

DEATH AND AFTERWARD

by H.A. Ironside

A collection of articles and writings by H.A. Ironside from Death and Afterward, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

5 Chapters

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Death and Afterward

What Happens to the Christian After Death?

In attempting to answer this question concerning which there seems to be much perplexity in the minds of many sincere believers, we need only consider 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10.

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labor, 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.

This passage abounds in striking contrasts. I want to point out more than a dozen. Doubtless a careful analysis would reveal others.

First, we have the “outward man” contrasted with the “inward man.” Notice this carefully. The outward man is the physical man; the inward man is the spiritual man. Materialists of all types deny the personality of the spiritual man, but verse 10 distinctly affirms it.

Second, “perish” is contrasted with “renewed.” The physical man wastes away. As soon as we begin to live we begin to die, but the inward man is renewed from day to day.

Then in verse 17 we have three more decided contrasts: “light” is contrasted with “weight,” “affliction” with “glory,” and that which is “for a moment” with that which is “eternal.” Affliction often seems to the tried and distressed saint to be heavy indeed and long-continued, but the spirit of God calls it “our light affliction which is but for a moment.” We realize this in all its blessedness when we see it in full contrast with the “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” which is to be our portion throughout the ages to come.

The sixth contrast is in verse 18, where “the things which are seen” is put in apposition with “the things which are not seen.” The former are declared to be temporal and the latter eternal. This sixth contrast is of great importance in connection with the present discussion. It is often said, by

the advocates of conditional immortality and other materialistic systems, that the word generally rendered "eternal" in the New Testament does not necessarily bear that meaning. But here we have this very word put in direct contrast with the word "temporal," which clearly means that which has an end. Eternal, therefore, must mean that which has no end. If we think of several other instances in which the same word is used we will perhaps realize more than ever the truthfulness and solemnity of this statement. We read of the eternal God, the eternal Spirit, eternal redemption, eternal inheritance; on the other hand, of eternal punishment and eternal judgment. Who, with any regard for the authority of scripture, would dare affirm that eternal means one thing when referred to what is good, and to deity itself, but quite another when it has to do with the punishment of the wicked?

The seventh and eighth contrasts are found in the first verse of chapter 5. There we have "our earthly house of this tabernacle" and side by side with it, "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The one may be "dissolved," the other is "eternal." Observe that this is the third time we have the word "eternal" used in this remarkable series. Once more it is in direct contrast with that which passes away, or comes to an end. That which is temporal may be dissolved, but that which is eternal will never know dissolution.

We next have the contrast between being "unclothed," which refers to death, and "clothed upon," which is resurrection. Mortality will then be swallowed up in life.

The last three pairs of contrasts are found in verses 6-9, where we have, "at home in the body" in contrast with "absent from the body," "by faith" contrasted with "by sight," and "absent from the Lord" contrasted with "present with the Lord."

I am persuaded that any thoughtful person, desiring to be taught of God, who will weigh carefully this full series of contrasts, will have no difficulty with regard to the future state of those who know the Lord Jesus Christ as their savior. Let us proceed to look carefully at the passage as a whole.

In the first place I call your attention again to the fact that we are not to confound the "outward" man with the "inward" man. I am not my body. Man is distinctly said to be spirit, and soul, and body. The body is the outward man. The spirit and the soul together constitute the inward man. The spirit is the seat of the intellectual being, a distinct entity. The soul is the seat of the man's emotional nature. These two, spirit and soul, are never separated. Scripture alone distinguishes between them; that is, it shows us that they are distinct but it does not separate.

All men, as created by God, consist of spirit, soul, and body. But the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has that which the natural man does not possess. Being born again, he has received a new nature, and this new nature is also called "spirit"; it is the characteristic feature of the inward man. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

Unless it should be our happy lot to be among those who are still living in the body when the Lord Jesus descends from heaven with that assembling shout spoken of in 1 Thessalonians 4, we who believe in him must go the way of all flesh. Our earthly house of this tabernacle must be dissolved; that is, the body will die. What then will be the state of the believer? When my body sleeps in death, do I, the inward man, go to sleep in the body? Or will I leave the body and ascend to another sphere?

Scripture gives no uncertain testimony in regard to this. The body is but the tabernacle in which the inward man dwells. The tabernacle may be broken down, but the man himself moves out. This is clearly what the apostle here teaches and it is confirmed by the words of his brother-apostle, Peter, in 2 Peter 1:13-15: "Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance."

While left on the earth Peter was in the tabernacle of his body; at death he put off his tabernacle. He speaks of this as his decease; this word here translated "decease" is the word "exodus," which is the same as the title of the second book of the Bible. That book is called "Exodus" because it relates the going out of the people of Israel from the land of Egypt. Peter's exodus took place when the inward man moved out of the earthly tabernacle. This was so with Paul, for he tells us in Philippians 1:21-25:

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith.

Here we have the same truth put in a slightly different way. Life here on earth is life in the flesh, that is, in the body. Death is to "depart," that is, to go out and to be with Christ, which is far better. But for that present time the apostle was convinced that he would still abide in the body. The point is, man himself is not confounded with his body. He is "far more than a living, breathing mass of clay" as one has well said. A living spirit indwells this clay tenement for a brief period, moves out at death, but returns at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, when the body, raised in glory, and suited to heaven, becomes our soul's and spirit's eternal dwelling.

A number of years ago I was returning to my home city from a gospel tour. My wife met me at the station, and as we came up through town on the way to our house I noticed that an entire block of stores had been vacated, as the whole building was being made over. Apparently an arrangement had been made with the tenants of all the stores to move out temporarily and return when the renovation was complete. In every window we noticed signs reading as follows: "Such-and-such a firm temporarily located at such-and-such a place, has moved out until this building is renovated and repaired." I said to my wife, "What a striking picture of death for the believer! If I should be called home to be with the Lord before you, and you wished to put a slab of some kind where my body lies, you might have it read something like this: 'Henry A. Ironside, saved by the grace of God, moved out until renovated and repaired.' That would tell the whole story."

Months went by, and again I had been absent on a trip telling out the glad tidings of the grace of God, when on my return I passed this same block of buildings. So great was the change that one would hardly have recognized it, and yet it was the same original foundation, the same walls and floors, but marvelously altered both within and without. All the firms were back doing business at their old stands. I thought when I looked at it, what a picture of the resurrection, when that which has been sown in weakness shall be raised in power, when that which has been sown in dishonor shall be raised in glory. The inward man shall dwell in the renewed body, a body identical with, yet

different as to condition from, the body that once wasted away.

I know the thought of some is that the building of God is a spirit-body of some kind which clothes the inward man between death and resurrection, but the verses that follow clearly negative this thought. In this present tabernacle we groan, earnestly desiring, not to die, but to be clothed on with our house which is from heaven when we are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Like Paul, we are set for the first resurrection, and if when raised or changed we are in Christ we shall not be found naked.

It is well to remember that the resurrection does not necessarily involve salvation. There is to be “a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust,” a resurrection of life and a resurrection of damnation (John 5:29). There are those who in their resurrection body will be clothed in Christ’s likeness, and those who in that day will be as they are now, poor and wretched, miserable and naked, blind to the saving grace of God.

But the fact that people are saved does not preclude them from groaning. We once groaned in anguish under the weight of our sins. From that groaning, thank God, the believer has been delivered. But we still groan and yearn for deliverance from the vicissitudes of this present life and from the conditions that so often hinder spiritual growth. We look for the redemption of the body — this body that so often hinders our spiritual aspirations. How many times we are made to realize that the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak, and so we groan, desiring not that we be unclothed but clothed with a body like that of our Lord. No right-minded Christian yearns to die, for he should say with Paul, “For to me to live is Christ.” But we do yearn for the glad hour when we shall be clothed upon, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life, when our body shall be conformed to his body of glory. Now we have eternal life in a dying body. But in that blessed moment of our Lord’s return, his quickening word will impart eternal life to our body.

It is for this very thing that he has been working in us up to the present moment. He has given us his Spirit to dwell within us as earnest of the blessedness that shall be ours in that resurrection day. Meantime, though encompassed with infirmities, we have full confidence, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. However, if called to leave the body, we shall not go out to wander in space, nor sleep in unconsciousness, but shall at once be at home with the Lord. Walking, not by sight but by faith grounded in the written word, we have a confidence in view of death that enables us to say with Paul, “To depart and be with Christ is far better.” Therefore, we are willing “to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

Let no one rob you, dear believer, of the preciousness of those four words, “present with the Lord.” A better rendering would be, “at home with the Lord.” At present we are at home in the body and absent from the Lord; then we shall be absent from the body and at home with the Lord. When you think of the dear departed ones in Christ, comfort yourself with these heartening thoughts. They are at home. Oh, the sweetness of that word “home.” They were strangers and pilgrims here on earth; for his blessed name’s sake they voluntarily relinquished earthly claims. Now the wilderness journey, with all its trials for them, is in the past, and they rest at home. How could they enjoy this if in an unconscious condition between death and resurrection? If this cold thought were true, how could the apostle speak of being with Christ as “far better”? Surely he had not a sleep of unconsciousness in view.

It is true that in many places he does speak of death as a sleep. But that which sleeps is that which is to be awakened. The body of the believer is put to sleep, and it will be awakened at the Lord's return. Notice 2 Cor. 4:14: "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." This clearly is the body which is to be raised up by Jesus, even as God the Father raised the body of Jesus from death. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 we read:

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.

The expression used in verse 14, "them also which sleep in Jesus," might be better translated "them also who have been put to sleep by Jesus." Just as a mother takes her tired, fretful, and suffering child, and quietly soothes it to sleep, so the Lord Jesus puts his beloved people to sleep. By and by, when he returns from heaven, he will raise them up again. Then 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 will be fulfilled.

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 prevent [or precede] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Some may ask, Do those who are absent from the body and at home with the Lord know anything of what goes on in this world? The best answer to that may be another question: What does scripture say about it? Since the answer to this is that scripture says nothing, then it is not wise for us to speculate. But is there nothing in scripture which intimates that the redeemed in heaven have between death and resurrection at least some knowledge of things taking place on earth?

There is a passage in Luke 15:7 that is most precious in this connection. There we read: "I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance." I quote from the Revised Version, and would lay special stress on the expression "even so." The friends of the man who found the lost sheep were called on by him to share his joy over its recovery "Even so" are the friends of the good shepherd called on to share joy in his gladness over the salvation of a soul. In Luke 16 we see Abraham and the rich man in the full possession of their faculties, the one in paradise, the other in Hades. They are competent to enter into communications, the one with the other, though separated spiritually by a great gulf that can never be crossed. How much more shall the redeemed in heaven hold communion with each other and with their Lord, and thus enter into his rejoicing when a sinner repents. It is not only angels who exult, but all in heaven.

At the close of a meeting some years ago a young man who had led a wild, reckless life yielded to Christ. For over an hour several of us sought to help him from the word of God. He was in great anguish of soul as he mourned over his past wickedness, and it was some time before he could see the simplicity of salvation through faith alone in Christ. When at last he caught a view of that finished work, his soul entered into peace. With mingled tears of joy and grief running down his

face he said to me, "Oh, if my dear mother were only living that I might send her a telegram tonight to let her know that I had yielded to Christ. She prayed for me for many years. My ungodliness broke her heart. She died praying that I might be saved. How glad I would be if I could only get word to her that at last her prayers are answered." I said, "My dear young man, you need not grieve over that. I am certain she knew the moment you trusted Christ. Up there in heaven every redeemed one is rejoicing over another sinner that repenteth."

And so we gather from these scriptures that there is no such thing as unconsciousness for the believer between death and resurrection. The moment that he leaves the body he is in the presence of the Lord, and waits there expectantly until the first resurrection at the Lord's return.

When the weary ones we love enter on their rest above,

When their words of love and cheer fall no longer on our ear,

Hush, be every murmur dumb! It is only 'till he come.'

In that glad day the bodies of the sleeping saints will be awakened and the living will be changed in a moment. Then, throughout eternity, in bodies glorified, and wholly like the blessed Lord himself, we will dwell in his presence and be with him in happiness unmarred and joy unclouded, in the home of the saints, the new Jerusalem.

What Happens to the Christless After Death?

When we think of the realities of life to come, it is about the impenitent and the wicked that we are most exercised. We are not worried about what the other world has in store for the men and women who have walked with God here. We feel certain, even apart from revelation, that wherever John the beloved will be for eternity, it must be well with him; we are sure that Paul, the devoted follower of his crucified and risen master, cannot lose out in the coming ages as a result of his faithfulness here; nor are we concerned about repentant David, sinner though he owned himself to have been, or the dying robber, whose last words condemned himself and magnified his savior. With all these we are certain it must be well forever.

But we have deep exercise of heart when we think of Cain, who turned away from salvation purchased by atoning blood; of Esau, who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage; of Judas the traitor, who bartered away his hope of everlasting bliss for thirty pieces of silver. When we think of these men and myriads like them we ask with bated breath, What does the great eternal future hold in store for them?

In Job 14:10 we read: "Man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" The old Anglo-Saxon word "ghost," similar to the German "geist," simply means "spirit." At death man gives up the spirit, and the question is, Where is he? The body may be buried or disposed of in some other way, but where is the spiritual entity, the man who at one time occupied that place? Notice another question in Job 14:14: "If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."

There are then two questions: Man dies and wastes away; man gives up the spirit, and where is he? If a man die, shall he live again? The first question has to do with the state of the man between death and a possible resurrection; the second inquires whether there will ever be a resurrection. In attempting to answer these questions from scripture, let us remember that we are confining ourselves to the Christless man. Where is he when the body dies, and will that body ever be raised from the tomb?

There is no authoritative answer to these questions apart from divine revelation. The speculations of men, be they ever so reasonable and erudite, cannot provide answers. Those who reject the testimony of holy scripture are not further advanced in regard to the great question of life beyond the grave than that little coterie of Greek philosophers who, in the day of Socrates, centuries before Christ, used to reason about life and death and immortality. Plato is still read and taught in our colleges. People still go back to those ancient Greeks for arguments regarding immortality. Their comments are interesting and much that is advanced is fairly convincing and even probable. But there is no authoritative assurance, and the soul is left in uncertainty.

The Bible alone gives us positive knowledge. But to what part of our Bible shall we turn for light on these great questions? Please keep distinctly in mind that we cannot go to the Old Testament. There are those of a materialistic tendency, bearing a Christian name, but misguided people, who

insist that scripture teaches the unconsciousness of the dead between death and resurrection, and in some instances the annihilation of the wicked after the day of judgment. Rarely indeed do these people quote from the New Testament in attempting to maintain their theories; they refer us almost invariably to Old Testament scriptures. The bulk of these are found in three books, Job, the Psalms, and in particular Ecclesiastes.

The Old Testament was not given to unfold the eternal future, but chiefly to show God's dealings with man in this life, individually and nationally. Job, Psalms, and Ecclesiastes, more than other Old Testament books, give us human experience in striking detail.

It was our Lord Jesus Christ who brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Clearly then we need not expect to find these great truths fully developed in the Old Testament. There we have the twilight; in the later revelation we are in the full blaze of gospel light. I do not mean to say that saints of Old Testament times did not have the hope of immortality. They certainly did.

Job is perhaps the oldest book in the Bible, and unquestionably Job himself believed in a resurrection from the dead. He exclaimed, "I know that my Redeemer liveth... And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Moses spoke of the patriarchs as dying and going to be with their fathers, and Abraham could count on God to give him back Isaac from the dead if called on actually to slay him on Mount Moriah. This he could not have done, if he had not had the faith of immortality. David prayed and wept while his darling child was ill, but when he learned of his death he dried his eyes and comforted himself with the reflection, "He shall not come back to me, but I shall go to him." And elsewhere he exclaimed, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy [God's] likeness."

I will not dwell on the striking incident of Samuel's appearance to the witch of Endor, and his message to Saul, "Tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me," nor need I quote many passages in the prophets that give evidence of a knowledge of life after death. But, granting all these, it is certainly evident that it was not the specific purpose of any Old Testament writer to reveal this great truth, and in the experience books referred to, we need not be surprised if some passages even seem to indicate the contrary. These need to be carefully examined together with the context in order that they be not entirely misapplied.

Here let me make a statement, seriously and soberly, that may startle some of you and that you may even question at first. It is this: All the Bible is inspired, but there are many statements in it that are not true. Just think of it for a few moments. People often think that a text from any part of the Bible settles some controversial question, but a text out of context may be used to bolster up the worst kind of error; it may in fact be the declaration of an absolute falsehood.

We are told that some years ago a noted southern attorney was pleading a certain case before a Kentucky jury where his client was on trial for his life. The prosecuting attorney, addressing the jury, said, "Gentlemen, we have it on the very highest authority that 'all that a man hath will he give for his life.'" This made quite an impression on the jury, for they understood that he was quoting from the Bible, which he was. When he had concluded his address, the other attorney arose and said, "My opponent has told you that on the very highest authority we may know that all that a man hath will he give for his life." Then, opening a Bible, he read from Job 2, where the devil said, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." "Now," he exclaimed dramatically,

“Gentlemen of the jury, you know for yourselves who the attorney for the prosecution considers to be the very highest authority — even the devil himself!”

That statement is in the Bible; Satan made it, and it is only too true with many. But it is not invariably true that “all that a man hath will he give for his life.” Myriads of our Lord’s devoted followers have imitated their master in laying down their lives rather than surrender one jot or tittle of the truth of God.

So we see that there are things related in the Bible which are not true. Not only are there statements in the Bible that are said to be from the devil himself, but there are some things spoken by good men, such as the friends of Job, for instance, who were not inspired of the Holy Spirit to speak as they did. There are statements uttered by very bad men recorded in scripture that do not thereby become divine truth. Thoughts and reasonings of the natural man’s mind are sometimes given, as in the book of Ecclesiastes. It is very important to bear this in mind when reading the experience books of the Old Testament.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon tells us that those who have died will never have a reward. If we take that at its face value it would directly contradict New Testament revelation, as well as Solomon’s own declaration by divine inspiration at the end of the book where he says, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”

Is this evidence of the non-inspiration of the book of Ecclesiastes? Surely not. What then does this scripture mean? In his book Solomon wrote that he was giving us a record of what he said in his heart as he pondered things under the sun. He saw people die, they were buried, and he never saw them come back from the tomb. We read elsewhere, “The dead know not anything.” Does this mean they are absolutely unconscious after leaving the body? Not at all. Scripture elsewhere contradicts such a thought, but a lifeless corpse knows nothing of the affairs that occupied that busy brain but yesterday.

Shallow thinkers take such a passage as this, “The dead know not anything,” and in the face of all the New Testament teachings to the contrary, deduce from it the doctrine of the “sleep of the soul.” But the expression means nothing of the kind. The same words are used in that incident told in 1 Samuel of the compact between David and Jonathan. David was hiding in the field and Jonathan had gone in to sound his father and find out whether David’s life was really in danger. It had been agreed that Jonathan accompanied by a lad would go out into the field and shoot an arrow, and if he said to the lad, “The arrow is beyond you,” David would understand Saul was seeking his life. But if he said, “The arrow is behind you,” he knew he was safe. The program was carried out, and Jonathan called to the lad, “The arrow is beyond you,” and David understood; but we read that “the lad knew not anything.” Was the boy in a state of unconsciousness? Not at all, but he knew nothing of the compact made between David and Jonathan.

In Malachi 4:1-3 there is a passage that many seem to think settles the question as to the fate of the wicked dead.

For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts,

that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this. saith the Lord of hosts.

Now observe what the prophet was here telling Israel. Was he speaking of judgment to come on the wicked after death? Not at all. The passage is prophetic of what shall befall the wicked on the earth at the Lord's second coming. In other words, this judgment is pre-millennial, not post-millennial. There is nothing here about the resurrection and people brought before the great white throne. The day that "shall burn as an oven" is the day of the Lord, when wicked men, taken red-handed in their sins, will be burned up root and branch; that is, root and fruits. Then the righteous shall tread down the wicked. They shall be ashes under their feet in the day that God shall do this.

Does this prove the annihilation of those who die in their sins? No, it is similar in character to the judgment that fell on Sodom and Gomorrah. The day that Lot and his company left the city the fire of God's wrath burned up the people of the cities of the plains, root and branch. Had Lot himself and Abraham, his uncle, gone down to see conditions a few days after the judgment, the wicked would have been ashes under the soles of their feet, but that does not imply annihilation. In Jude, written centuries after, we read of "Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." And our Lord Jesus Christ declares that "it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment" than for those who rejected his word while he was here on earth. So, although burned up root and branch, although as ashes under the feet of the righteous, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah have not lost their identity; they are consciously suffering now, and will rise in the day of judgment.

Let us turn to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ himself, rather than to those of his apostles. I do not place the teaching of the Lord Jesus on a higher plane than that of his inspired apostles, but many say, "I am not prepared to accept Paul, Peter, or John, but give me what Jesus says." So I shall do this.

Men, who reject the solemn warnings given elsewhere in the Bible as to the eternal judgment of the wicked, foolishly say that the teaching of Jesus is all they want, that the sermon on the mount is enough for them. Do you know that eternal punishment is taught in the sermon on the mount? If you tell me that you will accept the teachings of Jesus Christ, don't forget that he has told us more of the actual state of the Christless dead than anyone else. No one ever uttered more serious and solemn things as to the doom awaiting sinners than God's blessed Son, who was the most tender man that ever walked this earth. It was not Peter who first spoke of "the fire that never shall be quenched"; it was not Paul who spoke of being "salted with fire": it was not John who said, "It is better to enter into life maimed than having two hands to be cast into hell fire." It was the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And whatever instruction you get in the New Testament in regard to the punishment of the wicked is all based on the teaching of the Son of God.

We have this teaching in its simplest and clearest form in Luke 16. Some object that this portion is only a parable, but this is not so. A parable is an illustration, or story, told to picture some truth. The parables are generally announced by some such expression as this, "He spoke a parable unto them," but we have no such expression here. This incident of the rich man and Lazarus is not called a parable. But, if this were a parable it certainly is meant to illustrate the fearful danger of

dying unreconciled to God. The impression made on the minds of his hearers and on those of millions of people from that day to this, is that Jesus was here teaching that it is a fearful thing to die in one's sins.

Notice the naturalness with which the story was introduced. Our Lord was addressing the people, and in the course of his instruction he said in verse 19, "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day" Was there a certain rich man, or not? Jesus said there was. He did not say, "Let us suppose there might have been such a person." Rather, he definitely declared there was such a man, and he described how he was clothed and how he was fed. Suppose in the course of my address I should say there was a certain Indian out in Arizona who was recently converted. When I complete my message you come up to me and say, "I was interested in what you told us about that Indian. How long ago was he converted?" "Oh," I say, "I hope you did not take me seriously. That was just a parable. I was only illustrating. I don't know of any such Indian." You would be justified in saying to me, "That, sir, was dishonest of you. You gave us all the distinct impression that you knew just such a person."

Now this is exactly what Jesus did. He gave every hearer that day to believe that he was relating a story of fact. When he began to speak of the other man in the story, he said, in verse 20, "There was a certain beggar, named Lazarus." When you are just supposing an incident to illustrate a point, you don't usually name the fictitious character. Why did he name this beggar? Jesus named him because he knew him, for "he calleth his sheep by name." We shall never know the rich man's name until the day of judgment, but we do know the beggar's name, because though poor in purse he was rich in faith, and was one of the sheep of Christ.

He goes on to say that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. This, of course, was before the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Abraham was the father of the faithful, and in paradise. As a son of Abraham, this redeemed beggar was welcomed to his bosom. Believers now are said at death to be "absent from the body and present with the Lord." To be in Abraham's bosom was the portion of Old Testament saints.

And what about the rich man? He also died and was buried, and we follow his disembodied spirit into the other world. Jesus said, "In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment." Now there have been times when I would have removed that from the Bible if I could, and even now I can well understand the feelings of Richard Baxter as he prayed, "Oh, for a full heaven and an empty hell!" I have searched this book, and read scores of volumes penned by theologians of all shades of opinion, to try to find one ray of hope for men who died in their sins, but I have never been able to find it.

Men try to take the edge off a passage like this by setting aside the old Anglo-Saxon word "hell" and using the Greek word "Hades." We are told that this word has no reference whatever to a place of punishment; Hades is simply "the unseen." So let us use the Greek word: "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment." But you can see that changing the name of the place does not do away with the torment.

Others say, "You are mistaken when you think of Hades as a condition in which men are found after death. Hades is simply the grave." I do not believe this for one moment. Scripture, I am certain, teaches the very opposite. But suppose, for argument's sake, we substitute the word

“grave” for “hell.” Let us read it that way: “In the grave he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.” Again the change of the word fails to do away with the torment. You may call it the tomb; you may designate it simply the unseen; you may call it the spirit world; you may use any term you like, but the solemn fact remains that wherever that rich man was, and whatever that word means, he was in torment.

Need we follow the story further? Need we dwell on its horrors? You know them well. Recall how this wretched man lost beyond redemption, became a suppliant in the pit of woe. He made two agonized petitions, but they were denied him. He began to pray on the wrong side of death. He prayed first for one drop of water on the tip of the beggar’s finger to cool his parched tongue. Living water he had refused while grace was free; now he was where living water never flows through all eternity. His other request was for his five brothers. People say, “If I am lost, I shall be with the crowd anyway. I shall have lots of company in hell.” But consider this man’s family. He had six brothers, one in hell and five on the way, and the man in hell prayed, “If you can do anything to keep my brothers from joining me here, do it; I don’t want their company; send Lazarus that he may warn them and tell them not to come to this place of torment.” Abraham replied, “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” In other words, they had the Bible. This is just what we have, and what we are responsible to heed. The man in torment cried, “Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.” Abraham answered, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.” Accept the testimony of the holy Bible, receive the Savior it reveals, or go into the outer darkness forever, for there is no other alternative. It must be Christ or hell, and to reject the one is to choose the other.

But we must not ignore the attempt to make this incident a parable. If it is a parable, what is it supposed to teach? One, whose propaganda has misled thousands in recent years, undertakes to explain it. He says the rich man is the Jew, the poor man is the gentile. For centuries the Jew had all the good things: the favor of God, riches spiritual and material. He fared sumptuously every day, while the gentile lay outside his door, afflicted, destitute, desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the Jew’s table. Eventually things changed; both Jew and gentile died to their former condition. Now the gentile has been brought into Abraham’s bosom, the blessings that once belonged to the Jew are his, and the Jew is being tormented in Russia, in Poland, and in many parts of the world, where he is in agony. And the distressed Jew, from his place of torment, pleads for mercy. He says, Send friends with some little message from the word of God; relieve my agony, or deliver my brethren. But Abraham replies, “Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; you cannot come to where the Gentile is, and the Gentile cannot come to you.”

Does this explain the so-called parable? Why, my friends, it does not fit! The gulf is not fixed between Jew and gentile. Any Jew who will may enter into the fullness of Christian privilege, and any gentile, who is foolish enough to do so, may go over to Jewish ground. But, you say according to your understanding of the passage, the man there is in torment before the day of judgment. If this be so, what need is there of a day of judgment?

Let me use a very simple illustration. A man is arrested and charged with a heinous crime. He is placed under restraint in the county jail, where he remains for long, weary months. If actually guilty, he is tormented with a hidden knowledge of his guilt, however vehemently he may deny it,

until at last he is brought to trial. If the case goes against him he is sent to the penitentiary. Hades is God's jail; Gehenna is God's penitentiary.

In Revelation 20 we read of a time when death and Hades will give up the dead that are in them. Death gives up the body; Hades gives up the spirit and soul. This is the resurrection of judgment, and it takes place a thousand years later than the resurrection of life. John wrote:

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

This is the last great assize. Then men will be judged, every man according to his works, and punishment will be meted out in righteousness. No man knows all that is involved in the honor expressed by the symbol, "the lake of fire." I pray that you will not run the risk of finding out for yourself, but will flee at once to Christ for refuge, and be able to say with Paul Gerhardt:

There is no condemnation,

There is no hell for me,

The torment and the fire

Mine eyes shall never see.

Actual details of the sinner's final doom are not given, but striking and awful figures are used, such as "wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever," "beaten with stripes," "cast into a furnace of fire," and many others. These all are meant to impress men with the fearfulness of an eternity away from God, an eternity without Christ. Do not risk so dire a doom, but flee now for refuge to him who waits in grace to save.

Spirit and Soul and Body

“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). Because God has existed from all eternity as one ineffable being in three glorious persons, we speak of him as the trinity. The word itself is not found in the pages of holy scripture, but the fact is again and again declared, perhaps nowhere more strikingly than in the formula of Christian baptism: “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Observe that they are not three beings but one, with one name.

Because man was created as one person in three parts we speak of him as tri-partite. He is spirit and soul and body. The body alone is not man; the soul alone is not man; the spirit alone is not man. Spirit and soul and body together constitute man. Let us consider what scripture teaches about these terms.

It is hardly necessary to say much about the body. It is the material part of man, and is his link with the material creation as a whole. The body is the house in which the inward man dwells. In its present condition it is subject to decay and death. But there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust, when the bodies of the saved and the lost will be raised from the dead. In their resurrected material bodies, the saints will stand at the judgment seat of Christ to be rewarded according to the deeds done in the body. The wicked, raised a thousand years later, will stand at the great white throne to be judged according to their deeds.

Turn to the first page of our Bible and notice how we have a three-fold creation: that is, three times in this wonderful first chapter of Genesis God is said to have “created.” In verse one we read, “God created the heaven and the earth.” Here you have the origin of matter. We never read of a second creation of anything material. All the matter in the universe is formed out of that which was then created.

In verse 21 we have a second creative act: “God created great whales and every living creature that moveth.” This is better rendered, “Every being that hath a living soul.” Here is the origin of life. Scripture knows nothing of life spontaneously generated from dead matter. It differentiates absolutely between the non-living and the living. By no possible process of evolution could the nonliving ever become the living. Therefore, if dependent life is to come into the universe, God must act anew as creator.

Soul, as we shall see, is that which is common both to the lower animals and to man. It is the natural life with all its capabilities of passions, emotions, and instincts. The soul of the animal dies when the body dies; with the soul of man it is otherwise, being linked with his spirit.

I remember some years ago I was in the town of Los Gatos in California, having a series of meetings. A Seventh Day Adventist was lecturing there at the same time, in a large tent. As I passed the tent one day I noticed a very imposing sign on one side. In large letters I read:

Ten Thousand Dollars Reward — I will give \$10,000.00 United States Gold Coin, to anyone who will produce a text from the Bible that speaks of an immortal soul.

I went inside to find the lecturer. He was there dusting the seats. I said, "I have come to see you, sir, about the sign outside." "Oh," he replied, agreeably enough, "you have come to collect the \$10,000, have you?" "No," I answered, "I am afraid I cannot claim it on your terms." "You admit then," he replied, "that the Bible nowhere speaks of an immortal soul." I acknowledged this without hesitation. Then I asked, "Because the Bible nowhere speaks of an immortal soul, do you therefore believe that the soul of man is mortal?" "Certainly," he answered; "undoubtedly if the Bible never speaks of an immortal soul, the soul must be mortal." I drew his attention to the fact that just as the Bible does not mention an immortal soul, neither does it ever speak of a mortal soul. I pointed out that, arguing from his standpoint, it was just as reasonable to say that the soul of man is not mortal, since the Bible never mentions a mortal soul. But I went on, "If I can produce a scripture that declares the soul is not killed when the body is killed, will you give me the \$10,000? I suppose, by an 'immortal soul' you mean a soul that lives when the body dies." He at once began to hedge, and said, "It might be a question of interpretation," and I saw that my chances of earning the \$10,000 were exceedingly slim. However, I produced the passage. You will find it in Matthew 10:28. There our Lord says, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." Manifestly, a soul that cannot be killed when the body is killed must be what we mean when we speak of "an immortal soul." The Adventist was taken aback for the moment, but though silenced, refused to part with the \$10,000. The fact is that in scripture the actual words, "mortal" and "immortal," are only used in reference to the body. The mortal body becomes immortal if the believer lives on earth until the return of the Lord from heaven.

Turning again to Genesis 1:27 we see a third act of creation: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." Why is there need of this distinctive creative act if man is simply an evolution from the animals beneath him? The fact is that by no possibility could creatures possessing only body and soul have become possessed of a thinking, reasoning spirit, unless it were communicated by God himself. It is this that lifts man above all else in God's creation. Zechariah 12:1 says, "The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him." Observe that the formation of the human spirit is there viewed as though it were as great a work as the stretching forth of the heavens and the creation of the earth. Does not this give us some idea of its importance in the mind of God?

Now just what is the spirit in man? Perhaps the clearest passage in the Bible is found in 1 Corinthians 2:11: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Here the spirit of man is shown to be the seat of intelligence. It is by the spirit man knows; it is the spirit that reasons; it is the spirit that receives instruction from God. Several other scriptures will help to make this clear. Romans 8:16: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Romans 1:9: "God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son." Job 32:8: "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." Notice that understanding is received by the spirit through divine inspiration. Proverbs 18:14: "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Proverbs 20:27: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly"; that is, illuminating the

man's inward being. God illuminates the man by communicating his truth to the spirit. We might quote many other scriptures, but these will suffice as they clearly emphasize the case in point. It is the spirit that thinks; it is the spirit that weighs evidence; the spirit is that part of the man to which God, who is himself a Spirit, communicates his mind.

At death the spirit leaves the body. This, in fact, is what death is, the separation of body and spirit. In James 2:26 we are told, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

We have already seen that when the body of the beast dies, the soul, which is linked with its body, dies too. That is the end of its existence. But when the body of the man dies, his spirit leaves the body, whether the person is saved or unsaved. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Leaving the earthly dwelling place behind, the spirit goes into the unseen world and has to deal with the God who created it. This is true of the saved and the lost alike. Both have to give account to God.

Materialists insist that the spirit is but the breath. They point to the fact that in both the Hebrew and the Greek the words for "breath," "wind," and "spirit" are the same, and they insist that therefore in each instance the word may be translated "breath" with impunity. However, it is well for us to remember that even in English the word "spirit" has a number of meanings, according to the connection in which it is used, and these meanings cannot be confounded without doing violence to the language. We speak of a man of spirit, and we mean someone of decision of purpose, and of energy. We speak of a spirit, and we mean a wraith or a ghost. The context determines the meaning of the word. The best way to find out whether the spirit of man is simply the breath of the man is to try translating for ourselves. Substitute the word "breath" in the various passages we have already quoted, and see if it fits. For example: I pray God that your breath may be preserved blameless (1 Thessalonians 5:23). We all agree that a blameless breath is desirable, but can anyone think the apostle speaks of such a thing here? Another example might be: What man knoweth the things of a man save the breath of a man that is in him? Whoever heard of an intelligent breath? It is not the breath of the man that is the candle of the Lord; neither does the Spirit of God bear witness with our breath that we are children of God; and Paul's service in the gospel was far more than service with his breath. Such fantastic theories refute themselves.

What then shall we say of the soul in man? That it is not to be confounded with the spirit, as our opening text makes plain. The use of the conjunction "and" between spirit and soul emphasizes this. In Hebrews 4:12 we read:

The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Here we learn that God's word distinguishes between soul and spirit. It does not separate them, for the two are never separated, either in life or in death. The spirit is the higher part of the unseen man. It is that part, as we have already seen, to which the Spirit of God speaks. The soul is the lower part of the unseen man, and is that part which links the body and the spirit. It is not merely the natural life, but is also the seat of man's emotional nature.

Again let me give a number of quotations from scripture. First, consider one that speaks of God having a soul: "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10:38). And in the next verse we read, "But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." God's soul longs for the salvation of our souls; that is, God, who is infinite love, would have our emotional nature in fullest harmony with his own. Hindrances to this are found in our bodily lusts. 1 Peter 2:11 states: "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." The soul in harmony with God finds its joys in him, and in this the spirit fully shares. Luke 1:46-47 states: "And Mary said, my soul Both magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

The soul suffers. Luke 2:35: "A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." Psalm 107:26: "Their soul is melted because of trouble." Joseph's brethren "saw the anguish of his soul," but took no heed. Jesus said, "Now is my soul troubled." Of his agony on the cross it was written, "His soul was made an offering for sin," for there "he poured out his soul unto death," when "he was numbered with the transgressors." (See Isaiah 53:12.)

The soul loves. "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" exclaimed the bride in the Canticles. 1 Samuel 18:1: "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."

The soul hates. 2 Samuel 5:8: "The lame and the blind, that are hated of David's soul."

The soul mourns. Job 14:22: "His soul within him shall mourn."

The soul desires. Job 23:13: "What his soul desireth, even that he doeth."

The soul longs. Psalm 119:20: "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times." Psalm 42:1-2: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God." Psalm 63:1: "My soul thirsteth for thee."

These few scriptures surely establish the fact that the soul is the seat of the emotional nature, just as the spirit is the seat of the intellectual nature. Because man in the present body is so largely a creature of emotions, the soul is made to designate the man as a whole. Man is distinctly called a soul over and over again. "Man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). In Luke 12:20 the Lord said to the rich fool, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee." Compare this to Revelation 6:9, where John saw in a vision the souls of those who have been slain. It is altogether correct, therefore, to speak of man as having a soul to be saved or a soul to be lost.

Someone has likened man as originally created by God to a three-story house; the lower story or basement is the body; the second story, or workshop, is the soul; the third story as the observatory and the place of communion and study, is the spirit. In his sinless condition, man's spirit held converse with God and enjoyed communion with the infinite Spirit. The fall of man, as a moral earthquake, so shook the house that the third story fell down into the basement. The natural man is therefore the soulish man. The word rendered "natural" and "sensual" in the New Testament is really "soulish." It is an adjective derived from the word for soul.

Man, however, is not bereft of the spirit even though fallen, but he has "the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance which is in him." No act on man's part can ever restore the spirit to its proper place, for all his faculties have been perverted

by the fall. His spirit has been made filthy by sin. We read of the “filthiness of the flesh and spirit.” His soul has become utterly debased and corrupt; he now loves what God hates, and hates what God loves. His body is weakened by disease and infirmity, the direct result of the entrance of sin into the world. He departed from the way, and has become altogether unprofitable. In other words, man is a hopelessly ruined creature, apart from the regenerating grace of God.

But it is the mind of God to save this fallen, debased man; and not only to restore him to his adamic condition, but to lift him to a higher plane than unfallen man ever knew. In order that this might be so, God himself, in the person of the Son, came into this scene as man. He not only took a human body, but was possessed of a true human spirit and human soul. Many do not see this, and think of the divine logos, the eternal word, bearing the same relation to his body as our spirit and soul do to our body. This is a mistake. Christ not only took a body as a tabernacle for deity, but he took a complete humanity into union with deity. In this way he became manifested on earth as the Son of God, a being with two natures, human and divine.

That he had a human soul is clear from the passages already quoted. In another place he said, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.” It is written also that “he was troubled in his spirit” and “he rejoiced in spirit,” and as he was about to lay down his life, he exclaimed, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.” He offered himself a sacrifice in full — body, soul, and spirit — on behalf of our ruined humanity.

The atoning blood that purchases redemption was a man’s blood untainted by sin. The body given on the cross was a human body, holy and undefiled. The anguish of his soul was the anguish of a human soul, which we can but faintly enter into as he suffered there in the deepest recesses of his being. All his most tender affections were lacerated as he took our place in judgment on the cross. The darkness that overwhelmed his spirit we can but faintly apprehend as we listen to his fearful cry “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.” His was a complete sacrifice of himself on our behalf.

When a soul trusts him as savior, a new life is communicated to the man once wrecked and ruined, and this life is felt in every part. The awakened spirit now receives the word of God, and the man is renewed in the spirit of his mind. The building is being renewed so that once more he is able to look up to God and enter into communion with him through the spirit. Humankind is able to take in and understand the mind of God, and to discern what is according to the word. His soul also is saved; its affections are purified; its longings and yearnings are now turned from things evil and things mundane to things holy and heavenly.

The body alone remains for the present unchanged. Eventually, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, he will change this body and make it like the body of his glory. Then we shall be completely saved — spirit, soul, and body. We shall then have put off the natural body and have put on a spiritual body.

Some, however, when reading 1 Corinthians 15:44, mentally contrast a material body with an immaterial one. But this is not the thought of the apostle nor the mind of the Spirit. A natural body is a body suited to the soul: the word rendered “natural” is simply, as already mentioned, an adjective derived from the word for “soul.” It is raised a spiritual body — not a body of spirit, but a real body suited to the spirit. At the present time the spirit often is willing, but the flesh is weak. In

the glorious future the body and spirit will be in perfect harmony. This will be our complete salvation, when spirit, soul, and body will be conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ, the firstborn among many brethren.

When left this scene of fault and strife

Then flesh and sense deceive no more.

We then shall see the Prince of life

And all his ways of grace explore.

We shall be wholly like him, and his suited companions, in glorified bodies like his own, forever. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." For it is written, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." In that day our salvation will be complete, when our entire spirit and soul and body will be blameless before God, as we stand in his presence in all the perfection of Christ's finished work.

What Does the Bible Say About...Death and Afterward?

Death is the great leveler of all men.

Whether rich or poor, wise or foolish,
powerful or weak, renowned or obscure —
none can rise above it, cheat it, or escape its
eventual claim on his life.

And what of life beyond the grave? What
awaits those with or without Christ?

What becomes of our bodies and the spirit and
soul they house? H. A. Ironside answers
these questions, showing from scripture how
every believer can have assurance concerning
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