

***ETERNAL LIFE
IS
GOD'S GIFT***

***Central Highlands Christian
Publications***

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is everlasting life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone believing in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:16

Behold, I tell you a mystery: Indeed, we shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For it will trumpet, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

And when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, then the word which is written will occur: "Death was swallowed up in victory."

1 Corinthians 15:51 to 54

Table of Contents

IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?	1
Popular Concepts of the 'Afterlife'	1
Is the Soul Immortal?	2
The Bible Viewpoint	4
Men in the Bible	9
Lazarus, Our Friend	9
Where is David?	9
Where is the Patriarch Job?	10
Who Has Immortality?	11
The Goal of Man and God's Gift to Believers	11
The Real Origin of 'Endless Punishment'	14
Mankind's Real Hope	17
Man's Choice Today	21
APPENDIX I	26
Scriptures That Appear to Support Eternal Torment:	26
Eternal Separation	26
The Rich Man and Lazarus	27
The Worm That Does Not Die	29
The Smoke of Their Torment	30
The Lake of Fire	31
APPENDIX II	32
You Shall Be with Me in Paradise!	32
The Resurrection of Life	33
APPENDIX III	34
Near-Death Experiences	34
Communication with the Dead	35
APPENDIX IV	37
Where and What is Hell?	37
Sheol	38
Hades	39
Gehenna	40

IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?

Reports of near-death "out of body" experiences make exciting reading. People who claim that the spirits of the dead can speak through them are sought out as mid-day TV show guests. Others claim that they can remember their past lives. Even if some of these people genuinely believe these things are true, is that sufficient proof of their claims? Could they be mistaken? Is there any way we can know what really happens after death?

From ancient times people have wondered what happens to us after death. Does part of us live on after death? Can we still feel pain or bliss? Will we remember our former life? Can we be reborn and have another lifetime on this earth? What is the present state of people who have died? Is it possible to communicate with the dead? Do we have eternal life now or will we receive eternal life after death or at a later resurrection? Will we suffer in Hell for eternity? Where does the teaching of "immortality of the human soul" come from? Is there anything we can do to receive eternal life if we do not already have it?

God's revelations to mankind, recorded for us in the Bible, hold the answer to these questions.

Popular Concepts of the 'Afterlife'

Believing that there is a conscious part of man that cannot die and thus lives on after our body dies is a common element in virtually all religions. Most religions derive their power by claiming influence over a person's fate after death. They usually offer a choice between an eternal holiday of endless pleasures for the faithful or eternal suffering in some type of hell for those who break that particular religions' rules. Sometimes there is an intermediate place such as Purgatory. (The Roman Catholic religion teaches that Purgatory is where 'small-scale' sinners stay until their suffering purifies them sufficiently to earn them entrance into heaven. This period can supposedly be shortened by payments and prayers by their surviving relatives). Several Eastern religions feel that living on earth is sufficient punishment and teach reincarnation for those who were not spiritual enough to be rewarded with bliss. However, little or no evidence is given to support their contentions.

As we will show, the Bible is unique in its teachings about the afterlife, which differ radically from the myths listed above. The Bible is also distinctive in its verifiable accuracy. The history given in the Bible has, time

and again, been proven to be true as more information becomes available to archaeologists. It is also unique in that it commits itself to detailed prophecies. Many of these prophecies have come to pass over the centuries exactly as foretold. It leaves us with no doubt that its Author is in full control, and that the remaining prophecies will also come to pass when their time is ripe. As God says through His prophet Isaiah:

Remember the former things of eternity, for I am God, and there is no other God, there is none like Me,

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from the past things which were not yet done, saying, 'My purpose shall stand, and all My desire I will do,' Isaiah 46:9 and 10

It is this total mastery of time and events that gives us confidence that this particular book is God's word and is thus the only truly reliable source of knowledge about the past, the present and our future, both on earth and in the 'spirit' realm.

The first topic we need to explore is the question of immortality. Side issues such as near-death experiences, communication with the dead and details about hell are covered in appendixes at the back of this booklet. These issues can only be understood within the context of Biblical teachings about the soul and the nature of man.

Is the Soul Immortal?

Many Christians believe that the eternal torment myth is true. They have accepted the concept of the "immortality of the soul" which underlies all systems of eternal punishment. For example, the *Baltimore Catechism* (Revised Edition No. 3), page 396, asks this question: "How can we prove that the soul is immortal?" Their answer, which is the official position of the Roman Catholic Church, is this:

We can prove that the soul of man is immortal because man's acts of intelligence are spiritual; therefore, his soul must be a spiritual being, not dependent on matter, and hence not subject to decay or death.

No Bible passages are quoted to support their position. The Roman Catholic Church relies on human reasoning and the authority of their own church instead of the Bible to teach this doctrine.

Many Protestant denominations also teach that the soul is immortal.

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines the soul as the "spiritual or immaterial part of man, held to survive death (*the immortality of the soul*)."
But is this what God teaches in His Word?

The origin of this doctrine is ancient. Idol worshipping pagans, centuries before Christ, taught the 'immortality of the soul.' Egypt is reputed to be the mother of this concept. According to Herodotus, who was born about 484 BCE and is honoured as the first historian: "The Egyptians were the first to accept the doctrine that the soul of man is immortal." Note that Herodotus wrote this nearly 500 years before Christ.

The ancient Greek philosophers also knew this concept. Socrates and Plato believed that death was the separation of the immortal soul from the body as shown in *Phaedo*. (included in *Five Great Dialogues of Plato* by Walter Black, Inc). These men taught philosophy between 400 and 500 BCE.

By 343 BCE, Aristotle was teaching these ideas to Alexander, son of Philip of Macedon. He is known to us as Alexander the Great, the man responsible for establishing the massive Greek Empire. Aristotle was a student of Plato and thus the doctrine was spread far and wide by the Greeks.

Many Protestants and Catholics pay tribute to Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430 CE) Prior to his conversion to Christianity, Augustine had studied the Greek philosophy of Plato. After his conversion, he brought some of this philosophy into the Christian teachings. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, under the heading of Augustinism, says:

Augustinism as a philosophy, has been regarded by some as a Christianized Platonism, an attempt to bring Plato into the stream of Christian thought...

In this way the Egyptian philosophies entered into the early Christian church after the death of the apostles. This was just as the apostle Paul had warned them:

For I know this, that after my departure grievous wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. And from among you yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverted things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

Acts 20:29 & 30

Watch, lest anyone rob you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ.

Colossians 2:8

With Paul's warning in mind, let's see what the Bible says about the human soul and life after death.

The Bible Viewpoint

God makes sure we know how He made us. Right from the start of Genesis we are taught about souls. His first reference to souls may surprise you:

Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living souls, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the expanse of the heavens."

God created great sea creatures and every living soul that moves, which the waters swarmed with, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:20 and 21

The word *soul* is translated from the Hebrew word *nephesh*. *Nephesh* signifies breath, as in a breathing creature. These verses show that God says that all living animals are also living souls. Only a few verses later, God also talks of man as being a living soul:

And Jehovah God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man *became* a living soul.

Genesis 2:7

Again soul is translated from the same Hebrew word (*nephesh*). And

again God emphasises that we, like the animals, were created with *living souls*. In these passages God does not say that our souls, or those of the animals, are eternal. Indeed the word 'living' used in these passages is correctly translated from the Hebrew word *chay*. If there are living souls, there may also be dead souls. Genesis 2:7 suggests this: Until God breathed life into the man, he was both a dead body and a dead soul. If the soul (*nephesh*) is an integral part of the person or animal, and if souls can die, we should be able to find scripture texts to support these ideas. Consider the following:

After Abraham had recovered a number of people and their possessions captured in battle, he paid tithes to Melchizedek, king of Salem. Then as he and the king of Sodom were dividing the spoils of battle...

Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the souls
and take the goods for yourself." Genesis 14:21

The context makes it obvious that the King of Sodom wanted his people returned to him, not invisible souls that had been separated from the bodies of those who had died in battle.

When gathering manna in the wilderness, the Lord commanded the Hebrews to harvest it according to the number of their *souls*:

This is the thing which Jehovah has commanded: Gather it,
each one according to the mouths he must feed, one omer per
head, according to the number of souls; each man take for those
who are in his tent.' Exodus 16:16

Note that this scripture uses the words *mouths*, *head* and *souls* interchangeably, that is, a soul is not just an immaterial essence.

Speaking about eating a sacrifice improperly, Leviticus 7:18 says in part, "the **soul** that **eats** of it shall bear his iniquity." So, the soul can and does eat. Verse 27 confirms that the soul eats, as does this quote from Jesus Christ:

Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your soul, what

you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not the soul more than food and the body more than clothing?
Matthew 6:25

Scripture does not present the soul as an airy essence separate from our body. When Joshua recorded how the wicked city of Hazor was destroyed, he said the souls of that city were struck with the sword, destroyed, and not left to breathe:

And they struck every soul who *was* in it with the sword's edge. He destroyed *them*. He did not leave anyone breathing, and he burned Hazor with fire.
Joshua 11:11

Obviously, Joshua was speaking of the **people** living in the city when he called them souls (*nephesh*).

There are also numerous places in the Bible where dead souls are referred to:

Num 6:6 'All the days that he separates himself to Jehovah he shall not go near a dead soul.
Numbers 6:6

The word *soul* here also comes from the Hebrew word *nephesh* and refers to a corpse. Likewise, Numbers 5:2, 6:11 and 9:6,7&10 are a few of the places where soul refers to a dead body and *nephesh* is translated as such in the King James Version.

Yet God reveals even more than the examples above have shown.

The Bible tells us that the soul and body can be separated from each other, though the result is very different from what is taught by those who believe in the 'immortality of the soul'. Jesus' words teach us much in this connection:

For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?
Matthew 16:26

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and

body in Gehenna.

Matthew 10:28

Thus we see that rather than being an *immortal* soul, we can *lose* our soul. God can totally and permanently destroy us - both our body and our soul if He decides it is necessary. Man can only "kill" our souls temporarily. Understanding that our existence depends totally on God is the beginning of true wisdom, which leads us to loving and obeying God. As scripture clearly states:

The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom. A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever. Psalm 111:10

Praise Jehovah! Blessed is the man who fears Jehovah, who delights greatly in His commandments. Psalm 112:1

Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' Matthew 22:37

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves imperfection. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. 1 John 4:18

No person who carefully reads and studies the Bible can prove the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; instead, they will prove to themselves that the soul is subject to death and is **not** immortal.

Not only does the Bible omit saying the soul is immortal-- it denies it.

After proving that the Bible says the soul can and indeed does die, some argue that it must be the spirit that is immortal. The text most often turned to for such proof is Ecclesiastes 12:7:

Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.

However, a careful reading shows that the text does not say the spirit is a conscious being. In fact, the word *spirit* is from the Hebrew word *ruwach*

which means breath. In other words, God gives the breath of life at conception and receives it back at death.

Another text that uses the word *ruwach* is Psalms 146:3&4, where the Psalmist is speaking of the death of a person.

Do not put your trust in princes, *nor* in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. His spirit goes out, he returns to the earth; in that day his thoughts perish.

This text proves that when a man dies his conscious existence is suspended.

Psalm 115:17 also speaks of the dead:

The dead do not praise Jehovah, nor do all who go down into silence.

King Solomon agrees when he writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

For the living know that they will die; but the dead, they do not know anything, and *there* is not a reward for them anymore, for the memory of them is forgotten.

Ecclesiastes 9:5

There are many scriptures which show that man is in an unconscious state after death. Sincere Christians should investigate the "immortal soul" doctrine for themselves. Accepting the orthodox stance may allow you to be deceived. Our booklet "*Spirit, Soul and Body*" provides a deeper look at this aspect of our existence.

As E. E. Francke said in his book, *Future Of Death*:

The terms 'immortality of the soul' and 'never-dying soul' and 'deathless spirit' are used so frequently in pulpits, and in Christian hymns, that we are [required] to inquire if such terms are Biblical. The word soul is used in the Bible 873 times; 768 times in the Old Testament, and 105 times in the New Testament. IT IS NOT CALLED AN 'IMMORTAL' SOUL

Eternal Life Is God's Gift

EVEN ONCE IN ALL THE 873 TIMES THAT IT IS USED. The word 'spirit' is used in the Bible 827 times; in the Old Testament 442 times, and in the New Testament 385 times; yet in all the 827 times that we find the word 'spirit' used in the Bible, IT IS NEVER ONCE SPOKEN OF AS A 'DEATHLESS SPIRIT' OR A 'NEVER-DYING SPIRIT.'

Men in the Bible

Now let's take a few specific Bible characters and see how they are spoken of in death. We will start with an event that took place while Jesus was on earth, recorded in John 11:11 to 14:

Lazarus, Our Friend

These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Lazarus, our friend, has fallen asleep, but I am going that I may awaken him."

Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he has slept he will recover."

However, Jesus spoke about his death, but they thought that He was speaking about rest - in sleep.

Then Jesus said to them openly, "Lazarus has died."

Jesus spoke of death and sleep in synonymous terms. Just as we wake from a deep sleep not knowing what has happened while we slept, so it is with death.

Lazarus said nothing of any conscious existence anywhere while he was dead. So we ask the question: if he was in a place of constant torment, as some preachers suggest, why did Jesus bring an end to divine justice? If he was in heaven with the angels, as others argue, why would Jesus bring him back from his reward of bliss to suffer and die a second time? It seems more reasonable to assume that he was in an unconscious state, as the Bible shows the dead to be, and that Jesus was demonstrating His power over death by bringing Lazarus back to life.

Where is David?

Peter said:

Men *and* brethren, it is permitted to speak openly to you of

the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Acts 2:29

Had Peter said no more, we might think the pagans were right, that the immortal soul had separated from the body and gone on to heaven as most Christians believe. But Peter plainly says,

For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says: "The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right, till I make your enemies a footstool at your feet." ' Acts 2:34&35

Where is the Patriarch Job?

By his own words, Job looked forward to remaining in the grave until brought back to life upon the earth in the latter day.

"Who will grant *that* You would hide me in the grave, that You would conceal me until Your wrath turns back, that You would set a limit for me, and remember me! If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my trials I will wait, until my change comes. You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall long *for* the work of Your hands. Job 14:13-15

For I know *that* my Redeemer lives, and at last He shall rise on the earth; Even after they destroy my skin, yet this *remains*, -in my flesh I shall see God, Job 19:25-26

Job's hope was to see God, not as a disembodied spirit, but in the flesh at the resurrection.

A long list of faithful and godly people is given to us in Hebrews 11 including Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Speaking of these great men, the writer to the Hebrews says:

And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not obtain the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. Hebrews 11:39 and 40

This passage is made clearer by a quote from Thessalonians, which

shows that these men are now dead, but will be raised to life at the time of Christ's Return:

For this we say to you by *the* word of *the* Lord, that we, the living, *who* remain until the coming of the Lord can not go before those who are sleeping at all. For the Lord Himself, with a word of command given by an archangel's voice and with the trumpet of God, will descend from heaven. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. So then, comfort one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:15 to 18

Who Has Immortality?

If the Bible does not teach *immortal* human souls, what does it have to say about immortality? The scriptures are very specific on this subject. The words immortal or immortality only occur six times in the King James Bible. Paul writes,

Now to the King of *all* ages, incorruptible, invisible, *the* only wise God, be honour and glory for ages of ages. Amen.
1 Timothy 1:17 (COG version)

If God is incorruptible, it follows that he must be immortal. Later in his letter, Paul says God is...

the only *One* having immortality, living in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen nor can see, to whom *be* honour and everlasting power. Amen. 1 Timothy 6:16

This scripture indisputably shows that God is the **only one with immortality**. But if God is the only one who is presently immortal, what is the focus of the other immortality passages?

The Goal of Man and God's Gift to Believers

All of the other immortality passages show that humans are **seeking** immortality. **None** of them state that we already have immortality.

Immortality is something man must pursue, not something that he has always had. The Word of God makes the attainment of immortality **conditional** upon how we respond to the will of God. Some choose to resist His will and shall face God's wrath. Those who believe God, repent and become obedient to Him will receive eternal life and glory.

Or do you despise the riches of His kindness, toleration, and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But according to your hardness and *your* impenitent heart, you treasure up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will give to each one according to his works:

to those truly and patiently *doing* good works, seeking glory and honour and incorruptibility, everlasting life;

but to the self-seeking, who are indeed even disobeying the truth, but obeying unrighteousness; anger and wrath,

Romans 2:4 to 8

The most convincing scripture showing man's present mortality and the conditional gift of a future immortality when Christ returns is in the 'resurrection' chapter of your Bible:

Behold, I tell you a mystery: Indeed, we shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For *it* will trumpet, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

And when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, then the word which is written will occur: "Death was swallowed up in victory."

1 Corinthians 15:51 to 54

The time for this event is "at the last trumpet". The following verse and 1 Thessalonians 4:15 to 18, already quoted above, show that this wonderful event occurs at the time of Christ's return:

But each *one* in *his* own order: Christ the firstfruit, afterward those of Christ at His coming. 1 Corinthians 15:23

The second century Christians heartily agreed with the Bible. They taught that immortality was not naturally inherent in man, but was a future GIFT from God. While their writings are not part of the inspired Word of God, they show what many Christians of the generation following the apostles believed.

Clement of Rome, a companion of Paul, believed immortality to be a gift to Christians. He wrote:

How blessed and wonderful, beloved, are the GIFTS of God! Life in IMMORTALITY, splendour in righteousness, truth in perfect confidence, faith in assurance, self-control in holiness!...Let us therefore earnestly strive to be found in the number of those that wait for Him, in order that we may share in His promised GIFTS." (The First Epistles of Clement to the Corinthians. Chapter XXXV. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. New York: Scribners, 1899. Vol.1, p.14)

Ignatius, a friend of Polycarp (a disciple of John), was martyred in 107 A.D. Before his death he wrote:

Be sober as an athlete of God: the PRIZE set before thee is IMMORTALITY and eternal life, of which thou art also persuaded." (Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp. Chapter 11. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol.1, p. 94)

Similar quotations may be found from Theophilus of Antioch who died about 181 A.D. and Justin Martyr who was beheaded about 166 A.D. Irenaeus looked forward to the premillennial return of Christ and taught that immortality was conditional upon accepting Christ. (See *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1 & 11).

Numerous Protestant writers from the sixteenth century down to the modern day have also written and preached that immortality is the future hope only for those with whom God is well pleased.

The variety of backgrounds is apparent in that some of them were from

Germany, others from Switzerland, England, America, etc. Some authors were Hebrew and/or Greek scholars. The scholars include William Whiston, translator of *The Works of Josephus*; Charles Fred Hudson, compiler of *Hudson's Greek-English Concordance*; Ethelbert W. Bullinger, producer of a Greek Lexicon and *The Companion Bible* and Dr. Richard Francis Weymouth, New Testament translator.

The Real Origin of 'Endless Punishment'

As we have seen, the Egyptian philosophy of the immortal soul was not widely accepted by Christians until after the second century. Before then, it was discredited by many ancient writers who are openly acknowledged as Christians. The following quotes from *The Origin and History of the Doctrine of Endless Punishment* by Thomas Thayer (1881), show that the entire idea of everyone already having immortality was actually part of a pagan mythology designed to terrify the ignorant common people into obeying their rulers:

Among the ancient pagans, the belief in a hell of some sort was very general, if not universal. It was known by various names, as *Orcus*, *Erebus*, *Tartarus* and *Infernus* or *Inferna*, whence our expression "infernal regions," &c...

Some idea of the natives of the country, may be gathered from the following description, taken from the Aeneid of Virgil, Book vi [published about 19 BCE by Emperor Augustus - this book was popular throughout the Roman Empire in the time of Jesus' ministry. Pitt's translation is used here.]:

“ At Hell's dread mouth a thousand *monsters* wait; —
Grief weeps, and *Vengeance* bellows in the gate;
Base *Want*, low *Fear*, and *Famine's* lawless rage.
And pale *Disease*, and slow, repining *Age*:
Fierce, formidable *Fiends* the portals keep,
With *Pain*, *Toil*, *Death*, and *Death's* half-brother *Sleep*.
There *Joys*, embittered by *Remorse*, appear.
Daughters of *Guilt* ; here storms destructive *War*.
Mad *Discord* there her *snaky* tresses tore;
Here stretched on iron beds the *Furies* roar;

Eternal Life Is God's Gift

And close by Lerna's hissing monster stands
 Briareus dreadful with a hundred hands;
 There stern *Geryon* raged; and all around
 Fierce *Harpies* screamed, and direful *Gorgons* frowned."

(This harmonizes very well with the 'Christian' view on this head; for, beside the devil and countless legions of demons as inhabitants, we have, according to an Orthodox poet,

" Pale phantoms, hideous spectres, shapes which scare
 The damned themselves, and terrify despair.

'*Gorgons* and *Harpies*, and Chimeras dire,'

And swarms of twisted *serpents*, hissing fire."

And Erasmus speaks of "spiritual lions and bears," "scorpions, snakes and dragons, to wit, spirits who creep round and look continually on the damned fire-brands of hell.")

The gate of Hell was guarded by the dog Cerberus, of three heads (Hesiod says fifty), who prevented all egress from the infernal regions. Once in, there was no escape. To make it still more sure, the horrid prison of hell was surrounded by a *river of fire*, called Phlegethon ; within which was another security in the shape of a triple *wall*.

Hence Virgil says :

"Here rolls the roaring, flaming tide of hell,
 And thundering rocks the fiery torrent swell."

(This also is copied by the Christian delineator:

"Fires spout in cataracts, or in *rivers* flow —

In bubbling eddies rolls the *fiery tide*.

And sulphurous surges on each other ride."

- Dr. Trapp.

"Suddenly before my eye

A *wall* of fiery adamant sprung up —

Wall mountainous, tremendous, flaming high

Above all flight of hope."

- Pollock.)

3. *Of the Punishments.* Virgil gives us a brief account of these in the book already quoted from :

“And now wild shouts, and wailings dire.
 And shrieking *infants** swell the dreadful choir.
 Here sits in bloody robes the Fury fell.
 By night and day to watch the gates of hell.
 Here you begin terrific groans to hear,
 And sounding lashes rise upon the ear.
 On every side the damned their fetters grate.
 And curse, 'mid *clanking chains*, their wretched fate.”#

(*Here, too, both Catholic and Protestant strike hands with the heathen, and borrow from them the detestable dogma of infant damnation, which, as seen above, is older than Calvinism or Catholicism. “The condemnation of children dying without having been baptized,” says the Catholic Bossuet, “is an article of firm faith of the church. They are guilty, since they die in the wrath of God, and in the powers of darkness. Children of wrath by nature, objects of hatred and aversion, cast into hell with the other damned, they remain there everlastingly subject to the horrible vengeance of the devil. Thus the learned Denis Peteau has decided, as well as the most eminent Bellarmin, the Council of Lyons, the Council of Florence, and the council of Trent.”

“How comes it to pass that the fall of Adam, *without remedy*, should involve so many nations, with their *infant children*, in eternal death, but because of the will of God? It is a horrible decree, I confess!” — Calvin's Institutes, Book iii., c. 28, 7).

#(So the Christian poets describe their hell, employing the same language, as Drs. Trapp and Young below :

“The *clank of chains*,
 The clang of *lashing whips*, shrill *shrieks* and *groans*,
 Loud, ceaseless howlings, cries and piercing moans.”

“Where *shrieks*, the roaring *flame*, the *rattling chain*,

And all the dreadful eloquence of pain.”)

The correspondences which I have italicized, and the theft, are equally obvious.

A few examples of individual torments will better illustrate the subject, and reveal at the same time how inherent in them is the idea of perpetual duration.

Ixion ... is bound to a wheel of fire, which is ever in continual motion, in swift revolution of torment. *Tantalus* ... was tortured with endless hunger and thirst... *Tityrus*, for his crimes, was chained to a rock, while a vulture fed upon his heart and entrails, which were ever renewed as fast as devoured.

For those readers who wish to read more details on many aspects of these things, Thayer's book is available on our website. He also demonstrates how both pagans and supposed Christians attempt to use these fictitious hells to instill obedience in their followers. But at what great cost: those believing in a cruel and malicious God tend to emulate him, as proven by the demonic atrocities of the Roman Catholic Inquisitions and crusades.¹

Mankind's Real Hope

The true hope for humanity is salvation through Jesus Christ and His promise of resurrection from death. Those who are asleep in death will be raised when Christ returns and not before that time.

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, about those who are sleeping, lest you also sorrow as the rest who have no

¹Note carefully that Yehovah God is not a god who is unwilling to judge sin. He does not merely allow those who refuse to repent of their sins and embrace the forgiveness and new life He offers through the death of His own Son to quietly die. They are -every one of them- resurrected to a public judgement where they are forced to admit to their sinfulness and acknowledge God's righteousness. Then they must wait in line to be annihilated in the Lake of Fire. It is indeed a time of wailing and gnashing of teeth. - But their actual death is both rapid and total- there is absolutely nothing left to ever be resurrected from this divine fire.

hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also God will lead those who sleep in Jesus with Him.

For this we say to you by *the* word of *the* Lord, that we, the living, *who* remain until the coming of the Lord can not go before those who are sleeping at all. For the Lord Himself, with a word of command given by an archangel's voice and with the trumpet of God, will descend from heaven. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 to 17

Christians living at the time of His return to this earth will be instantly changed from mortal to immortal. However, our new life will not be an eternity of meaningless inactivity. God has planned an eternity of fulfilling and interesting work for each of us. He wants us to continue our development as His children, using the gifts He blesses us with.

Initially we will work with Christ upon the earth during the one thousand years that Satan is bound in the bottomless pit. We will restore most of the earth to the Paradise that God originally created:

And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed *them* to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made them kings and priests to our God; and they shall reign on the earth."

Revelation 5:9 and 10

And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, the old serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and threw him into the abyss, and shut him up, and sealed it over him, that he would not deceive the nations any longer till the thousand years were finished. And after these things he must be released for a little while.

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them and the souls of those who were beheaded for their witness of Jesus and because of the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image, and had not received the mark on their foreheads and on their hand. And they lived and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:1 to 4

The Bible clearly shows us that our work during the Thousand Years is only the mere beginning of what God has in store for us. We are told in I Corinthians 2:9 and 10 that:

But just as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have come into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

It is only after the end of the Thousand Years, after all that is evil and corrupt has been totally destroyed, that the fullness of the joys and challenges that God has in store for us will be revealed. A brief account of some of these things are given in Revelation chapters 21 and 22.

But surely our greatest joy will come from being a friend and companion of Jesus Christ and His Father.

If we find that our personal beliefs disagree with the Bible, but we desire to be true Christians we have only one course to follow: Our personal beliefs must be sacrificed in order to accept God's Truth. Let God be true even if it means every man on earth must be a liar. If these words sound harsh, note that the originator was the Apostle Paul:

For what if some did not believe? *Will* their unbelief not destroy the faith of God?

Let it not be *so!* But let God be true and every man a liar, as it is written, "that You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are being judged." Romans 3:3 and 4

Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ to those who believe in Him. This gift is not bestowed on those who refuse Him and prefer to continue in sin. Sin pays wages--death! True Christians receive the fabulous gift of eternal life, just the opposite of death.

For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God is everlasting life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23

Most historians believe that the immortal soul doctrine began in Egypt. However, the idea of disobedient humans continuing to live forever, instead of dying as God says they will, comes directly from Satan himself.

The first couple were at peace with their Creator in the garden of Eden when the serpent, representing Satan, spoke. Note his reply when Eve told him they would die if they ate from the tree of good and evil:

And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' "

And the serpent said to the woman, "Surely, you will not die." Genesis 3:2 to 4

This is the **only place in the Bible** where intentionally rebellious men and women are promised they won't die. It is Satan's promise, and God tells us it is a lie. Satan has promoted it in nearly every pagan religion and in many Christian denominations. Satan is the father of the lie.

When speaking to the false teachers of His day, Jesus said:

You are from your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you desire to do. That one was a murderer from *the* beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own, for he is a liar and the father of it. John 8:44

We must trust the words of Jesus. He said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32) The truth sets us free from Satan's lies and assures us that God alone can give us eternal life. It

also shows us that God does not keep His enemies alive so He can torture them for eternity. God's pleasure is in giving us unending life, not in inflicting unending agony. (If you still think this may be so, please read the appendixes at the end of the booklet that deal with scriptures that some claim show such a fate for the unrepentant).

Do not think that you can live your life without God and escape Judgement. God makes it clear that everyone will one day have to stand before him and be judged. If you have not repented, you will be taken away and executed. It is not a fate to be taken lightly:

"The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all that offends, and those who practice lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Matthew 13:41 to 43

Man's Choice Today

God will not force you to serve Him against your will. He patiently leaves the choice up to you just as He did with His servants long ago. We are free to choose. It is actually our wrong choices that are responsible for most of the evil in this world. Satan encourages us to choose badly, and also encourages us to blame God for the results of our poor choices. Sadly, many of us continue to disobey God despite the horrible results that our decisions have on our own lives and the lives of those around us.

When the people of Israel went to their ageing leader Joshua, just before his death in the Promised Land, he gave them this inspired advice:

"And if *it seems* evil in your eyes to serve Jehovah, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, whose land you dwell in. But as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah"....

"When you forsake Jehovah and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do evil to you and consume you, after He has done good to you."

And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve Jehovah!"

So Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen Jehovah for yourselves, to serve Him."

And they said, "*We are* witnesses."

"And now turn away from the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart to Jehovah, the God of Israel."

And the people said to Joshua, "Jehovah our God we will serve, and we will listen to His voice."

So Joshua made a covenant with the people on that day, and set for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

Joshua 24:15, 24:20 to 25

You too can make a covenant with the Lord. God does not require you to have lived a sinless life before He will accept you. In fact, he knows that you have sinned. This is why Jesus Christ had to die. He, the only sinless man, suffered and died in our place so we could be given eternal life. If you think your sins are so horrible that God could not possibly forgive you, remember that Saul devoted his life to capturing, beating and executing Christians before his conversion. He then became one of Christ's greatest servants (See Acts 22:3 to 21). Conversely, if you think you are without sin, you need to study God's Word to learn what sin really is.

I John 3:4 tells us that "sin is lawlessness". We doubt that even one reader could claim to have always kept all of the Ten Commandments, the basics of God's Law, faultlessly. Please let these scriptures illustrate the point:

What then? Do we excel? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks to all be under sin, just as it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks God. All have turned aside; *they* have become worthless together; there is not one who does good, no, not one."

"Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have used deceit; The poison of asps is under their lips; Whose

mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."

"Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and they have not known the way of peace. The fear of God is not before their eyes."

Now we know that what the law says, it speaks to those in the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may come under judgement before God. Because by the works of the law no flesh will be justified before Him, for by the law is the full knowledge of sin.

But now the righteousness of God is revealed apart from the law, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ to all and on all those believing. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to display His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that had occurred before, to display His righteousness at the present time, for He is being just and the justifier of the one who has the faith of Jesus.

Romans 3:9 to 26

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone believing in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:16

For the law *was* powerless in that it was weak through the flesh. God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and because of sin He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to *the* Spirit.

For those living according to the flesh concentrate on the flesh, but those living according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

For to be fleshly minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Romans 8:3 to 6

Jesus promises us that He shall teach us, comfort us and give us satisfying, wholesome work:

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, because I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is pleasant and My burden is light."
Matthew 11:28 to 30

However, Jesus also warns us that there is a cost in becoming His disciple. Perhaps the greatest cost is where it can really hurt: your friends and family may turn their backs on you, you may be despised and hated for speaking the truth in a world that loves a lie:

And great crowds gathered to Him. And He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yes, and also even his own soul, he is not able to be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me is not able to be My disciple.

"For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it; lest he lays the foundation and lacks *the* strength to finish it, *and* those who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and lacked *the* strength to finish it.'

"Or what king, going to attack another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet those who come against him with twenty thousand? Otherwise, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks terms of peace.

"So then, whoever of you does not abandon all that he has is not able to be My disciple. Salt is good; but if the salt loses its flavour, how will it be seasoned? It is not fit for the soil nor for *making* manure, but they throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"
Luke 14:25 to 35

You must **choose** to accept the terms of the new covenant to gain

forgiveness and immortality. If you haven't already done so, accept Jesus Christ as your Saviour and as your Lord. That means you will accept and obey His teachings even when they disagree with men, with no regard to whether it is popular or not. Like the Berean disciples, you must search the Scriptures daily, to learn which things are true. (Acts 17:11) As Christians, our present joy is in the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit, our constant companion and helper. It links us with every other Christian who has truly died to sin and been reborn through baptism. (John 16:5-16, Romans 6:1 to 14) Scripture warns us not to rely on church traditions (like confirmation or infant baptism) as substitutes for the saving blood of Christ. (Mark 7:6 to 13; Colossians 2:18 to 23)

God wants us to serve Him because of gratitude for our salvation and because we truly love Him. His Word declares that we either accept His offer of salvation or perish.

Jesus made this prayer for His followers, recorded in John 17:17:

Sanctify them in Your truth. Your word is the truth.

God wants people to know the truth. Knowing His truth sets us apart by leading us to righteous behaviour. We are not to be physically separated from the world but to be a light in its midst.

May God help you in your search for truth and may you walk eternally in His Way.

APPENDIX I

Scriptures That Appear to Support Eternal Torment: What Do They *Really* Say?

Following are the main scriptures that are quoted to 'prove' that God is intending to endlessly torment all those who have not received salvation through Jesus Christ.

Eternal Separation

Some people claim that the torment of the damned consists of their endless sorrow at being separated from God for eternity. The following scripture is usually said to support this belief:

...it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These shall pay the penalty of everlasting destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His power when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed. 2 Thessalonians 1:6 to 10

Some modern translations have modified this passage to make it more supportive of the 'eternal separation' concept by departing from a literal rendering of the Greek. Our translation, given above, flows directly from the Greek. The passage clearly shows that unrepentant sinners will be eternally separated from God, which truly is a terrible fate. But there is not one word that conveys the idea that they will be spending eternity in agony over their foolish decision. In contrast, the passage openly states that their penalty will be destruction - forever! Their agony will be great, but it will be confined to the time between their resurrection for judgement and their final (second) death.

If you doubt that the above is a valid translation, please consider I John 3:15, which says: "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know

that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” - Now if he does not have eternal life, you know that he cannot be tormented for eternity.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

And there was a certain rich man who usually wore a purple robe and fine linen, rejoicing in luxury from day to day.

And there was a poor man named Lazarus who was laid at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. But even the dogs came and licked his sores.

So it was that the poor man died, and he was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And he lifted up his eyes in Hades, being in torments, and he saw Abraham far off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

Then he called and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am suffering in this flame.'

But Abraham said, "Child, remember that you received all your good things in your lifetime, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is comforted here and you are suffering. And besides all these things, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there cross over to us.'

Then he said, "Then I ask you, father, that you send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he can testify to them, that they do not also come to this place of torment.'

Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'

But he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

But he said to him, 'If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded even if one rises from the dead.'

Luke 16:19 to 31

This passage is intended as a warning to the rich, especially the Pharisees who were mocking Christ, as reading verse 14 will show. Jesus used it to graphically illustrate the folly of self-gratification coupled with

mercilessness. There are two time settings in this account: the first during their lives, and the second time setting when they have both been resurrected: Lazarus in the resurrection of the righteous and the rich man in the resurrection of the condemned. At this point the rich man is so close to the lake of fire that he is already suffering from the heat radiating from it and is tormented by the realisation that he is about to be cast into it. He also realises that Lazarus is with Abraham and has been granted eternal life. This -life and death- is the great chasm between them. But the man still has not fully understood that this is the time of judgement and his brothers will also have made their final choices already. Examine this passage carefully, and you will see that it does **not** state -nor even suggest- that the rich man will be tormented for eternity. However, God **does** say there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth in the day of His Judgement:

And He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Stand back from Me, all *you* workers of unrighteousness.' There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you are thrust out.

Luke 13:27 to 28

God says that the wicked will be totally burned up. He does not say that He will keep them burning in agony forever:

Then Jesus sent the crowd away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field."

He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man and the field is the world, and the good seed; these are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the evil one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.

Therefore as the tares are gathered and consumed in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all that offends, and those who practice lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and

gnashing of teeth.

Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Matthew 13:36 to 43

Then you shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him who serves God and him who does not serve Him.

"For behold, the day is coming, burning like an furnace, and all the arrogant, all who do wickedness will be chaff. And the day which is coming shall set them ablaze," says Jehovah of Hosts, "which will not leave them either root or branch."

"But to you who fear My name shall arise the Sun of Righteousness, with healing on His wings; and you shall go out and frisk like stall-fed calves."

"And you shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says Jehovah of Hosts.

Malachi 3:18 to 4:3

The Lazarus account also foreshadowed the Pharisees' coming refusal to accept the word of one who would soon be returning from the dead - our Anointed Lord Yeshua.

As we read above, the teaching of eternal punishing of the wicked came from the pagan Egyptian rulers and was perpetuated in Greece and Rome as a way to terrify the common people into submitting to their authority. Later both Judaism and apostate Christianity also adopted these myths.

The Worm That Does Not Die

"For as the new heavens and the new earth which I shall make stand before Me," says Jehovah, "So shall your seed and your name stand. And it shall be that from New Moon to New Moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before Me," says Jehovah.

"And they shall go out and see the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be put out, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."

Isaiah 66:22 to 24

This scripture clearly designates the bodies inhabited by the worms as corpses. There is not even a hint that the corpses are aware of anything. The sense of horror belongs not to the corpses, but to the living people who view them. It does not support the concept of eternal punishing.

Nor does it state that the corpses will be on view forever, an idea dealt with under "HELL". Saying that the 'worm does not die' may simply mean that the corpses will be left unburnt long enough for the maggots to develop into flies and leave the corpse. Logically, after the maggots have finished their work, the remains of the corpses will be completely consumed by fire. The fire itself is separate from the corpses and does not require a continuous supply of corpses to keep burning.

Jesus refers to the 'worm that does not die and the fire that is not quenched' in Mark 9:42-48. He urges us to do everything possible to turn from our sins and warns us clearly of the horrible end of those who continue in sin. He also calls this place Gehenna, which is discussed in detail in Appendix IV. These corpses will be put on view in such a graphic and repugnant manner to highlight the folly of rejecting righteousness through Christ's sacrifice.

Finally, note that it is people in the flesh who are worshipping God at the time this is happening. This restricts the time to the Millennium, as after the Millennium everyone will have bodies made from spirit, not flesh.

The Smoke of Their Torment

And a third angel followed them, saying with a great voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, then he shall also drink of the wine of the anger of God, which is mixed full strength in the cup of His wrath. And *he* will be tormented with fire and brimstone in front of the holy angels and in front of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises forever *and* ever.

And those who worship the beast and its image have no rest day and night, even anyone who receives the mark of its name."

Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Revelation 14:9 to 12

Note that it is the smoke that rises forever (ie. out of sight) while they are being tormented. Compare Revelation 19:3, which describes the smoke from the burning of 'Babylon the Great' rising 'forever and ever'. The passage does **not** say that their torment continues forever, but merely the smoke from their destruction. What does continue both day and night is the constant knowledge of God's curse taking away the peace of those who submit to the beast until they are judged.² God leaves no doubt that He intends to punish those who refuse to obey Him, but His punishment is just. Studying these verses in their context shows that this time of punishment occurs during the period of miraculous events leading up to Christ's Return and the setting up of the Kingdom of God. We believe that the torment "day and night" could actually refer to Revelation 9:5 & 6:

And they were instructed that they should not kill them, but they be tormented *for* five months. And their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man.

In those days men will seek death and they will not find it; and they will want to die, and death will flee from them.

The Lake of Fire

And when the thousand years have ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them to war, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea.

And they went up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and burned them down.

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *were cast*, and will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Revelation 20:7 to 10

² Our booklet *God's Calendar and the Sign of Jonah* gives more information on the Mark of God and the Mark of the Beast.

Note that this passage combined with Revelation 16:13 & 14 make it clear that it is the Devil and his unclean demons who will be tormented for ever and ever. Verse 20:9 states plainly that all the humans who followed Satan in his final battle were destroyed by the fire from God.

The White Throne Judgement recounted in Revelation 20:13-15 also confirms that for all others, being cast into the Lake of Fire is the second death, from which there is no resurrection. As Jesus says:

...do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.
But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body
in Gehenna. Matthew 10:28

Please read our free booklet *The Beasts of Daniel and Revelation* for further details of these events.

We believe that a careful study of these verses and their context will verify our position that the God of the Bible is a god of Mercy and Justice, who has no intention of torturing billions of people for eternity. Only those who steadfastly refuse to accept His offers of forgiveness which lead to eternal life will be destroyed, and this will be done with great sadness.

Please recall that we have already clearly shown that the Bible teaches that only Jehovah God and His Son, Jesus Christ, presently have eternal life.

APPENDIX II

You Shall Be with Me in Paradise!

Luke 23:43 is frequently quoted to "prove" that Christians go straight to heaven when they die. However, the original inspired Greek contained no punctuation and all the Greek letters were capitals. Punctuation and capitalization have been added by translators in a manner that is consistent with their beliefs. We feel that the matters brought to light in this booklet make it plain that the following is the correct treatment:

And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you today; You shall be with me in Paradise.

This is confirmed by recalling that Jesus spent the next three days and three nights dead in a tomb.³ He could not have been in Paradise with the ex-thief that day.

The Resurrection of Life and the Resurrection of Judgement

Some people have suggested that although mankind is mortal now, at the time of their resurrection all people will be given immortality, and then judged to decide where they will spend the rest of eternity. ie.- many people will be given immortality so they can be tormented forever. Is this concept supported by scripture?

The Bible clearly tells us that there are many separate resurrections. Quite a few resurrections have already occurred. In this context we wish to remind you of the raising of the widow's son through Elijah (I Kings 17:17-24) and the raising of the Shunammite's child through Elisha (2 Kings 4:18-37). Jesus also raised several people from the dead before his crucifixion, (Luke 7:11-17, Luke 8:40-56, John 11:1-44). After Christ's resurrection, Eutychus was resurrected from the dead through the Apostle Paul (Acts 20:7-12) However, Jesus' resurrection in 31 CE was unique. Jesus became the first 'man' to be given immortality. In each of the other resurrections we have listed so far, the person was simply given back their physical life, so they could complete their natural life cycle. There was no reason to believe that they would not age and die in the normal manner after their resurrections.

The Bible tells us that two massive resurrections are yet to come. The first one has been referred to in the main body of this pamphlet. It is the resurrection of God's servants, as shown in this passage:

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them and the souls of those who were beheaded for their witness of Jesus and because of the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or its image, and had not received

³ As prophesied by Jesus in Matthew 12:38-40. Showing how Jesus kept this Sign is the central topic of our *God's Calendar and the Sign of Jonah* article.

the mark on their foreheads and on their hand. And they lived and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. Blessed and holy *is* he *who* is part of the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him a thousand years.

Revelation 20:4 to 6

This is the resurrection referred to in 1 Corinthians 15:35 to 50, where we are told that our resurrected bodies will be incorruptible, glorified, powerful, spiritual, heavenly. Verses 50 to 58 make it clear that this transformation from mortal to immortal is **only** for those who are the brethren of Christ. John 5:9 tells us those who have done good are called to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgement. The details of this resurrection to judgement is given in Revelation 20:11 to 15. Verse 15 states that those not found in the Book of Life will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. Verse 14 tells us that the Lake of Fire is the Second Death. It offers no hope of any sort of immortality for those not in the Book of Life, not even the possibility of a life of eternal misery.

APPENDIX III

Near-Death Experiences

The vital point about near-death experiences (NDE) is that they occur when a person is dying, not when they are dead. There is a period of several minutes between the stopping of someone's heart and the point at which all of their brain functions have fully ceased. It is only after this point that they are truly dead. No doctors have succeeded in reviving anyone after this time, so there are no true after death experiences related to us, despite the reports often being called this. Only God can perform a resurrection.

The NDE generally conforms to the individual's personal beliefs about what the afterlife may be like. Thus those that go to 'heaven' usually find it much like they expected it to be, although there is an enormous variation in actual details. One ardent horse rider discovered heaven was just like the

Wild West! Of course God could use a NDE to teach a person a valuable lesson. But God is not the source of NDEs which confirm pagan or unBiblical beliefs. Many scientific researchers feel that NDEs are a type of hallucination produced by the stresses of dying and help to distract the person from their pain. There is no evidence that these experiences last beyond the point of total organic death, which is in complete accord with the Bible.

Communication with the Dead

The main article in this booklet has made it clear that we become totally unconscious when we die. The only power that can recall us from that state is God, who does it by resurrection. I Corinthians 15:35-58 details how He will restore His servants completely, but into an incredible new body, soul and spirit, not as wavering bodiless ghosts. Revelation 20:11-15 outlines the resurrection of those who didn't believe. These people will be raised just as they were in this life, so they can be judged. The timing of both these resurrections is given in the Bible and is very specific.

It is clear that "channelers" can not have the spirits or souls of the dead speaking through them. This leaves us with only two possibilities.

The first possibility, and probably the most common, is that the medium (the traditional name for a channeler) is a fake. There are many people who desperately miss a deceased loved one and are willing to pay generously for another chance to speak with them. Unfortunately, there are also many people who desperately want to become rich and are willing to lie to do so.

The second possibility is far more sinister. There are invisible spirit beings that are willing to communicate through mediums. These spirits are not our friends, however, nor God's.

These beings were angels who have heeded Satan's voice and turned against God. (See Revelation 12:7-12) They have become like their master- full of lies and hate. Like him, they are devious and delight in causing pain and suffering. A medium who is being used by one of these demons -to give them their real name- may be able to reveal details that no human knows. The demons can even imitate the voice of a dead loved one. These things are possible because the demon may have carefully watched the deceased while they were alive so they could deceive the deceased's loved ones who are still alive. But their deception is designed to lure you into eternal destruction and if possible to make you suffer immensely along the way.

These are the beings that work Ouija boards, that fake telepathy, that take control of people and stay in them against their will. They are not a joke nor an idle amusement. Hear what God says about these things:

You shall not turn to mediums and psychics; do not seek to be defiled by them: I am Jehovah your God. Leviticus 19:31

And the soul who turns to mediums and psychics, to go whoring after them, I will set My face against that soul and cut him off from his people.

Therefore sanctify yourselves, and be holy, for I am Jehovah your God. Leviticus 20:6-7

A man or a woman who have a medium or psychic with them shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them. Leviticus 20:27

There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who conjures spells, or a wizard, or a diviner, or one who consults spirits, or a psychic, or one who inquires of the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to Jehovah, and because of these abominations Jehovah your God drives them out from before you. Deuteronomy 18:10 to 12

Despite the clear testimony of these passages, some claim that an account of King Saul attempting to consult with the prophet Samuel after his death shows that mediums can contact the dead. Reading the entire episode in I Samuel shows the absurdity of this idea. I Samuel chap 15 details how Saul and Samuel parted ways long before Samuel's death, and how Samuel refused to speak to Saul again. As this was the case when Samuel was alive, even if it had been possible for a medium to bring him back to consciousness, the probability of Samuel then conducting a conversation with Saul is virtually zero. Not only that, we have already been told in verses 5 and 6 that even when Saul tried to inquire from Yehovah by the accepted means of dreams, the Urim and His Prophets, Yehovah refused to answer him. When one remembers God's condemnation of mediums, and

recalls that Samuel was God's prophet, the probability that God would respond this way becomes absolutely zero. As we mentioned above, the truth is that the medium was speaking with an evil spirit who was impersonating Samuel to deceive Saul. The first thing the evil spirit did was warn the medium that the man before her was Saul, who had once killed mediums like her. This is not a warning that Samuel would give. And even though Saul was told of his impending death due to his disobedience, he still refused to repent and begin obeying God's Laws again (I Samuel 28).

One would do well to follow God's own directive in this matter:

And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and psychics, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?

To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Isaiah 8:19 and 20

APPENDIX IV

Where and What is Hell?

One curious result of the eternal punishing concept is this: If you become one of God's children, do you think your stay in paradise could be perfect if you knew that while you were basking in joy, the God you were serving was continuously torturing your mother or father or spouse or child?

Obviously there could be no deep joy in such an existence. Thankfully scripture clearly denies such a state of affairs.

As we have pointed out above, the popular notions of Hell have been created to cast doubt on God's claim to be a God of love and mercy. The knowledge that God's gift is Eternal Life and His punishment is Eternal Nothingness is surely enough to convince any thinking person to seriously consider His offer.

The misinformation about hell is so pervasive that we have decided to use

transliterations of the Hebrew and Greek words commonly translated as 'hell'. Thus our translation uses Sheol in the Old Covenant and Hades and Gehenna in the New Covenant.

A look at these words in their context in scripture will reveal some of the half-truths these doctrines are based on and expose other aspects of the 'hell' teachings as total fabrications.

Sheol

Sheol is the Hebrew name for what we might call hell. Sheol, like hell, is shown as a place to which evil people are sent, as shown in this passage:

The wicked shall be turned into Sheol, and all the nations
that forget God. Psalm 9:17

It can also be a place that people can be cast into while alive, and that exists below the earth's surface:

So they and all those with them went down alive into Sheol.
The earth closed over them, and they perished from among the
congregation. Numbers 16:33

However, the differences are vast. Hell is usually presented as a place to which only the evil are sent. In contrast, the Hebrews believed that **all** people went to Sheol when they died, as these passages show:

When Jacob was told that his son Joseph had died, he:

...refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go
down into Sheol to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept
for him. Genesis 37:35

Jacob clearly expected to be in Sheol with Joseph when he died.
Job's prayer to God was:

Who will grant *that* You would hide me in Sheol, that You
would conceal me until Your wrath turns back, that You would
appoint a limit for me, and remember me! Job 14:13

Not only did Job expect to be sent to Sheol, he also expected to remain there until God decided to resurrect him!

Please note that Numbers 16:33 also says the people cast alive into Sheol *perished*. This statement is confirmed by Psalm 6:5 which states:

For in death there is no remembrance of You. In Sheol who will give You thanks?

Yet another difference is brought out in 1 Samuel 2:6:

Jehovah kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and brings up.

Thus we see that although Sheol is pictured as a place below the ground where the dead go, it is a place where **all** the dead go, where there is no consciousness while they are there, and from which God will eventually bring them back again. It is really equivalent to the *Grave*, not a place of eternal tormenting.

Hades

Hades is the Greek equivalent of Sheol. The following passages show some further insights into Hades, as taught in the Bible rather than Greek mythology:

The first passage is spoken by the Apostle Peter, who is clarifying a prophecy given by King David:

Foreseeing *this*, he spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. God has raised up this Jesus, of which we are all witnesses. Acts 2:31 and 32

This shows that even Jesus Christ's soul went to Hades when he died! It is definitely not just a place for the sinful! We see that Jesus's soul was also brought out of Hades when the time was fulfilled, just as God had promised. The following passage shows that at the end of the Thousand Year Reign of Christ, **everyone** will be brought out of Hades:

And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to their works.

Revelation 20:13

The New Testament even reveals that Death and Hades itself will then be destroyed. Not only is one's time in Hades not eternal, even Hades itself has only a very limited timespan!

Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And if anyone was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:14 and 15

Gehenna

Gehenna comes closer to the conventional concepts of Hell, and even has definite links to the lake of fire mentioned above. Gehenna is the Greek version of *Geh Hinnom*, the Hebrew name for the Valley of Hinnom. This valley, south of Jerusalem, had been used by corrupt Israelites to offer human sacrifices to pagan idols centuries before Christ (2 Chronicles 28 onwards). To stop this practice, the valley had been converted into a rubbish dump where sulphur was used to assist in burning the garbage tipped there. It was also where the bodies of criminals were dumped, to be consumed by maggots and the fire. It was an appropriate symbol for the lake of fire where unrepentant sinners would be consumed at the end of this age.

Unlike Hades, Christ makes it clear that Gehenna is a place reserved for the guilty; a place that everyone should strive to keep out of. As Jesus said:

Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the judgement of Gehenna?
Matthew 23:33

And you should not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear the One who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.
Matthew 10:28

Gehenna is truly a place to fear. It is here that God will destroy those who oppose him, consuming both body and soul. And it is here that the difference between Gehenna and Hell is made clear. Gehenna is the place

where unrepentant sinners are cast while still alive and fully conscious. But it is not the beginning of eternal torment. It is the second death, a person's final and total end.

But do not think that this will be an easy death. Before Gehenna comes the Judgement. Everyone will have to stand before God. Even those who rejected Jesus as their Saviour will at last know and acknowledge who He is and understand that in rejecting Him they have also rejected eternal life in paradise:

...For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

Romans 14:10 to 12

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in the highest heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9 to 11

The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all that offends, and those who practice lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 13:41 and 42

But know that God loves you and does not want you to perish:

"Again, when a wicked [man] turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he keeps his soul alive.

"Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

"Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not

fair.' O house of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair?

"Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord Jehovah. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin.

"Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?

"For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord Jehovah. "Therefore turn and live!"

Ezekiel 18:27 to 32

Life or Death. The choice is yours.

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