

Dial Daily Bread: Does It Make Any Difference What One Believes?

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Dear Friends of "Dial Daily Bread,"

Nearly the first lie Satan ever told us was about who man is: "You will not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). And Eve believed him; and nearly the whole world believes him--that man is naturally immortal, that he exists somewhere in consciousness after death. That's why Spiritualism flourishes--in Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, even in large segments of Christianity.

Many imagine they find support for it in the Bible: the witch of Endor bringing up "Samuel" (1 Samuel 28), Christ's parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), and the supposed eternal conscious torment of the lost. Does it make any real practical difference what one believes, so long as you try to live a good life? Yes!

(1) If the lost are tortured forever under God's rule, He becomes a cruel tyrant beyond imagination. You can't be truly "reconciled to God" if in the back of your mind you cherish this evaluation of His character.

(2) False natural immortality destroys the truth of the cross of Christ, leaving an empty symbol without meaning. If His death was merely graduating to a higher, more pleasant life, then He did not truly die the equivalent of the second death, nor did He pay the penalty for our sins. "The wages of sin is death," not eternal life in a new sphere. He could not "pour out His soul unto death," nor "empty Himself" as Isaiah 53:12 and Phil. 2:5-8 (*New American Standard Bible*) tell us. Instead, He withheld His most precious Thing--His own "life." And that would mean He could not be the Lamb who was slain, and who redeemed us by His blood (Rev. 5:9).

(3) And unless He is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" by an infinite sacrifice (John 1:29), we can't learn to hate sin and love righteousness. Aside from the Lamb's revelation of *agapeon* His cross, practical "Christian" living is reduced to veneer and lukewarmness.

--Robert J. Wieland

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