

E-Herald of the Coming Kingdom

"The time has come, and the Kingdom of God is near. Change the way you think and act, and believe the

Good News."

Matthew 1:15 GW

In This Issue:

Why Did Jesus Die?

Why Was Jesus' Resurrection Necessary?

Events Preceding the Second Coming of Christ

Why Is Truth So Unpopular?

Four Kinds of People at Jesus Return

**DEDICATED TO SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS
OF GOD'S COMING KINGDOM TO BE ESTABLISHED WHEN JESUS RETURNS**

EDITOR'S NOTE

Co-Editors: Wally Winner - Kent Ross



We live in exciting times with the turmoil that seems to be erupting everywhere around the Middle East. Egypt's Mubark was overthrown. Tunisia's leadership changed hands. Libya is involved in a civil war. Syria has rioting in the streets, and now as I write, so does Jordan. And there is unrest in the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Bahrain and some reports filter out of Saudi Arabia.

Of course our own country is and has been involved in war in Iraq and Afghanistan for years now. Our Generals say that it is going very well, and our president announces the pull-out of troops, but it just seems to be a rotation of units.

Only two nations seem relatively quiet there. Iran and Israel. Iran, though, is fomenting as much unrest as it can and even helping in financing it. They are also convinced the Islamic messiah is near to/ being revealed. Read this article's news story. Israel is the lone democracy in the area, our staunch ally, that we now seem to be abandoning and separating from.

It's all exciting for Christians for we see possibilities of end time scenarios coming into play. This magazine and certainly Co-Editor Wally Winner's Dot-to-Dot always feature articles to make us aware of what God may be doing to prepare the time of His Son's Return.

We want to make our position abundantly clear. We believe Jesus will be returning, literally, to this planet in the future, possible the very near future. On behalf of His Father, He will begin the establishment of the Kingdom of God on this planet. It first will be deep-cleaned with the fire of judgment, and then a perfect theocracy will be established as Jesus turns it all back to God, Himself, who then rules eternally.

Of course, there are many details missing, but of those stated facts we are sure. It is imperative that we watch for "signs of the times," those signs people get themselves befuddled arguing over details, which are of intense interest, but on which the Bible itself is not as clear as we wish. Many have been embarrassed assuming they had uncovered the date of His Return, and when their schematic unraveled, have been forced to admit their mistake. How strange to take a stand on dates which Jesus said He, Himself, did not know. For those who think Jesus is God, this is a most difficult conundrum.

And so we watch, we even posit, as we hear and read of political developments, especially around the land that is God's. He gave it as an everlasting, eternal gift to those people of His, the Jewish people. Not to the Arabs, nor Palestinians, who though from the same ancestor, rejected their opportunities and went another path that led them far from the God of Abraham. He is Jehovah, and not Allah. His Son is Jesus, the seed through whom even Gentiles can become part of God's family, for if you are Christ's you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise!

Today, then, we watch and wait . . . and obey and serve. We cannot be idly sitting and just watching. Today is the day in which salvation is available yet. We need to, in love, present with clarity and honesty, the Gospel Message and Plan of Salvation.

We must live it, and show it, as well as teach it for God, Himself, is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Him, through His Son, for eternal life.

Read this issue. Enjoy it. Be strengthened by it, especially the reminder of the verification of the story when God's raised Jesus from the dead . . . the firstfruits of them that sleep in death.

Editorial
Page 2

Contents

Why Was Jesus'
Resurrection Necessary?
Page 15
Wally Winner

The Coming Mahdi
Page 4
Dan Wooding

Four Kinds of People
at Jesus Return
Page 17
Wally Winner

Whatever Happened to Evangelism?
Page 5
Paul Shaw

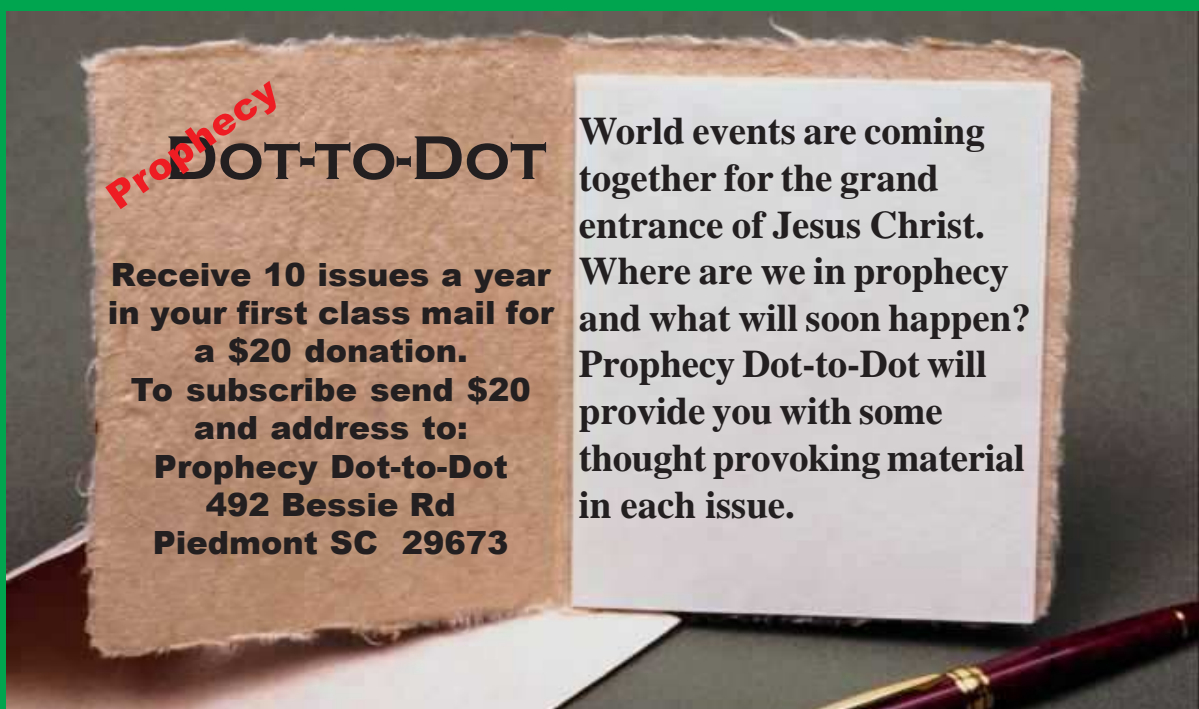
Why Is Truth So Unpopular?
Page 23
Bruce Reye

Events Preceding the
Second Coming of Christ
Page 8
Hollis Partlowe

How Could a Loving God Condemn
People to Eternal Torment?
Page 28
Richard Alcumbrack

Why Did Jesus Die?
Page 13
William Watchel

Holiness Lesson
Page 31



IRANIAN VIDEO SAYS MAHDI IS 'NEAR'

By Dan Wooding
Founder of ASSIST Ministries

TEHRAN, IRAN (ANS) — Erick Stakelbeck, CBN News Terrorism Analyst is reporting that new evidence has emerged that the Iranian government sees the current unrest in the Middle East as a signal that the Mahdi—or Islamic messiah—is about to appear.

CBN News has obtained a never-before-seen video produced by the Iranian regime that says all the signs are moving into place — and that Iran will soon help usher in the end times.

While the revolutionary movements gripping the Middle East have created uncertainty throughout the region, the video shows that the Iranian regime believes the chaos is divine proof that their ultimate victory is at hand.



Iran's president,
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

“The Coming is Near”

According to Stakelbeck, the propaganda footage has reportedly been approved at the highest levels of the Iranian government.

It's called “The Coming is Near” and it describes current events in the Middle East as a prelude to the arrival of the mythical twelfth Imam or Mahdi — the messiah figure who Islamic scriptures say will lead the armies of Islam to victory over all non-Muslims in the last days.

The Basij. This Iranian paramilitary force is a branch of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. They enforce Iran's Islamic social codes, and have a branch in almost every Iranian mosque.

“This video has been produced by a group called the Conductors of the Coming, in connection with the Basiji — the Iranian paramilitary force, and in collaboration with the Iranian president's office,” said Reza Kahlili, a former member of Iran's Revolutionary Guards who shared the video with CBN News. Kahlili, author of the book, “A Time to Betray,” worked as a double agent for the CIA inside the Iranian regime.

“Just a few weeks ago, Ahmadienijad's office screened this movie with much excitement for the clerics,” Kahlili told CBN News. “The target audience is Muslims in the Middle East and around the world.” The video claims that Iran is destined to rise as a great power in the last days to help defeat America and Israel and usher in the return of the Mahdi. And it makes clear the Iranians believe that time is fast approaching.

“The Hadith have clearly described the events and the various transformations of countries in the Middle East and also that of Iran in the age of the coming,” said a narrator, who went on to say that America's invasion of Iraq was foretold by Islamic scripture—and that the Mahdi will one day soon rule the world from Iraq.

Other “Prophetic” Signs

The ongoing upheavals in other Middle Eastern countries like Yemen and Egypt—including the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood — are also analyzed as prophetic signs that the Mahdi is near — so is the current poor health of the king of Saudi Arabia, an Iranian rival.

“Isn’t the presence of Abdullah, his illness, and his uncertain condition, great news for those anxious for the coming?” asks the narrator.

Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, and Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Iran’s terrorist proxy Hezbollah, are hailed as pivotal end times players, whose rise was predicted in Islamic scriptures. The same goes for Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who the video says will conquer Jerusalem prior to the Mahdi’s coming.

“I think it’s a very grave development,” Mideast expert Joel Rosenberg, author of *The Twelfth Imam*, told CBN News, “because it gives you a window into the thinking of the Iranian leadership: that they believe the time for war with Israel may be even sooner than others had imagined.”

Kahlili says “The Coming is Near” will soon be distributed by the Iranian regime throughout the Middle East. He explained that their goal is to instigate further uprisings in Arab countries.

In Sunni and Shia eschatology, the Mahdi is the prophesied redeemer of Islam who will stay on Earth for seven, nine or nineteen years (according to various interpretations) before the Day of Judgment, literally, the Day of Resurrection) and, alongside Jesus, will rid the world of wrongdoing, injustice and tyranny.



In Shia Islam, the belief in the Mahdi is a “powerful and central religious idea” and closely related to the Twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, whose return from occultation is deemed analogous with the coming of the Mahdi. In Sunni traditions, there are several hadiths referring to the Mahdi.

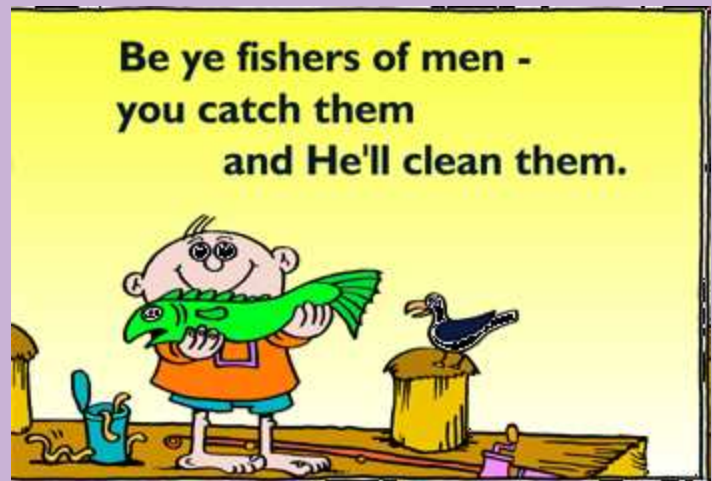
To watch the video report from CBN by Erick Stakelbeck, go to: www.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2011/March/Iranian-Regime-Video-Says-Mahdi-is-Near/

Dan Wooding, 70, is an award winning British journalist now living in Southern California with his wife Norma, to whom he has been married for 47 years. They have two sons, Andrew and Peter, and six grandchildren who all live in the UK. He is the founder and international director of ASSIST (Aid to Special Saints in Strategic Times) and the ASSIST News Service (ANS) and was, for ten years, a commentator, on the UPI Radio Network in Washington, DC. He now hosts the weekly “Front Page Radio” show on KWVE in Southern California which is also carried on the Calvary Radio Network throughout the United States. The program is also aired in Great Britain on Calvary Chapel Radio UK. Besides this, Wooding is a host for His Channel Live, which is carried via the Internet to some 200 countries. You can follow Dan on Facebook under his name there or at ASSIST News Service. He is the author of some 44 books. Two of the latest include his autobiography, “From Tabloid to Truth”, which is published by Theatron Books. To order a copy, press this link. Wooding, who was born in Nigeria of British missionary parents, has also recently released his first novel “Red Dagger”.

LOOKING BACK:

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO EVANGELISM?

By Paul Shaw



My friend, Kent Ross, emailed me the other day that he had run across a book on evangelism that was used as a textbook for a class I taught at Oregon Bible College in the 60's. I don't remember the book, or the class for that matter, but I do recall an emphasis on personal evangelism that seems to be missing in some churches today.

Evangelism Back When

In those days, possibly because not too many generations had passed since traveling evangelists had established many of our churches, evangelism was emphasized strongly. Christians everywhere were urged to be "soul winners." Indeed, the slogan of the entire General Conference in that Harold Doan-Stan Ross era was "Each One Reach One." Even our congregational singing reflected it. We readily sang hymns like "Rescue the Perishing," "Throw Out the Lifeline" and "Bring Them In." The chorus, "Lord, Lay Some Soul Upon My Heart" was popular both at youth camps and the general conference. There was an urgency about it, "redeeming the time because the days are evil," knowing that "the fields are white unto harvest."

The Effect On Me

As a young man and student pastor of the East Oregon Church, my earnest desire was to be one of those "soul winners." I loved the verse "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first and also to the Greek." I wanted the scripture about God making "His ministers a flame of fire" to be true in my life! I still have the small New Testament I carried in my shirt pocket in case I needed to share the "Roman road" or the "four spiritual laws" with someone.

Church Growth Now the Watchword

If you do a Google search these days for "Books on Evangelism" and another for "Books on Church Growth" you get about a million more hits on church growth than on evangelism. I haven't been associated with many Churches of God in

recent years but the churches I have attended seemed to care a lot more about church growth than personal evangelism. They depend on church programs and activities such as small groups to meet people's social and spiritual needs so that more people will attend, donate money, etc. Judging by the articles I see in the Restitution Herald and Progress Journal and a few church bulletins and web sites, it's possible the Church of God has seen some shift in emphasis also.

At the risk of a slight digression, let me sound a cautionary note. The phrase "gospel of the kingdom" has become popular in recent years among Churches of God. While it's a perfectly Biblical phrase, my concern is that some of the uninitiated may take that to mean that telling people the facts about the coming kingdom is all that our witness and message is to be about. Remember, Paul was described as "preaching the gospel of the kingdom and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 28:31). If your church preaches only about the kingdom, but not how to get there ("those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ"), then the full gospel is not being preached.

Nothing has changed in the scriptural call to evangelism. We are still to "go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

The Case for Evangelism

Nothing has changed in the scriptural call to evangelism. We are still to "go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). People are still redeemed by the "precious blood of Christ" (I Peter 1:18-19). The "preaching of the cross" still represents the power of God" (I Cor. 1:18).

The most wonderful news on earth is still that there is a way that we "might not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16) and it's even a free gift!

I believe that II Cor. 5:19 is one of the central scriptures of the Bible. It states "To wit, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," clarifying that over all the scope of history God has had one central purpose: that of reconciling lost sinners to Himself. How does He do it? The rest of the verse explains "and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation." Verse 18 expresses it "and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." Verse 19 calls us "ambassadors for Christ."

By these verses every Christian is asked to be a part of a ministry of reconciling the lost to God. The question remaining for us is: just what priority are we giving that ministry?

Events That Precede the Second Coming of Christ

By Hollis Partlowe

Dispensationalism reflects the general flow of the whole Bible in a systematic, orderly way. It helps us understand what God has done with mankind in the past, what He is doing now and what He is going to do until He sums all things in Christ in His eternal kingdom (Eph. 1:10). It has been of tremendous help to me in getting my bearings on God's whole plan of salvation as it deals with the three groups of mankind - the Jews, the Church and the Gentiles (1 Cor. 10:32).

Three tenets" of dispensationalism:

1. The recognition of a distinction between Israel and the church
2. A consistently literal principle of interpretation
3. The basic purpose of God is His own glory even above the salvation of sinners. The latter exalts the former.

Dispensation means literally a stewardship or administration or economy; from man's a responsibility; and in relation to progressive revelation, a stage in it.

I'm committed to the literal - futuristic interpretation of Bible prophecy which commends itself because of its comprehensive inclusion of all eschatological themes of the Bible and offers a key to the interpretation of prophecy. That key is the future destiny of Israel. It disturbs me to hear people refer to the church as the so called "new Israel" which is usually identified with amillennialism, and is arrived at by spiritualizing Scripture which our leaders a few years ago called "that cancerous method of interpretation".

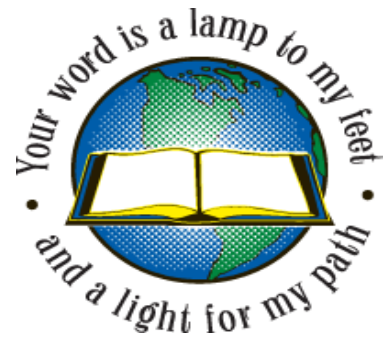
Order of Events

I. The Catching Up (Rapture) of the Church

When the church is completed, Christ will come for it. Then God will restart His redemptive plan for Israel, after this comes the final salvation of the Gentiles (Acts 15:14-17).

The completion of the church comes first (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-58). This is the "last trumpet" for the church, but there will be other trumpets sounded later concerning Israel and the Gentile nations. This trumpet is limited by its context to the church. Only believers are assembled here - "the living and the dead". Paul is very clear on that. Only believers respond to this trumpet and are assembled when Jesus descends from heaven for His own.

To confuse the last trumpet for the church with the seven trumpets of Revelation is to bring mass confusion to prophetic study. The seven trumpets of (Rev. 8:2-11:15) pronounce God's wrath and judgment upon the pagan Gentile world system. They are separate and distinct from the one that assembles the church. God's church does not fit into this program of judgment and divine wrath on the pagans throughout the world.



Christians have been redeemed and are not under condemnation, but have passed from death unto life (John 5:24). Our judgment for sin took place at Calvary. That's why we'll be made immortal in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet for the church is sounded. To relate the trumpet to assemble God's church with the trumpets of divine wrath for unbelievers is totally untenable. The "last trumpet" must be understood then to relate to the time order indicated by the context. It is not sound theology to carry the thought beyond this and locate it in another area of unrelated Scripture.

Notice too (1 Thess. 4:17), that the church is "caught up ... to meet the Lord in the air". There is no indication that Jesus comes all the way to earth at this moment, OR that the church suddenly changes directions in the air. That is often assumed but never proved. Well then, what happens next? That is a question that is left up "in the air" literally. One may push dogma here, but the facts are missing.

The church (ekklesia) is promised deliverance from "the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9), and therefore does not appear in the great tribulation passages. There are saints in the tribulation to be sure, but they are never called the ekklesia, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ - never said to be born of the Spirit, let of the Spirit, or filled with the Spirit. If we are going to put the church in the tribulation, we should at least be able to locate it in that time period. The burden of proof is on those who so teach.

The "last trump" of 1 Cor. 15:52 is clearly not the seventh trumpet of Rev. 11:15. In the former the Lord receives the church. In the latter He receives the kingdoms of this world. In the former there is joy unspeakable. In the latter there are thunderings, earthquakes, great hail and God's wrath. In my opinion, to equate the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11 with the last one for the church is bad exegesis.

The Greek word for "last" in 1 Cor. 15:52 is eschatos. It is translated "last" 46 times in the N. T. including John 6:39, 40, 44, 54 where Jesus speaks of the "last day". Are we to understand that, that means one 24 hour day or a series of events of the end time? Eschatology, the doctrine of last things, deals with such things as resurrection, the second coming, divine judgment, the kingdom, etc. - many things not one thing.

Then too, remember that Paul was writing about A.D. 54-56 to set forth the Christian hope. John was writing about A.D. 90-96 to reveal how God's wrath would be poured out upon the ungodly. One has to strain Scripture to the breaking point to see any relation between the trumpets of judgment in Revelation and the one in 1 Cor. 15 and 1 Thess. 4.

[II. The Trumpet to Regather God's Elect Nation - Israel - Matt. 24:31](#)

This is the regathering of Israel through special angelic messengers. The language is recognizably drawn from the O.T. "Ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of ISRAEL . . . The great TRUMPET shall be blown and they shall come ..." (Isa. 27:12-13).

The trumpet of Matt. 25:31 is not the resurrection trumpet of 1 Thess. 4 and 1 Cor. 15. Two things characterize the rapture:

1. Resurrection
2. Translation of the living

Neither one is in view here. Jesus goes on to illustrate the future restoration and conversion of Israel by the parable of the fig tree (VV. 32-34). This is typical of Jesus. He makes a point, then enlightens us with an illustration or vice versa. Sad to say, but the ones who spiritualize Scripture for their own convenience either miss that point or deny it. At any rate, the fig tree in Scripture is symbolic of national Israel: Matt. 21:18-20; Joel 1:6-7; Hosea 9:10; Jer. 24:1-

5; Luke 13:6-9. Our conference through the years has held this view. Make no mistake, Israel in Scripture means the physical descendants of Abraham through his grandson Jacob whose name was changed to Israel.

III. Israel's Great Tribulation - Matt. 24:21-22

It's really astounding how many jump into this subject and try to determine who is in the tribulation and who is out of it without even trying to define the term or determine God's purpose for it. Those who see the church in the tribulation usually make this twofold mistake.

The tribulation period is the final seven years of God's determined dealing with Daniel's people and the Holy City, to finish Israel's transgression, to end Israel's sins and to make reconciliation for Israel's iniquity (Dan. 9:24). -This time period is clearly decreed upon Israel, Daniel's people and Jerusalem. Daniel 9:24 and 12:1-2 say as much. Jeremiah calls it "the time of Jacob's (Israel's) trouble" (Jer. 30:7). It is never called the time of the church's trouble.

Daniel 9:24-27 contain a comprehensive program for Israel. A period of 490 years were decreed upon Israel, God's covenant nation. To read the church into this prophecy is contrary to the whole tenor of Daniel.

The 70th week (the last 7 yrs.), is not decreed upon the church anymore than the first 69 weeks. To define the church as the so called "new Israel" and read it into this prophecy is a crime against sound interpretation.

The church (ekklesia) is nowhere mentioned in the whole context of Rev. 4-18. Although ekklesia is used 16 times in Rev. 1-3, it is conspicuously absent in chs. 4-18. The church is not discoverable in the 70th week, the Great Tribulation. Small wonder since it is the time of "Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7).

A multitude of saints (Jews and Gentiles) are seen in Rev. 7. Both are designated tribulation saints (V. 14). Not one of them belong to the church, the body of Christ, in my opinion. Three groups are seen in the tribulation period: (1) Israel (2) nations (3) tribulation saints.

THE ANTICHRIST

The Greek prefix "anti" means "against or in place of". The antichrist emerges from the revived Roman Empire. Scripture says nothing about his nationality or racial connections. One cannot determine from which nation he will come.

"The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth..." (Dan. 7:23). This is clearly Rome and the ten horns are ten kings out of which the Roman Ruler comes, the "little horn" (V. 24, 8).

Three Stages of the Roman Empire

1. The ancient Roman Empire Dan. 7:7, 23
2. The ten horn OR ten kingdom stage 7:24
3. The little horn OR antichrist stage 7:24-25

We of the church find ourselves in between the old Roman Empire and the revived form of it in the end time.

Confusion of Little Horns

Daniel sees a different "little horn" in 8:9. The little horns of 7:8 and 8:9 are two different men living centuries apart. Notice the two beasts are totally different, and the number of horns is different as well.

LITTLE HORN - Dan. 7

1. Would come from Rome 4th kingdom
2. Would be an eleventh horn, uprooting three of the 10
3. Would persecute God's people for 42 months (3 1/2 yrs.)
4. Future

LITTLE HORN - Dan. 8

1. Would come from Greece 3rd kingdom
2. Would be 5th horn coming out of one of four horns
3. Would persecute God's people for 2,300 days OR e-v-ea 6 yrs
4. Historical

The "little horn" of Dan. 7 is the future Roman antichrist; the "little horn" of Dan. 8 is Antiochus Epiphanes who ruled Syria from 175-164 B.C.

Only typically can the "little horn" of Dan. 8:9 be construed as the future antichrist.

TWO PHASES OF CHRIST'S COMING

Jesus comes for the church, then after the tribulation He comes with the church to destroy this world system and establish His kingdom.



Christ's Coming With the Church;

1 Thess. 3:13 coming with all his saints

Col. 3:4 appear with him in glory

Matt. 24:27, 30 With power and great glory

Rev. 17:14 They that are with him

Jude 14, 15 With Ten Thousands of saints

Rev. 19:11-21 Smite the nations

2 Thess. 1:7-10 In flaming fire taking vengeance

Dan. 2:34-45 Stone smites the image

Zech. 14:3-5 Feet on Mount of Olives

See pages 491-492 of Systematic Theology by Dr. Alva G. Huffer for important details.

Christ's Coming For the Church:

Christ's return for His bride is imminent. By that I mean it is possible any time. There is no prophesied event between the church today and the rapture. However, many things happen before the kingdom is set up. Christ's coming is possible any time. although He may not come for many years, some of the prophecies which focus on the first phase of Christ's coming are: 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-53; Matt. 24:36-44.

We would do well to expect Jesus' return at any moment and prepare for it. He said: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come...Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:42, 44; Cf. Mark 13:32-37). Any teaching that denies that Christ could come any day for His own flies in the face of what Jesus Christ clearly taught. He warned against thinking, "My Lord delayeth his coming" (Matt. 24: 48).

Certainly we have two sets of prophecies that deal with Christ's coming. One set focuses on business as usual, just a normal day. The other set focuses on a time of unprecedented

tribulation, the war of Armageddon is raging with all nations involved. Two totally different pictures. We have different phases of judgment, different phases of resurrection. Why not two phases of Christ's coming?

The two comings of Christ in the O.T. are separated by many centuries, but the writers make no effort to distinguish between them. Not even the apostles saw this clearly. Likewise, the N.T. writers make no effort to separate Christ's coming for the church and His coming with the church.

The rapture concerns the church; the second phase concerns Israel and the nations. The church is separate and distinct from Israel in position, privilege and prospect. This of course is one of the great strengths of premillennialism. Pretribulationism emerged as a refinement of the premillennial view. It should be obvious to any student that this subject did not become a center of interest until after the protestant reformation.

[The Judgment of the Nations - Matt. 25:31-46](#)

The time of this judgment is clearly before or at the beginning of the millennium. When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then . . .", not a 1000 later as exponents of the so called "new Israel" would have us believe.

The ones judged at this point in time are the mortal people living then - the Gentiles, the ones who survived the tribulation and the war of Armageddon. They will be judged as individuals not as national groups. They have been converted since the rapture.

The purpose of this judgment is to determine their worthiness to enter the kingdom as subjects (mortal people). This is the normal premillennial interpretation.

Now if the rapture occurs at this point, who populates the millennium? With all the righteous raptured and all the wicked slain, the earth is depopulated totally (V. 41; 2 Thess. 1:7-9). I'm convinced that the catching up of the church takes place earlier, and the tribulation saints (ones converted during the tribulation) are the ones who populate the millennial kingdom (Rev. 7:14). They have obtained redemption through the blood of the Lamb, and therefore are worthy to enter the 1000 year reign of Christ as mortals. I have to assume that we all believe that no one can enter the kingdom of God without redemption and spiritual regeneration. (Heb. 9:22; John 3:1-8).

[SUMMARY](#)

To ignore, deny or reject that God has separate programs for the church, Israel and the nations is to bring hopeless confusion to prophetic study. Scripture carefully weaves the destiny of the church and the nations around the destiny of the nation Israel. Israel is the hub of all the prophetic Word. If one understands the unalterable destiny of Israel in God's prophetic program/then one is rightly oriented to understand the prophetic programs for the church and the nations. But if Israel's destiny is spiritualized, then the related prophetic destiny of the church and the nations become inexact, indistinct and blurred. The whole body of Scripture maintains a clear distinction between Israel and the church. To blur that distinction is a major blunder in Biblical interpretation.

When all the evidence is in, I believe that the whole revelation of Scripture teaches the premillennial return of Christ and the pretribulation rapture of the church. Pretribulationism is easy to defend. It is not a cult, but a powerful system of theology.

Why Did JESUS Die?

By William M. Wachtel

The question of why and how Christ died for sinners has occupied devout minds since the event itself. History has known many cases where people have sacrificed their own life to rescue others, but usually this sacrifice has been made on behalf of friends or family. In Christ's case, we are assured that the sacrifice was made on behalf of those who were sinners, enemies of God, and in no way worthy of such love.

The Book of Hebrews probes deeply into the question of Christ's death. In essence, the purpose of his death is said to be "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (9:26). The problem of sin in God's universe is the first and foremost problem brought to our attention as we study God's Word. Sin shows its ugly face in the early chapters of Genesis and is not finally done away until the last chapters of Revelation. Without some understanding of what sin is and what it does, we can never grasp the meaning or purpose of Christ's death.

The nature of sin is first revealed in Scripture as *disobedience* on man's part, when Adam and Eve broke God's commandment by eating of the forbidden fruit. (Gen. 3:1-19) Sin is described as "lawlessness" in 1 John 3:4, or, as the Authorized Version renders it, "transgression of the law." God reveals his will to man so that man can act in harmony with his will. Man's refusal or failure to comply with God's will is *sin*. The extent of man's defiance of God's will is seen in the declaration that "all have sinned and keep coming short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23, Greek), together with the solemn verdict that "there is none righteous, no, not one" (3:10). Men may try to excuse or explain away this universal fact of human experience, but God still calls it sin and holds man responsible for it

After knowing what sin is, we must explore what it *does*. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). "For the wages of sin is death . . .





“(6:23). Genesis records how God pronounced the curse of death on the human race as the result of sin. (2:17 ; 3:19.) Disobedient man could not expect to live on in his sinfulness: death was the decreed and appropriate end for the sinner. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4).

At the same time that God decreed death as the result of sin, he offered man hope for the eventual conquest of sin (Gen. 3:15). This hope was made brighter and clearer by further revelation as the centuries passed. To the promise that sin would be conquered was added the pledge that death, too, would be overcome at last. The Prophet Isaiah explained that God would conquer sin by laying its guilt and penalty upon an innocent victim sacrificed on behalf of all men. “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. . . . The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin. . . . He bare the sin of many” (53:5-12).

The New Testament contains the fulfillment of Isaiah’s famous prophecy. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, “his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Pet. 2:24). “Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb. 9:26). This sacrifice is a historic event. It occurred when Jesus died on the cross as “the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:2). God declared that he accepted the sacrificial death of his Son as a suitable and sufficient means of pardon for the believing sinner, providing reconciliation and access to God for those who had been separated from him by sin. God set forth Christ “to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:25, 26).

The death of Christ on the cross provided the perfect means for God to deal with the sin problem. It showed at one and the same time his abhorrence of sin and his love for the sinner. He remained *just* in his divine nature, as Judge and Punisher of sin. But he also (glory to God!) proved his *love* for sinful man and his *power* to save sinners from their lost condition. Christ “was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:25). The risen Christ “ever liveth to make intercession” for those who come to God by him (Heb. 7:25). And because Christ is alive, those who believe in his sacrifice and follow him as Lord have the hope of living forever, when they are rescued from death at his coming. (1 Cor. 15:20-23.)

Why did Christ die? He died to make salvation possible for sinners, for every person reading these words. He died because it was a “necessary” and not merely optional part of God’s plan. (Heb. 9:22-28.) If man could have been saved without the death of Christ, then surely it was cruel and capricious of God to allow the sacrifice of his precious Son in that horrible manner. But if there was no other way (and Scripture knows of none), then the fact that God “gave his only begotten Son” does indeed prove that he “so loved the world” (John 3:14-17.)

WHY WAS JESUS' RESURRECTION NECESSARY?

By Wally Winner

Think about it. If only Jesus' body died from the rigors of His crucifixion, but the real He or His "soul" was still alive, why was it necessary for His body to be resurrected three days after His death and burial?

Why would He need his body if, when He died, He was already an "immortal soul"?

After Jesus fulfilled His mission, why did it - the body - have to be brought back to *life* if one's "immortal soul" can live apart from the body, what need is there of a resurrection to life?

For that matter, why are Christians to be resurrected out of their graves as Jesus was if they are already alive apart from their bodies? If their "immortal souls" have already gone to heaven or paradise when they die, why do Christians need to be resurrected in order to live again?

Before we discover why it was needful for Christ to rise from the dead, we must first understand why He was put to death.

When God created the first human beings, He gave them a choice symbolized by two fruit-bearing trees. One tree represented obedience, its fruit leading to eternal life. The other tree represented disobedience, its fruit leading to death for all eternity.

God said to the first man, Adam, "In the day that thou eatest thereof [the tree that symbolized selfishness and disobedience] thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). In other words, the day man sinned, he came under the penalty of eternal death.

God didn't say Adam's body would die and that his "soul" would continue to live somewhere. Adam wasn't a body with an "immortal soul" inside. Adam – the living, physical being – was a soul. When God breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, "man *became* a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). As a result of Adam's sin, Adam – a soul – received the death sentence. Of course, for the Bible declares elsewhere, "The soul that sinneth, *it shall die*" (Ezek. 18:4). This important truth is repeated in verse 20. How can the Bible be any clearer than that?

Adam sinned and came under the death penalty. But where does that leave the rest of us? We are in the same boat as Adam, because we all - every human being who has ever lived - have also sinned - transgressed God's law (1 John 3:4). "Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men. . . ." Why did death pass upon all men? Continue, "for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

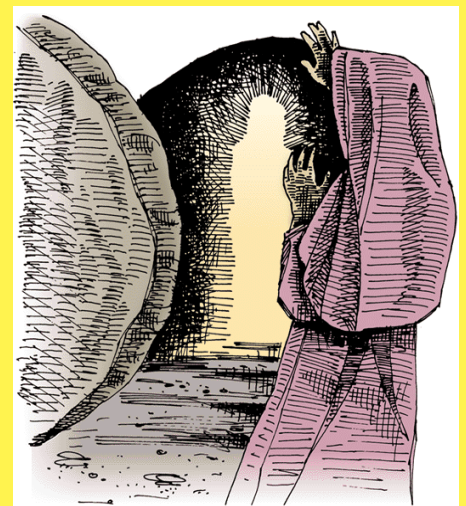
All human beings are consequently under the sentence of death.

God will not compromise with His law. How then could God fulfill His purpose for human beings?

To work out His plan, God had to provide some way to redeem, to forgive, to save people from sin. Someone had to bear the penalty of sin - to die - in their stead so they could be forgiven. It would have to be someone who was without sin so that his death would substitute for everyone else's sins. It would have to be someone whose life was worth more than the lives of all human beings put together.

Jesus Christ died in our stead (1 Peter 18, 19; Acts 20:28). If we repent of our sins (that means to stop sinning and begin to obey God's laws), if we ask for forgiveness, we can receive the gift of eternal life rather than the penalty of eternal death. That is, not this first physical death we all die, but the second death from which there will never be a resurrection (Rev. 20:6, 14, 15).

This is explained so well in John 3:16. Perhaps no other verse in the New Testament is quoted as often and understood so little. "For God



"He has risen;
See he is not here.
the place where they laid him."

Mark 16:6

so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Jesus did not say everyone already has everlasting life - an “immortal soul” - and faces either spending that everlasting life in hell fire, or in heaven. That’s not what this verse says at all!

It’s a question of either acquiring immortality or not having it; of either living forever as God’s gift, or of dying - perishing. There is nothing said here about an “immortal soul.”

We read in Romans 6:23 that “the wages of sin is death.” Notice, however, the rest of the verse: “but [on the other hand, by contrast to death] the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Eternal life is not something we already have but seek (Rom. 2:7). We do not possess immortality. It is a gift of God to those who repent. “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,” declared Jesus (Luke 13:3, 5).

The penalty of sin is death—the cessation of life. That is the penalty Jesus paid when He “poured out his soul [his physical, mortal life sustained by his blood] unto death (Isa. 53:12).

The death and resurrection of Jesus was foretold in Old Testament prophecies centuries beforehand. In one of those prophecies are reflected the words of Jesus to his Father concerning the ordeal of His crucifixion. “My flesh,” said Jesus, talking about His fleshly body, “shall rest in hope: [why would his *flesh* rest in hope?] because thou wilt not leave my *soul* [his fleshly body] in hell” (Acts 2:26-27).

The use of the English word *hell* in the King James Bible has caused some misunderstanding. The Greek word here translated “hell” merely means the grave - a hole in the ground. Even the old English word *hell* originally meant no more than a hole or place of hiding. Farmers used to speak of putting their potatoes in “hell” for the winter!

Jesus’ “soul”—his fleshly body—was placed in a hole in the ground, more precisely, a tomb hewn out of the rocky side of a hill. Jesus himself foretold where He would spend the time between His crucifixion and resurrection. He stated that He would be “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”—surrounded by earth (Matt. 12:40). Not up in heaven, not off somewhere else, but in an earthly grave, a hole in the ground. So said Jesus. He ought to know.

There is no mistaking that the Bible differentiates between a person’s “soul” - physical life and body—and his “spirit” (Heb. 4:12). Jesus said at his death, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). While the pagan idea of a conscious “immortal soul”, within man is not biblical, nevertheless the Bible here and elsewhere reveals “there is a spirit in man” (Job 32:8). This “spirit” is not conscious by itself, “His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish” (Ps. 146:4, RAV).

When a person dies, “then shall the dust [the physical body, the soul] return to the earth as it was: and the spirit [breath of life – Gen. 2:7] shall return unto God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7).

Jesus referred to this important truth when, just before He died, he cried: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost [spirit – breath of life]” (Luke 23:46). That it was not a conscious, living spirit that Jesus committed to the Father is proved by John 20:17, where, after his resurrection, Jesus said that He - the conscious Jesus - had not yet ascended to the Father!

Once dead, Jesus was put in the grave where it remained for three days and nights. He was “Cut off out of the land of the living” (Isa. 53:8). All life and conscious thought stopped, for “the dead know not any thing” (Eccl. 9:5). He was asleep, as are all those who have died (Dan. 12:2). His resurrection made him the “firstfruits [the first to be resurrected immortal, to eternal life] *of them that slept*” (1 Cor. 15:20).

Why was Jesus brought back to life in a resurrection out of that stone sepulchre? For two reasons. One, Jesus was not worthy of death. He had never sinned. Two, if Jesus were not brought back to life as a glorified, immortal being all the dead in Christ would remain dead forever. They could never live again. “And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep [they are not alive up in heaven, or somewhere else - they are asleep in their graves] in Christ are perished” - never to be brought back to life (1 Cor. 15:17-18).

But the fact is, Christ was raised from the dead. Because He lives we have the glorious “*hope* [not yet the reality] of eternal life” (Titus 3:7) “For this corruptible *must put on* incorruption, and this mortal *must put on* immortality” (1 Cor. 15:53). When? At the resurrection and not before (verses 42, 50-54).

That is the plain teaching of the Bible!

FOUR KINDS OF PEOPLE AT JESUS COMING

By Wally Winner

A new nationwide survey conducted by The Barna Group among a representative sample of adults explored how many have what might be considered a “biblical worldview.” If Jesus were to ask, “Who do you say I am,” the question He famously asked his disciple Peter, He would be disappointed by some of the answers He’d receive from contemporary Americans according to the report from Barna .

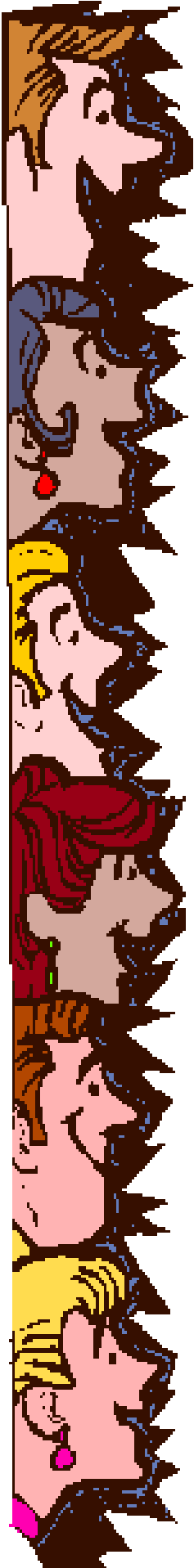
Among the views used for the purpose of the survey to define a “biblical worldview” were believing that absolute moral truth exists; the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches; Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; and God is the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the world who still rules the universe today. In the research, anyone who held these beliefs and a few others was said to have a biblical worldview.

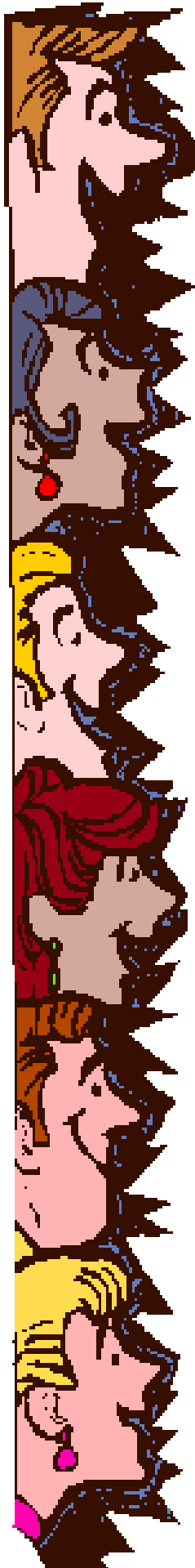
The most recent research revealed that only 9% of all American adults have a biblical worldview. Among the sixty subgroups of respondents that the survey explored was one defined by those who said they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Labeled “born again Christians,” the study discovered that they were twice as likely as the average adult to possess a biblical worldview. However, that meant that even among born again Christians, less than one out of every five (19%) had such an outlook on life. The same questions were asked of respondents in national surveys by Barna in 1995, 2000 and 2005. The results indicate that the percentage of adults with a biblical worldview has remained unchanged for more than a decade. The numbers show that 7% had such a worldview in 1995, compared to 10% in 2000, 11% in 2005, and 9% now. Even among born again adults, the statistics have remained flat: 18% in 1995, 22% in 2000, 21% in 2005, and 19% today.

It is a world full of paradoxes. All around awesome world events demand urgent action, with frightening trends. The conditions demand the soberest contemplation. When violence, kidnappings, assassinations, murders, civil wars, hijackings, and the toppling of governments should cause the deepest introspection, the millions doze. Famine with flatulence, emergency with ease, crisis without concern: none really mix. Yet they prevail.

What about you? Would you go to a poker game in a damaged nuclear reactor? Swim in a tsunami? Fly serenely into a hurricane? Walk lazily through a mine field? Lie down and nap on a sinking ship? It’s time you wondered about the paradox of apathy in a time demanding total commitment.

Look up and pay attention because judgment is about to come.





Most people are too sophisticated to believe such religious “superstition,” the archaic threat of “eternal judgment”. It is an ancient remnant out of man’s distant past, a useless appendage, a shriveled-up relic of a bygone age. Yet in clearly listing “*the principles of the doctrine of Christ*” in Hebrews 6:1-2, the Apostle Paul concludes these absolutely foundational principles of God’s Word with the phrase “eternal judgment.”

“Eternal judgment” in 2011? Sneers of ridicule! “Eternal judgment” seems to do everything to the modern mind except bring people closer to God.

Since the beginning God has separated the righteous from the faithless when the time of judgment came.

Flood

We do not know exactly how long it took after Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden before they made the wrong choice. Using the genealogy of Genesis chapter five, it appears that it took mankind about two thousand years from the Garden sin to be just plain wicked. So wicked that God used a flood judgment.

Yahweh said to Noah, “Come with all of your household into the ship, for I have seen your righteousness before me in this generation.” (Genesis 7:1 WEB)

All flesh died that moved on the earth, including birds, livestock, animals, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, of all that was on the dry land, died. Every living thing was destroyed that was on the surface of the ground, including man, livestock, creeping things, and birds of the sky. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ship. (Genesis 7:21-23 WEB)

Sodom and Gomorrah

It becomes necessary for God to localize His judgment on a couple of depraved burghs called Sodom and Gomorrah.

It happened, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the middle of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot lived. (Genesis 19:29)

Difference Between Egypt and Israel

The event that caused the Exodus of Israel from Egypt was a judgment on the firstborn. The blood made the difference.

Moses said, “This is what Yahweh says: ‘About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt, and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who is behind the



mill; and all the firstborn of livestock. There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been, nor shall be any more. But against any of the children of Israel a dog won't even bark or move its tongue, against man or animal; that you may know that Yahweh makes a distinction between the Egyptians and Israel. (Exodus 11:4-7 WEB)

One Taken One Left

Then there is an interesting and sad judgment mentioned that will transpire at the end of this age at the return of Christ.

Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and one will be left; Two women grinding at the mill, one will be taken and one will be left. Watch therefore, for you don't know in what hour your Lord comes. (Matthew 24:40-42 WEB)

That's correct: some that are alive at the return of Christ WILL NOT rise up to meet Christ in the air. Christ will find four types of people upon His return.

THE UNEXPECTED

To some Jesus will come as a thief. *Remember therefore how you have received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If therefore you won't watch, I will come as a thief, and you won't know what hour I will come upon you. (Revelation 3:3)*

This group will be like the people in the days of Noah. What were the people of Noah's day doing? Jesus says in Matt. 24:37-38: "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark," (Genesis 6-7).

According to the Bible there is nothing wrong with eating and drinking, marrying etc., etc., but these people who lived before the Great Flood were doing something which caused the Lord to drown them all. They had a preoccupation with wickedness.

They ate, drank, married right up until the time Noah entered the ark. Then the destruction of the flood suddenly came and they were destroyed. In Noah's day there was plenty of warning. It took approximately 120 years for Noah to build the Ark. This implies there was plenty of time for his neighbors and other curious individuals to question him on his reason for building the vessel. They would have been given a recurrent answer about the flood and their impending judgment. Unfortunately only a few people - eight in all - were saved from the flood.



Hence in the days of Noah people were not expecting the impact of God on their lives. They were even unappreciative of the mercy and grace He extended to them.

THE UNCONCERNED

As the Bible predicted, many today live their daily lives as if oblivious to the deadly potential of these times! We somehow convince ourselves all will be well — there's no need for concern — we have always managed to tough it out before, and we can tough it out again.

But he said to him, "A certain man made a great supper, and he invited many people. He sent out his servant at supper time to tell those who were invited, 'Come, for everything is ready now.' They all as one began to make excuses. "The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please have me excused.' "Another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I must go try them out. Please have me excused.' "Another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I can't come.' "That servant came, and told his lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, maimed, blind, and lame.' "The servant said, 'Lord, it is done as you commanded, and there is still room.' "The lord said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you that none of those men who were invited will taste of my supper.'" (Luke 14:16-24 WEB)

Notice the things which were concerning these people.

1. Business engagements - I have something else to see. I bought property and I need to go see it. Nothing like buying a pig a poke. Some grab bag real estate. They see to their earthly possessions and have no time for eternal provision that God has provided.
2. Go and try oxen - I have something else to do. I have to go to work. Who is going to buy anything without knowing anything about the purchased product? After I get done with all the work and chores on my "to do" list, I will consider coming.
3. Married a wife - I have something else to enjoy The family man's excuse. If one is to be acceptable this is it. All new relationships are sure to have a powerful influence in one way or another.

God requires one and only one thing of us: He wants us to want the coming of His Kingdom more than we want anything else in this life. At the end of this age, when nothing of this world remains, if He finds that we want—from the core of our



being—the Kingdom He intends to establish, then citizenship in that Kingdom is ours. But if He finds our eyes, our desires, and our affections fixed on the stuff that is passing away, then we are unworthy of His Kingdom, and His words to us will be, “I do not know you.”

THE UNPREPARED

Prophecy after prophecy in the Bible warns us that at the time when the second coming of Jesus Christ would be imminent, vast numbers of God’s own people would drift into lethargy and apathy, sleepily going about their own day-to-day affairs as if trying to shove the unacceptable future into the back of their minds and pretend there is unlimited time left for their own personal pleasures. They had their priorities all wrong.

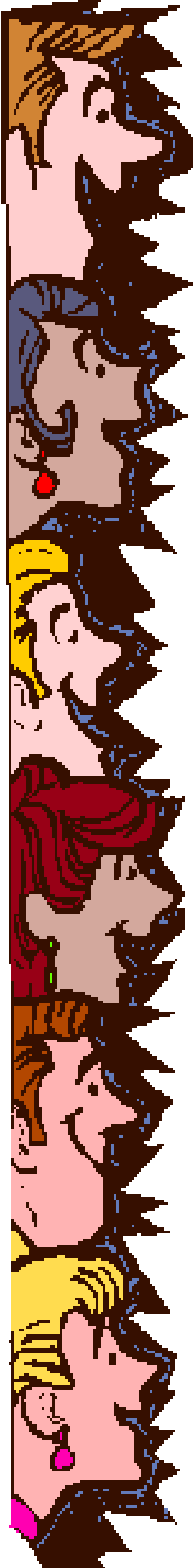
“Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. Those who were foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom delayed, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Behold! The bridegroom is coming! Come out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.’ The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘What if there isn’t enough for us and you? You go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ While they went away to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us.’ But he answered, ‘Most certainly I tell you, I don’t know you.’ (Matthew 25:1-12 WEB)

The oil that the foolish virgins found depleted when the bridegroom came is analogous to our desire for, belief in, and commitment to the eternal life which God has promised. Many people will desire it; many will believe God’s promise; many will commit themselves to wait for its realization. But only a few will find their desire, their belief, and their commitment in ample supply. Time and the flame of the weary, mundane ordinariness of life will try to lick dry our desire for the Kingdom and our belief in God’s promise. Good intentions do not let you into the marriage feast.

THOSE READY TO MEET CHRIST.

The Bride of Christ makes herself ready.

Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, and let us give the glory to him. For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready.” It was given to her that she would array herself in bright, pure, fine linen: for the fine linen



is the righteous acts of the saints. He said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" He said to me, "These are true words of God." (Revelation 19:7-9 WEB)

This Bride is clothed in His righteousness (not her own). She walks in holiness. *Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man will see the Lord... (Hebrews 12:14 WEB)*

And her reward is she will be caught up to meet Christ in the air.

But we don't want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who have fallen asleep, so that you don't grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we tell you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left to the coming of the Lord, will in no way precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with God's trumpet. The dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. So we will be with the Lord forever. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 WEB)

Jesus made one specific promise over and over again. When He was taken up to heaven, that same promise was repeated to His disciples even by angels, as the very first message ever to come down out of heaven after Jesus was taken up. That message was: *"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men [angels] stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1 :9-11).*

Jesus said over and over again He would come back to this earth. He told His disciples, *"For the Son of man shall COME in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). He said, "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26).*

Jesus said to His disciples then, and He says to all of us today, *"Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour [or time] when ye think not" (Luke 12:37, 39-40).*

Why Is Truth So Unpopular?

By Bruce Reye

Why is the truth so unpopular?

That seems like a loaded question doesn't it? That question also raises other questions as well.

Who decides what is popular and what is unpopular?

What is the truth and what is it about the truth that makes it "unpopular"?

If you were to look up the word unpopular in **Dictionary.com** you would find that it is defined as:

1. Not popular; disliked or ignored by the public or by persons generally.
2. In disfavor with a particular person or group of persons.

Of course we know that something that is popular is just the opposite and it is something that is regarded favorably by a person or a group of people.

One of the earliest Biblical accounts of an unpopular truth is found in **Genesis 6**. We find that in **Genesis 6** that God has asked Noah to build a boat; not just any boat. Noah has been instructed to build a very large ship.

God had a very good reason for this. We find that according to **Genesis 6:6** that God was sorry that He had made man and put mankind on the earth.

Why? Man was evil and his wickedness was great. **Genesis 6:5**

Noah preached and warned the people of an upcoming flood and yet the people did not listen nor did they repent.

I am sure that Noah was a very unpopular man during the time it took him to build the ark. I am sure he was ridiculed. I am also sure however that once the rains came and the waters began to rise that Noah suddenly became a very popular man.

The account of Noah and the flood is a very good example of an unpopular truth.

The amazing thing about the account of Noah and the flood is how much it resembles society today.

We live in an evil and permissive society and yet I believe that there only a few people who truly believe that. Just like in the days of Noah it seems that man continually does evil in the eyes of God.

Now that we know what the word unpopular means the next thing we need to understand is "what is truth?" For that answer I would like to turn to God's Holy Word. I can think of no better source for the truth than from the inspired Word of God.

Let's look at **John 14:-1-7** ¹"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ²"In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place



for you. ³If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And you know the way where I am going.” ⁵Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. ⁷”If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”

This passage is commonly called “The Upper Room Discourse” and we see here that Jesus is trying to comfort his disciples when he says “let not your hearts be troubled.”

Jesus knows that he will soon be crucified and be put to death. Jesus is trying to tell the disciples that they cannot go with him in death at this time.

I think it is important to remember that Jesus is saying this in light of the fact that Peter will soon deny him and the other disciples will be scattered and frightened once Jesus is arrested and taken into custody.

Thomas asks Jesus “where are you going?” and he asked this because he too was still looking for a conquering king. He feels the need to know exactly where Jesus is going. Remembering that it was the same Thomas who also had the need to touch and feel the wounds of our loving risen Savior.

Jesus responds by a profound self-identification. He explains that the disciples can place their faith and their trust in him. Jesus is the truth that Father God wants proclaimed and Jesus conquered death and because he conquered death we too can have life.

It is the answer that Jesus gave Thomas that I want to look at because in this answer Jesus is explaining just how perfect and complete he is.

Jesus said: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. Jesus is the **ONLY** way to the Father and Jesus is the truth and the life. Jesus is the truth and so begs the question, why is the truth so unpopular? Why is Jesus and why is religion so unpopular?

If you notice Jesus did not say **WE** are the way and he did not say that no comes unto **US** except thru me; one person of the godhead. There is only one way to God and it is thru Jesus Christ. I do believe that it does make a difference which Jesus it is you believe in and which Jesus into which you were baptized.

In no way was Jesus trying to put himself on the same level, the same plane as God.

If Jesus is the truth then why do you think the truth of Jesus being the Son of God and not God and the Oneness of Father God so unpopular?

Is “religion unpopular?”

Could it be that some people have forgotten the warning the apostle Paul gave to Timothy when in **2 Timothy 4:1-4** the beloved apostle said: ¹ I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: ²preach the word; be ready in season

and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. ³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,⁴ and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

Is it easier to go along with the crowd? Who wants to ruffle feathers or make waves?

Would we rather have our ears ticked; would we rather just hear what we want to hear and believe in myths?
Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

Why does this verse seem to be ignored so much?

Baseball will soon be here and baseball is a game of statistics isn't? On base percentage; fielding percentage, earned run average; these are only a few. We seem to rely on these stats and there are many managers in baseball that use these stats to help them make critical decisions at any certain point in time in the ball game.

However when it comes to the Bible people often seem to ignore the overwhelming numbers.

The word ADONI is used about 195 times in the Old Testament, the word ADONAI is used about 449 times and each time the word ADONAI is used it refers to the Father God. The words ADONI and ADONAI clearly show a Biblical distinction between God and man.

The Old Testament describes God with singular pronouns over 11,000 times. Singular pronouns tell us that God is one person, God is a single individual. God is not three persons as many are misled to believe.

With so much proof and emphases on the oneness of God why do you believe that the truth is so unpopular?
One reason could be because one might wonder how so many people could be so wrong?
Let's go along with the crowd because everybody can't be wrong.

Is it fair to say that for many people? There are people who really have not studied scripture and they might be more inclined to go along with the crowd.

When I was a kid we used to travel to the Cleveland area to visit my uncle and his family and my grandmother, we used to go once every month or so.

Often times if there was a new restaurant along the way my parents would look at the number of cars in the parking lot at a meal time hour. If the parking lot looked empty we would usually pass on by. However, if the parking lot looked full then my parents would go with the numbers and assume it was a good place to eat. People are like that concerning religion too. Many people automatically assume bigger is better but I am sure that we have all had enough experience in life to realize that is not always true.

As we understand the truth about Jesus and his real identity it becomes important for us to make sure that we understand what Jesus was doing while he was here on this earth.

Jesus preached what is often called the gospel. What is the gospel that Jesus preached? It was the good news about a coming Kingdom that is to be established here on this renewed earth. Jesus spent the majority of his earthly ministry proclaiming the gospel and he spoke very little about his death.

If you remember in **John 14:6** Jesus said "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

Keeping this in mind I want to take a look at another reason that I believe truth is unpopular.

In **Matthew 10** we read about Jesus preparing the apostles to go out into the lost sheep of the house of Israel and proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom. Jesus is trying to prepare them for acceptance and for rejection.

In **Matthew 10:34-38** Jesus said something that might make someone uncomfortable or ask questions.

Matthew 10:34-38 ³⁴"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵"For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; ³⁶and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. ³⁷"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸"And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

As you read this passage of scripture the one obvious theme is that Jesus is making it very clear that he did not come to this earth the first time on a peace mission. Jesus is also telling us that he came with a sword.

Jesus knew full well that the gospel that he was preaching was going to divide; it was then and it remains today to be something that is considered to be unpopular.

Jesus said he came to bring a sword didn't He?

Hebrews 4:12 says ¹²For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Ephesians 6:17 tells us that the sword of the Spirit **IS** the Word of God.

We as Christians do want to get along with everyone and yes we should try to do just that. However, we must remember that Jesus himself told us that the gospel that he teaches is not going to be a popularly accepted gospel.

Jesus does not care if you are black or white or what color your skin is. He doesn't care if you are German, Greek or American, nationality means nothing to him. Jesus does not care if you are Republican or Democrat or any other political party. Jesus does not care if you adhere to capitalism or communism. The universal division that has been created by the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that you are either saved or lost.

There is no grey area as the world would like you to believe. It is do or die. Either you do accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior or you die the second death.

This kind of teaching is not popular in today's society. Why is that? We live in a no fault society. Nothing is ever a by-product of one's own bad choices. It is not my fault because I am a victim and I am just a product of the way I was raised.

People do not like being told that there are boundaries and there are consequences for your actions. We live in a grey society because we are always looking for a special category so that everyone feels like they belong and that they have done nothing wrong. No longer is there a black or white, right or wrong. If everybody is faultless and has done nothing wrong then it only stands to reason that there really is no sin. However, the Bible makes it clear that we have all sinned.

Today's society does not like boundaries, it does not like to take responsibility for wrongs and society today wants everything quick and fast; because we feel deserving. Deserving of what?

Jesus talked about the broad road and the narrow path. The wide road leads you down a path of destruction however the small narrow gate and path will lead you to life eternal in God's coming Kingdom.

Jesus compared people to two different kinds of trees; the good tree producing a lot of fruit or the bad tree that bears not fruit. Jesus told us that we will know what kind of tree we are by the fruit that we produce; or by the fact that we do not produce any fruit.

Jesus spoke about the two foundations. The solid foundation built on the Word of God and the foundation built on the shifting sand. The solid foundation is established by the Word of God and this foundation can help you withstand the storms of life.

This is only a few examples of the illustrations that were used by Jesus and when you look at these examples you realize that Jesus was clearly dividing the world by his preaching and his teaching.

In **John 9:13-16** you can read of the account in which, because Jesus healed on the Sabbath there was a division among the religious leaders of the day. It was because of the timing of this healing that that this division existed among the religious leaders.

Some thought Jesus could not have been from God because he healed on the Sabbath. Other leaders disagreed because they did not believe a sinner would have the power to heal the blind.

In **Luke 14:26** we read ²⁶"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

At first glance this verse may seem a little harsh but I really like the New Living Translation's version of this verse, it says: "If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison— your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters— yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. (**Luke 14:26 NLT**)

You know how much you love your husband or your wife. You know how much you love your children and your grandchildren. Think about that love for your family and how strong it is, then realize that your love for Jesus Christ should be so strong and so complete that your love for you own family should feel like hate compared to your love for Jesus. That kind of love is very unpopular.

Why is truth so unpopular? I believe the reason the truth is so unpopular is because it was never intended to be popular.

Jesus never expected his gospel message to be a popular message. Perhaps there is a very good reason Jesus told the apostles and he is telling you and I in **Matthew 10:16** ¹⁶"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

“HOW COULD A LOVING GOD CONDEMN PEOPLE TO ETERNAL TORMENT?”

By Richard Alcumbrack

In his book entitled “Give Me an Answer that Satisfies My Heart & My Mind” - “Answers to your toughest questions about Christianity” Christian apologist Cliffe Knechtle tackles questions about HELL as the second most frequently asked question he encounters. I must tell you, that the logic, the scriptures, the answers Cliffe Knechtle presents, which are the answers of most of Christianity, **DO NOT SATISFY MY HEART**, they **DO NOT SATISFY MY MIND**, nor do I believe that are **REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES**.

Isaiah 5:16 “But the **LORD** Almighty will be exalted by his **justice**, and the holy God will show himself **holy** by his righteousness.”

God’s **HOLINESS** demands it. Really? It’s unholy for me to tear one wing off a fly and then watch it buzz around in circles. I knew as a first grader this was wrong in the sight of God! I wasn’t even sure if the fly felt any pain, or really realized any sort of suffering as we humans understand it. I can’t turn to a scripture because I am not aware of any that state “God’s holiness demands sinners suffer for eternity.” What would you call tearing the wing off a fly? The word is **CRUEL**. **My MIND CANNOT RATIONALIZE** eternal torment of humans.

God’s **JUSTICE** demands it. Really now? Let me get this straight. We would agree Adolph Hitler was one of the crudest humans to ever set foot on earth. He personally instigated the killing of millions of Jews. We would describe his actions as **CRIMES**, as **HEINOUS**, as **BEYOND COMPREHENSION**. We would describe him as the **ULTIMATE VILLAIN**, **SADISTIC**, an **OPPRESSOR**. a **TYRANT**, a **KILLER**, an **EXECUTIONER**, a **SLAUGHTERER**, a **BUTCHER**, a **MURDERER** — **A CRIMINAL!**

Yet many of his victims were unsuspecting that death was then fate. They were led into **GAS** chambers, where they fell dead with little physical pain beyond the gasping of their lungs for breath. This was evidently the most **EFFICIENT** way Hitler could devise for the elimination of the Jews as a race. And you tell me God’s **JUSTICE** demands it!

Let me tell you **UNEQUIVOCALLY** - **My HEART** cannot fathom how God’s **JUSTICE** could **DEMAND** that sinners who live less than 100 years could **JUSTLY** be punished for **ETERNITY**. Mind you — we are not talking about 100 years of suffering. We are not talking about 1,000 years of suffering. We are not talking about 100,000 years of suffering...1 million, 100 Million, 1,000 Million, 100,000 Million years - we’re talking about their **TORMENT, ANQUISH, PAIN** will never, ever, cease! How could my mind, our your mind, or anyone’s mind — ever be satisfied with this notion??? God’s **JUSTICE** is

EXALTED - not diminished to lower than any human who has ever existed! Isaiah 55:9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." "God will show Himself holy by His righteousness" - not his terribleness.

I will be the first to admit. God doesn't answer to me. You could say it doesn't necessarily have to make logical, rational sense to me or you. I believe logic comes from God, and **ONLY THROUGH LOGICAL ANSWERS CAN OUR MINDS AND HEARTS BE SATISFIED**, but setting that aside for a few moments, let us agree on this one thing: **OUR ANSWER MUST COME FROM GOD'S WORD.**

So, the question is before us: where is this teaching in the Bible? In Old Testament? In Gospels? In book of Acts? In Paul's writings?

Here's what the Bible does say about God's judgment against man's sin: "The Wages / Penalty of Sin is **DEATH.**" (Romans 6:23)

DEATH IS THE RESULT OF SIN - NOT ETERNAL LIFE.

Let's take a closer look at this passage; (Romans 6:36, 20-23).

What is the **REWARD** for Righteousness? Eternal life (v.22-23).

What is the **PENALTY** for Wickedness? (v.16, 21, 23).

Which is it? Is the penalty of sin eternal torment and unspeakable suffering? Or is it death?

What does the Bible say? There's a most interesting statement about God's **RIGHTEOUS** decree concerning the penalty of sin in Romans 1:32: "They deserve death."

And we should remind you that **SENTENCE** against **ADAM** was **DEATH**, not eternal torment: (Genesis 2:17) "In the day thou eatest of it you shall surely die." And it was the serpent who said, "Ye shall not surely die!"

THE PENALTY FOR SIN IS DEATH - THE CESSATION OF LIFE; THE REWARD FOR BELIEF IN GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE.

Eternal life is the REWARD reserved for followers of Jesus Christ (See 1 Cor. 15:42-44)

Now a question arises: If this **PERISHABLE** body cannot enter the Kingdom without experiencing a transformation from mortal to immortal - how could this perishable body be tormented for all of eternity without also undergoing that same transformation?

But that transformation is the **REWARD** for faith — and is only received through **FAITH** in Jesus Christ: 1 Cor. 15:50-54.

Now, an interesting thought arises: When I go to most funerals, or read the obituaries in the papers, the claim is that the **PERSON** has already gone to meet the Lord. **EVERY DAY** all over the country and around the world, Christians claim their loved ones have already gone to be

with the Lord. And yet they will hold a funeral or memorial service - and the BODY will be right there in the funeral home, or at the church, then at the cemetery or mausoleum.

SO, IS IT THE SPIRIT THAT BURNS IN HELL OR THE BODY?

Every image, every imagination, every teaching about eternal torment in hell (that I have ever come across) pictures a body burning, writhing in intense, unbearable anguish, with weeping and gnashing of teeth. One very popular teaching that was going around — from a man and wife who literally claimed that he had gone to hell!! and come back to warn people — described in detail how demonic creatures literally ripped the flesh from the living dead in prison cells, and their bloody screams of pain filled the air. Interestingly the wife of this man says she watched her husband writh in anguish as if he were suffering the fiery, almost indescribable torment. However, there was no report of her actually witnessing any bums, or seeing any physical proof or such torment.

We would all agree, a person must have an immortal body to suffer for eternity. This fleshly body would bum up immediately. The fire would suck the air from our lungs. We would faint or pass out from the pain. We would go into shock. There has never been a fire where people suffered for hours on end, let alone eternity. Perhaps mercifully, death comes.

HOW DOES ONE RECEIVE AN IMMORTAL BODY?

As we have said, only through faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible says God alone has immortality. Even Jesus Christ DIED on the cross. We must, as the Bible says - **PUT ON IMMORTALITY**. The Apostle said “If there is **NO RESURRECTION** our faith is in vain.”

Eternal torment was not taught in the Old Testament. It was not taught by Jesus. It was not taught by the Apostles. Eternal torment is entirely DEPENDANT upon us being immortal, and such teaching would have been utterly absurd to the OT Jewish mind.

The teaching of the early church was that...**Rom. 2:7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. (Must SEEK it - it will be given at the resurrection)**

1 Cor. 15:53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

2 Tim. 1:10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

HOLY...BE THY NAME!

Which of the following is a CORRECT use of the word HOLY:

Holy Mackerel!

Holy Cow!

Holy Cr-p!

Holy Moley!

What is a EUPHEMISM?
the substitution of a mild, indirect, or vague expression for one thought to be offensive, harsh, or blunt.

Who might be offended by each of the euphemisms?

Holy Mackerel _____

Holy Cow _____

Holy Moley _____

Holy Cr-p _____

HOLY – adjective

1. specially recognized as or declared sacred by religious use or authority; consecrated: holy ground.
2. dedicated or devoted to the service of god, the church, or religion: a holy man.
3. saintly; godly; pious; devout: a holy life.
4. having a spiritually pure quality: a holy love.
5. entitled to worship or veneration as or as if sacred: a holy relic.

HOLY – noun

a place of worship; sacred place; sanctuary.

HOLY — Synonyms

blessed...sacred...consecrated

Holy refers to the divine, that which has its sanctity directly from God or is connected with Him: Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Something that is hallowed has been made holy by being worshiped: a hallowed shrine.

When (why) do we use phrases like “Holy Moley”?

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Everything holy is only holy because of it's RELATION TO GOD

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE CALL HOLY?

The _____ day.

Genesis 2:3 And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

The _____ where Moses was standing

Exodus 3:5 “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”

The _____ of Israel

Exodus 19:6 “you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”



Mount _____ where Moses met God

Exodus 19:23 Moses said to the LORD, “The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, ‘Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy.’”

The _____ of God

Exodus 22:31 “You are to be my holy people. So do not eat the meat of an animal torn by wild beasts; throw it to the dogs.

The _____ containing the Ark of the Covenant

Exodus 26:33 Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the Testimony behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. 34 Put the atonement cover on the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy Place.

The _____

Exodus 30:10 Once a year Aaron shall make atonement on its horns. This annual atonement must be made with the blood of the atoning sin offering for the

generations to come. It is most holy to the LORD.

The _____ God

Leviticus 10:3 Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke of when he said:

“Among those who approach me
I will show myself holy;
in the sight of all the people
I will be honored.”

Aaron remained silent.

The _____ God

Leviticus 11:44 I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy.



“I the LORD
am
holy-
I who make
you
holy”
Leviticus 21:8

**Jesus taught his disciples to pray:
“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your
Name!”**

WHO is Holy? _____

Ex. 22:31 “You are to be my holy people. So do not eat the meat of an animal torn by wild beasts; throw it to the dogs.

WHO is Holy? _____

Eph. 5:3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.

WHO is Holy?

THINK ABOUT IT: What does Leviticus 10:10 have to do with our discussion?
“You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean.”

What does God mean when He says “Be holy, because I am holy.” (1Pet. 1:16)

What does the word ‘Holy’ mean to you now?

What I have learned from this lesson that I didn’t know before:

Answers for the introductory questions on other side:
According to Google...

As innocent as it seems today, the expression “holy mackerel” began as a blasphemous Protestant oath against the Friday fish-eating habit of Catholics.

The fish was an early symbol of Christianity.

Likewise, “holy smokes” is a snide reference to religious incense burning, while “holy cow” is a shot at Hindus who consider cows sacred.

“Holy moley” is an abbreviation of “holy Moses.”

Euphemisms are used as curses without direct reference to a religious icon.

Even though it is clear what they mean, it is a way of swearing without offending the pious.