

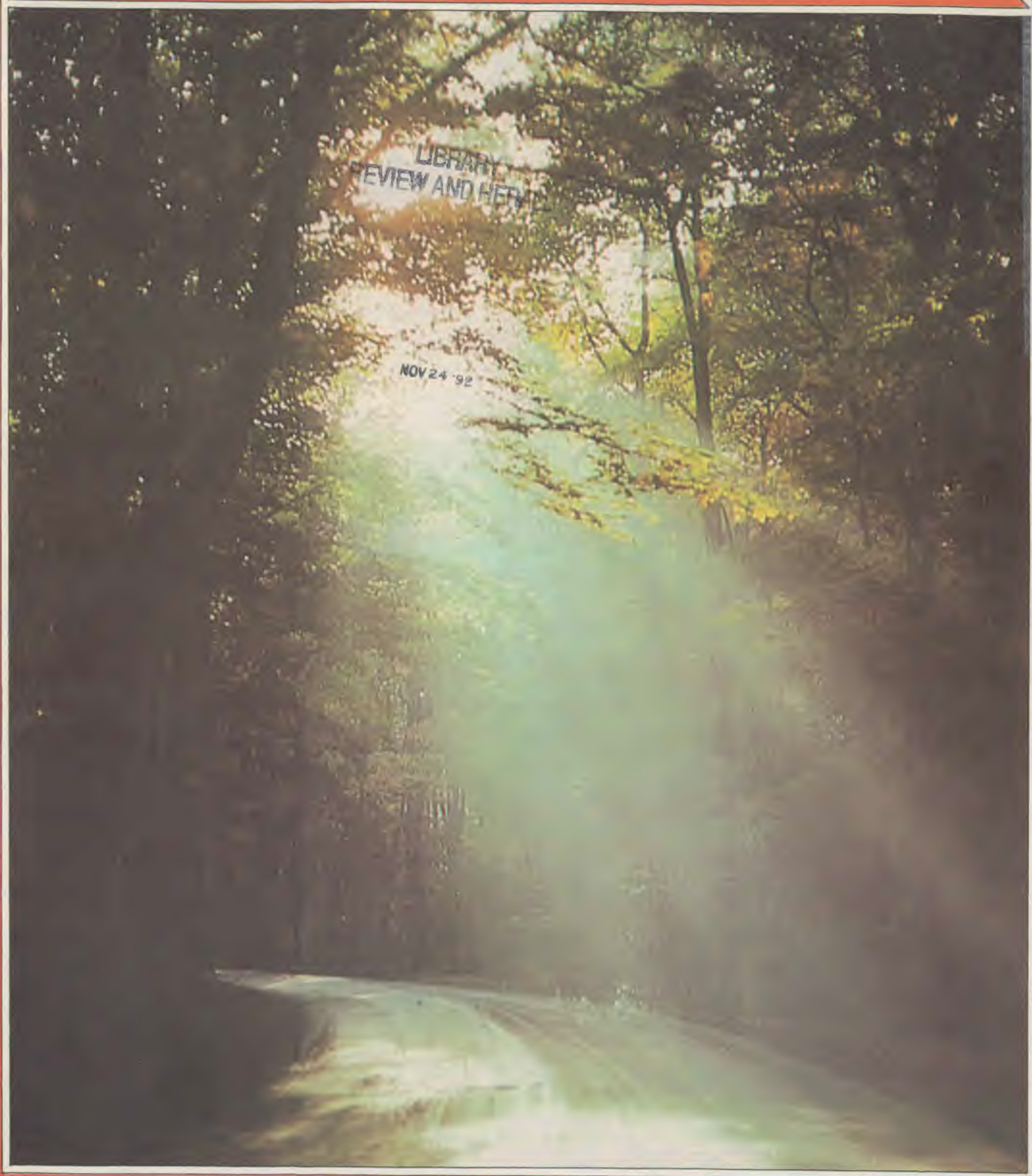
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Our Times

A FAMILY MAGAZINE FOR BETTER LIVING

ETERNITY, FACT OR FANTASY?



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EDITORIAL

On my table is a small clay plaque. It has been there for many years. On it is a picture of a red flower and the words, "Have a good day!"

What does have a good day really mean?

Many of us say the words when leaving home in the morning. We want our loved ones to have a good day filled with God's blessings.

We all want our days to be great. We awake with anticipation, plans and hopes. Our deepest desire is to be efficient and productive. We don't know what the day will bring, but most of us are optimistic enough to believe that a new day will be different from our yesterday.

When we leave home every day our prayer is that the Lord would keep us, guide us and love us. But inspite of this the day sometimes does not end the way we want it to.

What goes wrong? How can a day that begins with bright expectations and promise so often end in unfinished, unresolved and unpleasant memories.

But the Lord wants to see that the day is spend and used for His glory and our growth. The Lord fills our heart with His Spirit and guides us each step of the way.

Begin each day by praising the Lord. Praise prepares our heart to be receptive to what the Lord wants to say.

"Oh Come, let us sing to the Lord!

Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.

Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving;

Let us shout joyfully to Him with Psalms.

For the Lord is the great God,

And the great King above all gods.

(Psalms 95:1-3)

We need to praise the Lord and adore Him to begin a good day, but something more is needed to realize the Lord's blessing through the day.

"I will early seek the Saviour

I will learn of Him each day."

We should not only seek Him in the morning but throughout the day. We must be open to the Lord all through the day if we want to do things His way.

Let us today get on our knees and give the day to the Lord. Tell the Lord that we want Him to take our hearts and shape it. Only when we do this can we really have 'A GOOD DAY!'.

E Charles

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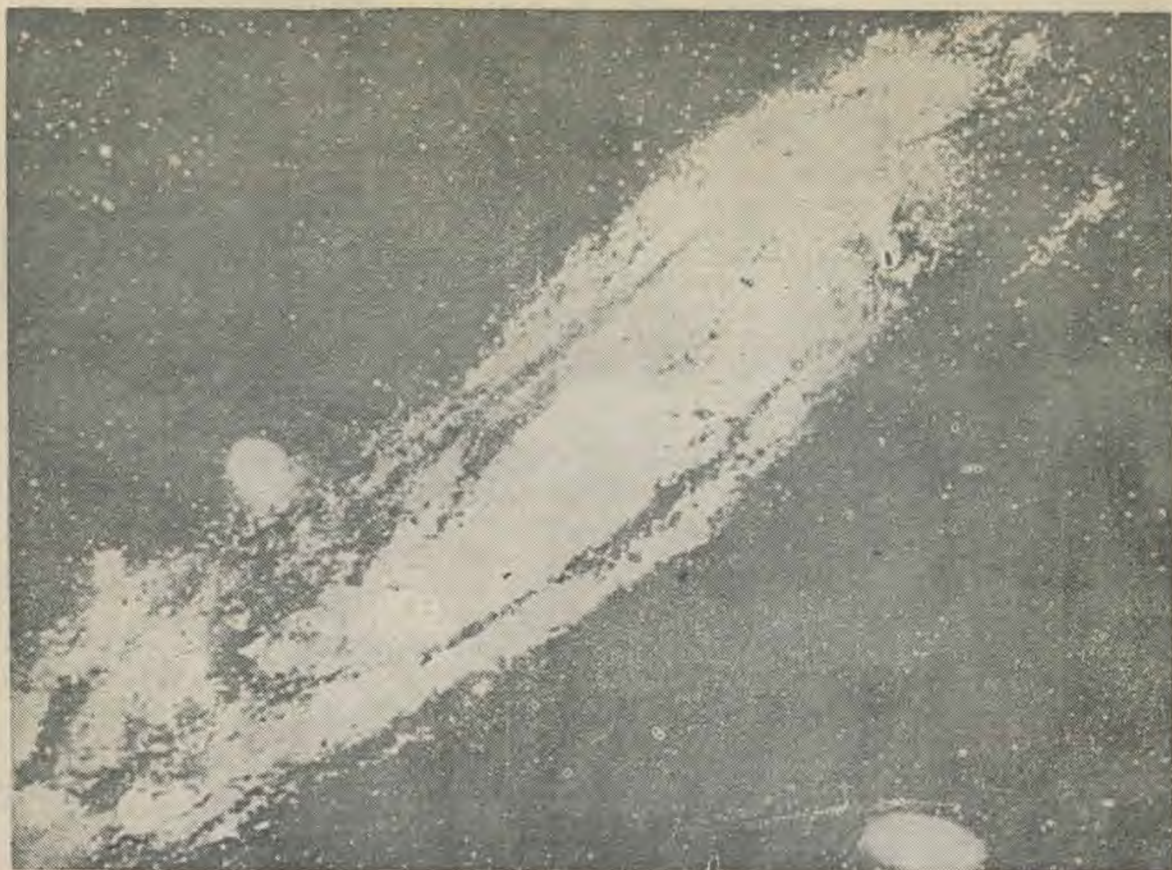
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Intergalactic travel

by Joe Engelkemier

About 10 years ago Carl Sagan, who has written extensively about astronomy, helped produce a 13-part television series entitled *Cosmos*. In a book with the same title, written shortly thereafter, he estimated that

the *Cosmos* television series attracted an estimated worldwide audience of 140 million people.

Vast numbers of people today have become interested in space, astronomy, and related subjects. Developments

that continue to increase that interest include America's resumption of space flights, the launching of the space telescope into orbit for a better view of outer space, the construction of telescopes on earth that are more sensitive



than those now existing, and of course, the various star wars dramas that have fascinated millions of people.

There is also considerable interest in whether or not there are other inhabited planets out in space. In *Cosmos* Carl Sagan estimates that known space contains 10 million trillion stars, with possibly that many planets. He suggests that it is very likely that "the universe is brimming over with life."

Several Bible statements indicate that life exists all through the starry skies. Revelation 12:12 speaks of those who dwell in the heavens. The book of Job twice mentions "Sons of God" who gather apparently from all over the universe to attend regular meetings at God's throne (Job 1:6-12; 2:1).

Andromeda is the only galaxy that can be seen in the Northern Hemisphere with the naked eye. On a very dark night between August and February, you can hardly see it as a delicate white cloud.

Our "Hometown" Galaxy

As we think about space travel out into our galaxy and beyond, we are dealing with

distances almost beyond comprehension. To measure space in miles would be like trying to measure the Atlantic Ocean with a teaspoon.

The most common measurement for space is the light-year. Light travels 186,000 miles a second—fast enough to circle the earth more than seven times every second. A light-year is the nearly 6 trillion miles that light travels in a year.

Andromeda is 2.2 million light-years from us. The light of Andromeda that we see tonight has been travelling 6 trillion miles a year for 2.2 million years to get here!

We live in a cluster of about two dozen galaxies affectionately known by astronomers as "the Local Group." Andromeda is the largest, and our galaxy is the second largest of these star cities. Our galaxy is about 100,000 light-years across and 2,000 light-years thick. Our sun is about 30,000 light-years out from the centre. That's so far that if you sent an airmail letter to a friend on a planet at the centre at the airline speed of 600 miles an hour, your letter would take 35 billion years to get there.

Back in our own neighbourhood, the nearest star, Alpha Centauri, is 4.3 light-years away. Almost all the stars that we can see with the naked eye are comparatively close. Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, is 8.7 light-years away. Arcturus, a star mentioned in Job 38:32, is located about 36 light-years from us. Rigel, a bright star in the constellation of Orion, is 910 light-years from earth.

Obstacles to Intergalactic Travel

Man has walked on the moon and hopes to eventually make landings on Mars and other planets. But what are the chances of getting beyond our solar system?

What would it take, for example, to get out to Alpha Centauri, the sun nearest our own?

At 18,000 miles an hour, astronauts cover 432,000 miles a day—almost 158 million miles a year. Divide 25.8 trillion (the number of miles to Alpha Centauri) by 158 million, and you will find that it would require more than 160,000 years for astronauts to get to Alpha Centauri. And that's only one way.

Anybody ready to go?

What about going to one of our near neighbour galaxies such as Andromeda? Instead of a mere 4.3 light-years, it's 2.2 million light-years distant:

Even if a rocket ship could be built that would travel at the speed of light, it would take the 2.2 million years to make a one-way trip to Andromeda.

To sum it up, two major obstacles face us as we think of any kind of travel beyond our own solar system. The first is the *shortness of life*. The second is the *slowness of travel*.

Good News!

The good news is that the one who created all the galaxies also makes provision for us to gain a life that will never end. In a statement that specifically mentioned this planet, Jesus said:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, NIV).

This saving belief can be compared to a transaction. We give the only thing we can give—a sinful heart and life. Christ, who took our sins, then gives us His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). Through prayer, through the study of God's word, and through the study of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we become transformed into His likeness (John 15:2 Corinthians 3:18). That saving and transforming faith brings a life that will never end.

But what about swifter travel? Even the speed of light

would be tediously slow if you wanted to go to a galaxy 10 billion light-years out into space. Does the Bible reveal anything that relates to intergalactic travel?

It does. Being whom the Bible calls angels frequently travel between God's throne and this planet. Jesus once told the disciples, for example, "You shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (John 1:51, NIV).

An experience in Daniel 8 and 9 illustrates the speed with which angels travel. In Daniel 8 the prophet had a vision that he called "beyond understanding" (Daniel 8:27). He prayed about it. Before he finished, the angel Gabriel interrupted him:

"Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding," Gabriel said. He then added: "As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you" (Daniel 9:21-23, NIV).

Notice the sequence of events. Daniel prayed. God spoke a few words of command to Gabriel. Gabriel headed out "in swift flight" (verse 21, NIV). Moments later he had covered the light-years between heaven and earth, and interrupted Daniel as he prayed.

Could it be that in eternity one of God's gifts to His children will be the ability to travel with a similar kind of "swift flight?"

That swift flight through the galaxies will open up a

future beyond your wildest dreams—a future with adventure unlimited. Consider these sample possibilities.

Billions of friends. Opportunities to travel open a door to unlimited new friendships. Paul looked forward to the time when we shall associate with God's "whole family in heaven and on earth" (Ephesians 3:15, NIV). How many billions or even trillions of new friendships could that mean?

Music. For all who love music, consider what this prophecy could include: "Singers (and) players on instruments shall be there" (Psalm 87:7).

Learning. Learning will not be like it is here—largely in classrooms sitting at desks. It will be out in the fields of the universe, visiting, asking questions, exploring. And ever and always, new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, and new truths to comprehend.

Sharing. "You are my witnesses," declares the Lord" (Isaiah 43:12, NIV). This we shall also be in eternity. Imagine you and several of your friends from this life travelling with Jesus to a planet in some distant galaxy to spend a weekend. Jesus first speaks to the massive crowds, then invites you and others from earth to share your joy. Will not the close relationship you have with Christ, and your gratitude to Him, make that the ultimate in adventure?

What a future! what joys can be yours even now, as you give yourself totally and completely to Jesus Christ!



MESSIANIC PROPHECIES IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS

by Dr M E Cherian

The Psalms Rich in Messianic Prophecies

The Jewish people divided their Bible, the Old testament, into three divisions: The Law (Torah), the Prophets (Nebi'im) and the writings (Kethubim). The writings, was also commonly known as the Psalms, which included three books of poetry: Job, the Psalms and the Proverbs. In this article we shall look at the Messianic prophecies found in the Book of Psalms.

The Psalms are a collection

of poems by a number of authors and the compilation was made possibly by men like Ezra and Nehemiah in the fifth century BC. These psalms were composed over a 1,000-year period beginning with Moses and David to the time immediately following the exile.

The Book of Psalms contains 150 Psalms, and of these about two-thirds give references in their titles as to their origins. Eight individual names appear in this list. They are: David, Asaph, Korah, Moses, Heman, Ethan, Solomon and Jeduthum. Among these, king David is the foremost as 73 psalms carry his name.

About the theme of the Book of Psalms, one Bible Commentary states: "Man is in trouble—God gives relief. This is the theme—universal in its appeal of the Book of Psalms. In these sacred poems we hear the cry not only of the Hebrew, but of universal man ascending to God for help, and see the hand of Omnipotence reaching down to bring relief. No wonder that for centuries, for Jew and Gentile alike, the Psalter has supplied material for private prayer and public devotion; it has served with equal satisfaction as the formal liturgy for the Hebrew temple and synagogue, as the hymn book of the Christian Church, and as the prayer book of the solitary child of God, regardless of race or creed" (*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 619).

In these inspired, sacred songs there are a number of prophetic references

regarding the coming Messiah who shall save man from his sinful condition. In these references "The Messiah is presented in His divine character and human descent, in His humility and exultation, in His suffering and glory, in His priestly service and royal dignity, and in the ultimate triumph and blessedness of His eternal reign" (*Ibid.*, p. 623).

The work of the Saviour of mankind as Prophet, Priest, Redeemer and King is portrayed in the book of Psalms. "It has been said that a systematic treatise on the Messiah could almost be compiled from Psalms" (*Ibid.*)

Song of the Lord's Anointed

The first of the psalms that contain prophecies regarding the coming Saviour, the Messiah, is Psalm 2, appropriately called a Song of the Lord's Anointed. Acts 4:25 refers to this psalm as that of King David. Verses 1-3 of the psalm "present a picture of the high and mighty of earth defying the Ruler of the Universe and His Messiah" (*Ibid.*, p. 633). Verse 2 says:

"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed."

The "anointed" here refers to the Saviour. A Bible Commentary quotes Martin Luther, the great Christian reformer of the Sixteenth Century thus: "How can they succeed, who set themselves against Jehovah and against

His Christ?" (*Ibid.*)

The second section of this psalm reveals God's disdain for the taunts of earthly rulers and reveals the Messiah as the true Ruler. The third section of the psalm contemplates on the divine decree that made the Messiah the king. Notice verse 7:

"I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."

The fourth part of the psalm calls for submission to the Messiah.

"Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." (verse 11)

". . . . Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." (verse 12)

Resurrection of Christ Foretold

Psalm 16 contains three verses that are Messianic. Verses 8-10:

"I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

"Therefore, my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

"For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy one to see corruption."

In the book of Acts 2:25-31) Saint Peter, and in the same book Saint Paul (13:35-37) refer to this portion of Psalm 16 as prophetic of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. "In Christ's deliverance from the tomb and in His resurrection the full meaning of these verses became clear" (op. cit., p. 665).

The Psalm of the Cross

A psalm that has prophetic references to the sufferings of the Messiah to atone for the sins of man is Psalm 22, again by King David. "This psalm has been called a prophetic and Messianic psalm of the greatest pathos and has been termed the Psalm of the Cross" (op. cit., p. 682). Note especially these verses:

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? (verse 1).

"... They pierced my hands and my feet. (verse 16)

"They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." (verse 18)

While the first part of this psalm (verses 1-21) refers to the suffering of the Messiah, the second part (verses 22-31) contains thanksgiving for deliverance and the joy in the establishment of God's kingdom.

"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. (verse 27)

"For the kingdom is the Lord's: and He is the governor among the nations." (verse 28)

Messiah's Relation to God's Will

Psalm 40, verses 6-8, is Messianic in nature.

"Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. (verse 6)

Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me. (verse 7)

I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." (verse 8)

Saint Paul applies this portion of Psalm 40 to the work of Christ in Hebrews 10:7-9.

The Anointed one of God

Psalm 45 is a song dealing with the celebration of the marriage of a king to a princess. There are Biblical scholars who hold that the entire psalm is Messianic. Verse 2 says:

"Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever."

Saint Paul refers to verses 6 and 7 as the words God the Father addressing the Son (Hebrews 1:8, 9).

"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. (verse 6)

"Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (verse 7)

Again in verse 17:

"I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever."

Sufferings of the Messiah

Another psalm containing predictions regarding the vicarious suffering of the Messiah is psalms 69. In verses 20 and 21 we read:

"Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there

was none; and for comforters, but I found none.

"They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

The actual fulfillment of this is the experience of Christ recorded in Matthew 27:34:

"They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink."

The Kingdom of the Messiah

A psalm that deals with the kingdom and the kingship of the Messiah is Psalm 72. It portrays the character of the king and the nature, extent and permanency of His kingdom. Notice verses 17 and 19:

"His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

"And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory."

The Perpetuity of the Messianic Kingdom

Psalm 89 deals with the promise God made to king David that his kingdom and his throne were to last forever. But this fulfillment was not found in the literal kingdom of David, but in the spiritual Messianic kingdom. So we read:

"Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. (verse 4)

"Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the

kings of the earth. (verse 27)

"His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven." (verse 29)

Messiah the king, Ruler and Priest

One of the most majestic songs of Hebrew literature is Psalm 110 written by king David. It is a Messianic poetry portraying the Messiah as King, Ruler and Priest. Notice verse 1:

"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

There is an incident in the life of Christ that is very striking in the context of this verse. In Matthew 22:41-46 we read:

"While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

"Saying, what think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David.

"He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,

"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?

"If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?

"And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions."

Verse 4 is also very significant:

"The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

This prophecy is directly applied to Christ, the Messiah, by Saint Paul in Hebrews 7:20-22:

"And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest:

"(For those priests were made without any oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

"By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament."

Messiah the Corner Stone

In Psalm 118, which is a national hymn of thanksgiving in celebration of a Jewish national festival, there are two Messianic prophetic verses (verses 22 and 26).

"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." (verse 22)

Saint Peter, addressing the Jewish leaders, says of Christ:

"This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner" (Acts 4:11).

Verse 26 reads:

"Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord."

Jesus once entered Jerusalem in a triumphal procession. We read it in Luke 19:29-38:

"And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples,

"Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither.

"And if any man ask you, why do ye loose him? Thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him.

"And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them.

"And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, why loose ye the colt?

"And they said, The Lord hath need of him.

"And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon.

"And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way.

"And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;

"Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."

So, over a period of one thousand five hundred years before the birth of Christ, these inspired hymn writers of the Jewish nation made predictions in their songs about the life, mission and work of Christ. Christ Himself was aware of these predictions. His followers recognized the fulfillment of these prophecies in the life and work of Christ.

My seatmate on what would be a two-day journey was a young architect who had arrived from England that very day. He had come to our distant shores as a volunteer church worker to design churches that reflected and incorporated the cultural background and heritage of the native people among whom he was going to be living and working. Not only would he receive no remuneration for his services, he told me, he had even paid his own fare!

He was excited about the possibilities of his assignment and was looking forward to getting started. It was the most worthwhile thing he had ever done in his life, he said.

So when he confided to me some hours later that he could not bring himself to accept the Christian concept of eternal life, I found it difficult to conceal my surprise.

Why did he bother to give up his career for a year? Why was he paying to do so from his own pocket?

It was his duty and privilege as a Christian, he said, to do everything he could for others here and now; the hereafter did not figure in his thinking.

Later, I thought: Why should I have been so surprised? Could the young man be right? After all, everything that confronts our senses is bound by the reality of dying. No form of life is immune from its stark reality. From the bug in the garden to the gigantic elephant in the jungle, all creatures are bound by the limits of birth and death. Between these, each

has a given span of existence during which it reproduces itself in preparation for its demise, then disappears from the scene, as did untold generations of its kind before it. Its successor will repeat the process, and its successor will do the same, in endless succession.

The process of life itself is a process of death. The food we eat is digested, and the unused material—together with our own dead cells—is discharged from the body as waste. The body absorbs material to build new cells to replace the ones that have been discarded, in a process that goes on endlessly throughout our lives.

The waste we discharge is absorbed by the soil, which in turn grows the plants which are needed to replace our energy supplies. Everything our senses perceive is engaged in this endless cycle of life and death, of living and dying. We are so accustomed to having every life terminate at the grave that we can hardly conceive of life that is endless.

The cycle of life and death is also the record of history. Civilizations, like individuals, come and go, rise and fall. Kings build monuments to themselves by which to immortalize their names. The monuments endure, but the man they immortalize turn to dust. New civilizations arise on the ashes of previous ones. They in turn flourish for a season, then recede into the shadows, and yet others arise to take their places.

In the heavens we witness the same phenomenon. Stars dies, and stars are born; suns

burn out, and new suns emerge. Does anything in the universe endure forever? Is the concept of eternity just a figment of human



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imagination? Mankind has fantasized throughout history. The most primitive and the most sophisticated cultures have created myths and legends to express man's

frustration at this finiteness and his desire to be infinite. The burial places of the Pharaohs, with their elaborate entourages of funeral attendants and costly paraphernalia, are examples.

Human literature, music, drama, and art are rich in fantasy—a fantasy that constantly gropes for some glimmer of hope for an endless future, but which, finding none, falls back into fantasizing about a dream world in which nothing ever ends. Does Christian literature, so rich in assurances of eternal life, fall into this category?

The case for eternal life

All we have said so far is true enough in the world of the senses. *But it is only one side of the coin!* There is another side, and we must look at it too.

When we look into space and contemplate the endlessness of the universe, we can see the reality of eternity. Whether we like it or not, the boundlessness of the universe is no fantasy. Look up into the sky on a cloudless night. Peer as far as the eye can reach. What do you see? Illimitable space. And what is beyond the space that you can see? More space. And beyond that? Yet more space! Still more and more and more and more and more! Forever.

Wait! protests reason. Somewhere there must be an end to space! But if there is an end, what does that end consist of? A stone wall? If so, what's beyond that wall? *Space!* More space! It goes on

forever. It has no beginning, it has no end. It is limitless. Boundless. Eternal. It's mindboggling, but the mind can recognize it. Space goes on forever and ever.

If this is true of space, it is not also true of time? If time had a beginning, what was before that beginning? And if it has an end, what is beyond that end? The answers are as imponderable—as before. If space stretches on endlessly, why not time? Indeed, could not space and time be related in sharing the quality of boundlessness?

It requires only one more step for reason to embrace the concept that instead of space and time being a boundless vacuum, there is (and always has been and always will be) within that boundlessness, boundless Being. The Hebrews called Him Jehovah. The Arabs call Him Allah. Jesus taught us to call Him our Father.

Are all these concepts of an eternal Being merely the human imagination trying to satisfy man's intense inner craving to secure himself to something bigger than himself? Or are they faint reflections of the face of that eternal Being on the mirror of human consciousness?

This is the philosophical case for believing in eternal life. What about the scientific evidence? Let's examine this mirror. The human mind. Intellect. It's an unexplainable marvel made up of thousands of millions of cells. During his lifetime the average human utilizes only the minutest fraction of his brain's potential capacity.

Every experience life has to offer, packed into the brain in complete detail, would not begin to exhaust its potential. Why was man given a brain with such phenomenal potential when he can employ only a fraction of its capacity? Isn't it like fitting an automobile with a 100-million-mile fuel tank capacity when the car itself will wear out after only 100,000 miles?

The answer to the puzzle may sound incredible, yet it is the only answer that makes sense: When man was made, his Maker intended that he would live forever, that he would never die. So He gave him a brain with a potential for eternal development. If you made a car with a 100-million mile fuel tank, wouldn't you also make the vehicle capable of lasting that long? Wouldn't that make sense? The human brain with its marvellous intellectual capacity is scientific evidence in support of eternal life.

The Theological argument

Let's look at the theological implications of this amazing realization. A brain capacity far in excess of what man can utilize in his present short life span could hardly have evolved or come about by chance. What blind circumstance, or combination of circumstance, could possibly result in the development of millions of brain cells that were never going to be put to use? For this to "just happen" would be as ridiculous as the development of a millipede that walks like an insect on six

legs and has the other 994 legs simple for the sake of having them without needing them! Such reasoning reverses evolutionary philosophy, which argues that creatures adapt to their environment by developing only the faculties they need for survival. The human brain—with its marvellous ability to remember, to reason, to deduce, to sort, reject, retain, store, and interpret information, to distinguish colours, tastes, scents, shapes, sizes, and sounds, to instantly recall at will the data stored away in its memory bank and, best of all, to make rational decisions on the basis of that data—could only have been engineered by a Designer greater than and outside of itself.

What about the computer? It can accomplish many of these same marvellous feats.

True. But without the human brain that conceived it, no computer, with all its fascinating functions, could ever have come into existence. It needed man to conceive and develop it. But more, it is entirely dependent on man to feed into it the data on which it bases its calculations.

In fact, the computer is an excellent modern-day argument for creation by design. If a mere electronic machine, intricate and amazing though it may be, depends upon a designer for its existence and upon external intelligence to make it function, what shall we say of the intricate and amazing human brain? No computer has ever written a poem, composed a symphony, painted a picture,

smelled a rose, or admired a sunset. No matter how close it may come to performing any of these functions, it is only at the behest of man, its creator.

We find ourselves, then, on the doorstep of an immense truth opened to us by these inescapable considerations! The one who designed the human brain is as much greater than the mind He made as is the human brain greater than the computer it contrived. And in all honesty and humility we must admit that the Being who made the human mind capable of infinite development must Himself be infinite and eternal.

The Scriptural evidence

The Bible confirms both the eternal existence of God and His original plan that man should live forever. At the same time it explains the cycle of life and death which confronts our senses on every side.

It is easy for us materialistic, modern human beings to dismiss the Bible as unauthoritative, unreliable, and irrelevant. But what if we find that it simply endorses what scientifically and intellectually we have already come to recognize?

The Bible says that God is eternal. Before and above all else the Bible reveals God. One of the things it tells us about Him is that He is eternal. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting. You are God." Psalm 90:2. NKJV.

The Bible says that God made man to live eternally; He did not originally intend that man should ever die. In the Genesis record of creation we read: "Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'" Genesis 2:15-17 NKJV

This decree was not arbitrary or vindictive. God was setting forth the condition on which endless life was possible: harmonious union with God. Once this union with the Source of life was broken, death would be the inevitable result. We see this process demonstrated in the everyday world around us. The moment we break an electrical circuit by throwing a switch, the current which flows from the power source ceases to flow, and the light in the bulb goes out. By sinning, man cut himself off from the power on which his continuing existence depended. Had man continued to obey—had he not severed his connection with God through disobedience—he would have continued to live forever as God planned.

The Bible says that by rebelling against God, man plunged the entire world into an era of death and dying. Just as the failure of one switch will sometimes bring darkness to an entire city so Adam's sin brought the realm of death to the entire human race.

"Therefore, . . . through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." Romans 5:12, NKJV.

The Bible says that God has put into effect a plan to reverse the order of death and dying which man brought upon himself and all creation on this planet. God himself, in the Person of Jesus Christ, would leave the eternal realm of the undying and enter into the realm of death. Jesus would take on Himself man's death and restore to him eternal life. Jesus would close the circuit that man's rebellion had broken.

"Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." 1 Corinthians 15:21-23.

By entering into man's prison of death and then being resurrected, Jesus seized the keys which unlock the doors of the prison to every believer. The resurrected, glorified Lord declares: "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Revelation 1:18.

The Bible says that God's original purpose, interrupted by sin, will ultimately be gloriously fulfilled. All that has been lost through sin will be restored. "And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." "And

there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away," Revelation 21:5, 4.

God's purpose is an eternal purpose. It transcends time. Everything He has done, is doing, and will do for the redemption of this world from the tyranny of sin and death has reference to eternity.

He has not set redemptive forces in motion for the restoration of all things simply to have them end in oblivion. He never builds a stairway that leads nowhere. The stairway He has built in Jesus leads to His eternal throne room and to a never-ending source of life. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

You are included in God's plan. God has no other thought in mind for you than that you should be a part of His eternal purpose. If you have other plans for your life, that's your decision, not His. He has made every provision for you to have eternal life. He asks you to accept His Son Jesus who died for you so that you could live with Him. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life." 1 John 5:11, 12.

Eternal life—fact or fantasy? Fact! Fact because of Jesus. Fact through Jesus. Fact in Jesus. Your death became His. By receiving Him, His life—eternal life—becomes yours. Do it now!

GROWING OLD GRACEFULLY

by Brenda L. Street

Do you dread growing old? If so, you should reconsider, because modern medical technological advances in disease treatment have helped increase the probability that you will live to a ripe old age. Population Reference Bureau in India is now 58 years for men and 59 for women.

Recently an article pointed out that chronological age is not always the same as functional age. Many people view aging from a strictly chronological perspective, which means that they consider reduced performance an inevitable result of reaching a particular age. Their attitude toward aging seems to be that each birthday will inevitably be accompanied by the erosion of the ability to function physically and mentally without assistance. They see themselves as gradually becoming a burden to other family members, and therefore dread the thought of getting old.

There are certain physical aging processes associated with chronological age that cannot be fully controlled. For example, some well-known effects of aging include impairment of the senses, such as the gradual loss of vision, hearing, smell, and

taste. Other examples are thinning and greying of the hair and loss of skin elasticity. Although these conditions generally cannot be fully controlled, they don't normally represent dreaded conditions that result from aging, because of the many ways available to correct or modify them.

What is it that causes people to dread getting old? I believe that people who dread the thought of getting old do so primarily because they associate the reduced ability to perform physically with chronological age. They feel that when they become a certain age, they will no longer be able to do all the wonderful things that they now enjoy doing, solely because they will have reached that age. The few people that they know who have reached that "dreaded" age and can still perform are viewed as exceptions rather than examples.

It is very important to view aging from a positive perspective. To do so requires that we focus on functional rather than chronological age. What difference does the number of birthdays we have celebrated make so long as we can function reasonably well and enjoy a life of quality?

Functional age, which is determined by one's ability or

inability to function physically at a given chronological age, can to a large degree be controlled. There is a wealth of information in scientific literature that clearly shows that humans can effect their aging characteristics through good health habits such as proper diet, exercise, and rest. This certainly should not be a surprise to Seventh-day Adventists, because good health habits are an important part of their beliefs. They extol the virtues of the eight "true remedies": pure air, sunlight, temperance, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, and trust in divine power. The fact that good health habits can drastically improve one's ability to function better at an advanced age may come as a surprise to some.

Let's consider some of the health principles that, if diligently practiced, will enhance people's ability to perform even as they grow chronologically old:

Exercise—Exercise a minimum of a half hour three times per week. It is an important aid to controlling weight, keeping bones strong, building muscle strength, conditioning the heart and lungs, and relieving stress. For a young person, exercise can increase physical function by 10 per cent, but in an older person, it increases physical function by 50 per cent. Gabe Mirkin, M D, told *Running and Fitness News* that "older people need to exercise far more than younger people do. On the average, people over the age of 60 lose 1 per cent per

year of their muscle strength and their ability to use oxygen." This, according to Dr Mirkin, does not happen to those who exercise regularly.

Walking is the cheapest, and safest form of exercise and the best overall prescription for healthful living. Remember, exercise improves the quality of life.

Diet—Proper diet means good nutrition. Good nutrition is very important for older persons because it can help prevent the development of late-life disease and can also aid in the successful treatment of disease. Another reason that it is important for older people to maintain good eating habits is that aging alters their body's use of food. Older persons have a lower reserve of body nutrients than young people; therefore, they have a reduced capacity to bounce back from illness.

A good diet includes a good daily balance of proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals. Therefore, I recommend that senior citizens seek advice on diet from a nutritionist. Free dietary counsel can usually be obtained from local senior citizen centres, clinics, and hospitals.

Wholesome foods that should be included in the diet are beans, peas, legumes and fresh fruits and vegetables.

Water—It is very important to drink at least six to eight glasses of water a day. Water acts as lubricant, helps protect tissues from external injury, and gives flexibility to muscles, tendons, cartilage, and bones. Water keeps the skin from drying out and

cracking. Water is also necessary for cooling the body. It is very important that elderly persons drink lots of fluids during the hot summer months since their sweat glands function less efficiently. The best time for drinking water is one to two hours after meals and up to 10 to 15 minutes before meals.

Rest—Rest is an important factor in good health. The body needs time to "let go" and recuperate. Rest is defined as cessation of any particular function of the body. Taking time off, leaving problems at work, relaxing, and getting sufficient sleep are just as important as proper diet and exercise. Although more rest is required by aged individuals, the length of time required for nighttime sleep is only five to seven hours. Longer periods may be harmful to their physical and mental functioning.

Hopefully you now believe as I do that growing old does not have to be viewed as a time of sickness, aches, pains, and inability to function. By practicing good health habits on a daily basis, you can stave off or even reverse the effects of old age. I believe that such a practice is the fundamental reason that my father-in-law functions so much better than my aunt, even though they are chronologically the same age. Although many factors are involved, I do not consider it coincidental that their functional ages are different, because their health habits have always been drastically different. My father-in-law has been a vegetarian for years

and has always abstained from the use of alcoholic beverages and tobacco products. He has been very active all of his life.

Although I have emphasized the physical aspects of the aging process, there are a few other factors that I consider very important, such as:

Community Involvement — Be active by maintaining a part-time job and/or a community volunteer position. Elderly volunteers in schools, hospitals, prisons, and art centres have helped fill the gap left by younger people. Many retirees view such services as a duty as well as a pastime.

Positive Thinking — Practice the art of positive thinking. Say and see something positive every day in every situation. Look for the good and you will find it. "as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).

The apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Trust in Divine Power — Last, but certainly not least, faith in God, submission to Divine will, prayer, and Bible study all contribute to sound mental health.

There is no question about it — if you are living, you will grow old. Although you will grow old, you do not have to view it as a calamity. It can actually be a mellow and graceful experience. Following these principles can help you.



WILL THE WICKED REALLY BURN FOREVER?

by Ralph Blodgett

A few years back I visited a popular Protestant church and sat in on "a good, old-fashioned hellfire-and-brimstone sermon," as they used to call it, delivered by the pastor of the church. I must admit, in retrospect, that few listeners in the large congregation that morning nodded off to sleep.

The speaker grabbed everyone's attention with his vivid and detailed descriptions of sinners crissing away in hellfire, screaming out in torment almost beyond endurance.

After considerable emphasis on the horrors of hell, his presentation shifted into a discussion of how long eternity is. His colourful illustrations and down-to-earth style of presentation reveted the listeners' minds on the fact that humans cannot possibly comprehend eternity. It is too far removed from anything we experience here on planet Earth.

Suddenly he swept the audience back to the terrors of a hell that not only burns with unendurable pain, but does so without ceasing—endlessly, eternally, forever. Death can never release the sinner. Unconsciousness cannot free him. He has nowhere to turn. He is hopelessly trapped by the wrath of a vengeful God who metes out eternal punishment to every man, woman, and child who has not been born again and received baptism.

Needless to say, the altar call that followed his sermon brought scores of souls to the front of the auditorium, 28 of whom he baptized that morning. I, sitting near the back of the auditorium, couldn't help but wonder, during the baptism, how many of those 28 being "buried in the waters of salvation" sought a daily, living experience with Christ, or only pursued a ticket out of

the flames of eternal torment.

No wonder, I reminded myself, so many people become atheists. How could anyone love a God who could condone and conduct that kind of horrendous activity? And carry it on forever? Unceasingly? Throughout all eternity?

A Damnable Doctrine

"The idea that a good God would send people to a burning hell is utterly damnable to me—the ravings of insanity, superstition gone to seed! I don't want to have anything to do with such a God." So declared the great American "plant wizard" Luther Burbank.

Admittedly, the scriptures do clearly state: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19). The word here comes from the Greek word *ekdikesis*, meaning "vindication," or "retribution."

Vengeance as used in the Scriptures must not be confused with revenge, an English word that indicates a desire to "get even," "to retaliate against someone for wrongs he or she has committed against an individual," or "to get satisfaction of a grudge by inflicting injury." Revenge involves a vindictiveness, a rancor, or a vendetta. Such motives are completely alien to God's nature. God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

God's vengeance, mentioned many times in Scripture, is the inexorable

execution of divine justice. It stems not from His anger, but from His absolute purity. Sin and sinners cannot survive in the presence of absolute holiness, just as darkness is obliterated by light.

God's vengeance, or wrath, will result in the complete destruction of the wicked, not their eternal torture.

"By the blast of God they *Perish*, and by the breath of his nostrils are they *consumed* (Job 4:9). "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more" (Psalm 105:35). "And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord *shall be consumed*" (Isaiah 1:28). "But the wicked *shall perish*, . . . into smoke shall they *consumer away*" Psalm 37:20, emphases supplied).

If the wicked burn forever, how can the Bible declare that they will be consumed? The Scriptures cannot contradict themselves. The problem must be in our interpretation or application of texts.

Why, then, do so many Christians believe in a hell that burns forever? Quite simply, because of a few passages of Scripture that—if viewed apart from the many other texts that teach that the wicked are destroyed at the end—seem to teach the flames are eternal. Let's look at three of the most famous passages:

1) The rich man and Lazarus parable, 2) the "eternal fire," and 3) the "unquenchable fire."

1. *The rich man and Lazarus parable*. Although many use this account (Luke 16:19-31) to

support that the wicked go to Hades when they die, most readers forget the story is actually a parable, not an account of real events.

Were it teaching facts about the future life, then all the righteous go "into Abraham's bosom" at death (verse 22), the lost in hell are visible to the redeemed in heaven (verse 26), and the two groups can communicate back and forth across the gulf separating them (verse 24). Yet virtually all theologians reject such conclusions.

Actually, Christ was addressing the Pharisees when He recited this account (see verse 14). Using one of their own well-known stories about the future (nearly every detail was recorded in Josephus' book *Josephus' Discourses to the Greeks Concerning Hades* [pp. 637, 638], which was written shortly after Christ's time), Christ pointed out that in this life only do we determine our future destiny. No second probation exists for the human race.

He employed a popular pharisaical story to teach an important lesson to the Pharisees. But the details of the story so contradict the other teachings of Christ (see Matthew 13:36-40) that no one should accuse Him of supporting the details of the parable itself.

2. *The "eternal fire."* The expressions "eternal fire" (Jude 7), "everlasting destruction" (2 Thessalonians 1:9), and other similar phrases refer not to the *duration* of the flames that destroy the wicked, but to the *kind* of

flames that destroy the wicked, and the *effects* of those flames and eternal destruction; they will never again see life).

We know this because of the example in Jude 7: "Sodom and Gomorrah... are set forth for an example, *suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*" (emphasis supplied). Are Sodom and Gomorrah burning today? Of course not; Peter claimed those two cities were turned "into ashes . . . making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly" (2 Peter 2:6). Obviously, according to the Scriptures an eternal fire does not burn eternally, but rather, its effects last for all eternity.

3. *The Unquenchable fire.* "This expression, which occurs only twice in the Bible (Matthew 3:12; Luke 3:17), again refers to the *kind* of fire God will use to destroy the wicked. No one will be able to extinguish it before it *burns up the wicked* (see Matthew 3:12).

God's word declares that this fire is so hot it will melt the very elements of the earth and destroy all the works of mankind (2 Peter 3:10-12). Just as the fires that destroyed ancient Jerusalem, God said, "shall not be quenched" (Jeremiah 17:27), so also the fire that destroys the wicked will not be quenched until it has accomplished its destruction (see Jeremiah 52:12, 13; 2 Chronicles 36:19).

The True Fate of the Wicked

Contrary to the popular teachings prevalent today, this fire that God sends down upon the lost at the end of time

will completely devour all the wicked (Revelation 20:9). It will cleanse the earth of every taint of sin, and even burn up the very elements of the earth (2 Peter 3:10-12. It will make the way open for God to create a new heaven and a new earth 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1).

It is the conclusion of this author that hell as popularly believed and taught is the doctrine of the devil and not of God. It is contrary to what the Bible teaches about God. It is against the teachings of Scripture when properly understood. It is inconsistent with every reason that can be mustered in favour of it. And it is merely an extension of the first lie that Satan spoke to Eve in the Garden of Eden: "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4).

Satan's great lie—that when you die you really don't die. But you keep on living forever, either in heaven or in hell—has been perpetuated from pulpits century after century, down through the ages, since time began.

Yet upon the broad foundations of this single lie religionists have erected such great theological institutions as purgatory, indulgences, prayers to dead saints, communication with the dead (i.e., spiritualism), and eternal torment for the wicked in hell fire.

It's time we laid this abominable doctrine aside and placed our trust in the teachings of God's word. Thank God that His plan for eliminating sin from the universe far surpasses man's plans.

TEN REASONS TO REJECT ETERNAL TORMENT

Many ministers believe that when the wicked die they pass into hellfire, there to suffer endless torture by a vengeful God. Here are 10 reasons why Christians who study the Scriptures should reject the teaching of eternal torment:

1. This teaching claims that the lost will continue living forever. The Scriptures testify: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20).

2. This teaching robs us of our God of love. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

3. The teaching of eternal torment cannot be reconciled with the picture the Bible gives of Christ. Jesus said: "Suffer [Allow] little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14). Could this Jesus torture other little children without mercy throughout eternity?

4. The redeemed, who will have a part in the final judgment (1 Corinthians 6:2), could never condemn their fellow creatures—their rela-

tives, grand-parents, parents, husbands, wives, and children—to unending torture.

5. The teaching of eternal torment imposes a punishment out of proportion of the crimes committed. "I judge: and my judgment is just," Christ tells us (John 5:30).

6. Eternal torment would forever cast a shadow over the happiness of the redeemed to know that somewhere in the universe their own relatives were being tortured, tormented, and toasted over undying flames. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," declares John (Revelation 21:4).

7. The teaching of eternal torment demands that an eternal plague of sin taint God's universe. But God will eradicate sin completely from His domain. (see Hebrews 2:14).

8. The theory of eternal torment perpetuates and immortalizes sin, suffering, sorrow, and pain. But God promises that these things will no more exist. (see Revelation 21:4.)

9. The teaching of eternal torment vilifies God's character and turns Him into a monstrous agent of Satan who keeps the wicked alive in a fire that burns but cannot consume, that hurts but cannot destroy.

10. The teaching of eternal torment has caused thousands to do unspeakable things to their fellow humans in the name of God. Many who led out in the infamous inquisition of Europe and the witch-hunts of early America were religious men who believed they were carrying out the will of God and saving their souls from eternal damnation in the flames of hell.

"From The Heart"

Elizabeth Coughlan



Years ago, my husband delighted me by planting for me a small rose garden. Each rose was an adventure. I chose dark, velvet red magnificently perfumed, misty rose pink to catch the mauve of morning, elegant pale apricot, copper yellow vigorous and vivacious, baby rose every colour I could find and also Peace and Masquerade, because they are each a whole catalogue of colours.

Whenever I can, I spend time with my roses—I talk to them. I tell them they are beautiful, or strong, or they are full of promise, or they make me happy just by being. I take my visitors to see my roses and sometimes – just to hear exclamations of delight – I take a rose bud to be admired by a special friend.

Even at their very worst, when they have been slandered by hot westerly winds, I see them as beautiful, as broken treasures to be restored. If one rosebud snaps and looks like falling off the bush in a wild storm, I rush to gather it indoors away from the anger.

And sometimes I pause: are my children as real to me? Do I accept them – hurt, tarnished, violated – as wholeheartedly as I accept my roses? Is there really any difference?

The greatest compliment I have ever had came from my child who had bowed to peer pressure for a while. Breaking and hurting, he came in one evening and leaned down to put his arms around me. he said brokenly, "You never stopped loving me, did you Mother?" And I thought, neither does God stop loving. Ever.

My beautiful, storm-bruised rose responded to being loved.