***Universal Atonement  
  
Colossians 1:4-9  
  
COL-105***

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Our subject is "Prayer for the Colossians," number 39 in Colossians 1:9-14.

**Carl Sagan**

The astronomer Carl Sagan is dead at age 62. Dr. Sagan gained lasting fame from his TV special, "The Cosmos," which he began by saying, as he looked into the camera lens, and thereby, into the very eyes of the viewer: "In the beginning was the cosmos, and that's all there was." With that simple statement, Carl Sagan declared that matter has always existed; matter is eternal; and, therefore, matter is, in effect, deity. And that deity then proceeded to shape itself. This was the human viewpoint belief of a man who without hesitation declared also that evolution was a fact beyond any doubt. I have seen him, in his intensity of sincerity, look right into your eye and say, "It is not a theory. It is a proven fact." And it was all based upon matter which is eternal, and therefore, deity forming itself through a process of evolution over a period (a vast extent of time), which in his typical way of pronouncing it, he referred to as: "billions and billions and billions of years of evolution."

This was a man who possessed a high IQ. He declared also that he saw no proof for the existence of a personal God, and who personally could not conceive of any rationality to the idea of someone dying to pay for another's sin guilt, as the Bible claims that Jesus did.

So, Carl Sagan was very definite in what he believed. He was very definite in his philosophical outlook. He was very convinced in what he concluded to be the truth. He was a gifted man. He was a gifted human being, however, who was in the grasp of Satan's darkness. He was groping his way through life under the guidance of the human viewpoint of his sin nature. Carl Sagan was not led to seek or to believe God's Word, the Bible. He was not led to this even from the awesome magnificence of the interstellar space, which he knew so well. And for that he will be condemned. He will be held accountable for the truth that was out there before his eyes, and that he studied for so long and he knew so well.

(Note: Does science confirm eternal matter? [The Big Bang – the Bible Taught it First](https://reasons.org/explore/publications/rtb-101/big-bang-the-bible-taught-it-first%20))

This is declared to us in Romans 1:18-20, which says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppressed the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them. For God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes (that is, his eternal power and divine nature) have been clearly, seen being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."

So, Dr. Sagan's condemnation and his eternal consequences will be even more intense simply because, as an astronomer, he knew what was out there. He knew the magnificence of what was out there. And he knew that Someone had to put that together. Instead, he chose to say that it did it all by itself, through blind chance, and an eternal matter. All the stars of space never drew Sagan to the star of Bethlehem, identifying the Savior, without Whom no man can come to be without God in heaven. John 14:6 is explicitly clear. Jesus says, "I am the Way; the Truth; and, the Life. No man comes unto the Father but through Me."

Dr. Sagan's deadly disease, which ultimately resulted in his death, was held in remission for two years, amazingly. And it was, in fact, God's last grace opportunity for him to accept the divine viewpoint of the spiritual enlightenment that could have come to him through Scriptures. It's sad to say that we have no indication that he ever trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ to save him. He chose to remain, instead, in the spiritual darkness in which he was born, and under the throes of the control of Satan, which has been so clearly explained to us here in the book of Colossians.

Thus, for one whom Christ has paid the price of redemption, he now experiences the shock of the rich man who was associated with the poor beggar, Lazarus. And most of you are acquainted with that record in history – the historical record recorded in the Bible of the rich man and his lifestyle, and the poor beggar Lazarus. And it is awesome to me to realize that the rich man longed to send word back from Hades about the reality of God; the truth of the gospel; and, the suffering awaiting the unsaved. That rich man now can tell Carl Sagan that he knows just how he feels, as they sit together this day in Hades.

**Lazarus and the Rich Man**

The sad account of that experience is repeated thousands of times a day, when people are screaming out in Hades, trying to get their voices across to relatives and people who are important to them (loved ones), "It's true. I was wrong. I deceived you." That story's recorded in Luke 16. And if there's anything that Christmas is about, it is about the redemption that Christ has made possible, and it is about avoiding the tragedy that is recorded here of Lazarus and the rich man.

Luke 16:19-31: "Now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple (very expensive material – dyed cloth), and fine linen (out of which undergarments were made) gaily living in splendor every day." Every evening, it was "Steak and Ale" time. He had the most luxurious life that one could imagine. He had everything that anybody could want.

Luke 16:20: "In contrast was a certain poor man named Lazarus. He was laid at his gate, covered with sores." Seemingly, Lazarus was now in such a crippled state that he even had to be helped to be able to come to the gate where he hoped that people would give him some money – where he could beg for alms, and where he could have something to survive on in the misery of his physical condition, with the sores that were all over his body, that were moving toward his ultimate dead.

Luke 16:21: "And longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table, besides even the dogs were coming and licking his sores." He was such a pitiful sight that the dogs who roamed around came up and licked the sores as they licked their own wounds, and have a therapeutic effect upon them. So they were doing it for this poor man, who was a human dog with one of them. This was while, up in the big house, the rich man threw his crumbs into the trash bin.

Luke 16:22: "Now it came about that the poor man died, and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom." That's an Old Testament term for heaven. "And the rich man also died, and he was buried." What a contrast! Abraham is carried by angels as indeed everybody who dies. That's the first thing you hear. You hear the sound of angels about you, and you find yourself in your spirit and soul, being carried into the presence of Jesus Christ by these angels. So they did indeed with Lazarus because he was born-again. But the unsaved rich man, who had everything, had a hole to be thrown into like a dog. He died, and he was buried.

Many years ago, I woke up one morning, and opened the garage door to let my little dog Yenta come in, and she didn't move. Mrs. Danish, in fact, was the one that went out. She came and said, "I think Yenta's dead." We went out there, and there she had her little pause together, and her head down between them. It was almost like she was in prayer. And I felt her, and she was cold stiff. So, I went out to the rose garden; dug a hole; went in there; gently picked up Yenta; and, laid her to rest in the hole. That's all the rich man had. Yenta was a dog, Yenta got buried. Yenta has no future. This little movie of entertainment is going around: "Dogs go to Heaven too." Don't believe it. Yenta's gone forever.

**Hades**

However, the rich man – better that he had been a dog. Better that he had been like Yenta, for once he's covered, he's gone. This man is not only going to get his body back, but he never went out of existence to begin with. And where he went to was, in Luke 16:23, that place called Hades. "And in Hades, he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom." Hades at this time was a place where all dead people went. It had two divisions. It had a part called paradise, or Abraham's bosom was the Jewish term. The gentile term was "paradise." That's where all saved people went. It had another compartment called "torments," where all unsaved people went. Then it had a third compartment, which is called "Tartars," a place of great agonizing darkness in which angels (a special breed of angels) were kept, who are described in Genesis 6, who intermarried with women, and created the mongrel race of giants before the flood wiped them out.

After Christ was resurrected, he went to Abraham's bosom, or to paradise, and He announced that now for what God had forgiven of sin on credit, the price had been paid, and they were now ready actually to be led up to heaven into the Father's presence. And at that point in time, Abraham's bosom or paradise were closed down. And all that is left in Hades now is the torments part of those who are unbelievers. But here there was a capacity, before that change was made, where they could see one another.

Luke 16:24 says, "The rich man cried out and said, father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool off my tongue, for I'm an agony in this flame." Now please remember that sometimes this record in the Bible is referred to as a parable. That's a mistake. The Bible itself, you will notice, did not call it a parable. And one of the evidence is that this is an actual historical event that Jesus is describing is that, in parables, you never have names. People are not named, such as "Lazarus." They're not identified with such specificity. So, this is very clearly not called parable. It is very clearly a historical event. So, this is pretty serious. We're talking about an unsaved person. He is suffering the torments of flames.

"But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life, you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus had bad thing. But now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.'" Why the reversal? Because one was saved and the other was not. Lazarus had a terrible life. Now all that's behind him. He's in eternal joy, with bliss beyond his fondest imagination and dreams. On the other hand, the rich man who had it all has lost everything. And like Carl Sagan, he now sits next to the rich man saying, "How could I have missed this? How could this have happened to me? I knew so much about this creation, and now this God is real. The gospel was true. My redemption was a reality. And I blew the thing off, and refused to accept the offer of God's.

"So many times I had a Christmas tree," Sagan probably would say. "So many times I was up in the euphoria of the Christmas season. So many gifts have come and gone. But God's unspeakable gift I never took seriously. And now look at me. And I'm still looking into the camera when they show my "Cosmos" series, and I'm telling people that all there was in the beginning was the cosmos, and that's all there was: matter, the eternal God.

Luke 16:26, "And beside all this, between us and you, there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us." Yes, we can see each other. You can see that we are in an oasis of great joy over here, and we can see that you're in a desert of suffering over there. But there's a gulf between us, and that gulf is the barrier of all the things that Jesus Christ removed, such as: spiritual death; and, being lost in Adam – all of these things that form the block of this wall that is described here as a great gulf. You can't come across. And once death has taken place, there is no second chance, because if there were, certainly the rich man would've said, "I do believe it now. Yes, I do believe it." But faith is what God requires in His Own Word. And when you see it, it's not faith. So, his opportunity is forever gone.

Luke 16:27: "And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him (that is, Lazarus) to my father's house; for I have five brothers, that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'" Immediately there was a moment of kindness in this man's heart, in the midst of his agony, and he says, "I have five brothers who are as much hell-raisers, sensual, self-indulgent, and as contemptuous of the Word of God as I was. Please send Lazarus to them, and tell them it's for real. Carry a message from their lost brother."

Luke 16:29: "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets.'" That's the Old Testament way of speaking about the Old Testament Bible: "They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them." So, what did the rich man point back to? He said, "You knew the Scriptures. You knew the Word of God. And you said that it wasn't the Word of God." Carl Sagan knew, I suspect, quite a bit about the Word of God, and he said, "No, it isn't the Word of God. It's the word of religious men who wrote the book.

Luke 16:30: "But he said, 'No father Abraham. But if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But Abraham said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.'" When the sin nature wants to be blind, it will be blind. And if Lazarus had gone and said, "I've been raised from the dead," they'd say, "It's a trick. You never were dead. And you're trying to fool us. And the unbelief would've still been there.

Now this principle, and the philosophy that Dr. Sagan held, and which is so prominent in our society today, and which is so tragic if, in the Christmas season, this deception and this blindness is upon people, is reinforced by a series of Scripture verses that I just want to read.

2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is inspired" (that is, God breathed). "All Scripture is inspired by God, and profitable for teaching, for proof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." If you want to know about God, you go to one place. It's the Scripture. If you want to know about it in depth of authority of adequate instruction, then you come to someplace like Berean Memorial Church, that specializes in teaching the Word of God from the original languages.

Luke 24:25-27: "And he said to them (Jesus, talking to the two men on the road to Emmaus, who were all so confused about what had happened in Jerusalem, and the crucifixion), 'Oh foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken (back to the Bible). Was it not necessary for Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory?' And beginning with Moses, and with all the prophets, He explained the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." These men were distressed. They were discouraged. They didn't understand what was going on because they had forgotten the Scriptures that they knew. And Jesus says, "Now let me take you back to Moses. I'm going to take you through the problems that have existed. And I'm going to show you that what took place with the Messiah Christ was the fulfillment of all of this, so that redemption could be provided for the people of the world.

Luke 24:32, "When Jesus suddenly disappeared from their sight, they said to one another, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while he was explaining the Scriptures to us?" Suddenly, when they had the Word of God, they knew it all. And they knew it all because they believed it. Do you see why it's important to know the Word of God; why you can never stop feeding upon the Scripture; and, why hell and high water should not keep you from being in a church service to be instructed in the Word of God? Once you get hold of that, then you become a significant person. Until you do, you're nothing but one of the dolts of the human race, even if you're born-again. But once you've grasped that doctrine that is your life, that is what sustains you through everything. That is the magnificence of what you'll ever be. Then life begins to have a purpose. And you will never look back and regret in eternity how you frittered away your life, and how you excused yourself for what you were doing in the face of the Word of God.

2 Peter 1:20-21 add this: "But know, this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation" (that is a matter of one's own invention." People did not produce the Scripture. We've already seen that Paul tells Timothy that it was God-breathed.

2 Peter 1:21: "For no prophecy (no revelation from God) was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." Carl Sagan said, "That's not true. These were religious men. They wrote the Bible. They thought they were telling the truth. It was their religious experience. It was not some almighty personal God who was speaking."

2 Corinthians 5:21: "He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Carl Sagan said, I can't conceive of anybody paying for somebody else's sinful wrongdoing." That was an inconceivable injustice to him. And yet, that's exactly what Jesus did. He said, "I'll give you my absolute righteousness for your sin," and He did.

Then there is Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Carl Sagan said, "That's not true. Matter always was there, and it made itself into the forms of life that we know."

Genesis 1:27-28: "And God created man in His own image. In the image of God He created him. Male and female, He created them. And God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it." He said, "Study it scientifically, and find all the secrets of how it works, and how I've put it together. It's yours. Have a ball. Study the interstellar spaces," which is exactly what Sagan did. "And rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Genesis 1:31, "And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning – the sixth day." Carl Sagan God said, "God didn't make it. It made itself."

Remember that we read these Scriptures on the background of the story of Lazarus and the rich man. Romans 5:8: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Dr. Sagan said, "That's fantastic to believe that somebody would die, and would be able to pay for another person's sin," because he didn't understand that, at Christmas time, was born a child, who was conceived without a human father. Therefore, He had no sin nature. You have to a human father to have a sin nature. It's your father that transmits the sin nature to you, not your mother.

John 3:36: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon Him." Sagan did not believe in Christ. Now the wrath of God is what he has to look forward to for *billions and billions and billions* of years.

Then there is 2 Corinthians 4:3-4: "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case, the god of this world (that is, Satan) has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." Now we come to one of the most awesome realities of Scripture. Paul, in Romans 3:10 says, "There is none righteous, no not one." And all these are quotes from the Old Testament. He also says, in quoting Psalms 10:4, "There is none that seek after God: no, not one." Then he goes on and describes how horrible people are by their nature, but none of them seek after God.

Here we have, in this verse, made clear that it is God who calls you that enables you to wake up and see the truth. Satan has blinded the eyes of those so that they do not see. But God demonstrates His love to bring us the enlightenment that we need.

Revelation 3:22 says, "He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." And what he says to the churches is recorded here in Scripture. But unless God opens those ears, you will be deaf and dumb, and you'll be unable to know the reality of what God has done for you.

**Hell**

Revelation 20:10: "And the devil, who deceives them, was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." There's nobody now in the lake of fire, which we commonly refer to as "hell." There's nobody there. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that there are two persons there now: the devil (which is not true); and, Martin Luther, because he messed up the Catholic system, and that's not true either. And I've seen in Rome, in the church of great marble floors, a great statue where a serpent (Satan) is defeating two writhing figures. On one, it says "Martin Luther." The other says "John Calvin." And they're being brought down because there were two of the great reformers that brought people back to the Bible, and thus to the light, and thus to the capacity to go to heaven, which had been denied people in the medieval church.

But nobody's in the lake of fire now. Later on, the weigh station, which contains the unsaved, which is Hades, we are told, will be dumped into the lake of fire. And all the people who have ever lived, from Adam on down, who are unsaved, will be dumped then in mass (Revelations 20:15) into the lake of fire, following the great white throne judgment.

So, here in Revelation 20:10, we have the devil, for whom the lake of fire was created, and his demons, and his two agents here, the false prophet and the antichrist – they're going to be there, and they'll be tormented day and night forever." This is at the beginning of the 1,000-year millennial reign of Christ on this earth. At the end of that millennial period, we look back into the lake of fire, and the antichrist and the false prophet are still alive, and they're still suffering. So, you never, as the Jehovah's Witnesses (JW's) falsely teach, are forever rubbed out of existence. You will always exist, from the moment that you are conceived in your mother's womb.

Revelation 20:15, therefore says, "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." And Dr. Sagan has found how true that is, as he now resides with the rich man in the weigh station of Hades. Poor Carl Sagan – our hearts go out to him, deceived by Satan, who was parading as an intellectual. And Sagan, as an intellectual, was drawn to Satan, the false intellectual. Sagan was a genuine intellectual. But the Bible tells us that man by wisdom knew not God. By human wisdom, you never come to God. It comes from the Bible through a pastor-teacher and a local church that gathers to be instructed. That's the system.

2 Corinthians 11:14 points out: "No wonder even Satan disguises himself as an agent of light." So, Dr. Sagan was trapped, as so many have been trapped, by this false intellectual, Satan.

We have found in the book of Colossians that a believer is qualified to be transferred from Satan's domain (his slave market of sin) into the kingdom of Jesus Christ because a price, the price of death has been paid, and that is ultimately the meaning (the significance and the message) of Christmas. Redemption has been made. The price of getting out of the slave market has been paid for all humanity.

**Unlimited Atonement**

Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live (this is true of every Christian), but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me, and delivered himself up for me." Because of that redemption, you are qualified to be taken out of Satan's slave market, and put into the freedom of God's grace as a child of God. The redemption price has been paid for all mankind, and thus we say that atonement is unlimited. What are we saying? We're saying that Dr. Sagan's sins have been paid for. We're saying that Dr. Sagan has been redeemed, potentially. But he refused to accept the redemption. You can't do anything to earn it, or to deserve it, but you are required to believe it. You are required to take as truth what is recorded in Scripture, and what God has said: that this is the way.

**Christmas**

This is the meaning of Christmas. Redemption is what it's all about. And when this great event was announced, in Luke 2:10-11, that's what it focused on: "And the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold I bring you good news of great joy, which shall be for all people. For today in the city of David, there has been born for you a Savior who is Christ the Lord." What is that talking about? It's talking about redemption. And because that redemption was for everyone, we say that salvation is unlimited. The atonement is unlimited.

This is declared for us if you'll turn to 2 Corinthians 5:14. The apostle Paul says, "For the love of Christ controls us. Having concluded this: that one died for all. Therefore, all died." We have just read where the apostle Paul said, "When Jesus died on the cross, I died with Him, because He died in my place. Therefore, the penalty of death has been paid by me through Christ. I could not pay it because I'm a sinner, but He could, because he was sinless. So, in my place, He died for all.

2 Corinthians 5:15 says, "And he died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." He did it for us. He controls us. The love of Christ presses in on us from all sides. This means that Christ's debt was the purchase price for redemption from the slave market of sin for every human being. That includes the rejectors as well.

2 Peter 2:1: "False prophets, who arose among the people, just as there also will be false teachers among you who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves." Here are people who are going to deny Jesus Christ, Who bought them. And that's what Dr. Sagan did. He denied Christ the Lord (Christ the Savior), Who has paid for his sin – Who redeemed him.

This is even more explicit in 1 John 2:2: "And He Himself (Christ) is the propitiation (the satisfaction) for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." Satisfaction of what? Satisfaction of the justice of God. The Bible says that the wages of sin is death. Sin must be paid for by death. If you're a sinner, you have no way of paying for it. You're already spiritually dead. Christ died spiritually and physically upon the cross. And in that way, He paid the debt for sin – the price of redemption. The sins of the whole world were placed on the Lord Jesus Christ in a moment on the cross.

Hebrews 12:2, "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, Who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." What was the joy? The joy was that He would pay the price of redemption. The joy was that, from Adam to the last person who shall ever live, he paid the penalty of death for that individual.

**Redeemed, Unsaved People**

So, what we have is the terrible realization that there are some redeemed, unsaved people. All those who are in Hades including now, Dr. Sagan, are redeemed, unsaved individuals. Christ has done the work for them, but they thumbed their nose at it. They were too smart. They were too clever. They thought that they had the intellectual wisdom and insights, but it was darkness that came from Satan.

Please turn to Revelation 20:11-12 once more. All that a sinner needs to do now, to cross over that gulf that existed between Abraham and the rich man, is to believe that God has removed the sin problem: to believe that he has been redeemed – that the price has been paid for releasing him from that slave market. To do that, he must depend upon the work of Jesus Christ in redemption rather than on his own merits in any way to get to heaven. You can't even add some of your good things to God's good work through Christ. That spoils it. God says, "I'll give it to you by grace, as a gift. If you add anything to it, you have nothing. God in eternity will mention no sin to the unbeliever. They're not going to talk about your sins if you go to hell. That's not the issue, because your sins have been taken care of by the redemption price that's been paid. It's the fact that you wouldn't accept the gift of eternal life. That's the issue – not to believe in Christ. That's the issue, because as we have seen Christ die for all. The atonement is unlimited. Unbelievers want to flee from this judgment, but they have no place to go to escape.

Notice Revelation 20:11. At this point in time, all those now who have been in the holding pen of Hades (who are unsaved) are brought before God: "And I saw a great white throne and him (probably Christ) who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them." This is why we say that the great white throne judgment will be in outer space. Heaven and earth flees from them. Heaven can't stand it. Earth can't stand it. This horrendous thing that's going to be done – human beings who are unsaved but are redeemed. Human beings who are unsaved, but for whom redemption has been provided. That's going to be a horrible sight. So God says, "It's not for earth. It's not for Heaven. I'm sticking it out here (oh no), in the interstellar spaces that Carl Sagan knew so well. He's going to stand and look around himself, close up to what he knew so much about from his study through the telescope? And now he's going to face the glory of God in brilliance at the great white throne judgment. What's going to happen?

**The Book of Life**

In Revelation 20:12, what's going to happen is that two books are going to be brought out of God's record: "And I saw the dead (the unsaved dead), the great and the small." These are the great ones like Sagan, and the insignificant ones like some poor nobody, "Standing before the throne, and books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life." This is referred to elsewhere in a Scripture as the Lamb's Book of Life. In the Lamb's book of life are recorded the names of only those who are born-again. There is a book called the Book of Life. That is a book which records everybody who has ever been conceived, whether they have come to life, or they abort you. You are conceived. You are a human being. And you are recorded in God's Book of Life. Then you are given the opportunity to take advantage of the redemption which Christ has given you to trust in Christ as Savior, believing on Him. Then your name is permanently recorded in the Book of Life. If you die without taking advantage of the redemption, then your name is erased from that book.

"I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne. And books were opened, and another book was opened, the Book of Life. And the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds." How in the world do most people want to go to heaven? By their deeds? Their bad deeds? No, they're good deeds. And they're all recorded. And these good deeds are not going to cut it for them. The book that's important is this Book of Life.

This is referred to earlier in Revelation 3:5: "He who overcomes (that refers to someone who's born-again) shall thus be clothed in white raiment (a symbol of absolute righteousness) and I will not erase his name from the Book of Life. And I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." Jesus Christ says, "Those who trust Me as Savior, I will symbolically clothe them in white garments (meaning that they have the absolute righteousness). They are as good as I am before God morally now. My righteousness is imputed to them. And I will not erase their names from the Book of Life, because now they have the believed." The Book of Life becomes the Lamb's Book of Life, the final edition.

Then there in Revelation 21:27: "And nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying shall ever come into it (this is the new Jerusalem), but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. New Jerusalem is another expression for heaven. It actually is a place that you will reside in. It will actually be places of residence for your body to be in. And the Lamb's Book of Life identifies who the tenants are at that time.

So, here in Revelation 20:12, we read that there's a Book of Life, and then there's another book. And this Greek word for "another" is "allos" (al'-los). This indicates that it's a different kind of book. It's not like this first book. In other words, it's the contrast of the Lamb's Book of Life of God. Here in this book are recorded all the deeds of the unbelievers: all their bad deeds; but, also all their good deeds. But since you are an unbeliever, everything you do is tainted by the sin nature. Therefore, all your good is human good. God calls it "filthy righteousness" in Isaiah 64:6. It counts for nothing with God. The redemption that Christmas set in motion is meaningless and useless because you rejected it.

So, these people have all their evil of human good and sins recorded, and all that has been covered by the unlimited atonement of the redemption of Jesus Christ. But all of the good works of the unbelievers, standing before the great white throne judgment, including Dr. Sagan, will add up to less than the standard required of the perfect righteousness of God. So, they will be doomed to the lake of fire. They will be judged according to the works that they've offered in place of Christ's work on the cross. They'll be judged on the basis of their human good. And their human good is only going to make things worse for them. The more human good you have, and the more evil you've produce, the greater it will be your punishment. That's another principle of the Bible: the more evil, the greater the punishment.

So, this is a sobering event, out in space, of the great white throne. And here are people for whom the full price of redemption was paid. It was provided by Jesus Christ. Those who believed have had this wonderful thing credited to their account. Those who did not believe have lost everything. There's only one issue in terms of your destiny in eternity. And that is unbelief in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to pay for your sin slavery guilt: unbelief in the redemption which He has provided.

**Belief**

So here's the alternative. And this is what is the issue at Christmas with the birth of the Christ child. Your alternative is either John 3:16, "For God so loved the world (the unsaved world), that He gave His Only Begotten (that is, His unique, one-of-a-kind Son), "that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." You believe in the fact that Christ has paid for your redemption. You don't go inviting Him into your heart. You don't invite Him into your life. You don't use all those pop-Christianity phrases which Satan has invented to keep you from knowing how to be saved. You simply believe that God is telling you the truth. Your redemption is paid for.

What happens? You believe in Him. You will not perish but have eternal life. And the word "perish" is a very strong word. It means to rot like stinking, petrifying meat. You will not rot.

The other side that you may choose from is Revelation 20. And Dr. Sagan went for this one: "If anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

So you, in effect, have two "whosoevers:" "whosoever" in John 3:16 believes; and, in Revelation 20:15, "whosoever" does not believe. And you're going to take one or the other. Believe what? You believe that redemption has been paid for, and you gladly receive it; or, you don't believe that redemption has been paid for, and you try to make it on your own, without the grace gift of God.

It is one or the other because of what 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 declare to us that God has done. Paul says, "For I deliver to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." The apostle Paul says, "Here's the gospel. Christ bore your sins. He died to pay the price of sin – the penalty of death to get you redeemed (to pay the redemption price), and to get you out of the slave market of condemnation. And then He was buried, and He arose again. And by that resurrection (God the Father raised Him physically), proving that the provision that He made of payment for sin was true. It really covered your sins. Had he not covered the sins of all mankind, He would still be in the grave. And He did this according to the Scriptures, as he explained to the two men on the road to Emmaus." This has been revealed through the Old Testament. This is exactly the way it was carried out.

Now you must make the choice. Will you take the redemption that was made possible by the Christmas event, or will you reject that redemption which has been made for all mankind? What a tragedy! What a tragedy to turn your back on this grace gift of God, and try to make it on your own. I wish that Dr. Sagan could now step up and give us his testimony.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank You for this Christmas good joy.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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