

A Brief Outline of Things to Come

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Chapter Eleven -

THE FUTURE STATE

- C.I. Scofield

WE SHALL NOW LOOK at what lies beyond time, in eternity. Only revelation can speak here.

Of that which is past, history may tell a broken and imperfect story. Of that which lies in the immediate future, the signs of the times may give us some premonition; but when we seek to pass beyond time and beyond signs, when we would know the eternal state, we can know only what GOD has revealed.

Science cannot help us. Scientists tell us that it is unscientific and irrational to infer that physical death is the cessation of all life. We see that other forces survive changes of form, and it is not according to analogy to say that the force which we call life, which has its manifestation for a few years in the mortal body, ceases with the change which we call death. That is the message of science. How unsatisfactory it is, after all!

If we die we shall live again! But how shall we live, and where shall we live? Do our choices here affect our destiny there? These are the questions that spring to the lips and demand an answer; and these questions are not merely speculative; they have the most direct bearing upon character and conduct.

"If a man die, shall he live again?" There is something within us that craves completeness. We do not go very far in this life before we find that incompleteness marks even the most fortunate human life. In each life we find defeated aspiration, imperfect achievement, and the soul's reaching out for things which the hand cannot grasp. So we ask, "Is there another sphere beyond, where the incompleteness of this life may find fullness?"

We follow our beloved dead to the grave. As we lay away all that is tangible and visible of them, we ask over each newly made mound, **"If a man die, shall he live again?"** The affection which we believe to be of GOD reaches out empty arms into the beyond. Love leaps over the little trench which we call a grave, and we stand there asking, "Is there life beyond? Is this the end, or may we presently take up the interrupted fellowship in some happier sphere?"

There is another question which demands an answer: Is this present life determinative of the life beyond? If this life is determinative of the life beyond, the eternal state is the greatest of all influences in the formation of character and the determination of conduct. If we believe this,

everything begins to take color from it. I repeat that the questions we ask concerning the hereafter are not speculative questions.

Is there an answer? If we turn to Scripture, we shall find an answer, not an answer which meets every idle, curious surmise, but an answer which, if received, satisfies every legitimate question of the soul.

As far as I know, not one who has come with a serious purpose to seek the Bible's answer to the questions concerning the hereafter has ever complained of its inadequacy.

It is true that "**it doth not yet appear what we shall be.**" Innumerable questions might be asked concerning the future of saint or sinner which are not answered in Scripture. But, on the other hand, enough is told to give rest to the mind. "**We know,**" said John, "**that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him.**"

That is Heaven anywhere - to be with CHRIST and like Him. In considering what is revealed concerning the hereafter, we shall find that the message of the Bible lies partly in its doctrinal statements and partly in its prophetic unfoldings.

Here the very volume of truth compels me to summarize. It would be impossible, even within a very liberal limit of time, to present to you in detail all the testimony of Scripture concerning the future state. I shall, therefore, summarize it in a series of propositions, reading from the Scripture which establishes the truth of these propositions.

DEATH IS NOT THE END

The first of these summary propositions is this: Death is the cessation neither of existence nor of consciousness.

The first answer which Scripture makes to the question as to what lies beyond death is that physical death, the death of the body, is not the end of life or of consciousness; that is, there is something which lives after the body dies, and that something is in full possession of consciousness. In proof of this I shall quote, first of all, the words of the LORD JESUS CHRIST in Luke 16. With His own hand He lifts the veil here and permits us to see what occurs beyond death, both to one who died unreconciled to GOD and to one who was His child.

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: more over the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

Perhaps you are saying, "Yes, but this is a parable." In the first place, I do not know of anything which authorizes you to call it a parable. There have been many rich men and many beggars on the earth; and I do not think that the LORD JESUS CHRIST had to invent a rich man or a

beggar. Many beggars have also been full of sores at the gates of rich men. But granting that we have a parable here, the LORD JESUS CHRIST is surely incapable of teaching error, either by the statement of a fact or by a method of teaching called the parable. In either case the teaching is the principal thing, and in either case the teaching is true because JESUS CHRIST said it.

"The beggar died." Well, beggars die now. The death of a beggar is not an uncommon phenomenon on this earth. Rich men also die. Death is the common fate of all mankind.

There is nothing remarkable about it. But what happened to the beggar after he died?

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments."

As we read on, we see that the man in Hades is very much alive; he carries on conversations; he has a memory; he remembers that he has relatives still living on the earth who may come to that place; and he desires that someone be sent back to the earth to warn them.

Bear in mind that I quote this passage at this time simply to support the first proposition, that death is the cessation neither of existence nor of consciousness. The beggar and the rich man are both alive and conscious after death. We turn now to Revelation 6:9:

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our Blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season."

These souls under the altar are living; they are very conscious of where they came from and of what is to occur on the earth. They are thoroughly alive and thoroughly conscious.

SEPARATION AT DEATH

Second proposition: Death is eternal separation of the saved and the unsaved. Read further from Luke 16. Notice especially verse 26:

"And beside an this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

Read also Matthew 25:46:

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

The words eternal and everlasting are translated from the same word in the original, a word which expresses the duration of separation. In Revelation 21:1-8 we read that the eternal abode of the saved is the heavenly Jerusalem, and the eternal abode of the lost is the lake of fire.

The condition beyond death involves, first, conscious existence and, second, the eternal separation of the saved and the lost. In this world the good and the bad are mingled together. The wicked do not cease from causing trouble here, and the weary do not here find rest; but this mixed condition does not continue in the next world. The rule hereafter is separation - separation of the saved from the unsaved.

ABODE OF THE DEAD

Third proposition: From the moment of death the saved are with the LORD, and the unsaved are in Hades awaiting the judgment.

Let us read again from Luke 16, the great foundation passage of all this line of truth:

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died. . . And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments."

From this we see that the lost soul goes immediately in to Hades. We shall see later what becomes of those who are in Hades. In II Corinthians 5:6-8 we find:

"Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

There are two places, so to speak, for the saved man.

He may be living in the body; and so far as the personal presence of the LORD is concerned, he would be **"absent from the Lord."** Or he may be absent from the body and personally present with the LORD. But there is no intermediate place, or waiting place. A Christian is either in the body and not in the personal presence of the LORD (of course, he is always under His loving eye and in His mighty hand), or he is absent from the body and present with the LORD. He does not yet have his resurrection body; but he is **"present with the Lord"** Read II Peter 2:9:

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

The lost are not immediately judged, but they are reserved **"unto the day of judgment to be punished."** There is no other possible prospect before a lost soul. That place of detention, as we know from many passages, is called hades and is to be distinguished from the **"lake of fire,"** which is the place of final punishment of the unsaved.

THE FUTURE FOR THE SAVED

Fourth proposition: At the second coming of CHRIST the saved receive their resurrection bodies and enter upon their eternal activities.

The state of the saved between death and resurrection is always said in Scripture to be one of

rest. It is not unconsciousness, but rest. The souls under the altar cry, "**How long?**" They are told to rest a little while. Glorious activities await the redeemed in eternity, but they are not entered upon until the resurrection has reunited spirit, soul, and body. This occurs at the second coming of CHRIST. Let us turn now to I Corinthians 15:22,23.

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming."

I do not know how there has crept into the thought of man and somewhat into the books that men write the idea of a simultaneous resurrection of the just and the unjust. The Scriptures never speak of one simultaneous, universal resurrection. It is expressly stated that "**all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth**" (John 5:28, 29). But two resurrections are immediately described.

Turn now to I Thessalonians 4:15-17:

"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 them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 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."

When CHRIST descends from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of GOD at His second coming, the dead in CHRIST will be raised.

"For Our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Philippians 3:20, 21).

This passage, as you see, completes the teaching of the Thessalonian passage. The Christian dead are raised; the living Christians are changed physically into the likeness of the resurrection body of JESUS. Both classes, living believers and believers whose bodies are in the graves at the second advent of CHRIST, are in view in the well known passage in I Corinthians 15:51,52:

"Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not an 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, and we shall be changed."

Read also Revelation 20:4-6:

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with CHRIST a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This

is the first resurrection. 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 a thousand years."

Between the resurrection of those who are CHRIST's and the resurrection of "**the rest of the dead**," who are not CHRIST's, there intervenes one thousand years of time - the millennial period.

THE FATE OF THE WICKED

Fifth proposition: At the end of the Millennium the unsaved receive their resurrected bodies, are judged, and are cast into the lake of fire.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it. from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God" (Revelation 20:11, 12).

As we have just seen, those who are CHRIST's have already been raised from among the dead and have been reigning with CHRIST for one thousand years. It is after the thousand years are expired that this Great White Throne is set up, and is "**the dead**" who stand before GOD.

I once supposed that at some time I would stand in space with the vast throng of all who had ever lived on this earth before that Great White Throne, that the books would be opened, that all my sins would be read out of those books, and that another book would then be opened from which it might appear that I had been saved. If the man by my side had not been saved, he would pass on into the lake of fire; and thus the eternal parting would take place. There is not a line of Scripture which supports this thought.

No Christian stands before the Great White Throne. Every Christian is a glorified saint then. The passage cited from Corinthians states clearly that those who are CHRIST's are raised at His coming, and there are left behind for the second resurrection only the bodies of the lost and the wicked dead.

"I saw the dead, small and great." This was not the living who had been reigning with CHRIST for one thousand years, His Bride; but it was "**the dead**."

Think of it! You have received your glorious body, have stood before the Judgment Seat of CHRIST as your works (not sins) passed His scrutiny, have been married to Him, have returned with Him in glory to the earth, and have been enthroned with Him; now are you to descend from that place and stand with the wicked dead who have just been raised from their graves to have it determined whether you are saved or not? The idea, of course, is preposterous! Furthermore, there is not a word of Scripture, or a syllable, which supports it.

But GOD forbid that we should study this subject in cold Blood. Try to think of this scene; try to realize its measureless horror - the dead standing before GOD! Most of them will, I believe, be speechless; but some will cry out in astonishment: "**Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name done many wonderful works?**"

Poor, deluded professors of religion! They trusted in religion and works rather than in CHRIST. Now they must hear Him who would have saved them say, "**I never knew you.**"

The record, the damning record, will be there in case any soul thinks to cry out against the justice of GOD in that awful scene. I, for one, can never read Revelation 20 without yearning over every soul that is putting off the question of salvation and staying outside of CHRIST. You and I may have our names written in the Book of Life. Oh, marvel of grace!

Think of it! Is your name written there? That is the important question. Is it there? Then we learn the result of this judgment.

"And death and hell [the contents of them] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (Revelation 20:14).

HEAVEN

Two questions now remain:

- (1) What is Heaven, and why are the saved so happy there?
- (2) What is this lake of fire, or "Gehenna," as it is elsewhere called, and why are the lost so wretched there?

Let us look at these questions briefly in the light of Scripture.

First of all, Heaven is a place. Get that very clearly in your mind. I used to think of it as a state of being, a disembodied condition (perhaps here on earth). As a little boy I shuddered and shrank from becoming a ghost, and I thought how cold, bleak, and uncomfortable it must be! When I confided all this to someone, I was told that I would be an angel if I were good; and I would have wings and a harp. Let us get these unscriptural notions out of our minds. Heaven is a place, a "prepared" place, which means a suited place.

"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" (John 14:1, 2).

These words can convey to our minds only ideas of locality and substantial entity. We know this at least Heaven is; spiritualize it as you please. On the other hand, we are not to suppose that Heaven is a place full of brownstone houses. That would be a very crude and fleshly conception of it. I do not know what glorified architecture is like; but I do know that the CHRIST who has sown this earth with flowers, lifted it into majestic mountains, set the continents in the tossing seas, and filled the upper air with drifting clouds and azure depths is the same CHRIST whose hand is shaping the eternal love-home for His Bride. "**I go to prepare a place for you.**" That is enough for me.

Turn with me now to Revelation 21:1:

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

There was no end after all, but continuity, change, development - a new Heaven and a new earth.

The chief conditions of happiness in this prepared place, according to Scripture, are two; but the co-operant conditions are almost innumerable. I am perfectly willing to state one of them in the exact language of science.

Herbert Spencer, the agnostic scientist, was asked what, from the scientific standpoint, would be required to make a Heaven. His answer was this: "A perfect being in a perfect environment." I am willing to give you that, the language of an agnostic, as the expression of what Scripture has to say about happiness in Heaven.

In Heaven our bodies will be perfected into the image of JESUS CHRIST (Philippians 3:21; I John 3:2). Every trace of sin, infirmity, weakness, and imperfection will be left behind; and we shall be changed into the glorious fullness of the image of JESUS CHRIST.

Then these perfected beings will be in a perfected environment. There will be no taint of sin there, no death, no grave, no separation, and no growing old and infirm.

All of these things will be banished forever.

The other condition of the blessedness of the saint might be called a negative one; it is the absence of the things which make misery here. We read that **"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death."** However perfectly we might arrange an Eden here or however heavenly we might make some small portion of earth, we know that the stealthy tread of death will come there. Would it be Heaven where death exists? I do not want any such Heaven. I want to go to a better Heaven than that.

"There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain [mental pain or physical pain]: for the former things are passed away."

HELL

What is the lake of fire, where the lost are, and why are they wretched there?

First of all, the lake of fire is a place, just as Heaven is a place. Let us read Matthew 25:41:

"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."

Men tell me sometimes that they would find it very difficult to believe in a GOD who had prepared such a place as the lake of fire for His creatures. He never did it! He prepared that awful place **"for the devil and his angels."**

- If you go there, you will go there against the pleading of GOD.

- You will go past the cross to get there.
- You will go there over the dead body of GOD's Son.
- You will go there because you resolve to go there.
- You will go there in spite of the fact that GOD has already paid the price of your redemption in the Blood of His Son and made a way of escape for you.

He has taken away all the barriers that His holiness and justice might have interposed between you and Heaven. He has swung wide the doors and said that whosoever will may come. He warns you that He has prepared a place for the Devil and his angels, and He implores you to be saved from it.

You do not have to do anything bad to go there - just keep on neglecting to be saved. If anyone goes there, he will find conditions of wretchedness. He will be eternally separated from GOD and righteousness.

What does that mean? Do not people get on fairly well without GOD here? My friend, you do not get on without GOD a fleeting second of your life. If GOD were to withhold His mercies from the most wicked man who walks this earth, he would fall into unspeakable torment at once.

Every day GOD showers mercies upon the very men who will not have Him, those who will not believe on His Son. The vilest wretch, the coldest atheist, or the most immaculate moralist alive on this earth is not without GOD or separate from Him. GOD is filling his life with blessings every day, everyone of which is designed to melt his heart and turn him to JESUS.

Many a man outside of CHRIST would not want his wife to be unsaved for anything in the world. He would not have his children without Christian training. I am glad of that - but think of it!

In Hades first and afterward in the lake of fire there is eternal separation from GOD and righteousness. It means absolute hopelessness. The most wretched man who lives on this earth has some lingering ray of hope in his heart, but the soul in Hell hopes for nothing.

- His heart is fixed in desperate hatred of GOD.
- His unchanged character is fixed in love of evil.

Look at the character of the rich man of Luke 16 in Hades. What does he want? He wants Lazarus, the poor beggar whose life was filled with disease and suffering, sent down into his place of torment so that he may be comforted a little. He is the same swine of selfishness that he was on earth; and it is Hell enough to carry that kind of a character throughout eternity.

When he realizes that he cannot get Lazarus down there with him so that, at whatever cost to Lazarus, his tongue may be cooled, he wants poor Lazarus sent back to the earth so that a miracle may be wrought in behalf of his wicked brothers who have already heard the Word of GOD without heeding its warnings. Think of the hellish selfishness of those two requests. There will be no man in Hell who would not tear GOD from His throne if he could. The black natural heart is there.

Scripture makes it very clear that the natural emotions are there. Judas hanged himself in

remorse. Do you suppose that the remorse stopped when his life went out through the tightened noose about his neck? His remorse is yet gnawing at his heart.

The man in Hades remembered. He sat there in torment with memory and with consciousness. "**Son, remember,**" said Abraham. Oh, if they could forget! What would they give if they could forget? But there is no forgetting. "**Son, remember.**"

Remember GOD's offer of mercy repeated again and again. Are you going to sit in Hades sometime and remember that GOD offered to save you, that it cost Him the Blood of His Son to be able righteously to make that offer, and that you said, "I will put it off a little longer"?

The rich man said, "**Father Abraham, I have five brothers.**" Probably he was the eldest of them, and he had lived the wrong kind of life before them. They were on their way to Hell, and he had had a good deal to do with it. Think of the brothers in torment saying, "You did it; you asked me to take my first drink; you led me into my first sin; you were older than I, and I thought that I could do it. I saw you going into barrooms and other places worse than that; I thought it was smart and manly, and I went in also:

Oh, turn ye, turn ye, my unbelieving friend! Why will ye die? These things are awful realities.

What is the great shining message that GOD sends out of Heaven? Listen! "**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**" Will you have it now?

Are you saying, "Well, what must I do"? I shall tell you what to do. Bow your head just now, and let these words be yours.

"LORD JESUS, I have sinned; I have done evil. Thou hast died for me. I take Thee for my Saviour. I trust Thee; I put my soul into Thy care. I give myself to Thee to be cleansed of sin and to be saved for eternity. Amen."

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