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# The Unity of the Spirit

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Dear Fellow-Believers,

There are few more important topics in the Bible than the biblical view of the *purpose, nature* and *destiny* of man. Our understanding in regard to many other biblical subjects is directly affected by our beliefs on these key topics. Not surprisingly, they have been the subject of countless theological discussions as well as the cause of seemingly endless controversies throughout the centuries amongst the various branches of Christendom.

The Bible, however, is amazingly clear about these matters if we allow it to speak apart from theological biases. In Psalm 8 David surveys the wonders of God's creation and exclaims:

*When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,*

*What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?*

*You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.*

*You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet (Psalm 8:3-6).*

These verses are an obvious allusion to the biblical account of the creation of man recorded in the Book of Genesis. Apparently, David was not moved when he considered the majesty of God's awesome universe to think that he may have evolved from

some lower form of life. Instead, God's wondrous creation turned his mind to God's "invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature" - through which God had created all things, including man, for the *purpose* of God's own glory (Rom. 1:20f; Isaiah 43:7).

The original account of man's creation provides the sure foundation for a proper understanding of man's *purpose* in life and the *nature* of his being. With this biblical understanding also comes the key to unlocking the ultimate *destiny* of God's people - the people of faith. Let us begin in Genesis 1:26-27:

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.*

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

Though there has long been speculation about the meaning of the phrase "in the image of God", Old Testament scholars generally agree that this is the language of royalty. God created man in his own image in order to endow man with a "god-like" kingship or rulership over the created earth - to be exercised in fellowship with God. This intimate relationship was meant to bring blessing to man and glory to God. The *NIV Study Bible* explains these verses as follows:

God speaks as the Creator-King, announcing his crowning work to the members of his heavenly

court ... Man is the climax of God's creative activity, and God has "crowned him with glory and honor" and "made him ruler" over the rest of his creation (Ps. 8:5-8). Since man was created in the image of the divine king, delegated sovereignty (kingship) was bestowed on him.

Victor P. Hamilton adds the following comments in relationship to the fact that much of Genesis 1 is an obvious contrasting of God's true creation order to the mythological creation stories and beliefs of the nations that surrounded Israel:

In ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian society the king, or some other high-ranking official, might be called "the image of God." Such a designation, however, was not applied to the canal digger or to the mason who worked on a ziggurat. Gen. 1 may be using royal language to describe simply "man." In God's eyes all of mankind is royal. All of humanity is related to God, not just the king (*The New Int. Com. of the OT*, p. 135).

Let us note that nowhere does the Bible ever say that man lost this status of being "in the image of God" after his expulsion from the garden of Eden (cf. Gen. 9:6; James 3:9). Yes, creation was "cursed" but the very fact that man was created in the image of God is the basis upon which other biblical statements are made (e.g. it is the reason for the death penalty being prescribed for murder, Gen. 9:6; cf. James 3:9).

This understanding of man created "in the image of God" has important consequences for our understanding of the *nature* of man as a unity rather than as separable parts. Hamilton continues in his commentary on these verses:

It is clear that v. 26 is not interested in defining what is the image of God in man. The verse simply states the fact, which is repeated in the following verse. Nevertheless, innumerable definitions have been suggested: conscience, the soul, original righteousness, reason, the capacity for fellowship with God ... etc. Most of these definitions are based on subjective inferences rather than objective exegesis. Any approach that focuses on one aspect of man - be that physical, spiritual, or intellectual - to the neglect of the rest of man's constituent features seems doomed to failure. Gen. 1:26 is simply saying that to be human is to bear the image of God. This understanding emphasizes man as a unity. No part of man, no function of man is subordinated to some other, higher part or activity.

The popular notion that man is a "spiritual being housed in a body" is totally contrary to the biblical way of thinking. In the Bible man is pictured not as a three-part or two-part being but as a single unity - a "living being" (Gen. 2:7). When the Bible speaks of man's "spirit, soul and body" (I Thess. 5:23) it is not delineating a three-part being anymore than it is teaching a four-part being when it tells us to love God with all our "heart, soul, mind and strength." This is simply a biblical way of emphasizing the *whole person*, not a method of differentiating parts.

In the Bible salvation has to do with the *whole* man and the *whole* creation (Rom. 8:18f). Man was the crowning achievement of that creation and the biblical doctrine of redemption and salvation has as its goal the restoration and establishment of an even greater "inhabited world to come" (Heb. 2:4). Our *destiny* is not to be found in a resting place "beyond the sky." Instead, the biblical hope is for "the restoration of all things"- to be fulfilled at the second coming of Christ (Acts 3:21). It is true that the "kingdom of God" which we will inherit (I Cor. 15:50) is called a "heavenly kingdom" (II Tim. 4:18) but that is only because it is now "kept in heaven" until it will be "revealed in the last time" (I Pet. 1:4-5). The letter of II Peter sums up the clear biblical hope for the final *destiny* of man:

*But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and new earth, the home of righteousness (II Pet. 3:13).*

Though this was first promised to the Old Testament people of God, it continues to be a promise for God's new covenant people as well. Man was created to rule over the earth and in the re-created "world to come" God's people will once again, with Christ, enjoy that rulership free from the sin, frustrations and death of this present evil age. May this hope be the "anchor" of our lives (Heb. 6:19) as we seek in this life to truly live for him.

*Richie Temple*

## The Christian at Work

by Chuck LaMattina

Chicago, IL

A few years ago there was a popular country-western song with the line, "Take this job and shove it, I ain't working' here no more!" Most of us have felt that way at one time or another. Finding a job that you enjoy and that brings your material and personal satisfaction can be like trying to find a needle in a hay stack. So very often today, work can be body bruising, nerve wracking, and mind numbing.

But the hard demands of the modern work place can be one of the best places to prove the reality and power of the gospel of Christ. Right in the middle of our hectic, work-weary world, we can prove that Christianity really makes a practical difference.

Is God really concerned about our work? The answer is a definite, "Yes!" Far too many Christians mistakenly think that work came as a result of Adam's sin and subsequent fall. But the truth is that God always intended for us to work.

Genesis 2:8, 15, 18:

*The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.*

*Then LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden **to tend and keep it.***

*And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a **helper** comparable to him [i.e. Eve]."*

God's original intention was for both the man and the woman to work and in their work to find meaning, satisfaction and joy. But there is also no doubt that sin has made work harder and more painful, physically, emotionally and intellectually. After Adam's fall God said,

Genesis 3:17-19

*"... Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.*

*Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field.*

*In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; For dust you are and to dust you shall return."*

In other words, Adam would continue to work, but now it would be full of toil and sweat. Even nature itself would now be uncooperative. Today, our working conditions vary. Some of us sweat more than others physically, some sweat in other ways. But even today, there is so often a sense of weariness in our work, even in the most professional of occupations.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon writes concerning his experiences in life. And in chapter two, he gives us the final perspective of one who puts his hand to all kinds of work, but finds it empty and meaningless without God. Solomon writes,

Ecclesiastes 2:4-11

*I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards.*

*I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.*

*I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove.*

*I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house.*

*Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me.*

*I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces.*

*I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds.*

*So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also, my wisdom remained with me.*

*Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure,*

*For my heart rejoiced in all my labor; And this was my reward from all my labor.*

*Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled;*

*And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun.*

Solomon put his hand to work in various areas of life - architecture, agriculture, economics, art; and he found some joy in these things, but ultimately he says it was all "vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun." Solomon then reiterates his conclusion again in verse 17.

Ecclesiastes 2:17

*Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind.*

Apart from God, this is as far as work will take us. At the end of all we do, the big question remains, what was it all for?

We humans will work because we need to provide for the basic necessities of life. We will work because we want to feel some sense of significance and accomplishment. And our work will produce some temporary benefits. But ultimately, all our toil and sweat will leave us with a sense of meaninglessness. We will wonder, "What was it all for anyway?"

But work doesn't have to be like this for us as Christians. The effect of our redemption in Christ can be felt even in the world of work. To be sure, our work will still often involve hard labor and sweat, but the meaninglessness of it all can be removed. For us now, as Christians, work can take on a whole new significance. For us Christians, there is no such thing as a valueless, no nothing job!

I'm going to give you three liberating principles from the New Testament concerning our work. As we apply these principles, they will help us to find real fulfillment in our work, no matter what we do. These three principles are:

1. Don't work for mere men, but for Christ.
2. Don't work like mere men, but like Christ.
3. Don't just work in the light of the present, but in the light of eternity.

## **Principle 1: Don't Work for Mere Men, but for Christ.**

We are going to read some verses that the apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus. When he wrote, the labor force of the Roman Empire consisted of about sixty million slaves. Whether you were a farmer or a physician, you were probably a slave and the popular attitude towards slaves could, for the most part, be summed up by Aristotle's statement, "A slave is but a living tool."

In the Roman Empire of the first century A.D. very few people owned their own enterprises or were free to work where they wished. So how do you find job satisfaction and personal fulfillment as a slave? How do you advance your career? In spite of the cultural differences between our world and theirs, the Bible holds the truth as to how to make the most of our work.

Ephesians 6:5-8

*Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ;*

*not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,*

*with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men,*

*knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.*

The first thing we learn from these verses is that we are not to work for men, but for Christ. We are to do our work as if we are actually serving Jesus Christ. It may in fact be a finicky customer whom we are trying to serve, or a grouchy boss, but we are to labor as unto the Lord.

Do you really want to see a big difference in your work? The next time someone questions you about something at work, how would you respond if it were Christ asking the questions? How would you

react if he wanted something done right then and there? What would you do if he gave you ten new projects right on top of the ten you are still working on? How would your work be affected if you knew that he would be out of the office for the whole day? The will of God for the Christian worker is that we are to treat our employer, or the people we serve, as if we were working for Christ. Why? The answer is that in reality we are actually working for the Lord! Writing on the same theme to believers in the city of Colosse, the apostle Paul states,

Colossians 3:22-24

*Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.*

*And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,*

*knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; **for you serve the Lord Christ.***

God sees all the work we do as being for the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ. We serve Christ. As Christians, in our work, as in everything else we may say or do, we are ambassadors for Christ to the world. What kind of ambassadors are we?

In a recent study done by the Princeton Religion Research Center, it was discovered that there was only a very slim marginal difference in the attitudes and actions of employees who claimed to be Christian as opposed to those who were not. In the area of stealing from employers such things as pencils, paper, supplies and other goods, there was virtually no difference between the Christian and the non-Christian. In overstating or lying about qualifications for a job, on resumes or interviews, there was virtually no difference. In calling in sick when they weren't sick, there was virtually no difference. When it came to striving to produce a better product, or better service, there was virtually no difference.

Now I know that studies such as these contain a margin of error. But a study such as this should shake the Christian community out of its mediocrity. The same lack of distinction was seen even with Christian employers or managers. In the study, there were only a small number who did not give in to

pressures to be dishonest, or manipulative and unethical, in order to stay competitive and survive. Yet back in Ephesians 6, Christian "masters" are held to the same standards as their "slaves."

Ephesians 6:9

*And you, masters, do the same things to them [i.e. treat them like Christ], giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.*

How much love do we hold in our hearts for God and for the Lord Jesus Christ? How thankful are we for our salvation? It should be reflected in our work. We are to put our hearts into all we do for the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ whether we are pushing a broom, negotiating a contract or managing people. Our attitudes and actions in the work place can make a very favorable presentation of the gospel. This is the point in the following verses from Titus.

Titus 2:9-10

*Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters,*

*not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.*

Our attitudes and actions at work should "adorn the doctrine of God." All that we say and do as Christian employees and employers can make the gospel of Christ attractive to those who care to notice. Yet even if no one cares to notice, or if our employer is hard to work for, we are still called on to be our best. The apostle Peter wrote,

I Peter 2:18

*Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.*

When Paul and Peter wrote to the believers of their day there was no Labor Relations Board. There were no unions or grievance committees. We need to remember that most of them were slaves! Today we certainly can and should use every legal avenue to correct injustices. But the painful fact is that not every problem will be corrected in this world. Therefore, we must trust in the Lord and work for him. It is the Lord who will reward us.

God will reward our faithfulness and He will overcompensate us for whatever loss we may suffer while being obedient to Him. Even the most unjust employer will have to stand one day before the Chairman of the Board of the Universe!

## Principle 2: Don't Work Like Mere Men, But Like Christ

In our society, most people, if they work hard at all, work for a pay increase, for career advancement, or for personal significance. Most of us want to achieve something, to be somebody, to be noticed. We want to feel important and to be held in respect. In one sense there is nothing wrong with striving for these things. But in our culture today so often our identity and sense of self-worth is tied to the type of work we do or the next promotion or pay raise.

But what happens to your identity and self-worth if you are a cook at "McDonald's"? What about when the world snickers about you being a homemaker? What happens if you are passed over for the promotion? What happens if you are asked to take a pay cut instead of a raise for the future good of the company? What happens to your sense of identity and self-worth then? As Christians, our true identity, value and worth are inextricably linked to the worth of the exalted Lord Jesus Christ! The Bible says, "As He is, so are we in this world" (I John 4:17) and "In Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him" (Col. 2:9-10). Our identity and value are tied to Christ! Therefore,

Col. 3:17

*... whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*

To do something in the name of the Lord Jesus is to do it the way that he would do it. Whatever we say or do is to be done with his diligence, with his faithfulness to God, with his concern to do a good work for the purpose of bringing glory to God and blessings to men.

The Bible says that God makes the sun to rise on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45). God's works in creation are a blessing to all and an indication of His power and grace. Likewise our work is to be beneficial to as many people as possible and done with a godly motive. To work in Christ's name, is to

work as he would work, in imitation of his Father, so that all may benefit.

This is what is now sometimes jokingly referred to as the Puritan work ethic. But it is no joke. The loss of this ethic in our society is a prime reason for all our poor service and craftsmanship. The Puritans believed, as did the Protestant Reformers before them, that all work was sacred. The great reformer Martin Luther wrote that,

Those who are now called "spiritual," that is priests, bishops, or popes, are neither different from other Christians, nor superior to them, except that they are charged with the administration of the Word of God ... but tailors, cobblers, stonemasons, carpenters, cooks, innkeepers, farmers ... have also been consecrated to their work and office.

... everyone must benefit and serve every other by means of his own work .. so that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community.

The biblical view of work makes all that we do a form of godly ministry. It doesn't matter if we are sweeping the floor or preaching a sermon. The New Testament knows no place holier than another, no believer holier than another and no work holier than another! The New Testament teaches us that all of life - every day, every thought, every act - is to be lived and accomplished in the name of Christ. All of life then, and every form of work, is a means to worship and glorify God. I Corinthians 10:31 says, "... whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

Cotton Mather, a colonial American Puritan Preacher, said,

The actions of a shepherd keeping his sheep, or of a mother caring for home and children, is as good a work as the actions of a judge giving a sentence, or of a minister preaching the gospel when all is done with the heart devoted to God.

The whole of life belongs to God, not just what happens in church. God is not just interested in religious books, but in all literature. He is not just concerned with religious service, but with all kinds of service. God is not just interested in religious education, but in all education.

We must work in Christ's name, as he would work, then we will find satisfaction and fulfillment in whatever we do. As Christians, all of life is

ministry and will be rewarded by God! And this brings us to principle number three.

**Principle 3: Don't Just Work in the Light of the Present, but in the light of Eternity.**

We need to understand that we simply will not always be rewarded in this life for a job well done. With this obviously in his mind the apostle Paul wrote the following in his letter to the Colossians,

Col. 3:23-24

*And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,*

*knowing that **from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance**, for you serve the Lord Christ.*

The ultimate reward for working whole heartedly as unto the Lord will be received in the age to come and enjoyed throughout all eternity. Eternity puts all our false pride and all our troubling problems, concerning our work into their proper perspective.

I'm sure you've seen those trucks with flattened old cars on their way to be recycled? At one time someone was proud of that car and became furious when it was first scratched. Someone borrowed money for it, going into debt. Someone became angry when it didn't start one cold morning. But none of that matters now. The car is junk and on its way to be melted down. Time can put all things into perspective. Think of what eternity will do with our false pride and troubling problems from work. As Peter wrote in his second epistle, nothing in this world will last forever.

2 Peter 3:10

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and **the works that are in it will be burned up.***

Think of it! One day all our labor problems and all our successes will be gone!

2 Peter 3:11-14

*Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,*

*looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?*

*Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

*Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;*

In the end, all that will be left of all our hard work will be the approval or disapproval of the Lord Jesus Christ for what we have done. The floor we swept will be gone, but not the love in our heart as we worked. The hamburger we served to the finicky customer will be gone, but not the attitude in our service. The skyscraper we were so proud of designing will have vanished, but not our motive in building it. God is righteous and generous, and He will reward us for our faithfulness to Christ.

In the end, meaning and fulfillment in work is all a matter of perspective. We are to be Christ's ambassadors, not just in church, but even out in the dirty, gritty, sweaty world of work as well. Right there in the world of work we can bear witness to the life changing power of the gospel. It is this that really gives value to all we do. If we desire the right for our gospel to be heard, we must back up what we say with credibility. The gospel is not just in word but in deed. When God and Christ are central to our work, then we will be successful in this essential matter.

[This article is adapted from Chuck's forthcoming book *Essential Matters*]

## Endless Torture Unbiblical

by Steve Jones

Jonesboro, GA

Many Christians consider the doctrine of endless torture a non-negotiable tenet. To deny it is to deny sound teaching and to join the ranks of the cults. Many sincere Bible teachers insist we believe in a God who torments the unconverted forever. At the same time, we are told that God does not delight in the death of the wicked, that he is full of tender mercies.

Is this the consistent doctrine of Scripture regarding final punishment? Will God, whose name is love (I John 4:7), keep most of mankind alive so that he can perpetually burn them with flames? Certainly, we have a right to ask the question, since Paul tells us to "test all things" (I Thess. 5:21).

We would concur that certain isolated texts may suggest such a punishment for the lost. These passages are very small in number. The general tenor Scripture, on the other hand, seems to suggest something different. Consistently, we read that the wicked will finally die, perish, be cut off, slain, devoured and destroyed.

### Old Testament Teaching

One of the great difficulties with the popular view of final punishment or hell is the profound silence of the Old Testament. This is frequently admitted by orthodox believers. Everywhere we find God warning sinners to repent. He threatens judgment for disobedience and carries it out on many occasions. But the idea of endless torture after death is extremely obscure.

God threatened Adam and Eve with death as a punishment for their sin. This He defined, not as an eternity of pain, but as a return to the dust of the earth (Gen. 3:19). Many Bible teachers will point out that God said "in the day you eat of it [the tree of knowledge of good and evil] you shall die" (Gen. 2:17). Orthodoxy reasons that because the pair did not drop dead the same day they sinned, the "death" must be of a different kind.

This does not follow. The Hebrews often spoke in an anticipative or *proleptic* sense. That which is certain to happen is spoken of as a present reality. For an example, when Abimelech took Abraham's

wife, God said to him, "Behold, you *are* a dead man" (Gen. 20:3). In other words, death was imminent, though not literally present.

The absence of explicit instructions regarding the punishment due Adam and Eve - and their posterity - is bewildering in light of the common view. *Did God send sinners to hell for thousands of years before He ever disclosed this awful fact?* We wonder how God could have warned Israel in precise detail about plagues, droughts and other punishments without saying a word about the worst punishment of all. Read the penalties for disobedience to the Mosaic Law (Deut. 28:15-68). Where are the warnings of hellfire in a future life?

Not a word came from the lips of Abraham, Isaac or Jacob about an endless hell. Likewise, Moses, Joshua, the Judges of Israel and the Psalmists are silent on the matter. The prophets of Israel and Judah, though they say much of God's wrath, fail to teach anything about torments after death. Jeremiah does mention "the valley of the son of Himmon" (Jer. 7:32), which any Bible dictionary will identify as the *Gehenna* or hell spoken of by Jesus. But in this text, the prophet calls this place "the Valley of Slaughter." Anyone can see that "slaughter" is something entirely different than an endless existence in agony.

Isaiah mentions "everlasting burnings" in his prophecy (Isa. 33:14). But, amazingly, he calls this judgment "the *devouring* fire." This contradicts what many Christians teach about hell. Sinners are supposed to writhe in the flames without ever being devoured. But Isaiah denies it. He also says that *no one can dwell in the everlasting burnings*, despite the view that hell is "the eternal abode of sinners."

The many occurrences of the word "hell" in the King James Version of the Old Testament are the result of faulty translating. Modern versions of Scripture have corrected the error. They seldom, if ever, render the Hebrew word *sheol* in this way. Instead, we read such words as "the pit," "the grave" or "death." The same is true of the New Testament word *hades*, which should never have been translated "hell" in the first place. Check any Bible dictionary.

Many times, the prophets of Israel mention fire in connection with divine judgment. But they always present fire as an agent of *destruction*, not

torment in a future life. Zephaniah, for example, said, "In the fire of his jealous wrath, all the earth shall be *consumed*" (Zeph. 1:18). Malachi said, "the day comes, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of Hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch" (Mal. 4:1). He goes on to say that the wicked would be reduced to ashes under the feet of the righteous (v. 2, 3).

### The Teaching of Jesus

Jesus spoke of a final judgment in which God would "*destroy* both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). This text is so ruinous to the common view that Bible teachers have assigned a theological meaning to the word "destroy." Many who claim to "take the Bible literally" escape the obvious meaning here by re-defining "destroy" as eternal, conscious separation from God. But the Bible nowhere else uses "destroy" in such a self-contradictory manner.

The word "hell" is translated from the word *Gehenna*, seldom used in the Scripture. Once the sight of idolatrous worship, it was a garbage dump outside Jerusalem where the bodies of executed criminals were cast. Worms fed on the carcasses. The imagery was familiar to the Jews. When Jesus said that the wicked would be destroyed in *Gehenna*, everyone knew what he meant.

In Mark 9:48, Jesus speaks of a place where "their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched." But this does not prove endless torments. The passage is actually a quote from Isaiah 66:24: "And they shall go forth and look on the dead bodies of the men that have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh." The fire and worms are feeding on *corpses*, not "never-dying souls."

Jesus does speak of "eternal punishment" in Matthew 25:48. But we would affirm that the destruction of evildoers in wrath qualifies in every way as an eternal punishment. The effects of such a punishment last forever, as long as the eternal life enjoyed by the righteous. The wicked will be extinct, never to rise again. The punishment is eternal.

Some may object that we are playing games with words. But the authors of Scripture often use

"eternal" to modify an activity that takes place in limited time, as long as the *effects* are ongoing. For example, the Bible uses the term "eternal redemption" to signify a once-for-all event with ongoing *effects*. Jesus Christ is not eternally redeeming his people. He did that in time, on the cross. But the effects of his redemption stretch into eternity.

Jesus often informed his hearers that unbelievers will *perish* in the judgment (Luke 13:1-5; John 3:16) and not see life (John 3:36). They would be gathered and burned, as men burn withered sticks (John 15:6). The meanings of these words were evident to the common people of his day.

Many will appeal to the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16 as proof of eternal torment. But the story is admitted on all hands as non-literal in many respects. Few believe that the story is an accurate account of what goes on after death. The Hebrew imagery of the dead carrying on conversations is not unique (Isaiah 14:3-10). Furthermore, the story does not deal with the final punishment at all. It is a pre-resurrection account (verses 27-28) and does not address the duration of punishment after the Judgment Day.

### Apostolic Teaching

The apostles taught the same view. Read the evangelistic sermons in the Book of Acts and see if they speak a word about eternal torments. Peter said, "every soul that does not listen to that prophet [Jesus] shall be *destroyed* from the people" (Acts 3:23). Destruction, not endless suffering, is the end of God's Judgment.

The epistles take up the same idea. Paul, who "did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable," (Acts 20:20) warns no one about eternal torment. On the contrary, he writes of those whose "end is *destruction*" (Phil. 3:10) and of the ungodly who will face "eternal *destruction*" at the coming of the Lord (2 Thess. 1:8-9).

"The wages of sin," says Paul, "is *death*" (Rom. 6:23). He does not tell his readers, "the wages of sin is to burn in hell *without* dying." Yet, that is the very thing orthodoxy teaches. Again, the apostle says that "if you live according to the flesh, you will *die*" (Rom. 8:13). If eternal torment is true, why would he cloak the doctrine in ambiguity - especially considering the gravity of the matter?

Peter also teaches the destruction of the wicked on Judgment Day. He likens their fate unto the incineration of Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Pet. 2:6-7). James speaks of the unrighteous rich who will be led off to slaughter and consumed by their wealth (James 5:1-5).

In Revelation 14:10-11, we read that God torments those who worship the beast, adding "the smoke of their torments goes up forever and ever." But this is language borrowed from the *destruction* of Edom (Isa. 34:10), it has nothing to do with misery in a future life. There is nothing in the text that demands such a thing.

The testimony of both the testaments is conclusive: the wicked will most surely perish. "The Lord preserves all who love him; but all the wicked will he destroy" (Psa. 145:20).

[Steve Jones is co-editor of the monthly newsletter *Christian Perspectives*. Copies of this article in pamphlet form may be obtained by writing to: Christian Perspectives, 3324-36 Pheasant Ridge SE, Kentwood, MI 49508]

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## What Happens When We Die?

Anthony Buzzard in his booklet *What Happens When We Die?* explains the biblical view of death and resurrection. I quote from pages 21-22:

The *ruach* [spirit] of the Old Testament is the invisible vital force which animates the creation. It is the driving energy sustaining the function of brain and nervous system. When the *ruach* is withdrawn from the body, the creature dies and the divine force returns to the one who gave it. The creature becomes unconscious in death, since *ruach*, the source of his sentient existence, has been removed. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the Biblical term "spirit" does not any more than "soul," contain *the real personality capable of conscious existence apart from the body*. ... death is described in two New Testament passages as the surrender of the spirit. Jesus said: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit ... (Luke 23:46). And in Acts 7:59, 60, Stephen said: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And having said this he fell asleep."

We must be careful not to read into these passages the Greek notion that "spirit" here means the real person now existing consciously as a disembodied spirit. To do so is take a leap into the

very different world of Greek philosophy ... The Biblical view is that Stephen fell asleep; he did not continue to live elsewhere. He, Stephen, is still identified with the dead body, just as Jesus, the whole person, died when the life-giving spirit was withdrawn, surrendered with the view to its restoration at the later moment of resurrection. In resurrection the dead man arises from the grave where he is sleeping in the dust until the moment when he awakes (Dan. 12:2).

[This highly recommended booklet is available from Restoration Fellowship, 185 Summerville Dr. Brooks, GA, 30205]

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## Is Man a "Spiritual Being" or a "Human Being"?

In many Christian and, paradoxically, "new age" circles man is often said to be a "spiritual being." This puts man into a similar category with angels, evil spirits, etc. It also makes him a part of the so-called spiritual world. But is this biblically accurate? I quote from E.W. Bullinger's work *Word Studies on the Holy Spirit*, pp. 19-20:

By the union of "body" and "*pneuma*" [spirit], man becomes "living soul," i.e., a living being (Gen. 2:7). When the body returns to dust "as it was" (Gen. 2:19), and the *pneuma* returns "to God who gave it" (Ecc. 12:7; Ps. 104: 29-30), man becomes, and is called, a "dead soul." See Lev. 21:11 and Num. 6:6.

Hence, at death the *pneuma* is "commended" to God for his keeping (Ps. 31:5; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59), until it shall be re-united with the body in resurrection. While man thus possesses *pneuma*, he is never once called "a spirit," as angels are. They are *spiritual* beings, man is a *human* being.

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## The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

### Does it Teach a Conscious Existence After Death?

The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, as found in Luke 16:19-31, is often appealed to as proof that Jesus and the New Testament teach a conscious existence immediately after death. But is this true? I quote from several of the leading commentaries on the Gospel of Luke:

[E. Earl Ellis, *The New Century Bible Commentary, the Gospel of Luke*, pp. 201-202, 206]

The general theme of the parable is familiar to the Lord's audience ... but it is not necessarily a "true after-life story". Some have thought that Jesus tells the parable to reveal what happens after death. However, the general currency of this story-theme in Judaism does not support this view. And Jesus himself expresses contrary views elsewhere about the future life (see on Luke 20:27-40). These facts indicate rather strongly that he does not intend here to give a preview of life after death. On this almost all commentators agree ... It is probable, rather, that Jesus makes use of a well known story to illuminate certain truths about the kingdom of God ... The picture of judgment and reward immediately at death is contrary to the usual New Testament understanding. Cf. Mt. 10:15; Acts 17:31; Jn. 5:28f.; I Thess. 4:13ff.; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 20:13.

[Norval Geldenhuys, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Gospel of Luke* p. 428. Geldenhuys here quotes A. Plummer from *The International Critical Commentary*]

We must remember that we have here to do with a parable and not with a real occurrence and that "it is no purpose of the parable to give information about the unseen world ... the details of the picture are taken from [popular] Jewish beliefs as to the condition of souls in Sheol, and must not be understood as confirming those beliefs ... "

[I.H. Marshall, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, pp. 632-633, 637]

The editorial comment in 17:1 reminds us that the audience for this parable is still the Pharisees; there has in fact been no break in the teaching of Jesus since v. 15 ... the background to the teaching is more probably found in non-biblical sources ... The general motif of this story found its way into Jewish lore, and

it is attested in some seven versions ... It is clear that Jesus' parable bears some relation to this folk tale ... Jewish representations of the after-life were fluid and developing, so that consistent pictures are hardly to be expected ... It is manifest too that the details are not to be taken literally.

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## Some Contrasts Between Luke 16 and Other Bible Passages on Sheol-Hades

by Don Robertson

Rock Hill, South Carolina

1. Luke 16: It was light enough to "see afar off" and recognize people (v. 23)  
In Sheol: there is only "darkness" (Job 17:14; Ps. 88: 6, 12).
2. Luke 16: Lazarus was "comforted" (v. 25).  
In Sheol: there is "corruption" (Job 17:14) and "destruction" (Job 26:6).
3. Luke 16: Rich man told to "remember" (v. 25).  
In Sheol: there is "no remembrance" (Ps. 6:5).
4. Luke 16: "said" or "cried" is used 7 times.  
In Sheol: there is "silence" (Ps. 31:17; Ps. 115:17).
5. Luke 16: Abraham and the rich man had some knowledge of their circumstances.  
In Sheol: "there is no knowledge" (Eccl. 9:10); the dead "know not anything" (Eccl. 9:5).
6. Luke 16: Abraham had wisdom (v. 31).  
In Sheol: "there is no wisdom" (Eccl. 9:10).
7. Luke 16: Did Abraham or Lazarus ever praise the Lord or give God thanks?  
In Sheol: "the dead praise not the Lord" (Ps. 115:17; Isa. 38:18).
8. Luke 16: The rich man was "tormented in this flame" (v. 24).  
In Sheol: the dead "sleep" (Job. 3:13; 14:12; Dan. 12:2) and "rest" (Job. 3:18; Dan. 12:13).

[Don Robertson has made two excellent tapes on the subjects of the Trinity and Eternal Punishment. To obtain them write to this newsletter]

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## Books in Review

### *The Works of F.F. Bruce*

There are certain writers on the Bible whose books I make it a policy to collect. Foremost among these are the works of the late Scottish NT scholar F.F. Bruce (1910-1990), considered by many to be the leading evangelical Bible scholar of the 20th century. The hallmarks of his writings are a deep devotion to God, a constant consideration for the unity of the body of Christ and a fierce integrity and honesty in regards to a proper handling of the biblical text. I highly recommend *all* of his works.

Bruce's background makes him especially sensitive to the issues of biblical studies. Being the son of an evangelist in the Plymouth Brethren movement (begun in the 19th century by men such as George Mueller and J.N. Darby) he was brought up on the Scriptures but also exposed to the various sectarian issues of his day. Through his studies at the Universities of Aberdeen, Cambridge, and Vienna as well as through his teaching positions at several British universities, Bruce became renowned not only for his encyclopedic knowledge of the Bible and its underlying texts and history but also for his ability to communicate this knowledge to the public at large.

Bruce's books on the historical and textual background of the NT - *New Testament History*; *The Books and the Parchments*; and *The Canon of Scripture* - are all classics in their fields. But it was in Pauline studies that he particularly distinguished himself. Here he emphasized salvation as the free gift of God, received solely through faith in Christ - but, with a corresponding emphasis on the believer's responsibility to express this faith through the fruit of the Spirit in one's life. Bruce not only wrote leading commentaries on each of the Pauline Epistles and the Book of Acts, he also summarized his life-long study of Paul in the classic work: *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free*. For those who are interested in a getting a sample of his writings I recommend the *F.F. Bruce Studies Pact* available from Christian Book Distributors (CBD). This is a collection of five of his shorter, but first-rate, books including: *The Message of the New Testament*; *The New Testament Documents*; and *NT Development of OT Themes*.

As with anyone whose writings span almost a half century F.F. Bruce grew in his understanding of different biblical issues. This is very evident when one reads his writings keeping in mind the dates of their publication. Bruce was from the beginning a strong believer in the second coming of Christ as a single climactic event at which time God's people would be made immortal and God's kingdom would be established in a renewed earth. He was also a firm believer in the gift of the Spirit as the firstfruits of the believer's final inheritance. But though he always rejected the Greek idea of the immortality of the soul, he seemed to struggle with regard to the state of the "dead in Christ" because of verses such as Phil. 1:23 and II Cor. 5:8. This struggle can be seen especially in his work *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, pp. 309-313. Even here, however, he offered a possible solution to this struggle in footnote 40 on p. 312:

The tension created by the postulated interval between death and resurrection might be relieved today if it were suggested that in the consciousness of the departed believer there is no interval between dissolution and investiture, however long an interval might be measured by the calendar of earth-bound human history.

As time went on Bruce seems to have gravitated more and more to this position as can be seen by his commentary notes on I Cor. 15 and II Cor. 5:1-8 in the *New Cent. Bible Commentary, I and II Corinthians*, pp. 137-159 and 198-206:

Paul does not think of immortality or survival after death apart from resurrection ... while Paul longed to be delivered from the present mortal body it was in order that he might exchange it for one that was immortal: to be without a body of any kind would be a form of spiritual nakedness from which his mind shrank ... So instantaneous is the changeover from the natural to the spiritual body - "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (I Cor. 15:52) - that there will be no interval of *conscious* 'nakedness' between the one and the other ... In I Cor. 15 this takes place *at the parousia* in those believers who are still alive then, while those who have died will rise in bodies which are not liable to corruption ... in the *consciousness* of the departed believer there is no interval between dissolution and investiture.

## Notes & Quotes on the Bible

### The Nature of Man

To understand the biblical view of life, death and the future destiny of man it is necessary to first have a firm grasp of the biblical view of the nature of man. Fortunately, this is one subject of which there is a great deal of unanimity in the world of biblical scholarship - at least as regards the original creation of man and the Old Testament view of man in general. However, it does not seem that this understanding has been effectively communicated to the Church at large. The result has been an infiltration into Christian doctrine of ideas that have their origin in pagan Greek or Oriental religion and philosophy. As representative of the scholarly consensus about the biblical view of the nature of man, I quote from the chapter "Life and Death in the Old Testament" by M.A. Knibb in the book *The World of Ancient Israel* (ed. R.C. Clements, Cambridge):

The account of the creation of man in the ... narrative of the creation and fall (Gen. 2:4b-3:24) epitomizes the Old Testament view of the constitution of man: "Yahweh God formed man of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life ... and the man became a living being (*nepes hayyah*)" (Gen. 2:7). It is widely recognized that there is no suggestion here of a dichotomy between body and soul; the "breath of life" is not conceived of as having an existence somehow separate from the body, and it is man as an entity who becomes a "living being." Thus, for example, Westermann comments: "a human being does not consist of a number of parts (like body and soul and so on), but rather is "something" that comes into being as a human person by a quickening into life ... a person is created as a *nepes hayyah* [living soul]; a "living soul" is not put into one's body."

The idea that man's life depends on the breath breathed into him by God is expressed in the Old Testament in a variety of ways. Gen. 2:7 uses the expression "the breath of life", but in Job 33:4 (cf. 32:8) this is explicitly identified as "the breath of the Almighty":

"The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life."

Here "spirit" (*ruach*) and "breath" (*nesamah*) are used virtually synonymously, as they are also in Isa. 42:5; and in some later passages *ruach* is used with the meaning "breath" simply as a synonym of *nesamah*: cf. Gen. 6:17; 7:15; Zech. 12:1 ... just as the life of man is dependent on the gift of Yahweh of the "breath" or "spirit," so the withdrawal of this by Yahweh means the death of man:

"When you take away their breath [*ruach*], they die and return to their dust.

When you send forth your breath [*ruach*], they are created, and you renew the face of the earth" (Psa. 104:29-30).

... Correspondingly, in Ezekial's vision of the renewal of the nation (Ezekial 37), sinews, flesh and skin first come upon the bones, but life only returns to them after the "breath" (*ruach*) comes into them at Yahweh's command [p. 398].

In addition to this understanding of life and death it must be emphasized that nowhere does the Old Testament indicate that man was created in any sense as "immortal": either as an immortal person as a whole or as having an immortal "part" such as "spirit" or "soul."

... There is no suggestion in the narratives of the creation and fall, nor indeed in the Old Testament as a whole, that man was created immortal and lost his immortality as a result of disobedience. In Gen. 2:17 death is certainly prescribed as the penalty for eating the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but there is no hint that man originally had possessed immortality ... the implication of 3:22-24, which refer to the tree of life which might have given man immortality is that man did not at that time possess it. There is thus no idea in the narrative of the creation and fall that man had once been immortal [*ibid.*, pp. 402-403].

### The Old Testament View of Death

Despite the fact that the Old Testament sometimes uses poetic imagery in regards to the state of the dead (e.g. Isaiah 14:3-23) there is no evidence that death was meant to be understood as anything other than what its natural meaning would indicate: lifelessness, without consciousness, as expressed by the metaphor of "sleep". The common idea that people were believed to continue in a "shadowy existence in a weaker form of life" (i.e., as "shades")

in the underworld of *Sheol* does not accord well with the general picture presented in the Old Testament as exemplified by such plain statements as follow:

*Lighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death (Psalm 13:3).*

*For in death there is no remembrance of thee (Psalm 6:5).*

*Man's breath goes forth, he returns to the earth; in that very day his thoughts perish (Psalm 146:4).*

*For the living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything (Eccl. 9:5).*

In short, the Old Testament view of death is summed up by James H. Charlesworth in his introduction to Vol. I of *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Doubleday):

At death the individual simply is gathered to his final (or father's) place, the tomb. *Sheol* and the netherworld is described as the abode of the dead, not of people who continue to live after death ... Only through his reputation or a son does his life continue on the earth (p. xxxiii).

## Life After Death in the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

After the return of many Israelites from their period of exile in Babylon and Assyria a time-span of some 400 years passed between the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, and the coming of John the Baptist. During this time, many foreign influences were introduced into the religious thinking of Judaism by the various empires - Persian, Greek and Roman - that occupied the general area of Palestine and beyond. Here it is important to make a clear distinction between the views and beliefs of the religion of *Judaism* (an increasingly fragmented religion made of up various sects and views, much like Christianity today) with that of the Old Testament *biblical* view.

The Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha represent Jewish writings of this time that were heavily influenced by a combination of the Old Testament, Greek or Hellenistic thought and the popular pagan oriental religions of that day. The Apocryphal books eventually found their way into the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, but were never considered to be a part of the Hebrew Canon of scripture. The so-called

Pseudepigraphical writings were collected only recently (mostly 19th century) so as to be a "body" of writings under the heading of "Pseudepigrapha". Many of these as individual writings such as I Enoch were apparently quite influential in the thinking of many Jewish people (and later many Christians) in the centuries just before and after Christ.

All of these books to a greater or lesser degree reflect a combination of Old Testament, Hellenistic and popular speculative thinking from the centuries just before Christ. They, together with the Dead Sea Scrolls, are extremely important for understanding the history and the thought world of early Judaism around the time of Christ. However, they are far less important for gaining an understanding of the *biblical* view of things and in some cases they are more likely to be detrimental to it. It is from these books that such ideas as the immortality of the soul, immediate conscious existence after death, eternal torment and all kinds of non-biblical ideas relating to angels, spirits and the after-life crept into Jewish, and later, into Christian thinking. When Paul spoke of "Jewish myths" and "speculations" to refute and to beware of, it was in all likelihood these, and similar types of writings, about which he spoke. Charlesworth summarizes the views presented in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha regarding death and the after-life:

In contrast to this [Old Testament] perception are the ideas developed in post-exilic Judaism. Some books in the Apocrypha contain numerous explicit references to the resurrection of the dead (see esp. 2 Mac 7, 14), or possibly even to the immortality of the soul (Wisdom of Solomon) ... Some pseudepigrapha, even more than these other documents, contain many passages that with pellucid clarity express the belief in a resurrection after death ...

Logically, subsequent to the development of this idea is the attempt to describe the future place of rest for the righteous. Hence, picturesque images of Paradise appear in many pseudepigrapha. *The various pictorial descriptions are characterized by mutually exclusive ideas.* Paradise is placed sometimes in the third heaven ... and sometimes on the earth ... It is depicted as either without inhabitants ... or with inhabitants... It is portrayed as both an eternal inheritance ... and a state preceding the end ... The Pseudepigrapha mirror a living religion in which the attempt was made to come to

terms with the dynamic phenomena of history and experience [*ibid.* p.xxxiii].

No doubt such literature helped keep alive the hope of a future just society achieved through divine intervention and resurrection of the dead as set forth in OT passages such as Dan. 12:2, but this was often at the expense of a mixture of pagan thought concepts. E. Earl Ellis describes the resulting religious thought world at the time of the coming of Christ:

In the time of Jesus Jewish views on the future life varied from group to group. Usually more resistant to the inroads of Hellenistic culture, the Pharisees in this matter were considerably, and rather early, influenced by Greek thought. The departure of the "soul" to reward or punishment immediately at death was for them a widespread if not dominant belief ... The Essenes (or some of them) shared this view, perhaps along with the Pharisees' doctrine of resurrection ... The Sadducees believed in neither "resurrection, neither angel nor spirit." In their view soul and body perished together at death. Like the Sadducees and the Old Testament Psalms ... the Qumran writings also seem to regard the whole man as mortal, perishing at death ... But in addition there is the distinct hope ... [of] ... an immortality for the righteous via resurrection. This view is closer to the New Testament thought than the teachings of either the Pharisees or Sadducees ... [*The New Century Bible Commentary, the Gospel of Luke*, pp. 234-235].

### **The Destiny of God's People: Paradise in a New Heaven and New Earth**

Whoever would profess to understand all that will take place after Christ's return or all the details concerning the final destiny of God's people would do so only in the face of clear scriptural statements that teach us that this is not now presently possible. Two verses come immediately to mind:

*Dear friends, now we are the children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is (I John 3:2).*

*Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then shall I know fully, even as I am known (I Cor. 13:12).*

Without claiming to understand all the details we can, however, surely say that the final destiny of God's people is clearly stated in the Bible as being "a new heaven and earth, the home of righteousness" (II Pet. 3:13; cp. Rev. 21:1ff.). That this is also equivalent to the term "kingdom of God" or "paradise" can be seen from a comparison of the characteristics of these two terms with that of the biblical hope of the new heaven and earth.

I Corinthians 15, for instance, describes the "kingdom of God" which will be inherited at Christ's return as being "imperishable." For this specific reason flesh and blood man cannot inherit it. Man must be "changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet" so that the "perishable clothes itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality" (I Cor. 15:50ff). Only in this way can man enter into this new "imperishable" realm. Likewise, though probably rich in symbolic language, the promise to the believer to be able to eat of "the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7) is without any question a promise to have an immortal life in the "paradise" of "a new heaven and earth" because that is precisely where this "tree of life" and "paradise" are located (Rev. 22:1-5, 14).

It is interesting that for neither Paul nor the writer of the Book of Revelation is the hope for man's ultimate destiny to be found in "heaven" or even in a "millennium" on earth. Instead, it is to be found in the final "imperishable" kingdom of God where sin, death and destruction can play no part. Since it is self-evident that the picture presented in Rev. 20 of the perishable millennium cannot fit with Paul's own descriptions of an imperishable kingdom of God (I Cor. 15:50), it is not surprising that many have wondered how this millennium (which is *only* mentioned in Rev. 20) is to be understood. R.J. Bauckham comments on this in his article "Eschatology" in the *New Bible Dictionary*, p. 347:

It should be emphasized that no other passage of Scripture clearly refers to the millennium. To apply OT prophecies of the age of salvation specifically to the millennium runs counter to the general NT interpretation of such prophecies, which find their fulfillment in the salvation already achieved by Christ and to be consummated in the age to come. This is also how Rev. itself interprets such prophecies in chs. 21f. Within the structure of Rev. the millennium has a limited role, as a

demonstration of the final victory of Christ and his saints over the powers of evil. The principle object of Christian hope is not the millennium but the new creation of Rev. 21:1f. ...

Whatever one's understanding of the millennium may be it must be emphasized that the promise held out to the "overcomer" in Rev. 2:7 is not for a share in the millennium - it is to partake of the tree of life in the paradise of the new heaven and earth. Thus, even in the Book of Revelation itself the ultimate hope is focused on a final paradise not on an "intermediate state" - whether it be in heaven or on earth (cf. Rev. 21:1f; Rom. 8:18-21; I Cor. 15:50f). R.J. Bauckham summarizes well the biblical picture of the hope for the final destiny of God's people:

The destiny of the redeemed is to be like Christ ... to be with Christ ... to share in his glory ... and his kingdom ... to be sons of God in perfect fellowship with God ...

With the final achievement of human salvation there will come also the liberation of the whole material creation from its share in the curse of sin (Rom. 8:19-23). The Christian hope is not for

redemption *from* the world, but for the redemption *of* the world. Out of judgment (Heb. 12:26; 2 Pet. 3:10) will emerge a *recreated* universe ... "a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet. 3:13). ["Eschatology," *New Bible Dictionary*, p. 347-348]

And so we say in unity with whole New Testament, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"

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Note: In the last issue of *The Unity of the Spirit* (Winter 1996), the quote on page 15 in the Notes and Quotes section should have been attributed to E. Earl Ellis (not Edwards).

Note: Mark Mattison has written a response to Dan Mahar's article *The "Mystery" of the Cross of Christ* where, though agreeing with the overall conclusions of the article, he disagrees on pt. 2 as listed on p. 9 in regard to the authority of angels. Anyone who would like a copy of this response along with Dan's counter-response may write to this newsletter to obtain them.

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