

Will I Live Again?

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This tract presents some definite answers, based on Scriptures, to some important questions frequently asked.

Often we wonder about them but never feel like asking them.

When I die, will I live again?

Yes, there is some good evidence you will live again!

That is hard for me to believe. Death seems so final.

You are not the first who has felt this way. In fact there have been many who seemed to delight in convincing others that there is no hope for existence beyond this life. Any concern for a future life has seemed nonsense to them.

What makes you believe in a future life?

It is impossible to view the amazingly perfect and complex creations in this world without being certain there is a

power, a great mind, in control of this universe. It does not seem logical—in fact, it seems nonsensical—to accept a theory that paints life as coming into existence by mere chance. And if we believe that all of life was created by an intelligent and purposeful power, then it is logical to believe that these creations had purpose in existing and were not just the “toys” of some irrational, ruthless creator to destroy at a whim.

But science hasn't proved that life continues beyond the grave.

No. But neither has science proved that life ceases. Life is still a mystery to scientists, for science of necessity deals only with physical and demonstrable facts—and many phases of life cannot be classified among these facts. Philosophy and theology often reach beyond the material reality. In such experiences, there come strong evidences that life continues beyond the grave. And many scientists join theologians in a firm belief in immortality, for recently they have discovered in atomic energy research just how *real* our “spiritual” world is.

Isn't it rather illogical to live your life on the theory that you will have a future existence?

Even if we live a lifetime in hope of a future which proves to be an illusion, we

haven't lost anything. Such a belief hasn't kept us from enjoying *this* life. In fact, a belief in the future encourages us to develop thoughts and actions which lead to a present-day happy life. We recognize the need of living a balanced, wholesome life—free of excesses that bring extreme mental or spiritual anxieties and a physically broken-down body. We recognize the need of developing relationships with other people that will maintain good will and freedom from fear and hardship. We feel the need of discovering more and more about our increasingly wonderful world. We search for a better understanding of our Creator, and find that his laws are universal and of tremendous benefit to us if we become aware of them and obey them And if we are right, we are better prepared to appreciate a future life.

Some believe the individual will perish, but society will go on, gathering up and conserving human gains. This view holds that man's life continues only in his children. What do you think of that idea?

Some have acquired a "social consciousness" which leads them to believe that people are progressing in a social evolution of which they are just a small cog in a great wheel; they are willing to obliterate themselves and feel that their future is to be found in the influence they wielded

upon succeeding generations. Such a belief does not take into consideration that if the individual must perish, so also the race may perish—and all social gain will be lost.

I understand that others believe that after death our "soul" is absorbed into Deity, or some mysterious reservoir of "energy."

That view eliminates the idea of "oblivion," but it blots out the individual personality. "But, individuality is of no importance," its advocates reply, "if the eternal qualities of love, justice, morality, and truth which are in the individual flow back and are preserved in Deity."

They forget that such attributes can be exercised only between and among individual entities. They cannot be exercised by one individual upon himself alone. It is much more logical to conceive that we are colaborers with God, and that we are and always shall be independent, ever-existing, intelligent entities who can continue eternally these qualities or attributes.

Does your church offer any understanding of a future life?

Yes, through the Scriptures of the past and through present-day revelation the church catches up the understandings of

the past and present and gives us a basis on which to build our belief in a future. Job, in the Old Testament of the Bible, expresses: "I know that . . . after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another" (Job 19: 26, 27).

Other prophets of that age expressed the same convictions: David said, "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me" (Psalm 49: 15). Isaiah wrote, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise" (Isa. 26: 19). God spoke to Ezekiel with these words: "O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, . . . and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live" (Ezek. 37: 12-14). It was revealed to Daniel that "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12: 2).

What does Christ have to say about a future life?

Christ told his disciples, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his [God's] 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" (John 5: 28, 29). He further taught, "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6: 40). The Apostle Paul expressed his faith in a future life when he said, "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable" (I Cor. 15: 19). Our Lord speaking in the nineteenth century reiterated the fact of a future life with the words: "Through the redemption which is made for you is brought to pass the resurrection from the dead."

Please explain what your church teaches about life after death. What happens when you die?

Death, as life, is at the present time beyond our mortal conception. We don't really know what it is, or what happens. But we believe the prophets down through the ages, and Christ, have presented us an understanding which is reasonably correct. They taught that at death a strange power leaves the body—a power that controlled the body, responded to changes in environment, maintained the bodily organization. The separation of the body and the strange power which we call the "spirit" is death.

You believe that man has a spirit which survives the death of the body? I understand some Christians do not believe that.

Yes, some claim that the doctrine of the "immortality of the soul" is "purely of heathen origin." Usually these Christians believe that at death all of man becomes unconscious and is laid in the grave. They view "spirit" as being the air we breathe, no more. Belief in "immortality of the soul," they say, has been introduced into Christianity from the Egyptian religion, and the early Christians believed in a "mortal soul." History does not indicate this to be true, for the great chronicler, Eusebius, in his *History of the Church from the Time of Its Founder to the Year 323*, writes:

"But also about this time (A.D. 249) other men sprung up in Arabia as the propagators of false opinions. These asserted that the human soul, as long as the present state of the world existed, perished at death and died with the body, but that it would be raised again with the body at the time of the resurrection. And as a considerable council was held on account of this, Origen, being again requested, likewise here discussed the point in question with so much force, that those who had been before led astray completely changed their opinions." *Millner's Church History*, Volume 1, page 250, agrees: "This great man (Origen) was now once more employed in Arabia in confuting an-

other error, namely, of those who denied the intermediate state of souls, and this he managed with his usual success."

What is the basis for belief in unconsciousness between death and a resurrection?

Interpretations placed upon certain passages of Scripture. The modern revival of this philosophy appeared in a paper called the *Bible Examiner* in 1844-45. Such Scriptures as Job's likening death to a period of sleep (Job 14: 12) and Solomon's claiming "the dead know not any thing" (Ecclesiastes 9: 5) are basic to this belief. But even these authors, who are interpreted as supporting this doctrine, express in other verses their belief in an immortal "spirit" which dwells in man. Job foresees that man's "flesh shall perish" and "man shall turn again unto dust" if God "gather unto himself" man's "spirit and his breath" (Job 34: 14, 15). And Job expresses confidence that he himself shall be consciously aware of, and be able to respond to, God's call to a resurrection (Job 14: 15). Solomon speaks of death, later in his writings, as a process wherein "the dust shall return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Eccles. 12: 7). "Soul sleeping," as this nonspirit philosophy is sometimes called, teaches that the "spirit" or "soul" of man often referred to in the Bible is merely the air he breathes. But

Solomon recognized something other than "air" when in the same book he differentiated between "the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth" (Eccles. 3: 21). We believe the "spirit" referred to in these and many other Scriptures is a conscious immortal force which exists beyond mortal existence.

Did Christ and his disciples of New Testament times teach a belief in a conscious spiritual existence for man after death?

We believe the Scriptures are quite clear in support of continued conscious existence for man after death. Notice the following:

(1) Three of Christ's disciples saw and heard two Old Testament prophets as they associated with Christ on one occasion (Matt. 17: 3). Moses and Elias (these prophets) had died centuries before and had not been resurrected, for no resurrection took place until after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ (I Cor. 15: 20). So they apparently were in some spiritual state.

(2) When Christ sent his twelve apostles to preach throughout the land, he warned them of persecution. But he heartened them by telling them to have no fear of physical punishments: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul" (Matt. 10: 28). Following

these words of encouragement, he seriously charged them to “fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body.” In these words Christ pointed out two component parts in man. The body—one of these—could be destroyed without the soul being affected. Here Christ describes a condition wherein man’s body is dead, but his soul is very much alive.

(3) Undoubtedly there was great significance in Christ’s statement at the time of his mortal death: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23: 46).

(4) And certainly Stephen wasn’t talking just about “air” when he cried, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7: 59).

(5) Neither was Luke just referring to “air” when he recorded, “And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway; and he commanded to give her meat” (Luke 8: 54, 55).

(6) Christ’s spirit functioned while his earthly body was in the tomb (I Pet. 3: 18). (See also Eph. 4: 8-10; Matt. 12: 40.) We have no doubt that since his life here on earth set a pattern we have been asked to exemplify, so also man can expect to function in a spiritual existence, as Christ did, after the physical death.

(7) Christ’s parable of the rich man and Lazarus leaves no doubt of his belief in a conscious spiritual condition between death and the resurrection (Luke 16: 19-

31). We would expect to find in Christ's parables the most perfect figure of speech, used in the most perfect manner of illustration. In this parable Christ definitely narrates a conversation between deceased men who are in a conscious "spirit world."

(8) Paul, a leading representative of the faith of the early Christian church, expressed his faith in immortality quite often in his writings. See II Corinthians 4: 14; 5: 1, 2, 6, 8; 12: 2; I Corinthians 5: 5; Philippians 1: 23, 24.

(9) Peter, too, expressed his belief as he spoke of death as the "putting off" his fleshly "tabernacle" (II Pet. 1: 13, 14).

(10) Other Scriptures supporting conscious immortality are I Peter 3: 18-20; 4: 5, 6; Revelation 6: 9-11.

At death what happens to this "spirit" you say man has?

Solomon's statement, "And the spirit shall return unto God who gave it," ably describes the immediate state of man's spirit after death.

But that's a very general statement. Don't you have any fuller explanation?

Yes. We believe all spirits find their places in a condition commensurate with their need and past earthly experience. We understand that there are two general abodes or conditions of man's spirit after death: *paradise* and *hell*. (Hell, in

some Scriptures, also indicates the physical grave.) The primary factor determining this division is man's response to Christ in this life. He who accepts Christ as his divine Savior and lives a life in harmony with the will of Christ abides in paradise; he who fails to accept Christ, places himself in hell.

Where do you get this "paradise" idea? I thought you either went to heaven or hell!

"Heaven" is a word which describes the place or condition in which immortal man (body and spirit united once more) resides after his resurrection and final judgment. "Paradise" describes the "spirit" abode of the righteous prior to a resurrection. Paradise is the same term used by the Jewish prophets, and by Christ when he spoke to the repentant, believing thief on the cross: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23: 43). See other examples of the word in the New Testament: Revelation 2: 7; II Corinthians 12: 4. A Jewish prophet of the American continent clearly expressed its meaning as he wrote in a historical record of his people: "I will go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and my body shall again reunite." This interpretation harmonizes with that of the scholarly authors of most Bible dictionaries and commentaries. *Hell* is the antonym of *paradise*, not *heaven*; and is the temporary dwelling

place of the spirits of those men who have not accepted Christ, or have not lived up to the standards of a good Christian life.

Hell, a temporary place? I thought that once you were in hell you were there forever.

No. Hell “delivers up the dead” in it before the “day of judgment” (Rev. 20: 13). (See also II Peter 2: 4; Jude 6). John the Revelator states that death and *hell*—after they have delivered up their dead—are “cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20: 14). Hell itself, therefore, ceases to exist. The parable of Christ in Matthew 25: 31-46 is often interpreted as picturing *hell* as “everlasting fire,” and “everlasting punishment.” As this parable of the sheep and the goats is read more carefully, it will be noted that Christ is referring to a condition following the “great day of judgment”—*after* the resurrection of all men, when “all nations shall be gathered before him.” This is after *hell* is emptied, and the punishment described in the parable is the same as pictured by John in the book of Revelation, called the “lake of fire.”

What is the purpose of “paradise” and “hell”?

The Jews believed in a vast receptacle where the souls of the dead existed prior to their resurrection. *Paradise* was con-

sidered the region of the "blessed," and was supposed to be in the upper part of this receptacle. Beneath paradise was the abyss in which the souls of the wicked were subject to punishment. We similarly see paradise as the abode of the blessed. It is a place of rest, but it is probably also a condition of activity in which greater understanding is gained.

"Hell" is the word we use to describe the location or condition of the spirits of men who have not accepted Christ and/or have lived earthly lives not consistent with high standards of righteousness. We believe that in hell punishment is primarily mental or spiritual torment coming as a result of man's gaining an understanding and appreciation of perfection and then realizing how far short of this goal he has come. It cannot be physical "fire and brimstone," for such would not have any effect on the spirit.

The words "purgatory" and "limbo" are used by some Christians. Do you have such concepts in your beliefs?

No, we have no concepts strictly comparable to "purgatory" or "limbo." Neither word is biblical.

You said that the spirits in hell would not stay in this condition, that hell would be "emptied." How is this possible?

Just as men are desirous of rehabilitating their fellow men who live a life of crime—in opposition to law—so God is concerned with rehabilitating those who have failed to understand and appreciate *his* laws. Those who definitely have known that Jesus was the Christ and have received verification of this fact through the operation of the Holy Spirit in their lives, then have denied him and worked in opposition to his plan of salvation are probably classified as “blasphemers against the Holy Ghost.” Christ lists such a response as the *one* sin which shall not be forgiven (Matt. 12: 31, 32; Mark 3: 29; Luke 12: 10; Heb. 6: 4-6; II Pet. 2: 20, 21). Continued punishment is promised the “blasphemer,” in the “lake of fire.” But all others in hell are promised an end to their torment—following their rehabilitation period—and a resurrection which leads to life immortal (Rev. 20: 12-15).

Rehabilitation? Are you implying a second chance?

No, If a man has had an experience which brings him a knowledge of the divinity of Jesus Christ and he fails to respond to it by accepting him as his Savior, we do not believe he will have a second chance to change his mind. However, let me emphasize: we feel a “first chance” is continually extended to man until he becomes fully conscious of the identity of Christ through a spiritual ex-

perience. We, in our limited concept, cannot judge when or under what conditions this will be attained; only God knows. The various Scriptures quoted above give positive indication that those who die without having a just opportunity to know Christ will be taught in the spirit world.

But the Bible doesn't teach that, does it?

Yes. Isaiah teaches that the "prisoners gathered in the pit" shall be shut up in the prison, and "after many days shall they be visited" (24: 21, 22). He later predicts that the Lord will "open the blind eyes" and "bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house" (42: 6, 7). Apostle Peter preached that Isaiah's predictions were confirmed in part by the ministry of Christ after his crucifixion when "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit . . . he went and preached unto the spirits in prison" (I Pet. 3: 18-20). These spirits in prison included the spirits of dead men, for Peter further explains: "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (I Pet. 4: 6). We believe this process of instruction is continuing today, and will continue until mankind's resurrections are complete. Hell is God's "rehabilitation center" (Rev. 1:18).

Resurrections? Are there more than one?

The Scriptures teach that there are at least two distinct resurrections.

Do you mean two resurrections for everyone? A reincarnation idea?

No. I mean that some people are resurrected at one time and others are resurrected at a later date. The reincarnation theory as generally taught propounds that as individual souls die here they pass a time on the "higher planes," and are then reborn to acquire further experiences, advancing or evolving from the lower to the higher. This process may be repeated several times. Transmigration is another theory often confused with reincarnation which teaches that man may also regress into animal form if he deserves punishment for an evil life. Christian Scriptures do not teach either theory. They picture that, following death and a period of time spent in the spirit world, man's spirit is united with an immortal body of similar appearance to his mortal flesh. (Refer to the following: Philippians 3: 20, 21; I John 3: 2; Romans 6: 5; Ezekiel 37: 1-14; I Corinthians 15: 35-49). An ancient American prophet wrote a clear understanding of this principle: "The day cometh that all shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works. Now there is a death which is called a temporal

death; and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this death, that all shall be raised. The spirit and the body shall be reunited again, in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time." Christians foresee only one mortal death and one resurrection for an individual entity. There is a condition spoken of as the "second death," but it is described as the "lake of fire," earlier referred to as a condition existing after the "final judgment" (Rev. 20: 10, 14; 21: 8).

What kind of body shall man have after his resurrection?

The exact nature of the body with which man shall rise is not known to us, although the Scriptures give a number of hints. Paul says that this body shall be changed until it shall become like the body of Christ (Phil. 3: 20, 21), that God shall give us a body according as it pleases him (I Cor. 15: 38), that the body with which we are raised will be one of "incorruption," "glory," and "power" (I Cor. 15: 42, 43). John makes a clarifying statement: "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3: 2).

Is there any difference in the future life for one who accepts Christ in this

life and is obedient to the gospel as compared to one who accepts Christ after death?

Oh, yes. God's judgment is *just*, as well as merciful. As we continue to complete the "picture" of the future life, you will notice several differences between such types of life. Most certainly there are rewards, or premiums, or whatever you might want to call them, for those who go all the way with Christ; they come as the inevitable result of complete compliance with the will of God.

These two resurrections . . . What's the difference between them?

Apostle Paul states that the first general resurrection takes place at the second coming of Christ (I Thess. 4: 16). (Matthew 27: 52, 53 mentions an earlier resurrection of some of the saints immediately after Christ's resurrection.) Of the first general resurrection, Paul says, "the dead in Christ shall rise first." John, in Revelation 20: 4, 5, describes this resurrection as one of the righteous. John 5: 29 describes this same one as the resurrection of those "that have done good, unto the resurrection of life." It is further explained in Revelation 20: 4, 5 that these who are resurrected "lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished."

The second coming of Christ? What is your understanding about that?

A book could be written about this subject. But briefly, we believe (1) that there will be a literal second coming or advent of Christ to the earth in a visible body (Acts 1: 11; I Thess. 4: 16; Rev. 1: 7); (2) that there will be a millennial (thousand-year) reign of those then living (and resurrected) righteous with Christ on the earth (Rev. 5: 10; 20: 4, 5; Job 19: 25-27; Dan. 7: 13, 14; Zech. 14: 9); (3) that under Christ's guidance a condition of perfection will be achieved, for the powers of evil will be subjugated and will have no effect on Christ and his associates (Rev. 20: 1, 2).

You mean you believe that the earth will be the abode of the righteous after their resurrection? Someone told me that they were "caught up in the air" to meet Christ.

Such a literal "catching up in the air" may take place, for the Scriptures predict a cleansing of the earth and a destruction of filth and evil at Christ's coming (II Thess. 1: 7-10). It would be logical that the righteous would be separated from this cleansing operation. However, the other numerous Scriptures already cited point to the reign of Christ with the righteous on the earth following this.

What is the purpose of Christ's thousand-year reign on earth?

Its purpose is to perfect the righteous so they can return to the full presence of God, having a full understanding of the laws of their Creator. This is the attainment of the ultimate end foreseen by the prophets of old and Christ and his disciples.

What happens after the thousand years?

John, writing in Revelation, continues his vision of the future with the words: "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, . . . to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" (20: 7, 8).

Are the resurrected righteous the ones Satan will deceive?

No, apparently not. John continues the description of his vision by stating that the "deceived ones" went to battle and "compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city" (20: 9). This evidently refers to a siege of the resurrected righteous. It does not seem probable that the righteous would be affected by Satan after having passed through this life in righteousness and having dwelt in

direct association with Christ for a thousand years.

Then who are these nations that are deceived? I had presumed the wicked were destroyed at the second coming of Christ and the righteous joined the legions of Christ during the millennium. Who else is left to be deceived?

Various prophecies indicate that many will remain in mortality during the millennium who have not become professed followers of Jesus Christ. Zechariah 14: 16-19 speaks of some of these people. The wicked, of course, will be destroyed, yet there will be many among all nations who are not wicked, as thought of in the usual sense. They may have partaken of their worldly environment, yet may not have been persistent and malicious in their opposition to the things of God. There will be enough in this class left to constitute "many nations." These nations will learn and Christ will judge among them (Mic. 4: 1-4) and they shall learn peace and righteousness. Probably these are the greatest number of those who shall rebel at the end of the millennium and fight against the "camp of the saints."

Others who are deceived after the millennium may come from the ranks of the heathen dead and others "who knew no law." Modern Scripture states these dead "have part in the first resurrection; and it

shall be tolerable for them.” After being instructed in “hell” and accepting Christ, they apparently must test their new-found faith just as Christians in this life are tested—and some may be deceived.

Children born during the millennium will also have to make their choice in temptation, and some may be numbered among the deceived.

How long does this “deceiving” process continue?

The Bible says Satan “must be loosed a little season” (Rev. 20: 3). How long this is we don’t know. But following this period of deceit and war against righteousness, the Scriptures continue: “and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them [the deceived]. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev. 20: 9, 10).

For ever and ever? Are there any others who are cast into the “lake of fire” condition?

Those we mentioned earlier as being “blasphemers against the Holy Ghost” are indicated as being among those condemned to this condition (Mark 3: 29). The time element called “for ever and ever” is spoken of in various other ways in Scrip-

ture; such as “eternal,” “endless,” “everlasting,” etc. *Cruden’s Concordance*, in its definition of “for ever,” says that many believe “for ever” and “everlasting” should be understood merely as meaning a very long time, to be left indeterminate. Nineteenth century revelation eliminates the time connotation from “eternal” and “endless” with the words spoken by God: “I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is endless punishment, for Endless is my name; wherefore—Eternal punishment is God’s punishment; Endless punishment is God’s punishment.” The words so defined picture a quality, rather than a length, of punishment. The adverbial phrase “for ever and ever” used in connection with “the lake of fire” condition, therefore, is indefinite in meaning and may lack the infinite time connotation so often associated with it.

What about the second resurrection?

As you recall, Revelation 20: 5 records: “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.” Following Christ’s thousand-year reign on earth, John sees (in the continuation of his vision) the rest of the dead delivered up from “death and hell” (Rev. 20: 13).

What happens to them after their resurrection?

The Scriptures indicate that the next step is the day of “final judgment”—“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" (Rev. 20: 12).

The "final judgment" is only one phase of a continuous process of *eternal judgment*. Just as eternal punishment is God's punishment, so is eternal judgment God's judgment. And such judgment cannot be rightly spoken of in terms of time or duration, rather its meaning is caught up in terms denoting quality. Such words as "righteous," "just," "creative," and "godly" are much more correctly used when describing eternal judgment than the temporal words "for ever," "everlasting," "endless." We are being eternally judged every moment of this life; judgment is not something which takes effect only after death. The laws of God are always with us; and our response to them continually brings God's judgment. We are made aware of this truth as we observe the results of transgression of the physical laws of God's universe: death and injury results from failure to obey these laws. Spiritual transgression brings even more tragic results, even though they are not so visible. We can be certain that justice is woven into the very nature of all of God's universe, and it cannot be averted—although God's mercy can intervene wherever man is willing to readjust to God's way of life.

Returning to the idea of "final judgment," you notice that the above Scripture calls this a judgment "according to their works." Matthew 16: 27 also emphasizes the judgment according to works. (See also John 12: 48 and II Corinthians 5: 10.)

Judged according to their works?

Yes. Except for those who have been "cast into the lake of fire," all have by this time "bowed the knee" and confessed "that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2: 11). Acceptance of Christ is no longer the determining factor in future existence.* The "uttermost farthing" has been paid for sin; "works" now play their role in judgment. Good works in mortal life are essential for entrance into God's presence. When spoken of in the Scriptures, they are to be understood as all manner of duties, inward and outward, thoughts as well as words and actions, toward God or man, which are commanded in the law of God, and proceed from a pure heart and sincere faith. The degree of understanding and compliance with God's laws in this life has its reward now, and in the future also.

*Read *Are You Saved?* published by Herald House, Independence, Missouri, for a complete discussion of salvation by faith and by works.

Your explanation of the judgment indicates various degrees of reward or types

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of immortal life. Is that possible? Isn't there just one heaven?

Apostle Paul wrote in II Corinthians 12:2: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven." Such a concept as Paul's indicates variation of immortal living conditions, and he called these differences, "heavens." He said the same thing in a different way when he likened these "degrees of heaven" to the heavenly bodies: "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead" (I Cor. 15:41, 42). The "rewards of glory" in the resurrection and judgment are as diverse in degree "as the stars differ in glory," and as the faintest star differs from the brilliance of the sun.

Can you explain more fully this concept you have of "degrees of glory"?

Paul, when writing of the "glories" to the Corinthian saints, called the glory of the sun "celestial." He also spoke of an inferior glory that he called "terrestrial." Modern revelation mentions a third degree of glory, "telestial," which is considered even of less worth. These "glories," or degrees of immortality, are more complete-

ly defined as "kingdoms." In the celestial kingdom dwell God and Christ and the "just." The just are defined: "They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name; and were baptized after the manner of his burial . . . that . . . they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands of him who is ordained . . . unto this power; and who overcome by faith, and are sealed by that Holy Spirit of promise; . . . they are they who are the church of the Firstborn . . . are priests and kings, who have received of his fullness, and of his glory, . . . whose bodies are celestial." (See also Revelation 20: 4, 6.)

And the terrestrial kingdom?

This kingdom is said to differ from the celestial kingdom as the glory "of the moon differs from the sun." The inheritors of this kingdom are to "receive of the presence of the Son, but not of the fullness of the Father." Within this kingdom reside those "who died without law; and also they who are the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it; these are they who are honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men; . . . these are they

who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus.”

And who dwells in the telestial kingdom?

In this kingdom, which differs from the terrestrial as stars differ in glory from the moon (as seen from our earthly vantage point), are those partially identified as habitual “liars, sorcerers, adulterers, whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie.” Others identified in this kingdom are those who professed to be followers of the great religious leaders of the Bible, yet did not really receive the gospel (and the testimony of these great men) and make it a part of their personality. They might be identified as those of whom Christ spoke: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7: 21, 22). The “kingdom of heaven” used in this Scripture apparently refers to the “celestial kingdom” where God and Christ abide.

I've thought of heaven as being a place of peace and rest. Is that your understanding?

Those who have been harried by an excess of worry and care often vision the future eternity as a period of "harp playing, of rapturously contemplating the great white throne, or rest, and more rest—no decisions to make." But that would soon become old. Joy comes from constructive and creative activity, and is found in the giving of service, in the pursuit of knowledge, in the association with kindred spirits. Surely the fullness of God's glory is not found in eternal inactivity; even now there is no inert matter—everything is in a state of activity. There is no reason to believe that the whole order of the universe, the whole nature of God and man will change in the beyond. Congenial, absorbing, creative activity—in peace—will help to fill our cup of joy in eternity.

Some people believe that those who shall be resurrected to live in the presence of God are foreordained or predestined to such a condition. Do you believe this is true?

There are only two Scriptures using the term "predestinate": Romans 8: 29, 30; and Ephesians 1: 5, 11. But they do not teach the theory that God has predestined some to salvation and others to

damnation without man having the opportunity of altering his destiny. In the verses in Romans, predestination is the consequence of foreknowledge. God foreknew, or foresaw, that certain ones would be worthy or faithful, and because of this worthiness he "predestined" them to be glorified or saved. This foreknowledge may be compared to that of a wise parent who can foreknow what a certain child will do in a given situation, though the infinite wisdom of God of course extends far beyond human power to foreknow. In exercising this wisdom, God does not prevent anyone from choosing to do right or wrong as he will.

In the Ephesians text, Paul refers to the saints and faithful in Christ as being predestined "unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself," but they were thus predestined because of their faithfulness and sainthood, and not without regard to their worthiness.

Is there any possibility of progressing from a lower estate to a higher kingdom of immortality?

Beyond the above statements, the Scriptures give little understanding. One religious philosophy pictures continuous progression to the extent that men become "gods" and create or supervise other "worlds." In other words, man eventually (according to this belief) reaches a level equal to Jesus Christ. We do not believe

such a philosophy can be substantiated by the Scriptures.

Your explanation of the future life is different than I have ever heard before.

Yes, but I'm sure that as you continue to study it you will have an increased respect for God and his eternal plan for man. God is the ultimate intelligence, so we should expect that he is always vitally involved in all affairs which lead to our ultimate good. We are sure that his judgment is superior to ours. We feel that in his divine wisdom God will allot each man a sphere of continuous life and self-realization based on the nature of his *deeds* and in consideration of what he *is*. Every man is assured of the highest and best that he is qualified to enjoy, able to use, and willing to receive.

Do you have any other literature explaining other beliefs of your church?

Your local Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has free literature covering many subjects, and your R.L.D.S. friend can help you select those pamphlets of special interest to you. A free listing of all tracts published by the church will be sent you immediately if you write: Herald Publishing House, Independence, Missouri.

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