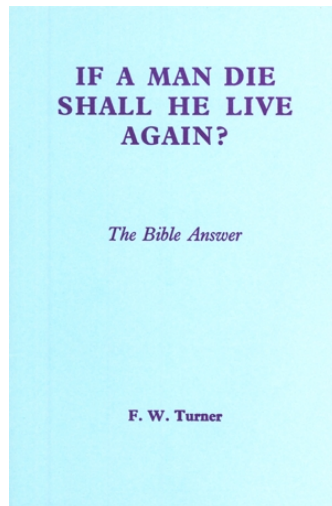


IF A MAN DIE SHALL HE LIVE AGAIN?



The Bible Answer

F.W. Turner

THE PROBLEM OF IMMORTALITY

“IF A MAN DIE, SHALL HE LIVE AGAIN?”

A PERSONAL PROBLEM

LET us make the question a personal one—as indeed it is. What will happen to you and to me when death claims us, as it must inevitably claim us sooner or later in this life? What is our destiny? Does death end all? Or does some part of us, by reason of its inherent immortality, survive the dissolution of the body and continue its existence under other conditions? If so, have we any knowledge of those conditions? Further, will all share equally whatever destiny is reserved for men and women, or is there some selective process which determines individual destiny?

Where can we find a conclusive answer to these important personal questions?

AN INITIAL DIFFICULTY

At the outset of our enquiry we are faced with a somewhat curious difficulty in view of the serious nature of the problems involved. Men and women generally are apt to show little concern about questions of death and the hereafter: they are very definitely interested in matters relating to *this* life— anxious to “succeed”, as they put it: willing to sacrifice present good for possible later advantage; but when the immeasurably more important question of final destiny is raised, many dismiss it as of small practical importance. John Ruskin has commented on this tendency to refuse to face the question of death and the hereafter, and has pleaded for “an honest declaration” thereon. His words are worth quoting:

“The dilemma is inevitable. Men must hereafter live or hereafter die ... We usually believe in immortality, so far as to avoid preparation for death; and in mortality, so far as to avoid preparation for anything after death.” (*The Crown of Wild Olive*: Introd.)

Reluctance to meet the challenge of eternal destiny seems even more marked today than when Ruskin wrote those words.

How often when this question is under discussion is the point of view expressed:

“Well, I shouldn’t worry about these things if I were you. Does it *really* matter what we believe? Live a decent life, pay your twenty shillings in the pound, do all the good you can as you pass through life, and it will come out all right in the end. After all, we’re all making for the same place: you call it the Kingdom of God: I call it Heaven. We may be going by different routes, but, depend upon it, we shall all get safely to the other side.”

Often this complacent attitude towards the hereafter is associated with a definite but inadequate view of the relationship of God to the human race. Emphasis is laid on one attribute of God—His goodness—to the exclusion of other attributes. God, we are told, is desirous that men should be happy, both in this life and in the world to come, so we can rest confidently in His benevolence. Acknowledge that His arms are ever open to receive us, and we need not worry very much regarding details of the life to come. Should it be suggested that there are other attributes of God which should be taken into account, such as His justice, or the possibility of Divine retribution, we are informed that these conceptions have no place in modern religious thought: they are the echo of a worn-out creed.

A SHOCK TO MODERN COMPLACENCY

But this easy-going view of the attitude of God to the human race has received a severe shock in recent years. The terrible results of the two great wars, and the even more terrible prospects of another global war, have brought men and women to a grim realization that something more is needed in religious thought than a child-like belief in the goodness of God. Some indeed have gone to the extreme of denying that there can be a God in view of the state of the world. But there is no necessity to swing so far in reaction against the complacency of former years. We can still believe in the goodness of God; but we must also accept human responsibility for the muddle and

distress in the world; and recognize that to the conception of the goodness of God we must add His justice, His intolerance of sin, and His inevitable punishment of evil doing. The logic of these events compels a revision of men's estimate of the character of God.

There is evidence that such a revision is taking place in religious thought today. Attention is called to the inadequacy of the view of God which considers only His benevolence. Mr. C. S. Lewis, for example, in his *Problem of Pain*, rather caustically condemns the conception of God which is confined exclusively to "His lovingness", as follows:

"What would really satisfy us would be a God who said of anything we happened to like doing, 'What does it matter so long as they are contented?' We want in fact, not so much a Father in Heaven as a grandfather in heaven—a senile benevolence who, as they say, 'liked to see young people enjoying themselves' and whose plan for the universe was simply that it might be truly said at the end of each day, 'a good time was had by all'." (p. 28).

Mr. Lewis further suggests that man is not the centre of the universe: that God does not exist for man: and, perhaps with some reluctance, reaches the conclusion that all men will not be redeemed.

Evidence of the changed point of view in the thought of the religious world of today is found in the publication of the Report by the Commission on Evangelism appointed by the late Archbishops of Canterbury and York under the title, *Towards the Conversion of England*. This is a remarkable document in many ways: it analyzes the causes of the modern "drift from religion": it seeks to explain the reasons for the decline in "Christian standards of morality": it discusses and condemns "humanism" as a basis for human conduct; and last, but by no means least, it suggests a remedy for the present unsatisfactory state of religion in this country.

With this remedy we are particularly concerned. Let us quote a striking passage from page 17 of the Report:

"What has the Church wherewith to meet with confidence the situation thus revealed? There is only one answer: the Eternal Gospel,' the whole counsel of God'. We would emphasize these two epithets, 'eternal' and 'whole' as applied to the Gospel. The Gospel for this twentieth century is identical with the gospel which Jesus 'came preaching' and the Apostles 'went forth and preached everywhere'. Neither may we pick and choose particular aspects of this whole Gospel- emphasizing the love of God to the exclusion of its inevitable reverse, which (in Biblical terms) is 'wrath', not 'neutrality': or uplifting Christ as an Heroic Leader or Social Reformer, but not as our Crucified Saviour ... We believe that the tendency to preach 'another Gospel' (Galatians 1:6, 9) or a partial Gospel, has been the weakness (not to say the sin) of the Church in our generation, more especially between the two wars, and accounts very largely for its failure in evangelism."

“BACK TO THE BIBLE”

We believe this witness to be true. With its “one answer” we agree: we re-echo its advice: “Back to the Bible”, to the “whole counsel of God”, to the “eternal” and “whole” gospel preached by Christ and his apostles! Here we shall find a complete answer to our problems, amongst them, and by no means the least, the problem of immortality.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL NOT THE BIBLE ANSWER

Many Christians, and you may be amongst the number, believe that the Bible answer to this question is found in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul: that man is a dual organism consisting of body, which is physical, mortal and corruptible, and soul—the *ego*, the real man, “a spark of the Divine”, inherently immortal, which after the dissolution of the body in death, continues to exist, and, as many believe, enjoys a fuller and higher life than was possible when yoked to a corruptible body. In this view, death is but an episode in the life of the soul; an entrance to a fuller life beyond the grave. “Death the Gate to Life!” “Is not that Scriptural teaching?” you ask.

It may, therefore, come as a rather painful shock to realize that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is wholly unknown in the Holy Scriptures: that it finds no place in the teaching of Jesus and his Apostles: that its acceptance actually prevents an understanding and appreciation of the true doctrine of immortality as revealed in the Bible.

“What!” we can imagine you asking, perhaps with some indignation and incredulity, “doesn’t the Bible speak of *immortality*?”

To which we reply: “Undoubtedly: we rejoice in the glorious hope of immortality revealed in its pages”.

But you respond: “Doesn’t the Bible speak of *souls*?”

Again we reply: “Yes, hundreds of times: but never from the first verse of Genesis to the last verse of Revelation does the Bible speak of an ‘immortal soul’, or use the phrase ‘immortality of the soul’.”

But you persist: “Does not Jesus tell us ‘fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul’? (Matt. 10:28). Doesn’t this prove the immortality of the soul as distinct from the mortality of the body?”

To which we reply: “Let us have the *whole* teaching of Jesus on this matter. You have quoted only half the verse: let us finish it: Jesus adds, ‘but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell’. A soul that can be *destroyed* with the body cannot be immortal!”

THEN DOES DEATH END ALL?

Many Christians doubtless cling to the belief in the immortality of the soul fearing that to surrender this belief will deprive them of all hope of a life beyond the grave. They

feel that there is no alternative between belief in the soul's immortality and the acceptance of the grim conclusion that death ends all. Such, however, is not the case. The Bible presents us with a glorious prospect of immortality: but its doctrine of immortality is not that of the inherent immortality of the soul. Surely our wisdom is to examine carefully what the Bible teaches on this important matter, and order our lives in accordance with its teaching.

A CONCLUSIVE TEST

We can apply a very simple, direct and conclusive test to ascertain what the Bible states concerning immortality—a test which will decide finally whether the popular doctrine is, or is not, taught in the Scriptures: whether there is hope of life beyond the grave: and if so, the conditions, if any, upon which that life may be secured.

We propose in company with you to do a little Biblical research. We have said that the Bible speaks of immortality: let us examine together *every passage* in the Bible in which the words “immortal” or “immortality” occur. “What a formidable thing to attempt!” you may say. In fact it is quite simple and by no means lengthy. In our Authorized Version of the Bible—the one most frequently used—the word “*immortal*” occurs only once: and the word “*immortality*” five times. All the occurrences are in the New Testament and in books with which we are all familiar. It will only take us a few minutes to refer to them. We shall discover exactly what the Bible itself says on this matter.

A LITTLE PIECE OF BIBLICAL RESEARCH

1. *The Word “Immortal”*.—The only occurrence of this word is found in Paul's First Letter to Timothy, chapter 1, verse 17, and reads:

“Now unto the King eternal, *immortal*, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

How simple that is! There is no doubt as to the meaning, is there? The teaching of the rest of Scripture is of course “from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God”. The only occasion on which the word “immortal” is used in the Bible applies to God: there is no reference to man whatever.

2. *The Word “Immortality”* occurs five times:

(a) I Timothy 6:16. Let us read from v. 13 to see the context in which it is placed:

“I give thee charge in the sight of God ... that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lords of lords; *who only hath immortality*, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”

Again, there is no difficulty in grasping the meaning and the application. It is a

reiteration—an expansion if you prefer—of the passage we have just examined. It refers to God Himself: there is no suggestion of man being included.

(b) 2 Tim. 1:10. Let us read from verse 8:

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord ... but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God: who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling ... according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, *and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*”

In these verses we have a development of Bible teaching on immortality. We pass from belief in the inherent immortality of God, to a consideration of His “purpose and grace given us in Christ Jesus” who “abolished death and brought life and immortality to light”. This bringing of immortality to light by our Saviour Jesus Christ is an actual demonstration in himself of what is involved in Bible immortality. In God’s “purpose and grace” Jesus yielded himself a willing sacrifice for sin: he was “obedient unto death, and that the death of the cross”. He was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, but was raised from the dead by God to die no more: “death hath no more dominion over him”. So he could declare triumphantly, “I am he that liveth, and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore” (Rev. 1:18). In Jesus, therefore, we see in actual fact what God intends us to understand by immortality—a change of nature, not by the release of the soul from the body, *but by the resurrection of the body itself and its subsequent immortalization*. Christ is presented to us in the scripture as the “first fruits” of that great harvest to be gathered in at the Resurrection at the last day.

(c) Rom. 2:7. This is a very important reference as it furnishes explicit evidence concerning *immortality in relation to man*. In this chapter, the Apostle Paul refers to the goodness of God and to the justice of God—both attributes, as we have seen, which must be taken into account in forming a true conception of the character of God. In verse 6 the Apostle states as an incontrovertible principle that “God will render to every man according to his deeds”, and then proceeds to show how this Divine justice will be worked out:

“To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality (God will render) eternal life. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness (God will render) indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish ... for there is no respect of persons with God.”

No respect of persons with God! Absolute justice based on man’s attitude to the truth of God! You will notice how Paul divides mankind who are responsible to God, by reason of knowing the truth of God, into two classes, and states precisely the destiny of each of these classes:

1. Those who *seek* for glory, honour and immortality by patient continuance in well doing, who will be given *eternal life* by God.
2. Those who are contentious, who obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness,

upon whom the *wrath of God* will fall.

Paul further enlightens us as to *when* and by *whom* this Divine justice will be carried out, for in verse 16 we read:

“In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”

We shall agree that these verses from Romans 2 throw an important light on the Bible doctrine of immortality. We learn from them that immortality cannot be a present possession of man, because those who ultimately gain it, have to *seek* for it, and why should we seek for what we already possess? Further, it is evident that all mankind will not obtain immortality—only those who seek for it “by patient continuance in well doing”: those who are contentious and disobedient will instead merit and receive the wrath of God. *The Bible does not, teach the doctrine of universal salvation, as these verses clearly show.* Finally the bestowal of immortality is in the hands of Jesus Christ, and will be given in the day of judgment, which other teaching in the Bible informs us is when he returns to the earth again.

(d) and (e) 1 Corinthians 15. The last two instances of the use of the word immortality are found in successive verses in this well-known chapter, a chapter specially concerned with the *resurrection of the dead*—its importance and its certainty which are guaranteed by the foundation fact of Christ’s own resurrection from the dead. Reading from verse 51:

“Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed ... for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

You will notice from the context how these last two references to immortality are associated with resurrection—the *resurrection of the body*. Throughout the chapter emphasis is on the *body*. “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body ... howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual” (verses 44-46). The whole conception of immortality as revealed in this chapter is in antithesis to the popular doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The Bible teaches in these verses that the natural and the spiritual do not co-exist: that immortality is a “putting on”, not a “putting off”; that it consists of a *bodily* change from a mortal body to an immortal body, and that change will take place *at the resurrection*.

A SUMMARY OF OUR RESULTS

Let us summarize our piece of Biblical research and state the conclusions. We have found:

1. *That God only hath immortality*—there is no reference to man possessing immortality in his present condition.

2. That in the “purpose and grace of God” immortality is *offered* by God to man, and that it was “brought to light” by the resurrection of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. That immortality must be *sought* by man by a patient continuance in well doing.
4. That not all men will attain to immortality: those who are “contentious and disobedient” will instead reap the wrath of God.
5. That immortality consists in a *change of body*—“this mortal must put on immortality”.
6. That this change of nature will take place at the *return of Jesus Christ* after the resurrection and judgment.
7. That the Bible doctrine of immortality is therefore entirely opposed to the popular belief in the immortality of the soul.

CONFIRMATION—THE BIBLICAL USE OF “SOUL”

Further examination of Bible teaching confirms these conclusions. The word “soul” occurs hundreds of times in the scriptures, *but never once is it associated with immortality*: on the contrary it is frequently stated to be subject to death; *e.g.*, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:20); “What man is he that liveth and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?” (Psa. 89:48). The whole emphasis in the Bible regarding man’s present condition is that he is mortal and needs saving from death.

Nowhere in the Scriptures is death spoken of as “the gate of life”: it is never stated to be an entrance to a better state of existence: it is an end of conscious existence, not a “portal to the life Elysian”. The poet’s words—“There is no death; what seems so is transition”—find no support in Bible teaching: in its pages death is referred to as a calamity; as a cessation of activity; as an enemy of mankind, which Christ will at last destroy—“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death”. Jesus himself wept in the presence of death when it had laid hold of his friend Lazarus (John 11:35): but manifested his power as “the Resurrection and the Life”, and therefore *the destroyer of death*, when he called Lazarus from the tomb.

THE BIBLE’S USE OF FIGURES OF SPEECH

Not only in plain speech, but also in the figures which are used, does the Bible declare the frailty of man, the shortness of his life, and the oblivion of death. The Psalmist speaks of his days as “an handbreadth”; as “a shadow that passeth away”: Hezekiah compared his life to a shepherd’s tent, here today and gone tomorrow; to a weaver’s thread, easily severed: Isaiah speaks of “all flesh as grass”, soon to wither and fade away. The Bible, however, uses one figure of speech concerning death which is particularly appropriate when we recognize its teaching concerning the mortality of man and his unconsciousness in death. Death is likened to a *sleep—an unconscious state, but with the possibility of awakening*. In some cases, the Bible informs us, that sleep of death will be eternal: there will be no awakening from it. Speaking of the

rulers of Babylon in the days of her destruction God declares: “they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King whose name is the Lord of hosts” (Jer. 51:57).

In contrast to these are others who shall awake from the sleep of death. Daniel states that “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt” (chap. 12:2). Jesus spoke of his dead friend, Lazarus, as “sleeping”, and said that he had come to awake him out of sleep. Paul refers to those Christians in Thessalonica who had died as “asleep in Jesus”, but who would “rise first” when the Lord Jesus Christ descended from heaven (1 Thess. 4:14, 16). The risen Christ himself is declared by Paul to be “the firstfruits of them that slept”; and “afterward, they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Cor. 15:20, 23).

This use of the figure of sleep by the Bible to illustrate the meaning of death, helps very definitely to the understanding of the Bible view of the nature of man and his relation to immortality. Man is mortal and death cuts short his span of life; death is a state of unconsciousness: “There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest” (Eccl. 9:10). Will the sleep of death be broken? Not in every case, as we have seen: some will never awake from that profound sleep. “The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead” (Prov. 21:16). But others will be aroused from the sleep of death. “Thou shalt call, and I will answer”, declared Job in giving his answer to the question, “If a man die, shall he live again?” (Job. 14:14, 15): and Jesus declares that the hour is coming when those that are in the grave 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 condemnation” (John 5:28, 29). The “call” will come “at the last day” and the “awakening” will be the “resurrection” (John 6:39, 40). Between death and resurrection consciousness ceases: “the dead know not anything” (Eccl. 9:5). Time has no meaning for those who “sleep”.

THE “GENESIS STORY”: CAN WE BELIEVE IT?

The Bible view on death and immortality becomes even clearer when we consider the account of man’s creation and early history as recorded in the Scriptures, and the purpose of God arising from that history. The “Genesis Story” is often regarded in these days as “unhistorical”—a myth or legend which has come down from primeval days. But it is evident that the whole purpose of God in Jesus Christ finds its explanation and origin in the events recorded in the first chapters of Genesis: in the “fall” of man; in the infliction of death by God as the punishment for sin; in the promise of the “seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent’s head”; in the exclusion of man, as a sinner, from participation in the “tree of life” which would have conferred immortality upon him. We cannot expunge the early chapters of Genesis without destroying the whole meaning of the purpose of God in the sending of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world. *Adam and Christ are related in God’s scheme of salvation. “Since by man (Adam) came death, by man (Christ) came also the resurrection of the dead”*, is Paul’s summary of the gospel in 1 Cor. 15:21. Let us then not reject these early records in Genesis, but rather consider them carefully as giving the foundation on which the whole purpose of God in relation to the human race is based.

MAN'S CREATION: "A LIVING SOUL"

In the Bible's account of the creation of man we learn that he was made "in the image of God" (Elohim) (Gen. 1:26, 27); that God formed "man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). Note the expression "a living soul": not an *ever*-living soul: there is no suggestion of immortality in the phrase; indeed, man was not the first "living soul" to be created, or the only creature that possessed the "breath of life". The rest of the animal creation were formed from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:19), they live by reason of breathing "the breath of life" (Gen. 7:21, 22), and they are "living creatures" or "living souls" (2:19 and 1:20, see margin). Man has a common origin with the animal world, but differs from it in being made "in the image of God" and possessing those endowments of reason and speech which differentiate him from the rest of creation, and place him in a different relationship to the Creator.

TRANSGRESSION AND DEATH

The account in Genesis states that man was placed under divine law, the penalty for breaking that law being clearly indicated to him. "In the day thou eatest of it (the tree of knowledge of good and evil) thou shalt surely die." Disobedience meant death. Man transgressed God's law, and death followed, with attendant evils and disabilities—sorrow, pain, toil, and the ground "cursed". Not a pleasant picture to contemplate, and one which many refuse to accept. But there it is in the Scriptures, and it is important to realize that not until the last pages in the Bible, in the glorious portrayal of the consummation of the purpose of God when "the tabernacle of God is with men", is death abolished, sorrow and sighing and pain removed, and the curse eradicated (Rev. 21:4 and 22:3). The Bible explains in simple language, for all to understand, how sin and death, sorrow, pain and the curse originated: it also declares their final abolition and the means by which this will be accomplished.

Another important point to be noted in the early record in Genesis is the precaution taken by God to prevent man, who had become a sinner, from becoming *an immortal sinner*.

We read at the end of the third chapter that "lest the man ... put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden cherubims and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life".

This language is emphatically clear. The Creator took special precautions to prevent man, who had transgressed this law, from securing immortality in that state of sin. The "way of the tree of life" was barred against him. The lesson is surely obvious: if man is to attain to immortality, sin must first be removed. An immortal sinner is a contradiction in terms in the philosophy of God. If only we grasp that basal fact, doubt and difficulty are avoided.

Sin and death are therefore related as cause and effect. That is the teaching of both Old and New Testaments. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin", is Paul's declaration (Rom. 5:12), and as he shows, on the principle of heredity," so

death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned". The whole race is under the dominion of sin and death. Such is the Apostle Paul's teaching on this question.

THE GOSPEL OF GOD'S GRACE IN JESUS CHRIST

Is this the whole of the Bible's message? Of course not. There is the Gospel—the good news—of the grace of God, expressed many times throughout the Scriptures, but never so eloquently as in those well-known words in the Gospel of John (3:16):

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Note the contrast—“perish” and “everlasting life”. The first is our natural destiny: we are mortal; under the dominion of death; and apart from the grace of God death will be our lot. But through the love of God in giving His Son, and our belief in that Son, we can be saved from perishing and have everlasting life. The way to the tree of life by which we can “live for ever” has then been opened to us through the love of God in the sending of His beloved Son.

We can understand, then, how Jesus, the Saviour, “brought life and immortality to light”. He came to “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself”; and sin we have seen is the cause of death. God's wonderful love is shown to the human race in giving His only begotten Son as a sacrifice for sin: that gift is at once the measure of God's love and His estimate of the enormity of sin. Christ's love for us is shown in his yielding his life voluntarily as a sacrifice for sin, and so effecting reconciliation between God and men. When sin is put away, therefore, immortality becomes possible: not only possible, but certain, provided God's conditions are satisfied. *“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Rom. 6:23).

God has offered mankind the gift of immortality in Jesus Christ.

“This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (1 John 2:25).

Jesus has made that promise a certainty by his sacrifice, for sin and by his own resurrection to immortality:

“I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

“Because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19).

God and Christ have abundantly done their part: there can be no failure of the fulfilment of their promises. The invitation to participate in this great gift is universal:

“Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”

HAS MAN THEN NO PART TO PLAY?

Is there nothing left then for man himself to do to obtain this gift of immortality? The Bible makes it evident that man has his part to play if he desires to attain to the

glorious destiny promised by God. He must *believe* in God's only begotten son (John 3:16): he must not only believe, but be *baptized* for the remission of sins, and *observe* all that Christ commanded (Matt. 28:19, 20): he must *seek* for immortality by "patient continuance in well doing" (Rom. 2:7). Thus he will make "his calling and election sure", and experience finally the realization of "the exceeding great and precious promises" of God by becoming a "partaker of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4, 10). Should death overtake him, God's promise of life still remains sure for him. He "sleeps in Jesus" until Christ returns to earth to wake his sleeping friends. Death for him will be "but a sleep with glorious waking". Then, accepted by Christ at the Judgment, he will be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, from mortality to immortality: this "body of humiliation" being transformed that it may be like unto the "glorious body" of the Lord himself, and he will enjoy the glory and honour God has promised for them who truly serve him.

THE BIBLE ANSWER TO OUR PROBLEM

The Bible, then, gives us a simple and final answer to the problem raised by the question: "If a man die, shall he live again?" It depends on whether a man hears the invitation of God given through His word, and, if he hears, how he responds to it: unless he hears he cannot respond and is "outside the way of understanding": he remains in the congregation of the dead. If he hears the invitation and declines or fails to respond to the conditions, he will be amongst those who "awake to shame and everlasting contempt": but if he hears and faithfully responds, then he will be amongst that glorious number who will awake to receive life everlasting and to enjoy the eternal companionship of the Father and the Son when God "shall make all things new" (Rev. 21:5).

We stated at the beginning of this pamphlet that the problem we are discussing is a personal one: the solution is a personal one, too. Each of us must decide the issue for himself. Salvation is an individual matter: we cannot be saved *en masse*. Christ puts the issue very clearly in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:13, 14):

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

But Jesus adds the encouraging words:

"Ask, and it shall be given you: *seek*, and ye shall find; *knock*, and it shall be opened unto you."

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