

# Deal Pentecostal Church Training School

Reference Material

## Study 12 Heaven and Hell

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## Heaven And Hell

Petts, D., *You'd Better Believe It*, Mattersey, Mattersey Hall, 1999.  
(Ch.20 Heaven and Hell, pp136-141)

In our final chapter we turn our attention to what in some ways is the most puzzling mystery of life. People everywhere and in every age have sought to interpret it. To a great extent the existence of most of the world's major religions is a result of man's attempt to understand it. It is a universal phenomenon. We call it death.

As we saw right at the beginning of this book, what we believe is of vital importance. As we now turn in conclusion to the subject of life after death, the need for right teaching should be obvious to each one of us. How grateful we should be that, amid the dreadful darkness of the demonic doctrines propounded by the spiritists and by the heathen world in general, we have the searchlight of the word of God, breaking through the misty gropings of human imagination and speculation, illuminating our thinking, enlightening our minds and revealing the truth!

Not that the heathen world has possessed a monopoly of human speculation! The so-called Christian church has had its share! There is no biblical support for the doctrine of purgatory, or the teaching of universalism, or the belief in conditional immortality, soul-sleep and annihilation, for example. Whatever our background may be, if as born-again Christians we will search the scriptures with open hearts and with the help of the Holy Spirit, there are certain basic truths which, despite all difficulties, will stand out so clearly that only blind prejudice could possibly ever cause us to close our eyes to them.

## **The immortality of the soul**

One fact about which both Old and New Testaments are extremely clear is that physical death is not the termination of our existence. The great emphasis, however, is not so much upon the immortality of the soul as upon the certainty of bodily resurrection. Nevertheless, continuity of existence after death is taught in the scriptures, and all theories of 'soul-sleep' must accordingly be rejected.

Even in the Old Testament man is not seen as ceasing to exist after death. His soul descends to 'Sheol' (usually translated 'grave' or 'hell') where the dead are gathered in tribes (Ezekiel 32:17-32) and receive the dying (Isaiah 14:9-10). It is in the New Testament, however, that the teaching is made explicit. In Matthew 22:32 the Lord Jesus made clear to the doubting Sadducees not only that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would one day rise from the dead, but that they were even 'living' at that very moment. To the repentant thief on the cross Jesus said, Today you will be with me in paradise (Luke 23:43).

Some have suggested that the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) is simply a case of Jesus using current Jewish thought and not intended to be taken literally. But if that were so Jesus' teaching would be extremely misleading, to say the least! The literal truth of Jesus' words is confirmed by the apostle Peter who speaks of the unrighteous dead as 'spirits in prison' (1 Peter 3:19) and by the apostle Paul for whom to be 'away from the body' was to be 'at home with the Lord' (2 Corinthians 5:8).

## **The resurrection of the body**

As we have already mentioned, however, a far greater emphasis is placed in scripture upon the certainty of physical resurrection for all mankind. What was foreseen by Isaiah (26:19) and Daniel (12:2), Jesus categorically stated:

A time is coming when all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come out; those who have done good will rise to live; and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned (John 5:28-29).

Compare also such passages as John 6:39, 40, 44; 11:24-25; 1 Corinthians 15:50-56, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Revelation 20:13.

In the verses quoted above, and in Daniel 12:2, two different kinds of resurrection are clearly anticipated. Revelation 20:5-6 indicates that there is to be a time lapse of a thousand years between them. This is usually referred to as the millennium. The precise timing of such events related to the Second Coming of Christ need not concern us in this study, however. Equally sincere Christians hold a variety of differing views concerning this vastly complex subject. What is most important to notice is that all people are to be resurrected, some to life and others to condemnation. The really crucial question is: Who goes where?

### **Heaven and hell: who goes where?**

As we have already seen in previous chapters, no one ever enters heaven by virtue of their own merit. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The end-product of sin is death (James 1:15, Romans 6:23). Our only hope is that God, who does not want anyone to perish (2 Peter 3:9), should have mercy on us. That mercy has in fact been demonstrated to us very clearly in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

It is God's revealed will that all people should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. This is why the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only mediator between God and man, gave himself as a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:3-6). John's Gospel makes it very clear that all those who put their trust in

Christ's atoning sacrifice have everlasting life and that all others will be condemned (John 3:14-18, 36; 5:24; 6:47; 20:31). The 'resurrection to life', then, is for those who have put their trust in Christ as Saviour. The 'resurrection to condemnation' is for those whom reject him. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 reveals that the essential nature of what we call 'hell' is being shut out from the presence of the Lord. Perhaps the simplest way to understand heaven and hell, then, is to think of heaven as eternity spent in God's presence and to think of hell as eternity shut off from God's presence.

In making this simplification, however, we must be careful not to minimise the awfulness of hell on the one hand or the glories of heaven on the other. The biblical descriptions of the torment of hell are extremely graphic and must never be taken lightly. It was Jesus himself who spoke of the fire of hell (Matthew 5:22), outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12) and eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46). It was Jesus who told us of a man tormented in hell (Luke 16:23). We should let the awful solemnity of these statements sink deep into our souls. Hell is revealed as everlasting, conscious punishment, and it is for those who will not believe (Mark 16:16).

### **The urgent need for action**

As we meditate upon these divinely revealed truths we should pray that they may be indelibly impressed upon our hearts by the Spirit of God. God is not willing that any should perish. It is man who has determined his own destiny by his wilful rejection of God's love. God has done all that he can do to reconcile the sinner to himself. The work was finished at Calvary. Life is offered to all. For those who refuse God's offer of mercy the consequences are inevitable. For those who accept it there is the assurance of eternal life in heaven.

But all over the world there are still multitudes who have never really heard of God's love. Many are seeking to justify themselves in God's sight by their own futile efforts. They do not know that it is with the heart that you believe and are justified (Romans 10:10). They do not know that all they have to do is to call on the name of the Lord to be saved (Romans 10:13). How then can they call on one whom they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? (Romans 10:14).

They cannot call on God to save them if they have not heard the good news of the gospel. And they will not hear unless they are told. And they will not be told unless we tell them. It is our responsibility to go into all the world to preach the gospel, to make disciples of all nations (Mark 16:15, Matthew 28:19). If we are going to do it effectively we will need to be endowed with power from on high (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8). But once we have been filled with the Spirit, it is our responsibility to go. If we really believe these things, we do well to ask ourselves what we are doing about it.

## **The Miracle Of Judgement**

Mike Petzer *(produced by Deal Pentecostal Church)*

### **Past Judgment:**

The single most liberating truth in the believer's life is this — judgment has already been passed on him. For the believer, the judgment that is past is the source of his confidence before God; judgment future is his consolation; judgement present is his security. "*... mercy triumphs over judgment.*" *James 2:13*  
*"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment...."* *1John 4:18*

God's mercy and love are both founded on His holiness and justice. He does not ignore or even suspend one part of His being in order to exercise the other part. He does not override justice nor violate His holiness in order to show mercy. It is because God has already punished all sin in Jesus' perfect sacrifice that He can be merciful toward "sinners" and still be perfectly just, loving, yet still holy.

The believer's confidence springs from this fact, not that he has escaped judgment, but that judgment has been fully executed upon him and that his acquittal is firmly founded on judgment satisfied and not because it has been avoided. Just like the father who came home and found his son standing next to a broken vase that lay shattered all over the floor. He promptly informed the boy that he was going to spank him for the crime, but the little boy boldly responded, "You cannot Daddy, Mommy has already spanked me!" He who has been judged, found guilty and punished, cannot legally be made to pay twice for the same crime.

The desire to have judgment over and done with — a thing of the past, is founded on the desire for fellowship.

When judgment is deferred, fellowship is strained. Insecurity and fear thrive. Judgment passed brings security and peace which are the essential foundations of a lasting, flourishing relationship.

I remember when I was a child that my father would ask me to do certain tasks from time to time. As any other child, for one reason or another, I would neglect to complete them as was required of me. When I would see my father returning after the day's work, I would suddenly realize that the "time of judgment" for neglecting his instructions was imminent. I was filled with a sense of guilt and an overwhelming desire to place as much distance between myself and him as possible.

The only problem was that, in the process of avoiding judgment, I had lost my sense of peace. The low-level-stress of no peace finally became more unbearable than the prospect of a spanking. I faced up to the consequences, was punished and immediately was flooded with relief and at peace again with my father, with our fellowship restored.

God's judgement is essentially redemptive. Unquestionably the greatest judgment that has ever been upon any man, is that judgment which fell upon Jesus as being the representative of the whole human race and all its sin. It is through this judgment that God established for all men, "Such a great salvation". Through this judgment we see that the ultimate purpose of every judgment is not to write us off but to redeem us. Not to destroy man, but to deliver him. Not to hurt men, but to heal them. Not to crush but to change. This is also illustrated throughout the Old Testament book of Judges. The judges were men who "judged Israel". Their judgment was characterized by acts of deliverance for Israel from all their oppressors. With the result that Israel was made prosperous again as a nation after a period of great, albeit self inflicted, hardship. The judges' judgments were against the people's enemies and they ensured that the promises of God remained Israel's experience.

In the New Testament, Paul writes, "*I have been crucified with Christ.*" *Galatians 2:20*. This is in fact true for all believers just as it says, "*One died for all, therefore all have died.*" *2Cor.5:14* Since Jesus' death was the penalty for all of mankind's sin, and we died with him, then we are already effectively punished for all our sins. He, by the grace of God, did "*taste death for everyone.*" *Hebrews 2:9b*

He died for all sin. Sins we have committed, do commit and even those that we may yet commit. When the Father placed



all sin on his Son and punished him in our stead, he did so with absolute knowledge. "All sin" for the Father is every sin whether they were past, present or future. He died once and for all. There is no sin that will require him to die a second time. Jesus' final cry from the cross of, "It is finished!" proclaimed that man's outstanding debt of sin was cancelled once and for all. There is nothing that we can do as believers that will catch God by surprise. There is no sin that we could do that he has not already paid for. He has settled the sin issue so thoroughly in the believer's life, that, when he comes a second time, it will be just as the scripture says, "*Without reference to sin*". <sup>Hebrews 9:28</sup> There is no condemnation for us who are in Christ Jesus. Neither now, nor in the future. Jesus put it this way, "*He who hears my word, and believes him who sent me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.*" <sup>John 5:24</sup>

We are now living in the realm of life. And this life does not come into judgment, because we are partakers of His own spotless life the moment we believed. We are joined to Him. We were one with Him when he was put to death, crucified, punished, raised and ascended to the Father's right hand (Ephesians 2:1-6). We are now one with Him in His blameless life. "*For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.*" <sup>Romans 6:5</sup> No present or future judgment can ignore this past judgment. It is the very foundation of our salvation and confidence before God.

## **Present Judgment:**

### ***Judgment And Punishment***

We have established that the believer has been judged, found guilty and punished in Jesus' death. His punishment was Jesus' death. It is for this reason alone that we are not judged for

our sins. *"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already."* <sup>John 3:18</sup> The Gospel of John then goes on to say that this judgment is one that the unbeliever has passed on himself. They have chosen darkness rather than the light (John 3:19).

Therefore the unbeliever's judgment is self imposed. It is a true statement that, "God sends no man to hell, they choose to go there of their own free will." The unbeliever has rejected real life and is therefore, by default, condemned to an inferior, base existence in this life and a fearful punishment in eternity. All of this is the result of his own choice just as Paul said to the unbelieving Jews *"It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles."* <sup>Acts 13:46</sup> Hell is not the result of a wrong life, but of the ultimate bad choice — the rejection of Jesus.

### ***Wrath, As Understood In The New Testament***

We are in the habit of viewing wrath as something that only happens in the future, but the New Testament speaks of it as the present tense experience of all unbelievers. *"He who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."* <sup>John 3:36</sup> This same concept is expanded on in Romans chapter one. Paul tells us here that since they *"did not honour Him as God"* (v21) and because, *"they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man, birds, four-footed animals and crawling creatures"* (v23), that God withdrew his restraining hand from them and allowed them to pursue their own course of self-degradation, self-denigration and self-destruction. These verses are a commentary on the truth stated in verse 18, *"For the wrath of God is revealed [not, will be revealed] from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."*

The use of the words "*God gave them over*" in verses 24, 26 and 28 clearly illustrate the point that wrath is not that God is actively punishing sinful men, but that he is allowing them to experience the resultant fruit of their own errors without intervening to stop them. Just as he says in Romans 1:27b, they are "*receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.*" Effectively this wrath is the by-product of their errors and not the action of an "angry God".

There is, of course, a wrath yet to come, but we are dealing with present judgment. Man, not God, is the cause of the present suffering and hardship in this world. He is experiencing the moral, social and personal confusion that is the effect of a lost identity and greed.

Neglecting or rejecting the revelation of God produces terrible results. If we look at the effects of false religion on the peoples of India and the other eastern countries, where children die of malnutrition in the streets while people feed slick, fat cattle as gods, we see this clearly illustrated.

They have no room for pity or compassion in such a belief. To help someone in a poor condition is to ensure that they come back and live in the same condition again, because to help them is to short circuit the process of their punishment for bad "karma" because, as the Hindu believes, their current condition is a reward for their deeds in a supposed "former life." So why bother? Even killing someone is not considered a bad thing by the Hindu. For the Christian we pass through this world but once but according to the Hindu, this is but one of many lives that he is living. So why should sending someone on his way to the next life earlier than what he expected be such a terrible thing to him after all?

## ***Discipline - The Chastening Of The Believer***

*"But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world."* <sup>1Cor.11:31,32</sup>

The believer can escape all judgment by simply obeying the clearly revealed will of God for his life in the Word. Much of what people term "learning from experience" is learning under judgment. It is far better for you to experience God's promise than to experience the fruit of your neglect of His of word.

*"It is for discipline that you endure, God is treating you as sons."* <sup>Hebrews12:7</sup>

The son the Father does not discipline, is the son the Father does not love. God will not let you do your own thing. When God puts a bit in your mouth and turns your head the way you ought to go - that is not hurtful to you. Just as the Psalmist says, *"Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, Otherwise they will not come near to you."* <sup>Psalms32:9</sup> Only when we choose to operate without insight or ignore the clear revelation of God does it become necessary to use drastic measures.

It would be harmful to you if he let you get your own way when it is opposite to his will for your life. This is the action of God's love. We need to settle in our hearts that the best thing for our lives is God's will.

When God judges, he does it to preserve the quality of life he always intended for us to enjoy. God will not pamper your weakness. Sometimes we want to hang onto our weaknesses that are actually killing us and so God has to wrest them violently from us. The rocks on which the ship of our false confidence is wrecked are not dangerous to us. They are a blessing because they expose the fact that our confidence is not completely in God. God's chastisement is seen in those

difficult times when our false confidences are permitted to be destroyed. God's present judgment of the believer is essentially revelatory. It unmask our bad decisions. My loss is only apparent — not real. Those things which I thought that I could not live without, I find that I can do without them all and yet enjoy more happiness in my life than ever before. I am permitted by the resultant bad experience to see the true folly of each deception so that I may find my fulfilment in God alone.

Those troublesome times are a blessing. This is not God proving that he is right and we are wrong. It is to our advantage that we are made stronger by the removal of the things we were deceived into trusting in. Discipline cuts us off from things that we are dependent on or were enslaved to which are detrimental to our physical, spiritual and emotional well being. All discipline seems not to be joyful at the time, and yet, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11). For the believer there is a great blessing in judgment. For example, the rain that fell during the flood in Noah's days destroyed the world of sin but elevated the believers to the highest place — Ararat. What began as judgment, rainfall, is considered a blessing now and is essential for growth. This should be proof enough that judgment causes growth.

Now, you can grow through obedience to the Word (that is, confronting yourself with the Word and overcoming your own disobedience) or through the judgment/discipline that comes through disobedience to the Word (that is, being confronted by your own disobedience). This judgment is when God permits us to experience the difficulty inflicted on us by our own wrong choice so that we may come to our senses and see the error of our bad decision. You have a choice! You can avoid being trained by "discipline" by

believing the Word and by acting on it. However, if we are not trained by the Word, then we must eat the fruit of our unbelief. I have told our congregation that there are two ways to grow. One way is by listening to the Word and putting it into practice and the other is by going through a hard time and then listening to the Word and putting it into practice. A good idea is to avoid the hard time bit and just put the Word into practice first time around. God wants us to live. He hates death and death is anything outside his will for our lives. God is out to kill death. In whatever shape it appears.

To clarify, God is not the source of these problems, our bad choices are. Yes, he has the power to stop them, but he will not override the human will. Man's freedom of choice is a sacred thing to God and he will not violate it. God does not force his will on any man. God will not force you to be blessed. You are free to live outside of and with less than what He has promised. It was because of this freedom to exercise his free will that Adam is rightfully regarded as being solely responsible for the fall. God had nothing to do with it. Yes He had the power to stop it, but he would not interfere with Adam's choice even though the fall of man was not his will. **Once again, it is wrong to think that everything that happens to us is God's will.** You cannot escape discipline if you are disobedient to the Word. There will always be a negative result for living outside of the will of God as it is revealed in the Word of God. Peter tells us that *"they stumble because they are disobedient to the word."* <sup>1 Peter 2:8</sup> We cannot escape the law of cause and effect. Peter calls this, *"Suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong."* <sup>2Peter 2:13</sup> and speaks of those who through destructive heresies and by denial of the truth *"Bring swift destruction upon themselves."* <sup>2 Peter 2:1</sup> Remember, God lets us see the error of our ways so that we can correct them. God

would be doing us great harm by permitting us to continue in disobedience under the illusion that it is not harmful to us.

When we are judged, we are disciplined so that we are not condemned together with the rest of the world (1Corinthians11:32). **Judgment for the believer is not condemnation.** The scripture is clear that there is no condemnation for the believer (Romans 1:8). It is far better for us to experience God's judgment (i.e. his discipline) now, than to wake up at the end of the age and find ourselves condemned. Condemnation, as far as discipline is concerned, is when we are not judged.

### ***What are we to endure then?***

Some have held, mistakenly, to the opinion that to "endure hardship as discipline" or "chastening" includes the idea of sickness.

Firstly, is the discipline from God? If the discipline is the result of God's dealing with us, surely we should respond to it and correct the problem rather than "endure" it. "Enduring God" or any of God's actions does not conjure up a positive image and cannot be considered as a godly thing that the Word of God would encourage us to do. But we are told to endure discipline, so how should we understand this verse?

The believer is not told to endure sickness, sin or temptation. Concerning sin and temptation he is told to resist them (Hebrews 12:4). Sickness is not mentioned anywhere in the book of Hebrews. So what must we endure?

Paul told Timothy to, "*Suffer (endure) hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*" <sup>2Tim.2:3</sup>. The "hardship" in this instance was Paul's imprisonment, being treated as a criminal for preaching the gospel. The same kind of hardship is in mind when the writer to the Hebrews encourages the recipients of his letter to endure hardship or persecution.

Consider the heroes of faith mentioned in chapter 11. Verses 33-37 give us an account of how they suffered terrible persecution and still did not give up on the divine promise. The recipients of this letter are also called upon to remember the former days when they "*endured a great conflict of sufferings... made a public spectacle... reproaches... tribulations... seizure of your property.*" <sup>Hebrews 10:32-34</sup> These are the kind of hardships they were to endure without giving up on the Perfect Covenant together with the Old Testament saints as their "*cloud of witnesses.*" <sup>Hebrews 12:1</sup> Jesus also is a faithful witness who "*endured such hostility by sinners against himself.*" <sup>Hebrews 12:3</sup> They were, and we are, to endure without giving up on our faith, the inevitable hostility of the unbeliever against us. Persecution is to be endured, temptation is to be resisted and sickness is to be healed.

### **Persecution**

*"For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God."* <sup>1Peter 4:17</sup>

Much has been said about this verse, but any verse out of context can become a pretext for misunderstanding. The preceding verses contain these clauses "*do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you which comes upon you for testing*" (v12) and "*if you are reviled for the name of Christ*" (v14) and "*if anyone suffers as a Christian*" (v16). These show clearly that the judgment that is in mind here is persecution. Paul wrote, "*And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*" <sup>2 Timothy 3:12</sup> and Jesus assured his disciples that, "*In this world you shall have tribulation.*" <sup>John 16:33</sup>

**Firstly**, nowhere in 1 Peter 4:17 does it say that God is the source of this judgment. God is not persecuting his own children! On the contrary, all persecution of believers is not



from God but from the devil. He is the spirit that troubles the believer and stirs up persecutions all over the world.

**Secondly**, these persecutions are not because the believer has done something wrong, instead, they are proof of a godly life. They come upon us to test us and are an opportunity for God to be glorified and the world to see the effect of our testimony. We are encouraged to be *"in no way alarmed by (our) opponents which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you."*

*Philippians 1:28*. This persecution is always to be an opportunity for rejoicing (James 1:2-4; Matthew 5:10-12; 1Peter 3:14).

So what exactly is this judgment and who is passing it and upon whom is it being passed? This judgment is passed on the believer by the world. Communicating to us that we are considered by them to be *"men of whom the world was not worthy"*

*Hebrews 11: 38*, and that we are unwelcome here. Just as Jesus said, *"But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the courts, and scourge you in their synagogues; and you shall even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles."*<sup>Matthew 10:17-18</sup> This is proof for us that we are saved.

And in their case, through them passing this judgment on us, they are in fact judging themselves as those who are to be destroyed. Which destruction they have no power to inflict upon us and so they are not to be feared.

## **Future Judgment:**

### ***Future Judgment Of The Believer***

*"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."* <sup>2 Corinthians 5:10</sup>

The believer will be judged for deeds done in the body, whether good or bad. We must avoid all confusion here. Salvation is not based on what we have done, but on what Jesus did for us. The unsaved are not lost because of their

deeds, their deeds merely reflect how lost they are. Man is not unsaved because of what he has done, but because of what he has not done - he has not received Jesus Christ.

This judgment of the believer at the judgment seat of Christ is a judgment of his works and not his sin. The believer's sin has already been effectively and permanently judged in Christ Jesus. God will not dishonour his promise nor insult his Son's finished work by calling into question the guiltlessness of those for whom Jesus died.

The judgment of the believer is a testing of the quality of the work that he has done and not the quantity. It is on the basis of quality that the believer will be rewarded or lose his reward for his good works.

*"According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire."* <sup>1</sup>Corinthians 3:10-15

This reward will not only be for those who are in full time ministry or merely for those who do "truly spiritual" things like praying for the sick or leading people to the Lord. The believer will be rewarded even for the seemingly unspiritual, mundane, ordinary, day-to-day things, like how you did your job. *"Knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free."* <sup>Ephesians 6:8</sup>. Notice that it is *"whatever good thing we do,"* that we shall receive a

reward for from the Lord. Slaves in Paul's day were not able to leave home and become involved in the more obvious Christian service of being a missionary. They were owned by their master and had to do his bidding. Paul assures them that this serious restriction will not be a disadvantage to them on judgment day. They will be just as surely rewarded as the most eminent apostles since they did their daily work faithfully. The future judgment of the believer will be a positive judgment. A judgment of reward. True, some will lose their reward but all will be saved.

### ***Calling Jesus Lord, And Yet Still Lost?***

*"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 'And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'"* Matthew 7: 22-23

The words "***I never knew you***" are the key to understanding this verse. Notice that it does not say, "*You did not know me,*" but, "***I never knew you.***" Speaking of the Galatians' salvation Paul makes it clear that, "*Now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God.*" Galatians 4:9 Salvation is correctly, God knowing us, rather than us knowing God. So when Jesus said, "*I never knew you,*" He is letting us know that these people were never saved. It is not that they once were and then fell away for then He would have said, "*I knew you once...*" but he said, "*I never knew you.*"

Does not the evidence of the miraculous prove that these were saved? No! The seven sons of the high priest, Sceva, in the book of Acts were in the habit of doing certain miracles in the Name of Jesus also. "*...Some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus...*" Acts 19:13. The man with the demon

that stripped them naked was not the first time they had attempted to cast out a demon using Jesus Name. They had attempted it over a couple as the use of the plural "those" in the above verse also indicates. These were unsaved men.

### ***The Future Judgment Of The Unbeliever***

Although this booklet was written especially for believers, it would not be complete without dealing with the final condition of unbelievers.

*"And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds." Revelation 20:11,12*

Every unbeliever will appear before the "great white throne" of judgment. These are called the "dead" and are part of the "second resurrection," and because they are part of this "second resurrection" (unlike the believers) they are subject to the second death. The believer is part of the first resurrection, *"Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years."* Revelation 20:6

The dead are judged according to their deeds according to what is in the "books". But the final criterion for judgment is *"anyone whose name was not written in the Lamb's book of life"* (Eternal life is not a reward but a gift and not because of good deeds, but faith in Jesus Christ.) Those whose names are not in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire. *"And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."* Revelation 20: 15. Since they have rejected Jesus as their saviour they are subject to the second death. This death was never intended for man, but for the devil and his angels just

as the scripture says, *"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels'"* Matthew 25:41

The scripture also teaches that this is a punishment of eternal, conscious, torment without any break, day or night. *"And the devil who deceived 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."* Revelation 20:10

The believer has nothing to fear concerning this judgment of eternal punishment because *"God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,"* 1Thessalonians 5:9

On the contrary, it is because of Jesus that we are saved from the wrath of God. *"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him."* Romans 5:9 *"and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come."* 1Thessalonians 1:10

Mike Petzer

## **A New Heaven And A New Earth**

Corbett, A., *A New Heaven and a New Earth*, [www.andrewcorbett.net](http://www.andrewcorbett.net) 2007  
**The Bible's Prophetic Program Culminates With "A New Heaven and A New Earth".**

What might this mean? What are the implications of this? Does it have bearing on how we live today?

The Bible culminates its pages with the announcement that there will one day be a "new heaven and a new earth".

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. Revelation 21:1*

But what does this mean? The implications of how we understand this Bible prophecy are slightly enormous. I was recently discussing with another pastor some issue of concern

we shared about a potential environmental hazard. I ventured that we needed to take some action. He responded by expressing doubts that a pastor could achieve any change. Then he said, "...besides, this earth will soon pass away since the Bible says a 'new earth' is coming, so ultimately it doesn't really matter!" How we understand what the Bible means when it refers to a 'new heaven and a new earth' may well determine how we treat our 'existing' earth and the type of legacy we will leave for generations to come.

### **The Biblical expression of 'heaven & earth'...**

*"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind." Isaiah 65:17*

The context of the latter portion of Isaiah is the coming new covenant. Within this context the Lord speaks of creating a new heaven and a new earth. The expression heavens and earth seems to speak of God's relationship with mankind. He is the God of the heavens and the earth (Genesis 14:19; Ezra 5:11). Actually He is the God of the entire cosmos- but the expression heaven and earth emphasises His connection to mankind. And the expression heaven and earth may well refer to the covenant God has with mankind. When the Lord speaks of a new heaven and a new earth there may be some merit in regarding this as Biblical language for a new covenant.

This suspicion is increased when we consider how Christ used this expression as well: *For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Matt.5:18*

Since Christ fulfilled the Law, was He right in stating that heaven and earth passed away? If we regard the expression 'heaven and earth' as referring to God's covenant with mankind, then this statement makes perfect sense. It seems that Christ

was therefore saying that once the Old Covenant is fulfilled it will be done away with and replaced by a new covenant.

Hebrews 8:13 says that the Old Covenant became obsolete at the Cross, but it was still to be done away with. Since we now know that the Book of Revelation was written around 64AD (just after the Epistle to the Hebrews, which referred to the Old Covenant as still being in existence - note Hebrews 8:13) Revelation's announcement of a 'new heaven and a new earth' was perhaps announcing that a change in covenant-order was pending.

### **Future implications...**

The closing announcement of the Bible of a coming new heaven and new earth does have some future implications. But if we are conditioned into thinking only in terms of geography we may completely miss the point of what being in covenant with God is all about. **"Heaven" is not so much about a location as it is about a relationship!** Dying and going to heaven is not merely about a change in location but a blessing due to a covenant relationship with God. The most important thing you could do with your life now is not merely to prepare for heaven, but to ensure that you have entered into a relationship with God. **It is a misrepresentation of Christianity to think that Christ died so that people could go to heaven- He died so that people could be forgiven of their sin and enter into a covenant relationship with God!**

Could the picture of a new heaven and a new earth in the Book of Revelation be describing a coming new physical reality? Perhaps. But we have some Biblical precedent for regarding it as an expression of God's covenant relationship with mankind. Reading this closing passage of the Bible

reveals that a time is coming for God's elect when nothing will hinder their relationship with God.

Therefore, while there may be future physical implications of this Biblical prophecy, there might not be. This is why those who regard other verses, such as Psalm 78:69, as speaking of God having created the earth to last- *He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded forever. Psalm 78:69* If God has created the earth to last '*forever*' we might need to abandon our '*disposable earth*' theology and have a rethink about how Christians can be stewards not just exploiters of our environment. That's why our interpretation of this prophetic passage has such dire consequences if we get it wrong. I'm on a mission to counter this discrediting of Scripture. It is my mission to help reverse Biblical illiteracy rates and produce resources to help readers understand what they are reading and how to correctly interpret the Scriptures. I opened this article by saying that the issue of eschatology is secondary to how we read and interpret the Scriptures (Hermeneutics). That's why I've made my eBook- *The Most Embarrassing Book In The Bible* available for an immediate download. Thousands of people around the world have now read this eBook and many have written to me thanking me and others for promoting a more sound method for reading and interpreting the Bible. I encourage you to download this eBook and read for yourself an alternate view to End Times than the one presented by many of these pop-preachers. When I first released this eBook several years ago I was a bit of a lone voice. But now some big ministries are beginning to say the same things. Most notably is Hank Hanegraaff's latest book, *Unlocking The Apocalypse Code*, where he now makes the same assertions. I predict that in the days, weeks, months, years to come, Jesus Christ will be Lord and His Word will be found true and reliable.



## **Where Are The Dead?**

Andrew Corbett, September 25th 2006, Legana, Tasmania, (αω)

Sitting across from me in my office was an older middle-aged man who had just read my draft commentary on the Book of Revelation. He had come from Queensland to visit friends in Tasmania and while in the neighbourhood, dropped in to see me to have chat and get a later edition of my book. He asked a lot of theoretical questions and we discussed the implications of what we discussed. Not until he returned to Queensland did I get an email regarding the chapter on the Resurrection. It was at this point that he confided in me that he was in the advanced stages of cancer and that his query was far more than theoretical.

For some the question of where are the dead is indeed far more than just an exercise in theological speculation...

### **"Jesus unites, doctrine divides!"**

I wonder how many people who espouse this anti-doctrinal statement realise that it is ironically a doctrinal statement? The fact might actually be that this statement is exactly wrong and the opposite is correct! The true identity of Jesus has been dividing people for two millennia! And various doctrinal positions have been uniting people for nearly that long as well. When it comes to controversial doctrinal positions that Christians feel strongly about, we may never come to complete agreement or resolve every Scriptural difficulty, but at the least we can become familiar with the various positions held and test them against Scripture, history, experience, and logic. By doing this we may not necessarily conclude the same things, but at least we can be better positioned to defend our particular doctrines and know why we believe what we believe. To do this requires "Positive Exegesis" and "Negative

Exegesis". The latter concludes what the Scriptures are not saying, while the former concludes what the Scriptures are saying. All Bible students should be good exegetes. This demands that the student knows how to do positive and negative exegesis. That is, when interpreting a text we need to determine what the text doesn't say and explore the possibilities of what it could be saying. Using this same principle of both Positive and Negative Exegesis we can at least dispense with bad doctrines (those doctrines that cannot be supported from the Scriptures or can even be disproved from Scripture). We may not be able to be conclusive about what is the proper Biblical position on all issues. In those instances where there is reasonable disagreement we should at least be able to make a reasonable case for our doctrinal position and understand the contrary positions of others.

### **Where are the dead?**

Despite the advances in medical science, the death-rate is still 1:1. The Psalmist asked "*What man can live and never see death?*" (Ps.89:48a). To the ancients this was only half of the inevitable destiny of people. The other half of the given was stated by the same Psalmist in the same verse- "*Who can deliver his soul from Sheol?*" (Psalm 89:48b)

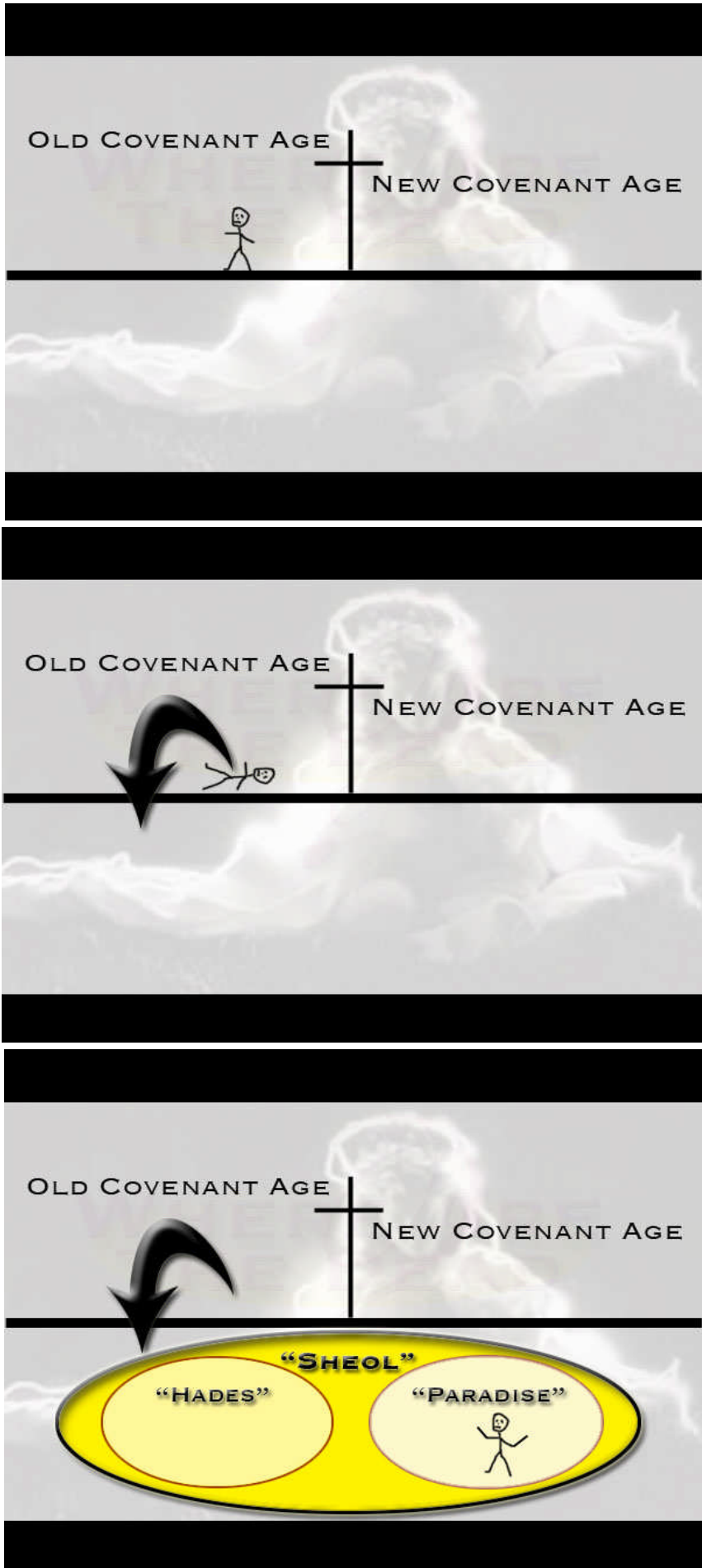
The ancients believed that death was merely a change of location for the soul of a person. The place of the dead was called "Sheol". When Jacob thought his son Joseph was dead: "*All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted and said, "No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning." Thus his father wept for him.*" (Gen. 37:35 ). When the judgment of God came upon Korah and his rebellion: "*So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.*" (Num. 16:33).

Sheol was variously referred to with other names depending on the literary genre. These included "Abaddon" (*Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD; how much more the hearts of the children of man! Prov. 15:11*); "the grave" (*Is your steadfast love declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon? Psalm 88:11*); "Hell" (*The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me. 2Samuel 22:6 KJV*). These Old Testament passages consistently teach that the dead did not go to their ultimate eternal destiny. That is, during the Old Covenant Age the righteous did not go to heaven, nor did the wicked go to eternal damnation. This perhaps gives us some understanding into the ideological origins of "soul sleep" and "purgatory".

The New Testament somewhat enlightens this when it introduces us to the revelation that Sheol has two compartments: Hades and Paradise. It also makes two overt claims that were previously just assumed in the Old Covenant. The first is that death is not the end, it is merely a "separation". *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (James 2:26)*

When a person physically dies their spirit is separated from their bodies. Their lifeless body decays while their spirit lives on. What many people who have come back from the dead have testified about seeing a bright light and tunnel seems to be in agreement with what the New Testament says about angels carrying the souls of the dead to the place of the dead. *The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried (Luke 16:22)*

The second overt claim of the New Testament is that all dead people will one day be resurrected- physically. But I will deal with this revelation in a moment. For now, let's examine what the Scripture reveals about the place of the dead as we seen thus far-



The story that Christ told in Luke 16 of the rich man and Lazarus is very revealing about the destiny of the dead. He described the two compartments of Sheol separated by a great chasm. The question that we should ask and explore is whether this is still the case since the Cross, or whether the New Covenant has made any difference to the destiny of the dead. What might surprise people is the difficulty in identifying exactly when the Old Covenant actually ended. How many people would consider John the Baptist a New Covenant prophet because they have assumed that the Old Covenant ended with the close of the Book of Malachi? How many people assume that the commencement of the New Covenant automatically cancelled the Old Covenant when the Book of Acts records the apostles continuing to worship in the Temple and partake of its ceremonies?

Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself along with them and went into the temple, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for each one of them. Acts 21:26 (Note also- Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:21, 25, 42)

Here we have the author to the Galatians partaking in Old Covenant ceremonies some twenty or more years after Calvary! When the disciples asked Christ about the end of the Old Covenant Age, He told them in Matthew 24 that it would coincide with the destruction of the Temple- *But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."* As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, *"Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?"* Matthew 24:2-3

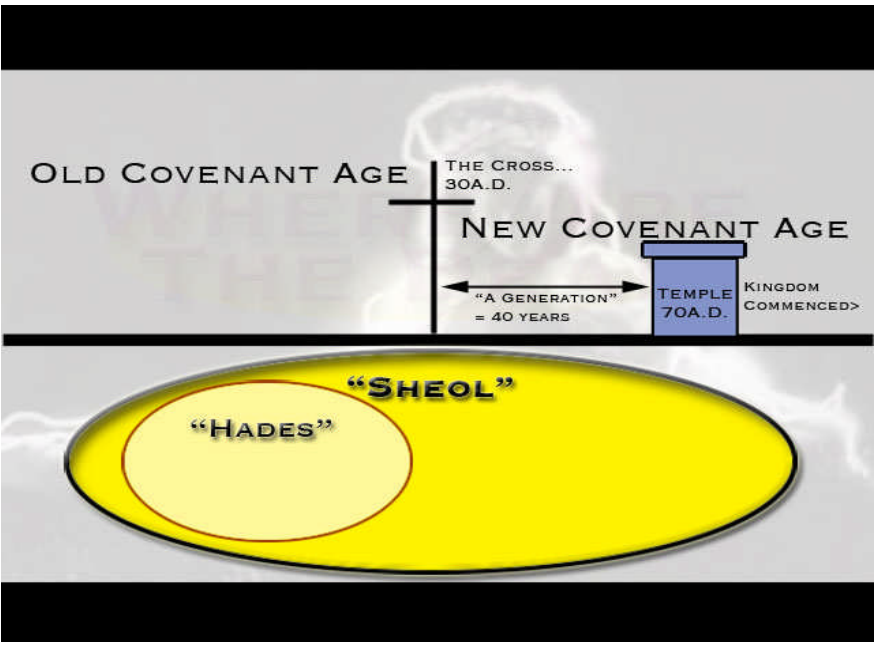
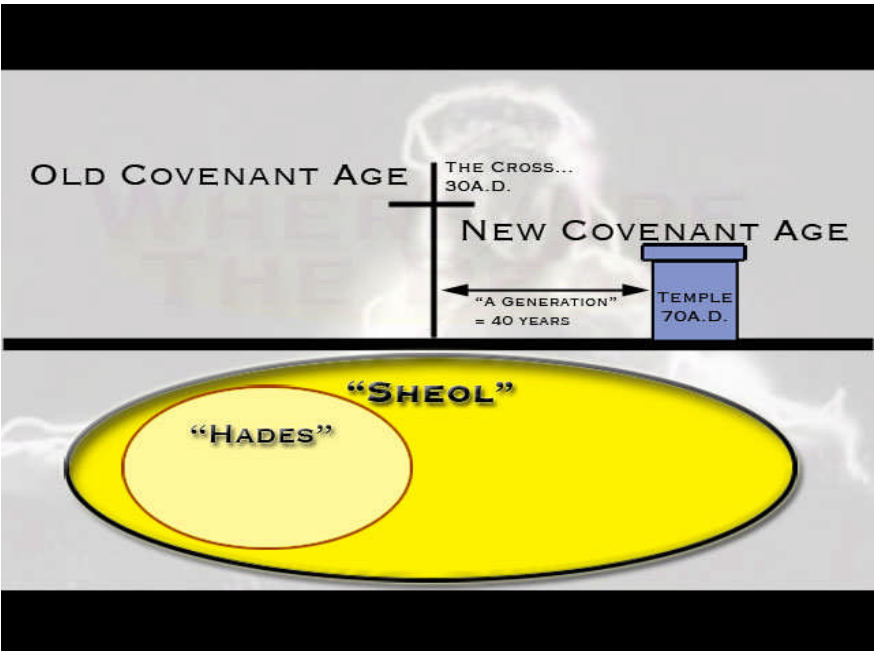
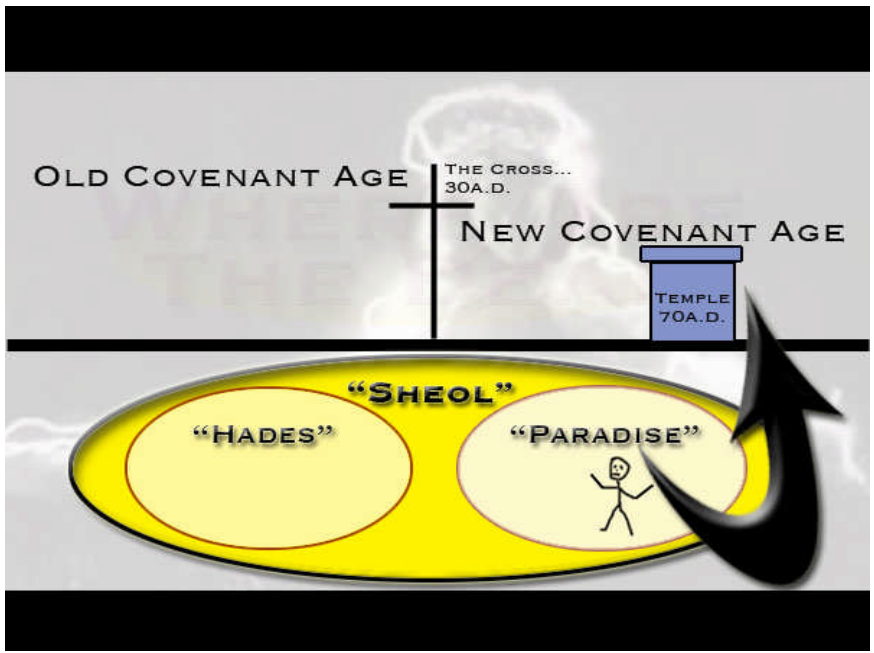
The writer to the Hebrews stated that the New Covenant had made the Old Covenant obsolete, but that it was yet to be

done away with. This suggests a temporary overlap of Old and New Covenants- *In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. Hebrews 8:13*

In Revelation 6 we are shown a glimpse of those who had died during this duality of Covenants. Following on the heels of the Four Horsemen (the rider of the white horse= Caesar Augustus; the rider of the red horse= Caesar Tiberius; the rider of the black horse= Caesar Caligula; the rider of the pale horse= Caesar Claudius, who coincides with famine according to Revelation 6:8 and is noted as being fulfilled in Acts 11:28 And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius); and then the fifth seal coincides with the martyrdom of Christians, Rev. 6:9). These deceased believers are then given a robe of white (which we might understand as a temporary heavenly body) and told that their wait "under the altar" would not be for much longer, before (presumably) they were to enjoy God's presence in heaven with their temporary heavenly bodies as soon as the Old Covenant was wound up.

With the close of the Old Covenant came the close of Paradise component of Sheol. Believers who died in Christ from that point could enjoy what Paul the apostle looked forward to even prior to the resurrection, that he would "be with Christ".

*I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. Philippians 1:23*



Therefore, the issue is not really about the location of the deceased believer, but the relationship of the deceased believer with Christ, forever. On "the last day", the great final eschaton, will come the Resurrection and judgment of everyone. *For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*" John 6:40

Therefore, for those who have died in Christ we can be comforted that they are with the Lord. And perhaps of more comfort is the knowledge that our devotion to Christ in this life is not in vain in the next. What awaits the believer and the rejecter of God, heaven and hell, is the topic of the next instalment.

(αω)

## **What Is Heaven Like?**

Dr. Andrew Corbett, 15th July 2008, Legana, Tasmania, *"All that we know about heaven we know from Scripture. But, if Scripture is more clear about one thing than about another, it is this: that heaven will perfectly satisfy all who reach it. It follows that any idea of heaven that assumes some of its inhabitants to be unhappy is false to fact. The trouble is, as Mr H.G. Wells would say, that you cannot describe the life of one world in the language of another...In heaven, we are told, there shall be no manner of sickness--not even homesickness."*

Dr. F.W. Boreham, "The Silver Shadow", Essay- Home, Sweet Home, 1918:269  
I honestly used to think that Christianity was all about having the assurance of going to Heaven. But as I learned more about the Gospel and the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth I became curious about the relative scarcity of references to Heaven in the Bible. Yet, while my understanding of the place of Heaven in my Gospel proclamation has been refined, some God-Channel evangelists have headed in the other direction



and made Heaven central to their Gospel. Some of these evangelists now even claim to have the spiritual power to make repeated visits there!

Presumably God, the Supreme Being, has a supremely beautiful home, in a supremely magnificent neighbourhood. Amazingly, God invites mankind to move into His neighbourhood- for eternity! But what is Heaven like? Is it possible, as some are now claiming, that we can visit Heaven? While I am going to lead readers to conclude that Heaven is not the Gospel's focus, if it is the only reason someone is motivated to convert to Christ, then we should rejoice-

*"Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."* Luke 10:20

### **Heaven is not the focus of heaven...**

The Bible is not pre-occupied with Heaven- it is preoccupied with God. Heaven is not the point or focus of the Gospel- God is! The Scripture reveals that the focus of Heaven is a Throne, well actually Someone who is sitting on the Throne. John the Apostle was caught up to Heaven in a vision. The first thing he saw was the Throne of God (Revelation 4:2). This scene sets the tone for the Apocalypse- that God rules the world from Heaven. So central was the belief among Jews that Heaven was the Throne-room of the universe, that "Heaven" became synonymous with "God" and devout Jews who dared not to take God's name upon their lips would use the term "Heaven" in referring to God. This is why the Gospel of Matthew (written to a Jewish audience) refers to the Kingdom of God as the Kingdom of Heaven (compare Matthew 10:7 with Luke 10:9).

In order for John to even see Heaven he had to be caught up in "the Spirit" (Rev. 4:2). This tells us that Heaven is in a different dimension to this physical realm. It is in a spiritual

realm. Kenneth Copeland teaches that, "Heaven has a north and south, and an east and a west. Consequently, it must be a planet."<sup>1</sup> But this is nonsensical and is a serious failure to exegete the Bible correctly. But because Heaven is in a spiritual realm it doesn't mean that it is less real. In fact, C.S. Lewis noted that the Biblical revelation of ultimate reality is spiritual ("God is Spirit" John 4:24). He said, "*You don't have a soul. You are a Soul. You have a body.*"

In his Chronicles of Narnia series he concludes the series with a masterful picture of what Heaven is like in the novel: The Last Battle. When the Pevensie children are rescued from the disintegrating Narnia by Aslan, they are ushered into a place that looks remarkably similar to the one they just left. But they notice that in this new place there are no limitations. They can run faster than leopards and not grow weary or come to the end of their acceleration. They ask Aslan about where they are. "Narnia", he tells them, "the real Narnia." Since the spiritual realm is just as real (if not more real) as this physical realm in which we now live, Heaven is not some vague misty cloud zone!

### **How we know about heaven...**

There are a several God-Channel evangelists and "seers" who are now claiming that they have had several visits to Heaven. Not to be out-done, some are now even claiming that they can enter Heaven at will and "spiritually" take others with them!

Before these latest rash of claims, some had previously written of their alleged experiences in visiting Heaven. Many of these paperback books have sold in the millions and

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<sup>1</sup> "**Spirit, Soul, and Body I**" Fort Worth, TX: *Kenneth Copeland Ministries*, 1985, audio-tape #01-0601, side 1

influenced many Christians in their ideas of not only what Heaven must be like, but what its purpose is: to provide a blissful, eternal, home for the "saved". One such book which was endorsed by some of the heavyweights of the Pentecostal/Charismatic world, was written by an American-Korean, Choo Thomas. Her book- *Heaven Is So Real!* claims that the author was repeatedly taken to Heaven by Jesus and shown what awaits the saved. The author also claims that she was shown Hell to see what awaits the damned. But there are a number of disturbing aspects to this book and ones like it. Firstly, the central idea behind the book is that salvation is all about "going to heaven". It's not. Secondly, the claim the author makes that Jesus told her He was about to return to earth but not enough people had yet believed. The world needs a book about Heaven so that they will believe in Jesus, the author claims she was told by the Lord. But I seem to recall that God has already given the world a Book so that they might believe in and turn to Jesus.

In a similar vein, Mary Baxter's book- *A Divine Revelation of Hell*, is the story of a woman who claims to have been taken to Hell each night over a 45 day period to be shown the horrors of Hell so that she could warn the world about it. In her "revelation" she saw demons and devils tormenting the damned. But the Bible says that God is the Judge and that these devilish creatures will be the ones being punished- not the ones doing the punishing! (See 2Peter 2:4) In fact, Hell, Jesus said, was created for the Devil and his angels.

*"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" Matthew 25:41*

Our understanding of what Heaven is like should not be based on some paperback book or the ranting of a God-channel televangelist-seer. We must depend upon the Bible

not only as our final authority, but our only authority for our understanding of Heaven. In contrast to these rather glib fantasies of heavenly visits, the Biblical authors were not only reluctant to share of their authentic experiences of Heaven but were actually commanded not to! (2Cor. 12:4, Rev. 10:4). This is no small point. Far from being told that the problem with the lack of belief in the world is a general ignorance about Heaven, the Biblical authors focus their attempts at persuading their unbelieving audiences to believe by teaching about the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus (note 1Corinthians 15:1-4).

The Bible seems to be consistent in describing the "Third Heaven" (where God's immediate presence is) as focused on the Throne of God. All of Heaven points toward the Throne of God, from where God reigns. 'Above' God there are at least two "Seraphim". Isaiah (Isa. 6) describes these Seraphim as having six wings: with two they cover their face (they are not worthy to look upon God), with another two wings they fly (they are not worthy to stand in God's presence), and with the other two they cover their feet (they are not worthy to be in God's presence). It appears that these Seraphim lead Heaven in worship.

Around God's Throne there is a "sea" described as being as "glass" or "crystal". In Biblical language, "seas" can speak of circumstances. When God intervenes into tumultuous circumstances it is described as stilling roaring seas and raging waves (Psalm 65:7; 89:9; 107:29). "Calm seas" or "still water" is sometimes Biblical language for the peace of God. Thus, when God's Throne is described as being surrounded by a sea of glass like crystal it speaks of the infinite peace that envelopes God's presence.

In "front" of God's Throne are four creatures called: Cherubim. The opening chapters of Ezekiel contain the most detail about these beings. They seem to be the Heavenly 'Secret Service'. They were sent into the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve sinned to stand guard against access to the Tree of Life. *He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. Genesis 3:24*

It seems that the Cherubim guard the Throne of God. God is said to be enthroned on/above/upon/between the Cherubim (Psalm 80:1; 99:1; Isaiah 37:16), and their wings are outstretched so that they touch tip-to-tip leaving no room between them. *Then I looked, and behold, on the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim there appeared above them something like a sapphire, in appearance like a throne. Ezekiel 10:1*

Ezekiel describes these Cherubim as having four faces each. *but each had four faces, and each of them had four wings...their wings touched one another. Each one of them went straight forward, without turning as they went. As for the likeness of their faces, each had a human face. The four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle. Ezekiel 1:6, 9-10*

John's glimpse of Heaven reveals twenty-four "Elders" before God's Throne. It seems that these Elders represent the Redeemed of both Covenants- twelve from the first Covenant (representing the twelve patriarchs) and twelve from the New Covenant (representing the twelve apostles)<sup>2</sup>. *that you may eat*

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<sup>2</sup> Edersheim in "The Temple Its Ministry And Services" Ch. 3 Temple Order, Revenues and Music, suggests the 24 Elders correspond to the 24 courses of Priest that served in the Temple, thus representing "all Believers" i.e. the "kingdom of Priests" 1Pet.2:9; Rev.1:6 (P.S.F.): *But even in New Testament times it was such that St. John could find no more adequate imagery to portray*

*and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Luke 22:30*

The remainder of Heaven is filled with angels and the redeemed.

*Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, Revelation 5:11*

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, Revelation 7:9*

Even prior to the Resurrection, since the close of the First (Old) Covenant, the redeemed are admitted to Heaven. Thus Paul could say that he was torn between this life and the next (in which he knew he would be with Christ, in Heaven) - *I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. Philippians 1:23*

Yet, there is coming a time when the Redeemed shall be resurrected and then able to enjoy the dimension of Heaven without limit. The closing scenes of the Book of Revelation describe the Resurrection of the Dead- the Redeemed to everlasting life with God in the "New" Heaven and Earth, and the wicked to eternal torment in the Lake of Fire. In either case the question of eternal destiny was answered by the choices they made in this life (not the next).

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*heavenly realities and the final triumph of the Church than that taken from the service of praise in the Temple. Thus, when first "the twenty-four elders," representing the chiefs of the twenty-four courses of the priesthood, and afterwards the 144,000, representing redeemed Israel in its fullness (12 x 12,000), sing "the new song" - the former in heaven, the latter on Mount Zion - they appear, just as in the Temple services, as "harpers, harping with their harps." (Revelation 5:8;14:2,3)*

## How can we enter heaven?

Without the grace of God all people are doomed. Unless God opens the eyes of a person to recognise their true spiritual condition they will continue to live in wilful disobedience to their Maker. Ravi Zacharias tells the story of a proud single mother who wanted to show-off the singing talent of her young daughter to their wealthy relatives in the hope that they might sponsor her further education. She invited the extended family over for an afternoon tea and made sure that her daughter looked her finest. At the time for the young to sing the mother called her over and invited her to sing. "No" her daughter replied. "Darling, do you remember that you were going to sing this afternoon?" the mother asked. "Yes" replied her daughter. "Then could you please sing for us?" her mother appealed. "No!" said her daughter. "Then go to my bedroom and wait for me there!" said the embarrassed mother. After the mother had apologised to her guests she went to her bedroom to talk with her daughter. But her daughter was not sitting on her bed where she expected her to be. Instead, it appeared that she was in the wardrobe. Opening the wardrobe she saw her daughter. "What are you doing in here?" the mother asked. "I'm spitting in your shoes" said the daughter, "and just before you arrived I was spitting on your dresses, and I'm glad you're here now so that I can spit in your face."

Ravi Zacharias says we are like the little girl. Not only do we "spit" on what God has done, given the chance, we would gladly spit in His face! We are rebels to the core.

*[Since] we've compiled this long and sorry record as sinners (both us and them) and proved that we are utterly incapable of living the glorious lives God wills for us, Romans 3:23 THE MESSAGE*

While some churches conduct "Seeker Services", the Bible actually says that there is no-one who seeks God- there are no seekers of God. *no one understands; no one seeks for God. Romans 3:11*  
The only way someone can qualify to enter Heaven is to be chosen by God. This is an act of His grace. Jesus said:

*“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” Matthew 7:13-14*

Those who are chosen by God are referred to as "the elect" (Mark 13:20, 27; 2Tim. 2:10; 2Peter 1:10).

*For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 1Thessalonians 1:4*

*If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. John 15:19*

### **E.N.T.E.R.**

**E. Elect.** *Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ 2Pet.1:10-11.* Is God calling you to abandon your old way of living and surrender to Him? If God has elected you to be saved from His wrath then He can give you the ability to repent, have faith, and live obediently to Him. These things are gifts of His grace (Eph. 2:8-9).

**N. Now.** *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; Phil.1:21-23.* What we do now determines whether we are granted entrance into Heaven. After we are dead there is no opportunity to undo the choices, decisions and actions that we owned in this life.



There is no purgatory. There are no indulgences that can be paid to release us from Hell. It all depends on our "now". And if we are to leave this life having been accepted by Christ and given His eternal life we will enter into Heaven with God- now.

**T. Truth.** *"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Jn.14:15-20* While there are people who promote reincarnation and even annihilation as a concept of the next life, the One who is most qualified to tell us what the next life holds, Jesus Christ, said that eternal life would either be spent in Heaven or Hell. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth..." He went even further when He said that He was actually the Truth (John 14:6). In this verse He destroys the arguments of Eckhart Tolle who teaches that Jesus was saying that the truth is within each of us, when Jesus was in fact making exactly the opposite point—that He is the only Truth that can give us access to the Father. There is no reincarnation. There is no "nothing" (annihilation) after this life. There is either eternal life or eternal death. And eternal life is only available through Jesus Christ.

**E. Eternal.** *The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms Deut.33:27* The choices we make now will determine our eternity. And after this life, we will live with our choices for eternity. Once the Redeemed Elect are in

Heaven they will be incapable of ever sinning since they will have inherited a share in the "divine nature".

*And by that same mighty power, he has given us all of his rich and wonderful promises. He has promised that you will escape the decadence all around you caused by evil desires and that you will share in his divine nature. 2Peter 1:4 NLT*

**R. Resurrection.** *But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 1Cor.15:20-22*

Not only do the redeemed pass from this life into Heaven in the next life, there is coming a day when they will receive new bodies which will not be subjected to the current limitations of our bodies in this life. There are some days when certain parts of my body make me long for the Resurrection!

*Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. John 5:28-29*

The final word on Heaven goes to my posthumous pastor, F.W. Boreham, who wrote that many older Christians begin to lose their love for this world and long for the next. This longing for Heaven, Dr Boreham says, is like being "homesick". The believer has come to recognise that Heaven is where they ultimately belong and that while their hearts yearn for Heaven they are actually longing to be home with the Father.

*"Most old people, however fully they may have entered into the zest and enjoyment of life, feel that they have had just about enough of it. They grow gradually out of love with the things that are, and fall in love with the things that are to be...And, depend upon it, this poor ministry of*

*mine will be most fruitful when I can awaken in men such an agony of homesickness that their hearts will cry out for the Father."*

*F.W. Boreham, "The Silver Shadow", Essay: Home Sweet Home, 1918:270, 272,*  
As we move through this life, may our hearts become increasingly "homesick". And while we may think that our hearts are yearning for Heaven, may we come to realise that it's not Heaven, but the full presence of God Himself that we truly long for. I pray that all my readers will enter Heaven to be with our Lord. (αω)

### **Is the Bible Tomorrow's Newspaper?**

*Dr Andrew Corbett, [April 7th, 2009]*

The Bible is uniquely prophetic. No other religious or holy book makes predictions of the future like the Bible does. This phenomenon has led some Bible teachers to over-emphasise the Bible's ability to predict the future. The rise in claims of the Bible's prophetic detail coincided with its increased availability. When medieval scribes increased production of Bible copies the number of prophetic speculations also increased. When the Gutenberg Bible revolutionised the way Bibles were produced from the 1500s, there was similarly a marked increase in the number and variety of prophetic speculations.

This reached a new zenith in the 20th century, when Bibles largely dedicated to emphasizing and interpreting Bible prophecy, were published. This included the Scofield Reference Bible, The Ryrie Study Bible, and the Dake's Annotated Bible. Not only did these Bibles make some absurd prophetic speculations (like a secret rapture, a yet to come Antichrist, a one-world government, a cashless society and a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem), but they spawned some of the most popular books in Christian publishing history such

as the now totally discredited The Late Great Planet Earth and more recent exercise in Christian fantasy and gullibility: The Left Behind Series. These "study" Bibles and paperback books on Bible Prophecy have conditioned today's Bible students to regard the Bible as more accurate than tomorrow's newspaper...

This expression (about the Bible being more accurate than tomorrow's newspaper) is a common statement made by some dispensational evangelists). As a boy growing up in a dispensational church I would hear this kind of statement from every "Prophecy Teacher" who came through. For example, one Bible College website puts this belief this way-

*Although the Bible was written by some 40 authors over a period of around 1600 years, and although the Bible was completed almost 2000 years ago, it is as current as tomorrow's newspaper. This is because it was inspired by the God of the universe who made man and the world in which he lives. <http://www.internationalgraduate.net/bible1.htm>*

These Prophecy Teachers and this type of website claim unabashedly link belief in God and His Word with the idea that the Bible can be read like tomorrow's newspaper. I want to show you that this is an entirely unreasonable claim and conditions readers of the Bible to accept wild speculations as normative Bible interpretation.

Recently, I had an evangelist, with two decades of travelling ministry to his credit, contact me after he read my book - The Most Embarrassing Verse In The Bible. In this book I show how to best interpret the major prophetic themes of the Bible. I show that all the events of Matthew 24 align with Revelation 1 - 19 and are now fulfilled - and will not be repeated. While the evangelist accepted this, he was disappointed that I hadn't speculated from Scripture about what the future held. Sadly, this evangelist had been infected

with the faulty hermeneutical virus of **TBIMATTN** (The Bible Is More Accurate Than Tomorrow's Newspaper). Even he had been conditioned to read the Bible as if it spoke of our day. While it is true that the Bible does still have some unfulfilled prophecies pertaining to the return of Christ, it is a dire mistake to read the Bible as if it spoke like tomorrow's newspaper to every generation since its writing.

***The Bible is written for us not to us.***

We should begin to interpret Bible Prophecy with the same basic principles of Biblical interpretation that we interpret any other passage of Scripture. Perhaps the first thing we should realise is that the Bible (including, and perhaps, especially, Bible Prophecy) was not written to us but it was written for us. That is, the writers of the Bible had a particular immediate audience in mind when God was inspiring their text. For example, when Paul wrote Second Timothy 4:13 it would be ludicrous to claim that he intended this to be an instruction for any other reader than the one the epistle was addressed to. Therefore, it is very possible that what was future to the original audience is now past for us today. For example, when Paul recorded the prediction that the man of lawlessness was to enter the temple and sit on a seat and exalt himself above God, it was future to his audience but is now past to us, since this is exactly what the High Priest did in the period between 66AD to 70AD. When Christ declared in Matthew 24:14 that the Gospel of the Kingdom should be preached in all the "world" then the "end" would come, most modern readers miss the immediate meaning of "world" which is not kosmos, (that is, the entire world) but is a particular Greek word: oichoumene - which to the original hearers and readers of this statement would have meant *The Roman Empire* (of the "known" world). Thus, when Paul wrote to the Colossians

(1:5b-6) that the Gospel had indeed gone into all the world he was referring to the Gospel having been delivered to every Jew in the Roman Empire just prior to his execution. And when Jesus spoke of "the end" in Matthew 24 He was not speaking of the end of the world. But how many modern readers realise what Jesus and His disciples actually meant by "the end of the age"?

Bible Interpretation is not speculation. When it comes to 'interpreting' Bible prophecy, some teachers only have one method: speculation. That is, they come up with a theory then 'massage' the Scriptures to make them fit this guesswork. One of the worst speculations I have ever heard about how to interpret Bible prophecy came from Dr Hugh Ross. Dr Ross is a great Cosmologist, if not one of the best in the world, but he is a very weak Eschatologist (someone who interprets Bible prophecy). He has one of the most imaginative views of Pre-Millenniumism I have ever heard! He proposes that Bible prophecy forecasts a restoration of Israel's fortunes which will immediately precede and precipitate the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. According to Dr. Ross, Christ will reign from Jerusalem for a literal 1,000 year period. During this reign, mankind will be without excuse for not serving the Lord wholeheartedly. This, says Dr. Ross, is the main point of the Millennium: it will expose the true condition of man's heart as rebellious and dismiss all excuses for disobedience. To be fair, Dr Ross offers little in the way of Biblical support for this theory. He loosely frames this theory around Revelation 20 and some of the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah. But this theory is a failed theory.

Revelation 20 speaks of the reign of Christ from the end of the Old Covenant Age (the Age of Sacrifice, the Age of the

Mosaic Law, the Temple Age = "the end of the ages" which is described in Revelation 19).

*Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.*

*1Corinthians 10:11*

*for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Hebrews 9:26*

The end of the ages began with the Cross of Christ. It ended with the destruction of the Old Covenant elements- the Temple, the Priesthood and the Sacrifices - which happened in 70AD.

In Revelation 20 it prophesied the reign of Christ for 1,000 years. Despite Dr Ross assuming that this one referencing of 1,000 years means that the reign of Christ will be a literal 1,000 year period, the Bible uses "1,000" to mean something in just the same way that other numbers in the Book of Revelation mean something. But how many modern readers of Scripture know what the Bible means when it uses the expression "1,000"? How many prophecy teachers have speculated wildly about the events of Revelation 1 to 19 leading up to this expression about the duration of the reign of Christ by assuming that it refers to our day?

### **The Bible does not predict-**

A one-world government in "the last days"

A dictator (identified as "Antichrist", note: the expression does not even occur in the Book of Revelation) who will rule the entire world

A cashless society

A supercomputer with a database with the entire world's personal information records on it

A yet-to-come 7 year tribulation

A rebuilt end-times Temple in Jerusalem

The restoration of Israel's Biblical boundaries  
A Global Financial Crisis

***What does the Bible prophesy about the future?***

Before we assume that the Bible's prophecies have not been fulfilled, we should examine history to learn whether they are already fulfilled. After doing this we will discover the events of Matthew 24 are all fulfilled and Revelation chapters 1 to 19 are similarly fulfilled. What is yet to be fulfilled is: the return of Christ, the Resurrection, Final Judgment, and the Eternal state. For those who have been conditioned to regard the Bible as tomorrow's newspaper this is going to be a very disappointing interpretation of what the Bible says is yet to happen. People suffering from this condition demand that the Bible reveals the immediate destiny of the United States and what will happen to the global economy. Instead, the Bible reveals that while we await the return of Christ we are to be busy about the Lord's work- the Great Commission. We should be sowing Gospel-seed that can be harvested for generations to come. We should be salt and light to our communities. We should be a prophetic light exposing the darkness being promoted by the world's politicians and media outlets. Does the Bible prophesy that we will succeed at this? This is actually the wrong question! Scripture presents God's desire for all people to be saved; all nations to worship Him; and for the Gospel to be taken to every nation - but it also tells us that not all people will choose to surrender to Christ and that followers of Christ can expect tribulation as they take the Gospel to the world.

I know this doesn't have the same sensational buzz about it as it does when the Newspaper Eschatologists make their wild speculations about the horrors of what they claim the Bible says the future holds, or when they claim that the Book of



Revelation forecasts the precise destiny of the USA or Europe or any other nation of the world of today.

(αω)

## **Canty's "I Was Just Thinking".**

### **Those millennial predictions ... what happened to them?**

Canty, G., [www.canty.org.uk](http://www.canty.org.uk) (*IWT 4*).

In the months leading to AD 2000 everybody, press, broadcasting, all talked as if hanging up the AD 2000 calendar would magically switch on a new spirit for a new world. But time is powerless. The third year of the third millennium and crime, terrorism and war are livelier than ever.

Church leaders set targets for 2000 which were never achieved. Religious cranks had a field day. Leader of the Brotherhood of the Cross and Star Olumba Olumba Obu 'confirmed' 72 hours of total darkness would take place and "After 1999 something spectacular will happen, end of times, last call".

Priestess Sri Patricia of the Morningland compound declared Jesus would arrive in Long Island in a UFO as big as Texas, piloted by her late husband. The last decade was expected to end with Christ's return. During the 19th century it drove Christians to prayer for power to evangelise the whole world by AD 2000. A respected American pastor laid down a positive date, a mistake

One popular line was that the first 2000 years was Adam to Abraham, the second 2000 years Abraham to Christ, the third would be from His first to His second advents and His 1000 years Millennial reign making up the Divine pattern of 7000.

A similar theory said man would rule for 6000 years, then Christ would rule. . Christian Fathers and scholars back to the first century held this expectation, including Irenaeus (born

AD 140). Even the Jewish Talmud has been quoted "The world will stand for 6000 years, 2000 in confusion and void, 2000 with the law, and 2000 to the time of the Messiah".

There was also the Y2K panic. Computers mark years in two digits. To register 2000, they would switch off and bring civilisation to a dead stop and a world recession. The 1998 London Times issued a 1000 word warning. The USA technology Information Association described the effect as "Titanic"

In 1988 The Daily Telegraph reported a British World Bank expert warning at the Royal Geographical Society that by the year 2000 unless the world changed its industrial processes, the Earth's life-support system would breakdown.

Then came Mrs. J. Z. Knight with messages from a man who died 35,000 years ago. Hundreds went to live in north west USA to escape the predicted natural disasters to fall on cities across the continent. A wealthy owner of a chain of hamburger cafés sold up and built a pyramid shaped house 'to catch the energy of the universe.' Actress Shirley Maclaine is a follower and bought a remote farm out of the predicted danger zone.

But meanwhile some Bible wielding prophets made fame and fortune with their predictions – all unfulfilled, but AD 2000 was just too good an opportunity to miss. John Gass complained of a Christian writer selling 20 million books of predictions that failed but he goes on writing just the same. I have a few books like that as museum pieces. The damage to faith is incalculable.

The desire for Christ to return is universal and will not be disappointed. Meanwhile human prophesying has been shown ten thousand times to be one of our greatest follies. They all do it and fail, the financial and economic pundits, the social

experts, the scientists. the governments, the Bible students and charismatic prophets. It is worse when Scripture is exploited. God does not divulge too much detail about the future. except about Himself, that He is faithful. We can't rely on human prophets but we can rely upon God, though the seas roar and the mountains are cast into the midst of the seas.

### **Where eagles gather**

Canty, G., [www.canty.org.uk](http://www.canty.org.uk) (*IWT 6*).

I was asked what Jesus meant in that great "second coming" chapter, Matthew 24, (v.28) about eagles gathering where there was a carcass. Luke 17:37 says, 'body' but a dead body. Eagles are vultures.

Well, no I did not know what Jesus meant, but I had a look first at scholars, Dr. Manson, Dr. Donald A. Hagner, Dr. John Nolland. Disappointingly, they didn't know either, but offered their speculations and all disagreed with one another - typical anyway. Dr. Nolland wasn't seriously interested despite his three volume commentary on Luke, remarking there are many explanations. Here are their suggestions.

**One**, the eagles are the Roman legionaries who would destroy Jerusalem 40 years later.

**Two**, the eagles are the people gathered by Christ at His coming. (!)

**Three**, Jesus meant the swiftness with which judgement would come on the day of the Son of Man.

**Four**, nobody can miss Christ's coming like nobody can miss vultures coming to a dead body.

Each takes it that Christ's enigmatic saying is about the day of His coming. But it just doesn't fit! How can vultures have anything to do with Jesus' return in glory? Their scholarly suggestions were bound to be odd. Dr. Nolland said the vultures are the elect caught away with Christ! I ask you,

would Jesus make such a crude comparison? By the way, there's nothing in the passage about judgment either.

Well, we can all think. My basis of enquiry is different. Obviously Christ's saying has nothing to do with His return. That was not all He had been talking about in this discourse. He spoke of what the world would be like from His times to the end. He sums it all up, saying, "Where the carcass is the vultures will gather". A world of vultures! Christ's saying was a penetrating comment on the state of things as He prophesied they would be.

History is a story of vultures. So much distress is due to avarice and selfishness, everyone seeking gain at the expense of others. Jesus did refer to earthquakes, but otherwise the evils He listed were mostly man made. Troubles, great dangers, wars, persecutions, nations against nation, civil strife like the raging sea, false prophets, self-appointed messiahs, famines and pestilences, all traceable to avarice and selfishness in individuals or nations. Commerce and industry often show no more feeling than vultures for the mass of people. Where there is something to gain, the human predators pounce. History is made up of such stuff. "The love of money is the root of all evils".

This proverb of Jesus actually alludes to a Bible theme from the time of Abraham. God isolated Abraham from the world to get the world out of his system. The ways of nations and city states in the ancient world were brutal, murder, rapine, and oppression. To help their economy cities pillaged their neighbours. Genesis 14 is there as an example. Abraham had been in Ur, Egypt, Haran, and the Cities of the Plain. They all depended on rapacity, the bounty of war, vulture-like scavengers swooping down and making off with their neighbours' property. The great empires were typical.

Nebuchadnezzar portrayed Babylon as a beautiful golden image. (Daniel 2) God described it as a preying beast trampling the earth, and also the empires of the Medes, Greeks and Romans.

The King of Sodom followed the world system. He offered Abraham the spoil of battle, but the patriarch refused it. God then said "Abraham I am thy exceeding great reward". God gave him a vision of another city whose foundations were not military power and whose wealth was not stolen gold stained with blood. The foundations were righteousness, laid by God. It was a vision of a civilised age we have scarcely achieved yet. We see riots about capitalistic practices, but what would our newscasters do if people stopped trying to get what wasn't theirs? Abraham was ahead of our times.

Jesus indicated that the future would be dominated by vultures, wanting what's going, first come first served "and the devil take the hindmost". Mankind's prehensile hand and predatory heart brought about conditions which Jesus said would precede His second advent. We used the emblems of Cross and Crusade when "Christian" armies slaughtered and plundered their way to Jerusalem 900 years ago. But there were many episodes before and since.

This 'proverb' of Christ is typical of His great wisdom. He flings it across the whole human scenario and sums it up. We have had 2000 years of vulture like economies and the inevitable distress.

In contrast, come other words of Jesus "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness". No wonder great criminal powers hate Christianity. Jesus challenges their systems of imperialist loot and exploitation. Stalin's 18 million Gulag slaves have just recently become newspaper revelation. What were Genghis Khan, Napoleon and Hitler but vultures?

Has any nation a righteous aim except their own gain? The current God is Mammon.

Christian believers can't implement Christ's radical teaching by imposing it on nations. We should, and I hope do, exemplify it in our own lives. We are the light of the world. Christian standards clash with the way of the world, like Abraham clashed with the King of Sodom. But, let the vultures gather to satisfy their greed, Christ calls us to follow Him. "If any man love the world, the love of God is not in him" said the apostle John. He meant universal cupidity.

Abraham looked for a city, the Kingdom of God, to which Jesus opened the door, and in which dwells righteousness. Twice-born believers are its citizens

## **Death? What's that?**

Canty, G., [www.canty.org.uk](http://www.canty.org.uk) (*IWT 10*).

I dedicate this short piece to the thirty or more colleagues and friends recently bereaved of wife or husband whom I name one by one before the Lord every morning.

A friend told me yesterday that a child he knew had a brain cancer. Lying ill, he had suddenly said "Mummy, look there are two angels". Then a door had opened and he had gone, slipped away, with a royal escort.

Having ventured on the territory of wife, marriage and personal issues, I will follow with what happened next. My precious lady went through that door. Then I saw them slip under the ground her beloved form forever. I visited that spot, and each time I had experienced shock effects, not only emotional but also claustrophobic and panic attacks. A doctor said that physical effects can occur years after losing one really loved. For over a year it was too harrowing for me to go near

that cemetery. Then, on the second anniversary, I felt it was only the decent thing. I went, anticipating an ordeal.

I stood there. The soil had sunk a couple of inches. Grass has covered it, unkempt, drab, ordinary, as if it didn't matter. First, rage burned in me that the earth had her in its grip. Then, a marvellous thing happened. Suddenly, not thinking or expecting it, I was struck by a brilliant shaft of warm sunshine that broke through the black clouds of my life. Instantly I **KNEW**, as if God had spoken, and I don't mean believed, I **KNEW** there was nothing under that inconsequential bit of mud that had anything to do with me. She had never been interred there, nor could she have been buried anywhere, not even in a monumental marble shrine in a cathedral.

Her worn out physical appurtenances, yes, had been laid there, but that personality who had filled my life and home, that lady of purpose, of faith, of love, who had borne the burden of life over eighty years with such victory and determination, **SHE**, she could never be buried, she was too vital, too **SAVED**, too trusting in Jesus every minute, in all she did and sang as we went into hundreds of churches, cold clods could never cover her, no never. She was obviously somewhere else, and I knew where. The first song I ever heard her sing was "'Good morning to heaven', some morning I'll say." Dead earth could not have anything to do with that living personality.

That beautiful head stone, engraved with flowers I had painted, I saw was forsaken, presiding uselessly over nothing. **SHE** wasn't even there, never was there, any more than I was there with that bit of my own hair I had put in that cold hand in the coffin. I had gone to that cemetery fearing grief, but came away with happiness in my very soul. I don't live without her for I can't but I live knowing that we still belong

to one another and she is fine. She is not just visiting in America or her sister in Australia, but completely settled with everyone she ever loved and with Jesus. The headstone reads, "Lived for Jesus, now living with Jesus".

One day while working at my desk, I suddenly dropped into a deep sleep and had a vision of her, always lovely, but now the essence of beauty, full of such charm, dressed in a coat of brilliant blue. She turned to me smiling, put her arm through mine and said "Come with me, let us take a walk". We did. When I woke suddenly, it was if she had just gone out through my study door.

Hundreds have prayed for me. I want them to know God has answered in amazing ways, and in this way - I KNOW "He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

### **What is heaven really like?**

Canty, G., [www.canty.org.uk](http://www.canty.org.uk) (*IWT 13*).

People ask, "Do you like Christmas?" Like it? God planned the world for it! The peak day, the key locking together of all days in Divine order. Without Christmas the world would be meaningless. The Incarnation and Christ's work are God's greatest achievement. The Father was at Bethlehem and at Calvary. That is high theology.

Those who quibble about the 25th of December being once a pagan mid-winter feast have no perspective whatever. They may as well say we can't grow wheat in a field because a dandelion once grew there.

Last Christmas, IWT asked what it was like for God to become Man. C. S. Lewis said that it was like a man becoming a beetle, a metamorphosis from the invisible and immortal to



the visible and mortal. "Beyond all question the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body!" 1 Tim. 3:16.

This Christmas, I am thinking about Christ's other experience - His change of location. He descended from the world of love down to breathe our fetid atmosphere and sit in our grotty parlours. So, I wanted to glimpse where He came from and what He gave up. It has helped me appreciate better His passionate imperative to make such a journey. He came to take us where He came from. Moving house, folk want to know about the neighbours and the place where they will live. I, we, shall be going to glory presently, so I am anticipating what that Home will be.

The apostle John in Revelation says he saw a door opened in heaven and tells us what he saw through that open portal. Was it the door from which Jesus exited to Bethlehem? He left the door of heaven open, one day to come and bring us and welcome us home through that door.

### ***Many mansions?***

The book of Revelation, uses strange figures of speech, such as a sea of glass mingled with fire, We will look at that presently, but first at what Jesus said about the future life. "In my Father's house are many mansions." The word 'mansions' is from the Latin Vulgate. It has inspired hymns and popular thought, but it is only imaginative poetry. Obviously in the resurrection state we will neither sleep, cook food, or have weather, so mansions with bedrooms, kitchens and shelter will not be needed and can hardly be the dwelling places Jesus mentioned.

The original word in Greek is 'monai', as in verse 23, "we will make our abode ('monai') with him." It isn't anywhere else in the New Testament but its cognate is 'meno', to abide, tarry, remain, used 129 times in the New Testament. So the monai

dwelling places are where we will 'remain' permanently. Earth is not our eternal resting place. Other Divine and gloriously different worlds are ready to welcome us.

Jesus went on to say "I go to prepare a place for you." (Greek 'topon'). Everyone including scholars speculate as if the 'place' was a location. Obviously it can't be. Christ is not an architect superintending the construction of a palatial residence! It would be a million miles wide city by now. After all, He made the heavens and the earth in six days, so He would hardly need 2000 years to make a mansion.

Our destiny is to be ever with the Lord, at His side, as His bride, as He said. "Where I am there you may be also". When I first went to the USA I did not take my wife but I 'made a place' for her, talking about her so she would have an American welcome when she went with me, happy with my friends in different cities and comfortable with the USA environment and culture.

I'm much confined to my own house so I trust not to be domiciled at some limited address hereafter, just pruning heavenly roses on a lordly heavenly estate somewhere. Human hankering for wider fields. Trips into space can now be commercially booked and it is planned for men to land on Mars within ten years. The believer's glorious expectation is that we shall leave the limitations of earth and go OUT, not IN, to explore the Father's house and its countless dwelling places for ever. This present world enthralls me though I live in an inner city zone, yet earth is only one of God's 'abiding places', so what beauties await us in other 'monai' places?

We shall move in a new dimension, everything new, new songs, music with a 1000 tone scale, new colours we have no power now to see, new delights, new pleasures. God is our true home and we shall swim in life, light and love.

Shall we know one another in heaven? Will my wife be no more than everybody else is to me? No, death is conquered and will not part us forever. In fact we shall know one another far better. Our bodies will be like the resurrection body of Jesus, our apprehension will no longer depend on fleshly eyes, ears and nervous systems. As purified and unveiled personalities, our recognition of one another will be as direct as God now knows us. Those we loved here we shall love with a joyous intensity never yet experienced. "Now we see through a glass, darkly".

Now Jesus gave up that heavenly state for Bethlehem's squalid estate to lie in His first bed of straw in a cattle trough and grew up in a primitive, unhygienic and smelly house shared with livestock.

He came here to take us there, shedding our fleshly imperfections to reflect the glory of His face, stars studding eternal skies, splendid above the bright-winged angels, in shore-less infinity. The whole Gospel of John opens this great hope to us.

### ***"I saw a throne"***

Paul in a Paradise experience saw "unspeakable things" he said. Language failed him. Hebrew writers use imagery that to us seems a misalliance of expressions. The Song of Solomon, chapter 7, for example. The lover says his beloved's nose is like the tower of Lebanon and she says his cheeks are like beds of spices. Some nose, some cheeks! Revelation uses the same style.

My thoughts have been hovering around Revelation 4 on the worship of the Creator and Revelation 5 on the worship of the Lamb, the blaze of eternal realities blotting out mundane matters - the screen of my mind.

What John saw was a throne, THE Throne. Isaiah, 800 years before, saw a throne at his prophetic 'call', but, like other writers, told us little of the scene. John places six Revelation scenes around thrones. He refers to dire happenings on earth but the high Throne is unshaken. The Lamb reigns, always, everywhere.

The Throne is the power centre to which Christ ascended.

John saw a rainbow of brilliant emerald light encircling the Throne. A rainbow is caused by sunlight passing through rain throwing prismatic colours on the screen of a dark sky. The first picture of heaven for us earthlings is that rainbow, God's own banner of promise flung high across the dark clouds of our earthly experience.

But this rainbow was green, the symbol of life. Nothing John saw was mere pageantry - just a passing display for John's benefit. This emerald blaze was the awesome Shekinah that the High Priest only saw through a haze of incense smoke, like a force-field of unfading glory and life. At Niagara falls I've seen the rainbow when sunlight shines through the rising spray. The emerald light of the great Throne is the constant glory of God's presence, like the radiation of the sun ever shining night and day whether we see it or not. He is the ***'Father of lights'***.

I noticed a subtlety in the Greek of Mark 5. A woman was healed when she touched Jesus' clothes as power emanated from Him. But she did not trigger that power by her touch. It is always there, flowing from His presence, so that not only her but, "as many as touched Him were made whole."

That life is the life of God, to John an emerald emanation from the Throne, but it fills heaven, so that there is no death, simply His presence with neither beginning nor ending, everything permeated by His life. We cannot die because He

lives and we are in Him, the place of ever-newness of life. John had written his Gospel with three main themes, light, life and love, and now He saw them made visible at their source. "The lamb is all the light."

### ***"Unspeakable things"***

John saw a figure on the Throne, but John could not explain to us what He was like, because He was like nothing else in the world and imagination had nothing to hold on to. John fell back on eastern depiction, saying that Figure was 'like' jewels, just exquisite beauty, "He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone", that is diamond and carnelian. Hebrew writing describes the beauty of one thing in terms of the beauty of a quite different thing. The Song of Songs (2:3) says the man beloved was like an apple tree. The glory of God Himself is beyond words, and John could only think of the scintillating loveliness of a flawless diamond and the rich deep red-brown of carnelian. Sardius suggests man, 'Adam', to be red and Christ was the second Adam.

The 'fair woman' of the Song of Solomon (chapter 5) is asked to describe her beloved. For six verses she tried different figures of speech, but in the end gave up and said "he is altogether lovely". That is our experience of Jesus. He excels our best songs. John had known Jesus but, seeing Him in His heavenly identity occupying His throne, He was lost for words. He had looked on the fountain of life. We shall see Him ourselves in His splendour, the source of all loveliness, music, poetry, colour, and joy. We shall stand for a thousand years 'lost in wonder love and praise.'

### ***Other 'dwellings' – for whom?***

Around the Throne John saw twenty-four other thrones occupied by twenty-four 'elders' who prostrated themselves before the One on the great Throne. John heard the noise of

heaven, no graveyard stillness there, but crashing thunderings and dazzling lightnings flashing across the immense scene. These elders were (Greek) 'presbyters', as appointed in churches but in the eternal dimension and enthroned. They were overseers of orders beyond earthly limits, with authority over domains and subjects deep in God's dominions, One day the redeemed and blood-washed children of God, Princes and Kings will visit these unknown territories. "Do you not know that we shall judge angels?" 1 Cor. 6:3.

John saw also four 'living creatures'. The original name is 'the Zoa,' (from Greek 'zoe', life.) He had described God as jewels and now needed words for these other awesome beings, full of eyes. Eastern style, he could only compare their faces to animals for their grace, strength, majesty and beauty. Such greatness was the boast of earthling. No human had the physical beauty of lions, oxen and eagles like these new Zoa life forms. But from where had they travelled to worship at the Throne. Are they the normal inhabitants of heaven that we meet when we go there? Or are there remote domains beyond all physical worlds, peopled by super-human beings? How far had they travelled to come to worship at the Throne? Further for sure than we travel to church.

These many and different creatures are hints of the spaciousness of the Father's house. Jesus said in it were many dwelling places, and if earth is the dwelling for people, then in what kind dwellings do such wonderful angelic beings dwell? We know of angels, cherubim, majestic and ancient spirits called the sons of God, mighty princes, vast intelligences. Heaven is so great it provides these lords their endless and lustrous kingdoms.

**"The heaven of heavens"**

The dwelling places Jesus mentioned are in the Father's house. Solomon said that the heavens, and the heaven of the heavens, cannot contain God. His house is not a closed space heaven with smaller departments or areas. The apostle Paul spoke of being caught up into the third heaven which he called Paradise – the garden outside the house. Heaven, where we are destined to abide stretches as far as Gods' presence, His entire order and series of infinite orders, spiritual, material and physical. We have seen the almost frightening photographs of stellar space taken by modern telescopic technology, but in the words of Job awed by what he could see by only his natural eye, "these are but the skirts of his ways". I have always thought he meant the mark on the dewy grass left by His Divine robes as He passed.

That is the dimension of Heaven, endless spheres, endless heavens, endless joy, endless life. It is not a shut-in estate behind gates, like an everlasting church meeting. Hell is small, a mere pit, with gates and bars to keep in its victims. Heaven is greater than all the cosmos.

### **Where is God going?**

"God came from Teman and the Holy One from Mount Paran". That's history, Bible history.

Sir Walter Raleigh warned writers that if they come too near the heel of truth it will kick their teeth. History is only a view point. Writers select, interpret and edit events to their liking. Somebody said "History is fiction with the truth left out". I taught students Church History for 20 years and felt the same about accounts of the past, – and incidentally about garbled Press accounts of my own evangelistic campaigns. Henry Ford said "history is more or less bunk".

However, in the Word, God is the editor of events. We have His judgment not only on the past but on the future also.

Here is an outline of Scripture history. After Creation came God's extraordinary concern with just one family, Israel, for 2000 years. Then a new global scene followed with the impact of Christ. It still progresses world-wide, sweeping across nations. All Christians on earth in the year 1900 numbered 500 million, but Pentecostal-Charismatics alone number 620 million today. The ferocity of some Islam extremists comes from their anger over Christian expansion. But Bible history overleaps the present, pre-writes the future and announces the Second Advent of Christ.

**However, after Jesus returns and reigns .... what then?**

Turning back to the sacred pages of the Book we find them bloodstained. It is the blood-price of human redemption paid by our Lord. Born from His supreme battle and victory is that wonderful new creation, the Church of the redeemed. This body is the most remarkable entity on earth, created by God, totally different from all organisations and religions ever known. The future lies with the Church, with what God is doing and anything God will do will be with the Church. What does not relate to the Church is irrelevant.

The hope of mankind is there, what will happen on earth. The global effects of Christ's first coming are evident, but His second coming will have far greater effects across the nations. That is our secret. In Bible terms we say that as God brought Eve from the side of Adam to be his wife, He has brought the Church from the wounded side of Christ to be His Bride. Soon He will come to claim His Bride.

The Second Coming is the consummation of history but not its end. The Bible does not end with 'Finis', but with Christ saying "I am the beginning and the end". The Bible begins with an end and ends with a beginning. From the Second Advent of Christ a new chapter starts, as Scripture shows us.



A student pastor asked me an interesting question. If we have free will in heaven, couldn't we still sin, even there? Of course some teach that those in heaven are predestined to be there by God's sovereign will, not by their own will. Having no will, they cannot sin. Well, for myself, I would not be happy in the company of such robotic creatures, nor can I see how God could have any satisfaction in them either. He wants people in His own image, with their own sovereign will and power of volition, freely loving and worshiping, not dolls, auto-response mechanisms, creatures with conditioned reflexes like Professor Ivan Pavlov's dogs.

In Revelation 21:5 God says "Behold I make everything new" and in 21:1 "I saw a new heaven and a new earth". The apostle Peter also says "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness" 2 Peter 3:13. A new universe having neither physical nor moral evil, no tears, no death, no sorrow, no crying, no pain, with fear banished and unbelief, abominations, murder, witchcraft, immorality and deceit forever eliminated.

This ultimate state cannot be achieved by God saying 'Let it be!' like He made the first order, creation. Omnipotent power is right for material effects, but to create a sinless universe of people, angels, or any other creature, force is useless. Not even God can make people good by compulsion. His way has to be love – and sacrifice. That is what is happening now, preparing the foundations of a righteous heaven and earth.

This process, breaking the power of evil was especially the work of Christ. Matthew 4:1 says "Jesus was led by the Spirit TO BE tempted by the devil". Mark's Gospel says the same thing. Luke says "Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit was led by the Spirit into the wilderness being forty days tempted of the

devil". He had come to overcome the devil, the world and the flesh. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3:8.

We are told of His wilderness temptations. They were not the only tests He had faced, for obviously His 30 years life in Nazareth presented every kind of temptation. But with His wilderness trials He had gone public for all to be aware of His purpose and holiness.

Christ resisted the devil. His rejection of all worldly ways brought Him to Calvary, and though His flesh flinched from the horrors of death He strode to Calvary to do His Father's will. For the first time a Man had overcome the world, the devil and the weaknesses and fears of human existence. The future was assured.

Christ did the groundwork for us to build upon. We are all here on earth for the same purpose. In this world we are exposed to maximum temptations, to prove that in Christ's love we can face the world, the flesh and the devil and by faith we can overcome and live victorious lives, like God boasted of Job. Here is the wisdom of God in one of the most remarkable Scriptures:

"Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed."

God's purpose is moving on. He has made us finite mortals capable of sin, to prove that under the greatest pressures love conquers and that we have victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the destiny of the redeemed – they overcome, and become Christ's spotless Bride "Christ loved the Church to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any such blemish, but holy and blameless." When

He comes, and our days of temptation and testing are over, there will be no more pressures of the world, flesh or devil, but the power of His love will purify the Church utterly. Having conquered on earth, no temptation can ever reach them.

When the new heaven and earth appear, the Church will be a glorious sight, like a bride adorned for her husband and like a glittering city with its gates open to mankind. In the midst of it is the Lamb of God bearing the marks of having been slain. His presence and the brilliant display of millions upon millions who have followed Him and been more than conquerors under terrible trials, even to death, this will be the barrier in the wisdom of God against all such repetition as the desperate history of earth.

This planet was made and we were placed here for this long war to end all wars, to end the reign of Satan, and empty fleshly and worldly temptations of all power. God has bigger plans than our comfort. He has allowed the present stresses to establish the reign of love, forever, in all future worlds. With evil finally ended, the purposes of God can move forward into endless eternities. What those purposes are we do not know, but we are the most privileged of all His creatures to be His agents, means and conquerors to ensure a sinless eternity, 'to the praise and glory of God, world without end'.

### **What Really Happens When We Die?**

Bulle, Florence, *The Many Faces of Deception*, Minneapolis, MN, Bethany House Publishers, 1989. Ch.12, pp. 162-174.

### **Beyond Death's Door**

As one would expect, Christians were soon debating the [Reader's Digest condensation of the book *Life After Life* by Dr. Raymond A. Moody, Jr]. What I did not expect was to hear so many say, "*Surely this being of light was Christ - who else?*"

If they had opened their Bibles and carefully checked out these "new insights," they would have known "who else!" For those who may not be familiar with the book, Moody studied approximately cases of people who came near to death or who clinically died and were then revived. Although there were variations, each had a strikingly similar story to tell. From the common feelings and events reported, Moody constructed an "ideal" or theoretical model. Essentially, it is as follows:

Shortly after hearing himself pronounced dead, the patient feels himself float out of his body and hears a loud disturbing noise as he swishes through a long, dark tunnel. Suddenly, he is looking down on his body, watching the resuscitation attempt. Spirits of deceased relatives and friends come to help him.

A loving warm spirit - a being of light - appears. This being questions him, nonverbally, as to what- he has done with his life - not for the purpose of judgment, but simply as a learning experience. At the same time, he is presented an instant replay of his life.

Approaching a barrier, he finds he must return to earth. "Overwhelmed by intense feelings of joy, love, and peace," he does not want to return, but something pulls him back, and he is reunited with his physical body. The person's life is remarkably changed by the experience, particularly in that he no longer fears death. Since words are inadequate to describe this episode, and because others scoff, he is reluctant to discuss his experience.<sup>3</sup>

In his later study, Moody found "several new elements" that he discusses in *Reflections on Life After Life*. But they occurred far less frequently than those referred to above. In *The Light*

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<sup>3</sup> Raymond A. Moody, Jr., *Life After Life*. New York: Bantam, 1976, pp. 22, 23.

*Beyond*, Moody describes more intriguing cases, all of which together have convinced him that something leaves the body as the end draws near.

New Age interests have generated a profusion of books on death and near-death experiences (NDE's). In a class by itself is *Otherworld Journeys: Accounts of Near-Death Experience in Medieval and Modern Times* (1987) by Carol Zaleski, a Harvard University lecturer in religion. Zaleski traces the effect of cultural forms and symbols on NDE throughout various periods of history. Comparing medieval and modern accounts at length, she found basic similarities. But she found cultural influences playing a striking role in the differences. For example, "*Whereas guides to the otherworld in modern NDE's are benevolent and parental, medieval guides are foreboding and authoritarian; they clearly reflect feudalism.*"<sup>4</sup> In its bearing and manner, the being of light in modern accounts, Zaleski observes, "*resembles nothing so much as a late twentieth-century psychotherapist.*"<sup>5</sup>

It is an encounter with this being of light that is the most commonly shared element in the myriad of near-death accounts extending back through Christendom. This also proves to be the element most profoundly affecting the individual.

Surely, for the Christian evaluating these experiences, this is the most crucial element. One cannot accept the information intimated by this light-being, along with the conclusions drawn by individuals reporting this experience, and at the same time accept the authority of the Bible. Even if this being

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<sup>4</sup> Carol Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys: Accounts of Near-Death Experiences in Medieval and Modern Times*. Oxford University Press, 1987. Quoted by Rodney Clapp, "Rumors of Heaven," *Christianity Today*, October 7, 1988, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 21.

of light were not suspect, I would have to reject this ideal model. I simply cannot accept the suggestion that all near-death or after-death experiences are so inexpressibly blissful. Not that I question Moody's accuracy in reporting these testimonies, but life itself has taught me differently.

First of all, there is the story my mother told. Though only a child at the time, she never forgot the horror of a dying neighbour's screams.

With every breath, he begged to be pulled up in bed, shrieking that his feet were already in the flames of hell.

And there was the terrible end of Brother Macy. This old man held some sort of record for the number of years he served as Sunday-school superintendent of the small rural church we attended when I was a child. What sticks with me is the picture of a squat little balding man in a collarless black suit, looking at me through round wire-rim glasses. And close beside him, his elfin-like wife with wisps of grey hair slipping free from the soft little bun on the back of her head - friskily rebelling against the puritanical plainness of her long-sleeved black cotton dress with its long skirt mostly hiding her heavy black stockings. Even as a child, I was impressed; the Macys looked so religious. Only one item of the couple's garb was not black. Brother Macy's shirt was white - collarless, too, of course. Wearing a necktie would have been sinful. But there was nothing saintly or euphoric about Brother Macy's death. He died screaming that he was dropping into hell. The church people were stunned. But when anyone said, "How unbelievable!" Mother only looked grim. Years later, I learned what she knew. Sister Macy told her some time before the old man's death that the goats her husband kept were a constant sexual temptation to him. Apparently the rigid mode of dress and pious ways were a cover-up for the rottenness underneath

that he had never dealt with. In the end, the dying man faced the stark reality of how grossly he had deceived himself.

Closer to home, there was the death of my uncle who had lived his whole life by his own rules. Only when he was refused government family relief checks did he legally marry the woman who bore him five children. Nobody, but nobody was going to tell Uncle Harry what to do! And God? As far as we know, he never acknowledged God's existence.

Then came the telephone call that he was dying. When my parents arrived at the hospital, they found a terrible scene. My uncle, propped up in bed, stared straight ahead at something only he could see, his face contorted in a look of sheer horror. At times he pushed himself forward as if straining to see more closely whatever it was that terrified him so. If one of his daughters entered the room and looked at him, she would rush out the door. The nurses refused to stay in his room. Whatever my uncle saw at the last, it certainly came nowhere close to Moody's ideal model of near-death experiences.

And I knew of one more case that ran contrary to this theoretical model. My father's first marriage ended when his wife, Fay, died of blood poisoning. Dad was left with two small children, a stack of bills, and a mother-in-law who was an avowed atheist, causing no end of trouble. When the children visited her, she encouraged them to do things Dad expressly forbade. When Dad remarried, she turned them against their stepmother. It was an ugly situation. But I think it was her mocking God that caused Dad to finally put a stop to all visits.

By the time of her death Dad had had no contact with her for some years. Weeks after her funeral, an in-law, hounded by the memory, came to tell my father that the old lady had died screaming for him. She knew she was on her way to hell; she

had a terrible confession to make; she must see my father. But her family had scoffed at the whole idea and stubbornly refused to call him.

These near-death episodes caused me to think that an elusive factor had escaped Moody's attention. Then I read the book *Beyond Death's Door* by Maurice Rawlings, M.D., a man with top credentials to write about this subject.<sup>6</sup> Particularly intriguing to me was what Rawlings saw as the missing component, why the stacked "research" discounted the idea of judgment and hell.

While resuscitating a terrified patient who told Rawlings he was actually in hell, and who begged the doctor to pray for him and not let him die, Rawlings was jolted into considering that death was not the painless extinction he had believed. He was also jolted into reading his Bible to find out what hell was supposed to be like. He discovered that and more - a compelling personal faith in the Bible as veritable truth and the reality of Jesus Christ as his own Saviour and Lord.

As he began his study of after-death experiences, he wondered how it was that, except for cases of attempted suicide, all the published reports of Doctors Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, Karlis Osis, Elendur Haraldsson, and Moody represented unbelievably good experiences. That there were no bad experiences did not square with what he learned from interrogating patients he personally had resuscitated. Upon contacting other doctors, he found that they, too, had had

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<sup>6</sup> Maurice Rawlings, *Beyond Death's Door*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1978. Dr. Maurice S. Rawlings is a specialist in cardiovascular diseases at the Diagnostic Hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He is a member of numerous medical organizations, including the American Heart Association, the American College of Physicians, the American College of Chest Physicians, the American College of Cardiology, and the American Society of Internal Medicine.



bad experiences reported to them. Why, then, did the above researchers unearth only these one-sided accounts?

His first clue came from the man who said he was in hell. Before becoming stabilized, this patient suffered three or four episodes of clinical death. During one of these episodes, he "saw" his mother and stepmother in a very lush and beautiful valley illumined by a brilliant beam of light. The man's mother had died when he was fifteen months old. He had never seen a picture of her. Yet weeks later, he was able to pick her picture out from among several others. He also recalled other particulars - standing aside and watching the doctor and nurses working over his body lying on the floor, the prayer the doctor had led him to say, and other details of his after-death experience that were pleasant. Earlier, when Rawlings asked him to recall what he saw in hell, he expressed surprise. He remembered nothing whatsoever of the hell he had described while being resuscitated two days earlier?

"Apparently," says Rawlings, "*the experiences were so frightening, so horrible, so painful, that his conscious mind could not cope with them; and they were subsequently suppressed far into his subconscious.*" This leads him to theorize, "*When patient interviews are delayed in any way, this may allow enough time for the good experience to be mentally retained and reported by the patient and the bad experiences to be rejected or obliterated from recall.*"<sup>7</sup>

Rawlings points out that Moody and other investigators who are psychiatrists collect their data after some time has elapsed. Not so with him. As a cardiologist working with critically ill patients in the coronary care units of several hospitals, he is involved in fighting for the life of the patient while his "data" is happening. This, he believes, is why he hears as many bad experiences as good ones. If patients were interviewed "*while*

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. pp. 21,22.

*they are still in trouble and calling for help and before the experience can be forgotten or concealed," Rawlings surmises, "researchers would find bad experiences to be as frequent as good ones."*<sup>8</sup>

It is an established fact that the conscious mind can repress or block out horrifying scenes so that they are beyond recall. If this is what happens with certain patients, it could certainly account for the dearth of bad experiences reported.

Yet for all this, in assessing NDE's we cannot ignore undeniable cultural, psychological, and physiological elements that figure in visions by the dying. Nor can we assume that what the near-death visionary sees is a literal picture or a definitive description of the final death experience and of life beyond. What's more, "near death" is not "dead" in the sense of absolute finality. It follows then that none of these accounts constitute "proof" for any religious position. The only sure word we have regarding man's eternal existence is God's Word. While not accepting NDE's as proof of anything, as Rodney Clapp, writing in *Christianity Today*, says, "*We are bound to consider seriously the possibility of a significant spiritual dimension to the NDE.*"<sup>9</sup> My main concern, is the many who write off any idea of hell or punishment and buy into a false security.

Dying persons apparently do have glimpses "beyond death's door." And what some see is far from pleasant. But what if there was not a single account of any such hellish experience? No matter. Regardless of how the "evidence" is stacked, Paul's words thunder down through the ages: "Let God be true, and every man a liar!"<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. pp. 64, 66.

<sup>9</sup> Rodney Clapp, "Rumors of Angels," *Christianity Today*, October 7, 1988, p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> Rom, 3:4.

When I read in God's Word that "*man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,*"<sup>11</sup> and God "*will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus with everlasting destruction,*"<sup>12</sup> I can only conclude that those who say, "*I've been there and back, and it makes no difference how a person lives,*" are victims of satanic deception. Being ignorant of the devil's genius at counterfeit, these patients simply take for granted that a being of light appearing at death must be Christ or God. Unfortunately, many who read their reports jump to the same conclusion.

This association springs from the term light used often throughout the Scriptures as a symbol for God - and from Jesus' claim, "*I am the light of the world.*"<sup>13</sup> Yet on one occasion, Jesus went on to say, "*I am going away... Where I go, you cannot come... If you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will die in your sins.*"<sup>14</sup>

But is this the message communicated by the figure Moody's patients described? Hardly! No matter what their answer to the question, "*What have you done with your life?*" they felt only total love and acceptance from the light. Even when "*their most apparently sinful deeds were made manifest,*" they insisted this being responded not with anger or condemnation, but rather "*with understanding and even with humour.*"<sup>15</sup>

God is love - that's the why of Calvary. Certainly He understands our weaknesses - that's why He offers us His strength. But He offers us no assurance, whatever, if we walk through life spurning His love. Quite the opposite! The Bible

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<sup>11</sup> Heb. 9:27

<sup>12</sup> 2Thess. 1:8-9.

<sup>13</sup> John 8:12.

<sup>14</sup> John 8:21-22, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Moody, *Life After Life*, pp. 58, 59. 61.

plainly says, "He [God] has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him [Jesus] from the dead."<sup>16</sup> And Jesus speaks candidly of that day when He will be forced to say, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels... Then they will go away to eternal punishment..."<sup>17</sup>

The proposition, therefore, that God sees sin as humorous, or that hell is simply a "learning experience," is sheer madness! And to swallow that lie is to be cruelly deceived.

So who is this being of light at the end of the tunnel? I do not question that in some cases this being is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who were with my grandmother's brother when he was dying told how his last hours were spent talking with Jesus and joyously greeting loved ones who had gone before.

But in many cases, having myself experienced the frightening reality of satan's ruse as an angel of light, I believe that sometimes it is the "master deceiver" in his most subtle form—passing himself off as a look alike for the One who said, "I am the Light of the World." Stephen Board points out, "It is not surprising for old Lucifer to assume that disguise, for his name literally means light bearer and his pre-Adamic effulgence was dazzling."<sup>18</sup>

Remember Paul's concern that the Galatian Christians were "turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all." He warned that they should not be taken in "even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than" the gospel of Christ.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Acts 17:31.

<sup>17</sup> Matt. 25:41,46.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen C. Board, "Light at the End of the Tunnel," *Eternity*, July 1977, p. 15. Reprinted by permission of *Eternity* magazine, Copyright 1981, Evangelical Ministries, Inc., 1716 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA. 19103.

<sup>19</sup> Gal. 1:6-8.

There is no question about it. The message the counterfeit being of light communicates is an absolute denial of Christ's gospel. The dying are led to believe there is no need for repentance, no need for reconciliation with God, no need for any concern other than to love others and gain knowledge. This, more than anything else, positively identifies this impostor as satan. Here again is the same Big Lie by which satan beguiled Eve to eat of the tree of knowledge: With such knowledge, you will be like God; you can do as you please without fear of judgment; you can sin and get away with it; you will not die. Satan, posing as an angel of light, thus swaddles the dying person in a security blanket as sleazy as cobwebs. But more, he seals the individual off from knowing the only One who can legitimately remove the fear of death.

### ***Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross***

One of the most passionate voices peddling satan's death-and-dying propaganda during the last 15 years has been that of Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. Recently, I picked up a magazine and read how a young mother, dying of cancer, and her family, were helped by "*The Death-and-Dying Lady*." It was a moving story, reflecting the sensitivity and concern Kubler-Ross demonstrates to the terminally ill.

But it was also the story of a doctor whose comfort to the dying reeks with deception. As I read, I felt I was watching a sedative administered to a woman about to enter the gas chamber at Dachau, a scene in which the guard smilingly reassures the woman that she is just going to the showers before being issued new clothing and sent to a lovely resort for rest and recuperation. But the lie did not wipe out the terrible reality on the other side of the door. Nor does the false assurance inspired by Kubler-Ross change the fate of those who go through death's door without having made

peace with God. The dreadful fact is that Kubler-Ross has drawn many adherents from the ranks of those who call themselves followers of Christ. Why can't they see through the devil's ploy? This question prodded me to look more closely at how Christians could be so deceived.

Following the publication of her book, *On Death and Dying* (1969), in which she described the five stages of grief - denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance - Elizabeth Kubler-Ross quickly became a worldwide authority on the psychological aspects of death.<sup>20</sup> Few people realized Kubler-Ross's growing involvement in the occult. In fact, just before publication of the book, she claims a patient of hers showed up following her death and burial "as her fully human self" to thank the doctor for having taken care of her, and to encourage her to continue her work with dying patients.<sup>21</sup>

Until then, Kubler-Ross had been sure death was oblivion. But soon after, she was saying she had changed her view; there is life after death. The change, she said, came about from her observations of dying patients and from interviews with those who survived clinical death. The change had nothing to do with God. As far as Kubler-Ross is concerned, God does not exist.

A short time later, Kubler-Ross began having out-of-the-body experiences having nothing to do with death. She believes this phenomenon, known as astral projection, duplicates the sort of separation from the body that takes place at death.

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<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*. New York: Macmillan, 1969, chaps. 3-7.

<sup>21</sup> Ann Nietzke, "The Miracle of Kubler-Ross," *Human Behavior*, September 1977, p. 25. Used by permission of Manson Western Corporation, 12031 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90025.

Though her first OOBÉ was "spontaneous", she turned to Robert A. Monroe, author of *Journeys Out of the Body*, to learn how to leave her body on command. According to Kubler-Ross, in no time, she was able to zoom out of her body. She recounts how, during one of her early experiences, she found herself travelling faster than the speed of light—horizontally. She says, "I switched and made a right-angle turn, rounded a big hill and went up ... to a place so far that when I came back... *I felt like a beaming source of light that could illuminate the darkest corner of the world.*"<sup>22</sup> (Emphasis mine.)

But wait! The Bible clearly states that we who are Christ's disciples are light because we have the Light of Life.<sup>23</sup> We are to shine before men, illuminating the darkness of an evil world. Apart from Christ, this function can be nothing but satan's counterfeit.

Since satan's imitations include a spurious conversion, it is not surprising that Kubler-Ross talks about her "rebirth." It began, she says, as another OOBÉ in which she went through "*every single death of every single one of my thousand patients ... the physical pain, the dyspnoea, the agony, the screaming for help... 10,000 more deaths wouldn't have made any difference, since all the pain you could endure was already there anyway.*" The moment she totally accepted the pain, it disappeared.

And there followed "*the most incredible rebirth experience. ... It was so incredibly beautiful...*" The next morning, she walked outside and found herself "*in love with every leaf, every tree, every bird even the pebbles.*"<sup>24</sup>

These mystical experiences gave rise to her teaching that "*Shanti Nilaya*" is "the ultimate home of peace" where we all

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> John 8:12.

<sup>24</sup> Nietzsche, p. 24.

end up one day after we have come to accept all the agonies of life. And that the only "hell" after death is "self-imposed and self-inflicted" as we are forced to review our lives and see how our "lower rather than higher choices" affected ourselves and others.<sup>25</sup>

The "evidence" Kubler-Ross presents at lectures and workshops to prove the spirit lives on includes stories about her "loving spooks." It is common, she says, for her to witness the physical materialization of spirit beings. A tape recording she plays sounds like two men singing. Not so, she says. One is a male friend, but the other is "Willie," one of her three main personal spirit guides.<sup>26</sup>

Kubler-Ross, denying the divinity of Christ, placed herself theologically among spiritists at the very beginning of her quest to gain knowledge of life after death. Her research was bound to lead to spiritist practices. Failing to recognize the possibility of satanic deception, she was extremely susceptible to the influence of evil spirits.

God strictly forbids His people to have anything to do with a person involved in spiritism or the occult (except, of course, to bring them deliverance). So for anyone taking the Bible seriously, the teachings of Kubler-Ross are clearly off-limits. Still, Christians heedlessly skip over where her "evidence" is coming from, and look to her as an authority on the afterlife.

When a review of nine books dealing with death appeared in *Christianity Today*, reviewer Dale Saunders observed that six of the nine, "all bow, more or less deeply," to Kubler-Ross.<sup>27</sup> Just last night, while reading a Christian writer I greatly admire, I was stopped short by her reference to "the great" Kubler-

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. pp. 25, 27.

<sup>27</sup> Books reviewed by Dale Sanders, *Christianity Today*, June IV



Ross. What's more, on my desk lies a notice of a conference on suicide designed to "unmask the myths," and "directed to the survivors of suicide, doctors, pastors, counsellors, therapists, and laypeople." It is a conference featuring Kubler-Ross and sponsored by the institute bearing the name of a well-known minister. I stare at the ad and feel crumpled inside.

Adding to the impact is the certainty with which she speaks. Let someone - especially "a somebody" - say, "I know beyond a shadow of a doubt ... .." and people - especially those uncertain about the matter - are prone to believe that person must be right. This is a delusion of course. A statement is not true just because it is spoken in italics and exclamation points. Yet this delusion has trapped scores of persons possessed by feelings of uncertainty and doubts about the hereafter.

Robert M. Herhold, a Lutheran pastor who attended a series of lectures given by Kubler-Ross before a group of clergymen, reflects, "*Several pastors commented later on how reassuring her words were.*"<sup>28</sup> Apparently, no one discounted the message as being contrary to the Bible or questioned the messenger's method of arriving at her beliefs. Nor did these clergymen question among themselves as to why they needed this sort of reassurance.

Herhold admits that at first he, too, felt reassured, but he began to be troubled by the fact that what they had been offered was "*a human-centred immortality fortified by stories of patients who have 'died' and reported back.*" There was not "*a hint that God may be what eternal life is all about.*" He goes on to say:

To be sure, many of us are more interested in having more time or more creativity, or more of something else after death than we are in God. But it is precisely the

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<sup>28</sup> Robert M. Herhold, "Kubler-Ross and Life After Death," *The Christian Century*. April 14, 1976, p. 363.

God question which concerned Jesus: "*And this is eternal life: for men to know you, the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ, whom you sent.*"<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, it is precisely the God question that should concern us. To know Him (and the Greek verb indicates progression) is eternal life. It is through Jesus that we come to know God redemptively. There is no basis for hope of eternal life if one sidesteps the crucified and risen Christ who came to reveal the Father - no matter what Kubler-Ross says.

But then, as Herhold points out:

Many of us clergy are guilty of Kubler-Ross's error. We try to relate people to life after death when we should be relating them to God. It is the presence of God which gives eternal life its content. Paul does not celebrate our endless existence; rather he celebrates the fact that nothing can separate us from the love of God.<sup>30</sup>

Those of us who say we are Christians and have been taken in by "a human-centred immortality" cannot blame Moody, Kubler-Ross, or anyone else. The fault is our own. It is in looking for answers apart from God, apart from obedience to the Word, apart from meeting God's conditions that we get into trouble. If we are not to become an easy mark for satan's fallacies, we must keep God at the centre of our spiritual quest - always.

Those who mistake the mirage satan conjures up - a being of light who totally and unconditionally accepts the dying, ushering them into a state of eternal bliss - for reality, say they no longer fear death. But common sense tells us to be rid of any fear without being rid of the causing factor incurs a far greater peril.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p. 364.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 364.

It is not enough to recognize satan's disguise and reject the mirage. We must meet God's conditions, not circumventing the Cross, which alone confers the certainty of life everlasting. The glorious word is that Jesus shared our humanity "*so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*"<sup>31</sup> Christ alone can legitimately and redemptively free us from the fear of death.

Does this mean all edge-of-death experiences are hallucinations or satan's mirages? Not at all! In fact, the counterfeit inevitably presupposes there is the real.

Moments before his death, Stephen looked into the eternal heavens and saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God the Father. Paul, Peter, James, and John had heavenly visions. There is no reason to reject the possibility that even today dying Christians see beyond death's door into the heavenly places. And, too, that some persons who have not made their peace with God have bona-fide visions of hell. Why some do and others don't, we simply do not know.

### ***How should you and I view these other-world experiences?***

In Acts 15, when the Jerusalem council was establishing the doctrine of the Early Church, Peter and Paul told of their experiences, while James quoted Scripture to back them up. This indicates that examining personal experience can be useful in understanding biblical truths, but we must be wary. Truth is not built on the foundation of subjective experience - our own or others. Rather, truth is the foundation on which we stand to examine all subjective experience. All subjective experience - visions, dreams, personal perceptions, intuitional

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<sup>31</sup> Heb. 2:14-15.

concepts - whatever occurs at variance with the Scriptures, must be flatly rejected as fantasy.

We must stay alert to the possibility of satan's intrusion, if not in some visual form of light, then, more often, as some "enlightening" thought or message. His manifestation may be fascinating, easily catching our imagination or interest. But one thing is certain. As we come to know God more and more, as His radiance increasingly fills our lives, we will be far less inclined to go chasing after satan's counterfeits - whatever form they may take. Death will hold no terror, nor will life's challenges cause us to panic, for God himself will direct our coming in and our going out.<sup>32</sup>

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**I long to see the face of my Saviour  
It won't be long now, it won't be long  
These many years I've known Him in measure  
But soon His fullness I'll see  
*His glorious face I shall behold  
His majesty shall unfold  
And in His presence I then shall stand  
Re-made by His almighty hand***

**I've felt the touch of hands that were nail scarred  
I've felt His presence for He was near  
I've walked by faith when I could not see Him  
But soon my vision will be made clear**

**I've felt His power, I know that He saved me  
I've shared His blessings they've been so free  
I've shared His love when others have failed me  
But soon His fullness I'll know I'll see**

Ruth Heflin

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<sup>32</sup> John 10:9.