

THE DEAD - WHERE ARE THEY?

***“I will ransom them from the power of the grave;
I will redeem them from death:
O death, I will be thy plagues;
O grave, I will be thy destruction.”***

(Hosea 13:74)

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CONTENTS

1.	When this Life Ends?	3
	Poem - Gladness Will Come to Stay	14
2.	Death and Resurrection	15
	Poem - On the Resurrection Morn	47
3	Thy Kingdom Come	48
	Poem - Beautiful Light	52
4	To Comfort All that Mourn	53
	Poem - God Shall Wipe Away All Tears	62

1 – When this Life Ends?

Questions of all sorts sink into insignificance beside one that inquires into the state of things the moment after death. What shall be when this life ends is a matter of the deepest interest to every one who can think, and the question is certain to have occurred to every individual who is able to contemplate possibilities further ahead than the next moment or two. Philosophers have wrestled with the question, and have formulated theories concerning it. Charlatans of all descriptions have coined mints of money by giving 'answers' to credulous seekers after information, many of these alleged 'answers' purporting to come from persons known to have died recently or in more remote times, but asserted to be alive and able to 'communicate' through human beings of appropriate sensitiveness.

Ministers of the Christian religion have also sought to answer the question, but their answers in the main have been so coloured by the philosophical speculations of heathendom, that the before-mentioned charlatans have, unfortunately, been assisted by them rather than exposed. The Bible answer to this important question has been sadly neglected in the meantime by many of those whose professed occupation is to teach the people what the Bible says. This neglect is the more saddening because the Bible answer is the only one that can correct the misapprehensions lodged in so many minds, satisfy the longings of every truth-hungry heart, and expose the colossal pretensions of the charlatans who prey upon the purses of those emotional beings who are convinced by their longing desires - the wish being father to the thought - in the absence of unquestionable demonstration.

In the Bible answer to the question, 'What shall be when this life ends?' there are simplicity and straightforwardness that command respect, and inspire confidence in the answer given. There is also a steadfast adherence to those facts which may be known apart from the Bible, which should form a weighty recommendation of the Bible to those who have not hitherto thought much of it. Moreover, in dealing with the situation revealed in its answer to the question, the Bible shows an incontrovertible logic which must appeal most powerfully to every admirer of consistency.

Testimony by Our Senses

Before seeking the Bible answer to our question, it will be useful to remind ourselves briefly of the leading facts observable by those in the presence of one just deceased. What is the difference between the condition of that one just prior to decease and his condition after decease? The senses of sight, touch, and hearing apprehend the evidence. What do they tell us? Sight tells us that there is no longer the activity associated with life, however feeble. There is no longer the rise and fall which must always be manifest where respiration is in process. Circulation of the blood having ceased, a certain pallor is manifest and remains. Touch tells us that there is no pulse, and presently informs us of a coldness that has come over the dead body. Hearing assures us that there is absolutely no movement within the trunk of the deceased, as there would be if the internal organs were functioning. So these three senses agree that life has ceased, and that death has taken place. As far as these senses can inform us, the deceased person is no longer in existence. If it be asserted that something has flown away, and persists in living after the person is apparently dead, the senses of sight, touch, and hearing cannot confirm such assertion; they can but say, we neither saw, heard, nor felt anything go.

Will the Scriptures confirm the testimony of sight, touch, and hearing? If so, to what extent? And will the Scriptures give us additional information of a sort not deducible from the examination by the three senses? To these questions we answer - Scripture fully confirms the testimony of the senses in regard to our question, and gives additional information such as the senses cannot supply.

Testimony by The Psalmist

The phrase, 'hymn book theology', is sometimes used in derision of sentiments expressed in hymns. It cannot be denied that some of these sentiments are far from bringing glory to God and edification to His saints. The reason for this is because the writers of hymns are not always careful to follow closely the teaching of Scripture. Expressing their own thoughts, the hymnists could not avoid going astray on some points, and this is said without disparagement of many beautiful and most comforting hymns, for which we acknowledge indebtedness to talented saints of all ages.

But there is a hymnal nearly three thousand years old, which speaks with the authority of divine inspiration; namely, the Book of Psalms. Whatever is found in the Psalms is true theology, and is to be accepted as such. If they say anything bearing on our question, their utterance will be the divine ultimatum that should satisfy every requirement of those who believe in God. Now it is a fact that some exceedingly plain and explicit statements occur in the Psalms, the perusal of which leaves no room for doubt. For example, *"In death there is no remembrance of thee: In the grave who shall give thee thanks?"* (Psalm 6:5).

If the ability to remember be gone, there is but little left. The power of connected thought goes out with memory, and only a blank remains. Not only is God forgotten in death by those who in life called upon His Name, but there is no power by which the dead can praise Him. The Psalmist in a sore illness uses this last as an argument with the Almighty - Save me! For if I die I shall not be able to remember thee or give thee thanks.

With a similar argument the Psalmist again calls upon God, *"What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth?"* (Psalm 30:9).

And again, *"Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? Shall the dead rise and praise thee? Selah. Shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave? Or thy faithfulness in destruction? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?"* (Psalm 88:10-12).

Contrast with this testimony of the Psalmist the following from a well-known hymn by Isaac Watts. 'Why should we start and fear to die? What tim'rous worms we mortals are! Death is the gate of endless joy; And yet we dread to enter there.' This is but one example of many hymns which assert that death is the gate of joy, whereas the Scriptures say that death is the entrance to the grave - a condition of destruction, darkness, and forgetfulness. Other modern hymns assert that the dead can praise the Lord much better than they could while alive. The disagreement is so serious that it is quite clear we cannot believe both. We cannot believe that a dead person both can

and cannot praise the Lord; that a dead person cannot remember and that he can remember. It is therefore incumbent upon us to make choice. Which shall we believe; the inspired Psalms, or the uninspired modern hymns? Choose this day!

Another assertion of the Psalms is, *“The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence”* (Psalm 115:17).

And King Hezekiah, having recovered from his serious illness, and having received the promise that fifteen years should be added to his life, sang a song of praise to God, saying, *“For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day”* (Isaiah 38:18,19).

Testimony by the ‘Preacher’

Efforts are constantly made to discredit the book of Ecclesiastes on account of its plain teaching in regard to what shall be when this life ends. It is alleged that it was written not under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but in a pessimistic mood, Solomon, its writer, having ‘seen life’, and tired of it. The royal preacher undoubtedly did some very foolish and exceedingly wrong things; but the tone of the book, and particularly of its closing exhortation, is, *“The end of the matter, even all that hath been heard, is, 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; margin).

A book that enforces its entire teaching, *“even all that hath been heard”*, with words like these, and those other words, *“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth”* (Ecclesiastes 12:1), cannot be catalogued as infidel literature, and this book is grossly libelled by those who so classify it.

The testimony of the ‘preacher’ concerning our question is clearly expressed. *“For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and*

their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.” “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, whither thou goest.” (Ecclesiastes 9: 4-6,10).

This teaching agrees exactly with that of the Psalm before quoted. If, therefore, some seek to discredit Ecclesiastes on account of this teaching, they should also find equal fault with the Psalms. But the right thing would be for them to revise their own false teachings, and remodel them according to the inspired declarations of the sacred Word.

Another portion of Ecclesiastes that is in even greater disfavour than the above with those who seek to discredit the book is, *“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth so dieth the other; yea they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man whether it goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast whether it goeth downward to the earth?”* (Ecclesiastes 3: 19-21; v. 21 according to ancient MSS. and R.V.).

This is of course very shocking to those who entertain certain notions about the constitution of man. But if this passage has to be criticised, then Genesis must be criticised on precisely the same ground. Moses wrote that the beasts of the field, the cattle, and the creeping things were made by God out of materials taken from the earth (Genesis 1:24-25); he also wrote that *“God formed man of the dust of the ground”* (Genesis 2:7), and that the effect of death would be that man should *“return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shall thou return”* (Genesis 3:19). As for all having *“one breath”*, this is a truism; every one knows that the same atmosphere is breathed by man and beast, and that when either man or beast stops breathing he stops living.

From the reading of Ecclesiastes 3:21 as above quoted from ancient manuscripts and the Revised Version, it would appear that the well known facts mentioned in verses 19 and 20 (in harmony with Genesis) were here cited by the ‘preacher’ in contradiction of heretical notions

that were even then abroad, as they are now, to the effect that man when he dies goes upward and the beast when he dies goes downward. The fact is that in death, and as far as death is concerned, a man has no pre-eminence above a beast. Both being alive, the man is superior to the beast; both being dead, the man has no advantage over the beast.

Nevertheless, the dead man has prospects which the dead beast cannot have, for God has promised that man shall be raised from death, but has made no such provision on behalf of the beast. It is because of this prospect that the 'preacher' says that "*the spirit* [or breath, representing the power to live] *shall return to God who gave it*" (Ecclesiastes 12:7). The Hebrew word rendered "*spirit*" in this passage is the same as that rendered "*breath*" in Genesis 6:17; 7:15; Ecclesiastes 3:19; and many other places.

Old Testament evidence in regard to our question has not been nearly all exhausted in the foregoing; there is much more to the same effect. What we have considered fully bears out the evidence of the senses (sight, hearing and touch), which evidence is the same beside the death bed and in the autopsy.

But Scripture looks forward as the senses cannot do. Scripture mentions the remedy for the disaster. As the people have been taken away in death, and have returned to their dust, they will in a time to come be brought back to "*their former estate*" (Ezekiel 16:53-55). The children, too, shall return from death, "*the land of the enemy*", to their own border, where they lived before death took them (Jeremiah 31:15-17).

Scripture makes no claim that people are alive while they are in death; recognizing that the people are actually dead, the Word of God mentions the only logical remedy for the situation; namely, RESURRECTION.

Testimony by Jesus Christ

"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. ... Jesus spake of his death. ... Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead." (John 11:11-14). *"I am the resurrection and the life"* (John 11:25).

Coming now to the New Testament, we find no discrepancy between it and the Old Testament. The same answer is given to the question, 'What shall be when this life ends?'. In the Old Testament it is said of both good and bad that they sleep in death, knowing nothing (2 Chronicles 12:1,16; 14:1,2; 16:13; 17:1-6; 21:1; Ecclesiastes 9:5). In the New Testament our Lord Jesus Christ gives the same teaching, as the above citations from John's gospel prove. This is confirmed by the incident of Lazarus' being raised from death, or waked out of his sleep. Had Lazarus been four days in heaven, he must have had much to tell about the wonders he had seen, and he might have been excused had he reproached his friend for calling him back to earth again. But there was no gathering of an immense multitude to hear a lecture from Lazarus on 'What I saw in my four days' visit to the heavenly courts'; for Lazarus had nothing to relate; nor did his sisters and friends expect that he would have. Lazarus had not been to heaven at all. *"No man hath ascended into heaven"*, said our Lord (John 3:13). Lazarus was simply asleep in death, knowing nothing, doing nothing; and it was from death that his loving friend Jesus brought him back.

In connection with this incident we are told Who has the power to raise the dead. It is Jesus; He is the resurrection and the life. By his death and resurrection He became Lord of dead and living, having paid the price of His own precious blood to purchase the race to Himself (Romans 14:9; 1 Corinthians 6:20). He has the *"keys"* of death and hades, and in due time will use them, and will release those who are bound in the prison (Revelation 1:18). He will call forth all those in the graves. (John 5:28). *"There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust"* (Acts 24:15).

Testimony by Peter and Paul

"For David is not ascended into the heavens" (Acts 2:34). *"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep. ... For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"* (1 Thessalonians 4:13,14). If our Lord said, *"No man hath ascended into heaven"* (John 3:13), the Apostle Peter was equally explicit concerning David. *"David is not ascended into the heavens."* Language could not be plainer than this. David was more than a thousand years dead when Peter said this about him. He was *"both*

dead and buried", and for a thousand years had been sleeping with his fathers. Since the day of Pentecost nearly two thousand years more have passed, and David's death-sleep still remains unbroken. But just as surely as great David's greater Son has the "keys", just so surely will He one day call forth His renowned ancestor; then He Who was David's son shall be David's Lord; He Who was the offspring shall be the root of David, from Whom David will derive his life (Matthew 22:41-46; Revelation 22:16).

Paul's testimony is quite as clear on this question as those before cited. The believers who died had not gone to heaven; they were asleep in Jesus, and would be waked out of their sleep in due time by Him Who has the power to call them forth. Paul himself did not expect to go to his heavenly reward immediately at death. He recognized that the crown of righteousness would be laid up for him, and would be given him at the time of our Lord's appearing (2 Timothy 4:6-8; John 14:1-3).

If there be no Resurrection?

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

Those Christians whose theology is corrupted by mixture with heathen philosophy and world-wisdom, and who therefore vainly suppose (contrary to Scripture and the evidence of their senses) that the dead are not really dead, but away in the enjoyment of more genial environment, relieved from the incubus of 'this mortal coil', see no reason why there should be a resurrection of the dead. To them the resurrection appears to be a positive and very great disadvantage, since the weight of the happily shuffled-off 'mortal coil' will again become a burden upon the now liberated soul. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that they take this view, and that many of them openly reject the idea of a resurrection as not only useless but injurious.

Their premise is wrong. The soul or spirit does not - can not - live independent of a body, and the dead souls are not living somewhere while the body moulders away. The truth is, that if there be no resurrection of the dead, there is no ray of hope to lighten the future

even for the saints, let alone the sinners. The Scriptures give us the logical position in the event of there being no resurrection. *"If the dead rise not, ... then they also which are fallen asleep [dead] in Christ are perished"* (1 Corinthians 15:16-18).

This is easy to understand. If we cannot look forward to resurrection, we cannot look forward to anything. There is only blackness of darkness; the infidel teaching is correct; 'death ends all'; and we, having hope in Christ in this life only, *"are of all men most miserable", or "pitiable"* (1 Corinthians 15:19; R.V.).

But, thanks be to God, though death is the end of life, as Scripture and our senses affirm, death has not the last word. The Son of God has died for our sins, has Himself been raised from death, has abolished death, and has brought life and incorruptibility to light (2 Timothy 1:10). He must reign until death is put under His feet and destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:25,26; Revelation 20:14). Then shall the ransomed of the Lord exult, saying, *"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ... Death is swallowed up in victory!"* (1 Corinthians 15:54,55). Praise ye the Lord!

Gladness Will Come to Stay

Some glowing morn, when heaven bends caressing
Earth's darkest vale to cheer;
Waking to know and love our Father's blessing,
Life will be grandly dear.

Chorus.

*Gladness will come, hallelujah, it is coming,
Gladness is on the way;
God will unveil the fulness of His mercy,
Gladness will come to stay.*

Some holy hour when broken hearts are crying,
Turning from sin away;
Mercy will bring a solace for their sighing,
Gladness will come to stay.

Desolate soul, for vanished treasure pining,
Wrecked on a friendless shore,
See through the gloom the star of promise shining;
Gladness will come once more.

Fulness of joy will shine away our sorrow,
Sighing will flee away;
Tears will not mar life's beautiful to-morrow,
Gladness will come to stay.

G.M.Bills
Zion's Glad Songs - No. 91.

2 – Death and Resurrection

Another way of putting the question, 'When this life ends?' is to ask, 'The Dead - Where are They?'. Thousands of years ago Job asked the same question. *"Man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"*.

But, unlike most modern questioners, Job was ready with the answer. *"Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep"* (Job 14:10-12).

It will be observed that Job's answer is in harmony with our Lord's statement concerning his friend Lazarus, already referred to, *"our friend Lazarus sleepeth; Lazarus is dead"* (John 11:11-25).

What was true of Lazarus, the Jew, is true of the general dead. It is also true of the Christian believers, called *"saints"*, as the Apostle Paul wrote, *"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep"* (1 Thessalonians 4:13-15).

The martyr Stephen, while being stoned, after seeing the vision of Jesus' glory, and praying for his persecutors, fell asleep (Acts 7:60).

These Scriptures show the great impropriety of considering that those who have fallen asleep in death are more awake than they were before their decease. The use of the word sleep in the natural way does not imply wakefulness on the part of the sleeper; neither should it be so thought of when used figuratively for death. In both cases the meaning is the same; quiet, unconscious, dark, forgetful rest.

The above texts also show that the saints and faithful of present and past ages did not at death, immediately pass to their everlasting reward. This thought is corroborated by several other portions. *"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have*

told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3). Here our Lord makes the union of His saints with Himself depend on His second advent, and in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 the Apostle says the same, showing that those who sleep in Jesus, and who are to be brought with Him, are not in heaven. *"The Lord Himself shall descend, ... and the dead in Christ shall rise."*

David was a man after God's own heart, for though he sometimes sinned grievously he repented and sought to repair the wrong he had done; yet the Scripture says of him, *"David is not ascended into the heavens"* (Acts 2:34). Our Lord said, *"No man hath ascended up to heaven"*¹ (John 3:13).

Sheol, Hades, Hell, Gehenna

Death is the same for both good and bad men. The same word describes their condition many times over. *"Abraham gave up the ghost [literally, "breathed out"], and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people."* (Genesis 25:8). *"And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people"* (Genesis 35:29). *"So David slept with his fathers"* (1 Kings 2:10). *"So Ahab slept with his fathers"* (1 Kings 22:40).

All of them, good kings, bad kings, good subjects, bad subjects, went to *hell*. This may seem a severe statement to make, and, in truth, if *"hell"* means eternal torment, it is too severe a penalty to prescribe for even the most hardened wretch that has ever polluted the earth.

But *"hell"* does not mean eternal misery. In the Old Testament it is a translation of the Hebrew word *sheol*, which occurs 65 times. It is rendered *"hell"* 31 times, *"grave"* 31 times and *"pit"* 3 times. In no case is the thought of eternal misery associated with the word, but always death, in which there is no remembrance, no joy, no love, no hate, no envy, no sensation whatever.

¹ The words, *"which is in heaven"*, are an interpolation, omitted from the Sinaitic and Vatican MSS. See Revised Version, margin.

In the New Testament, "*hell*" is a translation of the Greek words *hades* and *Gehenna*. The former is the equivalent of *sheol* (compare Psalm 16:10 with Acts 2:27; R.V.).

Sheol and *hades* both mean the covered, hidden, or concealed place or state. The English word 'hell' originally had this meaning, and four centuries ago it was in common use in England among the people. The farmer would 'hell' his root crops; that is, he would bury them to protect them from the frost. The builder would 'hell' a house; that is, he would put a roof on it. The word was probably in a transition stage about the time the King James Version was being made, A.D. 1611.

Other words used in that version, the meanings of which have materially altered in the last three centuries, are 'prevent', in 1 Thessalonians 4:15, which then meant 'precede', but which is not now used with that meaning, and the word 'let' in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, which meant 'hinder', three hundred years ago, but now means nearly the opposite of that. So the word 'hell' had originally none of the terrible meaning that it has now. The student should verify the above statements concerning the now obsolete meanings of 'hell', 'prevent' and 'let', by consulting any unabridged dictionary of the English language.

Gehenna was the name given to a valley outside Jerusalem, into which everything fit for destruction was cast. Fires were kept burning there; but if something cast into the valley lodged on a rocky ledge and did not fall into the fire, worms would presently consume it; no one would interfere with the destructive work of either the flames or the worms. Just as Jerusalem in Palestine typified the 'New Jerusalem', so did the 'Valley of Hinnom', called *Gehenna*, typify the "*lake which burneth with fire and brimstone*", 'without' the New Jerusalem (Isaiah 66:24). This lake means "*the second death*", not everlasting torment, and it was to this that our Saviour referred (Mark 9:43-48; Revelation 21:8; 22:15).

The words *sheol* and *hades* may be understood as generally referring to the death that has come upon all the race on account of the transgression in Eden. This has passed upon all (Romans 5:12). *Gehenna* may be understood as referring to the death which comes as a punishment of persistent wilfulness upon those who have been brought to a knowledge of the truth.

To note a few instances of good men going to *sheol* will be instructive, as showing that *sheol* means the death condition, not torment. *“Oh, 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 meaning a place of torment, since he prayed to be hidden there until God's wrath were overpast. Genesis 37:35; 42:38; 44:29,31 are similar instances, telling of Jacob's trouble over the loss of Joseph and the anticipated loss of Benjamin. *“For I will go down into the grave [sheol] unto my son [Joseph, supposed dead] mourning.” “If mischief befall him [Benjamin] by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave [sheol].”*

Death for Man and Beast

Having noted the Scripture testimony that death is the same for both good and evil men, it is now necessary for us to learn a further lesson; namely, that death as such is the same for man as for the beast - the cessation of life. This may appear humiliating to us, who regard ourselves as lords of creation; but if it be true there can be no possible advantage in disregarding it.

Here is the Scripture statement on the point. *“That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast, for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man whether [this reading is supported by many versions, including the Revised] it goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast, whether it goeth downward to the earth?”* (Ecclesiastes 3:19-21). It would seem that already in Solomon's day, nearly 3,000 years ago, there were philosophers arguing on the same lines as those mentioned in the preceding chapter, that man had some advantage over the beast in death. Solomon reproves these, not with the unwisdom derived from his association with false religions, but by expressing the sentiments of the divinely inspired Psalms of his father David, which he must often have heard sung in the temple service. In view of Psalms 88:10; 115:17; 6:5, what else could he have written than *“Who knoweth the spirit of man whether it goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast whether it goeth downward to the earth?”* Surely the vain philosophers did not know it, even though they may have

thought and taught it; but Solomon, instructed by divine wisdom, knew what the philosophers did not know; namely, that man and beast have one breath - they breathe the same air, and when they cease to breathe they cease to live. This being so, the good man, as far as death itself is concerned, is no better off than the evil one, and the beast is no worse off than either.

The Spirit of Man

The words *ruach* in the Old Testament and *pneuma* in the New Testament are equivalents, and are translated “*spirit*”. Their primary significance being an unseen power, both words have a wide range of meaning; namely, spirit in the sense of a spirit being, as God, Christ, angels, and the joint heirs with Christ; spirit in the sense of mind or disposition; air or wind; breath, including the idea of power to live. In the last of these senses the word *ruach* is used in Genesis 7:15, “*breath of life*”, literally ‘breath of lives’, referring to the power to live by breathing that God had given to the beasts of the earth and the fowl of the air. The same phrase, ‘breath of lives’, occurs in Genesis 2:7, where the creation of man is described, and it refers to the power to live by breathing which God gave to man as well as to the lower animals. With the same significance is *ruach* used in Ecclesiastes 3:21, “*who knoweth the spirit of man*”, the breath, and verse 19, “*they have all one breath*”. In Ecclesiastes 12:1-6 the gradual decay of the human body is described. In verse 7 the result of the separation of breath and body is shown to be that the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit (*ruach*), or power to live by breathing, returns to God who gave it. To “*give up the ghost*” means, literally, ‘to breathe out’ (Job 3:11; 14:10).

Man became a Living Soul

Genesis 2:7, after describing the uniting of the body and the breath of lives, states that the result of the union was that the “*man **became** a living soul*”. It has been thought by some that the man **received** a soul unto himself; but the Scriptures use a different word, whose significance should not be overlooked. All are fully acquainted with the difference between ‘receive’ and ‘become’. A student receives a diploma; he does not become one. On the other hand, a boy becomes a man; he does not receive one.

Before God started the breathing process (by breathing into the man's nostrils 'the breath of lives'), there was no being, no animation. The breathing process started, animation resulted; and the hitherto inanimate form "*became a living soul*" or being. The union of breath and body produced the soul or being; the dissolution of that union between body and breath means the death of that soul or being. This was the condemnation that Adam brought upon himself. When he stopped breathing, his power to live ceased; the soul or being died, as the Scriptures say, "*All the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died*" Genesis 5:5).

Man in God's Likeness

Wherein consisted the likeness of the man to his Maker? We see that it was not in that man was given to have 'life in himself'. That was originally the quality of Jehovah, solely (John 5:26), and was given by Him to the Son at His resurrection. It is also to be given - which shows it is not yet possessed by them - to the Church, the joint heirs with Jesus (Romans 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15: 49,53).

The original likeness to God, as manifested in the first pair, was in the moral attributes. They were able to appreciate and to exercise within their limitations the moral qualities which find full expression in the Almighty. After the transgression, the likeness began to grow dim, and the present condition of the race is far from being an expression of the divine likeness. Provision is made in the New Covenant for the rewriting of the divine law on the heart of whosoever will submit to the process, and in the end God's likeness will once more be perfectly manifest in His human sons, as well as in those who will attain to the spirit nature. Any of the race not submitting himself to the New Covenant processes after full enlightenment on the subject will be cast into the Second Death (Genesis 1:26; Luke 3:38; Hebrews 8:8-12; Jeremiah 12:14-17).

The Resurrection of the Dead

The Scripture testimony concerning the state of the dead has been examined, and it has been seen that the dead are asleep. The Scriptures have been found to teach that the whole of the race has been condemned to death on account of the one transgression in the Garden of Eden, but that a redemption has been provided through the ransom for all given by Jesus. This brings us to the teaching which distinguishes the Bible from all other religious systems. These,

based on vain philosophies, would have us believe that the dead are not dead, that they do not cease to exist but rather enter at once more fully into life, still keeping on with their conscious activities. Their hope of a future life is therefore based on something within themselves.

The Scriptures, on the other hand, fully recognising that the dead are dead, and that they are powerless to help themselves, preach Jesus and the Resurrection. He has obtained by purchase the right to call them forth from the grave, and He will do so (John 5:29; 11:25). All of heathendom's and most of Christendom's teaching concerning the hope of a future life is based on the fallacy of the philosophers: all the Scripture teaching concerning the hope of a future life for the human race is based on the fact that Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was raised from the dead by the power of God (1 Corinthians 15). Christendom, with its teaching concerning the persistence of life in death and that the faithful have gone to be with the Lord, finds the Scripture teaching of the resurrection of the dead a great inconvenience. Christendom teaches that the soul or spirit (it has been seen that unscriptural meanings have been given to these words) is liberated by death from the 'prison' of clay, that the resurrection is a resurrection of the body only; in its opinion, the resurrection is to be a re-imprisonment of the soul. No wonder the resurrection is an inconvenient doctrine! Deliverance is provided from death and the grave. *"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"* (Hosea 13:14). Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory!

Depart and be with Christ

The expression in Philippians 1:23, of the Apostle's earnest desire to be with the Lord, has caused considerable discussion, and some have found difficulty in harmonising this passage with the general teaching of the Scripture on the subject of Death and Resurrection. On the one hand the Scriptures, Paul's writings included, teach that the saints must wait until the Lord's second advent before they can be with Him (John 14:3; Colossians 3:4; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 11:15-18). But in Philippians 1 the Apostle seems to teach that at the moment of departing this life he would be with the Lord. Does he really contradict himself?

No; the Apostle does not contradict himself in this matter. He was a prisoner in Rome, at the time of writing to the Philippians. He did not know which day might be his last. Being a fully consecrated saint, the devoted Apostle was ready for Christ to be magnified through him in any way, whether by a life of activity, or by a martyr's death. Either would be to the Lord's glory (Philippians 1:20,21), and which of them to choose he wot not (verse 22). He was in a strait betwixt these two - life and death.

The apparent contradiction is here: that whereas the Apostle plainly says he is in a strait between life and death, not knowing which of them to choose, the King James Version unfortunately makes it appear that after all he preferred death, that being generally understood by "*depart*". This version belittles the Apostle by representing that he did not know his own mind. The word *analuo*, translated "*depart*", occurs in only one other place in the New Testament, and it is there translated "*return*", "*And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when He will return from the wedding*" (Luke 12:36). A derivative, *analysis*, occurs in 2 Timothy 4: 6, "*The time of my departure is at hand*". The word *analuo* means 'loosing again'. In Philippians 1:23 it refers to the resurrection, at our Lord's second coming, when Paul and all the other faithful would be loosed from the bonds of death and all present evil conditions, and would be received by the Lord unto Himself (John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18).

This, which the Apostle much preferred, was not one of the two things between which he could not choose, but was a third thing, different from the others, and "*far better*". The promise was a crown of righteousness and glory "*at that day*" (2 Timothy 4:8; Colossians 3:4).

"Absent from the Body, Present with the Lord"

These words of the Apostle (2 Corinthians 5:8) have been held by some to favour the thought that the faithful are ushered into the Lord's presence at death. Yet the Apostle does not say this; he merely expresses his preference to be "*absent from the body, and present with the Lord*". In this verse he does not refer to the intermediate condition of sleeping, waiting for the Lord, because that was not his preference. He speaks of this in verses 1-4. "*For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a*

building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are (1) in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be (2) unclothed, but (3) clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

"In this tabernacle" is the present unsatisfactory state of the consecrated Christian, seeking to walk in the Lord's way, but hampered by the weakness of the flesh, which causes those who have the first fruits of the spirit to groan within themselves (Romans 8:23). The *"unclothed"* condition is the period of waiting for the resurrection, when the faithful one, having finished his course in death, sleeps until the voice of the Lord calls him. This condition of sleep was not desired by the Apostle; yet he knew it must needs be. The *"clothed upon"* condition is that in which the faithful consecrated of the Gospel Age will rejoice when they receive the new estate, the *"house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"*. Then they shall be in the presence of the Lord, for they shall see Him as He is, and shall be like Him (1 John 3:2).

In verse 8 the first and third conditions are mentioned, and a decided preference for the third is expressed. The second condition is not mentioned in verse 8, but this does not authorise the thought that the Apostle expected to pass from the first to the third without staying for a time in the second or grave condition. He expected to remain *"unclothed"* for a time, and looked forward to receiving a *"crown of righteousness"* at our Lord's appearing (2 Timothy 4:7,8).

The Thief on the Cross

In His dying hours our Redeemer was associated with malefactors. One of these *"railed on Him, saying, If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us"*. The other was more kindly disposed. Instead of railing against Jesus, he rebuked the railer, confessing that they two were receiving the just punishment for their crimes, while Jesus had done nothing amiss. Then he said to Jesus, *"Lord, remember me when thou comest in (RV and most ancient MSS) Thy kingdom"* (Luke 23:39-43). What measure of understanding and faith the thief had respecting our Lord's kingdom cannot be gathered from the few

words of the narrative. In any case, he was a suppliant, not for a place in the throne, but for kindness to be shown him by the Saviour. Joint-heirship in the kingdom is prepared for those who take up their cross daily and follow in the footsteps of Jesus, learning obedience by the things which they suffer (Hebrews 5:8,9; 2 Timothy 2:12). Manifestly the thief on the cross, making his request only a few hours before decease, could not be reckoned in with the cross-bearing, footstep followers and overcomers. But he was among *“all the families of the earth”*, who shall be blessed by that kingdom, even as he prayed. This is the purport of our Lord’s answer to him, *“Verily, I say unto thee to-day, thou shalt be with Me in Paradise”*. In order to show the harmony of our Lord’s words with the general teaching of the Scriptures on the state of the dead, the comma is placed after the word *“to-day”*, instead of before it, as in the King James Version; and lest it be thought that an unwarranted liberty has been taken in doing this, the student is asked to note² that there was no punctuation in the oldest manuscripts of the Bible, not even spaces to separate the words.

The reader of the ancient Greek manuscripts, devoid of punctuation, would have other aids to the understanding. Such an aid is given in the case under discussion. The late Dr. Bullinger explains;

The verb ‘say’, when used with ‘to-day’, is sometimes separated from it by the word *hoti* (‘that’), and sometimes it is joined with it by the absence of *hoti*. The word *hoti*, put between ‘say’ and ‘to-day’, throws ‘to-day’ into what is said, and cuts it off from the word ‘say’. For example, Luke 19:9, *“Jesus said ... that (hoti) this day is salvation come to this house”*, and (Luke 4:21), *“He began to say unto them that (hoti) this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears”*. But this is not the case in Luke 23:43. Here the word *holi* is absent, therefore the verse should read, *“Verily I say to thee this day, thou shalt be with me in paradise.”*

² The reader will also note that the Revised Version punctuation is not always like that of the King James Version.

The correctness of this reading is assured not only by the fact that our Lord's words are thus shown to be in harmony with the Scriptures which teach that the dead are really dead, but also by the fact that He did not come in His kingdom on the day of His death. The coming in His kingdom is at the second advent of the Redeemer, when the kingdom will come to cause God's will, to be done on earth as in heaven, to cause the wilderness to blossom as the rose, and to establish in the whole earth the paradise which was once in miniature represented in Eden, but which was lost on account of sin. Our blessed Saviour was not in His Kingdom on the day of His death, neither was He or the thief in paradise on that day. He was three days in *hades*. (Acts 2:31; 1 Corinthians 15:4). Jesus was of the royal family of David, and King of the Jews, but He did not become King of kings, with all power in heaven and on earth, until His resurrection from the dead (Romans 14:9; Acts 5:31; 13:33,34; John 7:39).

The word "*paradise*" means a park or garden, and here refers to the kingdom which, when set up, will make the whole earth an Eden of peace and happiness. The thief, who is still in *hades*, will not be in paradise until the Saviour calls him out of the tomb. The blessing he sought, no doubt with a measure of faith, on that day, when everything seemed against Jesus and the possibility of His coming as the King of kings and Lord of lords, will then be given him. His 'cup of cold water', given to the Lord in the hour of trial, shall not go unrewarded, for "*Verily I say unto thee to-day, thou shalt be with me in paradise*".

The Souls Under the Altar

In Revelation 6:9-11 the souls of martyrs "*under the altar*" are said to cry, "*How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*". Some have taken this to mean that the martyrs were enjoying a conscious existence between their death and their resurrection. This passage, from the allegorical and highly figurative book of Revelation, is not a proper foundation for a teaching that contradicts the plain statements of Scripture, namely, that the dead are asleep, that they know not anything, and that therefore they cannot call on the Lord. The dead martyrs, slain on account of their faithfulness to the testimony of Jesus, were offered on the altar of the worldliness of a persecuting

church and state, all of them 'slain' socially, in the sense of ostracism, and many slain physically also. They could not, while in the death state, personally pray to God, yet the fact of their martyrdom could and does cry to Him emphatically, *"with a loud voice"*, in the same way that Abel's blood cried unto God from the ground, and in the same way that the faithfulness of the Ancients is a testimony to us (Genesis 4:10; Hebrews 11:4).

The martyr Stephen did not in his dying moments cry for vengeance on his persecutors; and were he consciously existing in a disembodied state he would be unlikely to alter his prayer, *"Lay not this sin to their charge"* (Acts 7:60). The narrative plainly states that, *"When he had said this, he fell asleep"*. But God, in whose eyes the death of his saints is precious (Psalm 116:15), has arranged retribution for the persecutors of his people, details of which are given in later chapters of the Apocalypse. It is said of Babylon the great, *"In her was found the blood of the prophets, and of the saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth"* (Revelation 17:6; 18:5-8,24).

The Spirits in Prison

This passage (1 Peter 3:19,20) has presented great difficulties, especially to those who have not discerned the Scripture testimony concerning the future blessing. They have been puzzled to understand why, if some were preached to by our Lord, with a view to repentance and salvation, no similar provision was made for subsequent sinners.

The spirits that were disobedient in the days of Noah are not to be understood as spirits of deceased human beings, for the Scriptures have shown us that the dead man is not survived by the soul or spirit. The dead man knows not anything. The disobedient spirits were the spirit beings, or angels, who kept not their first estate, but associated themselves with the human race, in a manner not approved by God (Genesis 6:1-4; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). For this they were imprisoned, *"bound in chains of darkness"*, and *"cast down to hell"*. Here the phrase *"cast down to hell"* is a translation of *tartaroo*. This is the only occurrence of the word *tartaroo* in the Scriptures.

The disobedient, “*cast down*” angels were in the earth’s atmosphere at the time of our Lord’s first advent, and He often came into conflict with them, driving them out of some who were possessed and crazed by them. To them our Lord “*went and preached*”³.

What did He say to the disobedient angels? How did He say it? These interesting questions are fully answered in 1 Peter 3:18,19. “*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by [literally ‘in’] the spirit; by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison.*” Our Lord preached to these fallen angels by His suffering, His death, and His resurrection. There was no formal discourse on a fixed date. His entire ministry and His reward by the Father constituted the ‘preaching’; and to the fallen angels it must have been a wonderful object lesson on the reward of obedience as contrasted with the punishment attached to their own disobedience.

Is this preaching likely to profit the disobedient angels? It was intended to do so, if they will learn the lesson; for it is written that the dispensation of the fullness of times is not only for the purpose of blessing all the families of the earth under Jesus, but also for the purpose of gathering under that one Head the heavenly beings now out of harmony, that is, the imprisoned beings to whom Christ preached by His life, death, and resurrection (Ephesians 1:10).

If the disobedient angels⁴ turn from Satan, and submit themselves to the Lord Jesus, they will join in the glad ascriptions of praise and honour to God and His Son (Philippians 2:10; Revelation 5:13). If they wilfully persist in disobedience, they must be destroyed, for, “*All the wicked will he destroy*” (Psalm 145:20; Matthew 25:41).

³ “*Went and*” is here used in that superfluous manner, more common in times past than now, which still survives in our expression, “I’ve gone and done it”. In this case, “gone and” does not imply that a journey was taken; neither is this implied by “*went and*” in 1 Peter 3:19. Examples of pleonasm are fairly numerous in Scripture. (See Deuteronomy 29:18; 1 Kings 9:6; Isaiah 2:3; Jeremiah 29:12; Matthew 9:13; 19:21; Mark 2:18; John 15:16; Ephesians 2:17).

⁴ For further explanation in regard to the fallen angels and their prospects, please see the pamphlet, ‘The Spirits in Prison’.

Moses and Elijah at the Transfiguration

In fulfilment of Matthew 16:28, our Saviour, as recorded in Matthew 17:1-9, took Peter, James, and John into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them. On this occasion Moses and Elias appeared unto them and spoke with Jesus. This incident has been thought by many earnest Christians to be a certain indication that Moses and Elias were not really asleep; for, if they were asleep, how could they take part in the conversation.

The answer is found in the words of Jesus in verse 9. He charged Peter, James, and John, saying, "*Tell the **vision** to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead*". It was a vision, not a real visitation from Moses and Elias, that they saw. Jesus was a real person; Peter, James, and John were real persons; Moses and Elias on the mount were appearances, but not substantial persons. Visions in which the prophets have themselves borne a part are by no means uncommon in the Scriptures, the other participants in such visions sometimes being figurative beasts or creatures, impossible in a real or natural sense, but emblematic of great realities to be accomplished. John on the isle of Patmos was himself an actor in some of the visions he describes (Revelation 4:6-8; 5:1-9; 6:1,3,5,7; 10:8-10; 13:1,2,5,6).

Having the express word of the Lord that this occurrence was a vision, it is clear that there is no conflict between it and the plain statements of Scripture, which show that the dead are really dead, and must sleep until the resurrection day.

Peter, one of the eye witnesses of the vision, described it as a vision of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of His majesty (2 Peter 1:16-19; R.V.). The teaching of the vision is that Moses and Elias were superseded by Christ. Moses represented the Law Covenant, and Elias represented the ancient Prophets. Both testified of Christ, and till Christ. "*The Law and the Prophets were until John*". "*The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*." God, who "*spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son*" (Luke 16:16; John 1:17; Hebrews 1:1). This was the purport of the voice which the three disciples heard, "*This is my beloved Son, ... hear ye him*" (Matthew 17:5).

Elijah taken up to Heaven

The question is sometimes asked, 'Was not Elijah taken to heaven in the chariot of fire, and so ushered, without dying, into God's presence?' (2 Kings 2:1-11). At first sight, this narrative would seem a formidable contradiction of our Lord's word, "*No man hath ascended up to heaven*" (John 3:13), but the solution of the apparent difficulty is at once made clear when the student remembers the variety of ways in which the word 'heaven' is Scripturally used. There are the heaven in which God dwells (Isaiah 66:1); the heaven in which the stars shine (Genesis 1:14-17); the heaven in which the birds fly, that is, the air (Genesis 1:20,26); and heaven used symbolically to represent a portion of the world, or order of things (Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:7).

From John 3:13 and Hebrews 11:13,39, we are obliged to deduce that Elijah did not go up to the first of these heavens, where God dwells; and there is no reason to believe that he was taken to some place in the astronomical heavens; but it is perfectly feasible to believe that he was taken up into the air, where the fowl of heaven fly. Elisha saw Elijah thus taken away into the air, but, as our Lord's word plainly intimates, he did not enter the Divine Presence. In order to view Elijah's experience in harmony with other Scriptures, we must consider that he died, while being taken up, and has since been asleep. This experience of Elijah may be taken as illustrative of the taking away of the last of the joint heirs with Christ, "*We who are alive and remain*". The fiery chariot and the whirlwind in which Elijah was taken are symbols of the trouble and distress of nations with which this age is closing, and in which the Lord is gathering His own to Himself.

Enoch Translated

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him." *"And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him"* (Hebrews 11:5; Genesis 5:24). Nothing in these texts says that Enoch was taken to heaven; nothing in them says that he did not die, and Hebrews 11:13 would seem to include Enoch with the others mentioned when it says, "*These all died in faith*". Again remembering our Lord's words in John 3:13, the student is guarded against supposing that Enoch was taken to heaven. Referring to Genesis 5:22, we are told that "*he*

was *not*", which is another way of saying that he had ceased to live. The expressions "*was not*", "*were not*" and "*are not*" are used in Psalm 37:36; Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:18 to denote death. That he was translated (set over) without seeing death should therefore be understood as meaning that his end came so suddenly that he had no warning or intimation of its approach. The people of his time were very long-lived; compared with others, he was taken at his prime, and probably had experienced little of the aches and pains which accompany death.

The Lord "*took him*" in the same way that He received the spirit of Stephen, when that martyr fell asleep. He took their power to live, preserving their characteristics in His own records until such time as the resurrection should call them forth. In the same manner, the spirit, breath, or power to live, of all human beings "*returns to God who gave it*" (Ecclesiastes 12:7), to remain in His keeping until the resurrection, when the power to live shall again be bestowed. This 'spirit' is not, as we have already seen, a separate personality, which consciously lives apart from the body, but it is the breath of life, which God placed in the first man's nostrils (Genesis 2:7), and by reason of which the man "*became a living soul*" or being.

King Saul and the Witch of Endor

In 1 Samuel 28 is related the experiences of Saul with the witch of Endor. Saul had been most desirous of knowing how his affairs would go, but could get no answer from the Lord (verse 6). Therefore he sought out this "*witch*", who belonged to a class with which Israel was not permitted to have dealings, or to allow to live (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 19:31; 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:10,11; Isaiah 8:19), and which, moreover, Saul had put out of the land (verse 3). The medium asked Saul whom she should bring up, and he said, Samuel. Influenced by her description, Saul "*perceived that it was Samuel*". It cannot be supposed that power would be given to a witch, one of the prohibited class, to raise Samuel from death; for if the Lord would not answer Saul when he called upon Him in the appointed ways, much less would He answer through a spiritualistic medium. What the woman 'saw' and Saul 'perceived' was not Samuel, but a counterfeit of him, impersonated by a fallen angel, one of those who had been disobedient in Noah's days, but was now "*reserved in everlasting*

chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day". Samuel had fallen asleep; and, being dead, he could neither know nor tell anything. He had before his death prophesied that the kingdom should be taken from Saul. This was known to the evil spirit, which impersonated Samuel, and was referred to in the warning that was given to Saul. It seems also that the evil spirit was correct in saying that the battle should go against Israel, and that Saul should be slain. It could not have been otherwise, since God had at last definitely withdrawn His favour from Saul, in refusing to hear or to answer him.

Body, Soul, and Spirit

"I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). That the Apostle was not praying thus on behalf of individual believers, consecrated to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, is evident from several considerations. (1) The prayer has not been so answered; no believer has been preserved alive through the Gospel Age. (2) It would not be consistent with the consecration of the believer's body as a living sacrifice to have it preserved (Romans 12: 1; 2 Corinthians 4:10; Galatians 6:17).

If the Apostle's prayer be regarded as for the Church as a whole, it is readily understood, for the True Church has been preserved through the age, notwithstanding many attacks against it. The Holy Spirit has been preserved to it; its soul, or life, has not died; it has also been preserved as a body. The membership has never been recognisable by the world, for the world has not known them, even as it knew not the Head of that body, Jesus our Lord; but God has known them, and therefore His foundation has stood sure (2 Timothy 2:19). The Apostle's prayer has been answered on behalf of the Church collectively, as it could not have been, and was not intended to be, answered on behalf of any member individually. This interpretation is also in harmony with our Lord's words, *"Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18).

Dives and Lazarus - Luke 16:19-31

This is the concluding parable of a group of five running through Luke chapters 15 and 16. The reason for giving this series is stated in

Luke 15:1,2, *“Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, ‘This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them’ “. The Pharisees and scribes were hardening their hearts against the truth preached by our Lord, while the publicans and sinners were more often sufficiently humble to receive the truth gladly, and to reform their lives in harmony with it. The opportunity to enter the race for the high calling and joint heirship in the Kingdom was being proclaimed to the Jewish people. The scribes and Pharisees were not only indisposed to enter, but they sought to prevent others who were willing to enter (Matthew 23:13). One of their special grievances against the Lord Jesus was on account of His willingness to receive all sincere penitents, regardless of their social position, while at the same time He exposed the real wickedness of the hypocritical ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, not needing repentance.*

The group of parables now under consideration is a specially good example of our Lord's attitude. Beginning most mildly, with the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Silver Piece, it carries the reader on through the parables of the Lost Son and the Unjust Steward, until the grand climax is reached in the last of the group, and the end awaiting the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, as well as the blessing reserved for the penitent publicans and sinners, is vividly portrayed, by the symbolism of The Rich Man and Lazarus.⁵

In Luke 15:3-7 and 8-10, our Lord justifies His conduct by illustrations which must have appealed to all the right minded among His hearers. If a man have lost one sheep out of a hundred, or a woman one of her ten silver pieces, the lost one claims more interest and attention than the others, and great rejoicing is made when it is found. Similarly, there is more joy in heaven over one of these repentant publicans or sinners than over ninety and nine scribes and Pharisees who in their own estimation are just, and need no repentance. This was mildly sarcastic against the just-in-their-own-eyes, but it must have given great joy to the sincerely repentant.

⁵ For a detailed explanation of this parable, please see the book, 'Everlasting Punishment'. See also the book, 'The Parables of our Lord'.

The Prodigal Son

In verses 11-32, that most beautiful and touching of all parables, our Lord further justified His position by depicting the depth of sin and misery into which the prodigal son had fallen, and the gladness with which the father had received him again. So, although the publicans and sinners had wasted their substance spiritual in *"riotous living"*, and had even associated themselves with the Gentiles, it pleased God to receive them with gladness on their sincere repentance. Not only was He pleased to receive them, but He also made a feast of spiritual good things for them; and just as the father in the parable bestowed on his repentant, returning son the best robe, the ring and the shoes, so did the heavenly Father bestow on the repentant publicans and sinners the best robe of righteousness (that which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, much superior to that of the Law), the hope of immortality in the high calling just then being opened up (a ring or circle, being endless, symbolizes immortality), and the shoes, the preparation of the Gospel of Peace, wearing which their walk and conversation would be better than it had been.

In this parable the murmuring scribes and Pharisees are represented by the elder son, who would not take part in the merry-making, but in a discontented spirit boasted of his righteousness and long service to the father. The kindness and long suffering of God towards the Pharisees are shown in this, that the privileges were all theirs, as well, and they were desired to partake of them (*"All that I have is thine"*), and to rejoice in the return of the penitents. The Pharisees and scribes should have appreciated this, and should have taken the lesson to heart; but they were not so disposed; therefore the Lord proceeded, in the parable of

The Unjust Steward

(Luke 16:1-15), to show them the effect of the wrong use of their superior position and privileges as stewards of the divine favours, as far as the Law had revealed them (Matthew 23:1-3).

The scribes are here represented as standing between God and the people, as the steward in the parable stood between his lord and the debtors. The steward was wise; when he realised that his office was about to be taken from him, he made friends with the debtors, by writing off portions of their debts, so that they would be ready to favour him when he was cast out. Here was a broad hint to the scribes.

They, sitting in Moses' seat, had unjustly bound grievous burdens on the backs of the people. They had imposed burden upon burden by means of their traditions, which made the word of God of none effect. To have relieved the people of these weights of tradition would have been no more than just, and it would have been a wise policy for them to adopt, seeing they were about to be cast out of the stewardship; but, instead of conceding anything, they sought all the more to justify themselves, and thus made themselves more abominable in God's sight (Luke 16:15; Matthew 23:1-6).

The Rich Man and the Beggar

Finally, the superior position of the Pharisees and scribes (rich in spiritual things, clothed in purple and fine linen, representing their own estimate of their righteousness and hopes of royalty, and faring sumptuously every day (Psalm 69:22; Romans 11:9) is contrasted with the outcast, beggarly condition of the publicans and sinners (poor in spiritual things, lying at the gate of the 'rich man', and desiring to be fed with some crumbs of the favour so bountifully enjoyed by the 'rich man' (Romans 3:1,2). Knowing that the scribes and Pharisees would not accept the good advice offered them by means of the parable of The Unjust Steward, the Lord now makes a positive prediction of the course of events, and by means of the picture of the deaths of the beggar and the rich man shows the changes that were to come in the circumstances of the self-righteous Pharisee class and the penitent class of despised publicans and sinners.

The latter, dying to their unfavourable spiritual conditions, were to be carried by "*angels*" (messengers of truth) into "*Abraham's bosom*"; they would by this change come into line to inherit the good things of divine favour expressed in the Abrahamic promise. The Pharisees boasted of their lineage, not realising that fleshly descent from Abraham would profit them nothing if their hearts were not right. When their class, as a class, 'died' to their favourable circumstances, it, as a class, was 'buried'. ' How accurately this describes the condition of the scribes and their sympathisers for nearly twenty centuries! They have been 'buried' beneath the social 'earth'; every nation has crushed them down, and while in this '*hadean*', or covered, or buried condition, they have been in most grievous torments, being persecuted, or at least ostracised, in all the countries to which they have fled for protection.

In an earlier portion of this study, we have seen that the condition of dead *persons* is such that they know nothing and feel nothing. Many scriptures indicate this plainly, and we must not suppose that our Lord would contradict the straightforward utterances of the Old Testament, which He constantly quoted as the Divine Word. By recognising that our Lord was, in this parable, depicting the fortunes of two *classes*, as carried through the group of parables beginning with that of The Lost Sheep, the perfect harmony between Him and the Old Testament is clearly discerned.

While in his 'torment', the 'rich man' class apprehends something of what he has lost and the 'beggar' has gained. The Jews realise that they are under the divine disfavour; they also know that they are in many nations socially beneath the 'earth', and without doubt they realise that they have been tormented in the 'flame' of trouble which destroyed their city and polity in AD 70, and which has been 'burning' them ever since. They call to 'Father Abraham' for relief, as though their lineal descent should avail to relieve their trouble; but God refuses to send it, not even a drop of the cool water of truth to relieve their distress; for all His favours are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, and not for those who deny Him.

This, however, is not on account of vindictiveness on God's part, though the 'rich man' is reminded that circumstances once were different. The hardness of heart of the Pharisee and scribe class and their sympathisers has caused a 'great gulf' of pride and prejudice to be 'fixed' between them and those who have entered into the divine favour (represented by "*Abraham's bosom*"), so that it is practically impossible for spiritual benefits to pass to the Jews. This 'gulf' represents also, we understand, the "*blindness in part*" of Romans 11:25, which has been so effective that but few Jews have been converted to Christ since AD 70.

Near the close of this most marvellous of parables, in which the great Teacher so wonderfully used the impossible to represent the actual, is found a reference to the written words of Moses and the Prophets. If the 'brethren' of the 'rich man' (possibly representing the Jews living outside of Palestine at the time of our Lord's ministry) were indisposed to hear them, neither would they regard the testimony of the 'beggar',

now received into divine favour, nor of the Gentiles who have been received into divine favour with him, having been raised from the death state of trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:5,6). This should be to us an intimation of the reverence we are to render to God's Word, as expressed in the Old Testament, and that we are not to suppose that the New Testament contradicts Moses and the Prophets, when they tell us that *"the dead know not anything"*.

The Second Death

In the Garden of Eden, death was pronounced as the punishment for the transgression there committed, and the whole of the Adamic race was involved in it. This was the unfortunate result of the first great Judgment of our race (Romans 5:12,16).

Another Judgment Day has been appointed, because the Son of God tasted death for every man, thus purchasing the entire race, and securing the right to put each individual of the race on probation for life, with the alternative of death to the wilfully disobedient (1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Romans 5:15,18-19; I Corinthians 15:21-22; Acts 17:30-31; 3:23). The death which is a possibility of this great judgment is called the second death. Whereas the possibility of complete deliverance from the Adamic penalty is to be put within reach of all because of the Redeemer's death, there is no hope of release for those who may be condemned to the second death; it will be final, because none will be sentenced to it until after it has been determined that the character is wilfully opposed to God and righteousness. A thousand thousand re-trials would not alter such a case; therefore none will be granted.

The judgment which has for its alternatives eternal life and eternal death is going on now, in some cases. Each one who has been enlightened comes under a measure of responsibility, and some who have enjoyed a great deal of light are thereby brought under very much responsibility, so that wilfulness on their part would involve them in utter destruction without hope of remedy (Hebrews 1:1,2; 2:2,3; 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 12:25; Acts 3:23, 26). Even a small degree of enlightenment is not to be trifled with. Let us therefore be very careful that we be rightly exercised by the divine mercies (Romans 12:1; 2 Corinthians 5:14,15).

Satan in the Second Death

Second death does not necessarily imply dying twice. Satan, his sympathisers among the angels, and all his evil systems of superstition are to be destroyed in it, though they have not previously died (Matthew 25:41,46).

Thus is shown the fact that the significance of 'second', as attached to this death, is not in the number of times the transgressor dies, but in that it is the condemnation which may be pronounced as a result of the second great Judgment, which includes heavenly, as well as earthly, beings, also false systems (Ephesians 1:10; Colossians 1:20; 2 Timothy 4:1; John 5:22,30).

Throughout the book of Revelation (2:9,13; 12:3,9,12; 20:2,7,10) the name "*Satan*" is applied to a political system, of which we hope to say more on another occasion. In Revelation 20:10, this 'Satan' system is mentioned with two other systems ("*Beast*" and "*False Prophet*" (Revelation 19:20) as being tormented forever and ever in the lake of fire and brim stone, which is the second death. The "*Beast*" and "*False Prophet*" are cast into the burning lake at the end of the Gospel age; the 'Satan' system at the end of the Kingdom age. Since systems have no nerves, they cannot feel pain; this passage must therefore be viewed as strongly figurative, describing the severe dealings of the Lord with all systems of evil, looking to their utter destruction.⁶

The fact that the name "*Satan*" is used symbolically in the book of Revelation does not disprove the fact that there is a personal Satan. The personal Satan was at one time a spirit being in heaven; but he became a liar and a murderer when he tempted Adam and Eve in the garden. Our Lord spoke of all wilful liars and reprobates as being in a sense Satan's children, "*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do*" (John 8:44).⁷

⁶ For more concerning the beast and the false prophet, see book 'Everlasting Punishment'.

⁷ For full examination of the Scriptures referring to Satan, see 'The New Covenant Advocate', Sept. and Oct., 1915.

Everlasting Punishment

The “*everlasting punishment*” mentioned in Matthew 25:46 is not to be understood as everlasting pain. When a criminal is executed by sentence of an earthly court, his punishment is everlasting, or permanent, as far as men can make it so, but his pain is not everlasting, nor is it intended to be so. What the “*everlasting punishment*” of the wilfully wicked is to be is plainly stated in 2 Thessalonians 1:9, they “shall be punished with everlasting destruction”; not everlasting destroying, an interminable process, but everlasting destruction, a completed work, the Second Death.

In Matthew 25:26, the adjectives “*everlasting*” and “*eternal*” are translations of the Greek *aionios*, derived from *aion*, meaning ‘age’. As already shown, this Greek word and its Hebrew equivalent, *olam*, do not always mean ‘endless’. But in Matthew 25:46 there can be no doubt that endlessness, in respect of both the life of the blessed and the punishment of the condemned, is meant.

The word translated “*punishment*” is *kolasin*. It means ‘cutting off’, and thus plainly indicates the nature of the punishment to be meted out to the wilfully wicked, expressing precisely what has been seen in 2 Thessalonians 1:9, that “*everlasting punishment*” means permanent destruction without hope of recovery. They shall be “*blotted out*”, “*destroyed from among the people*” (Psalm 69:28; Acts 3:23). That we all may be so commended to God in Christ Jesus as to escape this fate is our earnest prayer.

Resurrection and Judgment

A further question needs consideration. If the dead are now quietly sleeping in the grave, and if only the wilfully wicked and perverse are to be everlastingly destroyed, as stated in the above passages, what of those millions and billions who have sinned largely through ignorance, but who nevertheless have seriously injured their fellow men; shall they go unpunished?

Our Lord’s words to the Pharisees supply a partial answer. He said,

“The men of Nineveh shall rise in [the] judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here” (Matthew 12:41-42).

“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here” (Luke 11: 29-32).

Here the principle is set forth of condemnation according to the degree of light sinned against, and the readiness or otherwise to repent when the error is pointed out. (Compare with John 3:18-21.) Here we are also shown that the people of Nineveh, the Queen of Sheba, and the generation of Jews whom our Lord addressed will all rise from the dead and be together *“in the judgment”*. That judgment will be the Judgment Day, or the thousand years of Christ’s reign, during which He will instruct the people in righteousness. Then also many will be punished as they deserve, with a view to their repentance and conversion (John 5:27-30).

Our Lord also said that the people of Sodom, and of Tyre and Sidon, will be there. If the mighty works which He did in Capernaum had been done in Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. Therefore *“It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment”* than for Capernaum (Matthew 11:21-24). The peoples of these ancient cities were sinners, but they were less culpable than the Israelites (Ezekiel 16:35-63). And if they would have repented had the Lord preached to them in their day, there is hope that they will do so when they come back from the dead in the Kingdom age. Yet each individual will receive just punishment for his transgressions, as the following passages show

“God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Proverbs 12:14).

“But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done” (Colossians 3:25).

“But I say unto you, That every idle word [that is, every pernicious or perverse word, as illustrated in the opposition of the Pharisees] that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36).

“My reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Revelation 22:12).

We conclude then that the quiet sleep in the grave from death to the Day of Judgment will deprive no one of the just punishment for his wrongdoing. On the other hand, neither does the sleep in the grave deprive any of a suitable reward for their good deeds. And further, the people of Nineveh, many of whom knew not their right hand from their left, yet repented under Jonah's preaching, and many others like them, will be glad to repent and believe under the blessed influences of the Kingdom of God.

On the Resurrection Morn

On the resurrection morn, when from death all souls are born,
When all hear the trumpet's peal, every sickness Thou shalt heal.
Thou shalt open blinded eyes, listen to each voice that cries;
Thou shalt open all deaf ears, till each soul the gospel hears.

To Thy people thou hast vowed that Thou wilt resist the proud;
Thou wilt give the humble grace, Thou wilt meet them face to face.
Thou shalt guide them with Thy Word, by Thy counsel rightly
heard,
And provide a happy home, refuge from whence none shall roam.

There shall be no sighing there, neither crying anywhere.
Every trust shall then be true, in the earth and heavens new.
Through the endless ages blest, nevermore by doubt oppressed,
All shall sing with one accord praises to their gracious Lord.

H.O.H.

Zion's Glad Songs; - 120.

3 - Thy Kingdom Come

A. - Are you interested in the Kingdom?

B. - What Kingdom?

A. - Why, the Kingdom of God.

B. - Well, I hardly know. I have prayed "*Thy Kingdom come*" all my life, but it is hard to be interested in a thing you do not understand. Now, if someone could give me some reliable information on it, I might become deeply interested. As it is, I'm in a sort of comatose condition.

A. - I know how it is. I used to wish myself that a voice would come from heaven to explain life's mysteries to me, and why it was that we were taught to pray daily for a Kingdom which the rest of our theology told us would never come! It could never come because the very place that the Kingdom was supposed to come to, this earth, we were told in the next breath, would be burned up.

B. - That's my trouble. The prayer says, "*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven*", as though the Kingdom would bring about, as a result of its coming, a condition of happiness and peace on earth similar to that which prevails in heaven. And that happiness and peace could come only through the doing of God's will here as heartily and completely as it is done in heaven. For eighteen hundred years that prayer has been raised; but do we see any signs of its fulfilment?

A. - Of course, the fact that a thing is long in coming is no proof that it will never come. The Jews looked for centuries for the Messiah, and some of them gave up all hope of His coming. Nevertheless, He did come eventually, and fulfilled what the prophets had spoken concerning Him.

B. - That is true. I have often found help by looking back to those days, and thinking how much good He did in the few short years He spent among men. And I have thought, Oh, if He would only come again, and stay longer, and visit the whole world, if only to heal the sick as He did in those days! Think what a wonderful world it would be if all sickness were removed!

A. - Yes, and all the sorrow, and sin, and death. But does not the fact that He did come to the Jews at the right time according to the prophecies encourage us to hope that His Kingdom will also come at the right time? Surely He would not teach us to pray for the Kingdom unless it were an integral part of His plan to bring it to pass. Should not the constant repetition of the prayer impress it upon our minds as something to look forward to with certainty?

B. - No doubt: and I wish it were a certainty with me. But, as I said, if the earth is to be burned up, or absorbed into the sun, or exploded, there is no certainty about it.

A. - Wouldn't it be better to say that there is no certainty about the fire burning up the earth, than to say that there is no certainty about the Kingdom?

B. - Perhaps so; but they are both taught in the Bible, and that is the only authority. If you have any proof that the earth is not going to be burned up, I should certainly like to have it.

A. - A simple denial would be no use, for undoubtedly the words, *"the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up"*, do occur in the Bible (2 Peter 3:10). The way out of the seeming contradiction is to examine the passage carefully, to see exactly what it does say, and then see if we can harmonize it with the assurance of our Lord's prayer that God's will done on earth will some day be an accomplished fact. We must not forget that our Lord Jesus Christ has *"all power in heaven and in earth"*. And if, as you said a while ago, the Lord was good and did many wonderful works in Palestine for three and one-half years, we might reasonably expect Him to do much more good when His Kingdom is established over the whole earth, to last 1000 years.

B. - But it is just then, when He comes again, that we are told that the burning up of the earth is to occur. Indeed, instead of being eager for His coming and Kingdom, as I should be, I dismiss it from my mind; for I cannot bear to think of the terrible sufferings involved in burning up the whole earth with its teeming billions of people. Will our Lord use His *"all power in heaven and earth"* to burn up the earth?

A. - Not if I understand the Bible correctly. Just the opposite. He will use His *“all power”* to enlighten and bless mankind. I take that to be the meaning of Revelation 21:4, *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away”*.

B. - Then you would not include among the *“former things”* which are to pass away this earth that we live on?

A. - No; for the reason that we are elsewhere told that the earth we live on shall remain. Isaiah 45:18 says that God created the earth *“not in vain”* [that is, to be empty or ruined], he formed it to be inhabited. And Psalm 115:16 says, *“The earth hath he given to the children of men”*. That the earth was given to the children of men we find in Genesis. Man was given dominion over the earth and all the animal creation (Genesis 1:26,28).

B. - But did not man lose that dominion by his sin, and was he not driven out of the garden as a transgressor to die?

A. - Yes, he was. But that did not alter God's determination to have the earth full of happy, righteous human beings. And any passages which speak of the earth as burned up must be explainable on the basis of what God intended and arranged. Man's failure in Eden did not upset God's purpose to have men on the earth. Rather, God had provided against that disobedience, by an arrangement to send His Son into the world to redeem the guilty race. If a workman on a building does not follow the specifications, and puts a cupboard in the wrong place, it does not take the contractor long to rectify the matter. God, by his foreknowledge, could do even better than a human contractor; for he could, and did, arrange in advance to offset that one man's disobedience and all its consequences. This we read in Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:3,21; John 3:16.

B. - What I need, then, to help me at this juncture, is an explanation of Peter's words concerning the burning up of the earth. Also, what is meant in Revelation 21:1 by a *“new heaven”* and a *“new earth”*. How do you explain them?

A. - I will lend you a book to read, called "Bible Talks for Heart and Mind". In it there is a chapter on the scriptures you mention, which I believe you will find thoroughly satisfactory. After you have read it, I shall be pleased to have your opinion of it.

Beautiful Light

Straining their eyes for the tarrying day,
"O for the light, gladsome and bright!"
Sighed the poor shepherds who watched on the plain,
Worn by the wearisome vigils of night.
Lo! In the skies a bright radiance appears,
Beautiful light, gladsome and bright!
Charming them on to the manger where shines
Israel's hope and the world's rising Light.

Gross is the darkness that covers the earth,
"O for the light, gladsome and bright!"
Groans the creation, long trav'ling in pain,
Waiting relief from the curse and its blight.
Lo! In the skies a bright radiance appears,
Beautiful light, gladsome and bright!
'Tis the new star of a glorious day,
Bidding them hope in the God-promised light.

Hasten the day of Thy splendor, O Lord,
"O for the light, gladsome and bright!"
Drive from our dwelling the shadows away,
Grant earth a season of joy and delight.
Lo! In the skies a bright radiance appears,
Beautiful light, gladsome and bright!
Satan is banished, the darkness dispelled,
Shines forth forever the Kingdom of light.

R.B. Henniges
Zion's Glad Songs – No. 26

4 - To Comfort All that Mourn

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound: To proclaim the acceptable [or propitious] year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn." (Isaiah 61:1,2).

Today is a time when everybody looks about for comfort. Aside from those who are so callous as to cause suffering to others for their own aggrandisement, and to batten on war, munition-making, corners in foodstuffs and so on, or who, as walking delegates, foment strife for their own advantage, the vast majority of mankind are in need of comfort today. The greatest war of history has brought sorrow to hundreds of millions of people, nearly all Europe being under arms, beside the Colonial and Asiatic possessions and allies of the belligerents, in all eight great and six small powers. In addition, neutral nations are suffering through disturbed commercial arrangements and the high cost of living. And, whether directly affected or not, all with a feeling of humanity are daily pained by what they witness or hear of the sufferings of others. Sorrow and grief are heavy upon us, and the future holds still more of pain and suffering, loss and death. Where, then, can comfort be found? Where a ray of light?

Where an answer to the countless prayers that ascend to Heaven for the cessation of all these miseries?

True comfort is found in the Word of God, and nowhere else. The reason: because the Word of God is the only voice that speaks with authority concerning the end of the present order of things and the setting up of a new order, in which sorrow, pain, and death will be no more.

The agent or representative of this hopeful message is our Lord Jesus Christ. So our text says, *"The Spirit ... hath ANOINTED ME to preach good tidings unto the meek"*. He was anointed for the

purpose of preaching good tidings. Not to everybody, but to the meek. And not to all the meek at once, but according to a definite plan. He began by preaching the good tidings to the meek among the Jews, to whom alone He was sent in His earthly mission. *"This day,"* said He, *"this Scripture is fulfilled in your ears."* (Luke 4:16-20).

But on that day our Lord quoted only as far as, *"to preach the acceptable [or propitious] year of the Lord"*. Our Lord's ministry was a period when Jehovah deigned to be propitious. He showed His love by sending his only-begotten Son into the world, to preach deliverance, and to give His life a ransom for many. For it was to be on the basis of the ransom that permanent deliverance and everlasting comfort were to be established.

Since His resurrection our Lord has been sending the good tidings far and wide, using His disciples as preachers. It is because the disciples have been themselves comforted that they are able to comfort others.

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (2 Corinthians 1:3,4).

Them which are in Any Trouble

Could anything be wider, or more embracive, than that? Who in the whole wide world is exempt from *"any trouble"*? Even those callous ones already referred to have troubles of their own, for sickness and death spare none, envy and spite are ever at work to embitter the lives of the most prosperous. The true gospel has comfort for all, if they will but be meek enough to receive it.

But those whose trouble we are thinking mostly of just now are the bereaved, those whose loved ones lie buried on lonely Gallipoli, in the battle-scarred fields and hills of France, and on other Fronts. What is the truly comforting message concerning these departed ones?

That They Shall Live Again!

Yes, that is comforting, but how, when, and where shall they live again? Would there be any advantage in their coming back to go through the turmoil of this world? And what advantage would it be to us, since shortly our end must come, and we should then be parted once more? In the meantime, a question which first requires answer is that which recently formed the subject of a Melbourne Baptist minister's sermon, entitled:

What becomes of the Souls of our Sacrificed Soldiers?

We know what their lives were up to the hour of death, and we know from the Scriptures that our soldier boys will live again. But what becomes of their souls between death and resurrection? We cannot give the Baptist minister's answer, but we shall try to give an answer direct from the Scriptures.

As used in Genesis 2:7, "*soul*" means the being, the person himself; "*Adam became a living soul*". His body was first formed, but there was no life in it. When the "*breath of lives*" was breathed into his nostrils, he began to live; he began to breathe, and all his organs began to function - the heart to beat, the mind to think, the eyes to see, the ears to hear and so on. When he died, over nine hundred years later, he ceased to breathe, his heart ceased to beat and his mind to think. Life was animation, activity, comprehension. Death was simply the absence of life, and the dead body returned to dust. Adam, the soul or being called Adam, was dead. And, according to the Scriptures, that is and will be his state until the resurrection. For though he has ceased to live, Adam has not been forgotten. His identity is preserved in the mind of God. His power to live returned to God who gave it; and when our Lord calls forth all that are in the graves, Adam will come forth in answer to his name.

But someone may say, 'That is not very comforting. I don't care where Adam is; what I want to know about is my own darling boy'.

Yes, there is no doubt our interest centres in our own flesh and blood. But still, the one cannot be answered without the other. To find out what becomes of those who die now, we must learn what became of Adam, because - all were in him; we all die - the whole race dies - because we were in him. That is a great truth, and there is great comfort in it (Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22).

The reason there is comfort in it is because by condemning our whole race to death in the one man, God was able to arrange a plan whereby all should be redeemed by another Man. Adam and Eve and their race were redeemed by our Lord Jesus Christ, who was perfect as Adam was before he sinned. * The greatest of all comfort, therefore, comes from the knowledge that our Lord Jesus bought and owns the human race, and that the ministry of comfort which lasted 3½ years in Palestine, and which has continued throughout the present age, is not ended yet (Romans 14:9; 8:19-23). Our Lord was anointed to be not only a preacher of comfort, but a King and Priest to put into operation on a world-wide scale great practical measures of comfort. The wonderful organisations which the nations have built up for purposes of destruction will be as nothing compared with the powerful organisation which the Lord is building up to give comfort to all nations. He will set up His Kingdom in power and authority over the earth, and shall cause all men to be instructed in its rules and regulations. They will be shown their sinful state, and be given an opportunity to repent and believe the Gospel.

And the souls of our Sacrificed Soldiers will be there to receive that instruction and to enjoy that opportunity! That is, as the soul is the being or person, the soldiers themselves will be awakened out of the death state, and caused to live again. When they live again, all the functions of the body which ceased at death will begin again; they will be able to hear, to see, and to think, and if they are wise they will also act in accordance with the laws of the new Kingdom. Is not that comforting news? It is indeed.

Some might think this less comforting than the generally accepted teaching that at death all souls go direct to their reward - either to a heaven of bliss, or to a place of eternal torment. To that we reply that anyone who can get comfort out of the thought that three-fourths of humanity are on the way to an eternity of torture, and that the vast majority of the dead are there already, is out of harmony with the good tidings which Jesus was anointed to preach. Our Lord took no pleasure in the miseries of the people, and threatened no one with an eternity of torture.

* For further explanation, as to how the one man Christ Jesus could redeem our whole race, please see Bible Talks for Heart and Mind' chapter 'A Ransom for All'.

All the parables and other sayings which seem to teach eternal misery really teach in harmony with the plain statements of Scripture, that the dead await the resurrection, and that in the resurrection they will come forth to be blessed and enlightened. For an examination of all references to "hell", *Sheol*, *Hades*, *Gehenna*, please see the book 'Everlasting Punishment'. In this book proof is given that punishment for sin is just, and in proportion to the degree of light sinned against.

When on earth our Lord began to fulfil the prediction of the prophet, "*A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust*" (Matthew 12:20,21; Isaiah 42:1-4). A gardener does not cut down an injured plant without an attempt to heal it. Those who have seen the beautiful boulevards of Paris, and the miles and miles of residential streets in the principal American cities, in which the tree-tops meet overhead, casting a cooling shade on the hottest summer day, know the value of trees. A bruised tree is carefully doctored, that its life may be saved and the fine avenue remain unspoiled. The "*smoking flax*" or lamp wick - who would quench it, or throw it away? Is it not carefully trimmed that it may burn brightly as it should? That is the spirit of loving care with which the Lord Jesus was anointed, which He exhibited in His earthly ministry, which He manifests now to those who serve and obey Him, and which He will demonstrate in His dealings with the dead when they come forth.

Are there Two Ways of Salvation?

Probation is not limited to this life, except in the case of those who have experienced the light and other benefits described in Hebrews 6:1-8; 10:26. Hence it is not necessary to cast about for two or three different ways of salvation, or to apply the Mohammedan view (that every Mohammedan who dies in battle goes direct to Paradise) to our dead soldiers, and say that death on the battlefield entitles them to heaven. Salvation is by faith in the Lord Jesus, accompanied by repentance and forsaking of evil habits. To say that the mere act of dying in battle makes a saint out of a dissolute person and entitles him to heaven, is to deny the Scripture teaching on the mode of salvation which God has arranged, and to substitute for it a human theory. Our humane feelings and our best wishes for the heroic dead are fully gratified when we learn God's way and accept it. They will

not be harshly condemned for their faults, nor will those who die at sea, or peacefully in their beds. For it is God's will that all men should be preserved and come to an accurate knowledge of the truth. If they have not had that accurate knowledge in this life, they will receive it in the next. In that day the earth will be full of the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea, and all nations shall have the opportunity to walk in the light then shining (1 Timothy 2:4-6; Habakkuk 2:14; Revelation 21:4,23,24).

Shall not the Judge do Right?

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right", is often quoted by those who do not understand God's plan, and yet hope He has something good for their loved ones who die without having made a confession of Christ. This text was first used by Abraham when pleading with the angel over the destruction of Sodom with all its inhabitants, and it has done duty ever since (Genesis 18:25). There is but one answer, and that is, Certainly the Judge of all the earth will do right. But why stop at the modicum of comfort given by such a general statement of God's justice and goodness, when the Lord invites us to study His Word and learn exactly what His gracious purposes for mankind are, and thus receive an abundance of comfort?

And let not this great war disturb anyone's confidence that there is a God, and that He holds all the issues in His hands. Mankind must learn certain lessons, and these wars teach man's impotence to govern the world as it should be ruled. The effect should be to turn them to God and cause them to look forward to the time when He will rule the world in righteousness. For the Lord Jesus will not fail nor be discouraged until He has established justice and truth in the earth. Then also He will speak peace to the nations, and they will turn their 75s, their trench mortars, and their Zeppelins into plowshares and pruning hooks (Isaiah 42:4-7; Zechariah 9: 10; Isaiah 2: 1-4). These passages have had a measure of fulfilment during the present age; they await their widest and complete fulfilment in the Kingdom age, for,

"With righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity." (Psalm 98:9; 96:13).

"The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [symbol of Kingdom], saith the Lord." (Isaiah 65:25).

Till then, let us not mourn for the dead as those who have no hope. When we look upon a child sleeping, we know it is missing some of the good things that are going, but we know also that it is oblivious to any storm or trouble around it. So let us view our dear departed ones, safe in the Lord's keeping, and ready to be awakened in the morning.

God Shall Wipe Away All Tears

Listen to the voice celestial,
Ye whose eyes with weeping fail.
God reveals His gracious purpose
To the soul in sorrow's vale.
There will be no hopeless sadness
In the new earth's golden years,
Blissful years replete with gladness,
"God shall wipe away all tears".

Every tomb shall be deserted,
Harps of jubilee shall ring;
"Ruthless grave, where is thy triumph?
Cruel death, where is thy sting?"
Sing the blest emancipation,
Every creature that hath breath.
Life shall quicks all creation,
There shall thenceforth be no death.

No more widowed hearts repining,
No more hungry, homeless souls,
When the earth shall bloom as Eden,
And the "Prince of Peace" controls;
When the ransomed hosts are singing,
Not an echo of despair
In His vast dominion ringing,
"There shall be no sorrow there".

With the living waters flowing,
And his saving health made known,
Every cheek with beauty glowing,
Every friend of evil flown,
God will scatter leaves of healing
For each loyal heart and brain -
All His matchless love revealing,
"There shall henceforth be no pain".