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### Destiny of the Christless Dead: Universalism, Restorationism, Conditional Immorality or Eternal Separation from God - Which?

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THE DESTINY  
of the  
CHRISTLESS DEAD

*Universalism,  
Restorationism,  
Conditional Immortality  
or  
Eternal Separation from God*

W H I C H ?

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## FUTURE PUNISHMENT

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R. A. TORREY, D.D.

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### INTRODUCTION

The subject assigned me for this afternoon is Future Punishment. I shrink from speaking on that subject. I have a dread that approaches horror of speaking on that subject. I cannot tell you the pain I have in my heart every time I speak on that subject. I have lain on my face before God and sobbed as I have thought of what the Bible clearly teaches on the subject, and thought also of what it involves. It has seemed to me time and again that I could not have it so. I believe I would gladly die in agony and shame if thereby I could make it sure that all men would somewhere, sometime, somehow be brought to repentance and thus saved. To me the doctrine of Future Punishment is not a mere matter of speculative theory that I could discuss without emotion in cold intellectuality. I see it in its practical bearings on the destiny and the sufferings of the people I see around about me and thronging the streets. I see it and feel it in its relations to real living men and women. I see it just as I see the recent sufferings of women and children in Belgium, Armenia and Korea.

But as much as I shrink from speaking on the subject, I am glad to speak upon it. Indeed, I asked to speak upon it in preference to a subject upon which I was first requested to speak, but which I did not regard as fundamental, and which has been left off the program. This subject is fundamental, it is vital, it is of immeasurable

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importance. A man's stand upon this subject is decisive for his usefulness for God or his uselessness. It is at this point that more preachers and teachers who go seriously astray in their doctrine begin their descent than at almost any other point. When a preacher begins to wobble on Future Punishment, look out for him, he is very likely soon to go astray on the "Inspiration of the Bible," and the "Inerrancy of the Bible," then on the "Atonement by Shed Blood," then on the "Virgin Birth of our Lord," then on "His Literal Resurrection," then on "His Deity," and then - - -

In a thirty years' close study of men who were leaders in the church of Christ I have seen multitudes of men who were once a power for God shorn of their power for good by accepting Universalist, Restorationist, Conditional Immortality, Pastor Russellite and kindred views of future punishment.

#### I. The Bible—the sole guide to the truth on this subject.

The first thing I wish to say this afternoon is that, *the Bible is the sole guide to the truth on this subject*. We know absolutely nothing about Future Punishment but what God has been pleased to tell us in this Book; just as we know absolutely nothing about the future blessedness of the saved except what God has been pleased to tell us in this Book. If you are truly logical and not merely sentimental, if you give up what the Bible teaches on the one subject you will give up what it teaches on the other. If a man will believe that part of the Bible that he desires to believe and rejects that part of the Bible that he does not desire to believe, in plain unvarnished

English he is a fool. If the Bible is not true, we have no conclusive proof that there is either a heaven or a hell. And if it is true about one, it is true also about the other. Some men may be able to believe what they want to believe but to doubt or deny what they want to doubt or deny. I am not built that way. My wishes play no part in my decision, I have to be governed by my intellect; but, of course, I know that a will surrendered to the truth and to God does more than anything else to clarify the intellect.

So our whole inquiry will be, "What does the Bible Teach on This Subject?" Some people are always running off on to their reasonings and their speculations, but speculation on this subject is necessarily entirely vain. On such a subject as this one the ounce of God's revelation is worth a thousand tons of man's speculation. I sometimes show men what the Bible teaches on this subject and they say, "But how do you reconcile that with the love of God?" I reply, "How do you know God is love?" We owe that truth entirely to the Bible. If the Bible is not true, we have no proof that God is love; and, if you reject what the Bible teaches about Future Punishment and are logical, you must also give up your belief that God is love, and your whole foundation for your universalistic and kindred hopes is gone.

#### II. What the Bible teaches about Future Punishment.

What does the Bible teach about Future Punishment? Of course, there is not time to go into this subject in fullness in all its details, but we can set forth the tuncamental facts taught in the Bible.

1. First then, *the Bible teaches that as a result of sin, and especially of the crowning sin of rejecting the*



*Savior, there is to be after death an immeasurable suffering for those who sin in this life, and do not repent of their sins and accept Christ.* There is no need to dwell at length on that point. The old crude form of Universalism that no matter how a man lives in this life he enters at once into blessedness at death has largely disappeared, except from funeral sermons. If that were true, the kindest thing that we could do for people in the slums and other unfortunates would be to put them to death at once in some painless way. But take one Bible statement and this statement gives the words of Jesus, Matt. 5:29, R.V., "And if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell." Certainly these words of our Lord mean that there is to be after death for those who sin and do not repent, such intense suffering that the greatest possible present calamity would be preferable to it.

2. The second thing that the Bible teaches about Future Punishment is, that *the body shall share with the soul in the suffering of the lost in the world to come.* Take the verse that we have just quoted. In this Jesus Christ says, "the body"—and by the body he certainly means just what he says, "the body"—"shall be cast into hell." Take another utterance of our Lord, Matt. 10:28, R.V., "And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Here to the most distinct and definite statement possible that the body as well as the soul is to suffer in the "destruction" of hell. Neither the blessed nor the lost are to exist in the world

to come as disembodied spirits. There is to be a resurrection of the just and the unjust. This our Lord definitely declares in John 5:28, 29, R.V. He says, "the hour cometh, in which all that are *in the tombs* 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 judgment." Resurrection has to do with the body and the body only. The spirit does not tumble down and decay and therefore needs no resurrection. The passage just quoted says, "all that are in the tombs." What is "in the tombs"—the body, and the body only. The spirits of the lost at death go into Hades; the body (and the body only) into the tomb where it crumbles into dust. At the resurrection the body is raised and the spirit joins it. At death the spirits of the saved depart to be with Christ in conscious blessedness, which Paul says is very far better than the most blessed experience in the body in our present lives (Phil. 1:21-23). The bodies of the blessed who pass away before our Lord returns crumble into dust. At the second coming of Christ the bodies of the blessed are raised and reunited with the redeemed spirits. The redeemed spirit hereafter at the second coming of Christ shall be clothed upon with a redeemed body, fit partner of the redeemed spirit that inhabits it, and partaker with it in all of its joy; and the lost spirit shall be clothed upon with a lost body, fit partner of the lost spirit that inhabits it, and partaker with it in all its misery. While the bodily torments of hell are not the most important feature of Future Punishment, while the mental agony, the agony of remorse, the agony of shame, the agony of despair, is worse, immeasurably worse; nevertheless, bodily suffering, a bodily suffering in



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~~comparison with which no pain on earth is as anything, is a feature of Future Punishment.~~

<sup>3</sup> In the third place, *the Bible teaches that the sufferings of the lost will be conscious, that the lost will not be annihilated or simply exist in a non-conscious ~~state~~.*

This is the plain teaching of Luke 16:19-31, the story of the rich man and Lazarus in the future world. All manner of allegorizing has been used in attempting to explain away these words of our Lord, but these allegorical explanations are simply ridiculous. The same thing is clearly taught in Rev. 14:9-11 compared with Rev. 20:10. In Rev. 14:9-11, R.V., we read, "If any man worshippeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger; 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 goeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image, and who so receiveth the mark of his name." Now this certainly describes conscious suffering of the intensest kind and cannot be fairly and honestly interpreted in any other way. In Rev. 20:10, R.V., we read, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." These words unmistakably speak of conscious torment! We are told that they shall have no rest "day nor night," which would be impossible language to use by any honest speaker or writer if the punishment were unconscious.

<sup>4</sup> The fourth thing that the Bible teaches about

Future Punishment is that *the future destiny of the individual depends entirely upon what he does with Jesus Christ.* One passage is sufficient to show that, though a multitude might be ~~advised~~ <sup>suggested</sup>. That passage is John 3:36. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

<sup>5</sup> The fifth thing that the Bible teaches on this subject is, that *Future Punishment is endless.* In Matt. 25:41-46, R.V., our Lord himself is recorded as saying, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels \* \* \* and these (*i. e.*, these on the left hand) shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life." It is often said that the <sup>Greek</sup> word "aionios" used in these two verses does not by its *etymology* necessarily imply endlessness. Even were we to admit, which we do not, that this were true, every scholar knows that it is one of the laws of the interpretation of any book that the meaning of words in any language or any book must be determined by usage. What is the usage in this case? This word is used seventy-two times in the New Testament. Forty-four of these seventy-two times it is used in the phrase "eternal life," that "eternal life" is endless cannot be questioned. It is used fifteen times in connections where the idea of endlessness is absolutely necessary. This covers fifty-nine of the seventy-two instances in which the word is used. In the fifty-nine instances the thought of endlessness is absolutely necessary. In not a single one of the remaining thirteen cases is it used of anything that is known to end. If usage can determine anything, it determines to a demonstration that



the usage of this word in the New Testament necessarily implies endlessness. But that is not all, the context as well as the usage demands that in this instance, in connection with punishment, the word must imply endlessness. The context is this, "And these shall go away into *eternal* punishment: but the righteous into *eternal* life." The same Greek word is used twice. As our Lord was at least an honest man he could not use the one word twice in the same sentence with a different meaning, and if that life into which the righteous go away is endless life, then the punishment into which the cursed go is endless also. This cannot be denied without questioning either the intelligence or honesty of the Lord Jesus.

But even that is not all. We read in the passage Rev. 14:9-11, which we have already quoted, that the sufferings of the lost are "forever and ever," and that throughout this "forever and ever" they "have no rest day nor night." Here another Greek expression is used. There are two forms of this expression, one of them literally translated is "unto the ages of the ages," the other is "unto ages of ages," the only difference between the two being the omission of the article in the latter form. Now these expressions are used twelve times in the last book of the Bible. In eight of these twelve instances the expression refers to the duration of the existence, or reign, or glory of God or Christ. Once it is used of the duration of the blessed reign of the righteous. And in three remaining instances it is used of the duration of the torment of the devil, the beast, the false prophet and the impenitent. If we deal honestly with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the inspired apostles, it is impossible to read the doctrine of endless conscious suffering of those who reject

Christ out of the Bible. If anyone could produce <sup>me</sup> ~~me~~ one single passage in the Bible that, fairly construed, according to its context and the usage of the words and grammatical construction that clearly taught that the punishment of the wicked would not be absolutely endless and that somewhere, sometime, somehow all would repent and be saved, it would be the happiest day of my life. But no such passage can be found. I have searched for it from the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of The Revelation but cannot find it, it is not there. ~~I am thoroughly familiar with the passages that men urge. I have formerly used them myself, but they will not bear the construction that is put upon them if we deal honestly with them.~~

6. In the sixth place, the Bible teaches that *the question of our eternal destiny is settled this side of the grave.* We read in 11 Cor. 5:10, R.V., "for we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; that each one may receive *the things done in the body*, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Now of course this has to do primarily with the judgment of believers, but it shows that the eternal judgment is determined by what is done "*in the body*," what is done this side the grave, what is done before we shall "shuffle off this mortal coil." In Hebrews 9:27 we read, "it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment." The meaning of this is plain; namely, the eternal judgment is determined before death. But our Lord Jesus Himself says the decisive word, the word that would be decisive if it stood alone. In John 8:21, "I go away and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sin: whither I go, ye cannot come." Here our Lord says plainly that those who die in their sins cannot go where He does, that the



destinies of the future are settled in the life that now is, settled this side the grave.

~~CONCLUSION~~

It is clear to anyone who will go to the Bible to find out what it teaches and not merely to read his own views into it, that the Bible does not hold out one ray of hope to any man who dies without having accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and surrendered to Him as his Lord and Master, confessed Him before the world in the life that now is. Many there are who undertake to do this. They are taking a terrible responsibility upon themselves, they dare to do what the divinely inspired authors of the Bible have not done. They lull men to sleep in sin and worldliness and inaction. What shall the harvest be?

8:10

57:2 - 9

51:2 - 5

02:1 - 4

57:21 - 3

02:21 - 2