

Which Resurrection?

By Philip J. King

Deeply moved by a statement regarding the seriousness of hell made by his great-uncle, Philip King composed this graphic portrayal of the condition of a lost soul in eternity.

The man knows that it will not be long now. The disease of his old age has weakened him to the point of death. By human standards he has lived a good life. There have been the usual trials, the normal frustrations, and those long toilsome hours of early life to build that little empire. He has experienced the joys and frustrations of fatherhood and grandfather-hood. He has experienced the death of an unusually good companion, whom he had considered next to perfect, if only she had not been so spiritual and adoring of Jesus Christ, whom she called Lord. The children and grandchildren have succeeded as well as most folks for these times. While readily admitting he did not have the faith of his deceased wife, surely he had not done too badly. With great respect for his wife, he had been baptized into her church a few years ago, and had made somewhat of an effort to follow its prescribed way of life. He had adequately provided for his family, given modest sums of money to the church, and now was leaving a sizable inheritance to the children. He could think of many, even now on his deathbed, who had done worse. So the man lay dying, with a certain assurance that the good he had done far outweighed the bad.

He regretted having to leave this life and everything he had lived and worked for, but he had made up his mind that since death comes to all, he would be strong and face it with pride and dignity. He would face death for what it was – the end – and not lean on the crutch of the simpler and weaker ones who cheered themselves with hope of a resurrection and a better life to come.

He regretted the day his wife had told him she wanted Jesus Christ to be the Lord of her life. Feeling somewhat jealous, he had reluctantly but kindly consented, believing that if this would add to her happiness, he would let her try it. Her new life and faith had indeed inspired him, even to the point of true persuasion. But his pride, self-confidence, and intellect always won out. There were times when it seemed some unrelenting force kept him from yielding to a full commitment. His baptism and attachment to the church had done little to increase his faith, but it had given his wife great satisfaction and had stopped her periodic pleadings for him to make Jesus Lord of his life. Surely, he thought, if this talk of heaven and hell and of a resurrection proved to be true, the action he had taken would certainly be in his favor.

The doctors, nurses, children, and friends have given him their final assistance and comfort as best as they know how. And now as the hours slowly pass, the man, unconscious of his surroundings, lies waiting for that final moment. His subconscious mind repeatedly casts away the nagging question – is death really the end?

Suddenly from deep down in his soul he receives a spontaneous urge to live his life all over again. While before determined to face death with dignity, now he is completely convinced he does not want to die. Up to now he had been able to control and extinguish unpleasant, sobering thoughts, but now they linger with mounting persistence. From somewhere within his soul his spirit prays, "Oh, let me live my life over again, or else let me die and remember no more forever!" The man senses the end is very near, and as his soul convulses with fear, he cries, "Wait, wait!" but the change has been made.

The man is aware that he has left the body, and a new fear stabs his soul as he realizes it is not the end. He senses he is confined to an endless chasm of blackness, and the loneliness of his state increases his anxious fear of what might lie ahead. He has no sense of direction or time – just the awareness of his troubled soul. The misty blackness is most oppressive, and all the emotions of fear, oppression, confusion, loneliness, and insecurity seem to be focusing themselves on the center of his soul.

Suddenly from out of the darkness he sees a light. It gives him momentary relief. Had he not read testimonials of people leaving and returning to their bodies? Had they not described a tunnel of darkness with a light at the end which they assumed would have been their Lord? The man chides himself for being so fearful; everything was going to turn out right after all. Maybe he too would reenter his body.

Suddenly, just as the light blazes into full glory, the man does indeed reenter the body. Amidst mixed emotions of hope and surprise, he finds himself standing at a distance from a massive, dazzling throne of brilliant brightness. He finds himself surrounded by a huge sea of resurrected dead as far as eye can see. The vast multitude from all peoples, kindreds, tribes, and tongues stand silently captivated by the awesome grandeur of the majestic throne and of the Being who sits thereon, whose countenance is as brilliant as jasper. Of almost equal interest is the countless number of glorious beings surrounding the throne, whom he correctly guesses to be the angels of God. The man is still unaware of the movement of time. However, he is acutely surprised at how well he can see and feel. He is bothered by the strange silence that prevails. He senses he is a stranger and prisoner, confined to an ordered spot in the midst of this great ocean of people. Feelings of fear and anxiety creep over him as he realizes some compelling force is urging him and the multitude ahead of him closer to the base of the great white throne. The throne, massive and glorious at a distance, is now absolutely spellbinding as the man sees the angels of God ascending and descending the long, wide stairway leading to the glorious Being at the top of it. That Being, none other than the living God, sits far above the base of the throne. The multitude of resurrected dead are being ushered up and down the stairs to the throne.

As the man is absorbed by the activity of the holy angels, the smell of heavenly incense fills his nostrils, a bright presence appears on either side of him and the firm grip of angel hands clasp him around the arms. The first sound he hears is his own voice, "Wait, I'm not ready!" In spite of his fear and alarm, he is surprised at how clear and fresh his voice sounds.

"Come, sir," the angels urge, and the man feels himself propelled forward and upward along the stairway. Up and up they ascend; the man's anxiety mounts with every step. The angels remain silent, their faces sober. Higher and higher they ascend. The man cannot bear to look up. He is overwhelmed at his own reluctance to move on, and he begs the angels to stop. But still they ascend. He is now conscious of time, as he realizes his time has run out.

"Please let me go!" wails the man. But higher still they ascend. Up, up, and up they rise, higher, higher, higher. When the final plateau is reached, and the angels relinquish their hold on him the man slowly opens his terror-closed eyes. He is shocked and delighted with what he sees. Feelings of ecstasy pulsate through him as oceans of heavenly splendor and panoramic beauty bathe his delighted eyes. Before him is the promised land of all promised lands. He can see so far; he can hear so well. The sweetest singing fills his ears; the most pleasant scenes overwhelm his eyes. Stretching before him is a gigantic, staggeringly beautiful city, with streets of pure gold lined with stately, heavenly mansions and springing fountains of living water. The city thrives with multitudes of happy saints and overflows with sweet singing and praise. The man never

dreamed anything could be so lush and pure. He had never imagined anything so fantastic. The desire to walk the streets of the city is overwhelming. As he surveys one particular part of the great paradise, his gaze is suddenly fixed on one of the saints whose countenance glows with happiness, glory, and splendor. So angelic, pure, and beautiful is she, and yet so familiar. And then he recognizes her; it is his loving wife. The man begs the angels to let him enter into the city. But as he does so the city itself slowly vanishes from view, and the man finds himself staring into the face of the living God.

The man stands like a statue, speechless and sober. The piercing, blazing eyes of the Almighty cut through him like a sword. How he wishes he could escape, or run away and hide, or just close his eyes, but he cannot. He stands, fixed and imprisoned by the penetrating gaze of the Most High. The disappointed, hopeless feeling in his soul seems to be reaching the breaking point, and he has a strong urge to scream out with despair. It seems he has already spent an eternity looking into the overpowering presence of the Lord God. The man's desire to die and remember no more is exceeding great. How he wishes he had never been born – had never seen life. How he hopes that this is just an ugly dream, and that tomorrow he will wake up and lay hold on eternal life and embrace and love the Lord Jesus Christ with all his soul and strength. As he continues to stare into the face of God, he sees the Lord Jesus in the bosom of the Father. The countenance of the Son of God is very sad, and the man knows it is because he has forfeited the salvation the Lord Jesus so freely offered. The man tries to cry out and beg for mercy, but his lips are sealed.

Then in a moment the great Creator speaks with a voice of thunder, authoritative and final. "Behold, I have made all things new. Heaven and earth have passed away, but My Word shall never pass away. It was appointed unto men once to die (Heb 9:27). Now this is the judgment. This is the day I appointed to judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom I have ordained to be the judge of quick and dead (Acts 17:30-31). It was My intent that man should not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeded from My mouth (Mat 4:4). It was My realization that all men had sinned and come short of My glory. Therefore, I sent My only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). I did not send Him to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. It was My desire that whatsoever men should do in word or deed, they would do all in the name of Jesus Christ, giving thanks to Me through Him. I watched as He Himself bore your sins on the tree of Calvary, that you, being dead to sin, should shower your love and affection on things above. I received Him back to My right hand after I had raised Him from the dead for your justification. I watched with joy as multitudes received Him as their Lord and Saviour and lived, suffered, and died for Him. It was with regret that I blotted many out of the Book of Life because they went back and walked no more with Him. It was with sadness that I saw great numbers reject Him as their Lord and Saviour and try to live in their own strength and self-will. Now in this, the day of revelation of My righteous judgment, I will render to every man according to his deeds. Whosoever is not found written in the Book of Life shall be cast into the lake of fire" (Rev 20:15).

Horror stabs the man's soul like a dagger. The books are opened, and another book is opened, which is the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev 20:12). The man sees the written Word of God, and another book containing his every action, deed, thought, and motive – even every idle word he had ever spoken.

Eternity again seems to spend itself as each page of his life is examined in strictest detail.

The man never realized until now just how vile he was in the sight of God. Even the many pages of good things he has done are considered dead works by the Holy One because of his failure to give God the praise and allow Jesus to have the preeminence. Every commandment is slowly and precisely read from God's Word, and explained in careful detail. The man now sees with great clarity the absolute futility of any man's thinking he could approach the Almighty without someone else being able to present him faultless before this great throne of glory. Never before had he realized just how much man needed a Saviour.

The man is allowed to inspect every name written in the Lamb's Book of Life. The pain is intense as he realizes that not only is his name missing, but also the names of many of his children and grandchildren. Envy envelopes him as he sees names of those he did know-sometimes whole families. How he wishes he could go back and truly be the head of his household and provide the spiritual leadership God intended him to provide. The name in the Book that hurts him the most is the one to whom he had lived the closest, and yet had really never ever known, because her faith and trust were so far removed from his. Paradise has claimed the only person he has ever really loved.

The attending angels slowly scan the long list of names in the Book of Life page by page. Finally the last page is scanned, the Book is closed, and the angels solemnly bow their heads. The man, well aware of the verdict, falls heavily to his knees.

"Please don't do this to me!" pleads the man. "Please give me another chance! Please! I confess that Jesus Christ is Lord," he cries, sobbing hysterically. "Help me, Lord!" he begs, while looking up and seeing the face of Jesus in the countenance of the Father. "Please don't let me perish! I've done many good works. Oh, give me one more chance! I believe now with all my heart. I was too proud to believe before. Please Lord, please!"

The sincere outburst from the heartbroken man is unheeded as the great Judge of heaven and earth solemnly declares, "Whosoever is not found written in the Book of Life shall be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15). Depart from Me, thou worker of iniquity, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mat 25:41).

The man, now too weak with despair to protest, does not resist as the angels carry him to the base of the throne. How he would like to get just one more glimpse of that beautiful city before his departure. But he is too blinded by his own tears to see it, even if it were possible.

He is astonished at the great strength of the angels as they cast him outward with terrific speed. Almost instantly everything is black – oppressively black – thick, misty black (Mat 13:49-50). There is not the tiniest ray of light – not even a flicker from the great white throne.

Already he must be an immeasurable distance from the throne. He feels himself falling faster and faster. Down, down, he falls, away, way down. "Please help me!" the man shouts into the darkness.

"Please help me!" Silence follows for what seems like many hours, and the man continues to fall.

Again the man shouts into the darkness, "Is there no one here to hear me? Am I the only one here? Please, will somebody stop me from falling?"

The man is instantly startled as the voice of a demon replies, "Welcome to outer darkness, fellow-heir of damnation. Prepare to stay awhile." Fear grips the man at the new realization that he must share this oppressive blackness with unclean devils.

"Move away from me at once!" screams the man in a thunderous voice that echoes on and on through the darkness. The demon does not obey. The spirit of the demon clasps itself to the

man like a hungry parasite.

"We are going to hell together," whispers the demon. It's a long journey, and we need each other."

"I do not need you," convulses the man, thrashing and kicking wildly. I need Jesus Christ. O Lord, hear me now, and deliver me."

"How dare you mention His cursed name!" shrieks the demon in hysteria. I hate it! I hate it! Don't let me hear you mention His name again, you hear?" The man convulses in pain as the demon twists his body and oppresses his soul.

"Free me, please!" pleads the man. Have you no compassion?"

"Indeed so!" mocks the demon. "I am so greatly attracted to you. I want you with me always." The demon holds him closer. The man fights for his freedom, but he does not prevail.

"Do you not remember the good times we had together on earth?" tantalizes the demon. "I really enjoyed filling you with pride and stubbornness. I had you believing you were the most self-sufficient man on earth. When your wife nearly convinced you to surrender your life to that wretched Son of God (the demon shudders with fear and hate), I was afraid I had lost you. How proud I was when I persuaded you to pretend you believed! That was one baptism I thoroughly enjoyed."

"How dare you torment me this way!" screams the man. "You are a low-down, ugly, venomous beast!"

"And you are a fool, a stupid, ignorant fool," cackles the demon. "But I adore you so much." The man shudders in pain as the demon embraces his soul.

The demon has an excellent memory, and for what seems like days and days he brings to memory event after event of the man's life always claiming victory. The man hears again in detail about all the inconsistent things he did in life; the displays of temper, the pride, the selfishness, the unconcern for others, the gossip, the dirty jokes, the foolishness, and the revelry. Even if it is something that only happened once in his life, the demon relates it over and over. He makes light of the good things the man tried to do. He calls the man a myriad of vulgar names, but always assures him that he adores him.

All this time the man continues to fall in the dark, bottomless pit. He seems an infinity away from the remotest hope. For days and days he falls, then it seems like months, and then years. Surely God will deliver him soon. The wretched demon is unbearable; the man begs him to kill him. But the demon assures him that he loves him too much to ever do that.

After many days, to the man's relief, the demon is strangely quiet and detaches himself from the man's body. The man sees a dingy, flickering, dim light in the far distance. The light by no means relieves his oppression. As the man smells the first putrid odor of burning flesh, he recognizes the flickering light in the distance to be the sulfurous flames of the Lake of Fire. Frozen with terror, the man grits his teeth. What he had hoped was almost enough punishment, appears to be only the beginning. Heat waves blast against his face and acrid smoke fills his nostrils. The voice of wailing fills his ears, accompanied by hollow moans and sullen groans and shrieks of tortured ghosts. Worst of all is the loud mysterious sound, something like a billion fingernails scraping across a giant blackboard.

"Isn't that a beautiful sound?" bellows the demon after a long silence. "That's the sound of gnashing teeth. Hold me tight, my beloved. We are approaching hell."

The man is now unable to see because of the thick smoke. The heat is unbearable. Every muscle in his body is rigid. His fists are clenched. His flesh feels singed.

"This is unbearable!" the man cries. "You fool!" screams the demon, "We aren't even there yet."

Almost immediately a new terror is realized. The man shrieks with pain. The demon curses the Lord Jesus Christ with an oath truly fit for hell. As the man plunges into hell, surely a thousand swords must be slicing through every sinew of his body. He shrieks, kicks, and convulses as every nerve and fiber is aflame but not consumed.

"Help! help! help!" gasps the man. "I don't want to be in hell! I hate hell! I can't bear to be in hell! I'll do anything to get out of this hell! Please, someone, help!"

"You'll get no help, you chief of fools," snorts the tortured demon. "Unless good Lucifer can find a way out of here, we'll get no help. So just enjoy it and quit crying for help. You should have cried for help while you were yet alive. Then maybe you, your family, and friends would not be here screaming your souls out. But then, what else could you expect being under the influence of a master deceiver like myself?" At this even the demon cries out in pain.

All conversation is stopped. The man joins the multitude in hell in weeping and wailing. The gnashing sound of his own teeth seems louder than all the rest. He shouts and groans, twists and convulses in hope of some relief. But no relief comes. His throat is dry as powder, raw with pain. "Oh, wouldn't those baptismal waters feel good now! Those peaceful, quiet church services in the cool grove of trees off the side of the road a little way-wouldn't they be refreshing now! Oh, how beautiful would be that singing, even if some of it was slow, off-key and out of time! Oh, what a pleasure it would be to be back home with all the children circled around, and the Bible and hymnal in hand! What a joy it would be to deny self and sing and teach and pray with the family in sincerity and truth! Oh, why was pride so important? Oh, why was self so big? Oh, why was earthly esteem of so much value? Oh, why did heavenly things seem so dry, unimportant, and insignificant? Why had he been so foolish to deny the glorious resurrection? Why had the name of Jesus seemed just like another name? Why had those church ordinances just seemed like something you're supposed to do at church, and forget about the next day? Why hadn't he studied more? Why hadn't he listened more? Why hadn't he considered more? Why had he put so much emphasis on building projects, fund drives, and legal technicalities, and been so foolish as to forget faith, hope, and love? The demon was right. He was indeed the chiefest of fools. Oh, why, why, why?"

The man cannot believe that God would leave someone in hell so long. Surely no one was sinful enough to be in hell this long. Ages must have passed since those first flames pierced his body. The man has prayed over and over to be able to die and forget. But the demon reminds him that this is the second death.

The man suddenly shouts with all his might, "Oh, Lord, why do you punish us so long?"

"You miserable fool," gasps the agonized, tortured demon. "We've only been here five minutes!"

"Five minutes? You're a liar!" screams the man.

"I lie not!" shrieks the demon.

"Then how much longer?" pants the man in final utter despair. No answer; just the crackling horrors of a flaming hell.

"I say, how much longer?" say, how much longer?" say, how much longer?"

Quoth the demon, "Forevermore ... "Forevermore ... "Forevermore ..."

The parable does harmonize with the Scriptures; however, the actual state and sequence

of events in the hereafter may vary from this illustration. The warning of this parable, while containing a degree of speculation, is worthy of the thoughtful contemplation of every reader. It is a reminder that Christian profession alone is no assurance that one possesses salvation.

The Word of God reveals with vivid contrast the difference between the state of the saved and that of the lost. "And it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb 9:27 KJV)

"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" (Matt 25:41)

*"For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all 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** (John 5:26-29).*

"Jesus said... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).