

# THE ETERNAL DESTINY of the UNSAVED: *WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?*

—by I. C. Herendeen

This message is about one of the most important and solemn subjects contained in the Word of God, and should therefore be dealt with in great boldness and plainness. But important as it is, sad to say the great majority of preachers rarely mention it and then but lightly. This is all the more reason why we should carefully consider it, and set forth what we find the Holy Scriptures have to say about it: they are very clear as to the destiny of the unsaved. Christ Himself spoke more often and to a greater extent on this solemn subject than he did on heaven and its glories. Today we hear far more about heaven and its glories than about hell and its miseries. No one objects hearing too often about “the hope which is laid up for us in heaven” (Col. 1:5), no matter how often mentioned or emphasized. But when it comes to presenting that which is not so pleasing then we are apt to be told “Speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits” (Isa. 30:10).

## **NEED TO THINK ABOUT ETERNITY**

Everything about us is passing away and coming to an end, and our life’s race is apt to end any moment of any day. We have no lease on life. It is a journey from the cradle to the grave, from time to eternity, and ere we are aware we shall have arrived at our final destination—heaven for the righteous and hell for the unsaved sinner. This is the clear teaching of the Bible, our only infallible source of information. We cannot, we dare not, fail to give this solemn subject our earnest and concentrated attention for none of us is more than a heart beat away from eternal weal or woe. If we had a clearer vision of the awe-inspiring matter it would banish much of our levity and irreverence, and cause us to realize our deep need of “fleeing from the wrath to come” (Matt. 3:7).

## **REASON FOR THIS MESSAGE**

I am in hearty agreement with Arthur W. Pink when he wrote: “It is the deepening conviction of the writer that what is most needed today is a wide proclamation of those truths which are the least acceptable to the flesh. What is needed today is —

1. A scriptural setting forth of the character of God: His absolute sovereignty, His ineffable holiness, His inflexible justice, and His unchanging veracity.
2. A scriptural setting forth of the condition of the natural man: his total depravity, his spiritual insensibility, and his inveterate hostility to God, and the fact that he is ‘condemned already’ and that the wrath of a sin-hating God is even now abiding on him (John 3:36).
3. A scriptural setting forth of the alarming danger in which sinners are, the indescribably awful doom which awaits them.
4. A scriptural setting forth of the nature of that punishment which awaits the lost, the awfulness of it, the hopelessness of it, the unendurableness of it, and the endlessness of it. It is because of these convictions that by pen as well as by voice we are seeking to raise the alarm.”

To quote Bishop J.C. Ryle. “The eternity of future punishment has been held by almost all the greatest theologians from the time of the Reformation down to the present day. “ Further on he continues, “But after every allowance, admission and deduction there remains, in my humble judgment, a mass of Scripture evidence in support of the doctrine of eternal punishment which can never be explained away, and which no revision or new translation of the English Bible will ever overthrow. That there are degrees of misery as well as degrees of glory in the future state... is undeniable. But that the punishment of the wicked will ever have an end... I maintain is utterly impossible to prove by texts of Scripture.”

## **WHAT IS HELL LIKE?**

In Rev. 21:8 we read, “The fearful, the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.” Here we learn that the vilest of the vile will all be associated together. Those of high moral standards, who pride themselves on their truthfulness and honesty, their religiousness, their morality, if they die in their sins will for ever and ever be shut up in the prison-house of the universe with all the vile Sodomites, with every “murderer,” every “whoremonger,” with every “blasphemer” that ever lived: with Cain, Pharaoh, and Judas! Devils and wicked men all under the same condemnation will be their eternal companions. And this companionship, instead of affording relief, will only aggravate their woe. The whole throng, hateful and hating one another, will be tormentors of one another. The passions which burn in the hearts of wicked men on earth and destroy all eternal peace, and sometimes drives them to suicide, will then be unrestrained and do their full work of torture, and relief by suicide will be forever impossible: endure such torments they must. There will be no relief from their sufferings, their torments will be interminable with no hope of deliverance, no means of escape, no resting-place in hell, no change or variation of their lot. With no prospects of any improvement they will sink down to black despair and to “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28).

It is high time these facts were thundered forth far and wide and often to warn guilty sinners that “the wrath of God abideth on them” (John 3:36), and that execution of His wrath awaits them the moment they pass out of this life. God is a holy God (Joshua 24:19) and will not at all acquit the wicked (Nahum 1:3).

### **THE SINNER’S FOLLY AND MADNESS**

What has been before us above serves to expose the folly and madness of probably the greatest part of mankind, who for “the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. 11:25), for a little wealth, or for a little earthly fame and glory, go on in utter heedlessness and carelessness to their eternal doom, as the ox goeth to the slaughter. How mad are those who know they must die in a few short years at the very most but show no concern as to what is to become of them in the next world! And of those who have been faithfully warned many are not in the least disturbed but hear with as much indifference as though they were not at all concerned in the matter, as though the warning did not apply to them! And yet, for all they know to the contrary they may be in the fiery torments before another day or even hour passes. O the blinding power of sin! O the perversity of human nature! O the utter insensibility and indifference of men and women who are now sporting on the brink of eternal hell suspended only by the frail thread of mortality which may be snapped at any moment!

These series thoughts ought to make every unsaved sinner quake and tremble. Reader, it is useless to flatter yourself with the vain hope that this will not be true of you if you do not make sure and certain that you have been “born again” (John 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:23), washed in the precious blood of the Lamb of God and made an heir of glory. Every professing Christian ought to obey the Scripture command to “examine” himself (2 Cor. 13:5) to make sure that he has passed from death unto life, not prejudiced in his own favor, remembering that he has a “heart that is deceitful above all things” (Jer. 17:9). He should be careful not to give himself the benefit of any doubt or take anything for granted. Each of us should weigh the tremendously solemn issues which turn on whether or not we have really passed from death unto life.” We simply cannot afford to be uncertain or mistaken for far too much is at stake.

What folly on the part on those who deny the reality of hell! Strong and impressive proof of this momentous truth is furnished by Divine revelation. In it “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom. 1:18). From God’s infallible Word we learn that wicked men “treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom. 2:5). We are told that “the rich man died and was buried, and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments” (Luke 16:23,24). Men will be called from their graves to the judgment Heb. 9:27), and from the judgment the wicked will be sentenced to everlasting punishment. God is to be feared (Eccl. 5:7) for He can and will “destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28).

### **THE GREATNESS OF WRATH AND DAMNATION**

The greatness of the evil included in damnation may be inferred from the importance which the Scriptures attach to salvation. If wrath and damnation are trivial matters then the sending of God's only and well-beloved Son into the world to suffer for us as He did would be unworthy of infinite Wisdom; it would not be worthy to be called "so great salvation" (Heb. 2:3) if it did not deliver from "so great a death" (2 Cor. 1:10). Paul declared that God in the person of His Son Jesus Christ "came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15) hence He must have believed the salvation of sinners to be a work of vast magnitude and importance. The Psalmist asks, "Who knoweth the power of thy anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath" (Psa. 90:11). The finite mind cannot conceive what it will be. Because of "the terror of the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:11) every son of Adam ought to give himself no rest until he has made his "calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10).

Since eternal woe is something future, unseen and unfelt, the human heart is prone to neglect or slight God's warnings and threatenings of "judgment to come." Its apprehension disquiets men and distrubs their enjoyments, and so they are strongly inclined to put it from them and go merrily on their way while all the time they are drawing nearer and nearer to the pit of woe. The threat of "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" (Rom. 2:8,9) is fearful, and they cannot think of these things and remain at ease, and so try to persuade themselves that these threatenings will never be executed upon them.

Of what elements future misery will consist we do not know, but we do know that it will include poignant remorse, a sense of Divine wrath with absence of all enjoyment and of all hope. The subjects of it will "weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth" as at last they realize that they are forever and ever shut out of heaven and in outer darkness. They will "remember" the good things they once enjoyed but will never enjoy again, the opportunities of mercy, once neglected, never to return! They will be "tormented in this flame" (Luke 16:24) without a drop of water to cool their tongue. And their hatred of God will be such as to cause them to "gnash their teeth" in rage against Him and blaspheme His name as they realize they are the subjects of the Almighty's wrath and cannot extricate themselves!

## **HELL IS ETERNAL**

The duration of their misery will be eternal, never ending. God's Holy Word expressly declares "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:46). The punishment of the one and the happiness of the other will be of eternal duration - both will be "everlasting." In Rev. 14:11 we read "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." They will "suffer the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7).

The righteous will perpetually rejoice in the glory of heaven while the wicked will perpetually sink under the load of their woe. The terribleness and awfulness of hell is proven by the fact that the everlasting fire into which the wicked will depart is "prepared for the devil and his angels." Being "prepared for the devil and his angels" how intolerable it will be! How dreadful must that place be! That this "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" produces the most awful sufferings is clear from Rev. 20:10 where we are told that Satan shall be "tormented day and night for ever and ever." Whether this fire is figurative or literal who can say positively? But I believe that when God says "fire" He means fire. Was the "flood" figurative? Was the "fire and brimstone" which descended from heaven and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah figurative? Will it be figurative "fire" which shall yet burn this earth and cause "the elements to melt with fervent heat" (2 Pet. 3:10)? No: in each of these cases we are obliged to take the words of Scripture literally. Let those who dare to affirm otherwise answer to God. In the light of this we ask in the words of Ezekiel 22:14 "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it."

From the above we learn how God's character and throne will be vindicated. God will yet punish every rebel against Himself in the display of His sovereignty and government. When Pharaoh dared pit himself against Jehovah, God manifested His authority and destroyed him at the Red Sea. He turned Nebuchadnezzar into a beast to make him know that the "Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men" (Dan. 4:32). God now "endures the vessels of wrath" with much longsuffering, but in a coming day He will "show his wrath and make his power known" (Rom. 9:22).

## **WHO GOES TO HELL AND WHY**

“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12). From this scripture we learn that ever last one of us is born into this world a sinner (Rom. 3:23) on the road to hell because he is a descendant of his forefather Adam, who deliberately and willfully disobeyed God’s command in the Garden of Eden not to eat of the fruit of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:17), thus incurring the penalty of death. “The soul that sinneth it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4).

In all likelihood some of the readers of this message will be among those yet unsaved, and travelling as fast as time can carry them to this very hell. If, then, you have any concern for the eternal welfare of your soul you will give yourselves no rest until you have found out all you can as to what the Word of God teaches about this dreadful place, who will be its inhabitants, what their state therein will be, and what the only way of escape. Pray do not take it for granted that all will be well with your soul because you are religious, for one can be very religious and yet lost. It is not enough to attend church, be baptized, take communion, refrain from the grosser evils the world condemns, be moral, honest, upright, etc. Things are good in themselves, but they do not save, as the Bible plainly teaches. One may do all these things and yet go to hell notwithstanding, for Christ alone is the Saviour. In God’s sight “There is none righteous, no, not one...they are all gone out of the way” (Rom. 3:10,12). If you are to miss hell at last you must “Repent and believe the Gospel” (Mark 1:15). You must savingly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ who came into the world for the express purpose of saving sinners, and to give them right and title to “mansions in the skies.” My earnest prayer is that after you have read this serious message you will give yourselves no rest until you have made sure of your eternal salvation through the mighty sacrifice of the Lamb of God which “taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). You dare not give yourselves the benefit of any doubt for too much is at stake.

The Word reveals heaven as a “place” of eternal joy, bliss, glory and happiness for all the redeemed of the Lord, “prepared” by the Lord Himself for all those that love Him in sincerity (Eph. 6:24), whereas hell is for all those who refuse to bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ and come to Him that they “might have life” (John 5:40). Since this matter is of vital importance you will play the fool if immediate steps are not taken to “flee from the wrath to come” (Matt. 3:7), and apply to Christ for “the gift of God (which) is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). We beg you not to put off this all-important matter another moment, for you are only a heart-beat away from your eternal destiny.

Hell is a most solemn and awful subject. O think of your case in time. Can you remain unmoved at that threat in John 8:24, “Ye shall die in your sins?” Your sins will follow you to judgment and there be your accusers, there be your tormentors! And bear this in mind: You do not know when you lie down but that you may be in hell before morning! Divine wrath is a fierce, devouring, everlasting, unquenchable fire: take heed that it be not your portion. Mark 16:16 plainly warns you “he that believeth not shall be damned.” This is the Word of Him that cannot lie.

Great numbers spend their days without any thought as to their future and what it holds for them. They live as though they were to live for ever, give account to no one, and sure they will go to heaven when they die regardless of how they have lived. Others do not hesitate to act insanely and do those things which are almost certain to result in their death, and yet this does not deter them in the least. They are perfectly willing, it seems, to risk their lives for the sake of possible fleeting fortune, earthly glory, or for the sake of a brief season of physical satisfaction. O what an awful price such will pay ... an eternity suffering “the devouring fire” and the “everlasting burnings” (Isa. 33:14) from which there will be no alleviation and no escape!

Considering these awful, inescapable, and eternal consequences, we can but wonder at the widespread indifference on the part of multitudes. Are men and women so anxious to lose their precious lives that they are willing and ready to take such awful risks? It would certainly seem so since they appear never to stop to think what is involved should death overtake them. Death today is so common that men and women think nothing of it, they are not greatly affected by it. Great numbers are not aware that they are wicked sinners in the sight of God, that “God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psa. 7:11) and “hatest all workers of iniquity,” (Psa. 5:5) as well as all works of iniquity, and will “by no means clear the guilty” (Ex. 34:7).

God is ineffably holy, inflexibly just and absolutely sure to do as He has said, that “The wicked shall be cast into hell” (Psa. 9:17), that “all the wicked will he destroy” (Psa. 145:20), and this because the sinner’s heart is “enmity against God” (Rom. 8:7), and because he “hates” God “without a cause” (John 15:25). From these scriptures we see that the sinner richly deserves the doom which awaits him. He is unaware or indifferent to the fact that he is in the hands of infinite Justice who will pour out to the uttermost His wrath upon the ungodly the moment their spirits leave their bodies (Luke 16:19-26). Death seals their doom for all eternity: their souls go to be tormented in the “flames” an everlasting fire “prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41), and this is irrevocable and final whatever men may think or say to the contrary.

None of us have any reason to be ignorant of these truths for the Word of God is everywhere available. But since the great majority do not read the Bible, and since great numbers of professed preachers of the Word are silent on the matter of an everlasting hell, well aware that this subject is not at all a pleasing one, sinners are not being warned of their fearful peril as they should be, and bidden to “flee from the wrath to come” (Luke 3:7). It is also true that the occupants of many pulpits commanded to preach “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) even go so far as to deny the eternal punishment of all who die in their sins. Their denials, however, do not change the facts of God’s Holy Word. God has told us the wicked shall “suffer the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7), and so it shall come to pass in due time.

## **HOW TO ESCAPE HELL**

Countless thousands of all ages are now suffering the doom of the damned, and untold numbers of others, including hordes of unregenerate religionists are on their way to the same doom. This may not seem real now, but if you die unsaved, it will be your portion too. O my friend, do not dismiss this subject from your thoughts or your folly will only accentuate your misery in that day. Far better to be made wretched and miserable now for a time than that you should weep and howl for ever! O harden not your heart against Him, against infinite Mercy, against the Son of God’s love. Ezek. 33:11 tells us that “God hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked” but “that he turn from his way and live ... Repent and turn from all your transgressions: so iniquity shall not be your ruin” (Ezek. 18:30). If you do not repent, Christ Himself asks, “How can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matt. 23:33). O, sinner, why will ye die in your sins? Why will ye not come unto Him for life everlasting?

Come to the Saviour make no delay  
Here in His Word He’s shown us the way,  
Here in our midst He is standing today,  
Tenderly saying “Come.”

He has graciously promised, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). God, in order to provide your salvation “spared not his own Son” (Rom. 8:32). God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). God has graciously provided a way of escape so flee now this very minute, while time and opportunity are yours. Flee to the blessed Saviour of even the “chief” of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15) then you will not “fall into the hands of the living God” which is “a fearful thing” (Heb. 10:31). Cast yourself into the arms of Christ who shed His life’s blood for sinners that they might be saved “from the wrath to come.” “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they who put their trust in Him” (Psa. 2:12).

A clear understanding of the doom of the damned will cause the redeemed of the Lord to appreciate far better their “so great salvation,” and be the occasion of the profoundest praise to God, just as of old the overthrow of God’s enemies at the Red Sea caused His people to rejoice in their deliverance. In the coming day we shall be moved to rejoice when we witness the final display of God’s holiness and justice in the overthrow and punishment of all who have wickedly defied Him.

## **HOW DOES IT STAND WITH YOU?**

In closing we ask, What are your prospects in the future world? Have you seriously considered where you will spend eternity? If not, why not? Death is ever at hand and the Judge is at the door. Every act is a step to perdition, and you do not know but that ere night you may make your bed in hell. O, do not make light of this all - important matter. The very devils do not: they "believe and tremble" (James 2:19), and you are not more hardened than they. It is not wisdom to sport with the second death. Do not contend with God. Repent and be converted and none of this will come upon you. "Seek ye the Lord while he is to be found; call upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:6,7). "O, why will ye die? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye" (Ezek. 18:31,32). "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). "Behold, now is the accepted time: behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2) Tomorrow may be one day too late.

Say where is thy refuge poor sinner,  
And what is thy prospect today?  
Why toil for the wealth that will perish,  
And treasures that rust and decay.

O think of thy soul that forever  
Must live on eternity's shore.  
When thou in the dust are forgotten,  
When pleasures can charm thee no more.

The Master is calling thee, sinner,  
In tones of compassion and love,  
To feel that sweet rapture of pardon,  
And lay up thy treasures above.

To kneel at the cross where He suffered,  
To ransom thy soul from the grave;  
The arm of His mercy will hold thee,  
The arm that is mighty to save.  
The summer is waning, poor sinner,  
Repent ere the season is past;  
God's goodness to thee is extended,  
As long as the day-beam shall last.

Then slight not the warning repeated  
To all the bright moments that roll,  
Nor say when the harvest is ended,  
That no one hath cared for my soul.

"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb... and there shall be no night there...And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come, and let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:2,5,17). "Him that cometh to me I will no wise cast out" (John 6:37b). What an exceeding great and precious promise. Will you come while the door of mercy yet stands ajar?