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THE FINAL JUDGMENT AND A BURNING HELL

MAT 25:31-46, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done {it} unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

Most Bible students I ever met or read after is agreed that these last sixteen verses of Matthew Twenty-five deal with the final judgment. There are a few people who try to make something other than the final judgment out of this passage; but nothing else will fit. The language is too plain to be misunderstood.

There is a day coming when the Lord Jesus Christ will sit upon his throne in all his glory, and all mankind will be gathered before him to be judged "according to their works." John said that in the Revelation. REV 20:12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS."

There may be some who panic at the thought of the righteous standing before God to be judged according to their works. The Bible teaches clearly enough that salvation is wholly and solely by grace; and they feel that it contradicts the doctrine of salvation by grace to say that we will be judged according to our works. If we are judged according to our works, does that not mean that we are saved by our works?

To say that we will be judged "according to our works," does not mean that are saved by our works. The two may sound alike, but they are not in any sense the same thing.

The problem is that most people do not understand the meaning of the word "according." If he had said that our judgment will be "based on our works," that would have been an entirely different matter. Our salvation is not based on our works. That would have been works salvation, pure and simple. But while our judgment will not be based on our works, it will very definitely be "according to our works," and we will notice in next few pages that the Bible brings out that fact very clearly.

The word "according" means, "in agreement with," "in harmony with," "in a manner consistent with." That is exactly the way that John used the word in the Revelation. In the next few pages we will show that the judgment of the saints will not be based on our works, but that the judgment of all mankind will very clearly be "according to" their works. Or to say it another way, the eternal destiny of the saints is reflected in the way they behave themselves in this life; and by the same token, the eternal destiny of the wicked is even more clearly reflected in the way they behave themselves in this life.

The Arminian world seems to think this text belongs to them, and they use it to scare their people into a public profession. But this text does not each anything resembling the Arminian doctrine. This passage **DOES NOT GIVE CONDITIONS** that a person must meet in order to live in heaven. These verses rather **GIVE A DESCRIPTION** of those who will live in heaven. The Bible does not identify the children of God by any kind of label. It rather tells us what they look like; that is, it tells us how they behave. There is no label that could ever identify those who will live in heaven so unmistakably as these descriptions do.

Those who will live in heaven, someday, are those who are **ELECTED**, and **REDEEMED**, and **BORN AGAIN**; and these verses describe the way that elected, redeemed, and born again people behave. This is the way that **EVERY** elected, redeemed, and born again person behaves. Some behave in this manner to one degree,

and some to another; but every born again person behaves in this manner to one degree or another. With some children of God, their love and compassion toward those around them is so evident that you cannot be in their presence more than a few minutes until you are aware of the fact. With others of his children, you must look more closely, if you are ever going to see it. But every born again person has the love of God in his heart; and if he loves God, he loves his fellow man, and he will fit the description of those whom the Lord says he will set on his right hand, and say, "Come ye blessed of my Father."

This passage describes those, who are born of the Spirit of God, and it describes them in the clearest way. It describes them by the love of God that lives in their hearts. If any person is kind and compassionate toward those around them, it is because they are a born again people. It is because that the Spirit of God is in their hearts. The wicked do not behave in that way.

If the Arminian could take this text away from those who believe in salvation by the sovereign grace of God, he still could not claim it for himself. He may think that he can, but he cannot. No matter how he may explain this text, he cannot make it fit the Arminian mold. There are ONLY THREE DOCTRINES with regard to the way people are saved for heaven. Now, I know that you have probably heard that there are just two doctrines; but that is not right---there are three.

One doctrine says that God is the one and only Savior, and HE DOES NOT NEED ANY HELP. That is the doctrine of the Bible, and it is the doctrine of the Old Baptists.

Another doctrine says that God is the Savior, but that HE DOES NEED HELP. We call that doctrine Arminianism. That is the doctrine of the majority of established religion.

The other doctrine says that man is his own savior, and that MAN DOES NOT NEED ANY HELP. That is the doctrine of salvation by works. It teaches salvation by works, and works alone. It teaches that man does not need God's help. We call that doctrine Pelagianism. Some folks call it humanism.

If this text is giving conditions that you and I must meet in order to live in heaven some day, the Arminian still could not claim it for himself. The very best he could do is to claim it for the Pelagians---the works salvation people. The Arminian system teaches that the work of Christ on the cross has something to do with our eternal salvation. They have never figured out exactly what part the work of Christ plays in our salvation; and they are sure that the work of Christ is not sufficient, all by

itself, to take anybody to heaven. They are sure that we must add something to the work of Christ, if that work is going to benefit us. They are sure that we must add some amount of work on our part, some amount of faith on our part, some amount of good on our part, or else the work of Christ will never be sufficient. But while the Arminian is sure that the work of Christ is not sufficient, all by itself, to save anybody, he still believes that Christ accomplished something on the cross. He believes that grace, and redemption, and blood atonement have some part in our salvation.

But, notice that this text does not say anything about the grace of God. It does not say anything about redemption. It does not even mention the work of Christ on the cross. Read the text as carefully as you will, and you will not find one mention of the sacrificial death of the Lord. Why is that? It is because this text is NOT GIVING AN EXPLANATION OF WHAT GAINS US A HOME IN HEAVEN. It is rather GIVING A SIMPLE DESCRIPTION OF THOSE WHO WILL LIVE IN HEAVEN. Again, these are DESCRIPTIONS---NOT CONDITIONS.

So if this passage is giving conditions that a person must meet in order to live in heaven, then, salvation is strictly a do-it-yourself project. It makes no mention of the work of Christ on behalf of his people in redemption. The Arminian system does not teach the truth of the Bible with regard to the way that God saves his people, but they do believe that the Lord has something to do with our salvation. So if anybody want these verses to give conditions for living in heaven, well, there is just no way that you can make them fit the Arminian mold.

But why does this passage not make any mention of the redemptive work of the Lord? It does not mention what the Lord did on the cross, because it is not talking about what gains us a home in heaven. That is not the subject under consideration. It is rather giving a description of those who will live in heaven. Those who will live in heaven are an elected, redeemed, born again people, and this is a very clear description of redeemed, born again people. He describes them by their conduct. And this is the way every elected, redeemed, born again person behaves. Again, some behave in this manner to a small degree, and some behave in this manner to a greater degree; but every born again person behaves in this manner to one degree or another.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," verses thirty-seven through forty. These verses do not need any

explanation. I think that sometimes we spend too much time explaining things that are so plain that they do not need explaining. The Lord is not talking about what they did to him personally; he is talking about what they did to others around them.

Now before we go any farther, I want to point out that this passage teaches THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD, and it teaches ETERNAL PERSONAL ELECTION as surely as any other passage in the Bibles does. This passage shows that those who will live in heaven are those who are "blessed" of the Father. That is what he says in verse thirty-four, "Come YE BLESSED OF MY FATHER," inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Let me ask you first, WHEN were they so blessed of the Father? They were not blessed when they complied with conditions. They were not blessed when they decided to cooperate with God in the matter of their salvation. They were blessed "from the foundation of the world." Read the verse again, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom PREPARED FOR YOU FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD." That ought to be clear enough. There is no greater blessing that anyone can imagine than to live with God and with all the saints in that eternal kingdom above. That is the blessing of all blessings. That is what salvation is all about; and it was prepared for these people "from the foundation of the world."

And not only was it prepared for them; it was RESERVED FOR THEM." I Peter 1:3,4, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, RESERVED IN HEAVEN FOR YOU." This kingdom is an INHERITANCE, and it is reserved for these very people, who are to be set on the Lord's right hand.

An inheritance is not provided for a nameless, faceless mass of humanity. It is not provided for everybody in general, and nobody in particular. It is reserved for the heirs of the estate, for those who are named in the will. It is in the nature of wills that WILLS NAME NAMES. Wills identify those who are the beneficiaries of the will.

Those who are set on the right are a blessed people, and they were blessed from the foundation of the world. This kingdom was prepared for them---FOR THESE EXACT SAME PEOPLE---from the foundation of the world. And this inheritance was reserved for them from the foundation of the world. A reservation is always PARTICULAR and DISCRIMINATING. A reservation always includes the name of the person for whom the benefit is reserved. ANYTHING LESS WOULD NOT BE A RESERVATION. Now in this passage they are finally receiving that kingdom that was

prepared for them, and reserved for them from the foundation of the world.

On that grand day, those who were blessed in eternity past will be separated from the rest of mankind, and they will be set on God's right hand. Verse thirty-two, "And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall SEPARATE THEM them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." And he will SEPARATE THEM IN THE EXACT SAME MANNER in which he chose them, and blessed them, and provided for them. "And he shall separate them ONE FROM ANOTHER." The election of his people was personal, and this separation will be just as personal. He will "separate them one from another," "one from another," and "one from another." They were elected one by one, and one by one, and they will be separated one by one.

Language cannot be made any plainer than this passage makes it that these people were SEPARATED INDIVIDUALLY. And it is just as plain that HE WAS TALKING TO THEM INDIVIDUALLY when he said, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom PREPARED FOR YOU (for you individuals) from the foundation of the world." If that does not teach eternal personal election, I would like to know what it does teach. But it does teach election. We were elected one by one; we were blessed one by one; we were provided for one by one; and we will be separated one by one. John 17:24, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me BE WITH ME, where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." That verse will be literally fulfilled on that day.

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal," verses forty-one through forty-six.

There are some folks, who deny that there is an eternal, burning hell. There are some in the denominational world, and there are even a few, who carry the Primitive Baptist name, who will not admit that the wicked are going to suffer eternally. But the Bible teaches it; our articles of faith teach it; and I am sure that it is so. Just as surely as the Bible teaches that there is an eternal heaven, it also teaches that there is an

eternal, burning hell. This passage binds the two up together, and teaches them together. I cannot think of two doctrines that are ever bound up together, and taught as one unit the way the doctrine of an eternal heaven, and the doctrine of an eternal hell are bound up together in this passage. And then, to emphasize the fact that the two doctrines form one inseparable unit, he draws them together in the final verse. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." There is an eternal heaven, and there is an eternal, burning hell, and the wicked are going to be in hell just as long as the righteous will be in heaven. The two doctrines stand or fall together.

Those who deny the existence of a burning hell will tell you that God is too loving, too kind, too tender hearted to ever send anybody to such a place as that. But those who will tell you that have never seen the love of God for what it is; **AND THEY CERTAINLY HAVE A STRANGE VIEW OF THE GUILT OF SIN.** Those who deny that there is such a place as hell have surely never taken the time to consider what a terrible thing sin is.

I cannot think of any doctrine that diminishes the guilt of sin any more than the "no-hell doctrine." It is the great guilt of sin that requires such a place as hell. An eternal, burning hell is the proper punishment for sin, and **THE PUNISHMENT EXACTLY FITS THE OFFENSE.** God would never have prepared such a place as hell, if any less punishment could have satisfied divine justice.

Those who deny that there is an eternal hell either do not believe in the depravity of man, or else they do not believe in the justice of God. They do not believe that man is as wicked as the Bible says he is; they do not believe that sin is so bad that it requires any real punishment. As often as not the wicked get along better in this life than the righteous do, and if there is no place of eternal punishment, the wicked will never really suffer for their sins. Or else they do not believe that God is just and righteous, and that he will punish every sin. There is no way that anyone can advocate the no-hell doctrine without either denying that sin is really bad, or else denying that God is really good.

Several years ago there was a little girl murdered in a town just to the south of where I live. Her stepfather beat her to death. He sent her to the store, and she did not get back home as quickly as he thought she should, and he beat her. And he beat her, and beat her, and beat her. He would rest for awhile, and he would beat her again. And he burned her all over with cigarettes. And he would take Tabasco (that is a kind of hot sauce) and he would mix it with a little water, and he would make her drink it. And he finally beat her to death.

Recently the newspapers carried the story of a man who abducted a young girl. He mistreated her terribly, and when he was finally through with her, he chopped off her arms. He literally cut off her arms, and left her to die. But she survived. She is still alive today---without any arms. They caught the man, and arrested him, and convicted him. He served some time in prison, and they released him. The last I heard, they had run him out of the state of Florida, because nobody wanted him living in their community. I don't blame them; I would not want anybody like that living in my community, either.

History is filled with characters like Adolph Hitler, who had six million Jews killed, because he did not like Jews, and Joseph Stalin, who had millions of his own people killed in order to establish his own regime, and King Herod, who had every little baby under two years old killed, because he was afraid one of them would grow up to become king, and Pharaoh, who had every little Jewish boy killed, and Jezebel, who had Naboth killed, because he would not sell his garden spot to her wicked husband Ahab. We read about the emperor Nero, who had Christians soaked in oil, and burned alive to illuminate his gardens at night. It is not possible to take an objective look at the wickedness in the world around us without being convinced that **THERE IS A BURNING HELL AND THERE OUGHT TO BE**. Hell is the just and proper punishment for sin; and you can be sure that the punishment fits the offense. The justice of a righteous, sin-avenging God demands that every sin be punished.

We cannot say it too clearly, nor too often. The "no-hell doctrine," by its very nature, either denies that sin is evil, and that it deserves to be punished, or else it denies that God is righteous, and that he will punish every sin.

I am not going to tell you that every person who will wind up in hell is like those wicked men we have just described. God does not allow men to behave so wickedly as their old carnal nature would drive them to do. If God suffered man to carry out all the vile urgings of his carnal nature, none of us would survive the day. The world would become a slaughter house. But I am going to show what they are like. In this passage God gives us a very clear description of the wicked. In verses thirty-one through forty he gave a clear description of those who live in heaven. Now in verses forty-one through forty-six he gives an equally clear description of those who will suffer in hell.

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me

not," verses forty-one through forty-six.

He was not talking about what these wicked people had done, nor not done, to him personally. He was talking about the way they had treated others around them. "Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me," verses forty-four through forty-five.

When he says, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat," he was not saying that he had an appetite, because it was mealtime. He was not talking about feeding somebody, simply because it was convenient. He was talking about a man who was STARVING; he was talking about somebody who could not feed himself. If a man can feed himself, he ought to. The Bible teaches that. II Thess. 3:10, "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that IF ANY WOULD NOT WORK, NEITHER SHOULD HE EAT." That principle never changes---if a man will not work, he should not expect to eat.

One of the great problems in America today is the fact that the government has thought, for the last fifty years, that if they will just set up enough social programs, they can repeal that principle. But it still remains true; if a man will not work he should not expect to eat.

But this was talking about a man who could not help himself. This was talking about a man who was starving, and could not do anything about it. It is in this light that the Lord says, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink." Read the passage as carefully as you will. THOSE WHO WERE SET ON THE LEFT HAND WOULD NOT GIVE A CRUST OF BREAD TO A STARVING MAN.

Now let me ask you, how many of those on the left were like that? EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM. What he says to one, he says to all. He did not say, "Very few of you gave me anything to eat; very few of you gave me anything to drink." There was NOT SO MUCH AS ONE PERSON on the left who would give a crust of bread to a starving man.

Also, he did not say, "I was an hungred, and YOU DID NOT GIVE ME MUCH." He did not say, "I was an hungred, and YOU DID NOT GIVE ME ENOUGH." The emphasis in that verse is on the word "NO." He says, "Ye gave me NO meat," and, "Ye gave me NO drink." THERE WAS NOT SO MUCH AS ONE OUNCE OF THE MILK

OF HUMAN KINDNESS IN THE HEART OF ANY PERSON ON THE LEFT. If you can find the first trace of compassion in any person in any person on the left, you can find more than I have ever been able to find.

If you find so much as one person, who has any concern at all for his fellow man, you will find him among those on the right. That is a characteristic of a born again person, and those who are born again are on the right.

He goes on to say, "I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." I have tried to come up with some illustration to show what is meant by "a stranger," and the best I can come up with is this. Imagine a man who has worked hard all of his life. He exerts every effort to support himself and his family, and he accomplishes that, but he has never been able to accumulate anything. Then one day he loses his job. The mill where he works has laid people off, and laid people off, until they finally close the mill, and go out of business. They put eight hundred people out of work, and that throws another eight hundred people out of work at other businesses. There are only ten thousand people living in that little town, and now sixteen hundred of them are out of work. There are no jobs to be had---not in that town.

He has some kinfolks about five hundred miles away, and he hears that he might be able to find a job there. So he loads up his family, and a few items that he thinks he just has to have in order to get along, and he starts out. He thought he had enough money to make the trip, but he goes about three hundred miles, and he has a blow out. He uses the last money he has to buy an old used tire, and he starts out again. But now he is out of money and out of gas. And the kids are hungry and crying. He does not have any money; he does not have any gas; and he does not know the first person within two hundred miles.

Ten dollars would buy enough gas to get him to his kinfolks. Another ten dollars would buy enough bread, and mayonnaise, and bologna, and soft drinks to feed his family. Now just suppose for a moment that he runs into one of these folks whom the Lord will one day set on his left hand. What do you suppose his chances are? Do you suppose the man will help him? No, of course not. HE IS WASTING HIS BREATH. There is not so much as one person on the left who would give a crust of bread to a starving man. That is what the text teaches. You will not find the slightest trace of compassion in any person whom the Lord sets on the left.

There is an eternal, burning hell. The wicked will fill that place up, and they will be there for all eternity. But you will not find so much as one person there, who

has, or ever did have, the first trace of compassion for his fellow man.

But do the wicked never give anything to help those who are in need? Of course, it is true that the wicked do sometimes give to those in need; but they never do it for the PURPOSE of helping anybody. He may do it for a vain show. He may do it to impress somebody. Or he may work on a job where the boss has decided that one hundred percent of his employees are going to contribute to a particular fund raising drive. So he does not have much choice. He gives, but he would be glad to take it back, if he could do it without too much inconvenience.

The wicked very often give to buy support, or to buy prestige, or to gain influence. They give to get their name in the paper, or to get their picture in the paper. They give "hoping to receive as much again," and that is NOT A GIFT. That is a purchase, and not a very commendable purchase, at that. The Lord said, "Ye GAVE me no meat." The wicked have no love for anybody; and they never give for the purpose of helping anybody.

There is a passage in I John that casts light on that. I John 4:7, 8, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God and EVERY ONE THAT LOVETH IS BORN OF GOD, AND KNOWETH GOD. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." These two verses make a clear distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who are born again, and those who are not born again. The text says that everyone that loves is born of God. I am sure that none of has ever realized HOW VERY WICKED THAT "WICKED" REALLY IS. Primitive Baptist preachers will say more about the depravity of man in a week than most preachers will say in a year. Most preachers just don't talk about man's depravity; they don't believe it.

But as much as we Primitive Baptist preachers have emphasized the doctrine of total depravity, we have never painted the picture as black as it really is. Man is, by nature, DEPRAVED BEYOND HIS COMPREHENSION, and we do not have the capacity to see ourselves as we really are.

I know that somebody is going to object that the meanest man in town may love his mother. He may love his wife and children. But, no, the wicked do not love anybody. The text says so. If you find any emotion in the wicked that resembles love, it only resembles love. It is not the real thing. It only has to do with their close relationship to him. It is only because she is "MY mother," "MY wife," "MY children," "MY cook," "MY housekeeper," "MY property." He loves those people who are close to him only in the sense that he loves those things that are close to him and belong to him. He loves them in the sense that THEY BENEFIT HIM. That is selfishness, and

possessiveness, but it is not love. Selfishness sometimes becomes very protective, and it may look very much like love; but it is not love.

It has been said that there is a very fine line between love and hate. It has been said that love can turn into hate almost in an instant. But that is not true. Selfishness can turn into hate in an instant, and possessiveness can turn into hate in an instant; but love is not so fickle as that. The problem is that something was passing for love that was not really love to start with.

The wicked do not love anybody. They do not love God, and they do not love anybody else. John made that clear enough. I John 4:20. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen." A challenge is the strongest way to make a statement, and in the strongest possible way, John shows that those who do not love their brother do not love God. Those who will spend eternity in hell do not love God, and they do not love their fellowman.

Perhaps you have spent many a waking hour worrying about someone you love, for fear that he will spend eternity in that dreadful place. Well, someone you love may be there; but there will not be anybody there who loves you, because there will not be anybody there who loves anybody. The scriptures are plain enough; **THE WICKED DO NOT LOVE ANYBODY**. "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God," I John 4:7.

I have never met very many people like that, and I have an idea that probably no one reading these lines has ever met very many people who had absolutely no love for anybody. But I have met a few people who seemed to fit the description. No matter where you go, you will find a lot of good, decent, honest people; and you will find an occasional scoundrel.

I believe that the vast majority of the human race are children of God, and that they will be in heaven some day. John said, "After this I beheld, and, lo, A GREAT MULTITUDE WHICH NO MAN COULD NUMBER of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," Rev. 7:9. God compares his family to the "stars of the sky," and to the "sands of the sea." With all the discoveries that astronomers have made, none of them have ever been able to count the stars of the sky. Their mathematics will not help them there. They have to admit that the heavenly bodies are a great number "which no man can number."

The Bible refers to heaven as a large place. Psalms 18:19, "He brought me forth also into A LARGE PLACE." Heaven is a large place intended to house a vast multitude of people. It never talks about hell that way. It refers to hell as "a lake," or "a pit," or "a lake of fire and brimstone"---a relatively small place. By its very definition, a pit is a small place. A pit may be deep, but it is very narrow. If it was very wide, it would not be a pit; it would be a valley. A lake is always fairly small. If it was very wide, it would be an ocean. **GOD WILL HAVE THE VICTORY---EVEN IN NUMBERS.**

There is one text that some people seem to think teaches that there will only be a few people in heaven. 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 that 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 that is not talking about eternal heaven. That is talking about finding that way of life and obedience that is to be had here in this life. But that is a subject for another time.

We have pointed out several times that there is an eternal burning hell, that the wicked will fill that place up, and that they will be there for all eternity. We have also pointed out that there will not be anybody there that had any real love for anybody. But we should take the time to point out that, among all the other wicked, loveless people, there will be some wicked people, **WHO WERE HIGHLY RELIGIOUS** in this life. The Pharisees were the most religious people of their day. They wore their religion on their sleeve. They were proud of their religion; but they were the bitterest enemies of the Lord. As religious as they were, they did not manifest any real love for God, nor for his Son. And if there had been any question, the Lord removed all doubt. He told them, "**YE ARE OF YOUR FATHER THE DEVIL**, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it," John 8:44. You and I may be mistaken about somebody; but if the Lord says that someone does not have the love of God in his heart, you can be sure that he is right. These highly religious people did not have the love of God in their hearts.

Not only does the "no-hell doctrine" diminish the guilt of sin, it diminishes the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. If there is no hell, what was the Lord doing on the cross? **WHAT DID HE SAVE US FROM?** Why was any salvation necessary? Do the wicked just cease to exist at death? Is annihilation all the Lord saved us from? If all the Lord saved us from was annihilation, he did not save us from very much. There have been times in my life, when I would have gladly chosen annihilation, if that had

been an option---if I could have just snapped my fingers, and Harold Hunt would never have been.

Annihilation is the fate that awaits every little puppy dog that ever lived. Now I know that little boys believe there is a puppy dog heaven. There was a time, when I was very small, that I thought that might be the case. We can chalk it up to a child's sentimentality, that little boys believe they will see their pets again some day. But it is a more serious matter, when adults believe in A PUPPY DOG HELL---when they believe that the only fate that awaits the vilest sinner is the fate that awaits every little puppy dog.

Others have seen the consequence of preaching annihilation. They realize that the doctrine of annihilation denies that sin is bad, and that God is good. They know that if sin is bad, and God is just, there must be some kind of hell. So they preach that there really is a hell, after all. They preach that the wicked in hell burn, and burn, and burn, and then, they finally burn up. They cannot bring themselves to preach the Bible doctrine of an eternal hell, but they do get just a little close to the truth that the annihilationist.

But that doctrine is very little closer to the Bible than the other. If the wicked in hell burn, and burn, and then burn up, that still would not be too bad. If that is the case, there are a lot of good people, who suffer as much in this life as the wicked do in hell. I had a little brother who died in a fire, when he was eighteen years old. That was almost thirty years ago; but I still cannot allow myself to think about it. The memory is too painful; I cannot bear to think about it. If the wicked in hell finally burn up, my little brother suffered as much in this life as Adolph Hitler will suffer in eternity. Perhaps, he did not suffer as long; but according to that notion, he suffered in exactly the same manner. Adolph Hitler had six million Jews killed just to satisfy his hatred for Jews. I ask you, did Adolph Hitler's crime incur so little guilt that he will not suffer any more in eternity than that little boy did in this life?

Down through the ages, a lot of good people have been burned alive, burned at the stake, rather than deny their faith in the Lord. If the wicked in hell burn, and burn, and then, finally burn up, God did not save them from anything, because they suffered in this life exactly what they would have suffered in eternity---if Christ had not even gone to the cross.

The "no-hell doctrine" affects some of the most fundamental doctrines of the Bible. It denies the guilt of sin; it denies the justice, the righteousness of God; and it denies the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before we go any farther, we need to remember that those who will live in heaven will be there, not because of any merit in themselves, but **BECAUSE OF THE IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST**. Had we received what we deserve, we would have suffered the torment of an eternal hell just as surely as anyone else ever will. We were all cut from the same bolt of cloth. Eph. 2:1-3, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also **WE ALL** had our conversation in times past in **THE LUSTS OF OUR FLESH**, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind, and **WERE BY NATURE THE CHILDREN OF WRATH**, even as others."

There is, by nature, nothing about any of us that deserves saving. By nature, there is none of us that differs one whit from the vilest sinner that ever lived. If there is any difference about any of us, **IT IS BECAUSE GOD MADE A DIFFERENCE**. It is because God, in his sovereign mercy, reached down to us when we did not deserve saving, and were not even interested in being saved, and he saved us. He quickened us from that state of death in sins, and he gave us life. he placed his Spirit in our hearts and gave us a love for him, and for those around us.

Those who love do so because they are a "blessed" people (vs 34). Those who are filled with nothing but spite and envy, are so because they are a "cursed" people." (vs 41). But the blessing and the curse come from two entirely different sources. Those who are blessed are blessed "from the foundation of the world" (vs 34). Their blessing comes from the sovereign love and mercy of God. But the passage makes no such statement about those on the left. They are not cursed from the foundation of the world. Their condition is not to be traced to the sovereignty of God. Their condition is to be traced to Adam, and to the sin and curse he brought on all mankind. The Bible nowhere gives any ground for charging the sin and suffering of man to the sovereignty of God.

We said at the outset that the judgment of the saints is **NOT BASED ON** our works, but that the judgment of all mankind is "**ACCORDING TO**" our works. I believe the Lord makes that fact very clear in this passage. The judgment of both the righteous and the wicked is "according to" our works, that is, it is "in a manner consistent with" our works. It is "in harmony with" our works. That is exactly what the word "according" means. Not one person who loves God, or who loves his fellow man, will spend eternity in that dreadful place. If a person has love in his heart, he is a child of God. He is heaven-bought, heaven-born, and heaven-bound.

And not one person who will suffer in the flames of an eternal hell, ever had the

slightest trace of love for anybody, not for God, nor for anybody else. The only nature he has is a carnal, depraved, spiteful nature. HIS WORKS ARE "ACCORDING TO" HIS NATURE; AND HIS JUDGMENT WILL BE "ACCORDING TO" HIS WORKS.

The child of God has two natures. He has a new spiritual nature, but he still has the old carnal nature to contend with. Sometimes the old carnal nature motivates him, and he can still do mean and spiteful things. But if he is born of the Spirit of God, he has God's Spirit in his heart. That Spirit is a spirit of love, and that love will be manifest in the life of every person that has it---to one degree or another. To one degree or another his works will be "according to" the love of God that lives in his heart, and his judgment will be "according to" those works. It will not, in any sense, be based on those works, but it will be "according to" his works---"in a manner consistent with" his works.

Let's pursue that thought one step farther. Suppose you have a neighbor who lives next door. He has lived there for years, and you would be glad if he would live there from now on. He is as good a neighbor as anybody could ask for. You get up one cold February morning, and your battery is dead. Your starter won't even make a sound. But that is no problem; your neighbor has some jumper cables, and he will be right there to help. He will stay with you till you get the car started, and, if necessary, he will follow you down the highway to make sure it does not die on you again---even if he knows that it is going to make him late for work, and his boss is going to give him a hard time.

One day in April the ground has thawed, and you back out in the yard. The ground is never so soft as it is just after it has been frozen solid, and it thaws out. The car mires down, and you are stuck. That neighbor will be right there, pushing to get you out. He may mire up over his shoe tops; but that doesn't matter. A little saddle soap and water will take care of that.

A house burns down across town. The family just manages to get out with the clothes on their backs. They lose everything they have. They lose their house, and their furniture, and their clothes, and even their week's groceries burn up. Somebody comes by making up money to help. Now he doesn't those people. He did not even know there was anybody by that name living in that town. But that doesn't matter; he is going to help. He may have to wait until next to pay his light bill, and pay a penalty then, because he gave them part of his light bill money. But there are little children without clothes, and food, and a place to sleep, and, of course, he is going to help.

But there is another side to the man. He never goes to church. He was not raised to go to church. It just never has been part of his experience. Every now and then, he will come out with a curse word; and sometimes, when the occasion is just right, he may string several curse words together in a very emphatic manner. And a few times you have smelled alcohol on his breath.

Now suppose you ask the denominational preacher down the street about the man. "Preacher, you know the man; what if he dies tonight, what will his destiny be?" It may take a little while to get a straight answer from the preacher; but eventually he is very likely to tell you that if the man has never made a public profession of faith in Christ, he is just lost world without end. If the man has not met the preacher's formula for becoming a child of God and gaining a home in heaven, the preacher is just sure that he will spend eternity in hell.

Well there is an eternal, burning hell, and the wicked are going to fill that place up. They will be there for all eternity. They will be there in that flame JUST AS LONG as the saints will be in heaven. Matt. 25:46, "And these shall go away into EVERLASTING punishment, but the righteous into life ETERNAL." There is not one iota of difference between the two. The same word that is translated "everlasting" is the word that is translated "eternal." There is an eternal, burning hell, and the wicked will be there forever. But there is not one verse in the Bible that even implies that hell will be filled with good, honest, kind hearted people, who would give you the shirt off their back. Do you remember the verse that said, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it to me?" Do you remember where those people were found?

If the man does not go to church, he ought to start. If he uses foul language, he ought to quit. If he does not read his Bible, he needs to get into the habit. If he does not understand it, he needs to pray that God would give him understanding. But if anybody believes that he is the sort of person the Lord was talking to when he said, "Depart from me ye cursed," well, that is just not right. Eternal hell is the final destiny of the wicked; but the wicked are not kind, compassionate, and tender hearted. The dead will be judged "according to their works," and according to his works this man looks more like a child of God than some church going people I have known.

There is, indeed, a day coming when the Lord will come again in the clouds of glory; he will declare that time will be no more, and he will gather all nations before him. That final day will come; but far from being a day to dread, that should be our fondest hope. Paul says that we look "for that BLESSED HOPE AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING OF THE GREAT GOD AND OUR SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST," Titus 2:13.

We look forward with fond anticipation to that day. When he closed out the very last chapter in the Bible, the Lord told John, "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen," Rev. 22:20. And John's immediate response was, "EVEN SO COME LORD JESUS."