

„THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH”

How clear and simple is this statement. How strange it is that so many who profess to receive the Bible as the Word of God persist in contradicting this positive statement, and affirm that they believe, and that the Bible teaches, that the wages of sin is *everlasting life in torment*.

They realize that this is an awful thought, and affects the interests of every human being—because all have sinned and come short. Yet it is what they have been taught from infancy. It is what their church creed still teaches, and they are taught that it is one of the first steps to infidelity and perdition to doubt the *eternal torment* of all who are not true Christians. They suppose that, since their church creed teaches it, it must be one of the fundamental teachings of Scripture.

A very large majority of Christians (We say it with sorrow and shame) have never searched the Scriptures which are able to make them wise. (2 Tim. 3:15.) They have merely learned a few texts, which, construed in the light of their church creeds and instructions, tend to convince them that those creeds are in harmony with the Bible, and that eternal agony awaits a large majority of our race, foreseen and foreknown and pre-arranged by our Creator and Father, who, despite this terrible plan, they must call a *God of love*—who, despite his malevolence, must be worshiped and adored as the benevolent, loving One, the Author of every good and perfect gift. This One they must thus worship and try, or pretend, to love, lest they be of that eternally tormented multitude. No wonder so many draw near to God with their lips, while their hearts are far from him. No wonder that some who come to lose the fear of such torment, become blasphemous infidels, denying all things sacred, and regarding all religion as fraudulent, when they lose their dread of this fundamental teaching of the religion of to-day.

The difficulty is that the traditions of men are given the authority which belongs only to the Word of God. God says that he gave us our existence, and has the power to deprive us of it if we do not use it properly; (Ezek. 18:4; Eccl. 9:5,10; Psa. 145:20; and 146:4,) that the wages which he will pay to sinners will be DEATH—the extinction of life; and the wages he will pay to those who use life in harmony with his will, will be, *everlasting life*—life unceasingly. „The soul (*being*) that sinneth it shall *die*,” but none other. (Ezek. 18:20.) Again we read, „I have set before you life and death”—blessing and cursing; „therefore choose life.” (Deut. 30:19.) Choose it by complying with

the condition, on which God says we may have it. „I have no pleasure in the death of him that *dieth*, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn ye and *live*.” (Ezek. 18:32.)

Nor can any one find a reasonable objection to *death*—EXTINCTION of being—as the *punishment* for sin. Man (as a perfect being when created) was capable of appreciating good and evil, and of developing a character in harmony with the one he chose. God gave him *this* free agency, telling him which is His will, and which is best, and what the consequences of his choice will be to himself. He said to Adam regarding a forbidden thing, „In the day thou eatest thereof, dying thou shalt DIE.” (Gen. 2:17, margin.) So he tells us that the wages of sin is *death*; that we must shun sin if we would avoid its penalty.

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All of God’s plans and laws are the very best, and any other course than obedience is sure to bring some evil consequence. The interests of humanity are so much in common, that evil and its consequences in one member produces more or less evil and distress to others. It is a wise and blessed provision God has made, that none will be allowed to live whose misuse of life would be an injury and source of misery to themselves and others. And who would not admit that God’s dealings with the sinner as thus explained by His Word, are not only Just, but Merciful?

One cause of much of the confusion on this subject, arises from the fact that *death* happens alike to saint and sinner, hence many conclude—It must be some *other kind* of death than the death of the individual as we see it all about us, that the Scriptures refer to as the wages of sin. And giving their imaginations full play, they conclude that the DEATH which is the wages of sin, *must* be a *life* in torment, or, as some describe it—a death that *never dies*. In attempting to explain this, modern theologians fall into grievous errors, and begin to talk mysteriously about a number and variety of deaths. They must find as many beings to die as they find deaths. Hence, they not only tell us that there are *many deaths*, but that man is a combination of a *number of beings*. They explain that what God said to Adam, and what happened to him when he had sinned, was *spiritual* death; that nine hundred and thirty years after was *physical* death, and that then he was liable to *eternal* death—a condition of torture—a death that never dies.

We will first state our objection to this theological division of death into three, and proceed to explain the question under discussion from our standpoint. We object first to the division of a man into three parts—spiritual man, physical man, and something after which survives both of the former. The supposition that man could lose spiritual being arises from a *confusion* of thought concerning human and spiritual beings. Scripture teaches us that human beings and spiritual beings are different orders of beings, there being far more difference between a man and spiritual beings (angels, etc.), than between a fish and a horse. Adam, as a human being, was „of the earth,

earthly.” (1 Cor. 15:47.) And this was God’s design in his creation—viz.: to make a *different order* of beings from angels—spiritual beings, which he had already created—an order of beings adapted to the earth by nature. That God had succeeded in making man different from angels—spiritual beings—is evident from the fact that he called him „very good,” and gave him dominion over earth and all earthly things. (Gen. 1:26; Psa. 8:6.)

If, then, Adam was *human* and not *spiritual* by nature, he could not lose spiritual nature or spiritual life; and those who hold that he did lose it, are unable to point to a single Scripture which so declares. We suggest to make it forcible to your minds, that it would be as reasonable and as sensible to talk of a fish dying to a horse’s life or nature, as to say that man died to a nature totally different from his own.

Adam died only as a man. From the time he sinned and was driven from the Garden of Eden, he gradually began to *die* as a *man*; he began to lose those grand perfections of mind and body which constituted him the superior and ruler of the lower animals. This dying process continued by reason of his strength and perfection for a long time—930 years—then the dying process was complete—Adam was dead—lifeless. So far as he knows or feels he is „as though he had not been” created.

Thus, in him was illustrated God’s word—the wages of sin is death.

But the query comes—would not Adam have died anyhow, whether he had sinned or not?—if not, how could he ever go to heaven? We reply, no; if Adam had not sinned, he had not died, but would have lived on, on earth. God never promised anywhere in his Word to take Adam to heaven. Adam had no such hope or desire. His desire was in harmony with his earthly or human nature—to live on the earth and to enjoy it. And this, as we have shown, was God’s will also—to make an earth to be inhabited, and to make a creature to inhabit and use and rule it in harmony with God’s will.

It should be clearly held in mind, that while God does purpose and is to accomplish the lifting of a „little flock” of humanity *from* the *human nature* to a spiritual—the *Divine nature*,—as *new creatures*—yet this is not a change of God’s original plan, when he said let us make MAN. God’s plan relative to having the earth peopled with a race of perfect MEN, still continues, and will, ere long, be accomplished. It is only during this Gospel Age since Jesus was (at resurrection) highly exalted to the DIVINE PLANE of being, that God is calling out *from* among men, some to become partakers of the Divine nature, and sharers of glory as spiritual beings—joint heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord. The condition upon which we may claim those promises as ours, is, that becoming dead to earthly aims, hopes, motives, and pleasures, we render the *human nature* (not its sins) a living sacrifice.

But another inquires—if Adam would not have died had he not sinned, does it not prove that he possessed immortality? Not at all, (You will see the distinction between immortality and everlasting or continuous life by reading „Food,” pp. 11 and 134,) his life would have been continued by allowing him to continue to feed on the trees of life in the Garden of Eden. There was nourishment in their fruit which sustained human life. God executed the penalty, death, by separating man from those nourishing trees; Adam’s life forces were exhausted in labor, and the products of the cursed earth were insufficient to supply the waste. The earth was cursed for man’s sake—that it might not sustain his life.

But now the previous question. If physical death is the penalty or wages of sin, why is it that all—saints and sinners alike—die? We answer in the words of the apostle, death is passed upon *all* men in that *all* have sinned. The reason you *die* is because you are a sinner—you were born a sinner. It was not your fault that you were thus born, but it resulted from a law which God established in the creation of the race to which we belong. It was a part of his law or plan that this race should propagate its species. Thus Adam was to multiply and fill the earth with beings perfect and sinless like himself—in God’s sight „very good” men. But when Adam began to decay and to lose his grand perfections as a part of the penalty of disobedience—dying—he began to lose the ability to produce sinless and perfect offspring. A pure, perfect and sinless race could not come from a sinful and decaying head, and thus when Adam sinned, all his unborn posterity partook of the evils or wages of sin—death.

At first glance it seems unjust and harsh that we should be condemned and punished for an act in which individually we had no share. But when we take God’s *explanation* of it, all is clear and satisfactory: He condemned all through, or on account of *one* man’s sin, in order that he might have mercy upon all and redeem all by *one* sacrifice, which he had purposed *in himself*, before the foundation of the world. (Rom. 5:18,19; and 11:32.)

As we have before shown, had each man been given a trial, such as Adam had, the probabilities are, that more than half of the billions of his children would have done just as he did. And each one who did so, would have been condemned to *death*, and to redeem them all, would have made necessary the death of just as many *substitutes* or *ransoms*; causing pain and death to as many sinless (willing) redeemers. All of these redeemers must have first come down to earthly conditions, and become *men*, that they might taste death for the sinner and pay his penalty.

But how much wiser and better was the plan which God took. He condemned all through one representative, that he might justify through another—a representative redeemer. „Oh, the depths of the riches, both of the knowledge and wisdom of God.”

The reason, then, that all die, is, that by nature all are sinners. And, though the ransom of *believers* has been paid by the death of Jesus, yet those believers are not yet *saved* from

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the penalty of sin (death), but are merely assured by God's promises that their ransom has been paid, and in *His due time*, they will be saved out of death by a *resurrection*.

The advantages which *now* accrue to believers are not actual for they share the miseries of the curse with the world, but they are *by faith*, „For we are saved by *hope*” only, and not in fact. (Rom. 8:23,24.) We have a *basis of hope* for future life, in God's promise of a resurrection, which none but *believers* in those promises can have. Thus we have *hope* as an anchor which keeps us from the drifting doubts of the world. We have more also as believers in the efficacy of Jesus' ransom. We realize that while before as sinners, God could not recognize us at all, now as those whose sins have been paid and canceled by Jesus' death, we can come to God as *sinless*—”justified from all things.” (Acts 13:39.) We can again, as Adam did before sin, call God Father, and be recognized by him as *human sons*. (Luke 3:38.)

But, as we have seen, the penalty of sin—*death*—is allowed to continue until the full close of this Gospel or Sacrificing Age. During this age so many of the believers as desire may join themselves to Christ in sacrificing their *humanity*, and become thereby sharers with him of *Divinity*. When this work shall be accomplished—which pays in full the ransom price of the world—then comes the time for SALVATION in the actual sense. The church—the new creatures—will be the first to be *saved from death*. Theirs is called the first (chief) resurrection, because they are raised to the divine—spiritual plane. Blessed and holy are all they that have part in the first (chief) resurrection. This first (chief resurrection) began with our head, Jesus, and will be completed in raising to the same condition the church, which is his body. As Paul aimed, so we also aim to have a part in that chief resurrection, for only the „little flock”—his body—are of it. (Phil. 3:8-11.)

Then will follow the *actual* SALVATION of the world from death, by a resurrection. (See article „Resurrection.”) So we see that *death* is not complex but a simple thing. The man died, and God's plan is to save him from death by paying his ransom, and then giving him back his life, in hope, that being better able to appreciate its value, he will „choose life and live” in harmony with God's laws.

At some future time we will answer and explain the various passages supposed to conflict with the above explanation of sin's wages.

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