

THE FIRST AND LAST GREAT DECEPTIONS

Before we dive into our subject today, I want to share something that's totally unrelated, and yet important. Perhaps you've heard, or perhaps you haven't, about a meeting that was to take place at Loma Linda University titled "Adventists and Catholics, the History of a Turbulent Relationship." However, this meeting was canceled and ended up being held in a high school in Riverside, California about 10 miles away because there were people who protested holding such a meeting at a Seventh-day Adventist institution, and they were justified in doing so.

The main lecturer was Dr Reinder Bruinsma, a theologian, a retired pastor, teacher, and high-ranking administrator in the Seventh-day Adventist church who believes the Spirit of Prophecy is outdated when it comes to the way Adventists think of the papacy and Catholicism, and that The Great Controversy belongs to another age. He also believes Adventists have more that unites them with Catholics than divides them, and that may be true today, but that's not the way it used to be and the way it should still be today. He believes Adventists should distance themselves from anti-Catholic beliefs and rhetoric, which he says are unchristian, because the Catholic church has changed ever since Vatican II council in 1965. He says the idea that the Catholic church never changes is "a false statement", that they're not going to persecute seventh-day Sabbath keepers, and that we should now recognize that we are allies rather than enemies, and that we should be partners in Christian mission to bring the gospel to the world. Dr Bruinsma also said Adventists should hold more Christmas and Easter services like the Catholics and that we Adventists should ask for forgiveness for the many times we have accused Catholic believers and particularly the Catholic church because of our ignorance.

Dr. Gilbert Valentine of La Sierra University also had a part in the program, agreeing with everything Dr Bruinsma said, and suggested in his book about J. N. Andrews that James white was bi-polar, and that Andrews was incorrect when he said the papacy was responsible for changing the Sabbath to Sunday, which means of course that Ellen White was also incorrect, doesn't it?

So, my question is this, if the papacy is not represented by the beast of **Revelation 13:1-10** and the "man of sin" and "the son of perdition" according to **2 Thessalonians 2:3**, then who is? But they didn't talk about that. Remember this one thing, "It is a backsliding church that lessens the distance between itself and the Papacy." *Signs of the Times, February 19, 1894.4*

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There were also a couple other PhD stuffy shirt professors there and they were all in agreement with the main lecturer as well as a Catholic Priest who's been a Chaplain at Loma Linda hospital for the past six years, and I wonder who's paying his salary? This Catholic priest talked about how Adventists at Loma Linda celebrate Ash Wednesday with the Catholics and reiterated that there is one baptism, one Lord, and one Father, but not sure if he was referring to the pope as our father, or our Father in heaven. And then he closed by saying, "so you don't have to be afraid of the Catholic church ever again."

Well, all that lasted for an hour and 25 minutes and then there was a question and answer period afterward that lasted another 45 minutes. During that time several people spoke and said how much they appreciated what they heard, with much applause. There were a couple people however, who asked why the speakers still call themselves Seventh-day Adventists and if they believed there would be a national Sunday law in the future, but both of those questions were totally ignored, and I wonder why?

Remember back in the 1970s when then President Neil Wilson said that the anti-popery stand the Seventh-day Adventist church had taken in the past has now been consigned to the historical trash heaps? Well, we are now seeing the fruit and the open apostasy of that statement among highly educated leaders within the church.

By the way, these are the same kind of things Ganoune Diop is saying as the Director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty at the General Conference level. I spoke a little bit about him a couple months ago, if you remember. He has also said that the papacy has changed, and those who continue to give the three angels messages implicating the papacy as the beast power are religious terrorists.

I'll put a link to this Catholic/Adventist love fest in my sermon notes if you would like to verify what I've said, but I don't encourage you to listen, because it might make you sick.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/cpT9aLCZi28>

I'll quote just a couple Spirit of Prophecy statements about how Ellen White predicted all this, and then we'll get into today's subject. The first is in *The Great Controversy*, page 606, you know, that outdated book that belongs to another age and how the devil tried to kill its author for revealing the truth. "Thus the message of the third angel will be proclaimed. As the time comes for it to be given with greatest power (**latter rain**), the Lord

will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service. The laborers will be qualified rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. **(Isn't that something? God is not going to use these stuffy shirt PhDs to finish the work, or others like them, which should now be very obvious to us.)** Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. **(And I think we're beginning to see this more openly right now with those who are exposing the apostasy of church leaders. It's been coming for a while, but it's picking up steam over the past couple months.)** The sins of Babylon will be laid open. The fearful results of enforcing the observances of the church by civil authority, the inroads of spiritualism, the stealthy but rapid progress of the papal power **(within the church I might add)**—all will be unmasked. **(And again, it won't be done by those who have been trained in the literary institutions, but by those who have been pulled from the plow.)** By these solemn warnings the people will be stirred. **(Are you stirred by the things you've heard this morning? I hope so.)** Thousands upon thousands will listen who have never heard words like these. In amazement they hear the testimony that Babylon is the church, fallen because of her errors and sins, because of her rejection of the truth sent to her from heaven."

Tell me, has the Seventh-day Adventist church rejected truth that was sent to her from heaven? Has she fallen because of her errors and sins? Without a doubt, you just heard some of it, and this has been going on for decades. Therefore there will be thousands upon thousands of Seventh-day Adventists who will hear that this message applies to the church which they are members of.

Now let me be clear, when it comes to apostasy, first and foremost we're talking about the leaders here, it's always the leaders who lead the church astray. This is true of the Catholic church and it's true of the Adventist church. But guess what? If you know these things as part of the membership and you stay in there and support a church that has rejected "the truth sent to her from heaven" anyway, you will be a partaker of her sins and of her plagues.

And this second quote is from *Selected Messages, book 1, page 48*, "Satan is ... constantly pressing in the spurious—to lead away from the truth. The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. . . Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God's remnant people in the true testimony."

Friends, we are here! The last deception to destroy confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy is in the process of happening as I speak, and it's been coming for a while, but now it's on full display for anyone who has eyes to see and ears to hear.

We've talked for a few minutes about the very last deception of Satan this morning, and now I'd like to talk about THE VERY FIRST GREAT DECEPTION, because without a first there can't be a last, can there?

The first great deception is a deception that most Christians know nothing about and have never even considered, and yet it's one that has eternal consequences for those who reject the plain testimony of Scripture. And where on earth do you suppose this first great deception took place, and upon whom? If you said in the Garden of Eden upon Eve, you are correct.

As soon as our world was created, Satan did his best to deceive our first parents, didn't he? Because remember, **Revelation 12:7-9** tells us that there was war in heaven, and when the devil and his angels lost, they were cast out into the earth. Satan did his best to ruin heaven, and when he was unsuccessful, guess what? He continued the same warfare right down here. Just as he managed to get a third of the angels in heaven on his side, according to **Revelation 12:4**, he wants now to bring as many of the inhabitants of this earth to view things as he does by causing them to rebel against God's government. Because you see, heaven is a place of law and order, and not like what this earth has become, especially over the past few years with the border crisis, and all the law fare going on and the defund the police nonsense. And all this confusion that Satan is causing is for the purpose of shaking our confidence in the word of God and positioning himself to be like the Most High.

By the way, I'm going to be quoting a lot of Scripture today, so you might want to pause this right here and get paper and pencil and write down the references so you can verify what I'm saying. These things are too important to just take my word for it, or anyone else's for that matter. **2 Timothy 2:15** says, "study to show yourself approved unto God," and **1 Thessalonians 5:21** says we are to "prove all things and hold fast that which is good." And I hope you will do that this morning.

Adam and Eve had been perfectly happy in obedience to the law of God before the serpent perched in that tree in the midst of the garden, and to be honest, he couldn't stand it, because their happiness was a constant rebuke and a testimony against his own

claim that God's law was oppressive and opposed to the happiness of human beings. As he looked upon the beautiful home God had prepared for Adam and Eve, his revengeful heart was determined to cause their fall. In his mind he figured that if he could get them to disobey God, he could gain possession of the earth and establish his own kingdom in opposition to the God of heaven.

Remember what it says about Lucifer in **Isaiah 14**? Maybe we should read that. **Isaiah 14:12-14**, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." "I" is the middle letter in sin, isn't it? And Lucifer, who became Satan, was the result of having an "I" problem. He tried usurping God's position in heaven, and when he lost that war, he's now trying to become king down here. And he's been pretty successful so far, hasn't he? But notice what it says in **verse 15**, "Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit." And so, in the end he and all his followers will reap their reward for fighting against the Creator of all things.

Have you ever thought about why Satan used a beautiful talking serpent as a medium? It was because if he had revealed himself in his real character, he would have been rejected outright, because Adam had been warned ahead of time about this dangerous foe, hadn't he? As you read the account in **Genesis 2**, this was before Eve was created, so Adam had the responsibility to relate this information to her, as I'm sure he did, and no doubt God repeated this more than once. God told him you must "stay away from that certain tree in the midst of the garden, that's your only restriction." Pretty easy test when you think about it, but as easy as it was, the sinless pair failed, didn't they? So Satan worked in the dark, as he always does, concealing his real purpose that he might more readily accomplish his object of causing the downfall of our first parents and all of their descendants, and that includes us by the way, just in case you were wondering.

So, after Eve was created, Adam must have said to her, "remember to stay close by my side honey, because there's something lurking out there in the midst of the garden that's not good. I'm not sure what it is, but we've got to keep our distance or we're dead, whatever that means." But as we know, Eve wandered away from her husband, which she shouldn't have done, and she was startled when she heard a musical voice that said, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" So #1: Eve shouldn't have wandered off alone, and #2: she not only listened to the serpent, but she entered

into dialog with it. Had she turned around and ran back to her husband liceity split, she would have been safe, but instead she began to banter back and forth with the devil and he disarmed her in a very seductive manner I'm sure, and she became his first victim here on earth.

Friends, do you understand that we are no match for the devil? Eve was arguing with the devil about a requirement that God gave her and her husband and she was overcome, plain and simple. And how many people today are doing the same thing? They doubt and argue concerning God's requirements thinking they know better, or thinking their pastor knows better, and that they're smart enough to know evil when they see it, but instead of just doing what God says, they accept Satanic theories that are disguised to cause their downfall.

Notice what Eve said to the serpent in **Genesis 3:2-5**, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

The Bible doesn't say, but I bet the devil said, "look at me Eve, I'm a talking serpent, have you ever seen anything like me before? I gained this ability because I myself have eaten of this beautiful and tasty fruit. And by the way Eve, you are so beautiful, and you'll be even more beautiful and intelligent if you just take a bite."

Now, when the serpent said, if you eat this fruit "then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," that was a half-truth, wasn't it? Because before that she had not known evil, but now she was about to come to know about its results. The devil told her she would become like God, possessing greater wisdom than ever before and be capable of a higher state of existence, and Eve yielded to temptation and probably a little bit of flattery, and through her influence, Adam was led into sin as well. They both accepted the words of the serpent, that God didn't really mean what He said.

Now what was going on in their heads once they began to think this way? Didn't they begin to distrust their Maker and imagined that He was restricting their liberty and that they might obtain great wisdom and exaltation by disobeying what He said? That's exactly what was going on in their minds. It's the same thing Satan did in heaven to the holy angels before they fell. He probably said, "God is restricting your liberty because He

doesn't want you to be able to think for yourself and gain the same privileges He has. He's selfish and doesn't love you, He just wants you to be His slaves." We can only imagine about some of the things that were said and discussed during that time, but he must have been pretty convincing, don't you think?

By the way, the Bible indicates that Lucifer was the first being God created, that's why he's referred to as "son of the morning," we read that in **Isaiah 14:12**. And so, because of that he was already there when the rest of the angels were created, and they knew he was someone special, and perhaps that's why they listened to him. Maybe he even told them he was like God, and they couldn't disprove it, because he was always there. You can read more about how God blessed him in **Ezekiel 28** if you'd like to know more about the high position he held in heaven.

But getting back to Adam and Eve now: what did they discover was the real result of disobedience? They found out that the divine sentence for disobedience was death, just like God said. They weren't ushered in to a more exalted state of existence at all. The penalty for sin, and that's what disobedience is, was that they should return to the ground from whence they were taken: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

The words of Satan, "Your eyes shall be opened," proved to be true in this one sense only. After Adam and Eve sinned their eyes were opened to discern their folly and came to know evil; they tasted the bitter fruit of disobedience, and we are still tasting that bitter fruit today, aren't we? They didn't die physically that day, but they did die spiritually and needed to be born again just like we have to do if we would receive everlasting life. But even though we can receive the promise of everlasting life by accepting Jesus as our Savior, we still have to die the first death, and we'll talk more about that first death in a few minutes, because there is a second death, and we don't want any part of that one.

There was another tree in the Garden called the tree of life, and the fruit from that tree had the power of perpetuating life. Had Adam and Eve remained obedient to God, they would have continued to have free access to it and would have lived forever. But when they sinned they were restricted from the tree of life and cast out of their garden home just as Satan and his angels were cast out of heaven, and they became subject to physical death.

When God said, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," that meant total and utter extinction forever. That's how serious the situation was, but thank God there's a

remedy, and we can avail ourselves of it by coming to Jesus for forgiveness and for power to overcome the temptation to sin.

You see, immortality is not ours naturally but is promised to mankind in the future only on condition of obedience. We should never forget that. This is a truth that many don't understand. Because Adam did not possess immortality, he could not transmit to his descendants that which he did not have! And here's the point, there could have been absolutely no hope for the human race had not God brought immortality within their reach by the sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross of Calvary. And so, without Christ there is no hope; without Him this present life is all there is. So if we reject the sacrifice of Jesus, we might as well enjoy this life to the fullest of our selfish hearts, because when it's over, we're done.

Notice what it says in **Romans 5:12**. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Look also at **2 Timothy 1:10**. In the second part of this verse it says, "our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through (what?) through the gospel." Isn't it good news that a way of escape from the penalty of sin has been provided? If not, eternal death would be our only option. This means that only through Christ can immortality be obtained, because we don't have it apart from Him, and it's important that we get that.

Let's look at another verse along these lines in **John 3:36**. Here Jesus says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life." By the way, there's a difference between eternal life and immortality. When we accept Christ we have the promise of eternal life right now, but immortality is promised at a later time, and we'll see that as we go along.

So, what's the opposite of life? Death! And what is death? It's not just separation from God, as many Christians think, and it's not eternal life in the flames of hell, but total annihilation. If we reject Christ, in the end we will be as though we had never been. That's what it says in **Obadiah 1:16**. This is what the Bible calls the second death. And so, it's clear that life is the inheritance of the righteous, and death is the inheritance of the wicked. Because of Adam's sin, death passed upon the whole human race, and sooner or later we all go down to the grave, don't we? But there's a distinction made between the two classes. **1 Corinthians 15:22**, says, "for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all

die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." And **Acts 24:15** says, "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust," but again, there's a distinction made between the two classes that will be resurrected. **John 5:28, 29** says, "All (**both the righteous and the wicked**) that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." We see two different resurrections here, but they don't take place at the same time. The righteous are resurrected when Jesus returns, that's the first resurrection, and the second resurrection, "the resurrection of damnation" takes place at a later time.

Notice what it says in **Revelation 2:11**, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; he that overcometh (**the temptation to sin**) shall not be hurt of the second death." This second death is mentioned again in **Revelation 20:6, 14**, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him (**how long?**) a thousand years." Keep that in mind. And **verse 14** says, "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

Now let's look at **Revelation 21:7, 8**, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable (**or that which is disgusting to God**), and murderers, and whoremongers (**those involved in sexual sins**), and sorcerers (**those who traffic in poisonous drugs, like fentanyl**), and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is (**what?**) the second death."

According to the verses we just read, we're given ample evidence that the second death takes place after a thousand years when Jesus returns to this earth the third time to reward the wicked with eternal death. Is there a fire that will consume all the wicked? Yes indeed, we just read it, but when it's done doing its job it will go out, and sinners will be no more forever. I'll explain that more fully in a few minutes, but first let's go to **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**, because in these verses the apostle Paul sheds more light upon the first and second resurrections and the first and second death, as well as this thousand-year period.

Beginning with **verse 13** Paul writes, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep (**or those who have died**), that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him (**from the grave**). For this we say

unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent **(or go before)** them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout **(this is when Jesus comes the second time)**, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first **(this is the first resurrection)**: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord **(and this "ever" includes the thousand years)**. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

And then what happens at the end of the thousand years? **Revelation 20:1-3** has the answer, "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him **(for how long?)** a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season," or for a short time.

And so, while the righteous are in heaven with Jesus for a thousand years, Satan will be bound with a chain and cast into a bottomless pit, and he can't go anywhere for a thousand years. Now where is this bottomless pit. Well, it's right here on this earth. This is what the earth is likened to at this time in **Jeremiah 4:23-26**, "I beheld the earth **(this is the condition of things at the coming of the Lord)**, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man **(why? They're all in their graves until the second resurrection)**, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger." That's what this earth is going to look like after the seven last plagues are poured out, and this bottomless pit will be the home of Satan and his evil angels for a thousand years.

Now, we know that the book of Revelation is highly symbolic, and we know that from what the apostle John says right in **Revelation 1:1**. Right at the beginning John sets the ground rules for how we are to understand what he writes afterward. Notice what he says, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and **(did what?)** signified it by his angel unto his servant John." The word "signified" is the key word here. To "signify" means to make known by a sign, and a "sign" is a "symbol", and a symbol is something

that represents something else. For example, when you see a skull and crossbones on a bottle, you know that something poison is in there and is symbolic of death. Jesus is spoken of as a lamb, but He is not a real lamb, is He? Revelation is full of symbolism, but that does that mean everything in Revelation is symbolic, but that is largely what it is. In other words, does an angel come down from heaven and literally bind Satan with a literal chain? No. A literal chain cannot bind a fallen angel like Satan, because he's a spiritual being. The chain he's bound with is a chain of circumstances, because there's no one for him to tempt for a thousand years. Why? Because all the wicked people will be destroyed when Jesus comes the second time, and all the righteous are in heaven with Jesus. So the devil is stuck on this earth, which is likened to a bottomless pit, with nowhere to go and no one to tempt. Then, after the thousand years Jesus returns the third time with the saints who are inside the holy city, and raises the wicked dead, which is the second resurrection, in order to bring a final end to the great controversy between Christ and Satan that began with the war in heaven.

So, when Jesus comes this third time Satan is loosed from his prison in the sense that he is free once again to marshal the wicked dead that have been raised in the second resurrection in an effort to take possession of the Holy City, but what happens? **Revelation 20:9** says, "And they (**Satan and all his followers**) went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and (**did what?**) devoured them." How were they "devoured?" In the lake of fire, or what Jesus called "hell fire."

Now, let's talk about that for a few minutes. There's a verse in the book of Jude that describes this fire, and I think we ought to take a look at it. Jude **verse 7**, "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an (**what?**) an example, suffering the vengeance of (**what kind of fire?**) eternal fire."

The inhabitation of Sodom and Gomorrah suffered the vengeance of eternal fire, but is that fire still burning today? No! The results are eternal, but the fire went out when all combustible material was turned to ashes, and that's "an example" it says, of what hell fire is going to be like. When everything is burned up it will go out on its own. **Malachi 4:3** says that in the end the wicked are going to be ashes under the soles of righteous feet. Also in **Matthew 3:12**, John the Baptist speaks of the chaff, in reference to the wicked, that they will be burned with "unquenchable fire." So what does that mean? It simply means that it can't be put out, but when it's done consuming, it will go out on its

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As we’ve already seen, every person comes into possession of immortality only if they comply with the conditions. And the apostle Paul doubles down on this truth in **Romans 2:7**. Notice what it says there, “To them who by patient continuance in **(what?) well-doing (or in doing what’s right)** seek for glory and honor and immortality, receive eternal life.” We won’t take the time to turn to it, but **1 Timothy 6:16** says God is the only One who has immortality. So if we want to become immortal, that is, not subject to the second death spoken of in Revelation, we have to get it from Him. Does that make sense? Because why? Because we don’t have it naturally, and as a result, we can’t pass it along to our children.

And let’s not forget what it says in **1 Corinthians 15: 51-55**. I just love these verses. Notice what Paul writes to the Corinthians who were a little confused about what would happen to their loved ones who had died before the Lord returns. “Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, **(death is likened to sleep over 50 times in the Bible, and that’s significant. When you sleep soundly you are not aware of the passing of time, and that’s what it will be like for those who have died, no matter if it’s 1 year or 6,000 years. When they are raised it will seem like no time at all)** we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible **(in the first resurrection)**, and we **(those who are alive when Jesus comes)** shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality **(when? When the Lord comes)**. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” When Jesus comes

back, it is then that we shall be changed from mortal to immortal, that's very clear. And so no one has immortality until that time, which means there is no such thing as an immortal soul, or some part of us that goes on living in some other dimension after we die.

You see, the only one who promised Adam and Eve immortal life in disobedience was the devil. When the serpent said to Eve, "Ye shall not surely die," that was the first sermon ever preached upon the immortality of the soul; the first great deception. This lie rests solely upon the authority of Satan, and yet it's echoed from Christian pulpits all through the land, and people accept it as readily as it was received by our first parents. Only we have the Bible to guide us today, and they didn't. Sometimes we wonder, "how could Adam and Eve have been so stupid?" And yet we have 6000 years of Biblical history to look at and Adam and Eve didn't, so how stupid can we be to fall for Satan's deception?

In **Ezekiel 18:20** it says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," but that verse is made to mean, the soul that sinneth, it shall not die, but live eternally. And so, the words of the serpent are believed more readily than the words of God. And as a result, there is much confusion today about what the soul is. In some places in the Bible it just means people or persons. In **1 Peter 3:20** it refers to Noah and his family as "eight souls (**that**) were saved by water", or we would say eight people. Sometimes the word soul simply refers to living breathing creatures, and even animal are living breathing creatures. Sometimes the word soul refers to our mental faculties, and sometimes to rational beings. And so, the word soul can refer to many different things, depending on the context, but never does the Bible refer to the soul as some part of us that departs the physical body when we die. So hopefully we're clear on that.

And there's yet another lie that sprang from this first lie of the immortality of the soul, do you know what it is? We've already touched on it, and it's another lie that nearly all Christians believe today. You see, if one believes that the soul is immortal; that there's a part of a person that cannot die, then when a person dies their soul has to go somewhere, right, if one believes that? If they don't go to heaven they have to go somewhere else, and that somewhere else is a manufactured place of eternal misery and torment in the flames of an eternally burning hell, and while they're writhing in the eternal flames, the God of heaven who made them is pictured as looking down upon them with satisfaction. No wonder there are so many people today who hate God! If this is the way a "loving" God is, I'd hate Him too, and that's exactly what the devil would like us to do, but that's not true.

1 John 4:8, 16 says, "God is love," and love cannot act that way, it just can't, but there is someone who can, and his name is Satan. Think about it. Hate and cruelty comes from Satan himself, not God, and we know that because Jesus gave the supreme sacrifice of love to save every person who will accept Him. In **John 8:44** Jesus said, the devil "is a liar and the father of it." In other words, falsehood and lies started with him, and he gets his jollies from causing pain and suffering and crying, but **Revelation 21** says all that is going to be done away with when the saved get to the holy city. Let's read that, because it's important.

Revelation 21:4, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes (**the eyes of all those who have believed in Jesus**); and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are (**what?**) passed away." Praise the Lord! That's the end result, but until then Satan is seeking to overcome us as he overcame our first parents, by shaking our confidence in our Creator and leading us to doubt the wisdom of His government, the justice of His laws, and the love that was on full display 2000 years ago on a hill called Calvary.

When you think about it, Satan and his cohorts represent God as being the One who is even worse than themselves in order to try to justify the reason for their own rebellion in heaven. Satan bashes God in order to shift his own cruelty of character upon Jesus and our loving heavenly Father in order to make himself look good, that he might appear as the one who has been wronged by being cast out of heaven. He does the old Switch-a-Rooney trying to convince people that he would be a much better ruler and sympathizer to those who are held in bondage to the stern decrees of an unjust tyrant, and thus he succeeds in luring people away from their allegiance to God.

I don't know about you, but the thought that the God of heaven could torment people with fire and brimstone in an eternally burning hell for the sins of a brief earthly life is extremely offensive to me. If I believed that, I would hate Him. That false idea flies in the face of justice, fairness, mercy and love, which the Bible says God is. And so, Satan's accusations and lies just don't compute, and they don't compute because they are absolutely false. And Yet this teaching has been widely taught for centuries, and is still taught in the majority of Christian churches today.

Ezekiel 33:11 says, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Notice, God says, "for why will you die! He doesn't say for

why will you suffer forever in the fires of hell, does He? Yes, all the wick are going to burn up in the end, because sin does have a penalty. **Romans 6:23** says, "the wages of sin is death", eternal death, from which there will be no resurrection. There is no third resurrection, just two, and after the second, it's over! Eternal death is not eternal life in misery. If the wick burn in hell forever and ever without end, then wouldn't that be eternal life? But no, eternal death is cessation of life forever.

This one heresy of eternal torment that sprang from that first sermon the devil preached on the immortality of the soul has caused more fear and grief and depression than any other teaching I know. When we consider how Satan has managed to paint the character of God in a false light, can we wonder why many people have chosen not to become Christians? It has made millions, and millions of people skeptics and infidels, without a doubt.

The theory of the immortality of the soul and eternal torment in hell are two of the false doctrines that constitute the wine of Babylon, of which, **Revelation 14:8** says, she makes all nations drink of, and she has done that, because nearly the whole world believes these lies. That ministers of Christ should have accepted these two heresies and proclaimed them from the sacred desk is indeed a mystery to many people, but I'll tell you exactly where they come from, they come from Roman Catholicism, the same place they received the false teaching of Sunday sacredness, when God tells us plainly at the end of creation week, that the seventh day, not the first, is the day He blessed and sanctified, or made holy, but that a subject for another day.

But here's the other misconception many people have when they think of the false doctrine of eternal torment. Because it's so revolting to even think of, they are driven to the opposite error. They see as they study the Scriptures that the Bible represents God as a being of love and compassion, which He is, and because of what they've been taught they go to the opposite extreme and can't believe that He will ever destroy anyone. Because they believe the first great deception that the soul is naturally immortal, they see no alternative but to conclude that a loving God can never punish people forever, but will have to save all mankind, regardless of what they believe. This is called universalism.

Universalists believe the threatenings of the Bible are only designed to frighten people into being good, but won't be literally fulfilled. It's kind of like the indulgent parent that's always threatening their children, but never following through. And so, the child learns very quickly that they can live in selfish pleasure, disregarding the requirements of God

and their parents, and yet expect to be finally received into heaven, but it's not going to happen. This is presuming upon God's mercy, but ignoring His justice. It might please the carnal heart, but it only emboldens the sinner in their sins, and the end result will be that they are like little brats that learn too late that they have developed a character that cannot be allowed into a perfect heaven.

Again, this is a species of doctrine that originated in Catholicism with the false doctrine of purgatory: a place of purification after death for those who can suffer for their own sins and eventually make it to heaven, and make it even quicker if their living relatives can give enough money to the priest to pray them into heaven, which totally does away with the sacrifice of Christ, doesn't it?

Now think this through with me for a minute. If it was true that our souls go directly to heaven when we die, then we might be more likely to choose death rather than life, especially if things aren't going well for us, isn't that true? Who commits suicide when they're happy and things are going well? Truth be known, there have probably been thousands and thousands of discouraged people who have ended their lives prematurely because of this erroneous belief. Isn't it easy these days to become overwhelmed with trouble, and perplexity, and disappointment? It sure is, especially as we look at the condition of things in this world today. Many people can't pay their bills and put food on the table for their children. Many are homeless through no fault of their own and are living in their cars or on the streets. And for these people especially, it would seem an easy thing to just jump off a tall building or step in front of a train and wing their way to the bliss heaven if that were possible.

I have thought many times about people sitting in funeral homes weeping over their dead loved one when the preacher has them up there enjoying heaven. If they really believed the preacher, why are they crying? Because they miss them? Yes. Because they're lonely without them? Yes. And in this state of mind, why not just end their life so they can be with that loved one again. You see, there's something wrong with this picture, and there's something wrong with it because it's simply not true!

There are several individuals mentioned in the Bible who were raised from the dead, and not one of them had anything to say about what it was like in heaven. If they did say something it would probably have been, "why did you bring me back to this sin cursed earth when I was enjoying myself in heaven." But no, they were all silent about anything they might have experienced after they died, because there is no consciousness in death.

When speaking of those who have died, **Psalm 146:4**, "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."

I remember years ago, when a young man came to my home and knocked on my door. He was a member of the Baptist church down the road. And he, like other Baptists and other Christians, believe the soul was immortal. And that there was an eternally burning hell. And as we talked about these things for probably 20 minutes, I said to him, "What do you say about what Jesus told His disciples just before He went back to heaven? In **John 14:1-3** He said, 'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and **(do what)** receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.'" And I said to this young man, "If we are not going to be where Jesus is until after He comes back, then where were we when we die?" And he kind of scratched his head and said, "Huh, I never thought about that before." No friends, the dead person returns to his earth; and in that very day his thoughts perish."

Now, let's try to bring all this together and talk about Jesus for a little while and what His sacrifice in our behalf is all about. God is merciful, yes? But we must realize that He is also just. The word of God gives conclusive evidence that He will punish those who break His law of ten commandments, because that's what sin is, according to **1 John 3:4**. If we think that God is too merciful to execute justice upon the sinner, we only have to look to the cross. The death of Jesus testifies that "the wages of sin is death," and that every violation of God's law will be punished accordingly. But the thing is, Jesus didn't die for His own sin, because He never sinned. Jesus, the sinless One, became sin for us. He bore the guilt of our sins, and the hiding of His Father's face until it broke His heart and crushed out His life. That's why He cried out just before He died, Father, "why hast thou forsaken Me."

Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus my friends. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. In other words, hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave as a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of His sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to His Father that their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish that the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer pleads for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin and bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute that made the cup He drank so bitter. That's why, when He was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, He said, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass

from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Friends, Jesus suffered the second death for you, He experienced what every person who does not accept His sacrifice will suffer. Jesus lived life the way we have to live it, but even though He did it perfectly, He didn't know if His sacrifice would be acceptable. That's why He said to Mary after He was raised from the tomb, "touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father." He needed to know if His sacrifice was acceptable before he would receive homage and worship from her. And so, Jesus thought He might be separated from His Father forever, but He went through it anyway, because He loved us.

In **John 15:13** Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." That's what Jesus did for us. He was willing to be blotted out of existence to save us, and this was all done so that you and I might be redeemed. Praise God! There was no other way for this to happen; no other way for man to be freed from the penalty of sin. And every person that refuses to acknowledge this must bear his own guilt and punishment for the sins they've committed. And so, when you think about it, every person who chooses to die for their own sins will have chosen the penalty of sin themselves, because God forces no one to accept the sacrifice of Christ in their behalf, and as a result they will suffer what they themselves have chosen to suffer, the second death from which there is no resurrection.

Now, as we're winding down I'd like for us to consider, for just a few moments, what the Bible teaches concerning our part in the great plan of redemption.

In **Revelation 21:6** Jesus said, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." This promise of life is given to who? To those that thirst. A thirsty person realizes that they have a need, don't they? So what is this verse telling us? Think of a person without water lost in the desert and they're just about to expire. They realize at that point that if they don't find water soon, it's over! What would that person give for a drink of water at that point? They would give everything they have, wouldn't they? Friends, Jesus says He offers the water of life freely, but if we're unwilling to seek for it above everything else, we will not obtain it. In **Luke 14:33** Jesus said, "whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." There has to be a total surrender of our will to God's will if we would be saved. And what is God's will? Everything between the two covers of the Bible, and especially the ten commandments, which is at the very heart of the Bible. In **Psalms 40:8** king David said, "I delight to do thy

will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." And how do we get the law in our hearts so we can do God's will and obey that law of ten commandments? **Hebrews 10:16, 17**. God says, "This is the covenant (**or the agreement**) that I will make with them (**those who choose God**), . . . saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Is that what you want friends? All you have to do is ask, and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you, [**Matthew 7:7**] and with that new heart you will be able to live the new life, even the life of Christ.

And that's what it means to be born again. And we have to be born again, why? Because there's something wrong with our first birth. We're all born with a sinful nature that we can't resist on our own.

You see, we have something to do in this thing called salvation. Not that we can do anything to save ourselves, but that we have to want it; we have to prize eternal life and immortality in order to obtain it. God isn't going to force anyone to be saved. He has given us free will, and if we don't choose, He's not going to shove it down our throat. Everyone that makes it to heaven will be there because they have chosen to be there and followed the requirements set down in God's word. The Bible doesn't teach "once saved always saved" like many believe, but salvation requires the daily sacrifice of self. Let me read you a few verses that are very scary, but true nonetheless. These verses are found in **2 Peter 2:20-22** and speaks of those who turn their backs on God and the truth after they've once known it, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Oh friends, we need to be careful not to fall into this category of committing the unpardonable sin.

In **Revelation 21:7** it says, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son." Here again we see conditions, don't we? In order to inherit all things, we must resist temptation if we want to overcome sin. And we could go on and on with verses like this. How about **Revelation 22:14**? "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

You see, God doesn't force the will or judgment of anyone. He finds no pleasure in coerced obedience. He wants us to love Him because He is worthy of love. He would have us obey Him because we have an intelligent appreciation of His attributes and character, and if we know Him as it's our privilege to know Him, we will love Him because we are drawn toward Him because of who He is. **Jeremiah 31:3** says, "The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

Are you drawn to Jesus today my friend? If so, don't resist; that's your part! Don't resist! Just say, Jesus take my heart, for I cannot give it. It's Your property, keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for You. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, unchristlike self. Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere where the rich current of Your love can flow through my soul." That's my prayer for myself and for you today, and may it be so.

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