

STUDY XIII

HOPES FOR LIFE EVERLASTING AND IMMORTALITY SECURED BY THE ATONEMENT

The Earnest Expectations or Hopes of the Groaning Creation--Are not Proofs--The Promises and the Outworking of Atonement, as Proofs--A Distinction and a Difference--Is the Human Soul Immortal, or has it a Hope of Becoming Immortal?--Are Angels Immortal?--Is Satan Immortal?--The Life and Immortality Brought to Light Through the Gospel--The Greek Words Rendered Immortal and Immortality in the Scriptures--Wherein the Hope of the Church and the Hope for the Saved World Differ.

"If a man die shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." *Job 14:14*

"Our Savior Jesus Christ...hath abolished death and brought life [everlasting] and immortality to light through the Gospel." *2 Tim. 1:10*

THERE is a longing hope within men that death does not end all existence. There is an undefined hope that, somehow and somewhere, the life now begun will have a continuation. In some this hope turns to fear. Realizing their unworthiness of a future of pleasure, many fear a future of woe; and the more they dread it for themselves and others the more they believe in it.

This undefined hope of a future life and its counterpart, fear, doubtless had their origin in the Lord's condemnation of the serpent after Adam's fall into sin and death, that eventually the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. This was no doubt understood to mean that at

E384

least a portion of the Adamic family would finally triumph over Satan, and over sin and death, into which he had inveigled them. No doubt God encouraged such a hope, even though but vaguely, speaking to and through Noah, and through Enoch who prophesied, "Behold the Lord cometh

with ten thousand of his saints." But the *gospel* (the good tidings) of a salvation from death, to be offered to all mankind in God's due time, seems to have been first clearly stated to Abraham. The Apostle declares: "The *gospel* was preached before to Abraham--saying, 'In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'" This at least was the basis of the Jewish hope of a resurrection; for since many of the families of the earth were dead and dying, the promised blessing of all *implied* a future life. And when, centuries after, Israel was scattered among the nations at the time of the Babylonian captivity, they undoubtedly carried fragments of God's promises and their hopes everywhere they went.

Sure it is, that whether it came as a result of an admixture of Jewish thought, or because hope is an element of man's nature, or both, the whole world believes in a future life, and almost all believe that it will be everlasting. This the Apostle designates, "The earnest expectation of the creature"--the groaning creation. But such *hopes* are not *proofs* of the doctrine; and the Old Testament promises, made to the Jews, are too vague to constitute a groundwork for a clear faith, much less for a "dogmatic theology," on this subject.

It is not until we find, in the New Testament, the clear, positive statements of our Lord, and afterwards the equally clear statements of the apostles on this momentous subject of *Everlasting Life* that we begin to exchange vague hopes for positive convictions. In their words we not only have positive statements to the effect that the possibilities of a future life have been provided for all, but the philosophy of the fact and how it is to be attained and maintained are set forth there as nowhere else.

Many have not noticed these points, and hence are

E385

"weak in faith." Let us see what this philosophy is, and be more assured than ever that future life, everlasting life, is by our great wise Creator's provision made a possibility for every member of the human family.

Beginning at the foundation of this New Testament assurance of Life Everlasting, we find to our astonishment that it first of all admonishes us that in and of ourselves we have nothing which would give us any hope of everlasting life--that the life of our race was forfeited by the disobedience of our father Adam; that although he was created perfect and was adapted to live forever, his sin not only brought to him the wages of sin--death--but that his children

were born in a dying condition, inheritors of the dying influences. God's law, like himself, is perfect, and so was his creature (Adam) before he sinned; for of God it is written, "His work is perfect." And God through his law approves only that which is perfect, and condemns to destruction everything imperfect. Hence the race of Adam, "born in sin and shapen in iniquity," has no hope of everlasting life except upon the conditions held out in the New Testament and called *The Gospel*--the good tidings, that a way back from the fall, to perfection, to divine favor and everlasting life, has been opened up through Christ and for all of Adam's family who will avail themselves of it.

The key-note of this hope of reconciliation to God, and thus to a fresh hope of life everlasting, is found in the statements (1) that "Christ died for our sins" and (2) that he "rose again for our justification"; for "the man Christ Jesus gave himself *a ransom* [a corresponding price] for all." Adam and his race, which when he sinned was yet in him and shared his sentence naturally, have been "*redeemed* [bought] by the precious blood [death] of Christ." **1 Pet. 1:19**

But although the Lord's provision is abundant *for all*, it is not applicable *to any* except on certain conditions; namely, (1) that they accept Christ as their Redeemer; and (2) that they strive to avoid sin and to thenceforth live in harmony with God and righteousness. Hence we are told that "Eternal

E386

Life is the gift of God *through* Jesus Christ our Lord." (**Rom. 6:23**) The following Scriptural statements are very clear on this subject:

"He that hath the Son hath life [a right or privilege or grant of life as God's gift]; but he that hath not the Son shall not see [perfect] life." **John 3:36; 1 John 5:12**

None can obtain everlasting life except from Christ the Redeemer and appointed *Life-giver*; and the truth which brings to us the privilege of manifesting faith and obedience, and thus "*laying hold* on eternal life," is called the "water of life" and the "bread of life." **John 4:14; 6:40,54**

This everlasting life will be granted only to those who, when they learn of it and the terms upon which it will be granted as a gift, seek for it, by living according to the spirit of holiness. They shall *reap* it as a gift-reward. **Rom. 6:23; Gal. 6:8**

To gain this everlasting life we must become the Lord's "sheep" and follow the voice, the instructions, of the Shepherd. **John 10:26-28; 17:2,3**

The gift of everlasting life will not be forced upon any. On the contrary, it must be desired and sought and laid hold upon by all who would gain it. *1 Tim. 6:12,19*

It is thus a *hope*, rather than the real life, that God gives us now: the hope that we may ultimately attain it, because God has provided a way by which he can be just and yet be the justifier of all truly believing in and accepting Christ.

By God's grace our Lord Jesus not only bought us by the sacrifice of his life for ours, but he became our great High Priest, and as such he is now the "author [source] of eternal salvation to all that *obey him*." (*Heb. 5:9*) "And this is the promise which he hath promised *us*, even eternal life."

1 John 2:25

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life [now by faith and hope, and by and by actually, 'when he who is our life shall appear'], and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." *1 John 5:11,12*

E387

This everlasting life, made possible to Adam and all his race by our Creator through our Redeemer, but intended for, and promised to, only the faithful and obedient, and which at present is given to these only as a *hope*, will be *actually* given to the faithful in the "resurrection."

It will be noticed that the explicit promises of God's Word differ widely from the worldly philosophies on this subject. They claim that man must have a future everlasting life *because he hopes for it*, or in most cases fears it. But hopes and fears are not reasonable grounds for belief on any subject. Neither is there basis for the claim that there is *something* in man which must live on and on forever--no such part of the human organism is known, or can be proved or located.

But the Scriptural view of the subject is open to no such objections: it is thoroughly reasonable to consider our existence, soul, being, as therein presented--as a "gift of God," and not an inalienable possession of our own. Furthermore, it avoids a great and serious difficulty to which the idea of the heathen philosophies is open; for when the heathen philosopher states that man cannot perish, that he *must* live forever, that eternal life is not a *gift* of God, as the Bible declares, but a natural quality possessed by every man, he claims too much. Such a philosophy not only gives everlasting existence to those who would use it well and to whom it would be a blessing, but to others also who would

not use it well and to whom it would be a curse. The Scriptural teaching, on the contrary, as we have already shown, declares that this great and inestimably precious *gift* (Life-Everlasting) will be bestowed upon those only who believe and obey the Redeemer and Life-giver. Others, to whom it would be an injury, not only do not possess it now, but can never get it. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (**Rom. 6:23**) The wicked (all who, after coming to a clear knowledge of the truth, still wilfully disobey it) shall be cut off from among God's people in the Second Death. They "shall be as

E388

though they had not been." "They shall utterly perish." "Everlasting destruction" shall be their doom--a destruction which will last forever, from which there will be no recovery, no resurrection. They will suffer the loss of everlasting life, and all of its privileges, joys and blessings--the *loss* of all that the faithful will *gain*. **Acts 3:23; Psa. 37:9,20; Job 10:19; 2 Thess. 1:9**

God's gift of life eternal is precious to all his people, and a firm grasp of it by the hand of faith is quite essential to a well-balanced and consistent life. Only those who have thus "laid hold on eternal life," by an acceptance of Christ and consecration to his service, are able to properly and profitably combat the tempests of life now raging.

A Distinction and a Difference

But now, having examined the hope of immortality from the ordinary understanding of that word (everlasting life), and having found that everlasting life is God's provision for all those of Adam's race who will accept it in "due time" under the terms of the New Covenant, we are prepared to go a step further and to note that everlasting life and immortality are *not* synonymous terms, as people in general suppose. The word "immortal" means more than power to live everlastingly; and, according to the Scriptures, millions may ultimately enjoy *everlasting life*, but only a very limited "little flock" will be made *immortal*.

Immortality is an element or quality of the divine nature, but not of human or angelic or any other nature than the divine. And it is because Christ and his "little flock," his "bride," are to be "*partakers of the divine nature*" that they will be exceptions to all other creatures either in heaven or on

earth. **2 Pet. 1:4**

Is the Human Soul Immortal, or Has It a Hope of Becoming Immortal?

We have seen that a human soul (sentient being) results

E389

from a union of breath of life (*ruach--pneuma*) with a human organism or body; exactly the same as in the cases of lower animal souls (sentient beings) except as man is endowed with a higher organism, a superior body possessed of superior powers and qualities. Our present inquiry then is, Are all animals immortal? And if this be answered negatively, we must inquire, What does man possess above the lower animals which gives hope for his immortality?

Solomon's declaration as well as our own observations attest that man like the lower animals is subject to death-- "As the one dieth so dieth the other. Yea, they have all one [kind of] *breath* [spirit of life--*ruach*]." (**Eccl. 3:19**) On every hand the crape, the casket, the hearse, the cemetery, all testify that man does die and hence that he is not *immortal*, for the word "immortal" signifies death-proof, that which *cannot die*. Whatever man's *hope* of immortality, it is not a present possession and can at very most be a *hope* in some divine provision, future.

Before probing this question further it will be profitable for us to consider the meaning of the words "mortal" and "immortal," for a gross misunderstanding of the significance of these words is very prevalent and often leads to confusion of thought.

The word *Immortal* signifies *not mortal*--death-proof, incorruptible, indestructible, imperishable. Any being whose existence is dependent in any manner upon another, or upon conditions such as food, light, air, etc., is not immortal. This quality originally inhered in Jehovah God alone, as it is written--"The Father hath life *in himself*" (**John 5:26**); i.e., his existence is not a derived one, nor a sustained one. He is the King eternal, immortal, invisible. (**1 Tim. 1:17**) These scriptures being decisive authority on the subject, we may know beyond peradventure that men, angels, archangels, or even the Son of God, before and during the time he "was made flesh and dwelt among us"--were not

immortal--all were mortal.

E390

But the word "mortal" does not signify *dying*, but merely *die-able*--possessing life dependent upon God for its continuance. For instance, angels not being immortal are mortal and could die, could be destroyed by God if they became rebels against his wise, just and loving government. In him (in his providence) they live and move and have their being. Indeed, of Satan, who was such an angel of light, and who did become a rebel, it is distinctly declared that in due time he will be destroyed. (**Heb. 2:14**) This not only proves that Satan is *mortal*, but it proves that angelic nature is a *mortal* nature--one which could be destroyed by its Creator. As for man, he is a "little lower than the angels" (**Psa. 8:5**), and consequently *mortal* also, as is abundantly attested by the fact that our race has been dying for six thousand years and that even the saints in Christ are exhorted to *seek* immortality. **Rom. 2:7**

The common definition of mortal is *dying*, and of immortal *everlasting*--both wrong. To demonstrate the falsity of these general definitions let us propound a simple question--

Was Adam Created Mortal or Immortal?

If the answer be--"Adam was created *immortal*," we respond, How then was he threatened with, and afterward sentenced to, death: and how could he die if he were death-proof? And why did God in punishing him drive him out of the Garden of Eden away from the life-sustaining grove or trees of life, lest he *by eating* live forever? **Gen. 3:22**

If the answer be that man was created *mortal* (according to the erroneous common definition, *dying*) we inquire, How could God sentence man to death after his disobedience if he were already a *dying* creature and never had been otherwise? And if Adam was created *dying* how could God declare that his death came by his sin?

E391

Confusion is unavoidable unless the true definitions of mortal and immortal be clearly recognized as follows:

Immortal--the state or condition in which death is impossible--a death-proof condition.

Mortal--a state or condition in which death is possible--a condition of liability to death, but not necessarily a dying condition unless a death sentence has been incurred.

From this standpoint we can see at a glance that Adam was created *mortal*--in a condition in which death was a possibility or everlasting life a possibility; according as he pleased or displeased his wise, just, and loving Creator. Had he remained obedient he would have continued living until now--and forever--and yet all the while he would have been *mortal*, liable to death if disobedient. Nor would such a condition be one of uncertainty; for God with whom he had to do is unchangeable: hence Adam would have had *full assurance* of everlasting life so long as he continued loyal and obedient to his Creator. And more than this could not reasonably be asked.

Adam's life condition previous to his disobedience was similar to that now enjoyed by the holy angels: he had life in full measure--lasting life--which he might have retained forever by remaining obedient to God. But because he was not *death-proof*, because he did not have "life in himself" but was dependent for continuance upon conditions subject to his Creator's pleasure, therefore God's threat that if he disobeyed he should die, meant something. It meant the loss of the spark of life, "the breath of life," without which the body would moulder into dust and the living *soul* or sentient *being* would cease. Had Adam been *immortal*, undieable, death-proof, God's sentence would have been an empty threat. But because Adam was *mortal*, die-able, liable to death except as sustained by his Creator's provisions, therefore, as declared, he died "in the day" of his disobedience. See **2 Pet. 3:8**.

E392

To those who think that the Bible abounds with such expressions as *immortal soul*, *undying soul*, *never-dying soul*, etc., we can offer no better advice than that they take a Bible concordance and look for these words and others of similar import. They will find none; and thus the sincere truth-seekers will most quickly convince themselves that Christian people in general have for centuries, in thought at least, been *adding to* the Word of God, much to their own confusion.

According to the Scriptures the angels are enjoying life-everlasting but are *mortal*: that is to say, the everlastingness of their angelic existence is not because they are immortal or death-proof and so could not be destroyed by their Creator;

but because he desires that they shall live so long as they will use their lives in accord with his just and loving arrangement. This is easy of demonstration; for was not Satan one of the holy angels before he by pride and ambition sinned? And did he not thus become one of the wicked (willingly, intentionally opposing God) of whom it is written, "All the wicked will God *destroy*"--"who shall be punished with everlasting destruction"? (*Psa. 145:20; 2 Thess. 1:9*) Note the explicit declaration respecting Satan's destruction, applicable in principle to all who follow his evil way and reject divine arrangements knowingly, intentionally.

Heb. 2:14

While the Scriptures do speak of the mortality of man, and indeed in nearly all particulars confine themselves to man's relationship to God, yet they no less positively teach in another way the mortality of angels, by declaring that Christ "only hath immortality" (*1 Tim. 6:16*)--the Father as always being excepted. (*1 Cor. 15:27*) And as we have already seen, our Lord Jesus received *immortality* (which is an element or quality of "divine nature," only) at his resurrection, and as a reward for his faithful obedience to the Father's will to the extent of self-sacrifice--"unto death, even the death of the cross--wherefore him hath God *highly*

E393

exalted." Although always superior to all others as "the only Begotten," this *exaltation* raised him, as the Apostle declares, *far above* angels and principalities and powers and every name that is named in heaven and in earth. ***Eph. 1:21***

Thus it appears clear, from God's own revelation on the subject, that only himself and his Only Begotten Son possessed this quality of immortality at the time the apostles wrote their epistles. Indeed, had the Only Begotten been *immortal* sooner than at the time of his exaltation he could not have been the Savior of the world--because he *could not have died*; and under divine arrangement to be our Redeemer he must die: the record is, "Christ died for our sins" and was exalted to immortality afterward.

Hopes of a future everlasting life are held out vaguely in the Old Testament; but immortality is not so much as mentioned. Indeed, the inspired Apostle declares of our Lord Jesus, that he "abolished death [broke its hold on man] and brought *life* and *immortality* to light through the gospel." (*2 Tim. 1:10*) This shows two things: (1) That *life* in perfection, lasting life, is separate and distinct from *immortality*, indestructibility. (2) It shows that neither of these great

blessings had been disclosed or made accessible previous to the gospel--the "great salvation which *began* to be preached by our Lord." **Heb. 2:3**

And what did our Lord's gospel bring to "light" respecting these two great blessings--life and immortality?

(a) It shows that by divine grace our Lord purchased the whole world of Adam's posterity and thus secured for each and every member of the race an opportunity to *return* from *death to life*--in other words it declares coming "times of *restitution* of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began." Restitution in its highest and ultimate sense will be the bringing of the restored ones not only out of the tomb, but out of the various degrees of death (represented in sickness and imperfection)

E394

up to *life*--lasting life as Adam enjoyed it before his disobedience. The gospel of Christ assures us that a full opportunity to attain this *life* blessing shall be granted to all under the reasonable terms of the New Covenant--"in due time." **1 Tim. 2:6**

(b) The "light" of Christ's gospel shows a special provision in the divine plan for a special calling, testing and preparing of a small number of his creatures to more than a moral and rational likeness to himself--an invitation so to conform themselves to the Father's will and so to prove their loyal obedience to him, that he might make of them, "*new* creatures," "the express image of his person," and "partakers of the divine nature"--a prominent constituent element of which is *immortality*. This our Lord Jesus broached, brought to light, in his gospel of God's grace.

With amazement we inquire--To whom of God's holy ones--angels, cherubim or seraphim--is so high a call extended? The reply of the gospel of Christ is that it is not extended to the angels at all, but to the Son of Man and his "bride" to be chosen from among those whom he redeemed with his own precious blood.

Consider him, who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now in consequence set down at the right hand (place of favor) of the throne of God. He was rich, but for our sakes he became poor. Inasmuch as the man and race to be redeemed were human, it was needful that he become human so as to give the ransom or corresponding price. He therefore humbled himself and took the bondman's form; and after he found himself in fashion as a man, he humbled himself even unto death--

even unto the most ignominious form of death--the death of the cross. "Wherefore, God hath highly exalted him [to the promised divine nature, at his resurrection], and given him a name that is above every name [Jehovah's name excepted--**1 Cor. 15:27**]." **Heb. 12:3,2; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:8,9**
E395

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain *to receive* power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." **Rev. 5:9-12**

The pulchre of divine favor might well have stopped with the exaltation of this great and worthy One: but no; God, the Father, has arranged that Christ Jesus, as the Captain, shall lead a company of Sons of God to "glory, honor and immortality" (**Heb. 2:10; Rom. 2:7**), each of whom, however, must be a spiritual "copy" or likeness of the "First Begotten." As a grand lesson of the divine sovereignty, and as a sublime contradiction to all evolution theories, God elected to call to this place of honor (as "the bride, the Lamb's wife and joint-heir"--**Rev. 21:2,9; Rom. 8:17**), not angels and cherubs, but some from among the sinners redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb. God *elected the number* to be thus exalted (**Rev. 7:4**), and *predestinated* what must be *their characteristics* if they would make their calling and election sure to a place in that company to be so highly honored; and all the rest is left to Christ, who worketh now as the Father worked hitherto. **John 5:17**

The Gospel age, from Pentecost to the setting up of the Kingdom at the second advent, is the time for the selection of this elect Bride of Christ class, variously termed "the Church," "the body of Christ," the "royal priesthood," the "seed of Abraham" (**Gal. 3:29**), etc.; and the continued permission of evil is for the purpose of developing these "members of the body of Christ" and to furnish them the opportunity of sacrificing their little and redeemed *all*, in the service of him who bought them with his precious blood; and thus of developing in their hearts his spiritual likeness, that when, at the end of the age, they are presented by their Lord and Redeemer before the Father, God may see in them "the image of his Son." **Col. 1:22; Rom. 8:29**

As the reward of "glory, honor and immortality," and all the features of the divine nature, were not conferred upon the "First Begotten" until he had finished his course by

E396

completing his sacrifice and obedience in death, so with the Church, his "bride"--counted as one and treated collectively. Our Lord, the First Born and Captain, "entered into his glory" at his resurrection: he there became partaker of the divine nature fully, by being "born from the dead," "born of the Spirit": he there was highly exalted to the throne and highest favor ("right hand" of God); and so he has promised that his Church, his "bride," shall in resurrection be changed, by divine power, from human nature to the glory, honor and immortality of the divine nature. **Heb. 13:20; 2 Pet. 1:4**

And so it is written respecting "*the* resurrection" of the Church: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption [immortality]: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural [animal] body; it is raised a spiritual body."

1 Cor. 15:42-44,49

The conditions imposed upon all who would make their calling and election sure to this favored position are *exacting*, though nevertheless "a reasonable service"; and in offset the faithful are promised the "glory, honor and *immortality*" of "the divine nature"--that thus they shall share the Redeemer's high exaltation "far above angels," if they share his ignominy by walking in his footsteps, following his example in this present time while evil is permitted to triumph.

Note well the fact that every promise or suggestion of hope of immortality in the Lord's Word is to this special elect Church. This is the inherent life referred to by our Lord, saying--"As the Father hath *life in himself* [a life not requiring sustenance--*immortality*] so hath he given unto the Son that he should have *life in himself* [immortality]" and that he should give it unto whomsoever he would--his bride, his Church--"members of his body." **John 5:26;**

Eph. 3:6

Two Greek words are translated *immortality*:

(1) *Athanasia*, which Strong defines as "*deathlessness*." This

E397

word is found in the following scriptures only:

"This mortal must put on *immortality* [*athanasia*--*deathlessness*]"--referring to the first resurrection shared in only by the Church. **1 Cor. 15:53**

"When this mortal shall have put on *immortality* [*athanasia*--

deathlessness]"--referring to the same first resurrection of the Church. **1 Cor. 15:54**

"Who only hath *immortality* [*athanasia*--deathlessness]"--referring to our Lord Jesus and excepting the Father from comparison, as always. **1 Tim. 6:16**

(2) *Aphtharsia* and *aphthartos* (from the same root) are rendered *immortality* twice and *immortal* once, but would more properly be rendered *incorruption* and *incorruptible*, and are generally so rendered by lexicographers. All the occurrences of these words in the Bible follow:

"To those who seek for glory, honor and *immortality* [*aphtharsia*--incorruption]." **Rom. 2:7**

"It is sown in corruption, it is raised in *incorruption* [*aphtharsia*]." **1 Cor. 15:42**

"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit *incorruption* [*aphtharsia*]." **1 Cor. 15:50**

"This corruptible must put on *incorruption* [*aphtharsia*]." **1 Cor. 15:53**

"When this corruptible shall have put on *incorruption* [*aphtharsia*]." **1 Cor. 15:54**

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in *sincerity* [*aphtharsia*--incorruptly]." **Eph. 6:24**

"Jesus Christ who hath brought life and *immortality* [*aphtharsia*--incorruption] to light through the gospel." **2 Tim. 1:10**

"In doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, *sincerity* [*aphtharsia*--incorruption]." **Titus 2:7**

"The glory of the *incorruptible* [*aphthartos*--incorruptible] God." **Rom. 1:23**

"They do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an *incorruptible* [*aphthartos*]." **1 Cor. 9:25**

E398

"The dead [Church] shall be raised *incorruptible* [*aphthartos*]." **1 Cor. 15:52**

"The King eternal, *immortal* [*aphthartos*--incorruptible], the only wise God." **1 Tim. 1:17**

"An inheritance *incorruptible* [*aphthartos*], undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."

1 Pet. 1:4

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed but of *incorruptible* [*aphthartos*]." **1 Pet. 1:23**

"That which is not *corruptible* [*aphthartos*] even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." **1 Pet. 3:4**

The thought in this word is--that which cannot corrupt,

cannot decay, cannot lose value: *aphtharsia* is thus in many respects the equivalent of *athanasia* or *deathlessness* when applied to sentient beings; for that which having life is death-proof, may truly be styled incorruptible.

Mankind's Hope for Everlasting Life

The boldest and ablest scientists and evolutionists have attempted to show that man's life was not a gift from the Creator. Theoretically they have brought man and all the lower animals up, by evolution process, from a microscopic germ; yea, from protoplasm, which Prof. Huxley called "the physical basis of life"; and they fain would in some way ignore the Creator and Life-giver entirely: but, as a matter of fact, they have been unable to suggest any way that even protoplasm could get life from inert matter. To this extent, therefore, they are obliged to recognize a first great cause of life. But the reverent Bible student should not have the slightest difficulty in accepting the statement of the Scriptures that God himself alone is the First Great Cause, the fountain of life, from whom has proceeded all life on every plane; as says the Apostle, All things are *of* the Father, and all things are *by* the Son, and we by him. (*1 Cor. 8:6*) The Christian not only finds the evidences of a Creator

E399

in the book of Nature, but he finds in the Bible the express and particular revelation of that Creator, and of that creation. He accepts as a fact the statement that God created our first parents, and bestowed life upon them, and provided for their propagation of a race of sentient beings, souls, of their own kind, just as he provided for a similar process in the brute creation.

Looking back to Eden we see Adam and Eve in their perfection, possessed of moral and intellectual powers, in the likeness of their Creator, and therefore far superior to their subjects, the brute creation--souls of a higher order, the result of a higher and finer organism; and we inquire, What was the purpose of God respecting man in his creation? We see that so far as the brute creation is concerned, the Lord's evident design was that they should live a few years and then die, giving place to others of the species; and that thus they should minister as servants to the pleasure and convenience of man, their master, who in his perfection was a gracious master. But how about man? Was man born to die

like the beasts? We have just seen that he had no undying quality bestowed upon him, but we find abundant testimony of God's provision for the *everlasting life* of all who attain to approved conditions: that provision consisted not in the bestowment of immortal powers and qualities, but in the good will and purpose of his Creator, under which alone he "lives, moves and has his being."

Occasionally a shallow thinker will argue that man is immortal, indestructible, because science has determined that "*matter is indestructible.*" But, as already pointed out, *matter* is not *man*, nor is the soul, or being, matter. The body is matter, but to be the body of a man matter must have a special peculiar organization, and then spirit of life must be added before it becomes man or soul. No one will argue that an *organism* is indestructible, and hence any one of reasoning ability can see that the *being* or *soul* based upon and dependent on organism can be destroyed. Besides, this absurd reasoning or rather failure to reason would be forced by

E400

analogy to claim that all insects and creeping things have immortality, are indestructible. There is an immense difference between destroying inert matter and destroying being.

God declared to our father Adam, according to the record, that his life was secure, and would be continuous so long as he continued an obedient son of God; that only disobedience would expose *him* (the being, the soul) to death.

The same Scriptures tell us of the disobedience of our first parents, and of the divine pronouncement of the sentence of death, as the penalty for sin. And we should notice carefully the language of our Lord, in respect to this sentence.

God did not address his language to the senseless body, before it had been vitalized; neither did God address himself to the breath or spirit of life, which is an unintelligent vitalizing power merely. He addressed Adam, the *soul*, the intelligent or sentient *being*, after he had been fully created.

And we all agree that this was the reasonable and only proper course--that the soul or being alone should be addressed.

Now mark the Lord's words: "In the day that *thou* eatest thereof, *thou* shalt surely die."

When Adam transgressed the divine law and came under the sentence thereof, that his soul should die, the Lord might have executed his penalty in an instantaneous death; but instead he merely withdrew his special provision for his continuance of life, and thus let Adam die gradually. The conditions of life are explained to us as having been a special

grove of life-giving trees, by the eating of which man's life would have continued, making good daily its wastes, and suffering no decay. As soon as man became a transgressor, he was restrained from access to these trees of life, or orchard of life, and thus, like the lower animals of his dominion, became subject to death. In man's case, however, death is said to be a "*curse*," because it came as a result of the violation of the divine regulations, and incidentally, through the curse upon earth's king, a curse rests upon his dominion and upon all his subjects, the lower animals; for

E401

the king having lost his perfection, the entire dominion fell into disorder.

Moreover, the children of Adam could not obtain from him, as their progenitor, rights or privileges or physical perfections, which he had forfeited and was losing; hence, as the Scriptures show, the entire race of Adam fell with him under the curse--into death, and hence, as creatures in the image of God, possessed of powers of intelligence appreciative of everlasting life, we look up to God to see whether or not infinite wisdom, infinite love, infinite justice and infinite power can unitedly produce a plan of salvation for man, under which God can be just, and yet be the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. ***Rom. 3:26***

Nor is the hope a vain one. God's provision, through Christ, as revealed in the Scriptures, is for a resurrection of the dead, a restitution of man to his former estate. True, there are limitations and conditions, and not all shall return to the divine favor, but an opportunity to return shall be granted to all, with the strong probability, we believe, that a majority of Adam's posterity shall, when they know the truth, gratefully accept of God's grace through Christ, and conform their lives to the law of the New Covenant, through faith in the Redeemer.

It is not, however, for us or anyone to answer the query which our Lord refused to answer, viz., "Are there few that be saved?" (***Luke 13:23***) The most we are privileged to do is to point out that "a ransom for *all*" has been given by our Lord and the promise that in "due time" all shall come to a knowledge of this great truth and to opportunity to attain everlasting life from him, the great Light who shall yet "lighten every man that cometh into the world." (***1 Tim. 2:4-6; John 1:9***) We should and do repeat during this age to all who have "ears to hear" the Master's words: "Strive to enter in at the straight gate: for many shall seek to enter in

and shall not be able, when once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door." (*Luke 13:24,25*) In other words the call, the only call of this Gospel age, is to the narrow

E402

way of self-sacrifice: and no distraction of interest should slack our running for the great prize of immortality now offered. When the number of the "elect" is filled full and the great tribulation of the end of this age gives notice that the Church is completed and glorified, there will be many to take a different view of the worldly trifles which now hinder their fulfilment of their consecration pledges.

God's plan of salvation for the general race of Adam is to extend to each member of it, during the Millennium, the *offer of eternal life* upon the terms of the New Covenant sealed for all with the precious blood of the Lamb. But there is no suggestion anywhere that immortality, the Divine Nature, will ever be offered or granted to any except the "elect" Church of the Gospel age--the "little flock," "the Bride, the Lamb's wife." For the others of Adam's race the offer will be "restitution" (*Acts 3:19-21*) to life and health and perfection of *human* nature--the same that Adam possessed as the earthly image of God before his fall from grace into sin and death. And when at the close of the Millennial age all the obedient of mankind shall have attained all that was *lost in Adam and redeemed by Christ*--then all, armed with complete knowledge and experience, and hence fully able to stand the test, will be tested severely (as was Adam), but individually (*Rev. 20:7-10*), and only those found in fullest heart-sympathy, as well as in outward harmony, with God and his righteous arrangements, will be permitted to go beyond the Millennium into the everlasting future or "world [age] without end." All others will be destroyed in the Second Death--"destroyed from among the people." *Acts 3:23*

But although there shall be no more death, neither sighing nor crying, it will not be because the victors of the Millennial age will be crowned with immortality, but because, having learned to judge between right and wrong and their effects, they shall have formed characters in full accord with God and righteousness; and because they will have stood tests which will demonstrate that they would not wish to sin if the way were opened and no penalties attached.

E403

They will not have life in themselves, but will still be dependent upon God's provision of food, etc., for the sustenance of life. Compare **Rev. 21:4,6,8; 7:16; Matt. 5:6.**

As the curse brought the death of mankind, so the removal of the curse means the removal of all legal objections to man's return to all the original blessings bestowed upon him in Eden. But man, now degraded and imperfect mentally, morally and physically, is not fit, as Adam was, to enjoy the perfections of an Eden or Paradise condition; hence the divine purpose is that in the "restitution times," during the Millennial age, mankind, whose sins have been atoned for by the death of the Lord Jesus, may be brought back by him, the Life-Giver and Deliverer, from the bondage of sin and death, to all the fulness of the perfection of the original likeness of God. Not only so, but the divine plan we find is that man's experience with sin shall constitute a lesson which will have an everlasting influence upon some, giving them to know, by personal experience, something of the "exceeding sinfulness of sin," and of its sure reward or penalty, death: so that when, during the Millennial age, these shall be brought to a knowledge of righteousness, truth, goodness, love, and all the graces and qualities of divine character, the willing and obedient shall know and appreciate the privilege of eternal life in a way that Father Adam never would have known it, and never could have appreciated it.

To this end the dying has been a *gradual* process with the race in general, and to the same end the resurrection is to be a gradual process: inch by inch, as it were, mankind will be raised up, up, up out of the mire of sin, out of the terrible pit of degradation and death, to the grand height of perfection and life from which he fell in the person of father Adam. The only exception to this general program for the world, as presented to us in the Scriptures, being the few brought into harmony with God in advance, the seed of Abraham, natural and spiritual. **Gal. 3:29; Heb. 11:39,40**

Seen in this, the Scriptural light, the subject of immortality shines resplendently. It leaves the way clear for the general

E404

"gift of God, eternal life," to be extended to all whom the Redeemer shall find willing to accept it upon the only terms upon which it could be a blessing; and it leaves the unworthy subject to the just penalty always enunciated by

the great judge of all, viz.:

"The wages of sin is *death*." **Rom. 6:23**

"The *soul* that sinneth it shall *die*." **Ezek. 18:4,20**

"He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God [the curse, *death*] abideth on him." **John 3:36**

Thus we find, on this subject as on others, that the philosophy of the Word of God is deeper as well as clearer, and more rational by far, than the heathen systems and theories. Praise God for his Word of Truth and for hearts disposed to accept it as the revelation of the wisdom and power of God!

But does doubt cry out, How could God in resurrection reproduce the millions of earth completely so that each will know himself and profit by the memory of present life experiences? We answer that in the phonograph cylinder even man is able to preserve his own words and reproduce them; much more is our Creator able to reproduce for the entire race such brain organisms as will perfectly reproduce every sentiment, thought and experience. David seems to refer to the power of God in a manner that might be applicable either prophetically to the resurrection or reflectively to the first birth. He says:

"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. My substance [organism] was not hid from thee when I was made in secret, curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance being yet imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written which in continuance [gradually] were fashioned when as yet there was none of them." **Psa. 139:14-16**