

Basic Bible Doctrines

In this book the author presents the major doctrines of the Bible In a basic and concise way from a Pauline perspective.

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Day of Grace Ministries, Inc. Is a not-for-profit corporation organized In 1990. Its purpose Is to spread the gospel of the grace of God so that all men might have the opportunity to "be saved and come unto a [full] knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

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Preface

Do we really need another book on Bible doctrine? What about all the other books on doctrine; aren't they good enough? I could easily answer these two questions by simply saying that *Basic Bible Doctrines* approaches Bible doctrine from a Pauline perspective. This means that Paul's words in Romans 11:13 are taken literally. "For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my office." Paul is the Apostle of God for this dispensation of grace, and that makes Paul's Epistles the key that unlocks the rest of Scripture. All Scripture must now be interpreted in light of the Pauline revelation—the revelation given to him by the risen, glorified Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's writings are the only place in the Bible where we can read about this present dispensation of grace—the interim between the stoning of Stephen and the coming time of Jacob's trouble. Yes, we do need another book on doctrine.

There is a continuing need for exposition and proclamation of the truths of Scripture. To expand our understandings of the great truths of the Word of God is what I have endeavored to do, I trust with God's help. I have sought to present the basic doctrines of the Bible in a concise and yet thorough way according the light and help God has given. May it not be the last such book written or read to gain further understanding of the Word of God.

To that end, may the volume itself draw you closer to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God, the Father, in your knowledge and appreciation of Him. May it result in a living testimony to Him, in accordance with the revelation so wonderfully committed to us.

Donald Webb

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Chapter 15

The State of the Dead

The state of the dead can be a very disturbing subject to those who are outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. But to us who have trusted Him as our Savior, our hope of living forever with Him is secured by His resurrection. Based upon the absolute faithfulness of the Word of God, we have the assurance that our lives are:

“...hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:3,4).

The Word of God has much to say about the state of the dead (both saved and unsaved) between death and resurrection. The eternal state of the unsaved dead is also clearly taught. These issues are important indeed, and the Bible is the only authoritative source of truth about these issues. In this lesson we seek to give a brief overview of the Bible’s teaching on this subject. We will cover this lesson in four points:

- Death
- Resurrection
- Judgment
- The eternal state of the lost

DEATH

The term *death* has been a problem for many people, but the main thing to remember is that it never means *extinction* or *cessation of existence*, but rather *separation*. Ephesians 2:1 tells us that before we were saved we were *dead* in trespasses and sins. This is talking about *spiritual* death. This does not mean that we did not exist, but it means that we were *alienated* or *separated* from a Holy God because of our sins. This was remedied when we trusted Christ as our Savior, at which time we were given spiritual life or *regenerated* by the Holy Spirit. This is when we were placed into Christ and given His eternal life by the gift of God’s grace.

Whether we talk about spiritual death, physical death, or eternal death, the issue is the same—it means *separation*.

Physical death is the separation of the soul and the spirit from the body. *Resurrection* is the reuniting of the body and the spirit. If death were final and meant the end, then what would be the meaning of resurrection? And if death were the absolute cessation of existence, then how could there be a *second death* as in Revelation 20:14?

Death is a definite state that affects the body, soul, and spirit. One of the things we must realize is that man is tripartite; that is, man is a three-part being. We know that we have a body. This was made of the dust of the ground as a creative act of God:

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7).

Some maintain that this verse means only that man *is* a living soul—that it does not mean that man *has* a soul. We believe that when God said in Genesis 1:26, “...Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,” that He meant that as He is tripartite or triune, so we are tripartite. We have a body, soul, and a spirit. The Lord Jesus confirmed this when He said:

And fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28).

Also we read:

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26)?

To what could the Lord possibly have been referring in these references if not to the fact that we do indeed have a soul? As to the spirit, Paul said:

The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16).

Therefore, we conclude that we are three-part beings and that each part suffers the consequence of sin. We are *spiritually dead* or *separated* from the life of God before salvation. We are presently *dying physically*, and unless we are bodily taken to heaven in the rapture, our bodies will be separated from our souls and spirits in death. Our souls are either saved and have the hope of living forever with Christ, or they are lost and on their way to a Christless eternity.

Spiritual death is a condition that man is born into. His whole body, soul, and spirit are separated from the life and blessing of God. Physical death, however, is the point at which the spirit and soul leave the body. Once this happens, a man is ushered into eternity forever. Once this death takes place, man’s eternal state is fixed and cannot be changed.

A man’s eternal destiny depends upon whether or not he was saved during his physical life. In this regard the Book of Hebrews says:

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

This is one appointment that no one will miss. Mark well, there is no second chance. Men who trifle with death and treat it lightly should think twice; our lives are like a vapor, and all too soon we are ushered into eternity.

When physical death takes place, what exactly happens to the body, the soul, and the spirit? First, the body returns to the ground, back to dust from which it was created:

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return (Genesis 3:19).

This is a condition the Scriptures refer to many times as both *death* and *sleep*. The body, as we know, decomposes quickly and remains unoccupied or separated from the

soul and spirit awaiting resurrection. The place that the body goes is the ground or the grave, and the regular Old Testament word for this is *kehver*. This was generally a cavern closed off by a door or a stone. The New Testament word means *a monument or a place of remembrance*.

The one difficult thing about the subject of *the grave* is that the word *grave* is sometimes used to translate other Hebrew and Greek words that do not mean the place of the body. One of these is the Hebrew word *sheol* (with its Greek equivalent *hades*). The most important thing to remember here is that *the grave* is separate and distinct from the place of the soul and spirit. The body returns to the ground but what of the soul and spirit?

Like all Bible subjects, this one too involves progressive revelation. To base all of our understanding upon Old Testament verses would be wrong, but in some cases that is exactly what men have done.

The Book of Ecclesiastes is often quoted by those who maintain that death or the grave is the end of existence until the resurrection. It must be remembered that Ecclesiastes is a book authored by a man who looked upon everything from the viewpoint of mere human wisdom. He experienced everything *under the sun*, and the inspired account of his findings was “all is vanity.” We would not look to this book as the final authority on this subject in view of its perspective, as well as the truth of further revelation from the Lord—both in His earthly ministry as well as through Paul from glory. But Solomon did make one statement that provides a beginning as to what happens to the soul and spirit:

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God, who gave it. (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

When the body returns to the ground, the spirit returns to God who gave it. But does this mean that all men go to heaven whether saved or lost? No, indeed! But the spirit of man does return to God for His disposition, that is, from the time of physical death on, the disposition of the spirit and soul is out of men’s hands. They no longer control their fate, but rather, it is completely in God’s hands.

But where exactly do the soul and spirit go? The Old Testament answer is found in the word *sheol*. Though this word is only translated either *the grave*, *hell*, or *the pit*, its actual meaning is *to ask*. It is the place of the departed or *the unknown*. They simply did not know anything about what went on in this place. That this word can mean *the grave* we do not argue, but that it *only* means the grave we deny. In 1 Samuel 28:7–19, King Saul sought the help of a medium. She was allowed to summon Samuel. In verse 15 Samuel said: “...*Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?*” Obviously, Samuel was conscious and in some place of residence.

In the Psalms, David said of the Lord:

For thou wilt not leave my soul in sheol, neither wilt thou permit thine Holy One to see corruption (Psalms 16:10).

The place in which the Lord was not left is called *sheol*. Sheol was a two-compartmented place that contained the souls of the lost and the saved, each in their own respective place.

The New Testament also adds further light. The New Testament word equivalent to *sheol* is the word *hades*. This word is translated *hell* ten times and *grave* once.

Hades is the place that is referred to in the striking story of the rich man and Lazarus, where the rich man is said to be in hell or *hades*.

The Lord also said in Matthew 16:18 that the gates of hell or *hades* would not prevail against it (the Kingdom Church) built upon Him—the rock! The main question about *hades* is: “Are the souls there conscious or unconscious?” We believe that they are conscious. Some, trying to prove the unconscious state of the dead, have tried to make *sheol* and *hades* always refer to the grave. From this doctrine some have developed the idea of *soul sleep*. As we have already noted, the implication of Scripture is that those in the intermediate state are indeed conscious.

I believe that one very pertinent passage in regard to the conscious state of the dead is the story of the rich man and Lazarus. In Luke 16:19–21 the Lord related a story that warns men of God’s ultimate judgment upon unbelief toward the Word of God. One of the clear inferences here is that those who perish having rejected the teaching of Scripture are separated from God’s blessing and in a condition of suffering. This gives a clear view into the state of the soul between death and resurrection. From the overall context we learn that the Lord was rebuking the self-righteousness and unbelief of the Pharisees.

All the way from chapter 14, He dealt with the Pharisees. In Luke 16:13–18 the Lord directly rebuked their covetousness and their disobedience to God’s Word while claiming to keep the law. But in verses 19–31 the Lord gave to the Pharisees the strictest warning of all.

While some have suggested this portion is just an account of the Lord repeating an error of the Pharisees to humiliate them (a kind of satire), the Lord never rebuked error in that manner. Others tell us this account is just a fable and has no reference to actual facts. But that cannot be true for the Lord did not in any way relate these events as fictitious. On the contrary, they are related as real and a direct warning to the Pharisees. Even if we call this a parable, we must be careful to note that parables were always based upon truth. Parables were never fables. Luke 16 leaves no doubt that it is a story that represents true ideas and real consequences, whether we call it a parable or not. I prefer to call it a story.

The reader is exhorted to read this passage carefully and to note some of the following things. First, there is a very real, frightening consequence to some of the hearers of this story. Next, in verse 20 only the beggar is given a name. Verses 22 and 23 relate that both men died and went to their respective places. The implication is not that rich men go to hell and poor men go to heaven but that the rich man, like many of the Pharisees, had not accepted the Word of God (cf. verses 29 & 31) and therefore did not receive blessings. He was not saved and was self-indulgent, living in self-righteousness, luxury, and covetousness. He clearly did not love his neighbor as himself. The beggar, on the other hand, was obviously one who had been saved in his lifetime and received blessings after his death.

I believe that we must realize that this story teaches, a conscious state of men between death and resurrection.

We notice that some of the things in the passage are metaphorical of the truth they convey. Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom, which means the joy of Abraham or the place of joy for saved Jews. We also notice that there were fingers and eyes and a tongue mentioned, but these were just ways of showing that this was a fully conscious state. We see that in this place called hades the rich man was in torment, Lazarus was comforted, and between them there was a great gulf fixed. We further notice that there was no changing the circumstances in which they found themselves. The rich man had absolutely no hope of deliverance; their eternal destiny was fixed at the time of their death.

Thus, the Pharisees were being told that if they continued in their self-righteousness and unbelief, they would surely go to a place of eternal, conscious torment as soon as they died. This passage certainly supports a conscious state of the dead, whether between death and resurrection or in eternity and clearly puts an end to the teachings of soul sleep between death and resurrection, as well as any thought of annihilationism, that is, that the dead are simply snuffed out or cease to exist.

This passage also provides not the slightest hint of purgatory. There is no such doctrine taught anywhere in the Word of God as that of purgatory, a teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. According to them, some men go to purgatory where they can work out their punishment and then finally be delivered into heaven. But the Scriptures are clear that belief in the gospel while on earth is the only way that a man can be saved. The Lord Jesus said:

...if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins (John 8:24).

Another important verse that teaches the conscious state of the dead is Matthew 22:32. There that Lord says:

...God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

What the Lord is teaching here directly concerns resurrection but the implication is clear, no one's spirit is asleep after death. We also see this in John 8:56 where the Lord says: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and say it and was glad." Furthermore, the Lord said to the thief on the cross:

...this day thou shalt be with me in paradise (Luke 23:43).

This man was to be conscious and with the Lord after death that very day.

Just as we have seen an intermediate state for both the saved and the lost in accordance with prophecy, the Pauline Epistles also show the believer's hope today of being with the Lord immediately after death:

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8).

We realize that this overall context is talking about being clothed upon with our house not made with hands which is eternal in the heavens. This is our resurrection body that we will receive when this tabernacle or tent which is our present house is dissolved. The principle here leaves no room for soul sleep. Rather, we are confident that though we are absent from being physically with Him now, once we are absent from this body we will be present with Him as we await the receiving of our glorified bodies. Paul says much the

same thing in Philippians where he talks about Christ being magnified in his body whether it be by life or by death:

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21).

What gain could there be in dying if it meant an unconscious state? Paul speaks of a gain that is the result of presence with the Lord. In verse 23, he goes on to speak of this gain as a departure or, literally, an upward loosing to be with Christ which is far better (in the original, very far better)! But Paul said that though he would much rather be loosed to be with the Lord, to abide in the flesh was more needful for them, and thus, he had a confidence that he would abide with them. There is absolutely no room for soul sleep in our understanding of this intermediate state.

In conclusion to this section, is it not correct and Scriptural to say that after our body dies and goes to the grave that our spirit (and no doubt our soul) will be with Him, our Lord (Ecclesiastes 12:7), and like He was between His death and resurrection? This is not just in future resurrection it is immediately after death. Our Lord's soul and spirit were never asleep or unconscious and were never separated from God in any way after the death of His body and prior to His resurrection, and neither shall we be. Did the Lord have an intermediate body? No, don't be ridiculous, and neither will we. God can handle our state-of-being until resurrection, be sure of that.

RESURRECTION

We will examine *resurrection* with special reference to the lost and also with reference to judgment. We emphasize that all men both saved and lost will have a resurrection. The Lord made reference to this in the Gospel of John:

Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28–29).

We understand that these two resurrections are both prophetic and will be separated by a space of 1000 years. The *mystery* or *secret resurrection* of this dispensation of grace will involve only the saved of this *present* dispensation. The Apostle Paul also made reference to the resurrection of the saved and lost in the Book of Acts:

And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust (Acts 24:15).

Those who wish to think that death is just the end and that there is no afterlife are going to be in for a great surprise. Not only is there a conscious intermediate state, but also a resurrection to a judgment where there will be no hope of receiving mercy. Paul used this as a warning:

Because He hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; concerning which He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead (Acts 17:31).

Much like the reaction Paul received in verse 32, many today scoff at the idea of a resurrection or of a coming judgment. However, the warning is clear, and God has made us responsible to tell the lost of their imminent danger. God's remedy is fully made known. The gospel of the grace of God stands between life and death, and men need only trust Christ to be delivered by His grace.

The resurrection of the lost, those who reject the truth of God, is referred to most clearly in the Book of Revelation. In Revelation 20:11–15 we read of the most awesome judgment in the Word of God.

JUDGMENT

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 (Revelation 20:11).

This great white throne is the final judgment of God before the beginning of the new heaven and new earth. We do not believe there will be any saved individuals at the great white throne. This is that resurrection of the *unjust* of which Daniel, the Lord, and Paul all spoke. All of the lost of all ages including this present dispensation of grace will be there to be judged for their works. The One sitting on that throne will be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ:

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son (John 5:22).

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man (John 5:25–27).

It is as the Son of man that the Lord will judge men. He is man's Redeemer, and He will also be man's Judge. How amazing to realize that all those who have rejected Him as Savior will some day stand before Him as their Judge. In that day there will be no gospel of grace, no opportunity to be saved, but only His justice upon ungodly sinners.

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 (Revelation 20:12).

These books that are opened are proof that God is keeping careful records of all the works men do in this life. Verse 13 continues saying:

And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hades delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works (Revelation 20:13).

The first prominent feature here is the resurrection. The dead, small and great, will stand before God. The sea gives up the dead that are in it. Death and hades deliver up the dead that are in them. These distinctions are somewhat obscure to us, but we recall that

there is to be a bodily resurrection of the lost. Thus, when it speaks of the sea giving up its dead, it no doubt refers to the resurrection of the bodies of those who died in the sea. Likewise, the bodies of those in death and hades will be raised to face this judgment.

The other prominent feature is that every man is judged according to his works. These works are the deeds done in his life that demonstrate he is a sinner and by which he chose to be judged. These are quite simply all those who have died in their sins. Men who die without a Savior will not have their sins forgiven and will have to answer for their own sins.

Though it is true that Christ died for the sins of the world, it is because He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world that God can and does offer salvation to any man who will trust Christ as Savior and Lord. But men are not actually placed into the death of Christ until they believe the gospel; that is, the work of Christ is not actually substituted for the sinner until he believes the truth.

God is propitiated or satisfied that the work of Christ is sufficient to save any man and is available to save any man, but the actual substitution does not take place until faith is expressed in God's message of salvation. Men who reject the truth of God will have to bear the judgment for their own sins. Paul made reference to this:

For this ye know, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man (who is an idolater) hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience (Ephesians 5:5–6).

It is because of sin that God will judge the unsaved. These are sins that they will have to bear themselves because they have no Savior. They will have rejected Him and the grace that was offered to forgive their sins. They will find themselves facing God's wrath and eternal separation from His holy kingdom.

When it says that they will be judged for their works, it means that the principle of grace was rejected and they now find themselves under the works principle. Paul made reference to this issue in Romans 2:5–16. As verse 5 teaches, the judgment of God in that day will be a righteous judgment. Every man there will receive exactly what he has coming.

Sometimes we hear men say, "All I want is justice," but this is a foolish statement. What we really deserve is to be judged and separated from God forever because of our wicked works. Instead, He by His grace offers something we do not deserve—the forgiveness of sins based upon the finished work of Christ.

Those who want justice will be surprised. Verse 6 says that God will render to every man according to his deeds. Reading down through verse 10 we see that there are two possibilities for those who choose to be judged by works. Those who have been perfect will indeed receive eternal life, but those who have sinned will receive God's indignation and wrath. Verse 11 gives solemn warning that there is no respect of persons with God. No one will be overlooked because of who they were; works will be the sole issue. All men whether under law or without law will be judged and shown to be sinners. Then Paul makes an amazing statement about the final decision or judgment of God in verse 16:

In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel (Romans 2:16).

What exactly is Paul's gospel? It is the gospel of the grace of God! What does Paul mean when he says that God will judge men by *his gospel*? Does not verse 12 say that men shall be judged by the law? Yes, it does. The answer is that both a consciousness of God's righteousness and the very law of God's righteousness will first judge men and show them that they are sinners. They will be proved to be dead in trespasses and sins.

The final judgment will not be that they did not work their way to heaven; no man can work his way to heaven. God did not intend that men would work their way to heaven, and that is why He always provided a message of salvation. Though the *gospel of grace* is a new message given through Paul, God's grace has always been the source of salvation in every dispensation.

The final judgment of men, that will send them to eternal separation, is that they rejected God's gracious offer of salvation in any dispensation. The remedy was always there. God always had a way for men to come to Him by faith. But men shunned God, rejected His salvation, and chose to stand in their own works.

What an ironic ending to face! Men were never obligated to perform a life of perfect works to be accepted by God. Salvation was always available, and men could have availed themselves of God's redemption from sin in any dispensation, even though the merits of the cross were not yet made known. That will be the final judgment—they rejected God's mercy and grace!

And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death (Revelation 20:14).

All of the resurrected lost will be cast into the lake of fire—body, soul, and spirit. This is a literal separation from God, but it is distinctly the last judgment and separation of the lost from God.

Just as the first death was not the end of existence, so the last or the *second death* is not the end of existence. These resurrected people will have bodies fitted for their eternal state. They will not be bodies of flesh and blood like the ones that died the first death; otherwise they would be burned up. These bodies will be of a different nature that will fit them to exist eternally in this state.

The lake of fire described here is the most terrible place in existence, and we emphasize that it is a *literal place*. Matthew 25:41 tells us this place was prepared for the devil and his angels. These rebellious angels never had an opportunity to be saved or to repent as far as the Scripture is concerned.

That God may have created this place to immediately stop and judge the rebellion of Satan and his followers is bad enough. But how astonishing to think that all the lost of mankind, who rejected God and knew Him not as their Father, will go to the place of their father—the devil!

It is interesting to note that here in Matthew 25 we also see a judgment that seems to involve men being judged before the great white throne. But upon a closer examination

of the passage, we see a judgment that will take place at the beginning of the millennium. Verse 31 begins the passage saying that this will take place:

When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory (Matthew 25:31).

The judgment that follows is of those nations that either helped Israel or worked against Israel during the great tribulation. It is commonly referred to as the *sheep and goat judgment* (verse 32). In verse 34, the nations that treated Israel favorably will be allowed to inherit the kingdom, which means that they will be allowed to enter into the blessings of that kingdom era. But in verse 41 we read of the other nations:

Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

While it may seem that these went immediately into the lake of fire, the meaning is that they were judged as worthy of the lake of fire and evidently were sent to hades to await the final judgment of the great white throne. Verse 46 affirms this:

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal (Matthew 25:46).

The lake of fire will be the final place not only of lost men but also of Satan and his angels, for whom it was originally prepared. The first inhabitants of this place are evidently the beast and the false prophet of Revelation 19:20, and they will remain there during the thousand-year imprisonment of Satan. From Revelation 20:10 we learn that Satan will be cast into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet are.

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

Of the books mentioned here only one is the book that could have helped an individual and that is the book of life. As men are judged out of the things written in the other books, no reason will be found to write their names into this book of life. Therefore, at the end of the judgment, all those whose names are still missing from the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire.

We have mentioned two specific judgments. The first (at the beginning of the millennium) will affect the nations of the tribulation period, and the second (at the end of the millennium) will affect the lost of all ages.

THE ETERNAL STATE OF THE LOST

We will examine *the eternal state of the lost* by asking three questions and answering them from Scripture.

- Are these people conscious?
- Will they be conscious eternally?
- Will they be in torment, i.e., is this fire real?

In Matthew 13 the Lord explained the parable of the tares and the field to His disciples:

And shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear (Matthew 13:42–43).

This tells us that they shall indeed be conscious. Wailing and gnashing of teeth are terms that are meant to describe torment and pain, not unconsciousness. But these of this judgment are no doubt cast first into hades and then later, after the millennium, into the final state. Is that state also conscious? Yes! In Revelation 14:9–11 we read of those in the tribulation who worshipped the beast and received his mark and who shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God:

... which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name (Revelation 14:10–11).

Not only does this passage speak of literal torment, but it also clearly addresses the fact that this suffering will be *forever and ever*. In conjunction with this we read:

Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

Also in verse 46 it says:

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal (Matthew 25:46).

It is clear that the state of the lost will be fully conscious and that when men go to hades it is merely the beginning of what will be an eternal state of torment. Hades itself shall be cast into the lake of fire—that everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

To sum up the answers to our questions, we believe the Scriptures teach:

- That the lost will be eternally conscious
- That they will be in torment in hades until the day that they are raised in bodies suited for torment to stand at the final judgment
- That from there they will be cast into the lake of fire where they will be separated from God forever and in a conscious state of eternal torment

Jude 13 gives us another glimpse into what this place will be like by saying that unto the lost *is reserved the blackness of darkness forever*. We can scarcely imagine how awful this place will be, but each individual will be alone in his own confinement of the blackness of darkness, completely separated from God and in the torment of fire, forever!

How we need to be busy proclaiming the gospel of God's grace while there is yet time!

Some of the main objections to these truths are important to note because it is likely that sooner or later we will be faced with some of them. There is the annihilationist view. Most in this camp believe that the lost simply sleep or are unconscious until the

resurrection of the unsaved, at which time they are simply annihilated. This, of course, requires the mishandling of many Scriptures that clearly teach the opposite.

Then, there is the universal reconciliation or universal redemption view. These believe that God will ultimately save all created beings including Satan. Their logic is shallow, indeed, and rests mostly on the claim that the words *eternal*, *everlasting*, and *forever* do not really mean *forever* but only have to do with specific periods of time or specific ages. Their claim is unsupported by Greek grammar, as well as the fact that these same words are used of God and the Lord Jesus Christ to describe their eternal power and Deity!

One of the particular dangers of this view is that it must logically attribute the creation of sin to God. By their logic, just as God originated sin to accomplish His own purpose, He also allowed for the redemption of all beings—some through faith in Christ and the others later, after a painless judgment and time of unconscious separation. This teaching is both dangerous and sinful; it attacks the very character of God and the truth of His Word.

Both of these erroneous views have a common denominator. They rest in the question, “How can a God of love ever torture His creatures with everlasting fire?” But God’s love is manifest in the cross, not in compromising His holiness and righteousness. The fact that He allowed His Son to suffer the equivalent of an eternal death upon the cross to redeem sinful man is the proof that He loves the world. His love never compromises His justice or righteousness. Those who reject His love are then subject to His justice. This is manifest in wrath and judgment against sin—the sin of rejecting His love and the redemptive work of His Son!

We simply cannot let our human emotions negate the clear teaching of the Word of God! While we do believe there will be degrees of punishment in the lake of fire (from such passages as Luke 12:47–48), they will nonetheless be in conscious suffering forever.

God be thanked that the redeemed—all those who are justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—will be eternally with Him! In this dispensation of grace we are consciously present with the Lord the moment we are loosed from these bodies. At the rapture of the church we will receive our glorified bodies and ever be with Him in the heavenlies.

The rapture will be immediately followed by what Paul calls *the judgment seat of Christ* in 2 Corinthians 5:10. This is no unbeliever’s judgment, neither is there any reference to salvation here—only the saved in Christ will be here! This is a time when we the redeemed will be reviewed by our Lord for our *service* for Him *as believers*. To the faithful, eternal rewards or degrees of reign in glory will be given. But for those who have been unfaithful, He will justly withhold reward; yet the believer will be ever in the joy of the Lord.

May these solemn and important matters beckon us to greater service for Him—that the lost might be saved from the eternal judgment of the lake of fire and enjoy eternity with Him.