



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XV  
Issue 353

## Does Death Seal Our Eternal Destiny?

by — Arthur P. Adams (1845-1925)

**T**he prevalent theological idea is as follows: It is assumed, to begin with, that all mankind are under sentence of “eternal death,” which according to the orthodox view, means “endless life in misery”; all are hell-deserving and in danger of being “lost forever”; during this life, judgment is suspended and an opportunity is offered to escape the execution of this impending sentence by repentance and faith in Christ.



### ONLY A SMALL MINORITY FOR NOW

Now with this, some may proceed to inquire what proportion of the human race has been “saved” thus far. We are obliged to answer that, so far as we know, a very small minority. The great mass of mankind have been born, lived and died in the most absolute and total ignorance of God and His truth; and such, moreover, is the condition of the race today.

### “BRIEF CHANCE” THEORY

This is man’s tradition: There is a brief chance to escape hell and secure heaven. If man fails to avail himself of this opportunity, and dies impenitent, the sentence is irrevocably executed and the man is eternally lost.

What an utterly hideous concept! No such teaching as this, either in outline or in detail, can be found in the Bible; it is entirely human tradition. In the first place, no such thing as “eternal death” is ever spoken of in the Bible; neither the phrase nor the idea occurs anywhere in the Sacred Writings.

### UTILIZING FEAR

Christianity’s highest idea of salvation is salvation from the consequences of sin and endless hell. This unworthy view is instilled and fostered by the practice of the churches in working on the fears of the impenitent to induce them to make a profession of religion. The great plea always is, “Prepare to die!” It is thus that they are ever urged to “holy living.”

### ALL WILL BE RECONCILED IN DUE TIME

Now the Scriptural view is as follows: God is creating a race of beings in His Own image and likeness; a work that has been finished only in the case of one individual thus far (the Lord Jesus Christ), and will be completed in the remainder of the race of men in God’s “due time” (I Timothy 2:3-6).

### CURRENTLY DARKNESS COVERS THE EARTH

The words of the prophet and of the apostle apply now to the condition of mankind as a whole, as they have always been applicable thus far in the past.

*Darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people (Isaiah 60:2).*

*The whole world lies in wickedness (I John 5:19).*

### TRADITION SEALS MAN’S DESTINY AT HIS DEATH

Now, according to the common view, death consigns the individual either to endless happiness or hopeless despair, with multitudes now in heaven or hell.

How can we accept that a few hundred thousands, perhaps, have gone to heaven, while billions have gone to hell, there to remain eternally? Just think of it for a moment. How appalling and horrifying is the thought!

Yet there is no logical or scriptural escape from it according to the orthodox view. It is a sad and significant fact that most church members are entirely indifferent to these great sub-

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## **Bible Student's Notebook™**

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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This free weekly electronic publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
  - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
  - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

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### **DEATH** (continued from front page)

jects. "I don't know what God will do with the great masses of mankind," they say (and many, if they told the whole truth would add, "I don't care"). Thus, with heartless selfishness they dismiss the whole subject.

However, there are some who feel the burden of this awful doctrine, and their souls revolt at the conclusions to which it leads. Such ones have resorted to various makeshifts to escape these conclusions.

### **THE RELIGIOUS THEORY CONCERNING THE HEATHEN**

I will notice one of these. It is said that, although it is true that the great mass of the race have thus far died in sin, yet it does not follow that they have been lost; for if those who are unavoidably ignorant live up to the light they have, they will be saved; and thus many Christians think the majority of the heathen will be saved. To support this view, Romans 2:11-15 is referenced. Now read this passage over and see if there is any such doctrine taught as that heathen who live up to the light they have will be saved. In the first place, there is not one word said about "salvation" anyway in the whole passage. Secondly, :12 says,

*They that have sinned without law shall perish without law.*

There is here not the most distant hint that anyone will be saved by living up to the light that they have.

Furthermore, think of some of the strange conclusions that would follow from this view. If the majority of the heathen world are to be saved by living up to the light they have, it follows that *more* will be saved without the gospel than with it.

### **BETTER OFF BEING BORN IN A HEATHEN WORLD**

We know as a matter of fact that, in so called Christian lands where the people are gospel enlightened, the majority reject the gospel and must, according to the orthodox view, be inevitably lost; whereas in heathen lands it is said that the majority will live up to the light they have and be saved. Hence the majority of heathen will be saved and the majority of the gospel enlightened will be damned.

### **MISSIONARY WORK A MISTAKE**

According to this view, if you are born in a heathen land the chances are that you will be saved. If you are born in a Christian land, the chances are overwhelmingly against your salvation. Still further, according to this view, all missionary work is a stupendous mistake, and on the whole a curse to the heathen world. Leave the heathen alone in their darkness and ignorance, and the majority will be saved by

living up to the light they have. Send them the gospel, and we know from past experience that the majority of them will reject it and be lost forever. These conclusions are inevitable. You cannot escape them while you entertain the idea of the majority of the heathen being saved by living up to the light they have.

### **NO ONE LIVES UP TO THE LIGHT THEY HAVE**

Again, suppose this theory was true. Even admitting that those who live up to the light they have among the heathen will be saved, very small comfort could be derived therefrom, for it is a notorious and universal fact that no class of human beings have ever lived up to the light they had.

Is it not true of all mankind – Jewish, Heathen or Christian – that our practice is far below our knowledge and advantages? Does not all history, ancient and modern, teach us the nations have not increased in virtue as they have advanced in civilization and learning; but, on the contrary, they have become more and more wicked and depraved until, time and again, the most highly cultivated and enlightened nations have perished in their own corruption?

Read the first chapter of Romans and see how forcibly Paul confirms this view by clearly setting forth the awful failure of the heathen world, "*the Gentiles*," to live up to the light they had; and in our own day, in this respect, history is repeating itself.

### **THE HEATHEN JUSTIFIED THROUGH FAITH**

*The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, "In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Galatians 3:8).*

Now comes a great difficulty. How are the heathen to be justified by faith, since,

*Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God? (Romans 10:17).*

The masses of them never have had any opportunity to hear; they know not God, nor Christ; hence they could not,

*Believe in Him of Whom they have not heard (Romans 10:14).*

They have no faith, without which it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). They have lived and died in this condition; the masses of mankind are still in the same state,

*Without God and without hope in the world (Ephesians 2:12).*

(see DEATH, page 3190)





# The Eons or Ages

Hebrews 1:2

...through

His Son,

God makes

the eons

Before

The Eons

1 Cor. 2:7

2 Tim. 1:9

Titus 1:2 Ro. 16:25

One God

The Father

Out of

Whom

All is

One Lord

Jesus

Thru Whom

All is

1 Cor. 8:4-6

Romans 9:5 GOD OVER ALL Ephesians 1:11

Return of Christ for His bride

1Th. 4:13-5:11

Matt. 24:29-30

The Great

White Throne

Rev. 20:11-15

Judgment

of Nations

Mt. 25:31-46

2 Peter 3:7

...(the second of)

the oncoming

eons Eph. 2:7

...this eon

Titus 2:12

...the present

eon Gal. 1:4

...the current

eon 2Tim. 4:10

2 Peter 3:5

...an earth

cohering out of

water and

through water, by

the word of God.

2 Peter 3:6

...the world

(cosmos)

which then was,

being deluged by

water,

perished.

Present Eon

Gal. 1:4

Second Eon

Gen. 1-9

First Eon

Heb. 1:2

F

L

O

O

D

E

A

R

T

H

Q

U

A

K

E

Rev. 21-22

NEW EARTH

Rev. 20:1-10

MILLENNIUM

Coming Eon

Luke 18:30

The Eons of the Eons

Rev. 11:14, 15

2Pet. 3:10-13

Rev. 16:17-21

Gen. 6-9

Gen. 1:2

Believers get eonian life which is the life pertaining to these last two eons. When those eons end, we no longer have eonian life but we do continue to have immortality. The goat nations judged in Matthew 25:31-46 get eonian chastening which is for the duration of the millennial eon here.

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All

Rule, Authority

Power, Death

ABOLISHED

1Cor. 15:24-26

CONSUMMATION

OF THE EONS

1Cor 15:28, Heb 9:27

ALL

SAVED 1Tim. 2:4-7

JUSTIFIED Rom. 5:18, 19

Reconciled Col. 1:16-20

Vivified 1Cor. 15:22-26

Subjected 1Cor. 15:27-28

GOD ALL IN ALL





Working left to right, each eon is marked by a drastic earth-wide cataclysm.

— EON 1 —

The first eon begins when the earth is created (Gen. 1:1). It ends with the disruption (Gk. *catabole*, Mt. 13:35, Rev. 13:8) when the earth *becomes* chaos and vacant.

— EON 2 —

The next eon begins with *re*-creation, when the earth is made habitable again (Gen. 1:2). It ends with the deluge, or flood, in Noah's day.

— EON 3 —

The present wicked eon, in which we live, follows, and ends with the tribulation (Chart 1: the great earthquake) followed by our Lord's return to earth.

— EON 4 —

This inaugurates the fourth eon, the millennium (Christ's thousand year reign on earth). It ends when the earth is destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:7).

— EON 5 —

Then the fifth and final eon commences, the New Earth, which lasts until the consummation, when death, the last enemy, is abolished, and God becomes "All in all" (1Cor. 15:22-28, Eph. 1:22).

None of the eons are eternal, neither individually or together. All judgments occur *within* the eons and thus are said to be "eonian", or as some translations say: "age-enduring", "age-abiding", or "age-lasting."

## DEATH (continued from page 3187)

Is this promise of justification of the heathen by faith only for a very few, the rest being hopelessly lost? Does this wretched, short, beast-like existence of the masses of the race in the past (and the same condition of things still prevails) determine for each one his eternity? How utterly unreasonable such an idea appears! Yet this is the prevailing belief among Christians.

### IS THE ORTHODOX VIEW JUST?

The common idea is that death seals our eternal destiny; as we are at death so will we be forever and there is no possibility of a change of condition after death but simply an intensifying of the same condition: the saved in heaven eternally growing better, the damned in hell forever growing worse.

What is there in common sense or in Scripture to substantiate such a view? On what ground of reason can we claim that death is that which eternally fixes the human destiny?

Is it *just* that man has so poor an “opportunity” here, and the majority have no “opportunity” at all? Is it *equitable* that “advantages” are so meager, and so unequally distributed? Is not God a God of justice and no respecter of persons, that there must be a more impartial distribution later?

These conclusions I think are reasonable; far more so than to claim that all, whatever is their condition here, will determine their future eternity by this present life.

### SCRIPTURE, NOT REASON IS OUR GUIDE

However, reason cannot decide this question for the one who is a believer. The final appeal must be to the Bible. However reasonable the foregoing view may be, we could at best only hold it as a possible explanation of the difficulties of the orthodox position, if it was not plainly in harmony with the Word. Yet it is in harmony with the Word. The *entire* teaching of the Bible, both in its general scope and in its special precepts and declarations, is in *full* harmony with the doctrine of post-humus reconciliation; not a second “opportunity,” as some say, but the **only** “opportunity” that the great majority of mankind ever have. To the Scriptures, then, we turn for the main argument that establishes this glorious truth of a “*restitution of all things*” (Acts 3:21), in the “*ages to come*” (Ephesians 2:7).

### WHERE DOES SCRIPTURE TEACH THAT DEATH FIXES ONE’S DESTINY?

I would call attention first to the fact that there is absolutely no Scripture *against* this view. Let the reader stop and think if he can, of any passage of Scripture that teaches that death fixes our eternal destiny.

Where is this taught in the Bible? Some passages may occur

to you that *seem* to teach it; but if you examine carefully and adhere closely to the one point under consideration, you will see that they can teach nothing of the kind.

Does death irrevocably fix our eternal destiny? Not one passage can be found answering this question in the affirmative. If any reader thinks that there are any such, I shall be very glad to have him point them out to me.

Now, on the other hand, there are many passages that teach, both by positive inference and by direct statement, that *death does not fix our eternal destiny*. I have not space to notice all of these passages, but will only cite a few of the plainest of them. We will notice in the first place some of these Scriptures that do so by positive inference.

### AN OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE OF POSITIVE INFERENCE

Take God’s promise and oath to Abraham:

*In thee and thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*

This is repeated again and again throughout the Bible (see Genesis 12:3; 22:18; 28:14; Galatians 3:8).

The positive, inevitable, unavoidable inference is that there must be a further work of God after death, or this great promise of all promises cannot be fulfilled.

Some will say that the promise will be fulfilled in some future period to “*all the families of the earth*” *THEN LIVING*, but that those who have died in the past without such blessing are not included among those referred to in the promise. They say that their destiny is sealed without sharing in this universal blessing.

I reply that this promise of God is a *divine affidavit*, doubly immutable, sworn to and signed by the Lord God Almighty (see the plain statements of Hebrews 6:13-20), Who has further declared,

*My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure* (Isaiah 46:10).

If this promise is uncertain, indefinite and equivocal, not meaning what it appears to mean but something far inferior to it, then my faith in all of God’s promises is shaken; I cannot tell what they mean; I do not know how much they are to be discounted, and such “paper” would be of but little value.

In a human court, if the sworn statement of a person was found to be no nearer true than the above view would make God’s oath, he would be indictable for perjury. However, *God’s promises are not at a discount, but at a premium*. Any explanation of a Scripture that belittles it, that seems to fall



short of the language used so as to make it mean less than is said, may safely be considered incorrect and rejected at once, for the reality of *God's truth is not below, but far above the power of human expression.*

The conclusion, then, to which we are inevitably led from the foregoing, is that this promise and oath of God must be fulfilled after death, to those who die without sharing its benefits in this life. This view is confirmed by other Scripture which I will notice very briefly. Passing over many more passages that might be cited from the Old Testament, I will call your attention to a few from the New.

### NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES OF POSITIVE INFERENCE

***I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people*** (Luke 2:10).

The angel's words plainly imply that *death does not fix our eternal destiny*, for how else could this good tidings be to *all people*, since the great mass have died and are still dying without any knowledge of this blessed news, this glorious gospel of the blessed God?

This same may be said of John 1:9, that

*[Jesus Christ] was the True Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

Very few, comparatively, have thus far been enlightened by this "True Light." If every man is to be enlightened it must be in some future point, beyond the grave. Furthermore, those passages that speak of Christ as the "Savior of the World" clearly imply the same truth (see John 1:29; 3:17; 6:33; I John 2:2; 4:14).

Take these passages in connection with I Timothy 2:3-6.

***God our Savior will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth for there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time.***

God Himself, too, is the Savior of the world; all are to be "saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Will the great mass of mankind die and be lost, *never* having been "saved" and come to the "knowledge of the truth" – never having heard about this universal ransom? It must be so, or they must come to this knowledge and hear of this ransom *after death.*

### A SCRIPTURE OF DIRECT STATEMENT

Although there are many other passages to this same effect, I must pass them by and close this section by noticing just

one more passage which ***directly*** teaches that *death does not fix our eternal destiny.*

In Ezekiel 16:44-53 we have first a comparison made between the wicked cities of Jerusalem, Samaria and Sodom. The Lord declares that the first was far more wicked than either of the other two. He goes on to tell why He destroyed Sodom (:49-50), and then declares in plain and unmistakable language that He purposes at some future time to *restore Sodom* to her former estate, and when He does this, He will restore Jerusalem and Samaria to their former estate.

Now, it is plain that by Sodom is meant *the people*, the inhabitants of Sodom (:49-50), and it is certain that *if the inhabitants of Sodom are ever to be restored to their former estate, it must be from the dead, for they were all destroyed without a single exception* (see Luke 17:29).

It is further clear that they are thus to be restored that they may be benefited and blessed (:60-63). No other interpretation can be put on the passage, except if it is forced. It must be plain to all that *death does not fix our eternal destiny.*

The truth is still further confirmed by the fact that we are taught that the nations are to be restored in the latter days, by example, Moab, Ammon and Elam (see Jeremiah 48:47; 49:6, 39).

Finally David makes this restoration of the nations universal when he says,

*All nations whom Thou hast made, shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord, and shall glorify Thy name; for Thou are great and doest wondrous things: Thou art God alone* (Psalm 86:9-10).

Also look up Psalms 22:27-28; 66:4; 72:11, 17, 19; 113:3; 138:4, and see if they do not fully harmonize with the broad and glorious view presented here.

Although thus far in this world's history evil has seemed to triumph over the vast majority of God's "offspring" (Acts 17:29), and they have gone down to the grave in darkness, ignorance and sin, yet it by no means follows that this sad triumph is eternal.

We see a big hope for the race in the ages to come, when God will show the exceeding riches of His grace (Ephesians 2:7). Well may we exclaim in view of such a glorious purpose of the ages as in Ephesians 3:11,

*Glorious and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the ages. Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou only art holy; for all the nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy righteous acts have been made manifest* (Revelation 15:3-4).





I am reading *God's Holy Nation* and enjoying it. I am amazed that you can write all the things you do. Do you ever sleep? – **CO**

One of the highlights of my morning is seeing what you have sent by e-mail. Thanks so much for the many interesting and informative articles and books that you supply. – **TX**

Clyde, I just finished reading your book *The Outsiders*. It was very encouraging, thanks for your thoughts and study on the true Body of Christ and the lonely road we travel at times. – **MO**

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Your ministry, teaching, books, audios, Daily Email Goodies, etc., etc., are a true blessing to me. I pass these on to others and have had some interesting conversations about the subjects! I am always praying for you and that God's Word will continue to race and

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I had two copies of your book *The Church in Ruins*. I gave one away, and loaned the other. So recently I bought a third copy. Really impressive! – **CA**

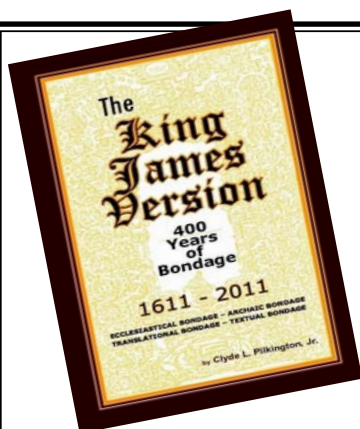
I have just finished my first read of *God's Holy Nation*. I have read on this theme for over 20 years and have not found, until now, such a clear and easy to understand explanation as you have provided. Many points that I have been unsure about were clearly presented and expounded in a way that leaves no confusion for me – strong meat in a palatable form. I thank Father for your talents and your love for His truth. – **LA**

It is rare to find someone who even mentions the topic of suffering, but you wrote an entire book on this: *Suffering – God's Forgotten Gift*, which I highly recommend to everyone! – **Facebook**

I'm better than half way through your newest book *World Affairs* and am thoroughly enjoying it. – **NC**

Just wanted to let you know how much I am loving reading *Humanity in the Arms of a Loving Savior and Important Related Matters* by James T. Burson. – **Australia**

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1611 was not a high spiritual mark in the history of the church, the Body of Christ. Instead of being a grand year of the pinnacle of preservation or perfection of God's Word, it was rather the sad depths of the subtle corrupting of God's Word by the historic union of governmental and ecclesiastical politics.

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