

## **I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW**

### **A. With Lessons 28-30 we come to the final section of Essentials: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology ... and now, Eschatology (the doctrine of the Last Things).**

1. The main parts of Eschatology are the intermediate state, the precursory signs, the millennium, the Second Coming of Christ, the final resurrection, the Last Judgment, the eternal state.
2. About this subject there is a lot of debate among Christians esp. over the Millennium and the events leading up to and including the Second Coming of Christ.

### **B. This subject is of great importance because it concerns our hope (Rom. 8:24:25)**

1. Is our hope that Christ will come and secretly snatch us away into heaven?
2. Is our hope that Christ will establish an earthly kingdom of Jews in a renewed Palestine?
3. Is our hope that the world will be “Christianized” so that the majority of the world are converted?
4. Our hope is the Second Coming of Christ and our own resurrection so that we live body and soul with Him forever? (Rom. 8:23)

## **II. THE INTERMEDIATE STATE (The state of the soul after physical death before final resurrection)**

### **A. The Bible has a lot to say about the state of man after death but its revelation is *progressive*.**

#### **1. For that reason the Old Testament is less clear than the New Testament**

- a. The Old Testament reveals that all the dead went to a place called Sheol. This word “Sheol” is translated “grave,” “hell” or “pit.”
- b. Examples of “grave” (Gen. 42:38; Psa. 6:5, 49:15; Isa. 38:18); examples of “hell” (Deut. 32:22; Job 26:6; Psa. 9:17; Prov. 15:11; Isa. 5:14); examples of pit (Numb. 16:30, 33).
- c. In the OT the concept of Sheol is place removed from this earth, and where all the dead are together (I Sam. 28:19).
- d. However, there is also the expectation that the experience of Sheol will be different for the righteous and the wicked.

#### **2. In the NT the place of the dead is called “Hades.”**

- a. The word “Hades” almost always in the NT refers to the place of the wicked dead and is usually translated “hell” (Matt. 11:23; Luke 16:23).
- b. Sometimes, however, “Hades” is more general and it refers to the grave (Rev. 6:8, 20:13-14).
- c. The NT is clearer about a difference between the state of believers and unbelievers after death but the OT is not silent about this (Psa. 73:18-19; Luke 16:22-23).
- d. The other place of the dead is “Gehenna” which is the place of torment for the wicked. It comes from the “Valley of Hinnom” outside Jerusalem which was burning rubbish heap (Matt. 5:22, 29, 10:28, 23:33; Mark 9:43-47 [Isa. 66:24]).

### **B. We call this part of Eschatology “the intermediate state” because it is temporary and imperfect.**

#### **1. Death exists in the world as the judgment of God upon sin which raises the question: why must believers die?**

- a. The death of believers is not judgment for sin: Christ has been judged for sin in our place.
- b. The death of believers is not satisfaction for sin: Christ made full satisfaction (John 11:25-26).
- c. The death of believers is the abolishing of sin: at the moment of death the struggle with sin ceases; the flesh (which dwells in the members of the body) is destroyed.
- d. The death of believers is the passageway into eternal life.
- e. We do not die because Christ did not purchase for us eternal life of body and soul (He did!), but because it is God's purpose to give us the benefits of Christ's death *gradually*. We will not have full salvation of soul and body until the Last Day.

#### **2. Death—although transformed for the Christian—is still dreadful**

- a. Death is unnatural: it is the last enemy, and it will not be completely destroyed until the Last Day
- b. While the believer is dead death has power over the body, and “the earthly house of this tabernacle” is dissolved (II Cor. 5:1-2; II Peter 1:13-14).

- c. Death separates the believer from everything dear to him on the earth and it constitutes a painful parting from those he loves in this life (although from fellow believers that parting is temporary).

**3. The state of the soul between death and the resurrection is temporary.**

- a. The state we have at death is not the *final* state, but it not the *same* state either: it is intermediate.
- b. It is not the believer's final hope to be a disembodied soul forever: full, blessed salvation is found in *the resurrection of the body* (Job 19:25-27; II Cor. 5:4).
- c. The believer "waits" in the intermediate state for the consummation of all things at the Second Coming of Christ (Rev. 6:9-11).
- d. The believer must wait in the intermediate state because he cannot receive his full inheritance (which Christ purchased for him, and of which we already now receive a foretaste) until all the elect are saved (Heb. 11:40; Rev. 6:11).

**III. THE INTERMEDIATE STATE OF THE BELIEVER AND THE UNBELIEVER**

**A. The intermediate state of the believer is one of blessedness for the soul.**

**1. The soul of the believer is immediately taken up to Christ its head (Heid. Cat., LD 22, Q&A 57)**

- a. The soul does not simply fly away into heaven when we die: it is taken up; Christ actively receives it; in a sense He comes for us at death (John 14:3; Luke 16:22; Rev. 20:4-6).
- b. The soul at the point of death is made holy and made fit for heaven. Our souls are of the earth, earthy, and must be transformed to live in heaven. It does not happen naturally. The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* says, "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory ..." (Q&A 37).
- c. At this point, the sanctification of the soul is perfected: Heb. 12:23; Rev. 6:11, 21:27)

**2. The blessedness of the intermediate state is conscious glory with Jesus Christ in the soul**

- a. The believer is *with* Jesus Christ: this is the height of the blessedness of covenant fellowship.
- b. If Christ is not in heaven and heaven consists merely of pleasure (food, drink, relaxation, entertainment, etc) the believer does not want to be there.
- c. The longing of the soul of the believer is fellowship with God in Jesus Christ and the soul of the believer is satisfied in heaven (Luke 23:43; II Cor. 5:6, 8; Phil. 1:23-24; Rev. 14:13).
- d. The believer in the intermediate state reigns with Christ and rests in Christ (Rev. 14:13, 20:4).

**B. The intermediate state of the unbeliever is conscious torment in hell.**

**1. At death God casts the ungodly person away from Himself into a place of punishment.**

- a. The unbeliever's soul and body are separated at death but the resurrection for him is no hope.
- b. The unbeliever is separated from everything he loved on the earth: his treasure was on earth and he loses everything he had (Matt. 6:19-21; Luke 12:20-21; I Tim. 6:7).
- c. For the unbeliever death is punishment and is not a passageway into eternal life but into hell.
- d. Hell is a prison for the soul which is only temporary: death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire where the unbeliever will be punished forever in soul *and body* (I Pet. 3:19; Rev. 20:14-15).

**2. The misery of the intermediate state is conscious punishment.**

- a. The unbeliever will feel the full weight of the wrath of God and His curse bearing down upon him forever. The only thing worse is the lake of fire which awaits the ungodly *after the Day of Judgment* (Luke 16:23-24)
- b. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God who is a consuming fire (Heb. 10:31, 12:29).
- c. It is from *that* dreadful end which Christ has saved us. Christ experienced "inexpressible anguish, pains, terrors and hellish agonies" on the cross (Heid. Cat. LD 16, Q&A 44; Matt. 27:46; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 5:7).
- d. How we must be thankful that for us death has no sting! And how we must live in thankfulness!