

## Newsletter May 2020

In this month's Newsletter we shall discuss the fearful topic of death. Death is a certainty that none can deny, for men, women, and children die every day as absolute proof that it awaits us all. The Coronavirus pandemic that we discussed in last month's Newsletter (cf. Newsletter April 2020), made that fact even more evident by placing it foremost in our minds. Death can best be defined as a separation of our souls from our bodies; the spirit that had given us life returns to God who had sent it. As to the body, it must again return to the elements from which it came. However, the Word of God informs us of an afterlife beyond the grave, the particulars of which will be determined by a judgment held after we die and our souls leave this earth. While the body made of material flesh is subject to death, the soul is of immortal substance and is not subject to death. Therefore, the death of our bodies requires that our souls find another place of residence in which to spend the eternity that follows life on earth.

Secularists believe that when all men die, they merely enter into a state of eternal bliss, a mindless nirvana, akin to a pleasurable state of eternal sleep; in their minds this all that "Heaven" can be. Hell is viewed as nothing but a "religious scarecrow" used to frighten people into conforming to a legalistic set of rules established by "religious extremists" who believe in a non-existent God. Still others believe that when men die, they become disembodied spirit-beings; adult men and women will most likely receive wings and become angels, while infants who die are envisioned as becoming delightful little cherubs. Heaven is viewed as a place of eternal rest, wherein no work is necessary or ever performed. The only activities in which one could find any gratification involves the prospect of floating around, resting alone on clouds, and strumming upon golden harps – not at all a very satisfying thought. This is pure fantasy. The human mind cannot grasp what the journey of a soul is as it approaches its ultimate destination, or what that destination will be like. However, we have a sure Word regarding death and the afterlife given to us in the Holy Scriptures.

Many may wonder why God does not immediately annihilate all sinful men and women and be done with mankind altogether. He most certainly has the power to do so with great ease, for no mortal could withstand His righteous wrath even for a moment. They would immediately perish; for, our God is as a consuming fire. Moreover, God's Holy unsatisfied demand for their righteousness on a par with his own absolutely requires Him to do so. Certainly, God is not unmindful of mankind's rebellion; yet, He restrains his hand. Even so, God does not let evil go unpunished. Death can and does overtake men through various means that God has at his disposal. God is in no hurry in his judgments, inasmuch as all men must one day stand before Him at which time the reprobate must be judged and sentenced for their rebellion. As we read in the book of Hebrews,

**“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (He. 9:27).**

Holy Scripture speaks of but two possible destinations for the souls of those who die; one is a wonderful place of joyous awareness called Heaven, and the second is an a terrifying place of aware punishment called Hell. Therefore, as fearful as the specter of death is, we must carefully consider the judgment to come after we leave our bodies behind to be even more significant inasmuch as it will determine how and where we shall spend the vast ages of eternity.

Let us first discuss the journey of the soul of a Christian who have been redeemed by God in Christ after the death of their human body.

**“We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done in his body*, according to that he hath done, whether *it be good or bad*” (2Co. 5:8-10).**

The Apostle Paul said this regarding this coming transition, as he contemplated his own departure through death. This text informs us that when the soul of a believer leaves the mortal body behind. It will immediately go into the presence of Jesus Christ to be judged of the things they have done while in the body. Those that have done good things will be rewarded, while those who have done bad things will be admonished and receive no reward. Nevertheless, there can be no question regarding their ultimate destination, for all that are redeemed by Christ are destined for Heaven to be with Him forever.

When most Christian men and women consider Heaven, they vaguely envision a paradisaical "Eden" where the souls of the living will go after the death of their mortal bodies. Beyond that simple thought, the reality is that most men and women rarely think about Heaven at all – unless they are faced with a serious illness and the specter of impending death – their own, or that of their loved ones. With the day-to-day cares of this life including

individual and family issues, as well as job issues, political issues, and even pressing church issues, totally occupying our minds, Heaven is not a subject most Christians spend much if any time dwelling upon. After all, we do not, as some wag has put it, want to become “so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly good.” The fact is that we cannot know exactly what Heaven is like or what awaits us there until we personally experience it.

**“For since the beginning of the world *men* have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, *what* he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him”** (Is.64:4; cf. 1Co.2:9).

Still our minds yearn to know as much as we can about Heaven – what and where is this wondrous place, and what can we expect when we arrive there? We must state the obvious here: human speculation about that which is not explicitly recorded within this Holy Scripture can only be just that – speculation; and nothing more.

Heaven is fondly talked about by most unsaved pseudo-christians, who believe they are in Christ, but are not, as a place where their souls and the souls of their loved ones automatically go after death – regardless of the sinful lives they may have continued to live here on earth. Moreover, they often assume that their departed loved ones can observe those still living on earth and often seek to guide them. Quite often, the pseudo-believer can even be seen to pray to their departed loved-ones for help within various difficult circumstances. However, merely wishing all of this to be true in an effort to comfort oneself does not make it reality. This commonly held belief of a universal salvation for everyone flatly denies the firmly stated Scriptural reality that the default destination for all of fallen mankind is not Heaven, but a real and terrifying place called Hell.

Universal salvation is theologically referred to as “Restitutionalism,” wherein it is believed that all things including all men and women will be one day restored to a sanctified state of being as before Adam’s fall. Various verses are interpreted out of context by terribly misguided “theologians” in support of this heretical doctrine, but the most common one is found in Acts 3:21:

**“Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”**

Undue emphasis is placed upon the “restoration of all things” without considering the qualifier in this verse that defines “all things” as that “which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” – not all things in a universal sense. In like manner, “all things” are misinterpreted in two other passages, which are commonly put forth as additional proof texts for this heresy. Those three verses are found in the Gospel of Matthew and the epistle to the Ephesians:

**“And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel”** (Mt. 19:28).

Regeneration as it is found in this verse is translated from the Greek word, *paliggenesia*, which can be translated as “restoration” or “regeneration.” However, in the context in which *paliggenesia* is used here, we must refer to its primary meaning, which is a spiritual “renovation” or “rebirth.” Therefore, the renovation of which Jesus speaks here is not universally applied to all men, but is exclusively applied only to those who have followed Christ as a consequence of a spiritual rebirth in time.

**“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him”** (Ep. 1:9,10):

In this text the phrase “gather together in one all things” does not imply a universal restoration of all things at a future time. Rather, it states that a “resolution” of everything, regarding whether they be good or evil, will come about in the fullness of times. In that day, Christ will return to the earth to sit in judgment as He “gathers together in one all things” to judge them. Whether they be things in Heaven or things upon the earth, all will be resolved in and by Him as He casts away that which is evil from his presence. As we can see, the doctrine of Restitutionalism constitutes a total denial of Scripture as well as the Gospel itself; for if all are to be saved regardless of their sinful state of being, then Jesus atoning death on the cross becomes meaningless. All of this talk about a universal restitution of evil is but a deceptive lie promoted by Satan to keep men and women firmly in his clutches.

All mankind has sinned, such that all are under the sentence of death from birth, and for that reason all men and women are destined for Hell, not Heaven. Nevertheless, God has chosen to hold back his wrath upon sinners still living on earth for a time in order that a great number may be saved. While a way of escape from God's ultimate wrath exists for everyone through Christ, the obstinate sin nature of mankind prevents all from entering that way at every turn. Continual unbelief is the ultimate sin for which there can be no forgiveness possible. Since repentance will be impossible after one arrives in Hell, only within this life is the day of salvation possible, and those that hear his voice must respond to it immediately. If it were not for God's overwhelming grace in electing some to be followers of Christ through a spiritual rebirth (cf. Jn.3:3), none would or could be saved from Hell.

Many pseudo-believers continue to talk much about Heaven, yet few out of the vast populations of the earth both past and present and in the future are actually going there. We read in the Prophecy of Daniel about two opposing states of existence of the dead when they awake in the afterlife:

**“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt”** (Da.12:2).

Only those who are identified with Jesus Christ through a spiritual rebirth, and through his imputed righteousness will have become consecrated into a state of positional holiness, will be granted entry into Heaven. All others who have rejected God's grace offered in Jesus Christ will awaken to everlasting shame, and they will find themselves condemned within a state of everlasting contempt. In the book of proverbs, we are told that there are seven things that God especially hates:

**These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness *that* speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren (Pr. 6:16-19).**

All of these contemptible things, which are regularly committed by the wicked, severely violate God's divine law, and are hated by Him; “six yea seven” indicates that there are still more things unstated. Those abominable acts must ultimately be condemned and severely judged by God. This is an indisputable fact of Scripture, which secularists merely see as a narrow bigoted perspective invented by super-religious extremists. Sadly, all those unsaved pseudo-believers who die today and have looked forward to the false notion of a “universal Heaven” will ultimately find themselves in a far-far different place, the reality of which they have dogmatically denied.

Therefore, we must now turn to a forthright discussion of Hell. Admittedly, this is not a pleasant topic to contemplate, but it is very necessary in view of today's world that has been so heavily inoculated against all unpleasant reality. In today's highly secularized and politically-correct world, the stark reality of Hell has all but been expunged. This word is commonly only heard within vulgar curses hurled against one's adversaries; thus, any serious mention of Hell as a real place is absolutely shocking to the human senses. To seriously suggest that anyone or any group of persons would actually go to such a fearful place is commonly considered to be “hate speech,” which society seeks to eliminate from all human discourse, lest anyone be unnecessarily offended. Sadly, these do not even know that in doing this they are paving the broad road leading to their ultimate destruction and are encouraging many others to follow them as well (cf. Mt.7:13).

Hell is described in Scripture as a lake of fire and brimstone. Jesus likened it to Gehenna, the pit in the Hinnom valley in which a continuous fire burned to consume the worthless garbage of Jerusalem. In that sense, Hell is a place where the worthless reprobate of mankind will be cast away to be consumed by fire. Today, Hell is hidden away beyond space and time within outer darkness, and is not yet populated. “Hell” as we commonly refer to it today is actually *Sheol* – a place where the unsaved dead are temporarily being incarcerated as they await future judgment before the great white throne of Jesus Christ in the last days (cf. Re. 20:11). The first occupants of Hell will be the Antichrist, and the False Prophet (cf. Re.19:20). At the very end of the Millennium, Satan will be loosed for a short while (cf. Re.20:7), whereupon he will institute a brief final rebellion against God. After his utter defeat, He will follow the Antichrist and the false prophet into Hell (cf. Re. 20:10). Satan will soon thereafter be followed into Hell by those who will have participated in his final rebellion – along with those presently incarcerated in *Sheol*. Each who are not found in the book of life will receive a final sentence by Christ to join this unholy troika awaiting them within this frightful place of never-ending fire (cf. Re. 20:15).

Offensive as this terrible place is to the human mind, the truth regarding the future existence of a literal and factual Hell must be made known to those who presently reject it outright as hateful rhetoric. Deliberately

withholding the truth about Hell from them would in itself constitute an unmitigated act of evil, for it would perpetuate their ignorance of its existence to their ultimate Peril. Moreover, it would condemn a Christian's conscience for having withheld it. In the words of Paul, the apostle,

**“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences” (2Co. 5:11).**

Because the topic of Hell is so humiliating and undignified to today's unsaved pseudo-christian, the biblical doctrine that explicitly warns of the terrors of Hell, along with any mention of sin's corrupting ability that demands it, is rarely if ever heard from today's church pulpits. The “Hell and brimstone preaching” of a past era has been replaced with a seductive persuasion of unrighteous sinners to love and unconditionally accept one-another in a mutually sinful state – without any fear of present or future judgment by a holy and righteous God.

Thus, Hell is not even considered to be a real place by many. Most if not all unsaved pseudo-christians have never seriously studied the Scriptures for themselves, and they have never attended a sound Bible church where the subjects of Heaven and Hell are examined and candidly discussed. A great many attend broad-minded highly tolerant church services where any mention of sin or of Hell is strictly avoided for fear of losing their congregants to other more liberal churches. Therefore, many unsaved pseudo-christians remain totally ignorant of the great peril that hangs over them.

Most of them believe that a merciful truly loving God could not possibly send anyone to such a place of eternal punishment regardless of their continual sin and their rejection of the atonement of Christ. However, the over-arching truth that God is love, only tells half the story, and even that part is not at all accurately depicted by most churches. Love is the antithesis of hate, and the false logic of the unsaved is that since God is love, He can not hate – anything or anybody. It is assumed that He will and must always forgive – anything and everything. Yet, there must be a limit to God's forgiveness, lest He abrogate his Holiness and divine authority – which He can never do, inasmuch as that would be contrary to his divine nature. His forgiveness is assured only through faithful belief in the atoning death of his Son – God's true and ultimate expression of his love toward mankind.

Because of his great divine love, God hates anything and everything that would endanger or transgress his love. For that reason, God repeatedly chastens his own who love Him, to lead and keep them in the way of righteousness. Since He does not hesitate to chasten his own who sin, He is extremely angry with the wicked who hate and oppose Him ever day (cf. Ps 7:11). Moreover, God is a jealous God (cf. De 12:31) to the extent that He demands that we respond to his great love with a love in kind that involves all our hearts, souls and minds (cf. De. 6:5; Mt.22:37). When a man commits sin – any sin – he sins directly against God, and in doing so he violates God's love for him, such that he places himself in eternal jeopardy of God's righteous hatred in defense of his love. In that sense, a reprobate man who habitually sins against God's love through willful disobedience is already living in a virtual threshold of Hell – already separated from a loving God and his many blessings by man's own choosing. The future prospects of God's righteous wrath will continually haunt him throughout his mortal life, and the terrors of Hell yawns before him as his ultimate destiny.

In contrast to the unsaved pseudo-christian, secularized men and women who make no pretense at all of being a Christian, have completely swallowed Satan's lie that following their death their souls as well as their bodies will simply be annihilated, and any remaining essence of their being will experience a peaceful nirvana in a state of eternal unconsciousness. Deep down, they may suspect they are being deceived, but to avoid dwelling on that possibility, they divest themselves of any thoughts of Hell by employing many convenient diversions. Along with others of their kind, they eat, drink, and make merry, repeating all the while that “we only go around once, so we must make the most of it.” Through all of their sinful merriment, God's wisdom calls out to them from his creation and from every doorway they enter and every corner they turn that they are being deceived (cf. Pr. 1:20-22). Yet they have stubbornly closed their ears to her pleading calls, as they merrily continue on the road to destruction. Jesus warned of the danger of entering this broad way when He said,

**“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat” (Mt.7:13).**

The strait and narrow gate is the Gospel that alone leads to salvation in Christ, and few there are that find it. Conversely, the broad way is heavily populated by those who have not received the Gospel; proudly carrying their sins, they are merrily rushing toward the ultimate great white throne judgment, and immediately afterward they shall be cast away as dross into the lake of fire.

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