

From Death To Life

The Official Magazine of the
Conditional Immortality Association
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Inside:

Twisted Scripture
This Is My Story
The Life And Advent
Conference Report
and more!

Bible Teaching • Life • Death • Resurrection • Eternal Destiny



Editorial

Spiritualism And The Bible

My friend Terry works with a couple of Spiritualists. Spiritualism, among its many other beliefs, admits to the continuing existence of the spirits of the dead and of the possibility of communicating with them. With typical good humour Terry tells his workmates he's a Medium too. "It says so on my underpants!". He then goes on to tell them, more seriously, that centuries ago the God of the Bible forbade his people to engage in such practices.

Terry is right! God said:

"Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 19:31).

"I will set my face against the person who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute himself by following them, and I will cut him off from his people" (Lev. 20:6).

God drove the Canaanites out of the Land because they practiced these forms of occultism.

"Let no one be found among you ... who is a medium, or a spiritist, or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord and because of these detestable practices the Lord your God will drive out those nations from before you. You must be blameless before the Lord your God" (Deut. 18:10-13).

When God's people did turn to spiritualism God warned them:

"When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people enquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn" (Isa. 8:19, 20).

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- On the Cover -

Photographs from our Annual Conference and Dinner by Jachin Mandeno.

The “Rich Man and Lazarus” has long been a stronghold of traditional thinking on the afterlife. Much has already been written about this Scripture, but we need to take special note of the following:

1. Almost everyone is willing to accept that this is a parable not a literal report of actual events in the lives of real people (Compare Luke 16:19 with 16:1, 15:11 and 14:16 all of which begin with a phrase such as, “There was a man”);
2. Many scholars will also acknowledge that the story is not original with Jesus, he is making ironic use of popular and Pharisaic lore in the tradition of the prophets (See more on this ironic use of popular mythology below);
3. This passage says nothing at all about any “soul” or “spirit”, it speaks only of whole persons, and if taken literally would contradict all other Scriptures on this topic;
4. Taking the parable literally involves us in a number of absurd contradictions. Can a drop of spit really quench the torments of hell, for example? I think not!

The problem most people have with the argument so far is that even if Jesus was using a preexisting story doesn't his tacit approval of the background details involve him in “telling a lie” about the afterlife? I say, no! Jesus was simply following in the prophetic tradition of making ironic use of pagan mythology in his preaching.

Isaiah speaks of talking trees (Isa. 14:8) in the same breath as he speaks of the spirits of departed kings being roused (Isa. 14:9ff). No one believes Isaiah taught that trees literally talk! How is it people are prepared to so quickly take his language about departed spirits literally?

Most relevant to this point is the way in



The Rich Man and Lazarus: Literal History Or Ironic Use of Pagan Mythology?

which the inspired writers take up the Canaanite mythology of a “sea-monster” that was “cut to pieces” as part of the Creation process and use that in an ironic way. Job speaks of the cohorts of Rahab, this mythical monster, cowering at God's feet (Job 9:13). Was this at the very time God vanquished Rahab, cutting her to pieces? (Job 26:12). This same imagery is picked up in the Psalms (Psa. 89:10) and in the prophets (Isa. 51:9) to celebrate God's creative power and the redemption of his people Israel.

This use of mythological language is intended to drive home a point. It is done without in any way intending to endorse the “mythological details” or contradict clear biblical teaching on the matter, namely that God was utterly unopposed in creation and that everything came into being by his word (Gen. 1:1-31).

What Job, the Psalmist, and Isaiah do, Jesus does too. He takes pagan mythology and uses it in an ironic way. He uses it to drive home the danger of loving money and relying on our own self-righteousness (Luke 16:14-15) while making known the urgency of the need to repent in light of Kingdom values.

David Burge.

Jesus Is Coming!

Jesus is coming again!

Hope in the Bible expresses certainty - something we look forward too - not merely something we wish for. Titus 2:13 says: "we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ". Many aspects of this Blessed Hope sincere believers still puzzle over, but the vast majority of evangelical Christians believe that Jesus is coming, personally, visibly, powerfully, suddenly and (for most) unexpectedly, to consummate the work of redemption. As Christians we should not be

Jesus is coming, personally, visibly, powerfully suddenly, and (for most) unexpectedly, to consummate the work of redemption.

caught unawares. We should be living holy lives.

• How Will He Come?

The Bible declares that Christ's coming will be personal.

Jesus himself is our hope! Not some philosophy, or ideal. He is the fulfilment of God's plan. He said he would come again (John 14:3).

The angels promised "this same Jesus" who went up into heaven will come again (Acts 1:11). Paul says, "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven" (1 Thess 4:16). The same

Jesus who walked upon this earth, and who died and rose again, ascending up into heaven, shall return in person, not just figuratively.

His coming will be visible.

Jesus told his disciples: "For as lightening that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man" (Matt. 4:27). Revelation 1:7 says, "every eye shall see him".

His coming will be in power and glory.

The angels promised that he would come "in the same way" (Acts 1:11). It was in the

clouds that Jesus was taken away (Acts 1:9). He will come again "in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64, Mark 13:26, Rev. 1:7). The clouds speak of his coming in Divine power and glory (Dan. 7:12-14, Psa. 104:1-3). (Matt. 24:43, 1 Thess. 5:2, 2 Pet. 3:10, Rev. 3:3).

His coming will be sudden and unexpected. Jesus will come unexpectedly, "like a thief in the night" (Matt. 24:43, 1 Thess. 5:2, 2 Pet. 3:10, Rev. 3:3). The world will be unprepared for his coming. It will be "as it was in the days of Noah". People will be going about the ordinary business of life (Matt. 24:37-41). While they are saying "'Peace and safety', destruction will come on them suddenly" (1 Thess 5:3).

Christians however are to watch and be ready (Matt. 24:42,44). The day will not surprise us. We are to be alert and self controlled (1 Thess 5:4-9).

• Why Must He Come?

The Bible is specific as to the purposes for which he is coming. Much about this important New Testament doctrine is obscured, however, by the tendency of many Christians to see our death, rather than his coming as the climax of history. Jesus comes to finish his mediatorial work. Christ died to reconcile God and us. He continues his "mediatorial" work, interceding for us at the right hand of God in heaven. When he comes he will rule until he hands over the kingdom to his Father that "God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:24).

He comes to raise the dead.

Christ died to save us from sin and death. His work on Calvary will be consummated only when he comes again, the dead are raised, and "Death has been swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54-56).

He comes to give life to the righteous.

At his coming not only will the dead be raised but we who believe and are left alive will be transformed into his image. Paul says, "Listen, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed" (1 Cor. 15:52). John says that "when he appears we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). Only at his coming will we be changed so as to be fully like him.

He comes to judge the world. God has appointed a day in which he will judge all people, by his Son (Acts 17:11). We must all appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). Everyone will get their reward but only when he comes again (Rev. 22:12). He comes to punish sinners. After Judgement Christ will see retribution visited upon the wicked. They will be punished with an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord (2 Thess 1:9). This is the second and everlasting death (Rev. 20:14). He comes to establish God's Kingdom.

A succession of human emperors and empires - Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome - will finally be succeeded by the everlasting kingdom of Christ and his saints (Dan. 7:13-14, 18).

He comes to make heaven and earth new.

The "new heaven and earth" is associated with the kingdom in the Old Testament (Isa. 65:17, 66:22). It is associated with the coming of Christ in the New (2 Pet. 3:13). Jesus himself said, "I am making everything new" (Rev. 21:5). God's plan is to have a society of immortal, perfect beings living in relationship with him on an earth restored to its Edenic purity and perfection. This plan will be fulfilled when Jesus comes again (2 Pet. 2:13, Rev. 21&22).

• **When Will He Come?**

Jesus is coming, but when? The Bible says his return is "imminent". We do not mean

his return will occur soon, only that it may. Three things make an event imminent: 1) it is inevitable, 2) its timing is uncertain, and 3) it is always possible (If not any day, then in any believers life time!). Now, either the Second Coming is inevitable or God is not God. Nobody knows exactly when Jesus will come. Many have attempted to set a "date" for his Coming. This is wrong. Nobody knows. But it is possible (some say it is likely) he may come soon. The early church knew that Christ could not return until the Comforter had come (John 14:26) and the gospel was



preached in all the world (Matt. 24:14). Peter had to die (John 21:18-19). Jerusalem had to fall. A great persecution and apostasy had to take place (2 Thess 2:2). But the Comforter did come (Acts 2). The gospel was preached (Col. 1:23). Peter died. Jerusalem fell. The secret power of lawlessness was already at work (2 Thess 2:7). Jesus himself left open the possibility he might come before the death of the apostle John (John 21:20-23). Israel is a nation in the Land again. Certainly Jesus could come - and soon.

• **Why So Long?**

Jesus could come any time. Why does he wait so long? "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise as some understand slowness. He is patient with you not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). We are able to "speed its coming" - perhaps by the work of evangelism (2 Pet. 3:12).

• **Our Response**

Careless speculation has given preaching on the Second Coming a bad name. Some say it is irrelevant and divisive. But God intended the

hope of Christ's Second Coming to inspire us to action here and now. Our second Advent hope should make us: Like the owner of a house guarding against a thief, **READY** (Matt. 24:44). Like a servant awaiting the return of his master, **WATCHFUL** (Mk. 13:35). Like a servant investing on behalf of his master, **HARD**

WORKING (Lk. 19:13). Judging nothing, **MERCIFUL** (1 Cor. 4:5). Keeping the commandments of Christ, **OBEDIENT** (1 Tim. 6:14). **WAITING** for him to bring salvation (Heb. 9:28). **PATIENT**, Like a farmer waiting for his land to yield a crop (James 5:7-8). **CONTINUING IN HIM** (1 John 2:28). The Second Coming, preached on and believed as God intended it to be, is the inspiration we need to live holy lives (1 John 3:3, 2 Pet. 3:11).

This Is My Story

“Do you know what happens when you die then, Melly?”, asked Mrs. L, a bright elderly lady who had come straight up to the front and asked me this question. I had just given a talk on the ‘spirit, soul and body’ (Watchman Nee) at the fellowship my wife and I had attended for about 20 years. I had never been asked this question in such a direct manner before and somehow I knew the traditional answer of “you go to heaven or hell” was not going to fit in very well with what I had just been teaching and would not satisfy the inquiring mind of Mrs. L. I had to be honest, so I said, ‘I don’t know.’ The inability to clearly answer such a basic question after 25 years of being a Christian bothered me a little, but Mrs. L just smiled and left it at that.

Some time later the subject was raised again by a young man at a meeting in a drug and alcohol treatment centre that I was helping a friend take.

“Is there life after death?”, he asked, indicating with a following comment



Christine and Melly Maas

“What happens when you die then, Melly?”

that he didn’t think there was. This time I replied with a quote I used from time to time that I had heard many years before. ‘There sure is, it’s just a matter of what your forwarding address is going to be’, meaning heaven or hell. This time I had the feeling there was something wrong with my answer, but I consoled my uneasiness with the ‘knowledge’ that this was the only answer a ‘true Christian’ could give.

“Is it OK if I leave this box of books with

you for awhile”, asked John, a travelling Christian missionary friend who had parked his caravan at our place for a while. I think most of them had been given to him and there wasn’t room in a caravan for ‘everything’.

“Feel free to look through them; I’ll pick them up later”. I wasn’t a great reader, but I had plenty of room to store a few books. However there was one little booklet that caught my eye. It was simply called ‘HELL’ and had a comic picture on the

front with a puny little man in his 'Y fronts', chained up in a dungeon , being tickled by the devil with a feather. I had never read a book about hell before nor had I wanted to. I thought it really was something too horrible to contemplate and it was probably better to let God worry about it, but I had a bit of spare time so I read it.

Well, I hadn't read far before I realized my 'theology' was in a 'little' bit of trouble.

I didn't know that in the Greek and Hebrew there were 3 or 4 different words with very specific meanings that were usually just translated as 'hell'.

I didn't understand that man (and an animal for that matter) IS a SOUL and the that the soul is not just the invisible or spiritual part of man.

I didn't realise that the bible taught that man was 'really' mortal by nature and that only God was truly immortal. And, when the bible says a man is 'dead', it means 'he is not living'!

Neither had I taken much notice of what the Old Testament said on the whole subject.

My wife's initial response to my newly discovered truth was a very defensive, "You have got to be joking" but two weeks of verses "popping" up in the scriptures she was reading were enough to convince her that our theology needed revising. It took several months for our 'Yes, but what about this verse', questions to be answered, but answered they were. We now have a God who is just and humane, a gospel message that calls us to repentance and faith in a loving God, rather than extorting a confession by fear of eternal torment. We have a clearer understanding from the scriptures about life and death, the resurrection of the righteous dead to eternal life in the Kingdom and the destruction of the wicked. It has also been a key which has unlocked other

truths that my wife and I had found difficult to understand.

And what of Mrs. L...? Several years elapsed between her asking of the question and my finding the answer. I had the feeling that she knew the answer herself so I said to her one day

"We don't go straight to heaven when we die, do we?"

A smile broke out on her face,

"Of course we don't Melly" she said and went on to explain how her father had taught her about these things as a child. It can not have been easy to know this truth all those years and not have the freedom to speak about it. She probably found out, as we were about to, that many Christians are not willing to examine and discuss something if it brings into question their traditional beliefs. Sadly, as many others have found, the opportunity to teach in that church quickly closed and a few friendships were lost, but we have been blessed by the many believers we have met who have a love for the truth and the Word of God.

Melly Maas

Melly and Christine Maas are silage and hay making contractors who live on a small farm near Marton where they have raised four children. Three sons are grown up, (the two oldest are married and live locally) and a teenage daughter is still living at home. They are looking forward to the next "phase" of parenting when their first grandchild arrives in a few months time. For recreation they enjoy travelling in their home built house truck, especially by the sea where Melly can fish to his hearts content and Christine is happy to "quilt" the hours away.

Melly very kindly agreed to share his story with us in the hope that his journey will be an encouragement to many truth seekers out there. Indeed there are many other such stories out there. Perhaps you might consider sharing your story with us?

From Off Of The Shelf

A Summary And Review Of “Four Views of Hell” Edited By William Crockett

The book, “Four Views of Hell”, is intended to have the feel of a civilized debate about it. The reader is allowed to see four competing views of hell laid out side by side. Each is presented, then critiqued. John Walvoord argues that hell is a literal place of literal smoke and flames in which the wicked will experience a very physical form of everlasting conscious torment. William Crockett defends a metaphorical view in which the wicked will experience everlasting torment but that torment is not necessarily one of literal fire. Zachary Hayes is called upon to explain the concept of purgatory. Clark Pinnock defends the view we know as conditional immortality. He argues that ultimately God will annihilate the wicked.

John Walvoord’s Literal View

The doctrine of hell unfolds slowly, Walvoord says. At times sheol (in the Old Testament) means the grave. Nevertheless sheol, he argues, is at times a place of “fire” (Deut. 32:22) and “pain” (Job 14:22), of punishment and retribution. “In Isaiah the Babylonians killed in divine judgment are pictured as being greeted in sheol by those who died earlier” (p17) (Isa. 14:9-10). Verse upon verse is plied to prove that the wrath of God is more than mere physical death. Words such as olam and neash, commonly translated “ever”, are in some contexts limited as to duration in time (e.g. Ex. 27:21), but says Walvoord, “such termination is never once mentioned in either the Old or New Testament as relating to the punishment of the wicked.” (p18). “[T]here is no intimation that this punishment should not be taken literally and continue eternally.” (p18).

Walvoord acknowledges that while the Pharisees generally believed in eternal torment for the wicked, the school of Hillel taught that

the torment of the wicked would last only one year for all but the most exceptional sinners who would be punished for some time. “Their conclusions are not backed by Scripture”, he says. (p19). Sorry Hillel!

For Walvoord, the teaching of Jesus and his Apostles, even down to the use of the Greek word aionios “forever”, makes explicit what was implicit in the Old Testament.

Walvoord admits many Christians struggle to reconcile the notion of a loving God with a real hell. But personal opinion (ancient or modern) is not determinative. Those who believe in the inerrancy of Scripture and in a hermeneutic of literal interpretation must, according to him, accept hell as a place of everlasting conscious torment in a literal fire.

William Crockett’s Metaphorical View

Crockett’s view is not intended to be a “modernistic” watering down of Scripture. He sincerely believes (along with a significant minority throughout history) that the Bible’s descriptions of “eternal fire” were intended to be metaphorical. While Crockett agrees with Walvoord that hell is a place of endless conscious punishment, he says that hell cannot literally be both a place of “blackest darkness” (Jude 13) and “fire” (Mat. 25:41). A literal fire cannot torment spirit beings (Mat. 25:41). He suggests that New Testament descriptions of both heaven and hell are largely symbolic, not a literal description of the furnishings of the world to come. He argues that ancient teachers used hyperbole to underscore a point (Luke 14:26, Mat. 5:29, Luke 9:60). The pictures of hell outside the Bible in Jewish literature are graphic and concrete, but were not intended to be taken literally. Crockett believes the authors of the New Testament wrote in much the same vein. Taken as a whole, Crockett suggests, the Bible speaks the language of metaphor to express the otherwise inexpressible horror of the judgment of God.

While disagreeing with Walvoord’s literal view he

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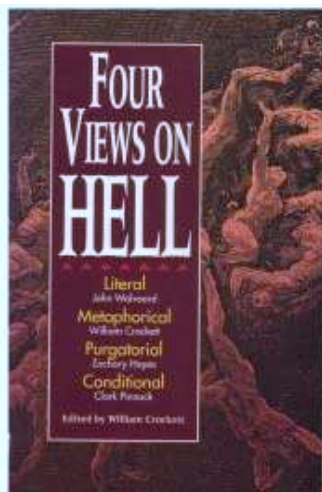
also disagrees with Pinnock's conditionalist position. The problem of an eternal lack of harmony in the universe, he thinks, is more an argument for universalism. It imposes present day expectations on ancient writers. He surveys Jewish writers of late antiquity and 2nd-century Christian writings and proves to his own satisfaction that early Christianity affirmed eternal conscious suffering. He rejects the influence of Greek philosophy as an explanation for the abandonment of the annihilationism of Christ and the Apostles by later generation of Christians. For exegetical support of his rejection of the conditionalist position he relies on the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), on Mark's use of the "undying worm" image (Mark 9:47-48) from Isaiah 66:24, and the biblical language about "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:49-50) and many others. He interacts somewhat, but I believe inadequately with annihilationist views of these key texts.

Zachary Hayes' Purgatorial View

The purgatorial view is based, says Hayes, on the following convictions: that eternal destiny, either heaven or hell, is set irrevocably at the moment of death; that most are not "bad enough" to be consigned to an eternal hell, nor are they good enough for heaven; and that, therefore, some sort of "cleansing" process needs to take place between death and entrance into heaven. Roman Catholic theology adds to this concept the possibility of being aided in the cleansing process by those still alive on earth.

In the early church, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and a multitude of others believed the fires of hell were in some sense remedial (Many early Greek theologians actually believed in universal restoration, that everyone would be saved).

As for Scriptural justification, 2 Maccabees 12:41-46 (part of the Catholic canon) teaches the possibility of atonement made for the dead that they might be freed from sin. Matthew 12:31-32 speaks of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit as a sin which will not be forgiven, "either in this age or in the age to come." This at least implies some sins might be forgiven in the age to come, argues Hayes. A third important text, 1 Cor. 3:11-15, speaks of the possibility of being saved "as one escaping through the flames".



The notion of purgatory is however foreign to Protestant thinking. The Protestant doctrine of Justification by faith alone will not allow it. The Protestant doctrine of "Sola Scriptura" (The Bible alone!) makes Protestants suspicious of any doctrine that is supposed to have developed through the ages, beginning in popular piety, and only later receiving official recognition and theological elaboration.

Clark Pinnock's Conditionalist View

Few preachers today, says Pinnock, preach eternal conscious torment. They recognize the grotesque moral problem involved in presenting our loving God as a cosmic torturer. Pinnock argues that if we are to take the Bible literally we must take words such as "perish" and "death" literally. To imply that those who reject the "literal" view of hell reject Biblical inerrancy is simply not true. In fact, Pinnock, argues, the uncritical acceptance of the notion of the immortality of the soul, which lies behind traditional interpretations of hell, leads traditionalists to ignore the literal meaning of many Scriptures. Pinnock then provides a good account of those key Scriptures that obviously support the conditionalist view and shows how those Bible verses often used to teach other views are better understood from a conditionalist perspective.

Given that a multitude of views concerning hell exist within Jewish and Christian tradition, Pinnock asks: Must we portray God as a God of infinite cruelty? (No!) Do sins committed in time and space justly merit limitless divine retribution? (No!) Does the so-called traditional view spur believers on in the work of evangelism? (No!) It embarrasses Christians and turns many away from Christ thus harming the cause of evangelism. The metaphorical view does little to lessen the torments of hell, how is it any better than the literal view? The universalist position (not really discussed in this book) takes no account of human freedom. The conditionalist view, Pinnock concludes, may actually save hell (or at least mention of it) from extinction.

My Comments

Some general impressions:

1. Many reviewers have commented that John Walvoord was not at his best in presenting the literal view. He does better in critiquing the views of his theological "opponents." On the whole, while each author presented his own view well,

(Continued on Page 18)

Carey Park Christian Camp

It has been an extremely busy year so far. With having the camp almost completely booked from January to December we haven't had much down time. We have also had two new people join the staff, Richard Lange as the Activities Coordinator and Caitrin Aitken has taken over as Receptionist/Bookings Coordinator. They are both very enthusiastic to be here and share the vision of Carey Park.



We recently took on managing another camp called Stedfast Park. It is situated at Glen Esk Road in Piha. Surrounded by trees and with the beautiful scenery it is much like Carey Park. We are very excited about taking on this new challenge and have already seen an increase in bookings. With almost every weekend booked out from

September till mid February 2006 it is so encouraging seeing God moving in that place. We look forward to the years ahead and seeing the place grow and being used to share the word of God.

We recently had the Teen Mania group through. This is a group of teens from America who come over and go out to local schools and do ministry there using drama and dance to share the gospel. It was really encouraging to see such young people fired up for God and wanting to tell others about Him too.



We have been praying for a new chef for quite some time now and we finally found Ryan. He will be starting in September so thank God that he provided us with someone to fill this position.

What can you pray for? Just pray that we don't lose sight of our dream and continue to work in

a way that glorifies God. That Ryan fits in well with the team here and catches on to our vision quickly. Thank God that He has provided us with this awesome ability to teach people about God in a fun environment surrounded by beautiful scenery that He has given us.

The Carey Park staff continues to thank you for your prayer and support and look forward to many more years ahead.

Cameron Dick.




WORK TEAM TO MALAYSIA

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The Life And The Advent

**An Address by Colin
Prestidge given at the
Conditional Immortality
Association Annual
Dinner and Conference,
June 11, 2005.**

On the face of it, it seems rather extraordinary that we even need to define what death is. Of course a lot of people in the modern era, particularly those with no profession of faith in God, know what it is. Zap, Kaaput, the finish mate – into the grave or incinerator she goes – a good innings, but that's it. Its total tragedy when someone young dies, especially in their teens. So much promise, goals were set, an accident, and before you know it – good night! This is what is called facing life squarely with all of its prospects and reality. Life is what you make it - what if you don't – well that's tough – them's the breaks. The picture is like Scott of the Antarctic – “We took risks – we knew we would – things have come out against us.” Sentiments noble, realistic, fatalistic, tragic indeed the tragic nature of human existence.

There is another definition of death held by Christians and non - Christians, pagans and infidels, people of all walks of life, which treats death as a “double think”. Yes, we die but we don't really die. Our death is the focal point of eternity – eternity begins individually at one's death.

The question evangelically is, “Where will you spend eternity?” Heaven or Hell? Now if I were to say to someone who was watching their loved one being buried “Where do you think they are?” The answer would invariably be a “double think”. I know we've watched the body being lowered into the grave – but really they aren't there – they have gone to a better place. I went to a teenage Christian funeral a short while ago. While the presiding Baptist Pastor said that this was Good Friday but Easter Sunday is coming some invited friends of the dead teenager assured us that he was dancing with the angels!

Well really you can't have it both ways – the issue is not about Heaven and Hell – but about life and death.

What we have just been discussing is the doctrine of natural immortality. That is, that we are born with some part of us which is immortal. Theologically it is said this is because we are in the Image of God. We are in the Image of God yes but does this include immortality – we would like to think so! But this is not so! God has at this point been brought into the picture. Now think for a moment – if we have natural immortality – an immortal soul/spirit – we are gods too!! We have bought the devil's lie “you shall not surely die”. In direct contrast God's

definition of death is “dust you are and unto dust you shall return”.

The bible – God's infallible authority – is overwhelmingly unambiguous about the subject of death . It can be said that our human experience and witness to death and the Bible's are the same. There is no mystical - out of body – experience – such as many people claim - to quote Shakespeare on this and on other subjects in which humans may be duped – “the spirit that I have seen may be the devil, and the devil hath power to assume a pleasing shape”.

An unofficial leading religious authority – Professor Geering has this part of his theology right – there is no such thing as an immortal soul. Let us indeed face the truth, even if it hurts and not entertain vain thoughts about the death state. Among other things death should be a reminder to us of sin, and when in the presence of death we need to re appraise our relationship with God.

But why? What's the point of this reappraisal if death is extinction? This is what evolution has brought to us. The answer is to receive immortality as a gift from God – as opposed to something that we were created or born with. According to the Bible immortality –which God alone has is nevertheless given by Him as a gift. This doctrine is

known as Conditional Immortality. Immortality is conferred by God – there’s a condition. It’s not wholesale – if it were we would no longer need to live a life in relationship with God.

The next question is how? How does God confer immortality? The creation account and subsequent fall reveals that it was not at creation - even though we were created in the Image of God. It is not at our death, we must bear the full measure that brings about our death otherwise death is not death.

In considering our death, and immortality as a gift from God, we need to focus our attention not on ourselves but on God who created us. Indeed to think about, and witness death should be a ‘wake up’ call to humanity especially when we experience in our lives natural disasters, when we ask the big questions - why did God allow this disaster to happen ? He could have stopped it. Were they

more wicked than I? Jesus in Luke 13 answers this big question with “no – but unless you repent you too will perish.”

God then should be our focus, why? Because He brings back life from the dead. He who creates is the same God who recreates. Recreation or resurrection is the how of immortality. How does God do this? Two

chapters are particularly instructive on this matter - Ezekiel 37 and 1 Corinthians 15.

The prophet Ezekiel was in exile in Babylon with fellow Jews. They were exiles because of their sins of idolatry and injustice. It seemed like the end of the



“... the spirit that I have seen may be the devil, and the devil hath power to assume a pleasing shape.”
(Shakespeare).

world to them – Psalm 137. The temple was ransacked therefore God had gone from them – no temple no land equals no God. Yet into this lamentation came hope! The judgement would end and the exiles would return. But like so much biblical prophecy, the vision given by God stretched far and away from the immediate future to the final fulfilled future.

The exiles did indeed return, under the benevolence of the Persian king Cyrus. In our modern era Israel has been returning to its land again, albeit largely in ignorance. Yet superimposed upon this return is to be a national resurrection – literally – and that surely is what was

behind that passage special in Matthew’s gospel about a resurrection of saints following Christ’s resurrection! It’s like creation all over again . Look at Ezekiel 37.5 – breath, tendon, flesh all coming together as dead bodies standing up – a vast army!! Paul is unmistakable in his treatment of this theme. You’d have thought he had already experienced resurrection Himself and had dropped us an account of it from heaven. In Paul’s account of it, a new body is required so that the saints can properly be fitted for

their heavenly home. He contrasts the natural body with the spiritual one. The body is raised, but in such a manner that it is at the same time

transformed, so that the personality is retained as the body is perfected. The saints will differ from one another in appearance, and in personality, yet be unified in their bodies, as they further bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

Immortality, a word used sparingly in scripture, is here brought to the fore. This immortality is a gift from the

“second man from heaven” compared to the first man from the earth. Adam was a living being (soul) the second man – Christ is a life-giving spirit. To be more specific – the natural body (flesh and blood) is traded for a spiritual body (flesh and bones) like Christ’s.

The question now before us is - when? It is when we ask this question , that I believe we link Conditional Immortality and the Advent. There is a “when” in the process that God works through and consequently we work through with Him. God is a God of the ages. They are His “ages of administration”. We change Governments but God being God does not change Himself but what He does do is to change His method of administration. Why? Not because He wants to play games with us, but because of the moral condition of His humanity who sin against Him.

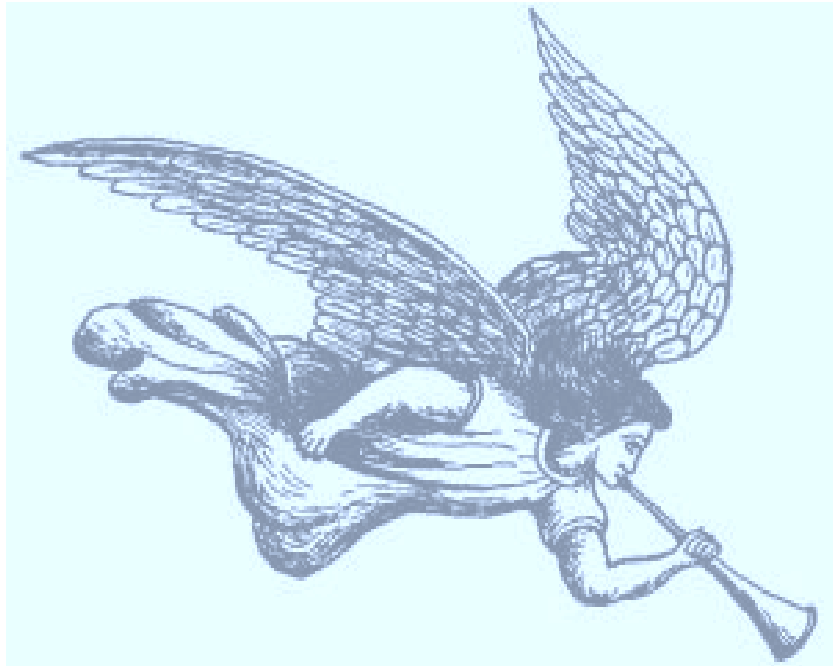
Some Christians want to race to the end product – the New Heavens and New Earth and reject the idea of a millennial reign , or “spiritualise” it – but that won’t do! The “end will be arrived at, but, as one brother said to me recently - “there’s a lot to happen before that!”

So when do we put on immortality? In other words, when does the resurrection take place? The short uncomplicated answer is, at the close of this age. 1 Cor 15 despite its resurrection detail is remarkably uncomplicated. A time factor is introduced, which should reduce speculation and sharpen our focus. According to this chapter the

resurrection takes place – in a split second of timing – at the last trumpet.

But an amillennialist might object “but that’s just a figure of speech we use - poetry in motion - if you like to describe what happens when Jesus comes back. But how do we know that Jesus’ coming back is not a figure of speech also? Indeed the sky

day? The hour? That pretty close isn’t it? A longer and more measured response would be to say – have you read the bible –all of it ? It is riddled with “time factors surrounding the second advent, so that – as Paul says to the Thessalonians “but you brothers are not in darkness so that the day should surprise you like a



1 Thess 4:16 mentions ...
the resurrection of dead
saints and the living saints
caught up with the trumpet
call of God.

is the limit when you want to “spiritualise” anything in scripture you don’t like! Another often quoted objection is to say “after all, doesn’t the bible say that no man knows the day or the hour”. My quick response would be to say, Really? The

thief”

Let us then inspect this expression, the last trumpet. Not any trumpet but the last. To be the last it has to be associated with a series. There were a series of six preceding the fall of Jericho!! Revelation 11.15 is the answer. It’s the seventh of a

series spanning the Great Tribulation – a time of unparalleled trouble that is coming upon this earth. It's short but intense, like the Egyptian plagues but far more cataclysmic. Out of the Egyptian plagues Israel was saved, and so shall they be at the end of this period of judgement - and so will believers be. Revelation 11:18 mentions the rewarding of servants, prophets, and those that fear God's name, the saints both small and great. This must include a large company indeed! 1 Thess 4:16 mentions the same occasion – the resurrection of dead saints and the living saints caught up with ... the trumpet call of God.

We might safely and confidently say that the saints are raised, translated, transformed at the second coming of Christ. God never does anything just for His own benefit – to show how great He is, and how puny we are. That's the pagan concept of God. That's why they grovel and try and placate their gods with their prayers – their gods are in competition with themselves for territory – does that ring a bell – and are nor greatly concerned with their worshippers. The Christian God is not like this. His aim is not to make us bow and scrape to Him but rather to be His friends, even to sit down at the meal -table of heaven and be served by Him – Luke 12.37 – one of my favourites.

The conditionalist, then, is in great need of resurrection. No separate soul, no natural immortality. Help is on the way – it comes from God

who will give us immortality in the resurrection.

Ephesians has the most exalted description of the resurrected saints. Using the past-tense i.e. from God's point of view, in His reckoning of things as having already been accomplished – The Eternal God has the saints raised and seated with Christ in the Heavens - the Super Heavens – outside the universe – not a quaint saying but a location – even though it's just about beyond the comprehension of some of us - where God actually is, Christ at the Father's right hand. We are not grovelling at his feet – but seated, not on the floor reclining – I haven't much fat on that part of my anatomy – seated with Christ in the Heavens.

Here is a putting on of immortality, being raised up in order to receive instruction from Christ and to give that instruction to who? The powerful yet largely ignorant denizens of the heavens. It's this corporateness that I want to conclude with. And this is where we draw another bond between Life and Advent. 1 Cor 15 of course is unmistakable, that the body of Christians are raised together and transformed in a moment of time, but Ephesians also adds its voice and togetherness . The all-important word here is the pronoun "us". On its first appearance in Ch. 2 our corporateness is seen as outside the possibility of this momentous resurrection. We were morally not fit but were bound, dead in trespasses. But God takes the initiative and extends His great love on us as "children of wrath". The corporate theme is

continued. In a sweeping gesture the saints are raised up together with Christ into the heavenly realms – outside the universe literally, and all the time it is us together.

There is no comfort here for the doctrine of natural immortality , which has God nonstop from time immemorial receiving the souls of the departed! Here is a reinforcing of Conditional Immortality - the body is total human existence joining with millions of other bodies at one time as one body - and so to be ever with the Lord.

You and I are who we appear to be. Our inner thoughts and emotions sometimes concealing, sometimes revealing ourselves to others – but never to God, and so Conditional Immortality and the Second Advent have inescapable moral implications for ourselves, others and God as well. "Be imitators of God therefore dearly beloved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" - Eph 5.1.

Colin Prestidge



Colin trained as a Baptist Pastor at the Baptist Theological College in New Zealand from where he obtained a BTh. He was Pastor at Balclutha Baptist Church for 10 years. He is now a member of Westown Community Baptist Church in New Plymouth.

Report To The Conditional Immortality Association of New Zealand Conference

June 2005

Overview.

As has been my custom let me begin with a review of some of the work the Conditional Immortality Association continues to do year after year:

Our Magazine. We continue to publish our magazine, "From Death to Life". Issue 27 went out last month. After over ten years Carl Josephson has relinquished the position of editor. The mantle has fallen to me. Looking back over past issues the quality of the magazine has been continually improving. We owe Carl a vote of thanks for this. I hope to be able to continue this trend.

One new initiative I have begun is to make the magazine available in electronic format (as html or pdf). Over [100] people from around the world signed up in the first week or so. More are added every few days. This will dramatically increase the scope of our ministry to the Body of Christ worldwide! Join me in praying this will be an effective means to further the gospel of "Life Only in Christ".

Our Literature (Tapes Videos etc. Not Just Books).

We continue to promote Warren Prestidge's videos, "Life Death and the Resurrection", and his book, "Life, Death and Destiny". We have made Carl Josephson's thesis available, "The Intermediate State in Paul." Carl can give you a list of all the stock we carry if you ask him.

Last year I had opportunity to conduct a "Conditional Immortality Seminar" in Hamilton. I did a PowerPoint presentation in a private home to around 10 people. Inspired by some work done by Eddie Garrett (The Bible in Commentary Series), I have been experimenting with some new technology and intend to put my presentation on to a DVD complete with sound track. I hope to make these available to interested parties soon.

Our Website. Glenn Peoples continues as our Webmaster. Once again he has reformatted the site and added a lot of new information. The message board has been used sparsely but there are some interesting discussions recorded there. Glenn is doing a

great job. Pray God will use the website to make the truth known! Our web address is www.afterlife.co.nz Visit the website and tell others to do so. You might like to start a "discussion thread" on our message board.

Our Students. We continue to support theological students and others who share our belief in Conditional Immortality as they train for ministry in some capacity or another. Over the year just gone we have offered "scholarships" to four students studying at various institutions. As I said last year, this is an often unseen but very important aspect of our ministry and it is growing!

ACMissionNZ. We continue to maintain an interest in ACMissionNZ and in the work of Garry Schäche (New Zealand Chairman), Grant Aldridge (Missionary in the Phillipines), and Ernie Schäche (Missionary in India). We give praise to God for the success of the international work team which went to Chennai, India to work on "The Great Wall Of Guindy" – at the AC Mission's Guindy compound (December 27th 2004 to January 17th 2005). We are thankful to God that after much prayer Ernie his Visa! We look forward to hearing more of up and coming work teams. Have you attended an ACMissionNZ Supporters Gathering? For more information see Garry or go to www.acmissionz.org.nz

Carey Park. We continue too in support of Carey Park. Praise God that good bookings and 'regular' customers have made for a busy year. Kids and teens camps have touched many lives. Thank God for those who willingly help with working bees. For many years Viv Gilling has been one of our Association appointed members on the Adventure Camp Trust Board. Viv has given her resignation. Therefore a vacancy exists for an association rep on this Board. If you feel called to fill this position, please let us know!

Outstanding Issues.

Property Issues. We had hoped to finish with property issues this year. However,

various issues remain outstanding in negotiations with a number of ex-Churches of Christ and the Baptist Union over Trust Deeds and Title to buildings.

Our negotiations with Titirangi Baptist Church are almost complete. They are part way through getting the membership to pass the required resolutions. This will happen (God willing) on Sunday 3 July.

Significant progress has been made toward working out an acceptable Trust for the New Plymouth Church. A members meeting is scheduled for 12 June. Kelvyn Fairhall of the Baptist Union hopes to assist them in coming to grips with the "whys and wherefores" of the resolutions. Regarding the Sunnynook Baptist Church, Brian Winslade and Kelvyn Fairhall (Baptist Union) met with John Hitchcock (Pastor of Sunnynook)

and they have agreed to proceed down the same route as the other two churches. They have moved quickly and the congregation has unanimously agreed to the same trusts as have been proposed for the other two churches.

Praise God, these legal matters should soon be concluded, perhaps by the end of August. I want to thank the Executive and the membership for their patience in working through what at times has been a very difficult matter.

Dr David Dean's Visit. Dr David Dean and his wife, Dottie, were to have visited us late September / early October of last year. As retired Professor of Advent Christian Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary,

Massachusetts, Dr Dean's ministry to us, and to the wider public, would have been much appreciated. Unfortunately due to deterioration in Dr Dean's health the visit had to be cancelled. Dr. Dean continues to be in the prayers of those who know him.

Ongoing Opportunities.

ACGC Triennial Session. The Association has been invited to send representatives as observers to the Advent Christian General Conference of America Triennial Convention to be held on June 21-26, 2002 at Virginia Beach, Virginia, USA. Garry Schäche and I will have the privilege of going as your representatives. Our contact with ACGC in the past has been mutually encouraging and beneficial. For example, John Roller was influential in getting me to make the magazine available in electronic format with his claims that there are more Conditionalists outside of the AC denomination than within, and that a Conditionalist Association in the US need not be based in the US.

Dr Joel Green's Visit.

Professor Joel Green has accepted an invitation to visit New Zealand. Joel Green is an academic, an author, and a pastor. He is a regular

preacher and speaker for local churches, parachurch groups, conferences and institutes. The year 2001 saw him named in 2000 Outstanding Intellectuals of the 21st Century. Green's book, *Restoring the Human Person: New Testament Voices for a Wholistic and Social Anthropology*, is important for a Conditionalist understanding of human nature. Dr Green will be in New Zealand in September doing some public meetings on our behalf. Please pray for this visit!

We Are All Workers Together.

Again, as last year, we each have before us a number of opportunities to serve:

- **Publicize our existing ministries.**

Give away copies of our magazine, our tracts, and give out our web address. Make it known

Professor Joel Green will be in New Zealand from September 18 to September 30. Check out the details on page 20 and make plans to be at our Association dinner on Saturday September 24.

to people that they can receive our Magazine by email for free.

- **Recruit active members.**

Ask people to be actively involved by contributing to the Magazine (even letters to the Editor etc.), or allowing them selves to be nominated for the Executive.

- **Become an active member your self!**

- **Search out CI related teaching opportunities.**

Lead a home group / Bible Study in your church on the subject (if you can) or seek the permission of your pastor to have one of us speak to your church or a group of friends (As I did in Hamilton). Show one of our videos etc.

- **Publicize our Speakers.**

Invite your friends to come and hear Dr. Joel Green when he is here.

Prayer and word of mouth are the most effective means of making our ministry and message known. Pray for opportunities to share “Life Only in Christ”!

Our Executive.

Since Conference 2004 the Executive has consisted of Neville Brandt, Rob Carr, Beryl Ching, Brian Cooney, Sylvia Coulter, Don Dickson, Carl Josephson, Colin Prestige, Warren Prestidge, and Edwin Tucker, as well as myself.

During the year personal circumstances meant that it was not possible for Beryl Ching to continue as Secretary. Flowers and a book voucher hardly recompense her for the years of work Beryl has put in to this Association. They do however go some way toward letting her know her work is appreciated. She will be missed. Thanks to Glenise Burge for stepping into the gap. Brian Cooney and Neville Brandt are finding the travel difficult so they too are stepping down.

These folk desire to make known the gospel of “Life Only in Christ”. They work hard on your behalf. I commend them to your prayers.



David Burge
(President).

(Continued from Page 9)

many times the critiques do not deal with the specific texts the other writers presented in support of their case. This makes it a little harder to judge the relative merits of each case.

2. What needs to be borne in mind is that this is not a debate about the reality of hell but about the nature of hell. What do the Scriptures say hell is? What is the fate of those who are to be cast into hell? Just to say there is a future judgment in no way settles the matter as to the nature of that judgment.

3. All the authors acknowledge a diversity of opinion among Jewish and early Christian writers on the subject of hell (a diversity that would have been wider had someone sought to defend the doctrine of hell as remedial, leading to the eventual restoration of all souls to God. Universalism was perhaps the prevailing doctrine of the Church - at least in the east – for the first 500 years!). This diversity means it is simply not honest to claim to interpret Scripture against the background of any supposed uniform view of hell in Jesus day, nor to claim any view as correct because “tradition” stands behind it.

4. The idea of taking the Bible literally means different things to different people. No one believes that a literal beast with seven heads and ten horns will literally arise out of the Mediterranean Sea any time soon! Scripture must interpret Scripture, in its literary context, if we are to reach the mind of the Divine author of Scripture. Too many times the obvious meaning of words such as “perish” and “die” are rejected because of *an interpretation* of John’s apocalyptic vision in the Book of Revelation, for example.

5. I can’t help but agree with Pinnock’s assertion that the uncritical acceptance of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul has lead many to ignore the obvious meaning of many Scriptures. Thus we do well not to separate the doctrine of hell from other vital doctrines concerning the nature of man and the intermediate state. Has anybody written, “Four Views On Human Nature”, or “Four Views On The Intermediate State”?

If you were not a conditionalist this book would probably not make you one. However any one reading the book with an open mind, and an open heart, would say that there is a strong case to be made against the “traditional” (I use the term with reservations) view of hell.

Considering all the moral problems that the traditional view entails, Why do so many still hold to it so tenaciously. Scripture does not justify such a stand.

David Burge.

(Continued from Page 2)

Truth is not determined by tradition (however ancient) or by our own personal “spiritual” experience. The only source of truth in spiritual matters is “the law and the testimony”, that is, the Word of God, the Bible.

Satan is the source of all lies. His first lie was to claim that people are immortal. Through the serpent, he said to the woman: “You will not surely die.” (Gen. 3:4).

Today, Satan, who appears as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), has deceived millions into believing the dead are not really dead, but are more alive than ever, ready and willing to communicate a false hope for an afterlife without the need for faith in Jesus Christ!

The Bible, however, says God alone has immortality (1 Tim. 1:17, 6:16). The “glory of the immortal God” contrasts with that of “mortal humans” (Rom. 1:23). For us immortality is a prize to be sought after (Rom. 2:7). It will be granted only to “those who are considered worthy” (Luke 20:34-36). That is, by God’s decree it is a free gift given to the one who trusts in Jesus Christ. This gift will be given when Jesus himself returns (1 Cor. 15:42-54).

Meanwhile, as creatures of dust, at death we return to dust:

“For dust you are and to dust you shall return” (Gen. 3:19).

In death there is no remembering (Psa. 6:5); nor praising (Psa. 6:5, 115:17, Isa. 38:18); nor thinking (Psa. 146:4, Ecc. 9:4); nor hoping (Ecc. 9:4, Isa. 38:18), only silence (Psa. 115:17). Death is a “sleep” and the dead are “sleeping” (Dan. 12:1-2, 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Our hope – the only real hope for life after death – is that one day, perhaps soon, Jesus will return. Having once died to save us from our sins (Rom. 5:8), he is coming again to resurrect the dead and to immortalize the believer (1 Cor. 15:50-57), to destroy evil and evildoers (2 Thess 1:9, Rev. 20:14), to establish a worldwide kingdom of peace and righteousness (Dan. 7:13, 14, 18), and to reign forever on a renewed heaven and earth (Rev. 21:5).

God’s word is clear. We have no need to look elsewhere. We need only to believe and then to act on that faith!

Statement of Faith

1. We believe in God and His one and only Son, Jesus the Christ. Hebrews 11:6; John 14:1; 3:16; 20:31; Matthew 16:16.
2. We believe in the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Jude 20; Ephesians 3:5.
3. We believe that Jesus died for us and gave himself a ransom for all. Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Timothy 2:6.
4. We believe that God raised Jesus from the dead; that by resurrection He became Lord of both the dead and the living, and the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep; and that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. Romans 10:9; 14:9; 1 Corinthians 15:20; John 3:16.
5. We believe that baptism is commanded by Christ, was practised by His Apostles, and is taught in the New Testament. Matthew 28:18,19; Acts 8:12,38.
6. We believe that all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the people of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16,17.
7. We believe that human beings are by nature mortal. Genesis 2:7; 3:19; 1 Timothy 6:16; 2 Timothy 1:10; Romans 2:6-7.
8. We believe that human beings in death are unconscious. Psalm 6:5; 115:17; Ecclesiastes 9:5,10. This is likened to ‘sleep’. Job 14:12; Psalm 13:3; Jeremiah 51:39; Daniel 12:2; John 11:11-14; 1 Corinthians 15:51.
9. We believe that immortality is obtained only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:21-23; 2 Timothy 4:7-8; 1 John 5:9-12.
10. We believe that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked, to be followed by the Judgment. Acts 24:15; John 5:25,28,29; Revelation 20:12,13.
11. We believe that evil and evildoers shall be finally destroyed. Psalm 145:20; Matthew 10:28 Romans 6:21; Philippians 3:19; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 22:3.
12. We believe in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Acts 1:11; John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16.



Visit of Dr. Joel Green

Our Association is bringing Dr. Joel and Pam Green to New Zealand. God willing they will arrive Friday September 16, 2004.

Joel Green is an academic, an author, and a pastor. He is a regular preacher and speaker for local churches, parachurch groups, conferences and institutes. The year 2001 saw him named in *2000 Outstanding Intellectuals of the 21st Century*.

Green has authored a number of books. We believe his book, *Restoring the Human Person: New Testament Voices for a Wholistic and Social Anthropology*, is important for a Conditionalist understanding of human nature.

Joel

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| Sunday 18 | Owairaka Baptist in the morning (Church service)
Remuera Baptist in the evening (Public meeting) |
| Monday 19 | Radio Rhema interview
Auckland University (Public meeting) |
| Tuesday 20 | Massey University (Public meeting) |
| Friday 23 | Bible College of NZ |
| Saturday 24 | Dinner with CIA at Barrycourt Suites, Hotel Conference Centre in Parnell |
| Sunday 25 | Wellington in the morning (Church service) |
| Wednesday 28 | Dunedin – Otago University and Knox College |
| Friday 30 | Dunedin – Otago University and Knox College |

Website Address: www.afterlife.co.nz