the Covenant wherewith they are sanctified, which blood was shed that sins might be forgiven when repented of and put away, and not that they may be continued in.

Hebrews 6:4-8 and 10:26-31 refer to the enlightened in this age who sin wilfully, while Revelation 21:8 refers to the wilful transgressors of the Kingdom age. But in no case will anyone be destroyed in the Second Death who has not been first enlightened with an accurate knowledge of the great truth that *"there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time"* (1 Timothy 2:4-6).

### **The Tongue Set on Fire of "Gehenna"**

*"And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell [Gehenna]"* (James 3:6).

All realise with sorrow that the tongue is the unruly member. *"Therewith bless we God"*, says the Apostle, and *"therewith curse we men"* (James 3:9). How many tears have been shed, and lives blighted, because of hasty words! The tongue, spurred on by hot temper, or by the always foolish and often impure mind of the gossip, is the most awful known disturber of the peace! It began in Eden and has continued to this day, exercising itself in evil from tender childhood to hoary age. Even Christians have not been exempt from the trials occasioned by tongues not under control, set on fire by *Gehenna*, influences leading, if followed, to the Second Death, and themselves setting on fire the whole course of one's nature, blowing it, as only evil words can do, to the red glow of envy and the fierce, white heat of passion and murder.

On the other hand, the tongue can be an instrument of great blessing. The impulse to say something 'clever', that might wound a brother or a sister; the tempestuous raging of temper that might murder with a word; the unholy disposition to gossip; these must all be cast out. But it is not enough that these evil things be cast out; the heart must be filled and the tongue occupied with thoughts and conversations about the Scriptures of Truth, that will build one another up. If this be not attended to the evil thoughts will return with reinforcements into the empty heart, swept and garnished, and the latter end will be worse than the first.

The power of the tongue for good is thus described:

*"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, So is good news from a far country."* (Proverbs 25:25).

*"A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: And a word spoken in due season, how good is it!"* (Proverbs 15:23).

*"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." (Proverbs 25:11).*

Responsibility for one's words is also declared.

*"O generations of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:34-37).*

No doubt it is in view of this intimate association of the words of the mouth with the condition of the heart, and the importance of the words to justify or condemn, that the inspired Word commands;

*"Keep thy heart with all diligence; For out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee frowardness of mouth, And perverseness of lips put far from thee" (Proverbs 4:23-24; margin).*

### **The Pharisees in Danger of "Gehenna"**

*"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation [or, condemnation] of hell [Gehenna]?" (Matthew 23:33)*

Inasmuch as the word *Gehenna* was used by the Saviour in the passage now under notice, it is evident that He meant to intimate that the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Scribes was so great, their perversity so obstinate, and their opposition to the Truth so serious and wilful, considering the light they enjoyed, that it would be a marvel if they escaped condemnation to *Gehenna*, the Second Death. He did not say they cannot or will not escape being condemned to that utter destruction, but He declared that it will be a wonderful thing if they do get clear.

### **The Pharisees' Proselytes "Children of Gehenna"**

*"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and hind to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell [Gehenna] than yourselves" (Matthew 23:15).*

The baneful effect of Pharisaism upon the proselytes is here shown. Observing the hypocrisy of the teachers, the new converts to Judaism would be encouraged and emboldened to indulge in the same evil practices, and in the end would even exceed their preceptors, and would be made twofold more the children of *Gehenna*, more opposed to righteousness and truth, and more eager to run in the way that leads to utter destruction, than the Pharisees themselves. This was an awful commentary on the state of religion in Palestine at the time of our Lord's first advent.

### **Destroy Both Soul and Body in "Gehenna"**

*"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [Gehenna]" (Matthew 10:28).*

Because of the influence of tradition on this subject, many, even Christians, have thought that God put an 'immortal soul' into Adam at creation.

But the Scripture does not say so. In fact, although the word "*soul*" occurs nearly a thousand times in the Old and New Testaments together, the phrase 'immortal soul' or its equivalent is not once to be found from Genesis to Revelation, although the contrary is said, as, "*the soul that sinneth, it shall die*" (Ezekiel 18:4). Neither is the spirit of man called 'immortal', or 'never dying'. This may be a surprising statement; but a few hours with Bible and concordance will demonstrate its truthfulness; and the importance of the point is so great that the few hours required will be well spent by the student. What the Bible says about the creation of man is simple and straightforward –

*"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life [literally, lives; compare Genesis 7:14-15]; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7).*

Observe that it is not said that God breathed a soul into the man He had formed of the dust. It says that God "*breathed into his nostrils the breath of life*"; that is to say, He started the breathing process which, according to Genesis 7:14-15, is required by beasts, birds and creeping things, as well as by man, for the continuance of their lives. The result of starting the breathing process in the newly-formed man was that he "*BECAME a living soul*". He did not receive a living soul, he became or came to be one, when the breathing started.

The difference between 'receive' and 'become' is well apprehended in the ordinary affairs of life, though it seems to have been overlooked by many in reading Genesis 2:7. For example, the customer 'receives' a loaf of bread from the baker, but the customer does not 'become' a loaf of bread. Or, the graduate 'receives' his diploma and 'becomes' a Bachelor of Arts; but the graduate does not 'receive' a Bachelor of Arts and 'become' a diploma. So, the newly-formed man received the breath of life, and became a living soul.

Examination of the Bible testimony shows conclusively that in no sense of the word are men naturally possessed of immortality. To gain it certain conditions must be fulfilled. The fact that Christians are told to seek for immortality is evidence that

they do not inherently possess it (Romans 2:7). It also shows that the tradition of men, imported from heathen philosophy into Christianity, and generally accepted as true by nearly all Christians, which says that all human beings are naturally immortal, is in violent and irreconcilable conflict with the Scripture. This being so, one cannot hold both the tradition and the Scripture, any more than one can serve both God and Mammon. A choice must therefore be made. May each one who reads these words determine to hold fast the incorruptible "*word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*" (1 Peter 1:23).

The inspired record must be carefully, not carelessly, read. Neglect of the plain teaching of Genesis 2:7 is the cause of much of the confusion that has existed in Christendom for many centuries, since the importations of vain, heathen philosophies into the church. Away with the vain philosophies! Let us have the pure Word of God! Let us no longer tolerate the traditions of men, which make void the divine Word! (Isaiah 8:20).

### **What is a Soul?**

Generally speaking, the soul may be defined, in harmony with Genesis 2:7, as the sentient being produced by the union of organism and breath. This being loves and hates, feels and knows, according to the limitations and conditions of the animate organism; hence the differences between the bird and the quadruped and between these and man, created to be their lord. Men, quadrupeds and birds, all of them, breathe, and so live; but their several sensations and sentiments are determined by their various organisms. The 'soul' begins its conscious existence (according to Genesis 2:7) when the breathing starts, and it ceases to exist when the breathing stops. Dead animals and birds will never live again, but dead men will live again, for a resurrection of both the just and the unjust is promised (Acts 24:15). In harmony with the requirement of Genesis 2:7, one would not say, 'man has a soul', but rather, 'man is a soul', because the Scripture does not say that the man received a soul, but it does say that "*the man became* [or came to be] *a living soul.*"

But there are some exceptions to this general definition of 'soul'. In the Old Testament, the word *nephesh*, meaning 'soul', is used in a great variety of ways. It stands not only for 'the being', as above defined, but also, at times, for the body and the life separately. *Nephesh* stands for 'life' in various applications, and is sometimes so translated, as in Genesis 9:4-5; 19:17,19; 32:30; 44:30; Exodus 4:19; 21:23,30; and many other passages. *Nephesh* is also translated "*soul*", when "*life*" is manifestly the meaning, as in Genesis 35:18; 1 Kings 17:21-22. *Nephesh* is translated "*body*" in Numbers 6:6; 9:6-7; and a few other passages. *Nephesh* is translated "*soul*" when the evident meaning is "*body*" in Leviticus 5:2; 7:21. Thus the whole sometimes stands for a part, or a part for the whole.

These exceptions to the general definition of "*soul*", and similar exceptions in the New Testament, require that sometimes the 'soul', meaning 'life', 'body' or breath', as the case may be, should be spoken of as the possession of the individual, as 'his life' 'his body' 'his breath'; and this is so done in some of the Old Testament references last cited.

In the New Testament, the word *psuche* is translated "*soul*", "*life*" and so on. *Psuche* is used in Acts 2:27 as the word corresponding to *nephesh* in Psalm 16:10, the English word "*soul*" being used to translate both *nephesh* and *psuche*. *Psuche* is used in the same variety of ways as *nephesh*; the same general definition, therefore, and the exceptions already noted, apply to both these words, as well as to the English word 'soul', though the latter has acquired the additional meaning of a being capable of living without a body, which is not implied in *nephesh* and *psuche*. This additional meaning attached to the English word 'soul' should, therefore, never be considered when it is desired to use the word 'soul' in the Scriptural sense.

If the "*living soul*", or being, begins with the union of body and breath, and ceases to exist when the union of body and breath is dissolved, causing the death of the "*soul*" or being, which death of the soul can be caused by men, the question will arise, in connection with Matthew 10:28 quoted above, What is the "*soul*" which men cannot kill, but which God can destroy in *Gehenna*?

### **The Soul in "Gehenna"**

Must it not be that our Saviour was in this instance speaking of the "*soul*" in one of its exceptional senses, and not according to the literal and primary meaning as used in Genesis 2:7? It is even so, and the fact is clearly brought out in Luke's version of the Master's words, in which the idea is expressed without the use of the word 'soul'.

*"And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him"* (Luke 12:4-5).

The Master had been instructing the disciples in connection with their commission to go forth preaching the Gospel. In Matthew 10:21-22, He tells them plainly that they should be delivered up to death by those of their own households. In all their tribulations, however, they were to remember that the disciple was not to be above his master, nor the servant above his lord. And they were not to be afraid of their persecutors, who might, indeed, kill them as far as the present life was concerned, but had no further power of destruction. They were rather to fear Him, God, Who

could not only destroy them in respect of their present life, but could also, after that, cast them into that utter destruction represented by the Valley of Hinnom, and so cause their prospects of future life and even the memory of them to be destroyed and forgotten. The persecutors of the disciples might have caused their dead bodies to be cast into the literal Valley of Hinnom, outside Jerusalem; but they could have no power to cast any one into the *Gehenna*, or "*lake of fire and brimstone*", outside the New Jerusalem. The human persecutors could have no authority to cast one into the Second Death. But God could cast them into the Second Death; that is, into utter and irremediable destruction; and He would do so if necessary; the disciples should therefore fear Him.

Consideration of these last two references together shows that the Lord was using the "*body*" as a symbol of the present life, and the "*soul*" as a symbol of the hope of a future life and of one's place in the recollection of his fellows, consequent on one having a place in the recollection of God (Job 14:13-15). *Gehenna*, mistranslated "*hell*", was used by the Lord Jesus with its invariable significance of the total blotting out reserved for the wilfully wicked, the Second Death, without hope of resurrection. Anyone consigned to the Second Death must in time be totally forgotten, just as would a criminal whose dead body was cast into the literal Valley of Hinnom, and not buried in a tomb which could be marked and visited by sorrowing friends, and honoured by future generations. The disciples of Jesus might be persecuted to the death by earthly foes, but that would affect merely the present life, not the future prospects. Only heavenly authority could blot out their names from the Book of Life, casting them into *Gehenna*, destroying them, their prospects and hopes, and their place in the remembrance of their fellow men (Revelation 3:5).

Every Scripture text in which *Gehenna*, mistranslated "*hell*", occurs has now been examined. The finding is that *Gehenna* does not symbolise torture, not even for one moment, because nothing alive and capable of sensation was ever cast into the Valley of Hinnom. The only human bodies thrown into that place were the dead bodies of the criminals adjudged too bad to be decently buried. If cast into *Gehenna*, these criminals, though they died only once, can be said to have died in a double sense, since they would die to memory as well as in fact. The expression, "*twice dead*" (Jude 12), referring to reprobates to the Christian faith, is doubtless based upon this Jewish custom; and the expression, "*the Second Death*", becomes more understandable; for it is seen to be the punishment of a class of wilful transgressors whom God condemns as unfit for continued existence either as individuals or in the memories of Himself or of those who serve and obey Him. "*All the wicked will he destroy.*" (Psalm 145:20). Thanks be unto God for the teaching of His Word on this subject!

Some Christians, who see clearly that *Sheol* and *Hades* have in them no suggestion of conscious suffering, think that the dead are resting quietly in an unconscious state until the Day of Judgment, and that then the wicked will be called forth from *Sheol* or *Hades*, and cast into a place of everlasting torment. They base this idea upon our Lord's use of the word *Gehenna*, as quoted in the preceding pages. But anyone who examines these passages can readily see that our Lord's reference to *Gehenna* was by way of symbolising absolute destruction, and not torment; just as criminals cast into the literal *Gehenna* were not tormented, but destroyed.

### **The Lake of Fire**

The book of Revelation also refers to *Gehenna*, though it does not use that term. A 'valley' is a depression between hills, and a 'lake' is such a depression filled with water. The valley of Hinnom, or *Gehenna*, outside Jerusalem, was not a lake of water, but a lake of literal fire. The Revelation, being a book of symbols, uses the "*lake of fire*", or *Gehenna*, as a symbol. Symbols always stand for something different from themselves. Thus, a 'key' is a symbol of authority; a 'throne' of dominion; a 'rainbow' of a covenant, and so on. The common belief in a literal lake of fire as the punishment of the wicked shows deplorable ignorance of the use of symbolic language in Scripture, and particularly in Revelation, which ignorance we trust these pages will in a measure remove.

*"But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8; RV).*

*"And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15; RV).*

The "*Lake of Fire*" is a symbolic allusion to the total destruction of all who refuse to comply with the New Jerusalem conditions, when made known to them in either the present High Calling age or the future Kingdom age. "*New Jerusalem*" is also a symbol, representing the new government of our Lord Jesus Christ which superseded the Law Covenant when He nailed the latter to His cross (Colossians 2:14). As Jerusalem in Palestine stood for the Law Covenant (Galatians 4:25), so also its *Gehenna* represented the extreme of punishment under that Law. By analogy the "*Jerusalem which is above*" (Galatians 4:26), or the "*New Jerusalem*" (Revelation 21:2), stands for the New Covenant; and its "*lake of fire*", which is the "*Second Death*", is the extreme penalty of transgression under that New Covenant.

In the above references are set forth the characteristics of those who will be destroyed in the Second Death. Doubtless the widest significance of these characteristics has to be considered; for example, idolatry is not merely the worship of stocks and stones, but covetousness is idolatry of perhaps even a worse sort

(Colossians 3:5). And all right-minded persons will say Amen to the destruction of such as wilfully persist in these forms of wrong doing, after they shall have been fully enlightened with the truth, and shall have had every opportunity to flee from Sin. By the destruction of such as these, all undesirables will be done away with, and God's will shall then be done on earth as in heaven. Thank God, that glorious day is at hand, even at the door!

### **Death and Hell Destroyed**

*"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:14, according to Sinaitic and Alexandrine MSS).*

How blessed it is to be assured in the above words that *"hell"* is not a place of eternal torture! How can *"hell"* be a place of eternal torture, if it is itself to be burned up in the lake of fire? And how good it is to know that death will also be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:26,54-55; Isaiah 25:6-9; Hosea 13:14).

Yet there is something awful as well as blessed in this text. Suppose that in the Kingdom age of world-wide blessing and of resurrection of the dead some might be like the Jews of old, unwilling to believe on Jesus, though one rose from the dead. (See explanation in following pages of The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.) Our Saviour's words in the parable lead to the belief that there may be some such stiff-necked ones in the next age, who will not submit themselves, even after enjoying the light and blessing and the evidence of that time. The teaching of the Scripture concerning such is that they shall never see life, but that the wrath of God will continue to abide on them (John 3:36). That is, although brought out from the grave, they will never be fully delivered from the condition of having death working in their members, because they will not become true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and will not submit themselves to obey Him. If they do not believe in Him, and accept Him as the Saviour from sin, they cannot have life in perfection, for –

*"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:11-12; see also John 3:16,36; Hebrews 7:25).*

These persistent, wilful, rebellious unbelievers of the next age, who will not believe though one or a million, themselves and others, rose from the dead, will still remain on this account more or less under the dominion of death, because perfect life, or salvation *"to the uttermost"*, is provided only for those who obey Jesus (Hebrews 5:9). As death is to be destroyed in the Second Death, and these wilful unbelievers will not come out of death notwithstanding all the opportunities to do so, the only expectation on their behalf is that they must be destroyed in the Second Death, along with the original death from which they refuse to be delivered. The casting of death into the *"lake of fire"* portends, therefore, not only a blessing for those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life; it also means the utter destruction

of those who will insist on remaining under death's dominion, because they will not then choose life, that they may live. Every vestige of death must be utterly destroyed, 'dead' unbelievers included.

Thus, the predicted destruction of "*hell*" - *Hades*, *Sheol* — has its awful aspect, as well as its joyful side. The destruction of 'hell' intimates that there is to be no hope of a resurrection for those who die after having been brought out of the grave in the Kingdom age, or who sin wilfully after enlightenment in the present age, these latter being said to have partaken of the powers of the age to come, present enlightenment and opportunity being considered equivalent to being brought out of the grave, as intimated in John 5:25; 1 Peter 4:6; Hebrews 10:26-31,39; 6:4-9. The awfulness of the destruction of 'hell' with its resurrection-hope in the "*lake of fire*" lies in this, that there is no promise of resurrection from the Second Death, the "*lake of fire*". The resurrection from *Sheol*, *Hades*, 'hell', the grave, was arranged on account of the death of Jesus Christ; but He will not die again.

*"Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more"* (Romans 6:9).

How awful it is to think of any bringing that total, hopeless destruction upon themselves, as some will do!

### **The "Beast", the "False Prophet" and the "Devil" in the Lake of Fire**

*"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."* (Revelation 19:20).

*"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."* (Revelation 20:10; RV).

Nearly everything in the Book of Revelation is expressed in symbolic language, and the above passages are striking illustrations of the rule. Nevertheless, those who believe that God will unceasingly torment some of His creatures to all eternity are very insistent that the above passages, especially the second one, be taken with extreme literalness. They do not stop to think what a peculiar "*beast*" that must be to be so constituted that it could endure torment to endless ages. Neither do the literalist friends explain which of the beasts of the field has the moral sense, so that it could sin against God. If the literalistic idea were correct, this would indeed be a marvellous "*beast*", immortal, and having a moral sense, and in construction a monstrosity, having seven heads and ten horns. No such animal exists now, or has ever been known. Will God especially create such a beast? And if He were to do so, is it likely that the kings of the earth would regard it as an ally in war?

These are some of the difficulties in which one becomes involved who endeavours to follow consistently a literalistic interpretation of the *"beast"*.

Then again, the literalist fails to explain how the devil, whom they describe as an immaterial, intangible spirit, can be tormented by literal fire and brimstone. Moreover, the literalist believes that the devil is even now in the place of torment; but in believing this he overlooks the fact that the *"devil"* of Revelation 20 is not to be cast into the *"lake of fire and brimstone"* until the end of the thousand years' reign of Christ and the Church, His joint heirs. From all this, it is quite clear that the passages now under consideration, cannot be satisfactorily interpreted by the view of the literalist, and it is manifest that their symbolic character must be recognised.

### **Identity of the "Beast"**

The *"beast"* is the Papal institution. Let it be understood that we do not here speak of individual members of the Roman Catholic Church, nor of any official of the same; we mean the system or institution over which the Pope is the recognised head, it being claimed on behalf of the Pope, in his official capacity, that he is the Vicar of the Son of God. This claim is false, because, after the twelve apostles, no one Christian is more than another the vicar or representative of Christ. The making of a claim for chief position among God's people on earth, whether made on behalf of the Pope of Rome or any other, is precisely what must be avoided. For disputing among themselves on this very subject, the twelve were severely rebuked by the Master (Matthew 18:1-4; 23:8-12; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48; 22:24-27).

The *"beast"* is several times mentioned in Daniel 7 and in Revelation. In Revelation 13:17-18, the intimation is given that the numerical value of the name of the *"beast"* can be reckoned according to methods practised by men. To appreciate this, one must call to mind that the numerical symbols, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, now in vogue among all Europeans, of whatever language, for the purpose of expressing quantities, were not known in apostolic times. These numerical signs were introduced into Europe by the Arabs, several centuries later. Before that, the several nations assigned numerical values to some of the letters of their alphabets, and used these to express quantities. As the alphabets were not the same in the several languages, there was no convenient method of expressing quantities that could be universally understood, as can now be practised in Europe and America, and wherever the influence of these nations has extended. For if the written figures, 123, be shown to an Englishman, a Frenchman, a Russian, a German, a Spaniard, and a Swede, they will all understand what is meant; but if the Englishman were to say 'one hundred and twenty-three' to the men of the several nationalities above mentioned, he would, very likely, not be understood.

The reckoning up of the number of the name of the "*beast*" means that the values of the numerical letters of his name amount to 666. It is obvious that this reckoning must be done by taking the 'name' in its original language, and by calculating the values according to the usage of that language. The language of the Papacy is Latin, and the values of the letters have therefore to be reckoned according to the Roman method which, fortunately, or perhaps we should say providentially, is very well understood to this day. The title of the official head of the Roman Catholic Church is: -

"VICARIVS	FILII	DEI"
"Vicar	of the Son	of God"

The computation is simple: -

V	=	5
I	=	1
C	=	100
A	=	no value
R	=	no value
I	=	1
V	=	5
S	=	no value
F	=	no value
I	=	1
L	=	50
I	=	1
I	=	1
D	=	500
E	=	no value
I	=	1
"The Number of his name"	=	666

This is only one out of the many marks which identify the "*beast*" as the Papal system. Other marks are mentioned in the prophecies: the wearing out of the saints, the great swelling words, and the duration of the "*beast's*" power, all pointing in the same direction (Daniel 7; Revelation 13).

### **Identity of the "False Prophet"**

The "*False Prophet*" symbolises another system, allied Protestantism, working together with the Papacy and the kings of the earth for their common ends. Again, we desire to mention that individual members of Protestant churches are not meant, but the systems or institutions. Whereas once there was great hostility between Romanism and Protestantism, there is now much less of that. There is, on the contrary, a growing realisation of the necessity for co-operation with each other and

with the political powers in behalf of their mutual preservation against the inroads of the influences which now threaten the very existence of the present order of things in all of its phases: ecclesiastical, political, commercial, and social. These influences are set in motion by "*him that sat on the horse*", the Lord of Glory (Revelation 19:11-16,19).

Against these disintegrating influences the "*False Prophet*" (teacher), Protestantism, fights in harmony with the "*Beast*", the Papacy. Some have thought that Mohammedanism is symbolised by the "*False Prophet*"; but the fact that the "*Beast*" and the "*False Prophet*" work together should show that this thought is incorrect. Mohammedanism has never been friendly with the Papacy, nor is it likely to be.

### **Identity of the "Devil" of Revelation 20:10**

Even the devil is used as a symbol in the mysterious book of Revelation. Starting from Revelation 20:10, his identity as a symbol may be traced by working backwards: "*the devil that deceived them*" of verse 10, is the same as "*Satan*", mentioned in Revelation 20:7-8. "*Satan*", of verses 7 and 8, is identical with him of Revelation 20:2, called "*the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan*". These four names are mentioned in Revelation 12:9, from which text we refer back to Revelation 12:3, where we find him fully described as "*a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns*". This was a symbol for the time then present of the bloody and sinful religio-political Roman government, in its then pagan form. Later (Revelation 13:2,4) we find the "*dragon*" conferring power upon its Papal successor, the "*beast*", already identified; so that a more comprehensive view of what the "*dragon*" symbolises throughout, would be that the "*dragon*" stands for human self-government as opposed to God's government, whatever form the human government may take.

A good many are ready to admit that the human race has made no success in its efforts at self-government. And Scripture teaches that human self-government is a failure, in that God's people are instructed to pray "*Thy Kingdom Come*" (Matthew 6:10). Discerning the failures of the past and the faults of the present, many are wondering whether another experiment will be worthwhile, while others have their minds filled with political and social ideas that they desire the race to adopt.

It is this human self-government that is to be shut up for a thousand years, so as to deceive the nations no more, while God's Kingdom is causing His will to be done on earth (Revelation 20:2). It is this same notion that they can govern themselves that will take shape, as a system of some sort, deceive some at the end of the thousand years, and cause them to rise in rebellion against the beloved city, the Kingdom of God (Revelation 20:7-10). The number of the deceived ones is not

stated, and cannot be surmised; the statement merely is that the nations whom this *"devil"* will attempt to deceive will be as the sand of the sea in number. It is this system that, at the end of the thousand years, after the final temptation, is to be cast into the *"lake of fire and brimstone"*. This is the *"devil"* of the book of Revelation.

But let no one suppose that, though we understand *"the devil and Satan"* to be used symbolically in the book of Revelation, we are denying the existence of a personal Satan. We fully believe in the existence of such a being, and in Bible Talks some Scriptural reasons for this belief are presented. At the same time, we may remark that the Scriptures nowhere sanction the thought that Satan is the genius presiding over a place of eternal torment, for there is no such place. The personal Satan is referred to in Matthew 12:29, as the *"strong man"*, in John 8:44 the personal Satan is referred to as *"a man-killer from the beginning"* inasmuch as he procured the fall into sin and the condemnation to death of the human race. He is also spoken of as the father of lies; and in 2 Corinthians 11:14, as fashioning himself into an angel of light. In Ephesians 2:2 he is said to rule in the minds of the children of disobedience; and in 2 Corinthians 4:4 he is called *"the god of this world"*. It seems singularly appropriate, therefore, that in the last book of the Bible the name Satan should be used as a symbol of human self-government, apart from and opposed to God's government; for he it was who introduced the idea to our race in the garden of Eden, with the disastrous effect recorded in the first book of the Bible (Genesis 3).

Having identified the *"Beast"*, the *"False Prophet"* and the *"Devil"* of Revelation 19:20; 20:10 as symbols of politico-religious systems exercising great control over men, the Lord's method of disposing of these has to be considered.

### **"Cast Alive Into a Lake of Fire"**

In Luke 12:4-5 we were told of One who *"after he hath killed hath power to cast into Gehenna"*; and we saw this to be an allusion to the divine method of dealing with those human beings who sin wilfully after full enlightenment. This allusion was based on the custom of casting the dead bodies of executed criminals into the Valley of Hinnom, outside old Jerusalem. No living thing was cast into that valley. But the false systems, symbolised by the *"Beast"* and the *"False Prophet"*, are differently dealt with. The Word says;

*"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet. ... These both were cast ALIVE into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Revelation 19:20).*

This signifies that these wrong religious systems shall be in process of consumption while they are yet living. The same thought is expressed in 2 Thessalonians 2:8, where, speaking of the great antichrist system, the Apostle says,

*"And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his presence" (2 Thessalonians 2:8; RV margin).*

The Papal and Protestant systems are even now in consumption. They are wasting away, as everyone can see; and the cause of the wasting is the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. The *"lake of fire and brimstone"*, which is the second death, is gradually burning them up. Shortly the destruction will be completed, and these systems, that have deceived so many, with their doctrines of eternal torment, and so on, will pass out of the memories of those who knew them.

The prophecy of Daniel 7:26, which is the inspired interpretation of verse 11, agrees exactly with the above quoted utterances of Paul and John. Daniel says,

*"But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end".*

The last of the temporal power of the Papacy was taken away in 1870; the consumption, which began as long ago as in the time of the great Napoleon, is still going on, and must pursue its destructive course *"unto the end"* (Revelation 2:26). All this is the outcome of divine judgment and activity. There is no remedy.

### **The Worshipers of the Beast**

After foretelling the doom of the two false systems, the Revelator shows what the experience is to be of those who side with these systems.

*"And the rest ["the kings of the earth and their armies" – verse 19] were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, even the sword which came forth out of his mouth: ... " (Revelation 19:21; RV).*

This signifies that the influence and activity of princes and peoples on behalf of the doomed systems of Christendom will be brought to nought by the power of the Divine Word, which is *"the sword of him that sat upon the horse, even the sword which came forth out of his mouth"* (Revelation 2:16; Hebrews 4:12).

But this is not all of the experience of the worshipers of the *"Beast"*. Before being 'killed' by the Word of God, they must be *"tormented"*.

*"If any man worship the beast and his image [the "image", after receiving "breath", becomes the "false prophet"], 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 nor night, who worship the beast, and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name"* (Revelation 14:9-11).

The *"fire and brimstone"* which is to torment the worshippers of the beast and his image will not be applied to them direct, nor will they be cast into the *"lake"*. If the *"fire and brimstone"* were cast upon them, or if they were to be cast into it, it would mean their destruction; for the *"lake of fire and brimstone"* is the second death (Revelation 20:14). Besides this, it was seen in Revelation 19:19-21 that only the *"Beast"* and *"False Prophet"* systems are to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone at the end of the Gospel or High-Calling age; their followers are to be otherwise dealt with.

The distress of the worshippers of the *"Beast"* and the *"Image"* has been and will be increasingly caused by their realisation that these systems are being utterly consumed; thus will the worshippers be tormented with the fire and the brimstone that destroy the evil systems they have cherished. The worshippers themselves will not be in the flames, but will, according to another description, *"stand afar off"* *"weeping and wailing"*. They *"cried when they saw the smoke of her burning"*, and *"they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing"* (Revelation 18:8-24).

The *"smoke of her burning"* (Revelation 18:18) is the *"smoke of their [the worshippers] torment"* (Revelation 14:11). To say that this smoke *"ascendeth up forever and ever"* conveys the same thought as the expression concerning the fire that shall not be quenched; namely, it is continuous, or uninterrupted, and does not cease till it has accomplished its purpose. This has already been considered, under the explanation of *Gehenna*. This reminds us also of Jude 7, which says that Sodom and Gomorrah are *"suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"*, notwithstanding that the fire which destroyed them has been extinct for centuries.

The worshippers of the *"Beast"* and the *"Image"* *"have no rest day nor night"* (Revelation 14:11), on account of the destruction of their false systems to which they were devoted, and by means of which they had so much power that they trafficked in *"souls of men"* (Revelation 18:13). Doubtless, it is in God's mind a fit and becoming thing that the devotees of these false systems, that have misrepresented Him in so many ways, should, like the apostate Jews at the end of their age (The *"Rich Man"* of Luke 16:19-31), have a time of trouble at the end of this age, in witnessing the destruction of their false systems, and in being obliged to adjust themselves to the righteous conditions of the Kingdom age.

### The "Devil" Cast into the Lake of Fire

The events just considered belong to the close of the Gospel or High-Calling age. Very similar will be the series of events closing the Kingdom age. At the beginning of the thousand years, being also the close of the Gospel age, we have seen the "*Beast*" and "*False Prophet*" systems destroyed. The "*devil*" system is not to be destroyed at the beginning of the thousand years; it is merely to be cast bound into the "*abyss*" so as not to deceive the nations during the thousand years; the "*abyss*" being a symbol of oblivion or obscurity. At the end of the thousand years, there will be allowed a revival of this notion, to test and try those living on the earth. Those who permit themselves to be deceived again into the idea that man can govern himself apart from God will thereby show that they are wilfully opposed to God's Government, and they will be destroyed without remedy, as stated in Revelation 20:9. But before destruction falls upon them, they must also be tormented by witnessing the utter destruction of their cherished notion, the symbolic "*devil*". This is expressed in Revelation 20:10,

*"And the adversary, he that was deceiving them, was hurled into the lake of fire and brimstone, where also the wild beast and the false prophet (were hurled); and they shall be tortured, day and night, to the ages of the ages"* (Revelation 20:10; Rotherham).

Where this version inserts "*were hurled*" in brackets, the KJV inserts "*are*" in italics. The original text contains no word to correspond, the reading being merely "*where the beast and the false prophet*". Mr. Rotherham's judgment in supplying "were hurled" seems much better than that of the KJV translators in supplying "*are*" in italics. The "*Beast*" and "*False Prophet*" systems, having been utterly consumed at the beginning of the thousand years, would certainly not be in existence in the "*lake of fire*" at the end of the thousand years, the evident opinion of the KJV and RV translators to the contrary notwithstanding. The "*Beast*" and "*False Prophet*" systems would be dead beyond recovery (Revelation 18:9-10,21). And the reason why the "*Devil*" notion will be alive at the end of the thousand years is because it was not cast into the "*lake of fire*" at the beginning of the thousand years, but was merely shut up in the "*abyss*" of obscurity, with a view to release at the expiration of the thousand years.

Since the symbolic "*Devil*" will not have the company of the "*Beast*" and the "*False Prophet*" in the "*lake of fire*" at the end of the thousand years, because the latter two will have been consumed at the beginning of the thousand years, it is clear that these three cannot be meant where it says, "*they shall be tortured*" in Revelation 20:10. The KJV is at fault here in not having the pronoun "they," because the verb, "*shall be tormented*" is in the third person plural, which makes the English pronoun "they" a necessity in the translation; "*they shall be tormented*" refers to them who will be deceived by the "*devil*" at the end of the thousand years. As they realise the utter

destruction of their notion, and the futility of their mutiny against the *"beloved city"*, the New Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God; as they realise that they have incurred the enmity of the great King and Judge, who had been gently leading and instructing them during the Kingdom age; as they realise there is not a hope to sustain them nor a prop for them to lean upon, those sinners will have been reduced to a state of despair and misery impossible to describe, and even at this distance sad to think of. The utter destruction of their project, in the fire and brimstone of the second death, will be awful torment to them, just as the destruction of the *"Beast"* and *"False Prophet"* is torture to their worshippers now.

But whereas the worshippers of *"Beast"* and *"Image"* will be slain by the sword out of the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and will be allowed to adjust themselves to the conditions of the next age, if they submit themselves, it will not be so with the rebels against the full light at the end of the thousand years. The fire *"out of heaven"* (Revelation 20:9) shall devour them. According to another description, they shall have their part in the lake of fire, which is the Second Death. But first they must be *"tormented"* in the manner described. Note also that all this *"torment"* will be experienced on this earth, where God's Kingdom is established, and not in some other world, nor yet in the internal fires of the earth.

### **"For Ever and Ever" Not Always "Endless"**

*"For ever and ever"* (Revelation 20:10) is a translation of a phrase which has not in itself the idea of endlessness. It is sometimes applied to things known to be unending. In such a case the phrase takes on that meaning. But the same phrase is sometimes applied to things which it is known will terminate after a time (long or short); in such a case the phrase *"for ever and ever"* has its limitations, which must always be determined by the context. Revelation 20:9-10 is a case of the latter sort; for if the rebellious ones are to be devoured, it is obvious that endless torment will be an impossibility. The phrase *"for ever and ever"* (literally, 'unto the ages of ages') must therefore be limited by the context.

The phrase *"for ever"* is used in the limited sense in Philemon 15; while Revelation 11:15, in connection with 1 Corinthians 15:24,28, shows that the reign of Christ, *"for ever and ever"*, terminates at the end of the thousand years, the same being true of the reign of the glorified church with Jesus, as shown by comparing Revelation 22:4-5 with Revelation 20:4. However, the effects accomplished by the thousand years' reign will be endless.

*"Everlasting"* is similarly limited in 2 Peter 1:11; and in Jude 6 the everlastingness of the chains is limited by the words, *"unto the judgment of the great day"*. The *"eternal fire"* of Jude 7 is 'age-lasting', but it is not to be endless. This is proven by the divine promise that the Sodomites, who are *"suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"*, are to be restored to their former estate \* (Ezekiel 16:53,55,63).

After the rebels at the end of the thousand years shall have been devoured, there will remain only those who are humble enough still to continue in the attitude of the prayer; *"Thy will be done in earth, as in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10). They will not be in that state of mind that would propose to govern independent of God, but will gladly submit themselves to His benevolent rule. With such as its subjects, the Kingdom will be delivered up by the Son to the Father, and God Himself will be all in all, in a universe freed from sin and from all sinners, and from death, the penalty for sin, and inhabited by the happy subjects of His grace (1 Corinthians 15:24). Hallelujah!

Every Bible reference to the *"lake of fire and brimstone"* has now been examined, and it has been seen that this expression lends no support to the horrible and blasphemous doctrine of 'eternal torment'. But, on the other hand, it has been seen that the *"lake of fire and brimstone"* is a most effective symbol of utter destruction, and that it is defined in the Scripture itself as meaning the *"Second Death."*

### **Everlasting Fire - Everlasting Punishment - Everlasting Destruction**

*"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"* (Matthew 25:41).

*"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal"* (Matthew 25:46).

*"Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;"* (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

Although the words *"eternal"*, *"everlasting"*, *"for ever"* and *"for ever and ever"* are sometimes used in a sense short of endlessness, as clearly shown in passages before cited, they are also used with the meaning of interminable duration, as in the passages now to be considered. The endlessness of the *"life eternal"* provided for the righteous is unquestionable; so is the endlessness of the *"everlasting punishment"* placed in antithesis to *"life eternal"*, beyond cavil.

But *"everlasting punishment"* does not signify everlasting pain. The Apostle plainly says that the wilfully wicked, who obey not the Gospel, *"shall be punished with everlasting destruction"*. Let us say the same. Let us not say, as do some, that the punishment is to be everlasting destroying, always destroying but never destroyed. Let us realise and declare that destruction is the penalty for sin. God's 'destructor', the *"lake of fire"*, the Second Death, is able to destroy completely *"both soul and body"* (Matthew 10:28).

The personal devil and his angels and the "goats" will all be destroyed in the everlasting "fire" prepared for them. If we agree that this "fire", the Second Death, will be endless in duration, that will not prove that what is cast into it is everlasting. What would happen to a literal goat cast into a literal fire? He would perish, irrecoverably. Thus does the Lord illustrate the irremediable blotting out of the symbolic "goats", that are to depart into the symbolic "fire".

The Psalmist illustrates the completeness of the destruction of the wicked by likening them to the fat consumed on the altar;

*"But the wicked shall perish, And the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs: They shall consume; Into smoke shall they consume away" (Psalm 37:20).*

### **"Perish"**

This word is frequently used in both the Old and the New Testaments to denote the punishment of those who are wilfully wicked after enlightenment. The word "perish" is a great stumbling block in the way of the error of "eternal torment". Nevertheless, the error has obtained such a hold on the minds of some Christians that they forget the meaning of "perish" and allow themselves to use it, in such texts as John 3:16, as though it meant torment, whereas it means simply 'to destroy fully'. In John 18:14, *"that it was expedient that one man should die for the people"*, *apollumi*, meaning 'to destroy fully' or 'perish', is translated "die".

The great mistake of supposing that 'perish' means 'eternal torment' is strikingly shown in the following texts, in which *apollumi* occurs. In each instance the KJV has the word "perish", but we have taken the liberty to substitute "eternal torment" for "perish," so that all may note how it sounds.

*"And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord save us: we shall be eternally tormented" (Matthew 8:25).*

*"the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles" are eternally tormented (Matthew 9:17).*

*"Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet be eternally tormented out of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33).*

*"But there shall not an hair of your head be eternally tormented" (Luke 21:18).*

*"They [the 'heavens' and 'earth'] shall be eternally tormented; but thou remainest" (Hebrews 1:11).*

*"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are being eternally tormented" (1 Corinthians 15:16-18).*

Such are the sentiments which believers in eternal torment would unwittingly put into the mouths of the blessed Saviour and His inspired Apostles! Let us do so no more, but let us speak the truth, and do what we can to clear God's character of the aspersions cast upon it by the false teachings of Christendom.

### **Reason Agrees with Scripture**

Painful punishment is sometimes necessary for disciplinary and reformatory purposes. As long as there is hope of reforming the wrong-doer, proper correction, however painful, has its uses, and is justifiable. But, when a wrong-doer is known to be wilfully, such that corrective and disciplinary measures have no softening effect, the continuance of painful punishment becomes a display of vindictive cruelty, not excusable by any process of reasoning. Least of all would such cruelty be excusable on the ground of making the punishment fit the crime; for it is not possible to imagine that a poor mortal, a worm of the dust, could so seriously offend the dignity of the Creator of the Universe, that nothing less than endless pain would fitly punish the offence. But it is perfectly reasonable that a criminal not amenable to the reformatory measures of the Kingdom age should be destroyed, because neither he nor anyone else would benefit by his continued existence, and he could only be a communicator of corruption to others. On this principle decayed fruit is cast away, lest it cause the sound fruit to decay. And so we find reason corroborating the Scripture, which says,

*"neither shall there be any more pain"* (Revelation 21:4).

Some readers of these pages are parents. The children are sometimes disobedient, and require chastisement. Has any reader of this ever punished his child by holding the tip of the child's little finger for five seconds in the flame of a candle? Anyone guilty of such an enormity would be rushed off to prison at once, as not fit to be at large in decent society. No; you would not hold the tip of the child's little finger in the candle flame for one second, let alone five. But many are ready to charge God with something immeasurably worse than this. In so doing, they make God out an unspeakable monster; yet they hope to be happy in His society to all eternity. Is man better than God? Again does reason corroborate the Scripture.

All readers of these pages are children. You love your parents, and cherish their good name. You could not think of your parents tormenting you, and if a brother of yours, a child of the same parents should, after experiencing the love and care of your common parents, declare that they were preparing to torment some of their children, you would feel exceedingly grieved to think that your brother could have fallen so low as to slander his and your loving parents. You would protest with all your might against the calumny. Shall not the children of God protest with all their powers against the awful slander that has been circulated against the good name

of the Almighty? By all means! How sad it is to think that this defamatory doctrine has been actively circulated by the children of a loving Father! How good it is to be delivered from the snare of this awful delusion, and to realise that, after all, reason agrees with Scripture on this important matter!

God's people are commanded to be followers of Him as dear children. Also, His people are commanded to love their enemies (Ephesians 5:1; Matthew 5:44). But a good many of His people are certain that God does not love His enemies, but is filled with a spirit of vindictive cruelty towards them. Yet they do not follow God in this their imagination concerning Him. Why do they not let their reason agree with the Scripture, which shows that God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son to die in order that they might live? Certainly, if God commands His people to love their enemies, and also that we are to be followers of Him, God also loves his enemies, and will not vindictively torment them to all eternity. Thus again do we see that reason agrees with Scripture.

### **Redemption Forbids Eternal Torment**

The penalty for sin is death. Whatever death means, this is the word used throughout the Bible to describe the punishment for sin. The word is used in the beginning of the Bible, in the middle of it, in the apostolic epistles, and in the book of Revelation, to denote the punishment for sin (Genesis 2:17; 3:19,22-23; Romans 5:12; Revelation 20:14-15).

It is also declared that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; that our sins were laid upon Him, and that He bore the penalty for them, pouring out His soul unto death, thus making His soul an offering for sin. Furthermore, it is declared that He came into the world to give His life a ransom, or redemptive price, for many, and it is also stated that in order that He might do this, He *"was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death ... that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man"* (Hebrews 2:9). And the Apostle says that the one Mediator between God and men did give Himself a ransom for all (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; see also Isaiah 53:4-6,10-12; Mark 10:45; 1 Timothy 2:4-7).

Now it is obvious that death must mean the same to the Redeemer as it means to the transgressor whose iniquity He bore, and for whose sins He died. If death, the penalty for sin, meant eternal torment for Adam and his race, it must mean the same for the Redeemer. Are we redeemed? Yes! by the death of the Man, Christ Jesus. That being so, it is demonstrated again in harmony with the many Scriptures already cited, that death is the penalty for sin, and that eternal torment is a monstrous fiction, the nightmare of the dark ages. Thanks be to God for deliverance from the awful error, and for guidance by His Holy Spirit into the light of Truth!

### **Let the Light Shine!**

It is now necessary to remember that he who has been enlightened is expected to be a shining light to enlighten others. Therefore, let the light shine! Let no feeling of fearfulness as to results hinder the full expression of the truth on this subject as far and wide as God may permit you to carry it. The preaching of eternal torment for fifteen centuries or more has not made the world better; it has driven and is now driving many away from God and the Bible. By the same token, the preaching of the Truth on this subject will not make the world worse; the demonstration that God is indeed a God of love will not repel from God, but may attract men to Him, as the Scripture says,

*"We love, because he first loved us"* (1 John 4:19; RV).

And let us all so submit ourselves to the sanctifying influence of the Truth, that we may be prepared by it for eternal life and glory!

## The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

Having examined all the texts of Scripture in which the words *Sheol*, *Hades*, *Gehenna* and *Tartaroo* occur, with the exception of Luke 16 23, "*And in hell [hades] he lift up his eyes, being in torments*", we now inquire, Does our Lord in these words contradict the teaching of the 10 other occurrences of the Greek word *Hades*, and of the 65 occurrences of the corresponding Hebrew word *Sheol*, which declare that the grave to which all men go at death is a condition dark, silent, of knowing nothing, and doing nothing? No, He does not. Neither does He by His description of the torments of the rich man in *Hades* justify confusing *Hades* with *Gehenna*, as some Christians do. Had our Lord intended to represent the rich man as in *Gehenna*, or the "*lake of fire*" He would have used that word; and in that case the teaching of the parable would be that the rich man was condemned to the Second Death; for that is what *Gehenna* symbolises.

The fact that our Lord represented the rich man as in *Hades*, the dark and silent grave, and yet as conscious and tormented in a flame, is proof that the story is a parable, and that He took this means of teaching a great truth to the listening Scribes and Pharisees. This is the more evident when we notice that this is the last of a series of five parables, including the Lost Sheep, the Lost Silver Piece, the Lost Son, and the Unjust Steward, recorded in Luke 15 and 16, and that in it our Lord's rebuke of the Scribes and Pharisees is brought to a climax.

### The Parable

To Pharisees and Scribes, in the presence of Publicans, Sinners, and Disciples.

#### **Luke 16:19-31**

- 19 *There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:*
- 20 *And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,*
- 21 *And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.*
- 22 *And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;*
- 23 *And in hell [hades] he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*

- 24 *And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame.*
- 25 *But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*
- 26 *And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.*
- 27 *Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:*
- 28 *For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.*
- 29 *Abraham said unto him, They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them.*
- 30 *And he said, Nay, Father Abraham : but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.*
- 31 *And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

The first three verses of this parable portray most graphically the positions of the two classes contrasted in the parables of Luke 15. The rich man represents the condition of the Pharisees and Scribes. They had (in their own estimation, at least) the fine linen of righteousness, the purple of ruling position, and the sumptuous fare of great privilege and influence.

The beggar, Lazarus, well represents the despised, outcast condition of the publicans and sinners, their spiritual poverty and disease, and their desire for some of the favours cast away as crumbs from the table of the rich man's privilege. The Gentile "*dogs*" were the only ones who associated with these outcasts, to alleviate in any way their distress. Such were the conditions of these two classes in Israel at the time of our Lord's first advent, and such their attitudes toward each other (Matthew 15:27).

### **"The Beggar Died"**

There came a change in the conditions of these classes, represented in verse 22 by the two men 'dying'. Death and life are often used figuratively in Scripture to represent alterations of conditions, circumstances or attitudes. Familiar illustrations of this usage are found in such expressions as "*dead to sin*" (Romans 6:2), "*alive unto God*" (Romans 6:11), "*dead to the law*" (Romans 7:4) and others that might be cited. The alteration in the condition of the "*beggar*", the publicans and

sinners who believed in Jesus, was very much for the better. He *"was carried by the angels [messengers] into Abraham's bosom"*. Instead of being outcasts from God's favour, the believing and repentant publicans and sinners were received by God as His children, and were consoled for their previous hard experiences. The *"angels"* who *"carried"* the repentant publicans and sinners, now dead to sin, to *"Abraham's bosom"* (God's favour), were the apostles and disciples of Jesus, messengers of the truth. The word 'angel' means messenger.

The parable is not describing the literal death of afflicted beggars, and the wafting away of their souls to Father Abraham in heaven. That would not be in agreement with the plain teaching of Scripture. Father Abraham had no promise that he should go to heaven when he died; his goodly portion is to be in the land that he saw. That land was promised to him for an everlasting possession, and he dwelt in it for many years, but never as possessor, always as a stranger. The promise which was not fulfilled during his life is to be fulfilled to him when he shall rise from death (Genesis 13:14-17; Acts 7:5; Hebrews 11:8-9,39-40). In the meantime, Abraham sleeps, awaiting the call of our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose command all that are in the graves, both good and evil, shall come forth (John 5:28). That the dead will rise was shown by our Saviour to have been taught by Moses in his description of the burning bush, when the Lord spoke of Himself as *"the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"* (Exodus 3:6). Jehovah is not a God of the dead, but of the living; and though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all dead when Moses stood beside the burning bush, the certainty of the promised resurrection permitted Him to speak of those not in being as though they were. They were not alive then; they have not been raised yet, but soon they shall hear Jesus' voice and shall come forth (Luke 20:37; Romans 4:17).

Neither are poor beggars, full of sores, taken to heaven at death. Why should they be, if Abraham, the friend of God, was not? Even saints and martyrs for Jesus have not been immediately taken to heaven at death. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, *"fell asleep"* (Acts 7:60). Paul, the great Apostle, having finished his course, said a crown was *"laid up"* for him. He did not expect to receive it until the Lord's second advent (2 Timothy 4:8; John 14:3). It is also taught that those who *"sleep in Jesus"* will be with Him at His second advent (1 Thessalonians 4:14). But it is to be carefully observed that whereas the Lord Jesus comes down from heaven, the sleeping saints rise up from the grave, which proves that the sleeping saints have not been with the Lord while they slept. This is the plain teaching of Scripture on this subject, and it is not to be supposed that the Saviour would contradict it by His parable. The manifest intention of the parable is to conclude the lesson He was giving on account of the murmuring of the Scribes and Pharisees against Him for receiving the publicans and sinners (Luke 15:2-3).

### **"In Abraham's Bosom"**

Therefore, when He speaks of the beggar dying, and being carried into Abraham's bosom, He is to be understood as referring to that change in the spiritual circumstances of the publicans and sinners, which was even then transpiring. They were dying to sin, by believing in Jesus, and reforming their lives; as a consequence they were being received into divine favour, represented in the parable by *"Abraham's bosom"*. The adoption of this reasonable interpretation is not only agreeable to the plain statements of the Scripture; it also relieves the student of the absurdities in which he would be involved by an attempt to force upon our Lord's words that literal construction that would require the expansion of Abraham's bosom, in order that millions of starving, putrefying beggars might be accommodated there, not because they were saints, but because they were beggars.

*"In the bosom"* means in favour, or intimacy, as the following reference shows;

*"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him"* (John 1:18).

*"In the bosom"* also meant, according to the custom of those times, the position of the most honoured guest at the table. The custom was to recline on couches, resting on one arm, and the guest next in front of the host was thus said, in this figurative manner, to be in the host's bosom, or on his breast. This is illustrated in the following reference;

*"Now there was leaning on [literally, 'reclining in'] Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved"* (John 13: 23,25).

This manner of using the expression *"in the bosom"* shows that Lazarus *"in Abraham's bosom"* is a figure of speech meaning that the repentant publicans and sinners were received into the divine favour, Abraham representing God.

### **"The Rich Man Also Died"**

The 'death' of the believing publicans and sinners to their unfavourable spiritual circumstances was a good change for them. The 'death' of the unbelieving Scribes and Pharisees to their hitherto favourable circumstances was about to bring them into very unfavourable conditions. The rich man's 'death' was followed by his 'burial', and finding himself in a condition of 'torment'. This does not mean that the disembodied spirits of all rich men, who wear fine clothing and fare sumptuously every day, will be tormented from the time of death. We have already seen that a dead person knows nothing, being susceptible neither to pleasure nor pain (Ecclesiastes 9: 4-6,10), having no knowledge, no wisdom, no thoughts, nor any ability to carry on conversation. Our Lord's description of the rich man's

experience, as applied to the Pharisee and Scribe class, represented by the "*rich man*" in the parable, means that the Pharisees and Scribes were about to be deprived of their favourable position as a class, that they were to be "*buried*" (as a class) under the social 'earth'<sup>1</sup> and that, being so 'buried', they would be suffering grievous 'torments'.

How wonderfully this has been fulfilled is a matter of common knowledge. Shortly before His crucifixion Jesus left their house unto them desolate (Matthew 23:38). In due course came the destruction of Jerusalem, followed by the desolation of the land and the dispersion of the people; and the Pharisee and Scribe class has been dead, buried, and in torment, their plight being shared by those Jews that sympathised with their opposition to Jesus and Christianity. For eighteen centuries the Jews have been dead to God's favours, inasmuch as divine blessing proceeds, since Pentecost, through Jesus and the New Covenant, not through Moses and the Law covenant. For eighteen centuries the Jews have been deprived of the social rights and privileges granted to the meanest classes of the peoples amongst whom they have been dispersed, being considered beneath the lowest stratum of the social 'earth'. Thus 'buried' in *Hades*, the Jews have suffered most grievously, it being considered the privilege, pleasure, and duty of their Gentile neighbours to trample them down, and desecrate everything the Jews held sacred.

### **"The Wrath to Come"**

This was "*the wrath to come*" from which John the Baptist sought to deliver the Jews. He came as the Elijah, endeavouring to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers; that is, he tried to get the Jews to become childlike, instead of self-sufficient, and tried to direct them into the old paths. Had they heeded him, the threatened curse upon their land would have been averted (Malachi 4:5-6; Matthew 3:7; Luke 1:13-17; Mark 9: 11-13; Matthew 11:7-15).

The Scribes and Pharisees did not heed John the Baptist, the 'Elijah', and therefore "*wrath is come upon them to the uttermost*" (1 Thessalonians 2:15,16) in the destruction of their city and temple, with the loss of a tremendous number of lives, the dispersion of the remainder of their people, and the predicted curse upon their land (Malachi 4:6) on account of their obstinacy against the divine message. But it is said (Josephus, Bell. 2:20; 3:3:3) that not a single believer in Jesus perished in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem; they availed themselves of an opportunity to flee from the doomed city, and so they were all "*delivered . . . from the wrath to come*" (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

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<sup>1</sup> 'Earth', in the usage of symbolic Scripture, stands for the social order.  
For further explanation on this point, please see Bible Talks for Heart and Mind, chapter 2.

But the most severe manifestation of God's wrath against the Jewish people was in depriving them of the High Calling, which originally pertained to them (Romans 9:4; 11:17-20).

The above interpretation of this parable, in which it appears that our Lord was bringing to a climax His lessons of comfort to the repentant and mourning publicans and sinners, and of warning to the proud and murmuring Scribes and Pharisees, is in full accord with what has been seen in other parables. For example, see the conclusion of the parable of the vineyard;

*"What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid" (Luke 20:15-16).*

So thorough was the ruin of the chief priest and Pharisee and Scribe class, that the genealogies of the Jewish priesthood are lost, and the Jews have, therefore, no one who could officiate in the office of high priest according to the Aaronic order, even if the temple were restored at Jerusalem. Their destruction as a class was complete.

### **"Weeping, and Wailing, and Gnashing of Teeth"**

This loss of place and power was referred to also when the Lord commended the faith of the centurion whose servant He had healed;

*"And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:11-12).*

But the full realization of their loss will not come to them until the resurrection day, when the Lord tells them plainly, *"I know you not whence ye are"* (Luke 13:27). The plea that He taught in their streets will not avail them. This weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth does not show that these Jews will suffer eternal torment. It indicates rather their chagrin and disappointment when they find that, after all, they have missed their hoped-for places in the Kingdom (Luke 13:24-30).

### **"In Hell He Lift Up His Eyes"**

Those who insist on reading this parable as though it were a literal statement of facts, have a problem to solve. They think that when the 'rich man' died, it was only his body that died, and was buried, while his alleged immortal, incorporeal, intangible, imponderable soul, which is supposed to have no parts, went away to 'hell', to be tormented. This 'soul', being without parts, has no 'eyes', according to their ideas. They suppose that the 'rich man's' eyes were dead and buried, while

his eyeless 'soul' was being tormented in 'hell'. How could the 'rich man' in 'hell' *"lift up his eyes"* which he did not have with him at the time? This is the problem we would lay before our literalist friends.

### **The "Great Gulf"**

In the 'torment' endured by the Jews for the last eighteen centuries, they have cried aloud to God to relieve them; but, in the parable, the Lord points out to the Pharisees and Scribes that such appeals would be useless. They were enjoying great favours, and were misusing them; consequently, the time must come when they should see the other side of the picture, and be in great distress, while the poor despised beggar class of publicans and sinners would be comforted.

It would not be possible, either, for any of the hitherto afflicted but now repentant and favoured publican and sinner class to cross over to relieve the poor rich man's distress; because, hard-hearted and stiff-necked to the last, that state of mind in the Jews has caused a *"great gulf"* of pride and prejudice to be fixed between themselves and the divine favours, effectually preventing the passage of either party to the other (verses 24-26). So effective has been this *"great gulf"* of prejudice, that but few Jews have become truly converted to Christianity since the destruction of Jerusalem. The Jewish converts during the time indicated have been so few, that they may be regarded as the exceptions which prove the rule.

### **The "Five Brethren"**

If the Pharisee and Scribe class living in Palestine at the time of our Lord's first advent be represented by the *"rich man"* in the parable, it may be understood that the Jews scattered abroad in various countries were represented by the *"five brethren"*. Those dwelling in Palestine at that time were for the most part of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with some Levites, these all being descendants of the Jews who had returned from the Babylonian captivity. The others, *"scattered abroad,"* would be largely descendants of the captives of the two-tribe and ten-tribe Kingdoms who never returned to Palestine; but who still had respect for God's service, and made occasional pilgrimages to Jerusalem to worship.

In the parable the Lord indicates that a special plea on behalf of these *"five brethren"* would be useless. They had Moses and the prophets; if they did not hear them, neither would they be persuaded if one rose from the dead. This statement, remarkable as it may seem, is fully justified by the conduct of the *"rich man"* himself. After Jesus had raised Lazarus (His personal friend, not the Lazarus of the parable) from the dead, who had been four days in the tomb, did the Pharisees and Scribes make haste to believe in Jesus on the strength of this wonderful testimony of divine power? By no means! The record says;

*"Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. . . Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death" (John 11:45-48,53).*

*"But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus." (John 12:10-11).*

The 'rich man' class of that day (Pharisees, scribes, and chief priests) were so zealous of their 'place', that they were blinded thereby to the truth. Instead of being convinced by the evidence presented them, they sought to destroy the evidence by seeking to kill Jesus and the one whom He had raised from the dead.

Hard-hearted wretches they were, no doubt, but in this day of grace the same disposition is manifest in some who seek to destroy evidence of the truth that is against them, lest their 'place' and 'people' be taken away by the strength of the evidence. Did one not know this to be the fact, it would be slanderous to intimate that such unspeakable hardness of heart exists among the present-day professed people of God, even as the Gospel records assure us that it existed among the professed people of God at the time of our Lord's first advent.

As the 'rich man' class in Palestine did not believe when one rose from the literal dead, there was no reason to expect that his 'five brethren' would believe if some of the publican and sinner class, risen from the death-state of trespasses and sins, were to testify to them. Let them hear Moses and the Prophets;

*"There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:45-47).*

This reference to Moses and the Prophets is clear evidence that the 'rich man' and his brethren represented the Pharisaical class in Palestine and abroad, because only they had Moses and the Prophets. The Gentiles had not Moses and the Prophets. Hence the error of supposing that all the rich, or the wicked and selfish rich, among men are referred to. The Gentiles are not considered in this parable. Let us then apply it only in the manner and to the classes in which and to whom our Lord intended it.

## 5

### Sins Punished in Real Life

In the preceding pages we have seen from the Scriptures that the penalty for the Sin of Eden was Death, and that the entire race descended from the sinful pair has been heir of that penalty. Death passed upon all men, and after a longer or shorter period of happiness or misery every individual has been received into the never-satisfied *Sheol* or *Hades*. We have seen that though Death and *Sheol* mean the complete cessation of life, yet Death does not, as many infidels claim, 'end all'; neither does Death in the case of a vast majority of our race mean that God's dealings with the individuals concerned are concluded; for there is to be a resurrection of the dead, for the purpose of instructing in the truth those not previously fully enlightened.

We have also seen that the penalty for wilful sin after full enlightenment is the "*Second Death*", so called because it is one of the possibilities of the second great judgment, which judgment has been assured because Christ died for man's redemption from Sin and the Adamic death. As far as human beings are concerned, the "*Second Death*" is to be the punishment inflicted upon those who have had the opportunity of escape from *Sheol* or *Hades*, the first death imposed upon mankind, but who, because of wilful perversity and unbelief, decline the terms of salvation offered by the Lord Jesus; or who, having accepted the terms, and having made a start in the right way, "*draw back unto perdition*".

But the question arises; these are the extreme penalties for sin; are not other punishments mentioned in the Bible? Is it not unfair, some ask, that a person leading an openly sinful and vicious life should simply die, while one who has in a measure at least striven to be kind and good should also die? 'Are not God's ways unequal?' (Ezekiel 18:25). And we reply, No: God's ways are not unequal. But in considering His methods we must allow that His operations cover thousands of years and involve various 'diversities', and that what may appear unequal in a limited view may appear grand and just and loving in a larger view. We must be willing to search the Scriptures if we wish to know how the affairs of the world are to be adjusted, and God's glorious Name vindicated through Jesus Christ our Lord, and we must not judge any part of His work until a considerable knowledge of His Word makes us competent to do so.

## Disciplinary Punishment

Going back to the beginning, we find that, though Death was the penalty of sin, our first parents were allowed to live for nearly a thousand years, and that the population of the earth increased rapidly, each individual gaining a certain amount of experience with good and evil before finally giving up the breath and being "*gathered to his people*" (Genesis 25:8; 35:29; 49:29). The record in Genesis would lead us to suppose that Adam and Eve were exceedingly sorry for their transgression, and that they gladly accepted the arrangement for animal sacrifices which the Lord provided, and taught their children to serve Him; for Abel, their son, is described as a man of faith (Hebrews 11:4).

When Cain slew Abel, he recognised that he deserved punishment at God's hands, but he did not relish having it administered by his fellow men; "*It shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me*" (Genesis 4:14). In the course of time the penalty pronounced in Eden would operate in Cain's case, and he would die; but the Lord inflicted an additional penalty for Cain's personal (and evidently to some extent wilful) sin, in a curse of vagabondage; and upon him was also imposed a severer form of that curse pronounced upon Adam, for while Adam and his race were to till the soil and earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, Cain was to till the ground and get no returns (Genesis 4:12).

But notwithstanding these handicaps Cain married, and (possibly because cut off from the soil) built a city, and became the progenitor of men skilled in useful crafts. As to whether or not Cain was adequately punished for the slaying of his brother, we must at least admit that God chose a method of discipline which, had Cain been susceptible to correction, would have been most valuable to him. And as Cain had not deprived Abel of that future life which is the reward of the faithful, and could not do so, may we not be satisfied with the punishment which God inflicted on him in this life, without wishing him to be punished *again* in the next life, either in literal flames to all eternity, or in never-ending mental agony?

Note that the vengeance which God proclaimed against anyone who would interfere with Cain was to be in this life (Genesis 4:15); also that Lamech, whose sin was similar to that of Cain, expected to be visited with the merited punishment of his crime in this life (Genesis 4:23,24).

There are other instances in the Scriptures where individuals were punished for personal offences, which need not be detailed here. Suffice it to say, the wise man recorded it as his experience, that –

*"His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sin. He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray."* (Proverbs 5:22,23).

*"The perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them."* (Proverbs 11: 3).

The crystallisation of a bad character as a result of continuous wrongdoing, and an early death, are thus set forth as a form of punishment for the sinful, though they themselves do not always realise it as such. But they sometimes have even a more direct punishment; as, for instance, Haman, who was hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai (Esther 7:10). The Psalmist also refers to this direct form of punishment, in connection with the enemies of Israel;

*"The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. . ." (Psalm 9: 15,16).*

These instances, and many others which could be cited, show us another fact; namely, that the reception of punishment for personal transgression does not exempt any human being from the general punishment of death.

But not all the wicked who spread themselves as a green bay tree (Psalm 37:35) are cut short in their miserable careers, or get caught in their own snares. Some of them live long, to torment the victims of their power, and should not they be made to feel the torments of 'hell, or of some other place equally suitable for the purpose, where they will be made to undergo some of the pains they inflicted on others? Such questions will force themselves upon the attention of the sincere lover of righteousness. The wish to have evil-doers punished and well-doers rewarded seems to be instinctive in the human breast. Let us, however, leave the individual sinners for the present, resting quietly in *Sheol* or *Hades*, while we inquire concerning -

### **God's Present Dealings with Sinful Nations**

The antediluvians did not profit by God's leniency toward Cain and others in allowing them to live (2 Peter 3:15), but sinned even more; and the Lord perceived that *"all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth"*, and the earth was "filled with violence" (Genesis 6:12,13). Hence the flood was brought as a punishment in this life upon those wicked people. So also Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, and the Canaanites and others, when their cup of iniquity was full (Genesis 18:20; 19:24,25; Ezekiel 16:50; Genesis 15: 6; 1 Kings 21:26). The punishment of these

nations by extermination, also sundry chastisements upon Israel, are described by Jude (5-7) and Peter (2 Peter 2:4-10) as examples of God's ability to reserve the unjust unto a day of judgment to be punished, the "*day of judgment*" in their cases having been the time of their overthrow, as recorded in the Scriptures. So all Christians are encouraged to take comfort from the fact that though the enemies of Christ are allowed to flourish for a time, yet they also will be dealt with, principally by the great overthrow of the wonderful systems of error which have been allowed to flourish all through the age (2 Peter 3:7-10; Revelation 19:11-21).

God took the nation of Israel under his special instruction for particular purposes, the most important of which were to teach the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the need of a sin-offering before sins could be forgiven, and to prepare a people to receive the Messiah (Romans 7:13; 8:3; Galatians 3:22-25). Many national chastisements were inflicted, and much personal discipline; and when in any case (either national or individual) an adequate punishment was inflicted, it is not right to charge God with such unfairness and vindictiveness as that He will punish them again in the next life. There will be enough unrequited evils to be reckoned with in the resurrection day, when all that are in the graves come forth, without imposing double penalties for single offences.

On the other hand, it is said of many of the nations round about Israel, that "*God winked at*" their idolatry and wickedness generally. This does not mean that God connived at their wrongdoing, nor that He excused it; but only that He did not send His prophets to reprove them as He did to Israel, nor special judgments to discipline them. It was only when the Apostles were sent out with the Gospel that God called on "*all men every where to repent*" (Acts 17:30). And the judgment, which began at the house of God, was to follow the preaching of that Word, culminating in the final overthrow of 'Christendom' at the end of the age (1 Peter 4:17).

Consequently, all those nations which the Gospel did not reach, and all those individuals in the nations who did not hear the testimony, and receive full enlightenment, cannot be considered to be as responsible, or as deserving of punishment, as those nations and individuals who have had the light. This principle the Lord enunciated when He said, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment than for the cities of Judea (Matthew 10:15; 11:20-24). Although Sodom and Gomorrah had been condemned in one of the 'this life' judgments, and although Judaism was also in 'this life' condemned and overthrown in a judgment at the end of the Jewish age, our Lord's words intimate that in the future life there is to be some squaring of accounts, so that those who

sinned against more light shall be dealt with more severely than those who sinned against less light. The judgment of nations and systems, as such, is concluded in this life. The judgment of the next life will pertain to individual cases. For a thousand years Christ and the Church will reign, and will deal with the resurrected millions with a view to their correction and their establishment in righteousness.

When it is understood that no individual forfeits eternal salvation because of ignorance of the way, and that none gains eternal life without faith and obedience, the importance of knowledge in order to responsibility and salvation is realised. A specimen passage from the Old Testament, written to the Israelites under the Law, clearly shows this;

*"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every, work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."* (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14).

This was in accord with the Covenant made at Sinai, the terms of which included a threat on God's part to punish every infraction of the Law. It was in harmony with this understanding that the Jews were disciplined for eighteen centuries.

But that Law,\* together with the judgment of every secret thing, whether good or evil, that pertained to it, was only for the people of Israel. There was no such standard for the judgment of the Gentiles until Christ came and opened up the possibilities of the New Covenant, and a judgment based on it. So we have the announcement of John 3: 4-21. The Law Covenant had been found inadequate to the necessities of sinful man, and what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God accomplished through the sending of His beloved Son (Romans 8:1-3).

The Apostle John (3:14,15) shows the whole world, like Israel in the wilderness, perishing as a result of sin. And as Moses lifted up the serpent, in order that whosoever looked on it might be recovered, so the Son of Man has been lifted up on the Cross in the sight of all men, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.

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For evidence that the Law Covenant was abolished by our Lord, who nailed it to His cross, please see pamphlet, 'Sabbath Observance, an answer to Seventh Day Adventism'.

God sent not His Son into the world to condemn it afresh, because the original condemnation in Eden already rested upon all, and the additional condemnation of the Law rested upon the Jews. On the contrary, God sent His Son into the world as the means of salvation, and whosoever would look to Him in faith should be saved.

The condemnation referred to in John 3:19-21 is that condemnation which comes as a result of rejection of the light. The condemnation is that after the Light (Jesus said, I am the light of the world - John 8:12) has come and shined upon them, men still love darkness rather than light. To love darkness 'rather than' light implies a knowledge of both, and a deliberate choice of the darkness. It is not necessary to be a believer, and then to fall away, in order to come under this condemnation. All that is necessary is the opportunity to believe, and the deliberate perseverance in unbelief.

The punishment follows, as stated in verse 15; they shall "*perish*", not be eternally tormented, but eternally perish. (In justice, it must be said that only a small proportion of earth's millions have had sufficient light to reject the Lord intelligently, because most of the so-called gospels have been beclouded with traditions of men which rendered them powerless to influence many reasonable minds.) That punishment will follow the deliberate rejection of the Saviour, whenever it occurs, either in the High Calling age, or in the Kingdom age (2 Corinthians 2:15-17; Hebrews 10:26-31; Revelation 21:8). But before any are subjected to the extreme penalty of Death (the Second Death in this case), they will be disciplined with a view to assisting them in the right way, and with a view to their realising the appropriateness of an open profession of Christ, as explained in Romans 10:9-17. As with the light, so with these disciplines; they will either aid the unbeliever to an appreciation of the true Christian character, and awake in him a desire to become a Christian, or they will tend to harden him in evil (2 Corinthians 2:14-17). It was because the Pharisees, though confronted with much light and many manifestations of God's power, refused to believe, that our Lord said, "*How can ye escape the condemnation of Gehenna?*".

### **The Relation of Forgiveness to Punishment**

But the severest condemnation comes upon those who have believed in, and then rejected, Christ. The reason for this is that, in order to become a believer at all, a man must have been convinced of his own sinful disposition and actions, and that the Lord Jesus Christ had died for his sins. Second, he must have repented, and desired the forgiveness of his sins. Third, he must have made open confession of

Christ as his Lord and Master. And, fourth, he must have pledged himself to live a new life, by following in the footsteps of his new Master. These are steps for the unbeliever to take, in order that he may become a believer, and they imply a considerable degree of knowledge, of God, of Christ, of the Scriptures, and so on.

On the other hand, God has taken steps to meet and assist the individual. After having first sent the enlightenment, He stands ready to forgive all the sins of that individual's past life as soon as he shall confess them in the name of Jesus (Romans 3:25,26), and to accept him as a son by Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:26; 4:5-7; 1 John 5:1). Moreover, He sends the Holy Spirit to dwell in the heart and mind of the new believer as a token of forgiveness and acceptance (Hebrews 10:15-17; Romans 8:14,15), and as an earnest of his eternal inheritance (Ephesians 1:13,14). God enters into a covenant with him, the Lord Jesus Christ being the Mediator, and definitely promises to remember his sins no more, to be his God, to deal with him according to the thoughts and intents of his heart, and so to instruct him that righteousness will become constitutionally established in his heart and mind (2 Corinthians 3:3,18; Hebrews 8:5-12).

Thus it will be seen that the believer is placed on an entirely new footing with new responsibilities, and yet with innumerable aids to the proper discharge of those responsibilities. He is said to be translated or set over out of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son; he is reckoned or counted as having passed out of the condemnation in which he was born as a son of Adam into a state of justification or imputed righteousness (Colossians 1:13; Romans 4:23-25; 5:1; 1 Corinthians 1:30). This is a truly blessed state, bringing joy and peace which the world can neither give nor take away (John 14:27; Romans 5: 8-11; 15:13).

### **Sins Committed after Believing**

But although all past sins are forgiven on becoming a believer, the child of God finds in himself inherited imperfections which lead to daily sins of various kinds. How are these dealt with? The answer is that these must be confessed and forgiveness sought as soon as the transgression is recognised. On these conditions God stands ready to forgive;

*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (1 John 1:9,10).*

*" . . . And if any man [that is, any believer] sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:1,2).*

He is the propitiation, not for ours only who now believe, but for those of others who may believe on Him at any future time, but who are at present still in the world where we once were.

As an aid to overcoming the sinful tendencies of the 'old man', and the putting on of the new character of holiness (Colossians 3:5-14), the believer is *"chastened of the Lord"*. These disciplines or chastenings (Hebrews 2:2,3; 12:5-29) are said to work out the peaceable fruit of righteousness in them who are rightly exercised thereby (but in no others). The believer is warned not to disregard Him who speaks from heaven, because all opposing elements are to be summarily dealt with; *"our God is a consuming fire"* (Hebrews 12:29).

Every believer who has had experience of the disciplines of God can testify that of a truth every transgression and disobedience has received merited punishment; besides which have been those disciplinary trials and tests of character whose purpose has been more to develop spiritual strength and fidelity than to punish for specific sins. The Apostle Paul refers to these chastenings when he says,

*"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." (1 Corinthians 11:31,32).*

But the fact that our sins are forgiven in this way, and that they are not piled up against us for an accounting in the future life, does not relieve us from the necessity (often painful) of more or less 'stripes' and corrections from day to day. A hasty word spoken may be forgiven when we go to the Lord in prayer, confessing it; but the evil train of circumstances set in motion by that hasty word may be a sore punishment to us for many days, or even years, to come. An indiscreet act may cast a cloud over the life, even long after it has been confessed and forgiven, and reparation made so far as possible.

The Lord's people must learn, and bear well in mind, that if the worldly sin with apparent impunity, believers will not be allowed to do so, but *"every transgression and disobedience"* will receive a just recompense here and now. Just as an ignorant child thrusting its fingers into the fire will be burnt because it is a law of

nature for fire to burn, so every believer who sins, even ignorantly, will find himself suffering for it in one way or another, because it is a law of the New Covenant to *"cleanse from all unrighteousness"* by making us feel in a practical way the exceeding unprofitableness of sin in any shape or form. It is a comfort to realise that the guilt of our transgression is removed because of our faith and the application of the blood of Christ; therefore, when we find ourselves suffering the consequences of our mistakes, let us accept the discipline as from Him, and profit as much as possible by our experiences. No wonder the Apostle admonishes us to judge ourselves, and to *"make straight paths"* for our feet, *"lest that which is lame be turned out of the way"* (Hebrews 12:12-16), and that we may avoid unnecessary trouble.

### **Few Stripes and Many Stripes**

The setting in which this parable (Luke 12:41-48) occurs, seems to make it applicable both to the servants of God of the Jewish age and the servants of Christ Jesus during the High-calling age; because it is the enunciation of a general principle of stewardship. The Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat, as chief stewards of the Jewish household of faith (Matthew 23:2,3). Besides them were other servants or sub-stewards, whose duty it was to serve the people with their portion from the table of the Law (Psalm 69:22). On the other hand, the disciples were to be given a stewardship, and it was necessary that they be warned of the evil *"leaven of the Pharisees"*, and their general unfaithfulness, lest the disciples fall into like hypocrisy and corruption, and prove similarly unfaithful in their stewardship (Matthew 16:6; 13:52).

When our Lord performed the miracle which called forth the accusation that He was an agent of Beelzebub (Luke 11:14-16), and replied in unanswerable terms to the false charge (verses 17-26), the people began to gather thick together, to see and to hear; and He embraced the occasion vehemently to denounce that generation, particularly the Scribes and Pharisees. In the meantime, the crowd grew into an innumerable multitude (Luke 12:1), and the Lord spoke out plainly on a variety of subjects, addressing now the multitude, and again His own disciples particularly, introducing numerous similitudes, including several important parables.

Immediately following the parable of the servants who received rewards or punishments according to their deserts, our Lord partly explains the nature of the "stripes";

*"I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? . . . Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather, division:" ( Luke 12:49,51).*

*"Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" (Luke 12:56).*

*"I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite." (Luke 12:59).*

The *"fire"* above referred to was that described by John the Baptist;

*"he shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire:" (Matthew 3:11).*

*"he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3:12).*

The nature of this *"fire"* has already been explained. *"Fire"* fitly symbolises trouble and destruction. In that period of trouble through which the Jews were about to pass, every Jew would be severely tried; and according to their faithfulness or unfaithfulness under their Law Covenant, and their willingness to hear the Prophet greater than Moses, promised in that Law, and according to the degree of their sincerity or hypocrisy, their ignorance or their wilfulness, would be their responsibility, and the *"stripes"* to be inflicted by the painful experiences through which they would pass. The mass of the nation, we know, were stiff-necked and rebellious to the last, so that, as the Apostle Paul explains, *"the wrath"* came upon them *"to the uttermost."* (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16).

Those who, like the Scribes and Pharisees, grew bold through God's apparent slackness in requiring an account of their stewardship, misusing their office, beating the men servants and maidens, and eating and drinking to gluttony and intoxication their own traditions and false doctrines, were completely cut off from the Lord's favour, and their portion (notwithstanding their loud protests of sanctity) appointed with open unbelievers, where they rightly belonged (verses 45 and 46).

On the other hand, there were among the Jews, and even among the Pharisees, Scribes and priests, a considerable number not so thoroughly corrupt, who did not require to be cut off completely from the Lord's favour, and yet who could not, in their own interest, or in the interest of God's government, be allowed to go unpunished. Verse 47 describes the disobedient servant, who knew his lord's will, but did not do it. Verse 48 describes the servant who was ignorant of his lord's will, and did not do it. The *"fire"* which baptised the nation, causing physical pain

and mental anguish as their favourite indulgences were burnt up, and their hopes of earthly grandeur destroyed, brought to the disobedient and ignorant servants many hard experiences, to which might be added those personal afflictions which God could send, if He saw fit to administer discipline in that way. Such a servant, receiving "*many stripes*", or "*few stripes*", would be amenable to instruction, and would not be cast out as a hypocrite or unbeliever. So, we find that various of the disobedient and ignorant servants of the Jewish age were subsequently pricked to the heart by the preaching of the Apostles, when they realised that their blindness and wilfulness had led them to crucify the Son of God (Acts 2:37-40; 3:17-19; 6:7), and they became "*obedient to the faith*", receiving remission of their sins.

It may be asked, Why was not the ignorant servant, who knew not his lord's will, and yet committed offences, excused on account of his ignorance? And the answer is, Because as a Jew he had access to the Law, and it was his business to know God's will, and to be awake and ready for the Great Prophet which God had promised to send them (Deuteronomy 11:7-21; 18:15-19).

We see then that the infliction of "*few stripes*" or "*many stripes*" was a necessary discipline to all those Jews whose perversity of heart was not such as to secure their complete cutting off from the favour of God (Romans 11:19,20). We see, further, that the "*stripes*" were administered in this life, largely by the experiences through which the Jews as a people were put at the end of their age; and, further, that those servants who proved amenable to discipline, and humbled themselves, and became obedient, were continued in God's favour. They were able subsequently to accept forgiveness by faith and to enter the high calling which is of God in Christ Jesus.

The faithful servant in the parable represents that class of humble-minded Jews, of whom the Apostles, Nathanael, Stephen, and others were good examples, who had been in the proper attitude of watchfulness, who had studied the Law and the Prophets, and were expecting the Messiah promised therein, and who had as far as possible lived up to the Law which was given as a pedagogue to lead them to Christ (Galatians 3:24). As such they received the Heavenly Father's approval and were made the first distributors of the good news of the Kingdom to the Jewish household, and subsequently to all others who, from that day to this, have profited by their writings and sayings (Matthew 28:19,20; Luke 24:47,48).

The Lord Himself was represented in the 'Adversary' who would deliver up the Jews to the judgment, unless they agreed with Him quickly. Those who did 'agree' with Him received the great blessing He had come to bestow (Luke 12:58,59; Acts 3:26).

### **"Stripes" in the Household of Faith**

Looking back over the Gospel age, we see that the same variety of servants has existed in the Household of Faith. Every believer receiving the Holy Spirit and a knowledge of the truth becomes a servant of the Lord, to encourage and comfort other believers, and to give out the glad tidings as meat in due season. Some may have a public position, as had the Scribes and Pharisees among the Jews; others may serve in more humble capacities; but all are alike servants of one Master, and are responsible to Him for the faithful performance of their stewardship (1 Corinthians 12:13-31; Matthew 23:8; 28:18-20).

The Lord has dealt and still deals with His servants according to their deserts. The hypocritical, who beat their fellow-servants and otherwise misuse their office, he casts out; while the faithful receive His approving "*Well done!*" and the needlessly ignorant and disobedient are dealt with, in order that they may learn to obey Him, and may grow in knowledge and grace, as they should. This disciplinary dealing must take place in the present life, else the servants would not be fitted for further service, but, with the openly and perversely wicked servants, would need to be cast out, and have their portion with the hypocrites (Matthew 24:42-51). But, if rightly exercised by the chastenings of the Lord, confessing their mistakes, and reforming their lives, they may, after all, by the mercies of God extended toward them in the New Covenant, make their calling and election sure, and receive the glorious reward of the overcomer.

### **The Sin unto Death**

The same varieties of sins: (1) unforgivably perverse, (2) forgivable, but requiring "*many stripes*" or "*few stripes*", are referred to as (1) "*sin unto death*" and (2) "*sin not unto death*".

*"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death."* (1 John 5: 16,17).

*"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." (James 5:19,20).*

*"A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." (Titus 3:10,11).*

*"All unrighteousness", whether committed unconsciously by the persevering saint, or wilfully by the reprobate, is sin; and it is the duty of the brethren to assist one another, so far as possible, out of sin and into righteousness and holiness. This can be done by:*

- Timely Exhortation - Hebrews 3:13-19; Titus 3:8.
- Instruction, Admonition, and Reproof - 2 Timothy 2:24,26; Titus 3:10,11; 2 Timothy 4:2.
- Prayer - James 5:13-20; 1 John 5:14-16.
- Pointing to Jesus as the great Sacrifice for sin, and otherwise assisting the erring to confess his sins and to reform his life. This needs to be done very tactfully and patiently - Galatians 6:1,2; Matthew 18:15-18.
- Withdrawing from the erring, while at the same time admonishing them, that they may the better realise their wrong course and reform - 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15.

If any Christian be in doubt as to whether or not he has committed the *"sin unto death"*, let him humble himself, confess his fault, and make reparation so far as possible. Then let him accept forgiveness as a free gift from the Lord, and strive diligently to overcome the tendency to evil. The Lord is long-suffering and merciful, and will not turn a deaf ear to the cry of any penitent.

But if any are proven to be perverters of the faith, leading others astray, and not susceptible to admonition, the apostolic advice is clear and plain;

*"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 10,11).*

*"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." (1 John 2:22).*

*"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have gained, but that we receive a full reward." (2 John 8; margin).*

It should be noted that in the parables of Matthew 24:42-51 and Luke 12:35-48 only servants of God are dealt with. The billions of mankind, with whom He will deal in the Kingdom age, are not referred to.

The more wilfulness, pride and bombast connected with our wrong-doing, the severer the penalties we must expect, the greater will be the fall, and the more difficult the recovery, even under the Lord's tender administration of disciplinary experience. He that is born of God, that is, the true believer, does not knowingly and continuously practise sin (1 John 3:4-9); if he did, he would cease to be recognised as a child of God (2 Peter 2:12-22); and would be given his portion with the hypocrites (Matthew 24:50,51). "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh." (Hebrews 12:25).

The wilful sinners of the High-Calling age, who have tasted the good Word of God, the powers of the coming age, the mercy of God in the New Covenant, and so on, are not counted as being among those in *Sheol* or *Hades* who are to be called forth in the Kingdom age, because they have already been, as it were, raised from the dead (John 5:25; 1 Peter 4:6; Ephesians 2:1-6), and have received in this life the testimony which will be given to others in the next life. Hence, if at the close of the present life such enlightened ones are found to have resisted the grace of God, to have sinned against the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-31), and to have hardened themselves in sin, forgetting that they were once purged (2 Peter 1:9), there can be but one conclusion to their present career - total and final extinction, without hope of resurrection. They are described as "*twice dead*", "*plucked up by the roots*", etc (Jude 12:13; 2 Peter 2:17-22).

### **Sins Forgivable in the World to Come**

When reproofing the Pharisees and Scribes, our Lord showed that some sins are more readily forgivable than others, because they indicate varying degrees of evil in the heart; "*for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*" (Matthew 12:34).

"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men." (Matthew 12:31)

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is here designated as the most reprehensible of all evil, even more so than the same offence committed against Himself.

'Blasphemy' is sometimes thought to mean swearing and the use of oaths, and is usually attributed to persons openly wicked and profane. But our Lord's words immediately following explain what He means by blasphemy.

*"And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."* (Matthew 12:32).

When our Lord healed the sick and cast out devils, He did it not by His own power, but by the power of God, to whom He constantly ascribed the honour. The deed itself was good, and every fair-minded onlooker was obliged to confess that the One performing the miracle was a good man. Yet they ascribed His power to Beelzebub, or Baal-zebub, one of the forms under which the Baal of Old Testament times was worshipped (2 Kings 1:2,16), and whereby Israel was led away from the worship of the true God. To accuse anyone of performing miracles by such a power was to insinuate that he was not a covenant-keeping Jew, but an idolatrous apostate. But even this reflection against Himself personally our Lord was willing to pass over. Whatever might be said against the Son of Man was within the range of forgiveness, because it was possible for an ignorant person to be misled by the misrepresentation of others. But not so in the case of blasphemy or evil speaking against the Holy Spirit, which was a manifestation of divine power in the performance of good works. Whoever would ascribe to an evil power the works of mercy and goodness performed by Jesus, manifested the corruption of his own heart, and an inexcusable degree of wilfulness and perversity. But, in accusing Jesus, the Pharisees were condemning themselves. For if the good works performed by Jesus could be attributed to an evil power, then all the good works performed by other Jews could be likewise so attributed, including those of the Pharisees themselves (Matthew 12:27.)

Our Lord's words, *"neither in this world, neither in the world to come"*, show further that there will be forgiveness in the next life for sins committed in ignorance in this life, obviously when the opportunity for repentance and faith has been lacking in the present life. Every 'pernicious' word must be accounted for (Matthew 12:36). The KJV says, *"every idle word"*; but the context makes it clear that the reference is not to words carelessly spoken, or in jest, but to such pernicious words as the Pharisees gave expression to when they ascribed his good works to an evil agency. But those words, not pernicious, spoken ignorantly against the Lord and His work, not proceeding from an evil heart, but from a heart perplexed and blinded by the adversary, may be forgiven, either *"in this age or in the age to come"* (2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Acts 3:17)

We substitute the word 'age' for 'world' in Matthew 12:32 because the Greek word *aion*, here translated "*world*" in the KJV, means a period of time. The outworking of God's purposes has occupied a series of ages. The present age is for the taking out of a people for Christ's name, and may appropriately be called the 'High-Calling' age. Succeeding this age will be the 'Kingdom' age, when the Kingdom of God will be established in the earth for a thousand years.

### **The Judgment Seat of Christ**

Christian believers are said to stand even now before the Judgment Seat of Christ, who at the end of their period of discipline will either account them "*over-comers*" to receive the crown of life (James 1:12; Revelation 3:21), or reprobates to receive the penalty of wilful sin (1 Corinthians 9:27; Hebrews 10:38,39). Christ Jesus is Lord of the dead and the living, and to Him every knee must bow. Every tongue must confess Him as Lord, to the glory of God, the Father (Romans 14:1-12; 2 Corinthians 5:9,10; Philippians 2:9-11).

Those who have come to know this great truth in the present life should gladly bow the knee now. But those who are not yet enlightened concerning our Lord's high position and their duty towards Him will be given that light in "*the world [or age] to come.*"

In the Kingdom age the light will shine for the benefit of those not enlightened in the past. It will be the same light that now shines in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord, but then its rays will reach every man, whereas now they reach but a small proportion of those who have lived since He came into the world. Yet the Apostle says, "*That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*" (John 1:9).

When they are enlightened their responsibility will be great. In the meantime, the Lord has allowed them, by their daily lives, whether in infidel France or heathen China to-day, or in Nineveh or Edom thousands of years ago, to develop such characters as they may, under the influence of their environment. And when in the Kingdom age they come forth to receive the light, and to be judged by that light, the characters they have developed will bring them into more or less discipline and trouble, until they either accept Christ and His glorious Covenant of Mercy, or, rejecting Him and it, are condemned to the Second Death. Thus shall be fulfilled the prophecy of the Revelator concerning that age;

*"He that overcometh shall inherit all [these] things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."* (Revelation 21:7,8).

May we not, however, anticipate that the number who will so foolishly bring upon themselves this utter destruction, when everlasting life and happiness are within their reach on such simple and reasonable terms as faith and obedience, will be comparatively small? And may we not be glad in anticipation of that happy day when an innumerable multitude of the saved will rejoice in everlasting life for evermore upon an Edenic earth, while the saints in glory rejoice with them in the love and mercy of a loving God and a glorious Lord and King? (Revelation 7:9-17; 5:11-14).

The standard of judgment is the Lord's Word; as He said,

*"the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."* (John 12:48).

*"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke [margin, excuse] for their sin."* (John 15:22).

His Word is the sword that brought the crisis to the Jewish people (Matthew 10:34; 23:34-38), that smites the nations (Revelation 19:15), that destroys the great Mystery of Iniquity (2 Thessalonians 2:8), and that judges His people now (Hebrews 4:12,13). And it will be His Word that will judge the resurrected millions of mankind in the Kingdom age (Revelation 20:12). Let us therefore *"hold fast the faithful word"*. Let us treasure it in our hearts, and live it in our lives.

So, then, being transformed by the daily contemplation of its precepts, and of the lives of the faithful of the past, and being stimulated by the richness of the precious promises, we shall, by God's grace, PRESS ON in the narrow way set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith!

## PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

This, the third edition of our Appeal Direct to the Word, is issued at a time when men's hearts are grieved by a war if possible more cruel and devastating than any other the world has known. Bodily torments and anguish of mind still call for pity. Many with anxieties concerning the future life still call for aid, for some assurance that departed loved ones are not having their human miseries prolonged in a place of eternal fire - some assurance that the great God and Creator of Heaven and Earth is also a loving God, and not the cruel monster He is so often pictured to be. And our hope is that this Edition, like the thousands of copies of the earlier editions, will do its part in clearing away the false impressions generally held. We urge all to take up their Bibles afresh, turn up the references herein given, and see for themselves the marvellous goodness of God in His dealings with sinful men, and the wonderful provision He has made for the enlightenment and blessing of myriads of our race who have passed away in ignorance of the Saviour who gave His life for them.

Melbourne, July 1, 1940.