

Death

of the
New Zealand

Issue 20

March 2001

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Daniel had a dream. The text literally says, "Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head" (7:1). This does not mean he made the whole thing up! Rather it distinguishes the type of vision he had - while "upon his bed" asleep. This is as opposed to the vision he had in chapter 10, which he saw with his eyes, while standing on the banks of the great river, the Tigris (Dan. 10:4).

This sheds light on the words of Paul in 2Cor. 12. Paul speaks of visions and revelations he received "whether in the body or out of the body" (2Cor. 12:2, 4). There is no thought here of Paul's soul or spirit going for a jaunt without his body. Rather, Paul is confessing his inability to tell whether the visions he had were "in the body", that is within his head, or "apart from the body", that is a vision he saw outside of himself with his own eyes.

Rather than focusing on uninspired human tradition or "the prophetic experience" itself, we would do well to focus on the Word of God and what he has revealed to us. We would do well to seek to understand Scripture on its own terms. Comparing Scripture with Scripture.

David Burge.
(President).



The Intermediate State

In Paul

By Carl Josephson

Part 6

Resurrection of the Body and Immortality of the Soul.

Contrasts.

The doctrine of the 'immortality of the soul' is widely attested throughout human existence.¹ The basic belief is that 'part' of each individual survives death to go on to another life (whether always a 'better' place is questioned in some cultures where an understanding of a type of hell is suggested). It has been a tenet of the Christian faith as well, not only with the edict of the 5th Lateran Council of 1513 but also adopted by Protestantism, largely following Calvin's teaching (against Luther who had some doubts about it). While we tend to agree with Oscar Cullmann's provocative statement that "the immortality of the soul... is one of the greatest misunderstandings of Christianity"² the purpose of this chapter is not to argue whether belief in the immortal soul is **true** or not, but to ask whether it is **biblical** or not.³ In particular we are asking whether Paul conceives of it or not.

More positively, we propose that at the very least Paul's

overwhelming emphasis is on the resurrection of the body, noting, as discussed in the opening chapter, that of course 'body' "does not refer to the biological dimension of man but to the whole man."⁴

At its simplest level there is a fundamental difference between resurrection and immortality (Cullmann says they are "incompatible"⁵),

There is a
fundamental difference
between immortality
and resurrection

especially when the two terms are qualified by 'body' and 'soul' respectively. Resurrection requires an act (by God or other 'outside' power) to deliver an individual from death, after that person has died. Immortality of the soul, on the other hand, is about something **surviving** death. This survival may well be attributed to God⁶ (He created us with immortal souls, it can be argued), but survival of death is often regarded as a given, or even an inherent right, of human existence, regardless of whether the subject is

'regenerate' or 'degenerate'. Resurrection is quite distinct from this. If our conclusions in the previous chapters concerning monism and death are correct then resurrection of the whole person is the only hope that Paul could seriously consider.

Thinking upon the death of Jesus, Cullmann writes:

If life is to issue out of so genuine a death as this, a new divine act of creation is necessary. And this act of creation calls back to life not just a part of the man, but the whole man — all that God had created and death had annihilated. For Socrates and Plato no new act is necessary. For the body is indeed bad and should not live on. And that part which is to live on, the soul, does not die at all.⁷

Then thinking further upon the differences between immortality of the soul and resurrection of the body, Cullmann makes these telling comments:

Belief in the immortality of the soul

is not belief in a revolutionary event. Immortality ... is only a *negative* assertion: the soul does *not* die, but simply lives on. Resurrection is a *positive* assertion: the whole man, who has really died, is recalled to life by a new act of creation by God. Something has happened—a miracle of creation! For something has also happened previously, something fearful: life formed by God has been destroyed.⁸

Badham also makes a telling observation about the difference between resurrection and immortality. Although dismissing "a real material link between our present and future bodies" as being only for "those who are steeped in the biblical worldview", he writes:

The whole point of talking about 'resurrection of the body' rather than 'immortality of the soul,' is that a bodiless, immaterial, intellectual, non-locatable soul is held by some writers to be inadequate for full personal existence. The resurrection of the body has been chosen by Christian writers **in explicit contrast** to the notion

of an immortal soul, and if words mean anything, this explicit contrast must be

Scripture nowhere speaks of the 'immortal soul', indeed 'immortal' is a rare word in the Bible.

thought of as indicating some real difference between the two concepts.⁹ (emphasis added)

The differences between the two beliefs have consequences in the way we act here and now. Gabriel Fackre writes, "If we envisage our final destiny as that of an immortal soul, an ahistorical piety and morality invariably follow... In contrast, the resurrection of the *body* carries with it a mandate to care here and now for the hungry, homeless and abused."¹⁰ In saying "invariably" Fackre overstates the case, nevertheless we can acknowledge a tendency to head down the paths he suggests.

Immortality in the Bible.

Scripture nowhere speaks of the 'immortal soul', indeed ἀθάρατος (immortal / imperishable), ἀθανασία (immortality) and their derivatives are rare words. They do not appear in the LXX First Testament, although they are fairly well

attested in the Apocrypha¹¹, and apart from in the Pauline corpus only appear 4 times in the rest of the New

Testament.¹² In the major Pauline letters there are 8 occurrences, with a cluster of them in 1 Corinthians 15:50-54 (6x).¹³ The secondary letters contain 3 occurrences.¹⁴ 1 Timothy 6:16 attributes immortality to God

alone and Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:53-54 associates both imperishability and immortality for humans with the *parousia*, a yet future event.¹⁵ Whether one regards the bestowal of immortality as occurring at death or at a time yet to come, such as 'the Day of the Lord' is not the immediate issue. What is clear is that Paul does not speak of immortality as either the lot of everyone (rather, only those in Christ'), or a present possession.¹⁶

Certainly Justin Martyr's *Dialogue With Trypho* (Second Century A.D.) shows that the controversy over the question of bodily resurrection versus the immortality of the soul was an issue a little later in the church's history. He writes that there are "some who are called Christians ... who say that there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven... Do not imagine that they are Christians" (80).¹⁷

Resurrection: Paul's Background.

As we noted in the first part neither Paul nor the First Testament view the human being as **consisting** of a soul, but rather of **being** soul. The 'answer' or hope for after death that began to emerge in the later writings of the First Testament were not the same as most of Israel's neighbours. Their neighbours looked primarily inwardly to survival of something constitutive of their being, whereas the glimmer of the afterlife in the First Testament is found in some of the later books that look to God for hope in resurrection.¹⁸ Brandon ties Hebrew anthropology and hope together when he writes, "The physical re-constitution of the dead, and their re-animation, were demanded by the Hebrew conception of man [as a psycho-physical organism] as the essential preconditions for such an act of vindication."¹⁹ Dewart, referring to Psalm 49:15, writes of the "increasing testimony after the exile to the conviction that Sheol lay open before the Lord."²⁰

There are antecedents to resurrection "in the miracles of resuscitation performed through Elijah and Elisha" in 1 and 2 Kings, as well as in "the images of national revival" in Hosea 6:1-2 and Ezekiel 37:1-14.²¹ The earliest clear statements about resurrection come in Daniel 12:2 and Isaiah 26:19.²² It may also be

alluded to in Job 14:7-17.²³ In the extra-canonical writings bodily resurrection is also proclaimed (eg. 2 Maccabees 7:9-36 and 4 Ezra 7:31-32²⁴).

Witherington writes, "The majority of the references to resurrection in early Judaism suggest a very materialistic view of the resurrection... In other words... the idea of a nonmaterial resurrection would have amounted to a contradiction in terms."²⁵ Sider may be overstating the case when he writes that, "As a good first century Pharisee, Paul could not conceive of resurrection of the dead in purely immaterial terms."²⁶ (He seems to have ignored the fact that there was some divergence of beliefs within Pharisaism as well as intertestamental Judaism and certainly an awareness of alternative understandings.) A fairer position would be to see Paul's background as at least providing the language in

Paul never even hints that Jesus 'survived' death but rather that he was raised from the dead

which the Christian hope could be expressed.²⁷ On balance it is most likely that Paul did inherit a materialistic understanding of resurrection, confirmed by his Damascus encounter, and he

is unequivocal in his declaration that resurrection is bodily. This has been the standard Christian understanding for many centuries.²⁸

Paul and Resurrection.

The New Testament is full of the idea of resurrection. Dewart writes that it "is totally informed by the resurrection of Jesus and the hope it engendered among his followers,"²⁹ and Paul is no exception. The terminology he uses includes: to raise – Rom 4:24, 25; 6:4,9; 7:4; 8:11, 34; 10:9; 13:11; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:4,12,13,14,15,16, 17,20,29,32,35,42, 43,52; 2 Cor. 1:9; 4:14; 5:15; Gal. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:19; 4:14,16; to raise up – 1 Cor. 6:14; resurrection – Rom. 1:4; 6:5; 1 Cor. 15:12,13,21, 42; Phil. 3:10,11.³⁰

Paul's Pharisaic background (Phil. 3:5; Acts 23:6; 26:5) suggests belief in bodily resurrection. The testimony in Acts to an on-going dispute between the Pharisees and the Sadducees concerning resurrection is witness to this being a tenet of Pharisaic belief (see Acts 4:2; 23:6-8; 26:21). However one big difference between Paul the Pharisee and Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ was that resurrection, which was previously 'only' believed, was now made certain by the appearance of Christ. Murphy-O'Connor writes that it was "now 'known', whereas before such a return [from the dead]

had only been an inference based on the goodness of God.²¹

Paul never even hints that Jesus 'survived' death but rather that he 'was raised' from the dead. Indeed it could be argued that if 'all' Jesus did was survive death (as some suggest we all will) then in what sense could he have died for our sins - (1 Cor. 15:3); or more particularly, in what sense did he conquer or overcome death (Romans 6:9; cf. 1 Cor 15:26,54)?²² Conzelmann notes that this "victory over death does not consist in man's escaping death and its (abiding) power, but in death itself being overcome."²³

There can be little doubt that in Paul's view the 'Christian' faith stands or falls on the resurrection. Witherington summarizes Paul's position like this: "All that goes before resurrection in the story of Christ and all that comes after it hinges on Jesus' rising."²⁴ Within the wider Pauline corpus only 2 Thessalonians, Titus and Philemon don't mention it. In Romans 10:9 Paul places belief in Christ's resurrection as part of salvation,²⁵ having earlier in the same letter firmly tied justification with resurrection (4.25).

Continued next issue ...

Notes:

¹ So E.M. Blaiklock, *Not Made to Die* (Auckland: Institute Printing, 1950) Chapter 5: Immortality, 35-46. Cf. Brady, 450, "All cultures and civilizations ... recognize that

man possesses within himself some element that is relatively independent of the body, giving life and power to the body."

² Cullmann, 9.

³ This enormously important topic is beyond the scope of this paper - all we can do here is attempt to show that Paul's understanding was clearly resurrection and not immortality of the soul.

⁴ Rahner, 146.

⁵ Cullmann, 9.

⁶ This is especially true in the intertestamental writings about which Joanne E. McWilliam Dewart, *Death and Resurrection. Message of the Fathers of the Church*, Gen. Ed. Thomas Halton. (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1986) 24, writes, "Doctrines of the immortality of the soul and of the resurrection of the body had ... at least one element in common, ... (they are both) ... understood as God's direct gift."

⁷ Cullmann, 18-19.

⁸ Cullmann, 19.

⁹ P. Badham, *Christian Beliefs About Life After Death* (London: Macmillan, 1976) 91.

¹⁰ Gabriel Fackre, "I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body" *Interpretation* 46 (1992) 42-52, at 46.

¹¹ Eg. Wisdom 1:15; Sirach 17:30; 4 Maccabees 7:3; 14:6; 18:23.

¹² 3 of these are in 1 Peter (1:4,23; 3:4) while the fourth is in a variant of Mark 16:9.

¹³ Apart from 1 Corinthians the two other times are in Romans 1:23 & 2:7.

¹⁴ Ephesians 6:24; 1 Timothy 6:16; 2 Timothy 1:10.

¹⁵ Cf. Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 202.

¹⁶ Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 204, "The New Testament regards (immortality) as a conditional as well as a future possession."

¹⁷ Quoted in Hays, 259.

¹⁸ Refer previous chapter and below.

¹⁹ S.G.F. Brandon, *The Judgement of the Dead. An Historical and Comparative Study of the Idea of a Postmortem Judgement in the Major Religions* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967) 64, quoted in Dewart, 21.

²⁰ Dewart, 17.

²¹ Kreitzer, "Resurrection", 806.

²² Daniel 12:2 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake...

Isaiah 26:19 Your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a radiant dew, and the earth will give birth to those long dead.

²³ Eg. Job 14:4 If mortals die, will they live again?

²⁴ We do acknowledge that the apocryphal and pseudepigraphal writings do also testify to immortality of the soul. What we are establishing here is a connection between Paul's later theology and this Hebrew background, and endeavouring to show that he does not part from the First Testament

teaching.

²⁵ Witherington, 172.

²⁶ R.J. Sider, "The Pauline Conception of the Resurrection Body in 1 Cor. XV: 35-54," *NTS* 21 (1974-75) 428-39, at 433. Quoted in Kreitzer, 807. We agree that Paul does not conceive of existence without a body. What we question is Sider's introductory statement that "As a good first century Pharisee, Paul could not conceive..." We suggest the most profound influence on Paul's understanding was his Damascus encounter with the risen Christ. Conzelmann, 280, writes, "Existence without a body is a thing he cannot 'conceive' of at all." We rather suggest that he cannot 'entertain' the idea, because clearly he could 'perceive' it in the sense that he would have been able to understand the concept, while still disagreeing with it.

²⁷ So Dewart, 25. Also Calvin J. Rortzel, "As Dying, and Behold We Live: Death and Resurrection in Paul's Theology," *Interpretation* 46 (1992) 5-18, at 5, "It was not Paul's experience of Christ but his Pharisaeism (Phil 3:6) and his Jewish apocalypticism that first bequeathed to him a resurrection language."

²⁸ Eg. The Apostles' Creed includes "The resurrection of the flesh."

²⁹ Dewart, 25.

³⁰ Adapted from Kreitzer, "Resurrection," 807.

³¹ Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 142. Also Witherington, 171, "What caused Paul to alter his eschatological framework, which he inherited from early Pharisaeic Judaism, is precisely his experience of the risen Lord..."

³² Romans 6:9 - θάνατος αὐτοῦ οὐκέτι κυριεύει. (death no longer has dominion over him). Cf. De Boer, whole book, esp. c. Chapter 4. In particular, 126, "The main point ... (is) ... that the destruction of death (and thus the resurrection of the dead) is in fact what the reign of Christ is fundamentally all about. That and nothing else."

³³ Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, trans. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975) 274.

³⁴ Witherington, 170. He later writes, "The resurrection of Christ is the foundation stone of Paul's gospel, providing the basis for the offer of forgiveness of sins and justification." 179.

³⁵ So Kreitzer, 806; and Witherington, 178.

Off the Internet ...

The following is an actual question given on a University of Washington chemistry midterm. The answer by one student was so "profound" that the professor shared it with colleagues via the Internet, which is of course, why we now have the pleasure of enjoying it as well.

Bonus Question: Is Hell exothermic (gives off heat) or endothermic (absorbs heat)?

Most of the students wrote proofs of their beliefs using Boyle's Law, (gas cools off when it expands and heats up when it is compressed) or some variant. One student, however, wrote the following:

First, we need to know how the mass of Hell is changing in time. So we need to know the rate that souls are moving into Hell and the rate they are leaving. I think that we can safely assume that once a soul gets to Hell, it will not leave. Therefore, no souls are leaving. As for how many souls are entering Hell, lets look at the different religions that exist in the world today. Some of these religions state that if you are not a member of their religion you will go to Hell. Since there are more than one of these religions and since people do not belong to more than one religion, we can project that all souls go to Hell. With birth and death rates as they are, we can expect the number of souls in Hell to increase exponentially.

Now we look at the rate of change of the volume in Hell because Boyle's Law states that in order for the temperature and pressure in Hell to stay the same, the volume of Hell has to expand proportionately as souls are added. This gives two possibilities:

- 1. If Hell is expanding at a slower rate than the rate at which souls enter Hell, then the temperature and pressure in Hell will increase until all Hell breaks loose.*
- 2. Of course, if Hell is expanding at a rate faster than the increase of souls in Hell, then the temperature and pressure will drop until Hell freezes over. So which is it?*

If we accept the postulate given to me by Ms Teresa Banyan during my Freshman year, "...that it will be a cold day in Hell before I go out with you.", and take into account the fact that I still have not succeeded in dating her then #2 cannot be true, and thus I am sure that Hell is exothermic and will not freeze.

The student received the only "A" given.

(Editor's note. While I enjoyed the joke, and therefore included it in the Newsletter, it shows how flippantly the whole subject of 'hell' is treated by many Westerners. Part of that I am sure is because of the monstrosity of eternal torment. Rather than be 'scared into heaven' (which is a very questionable tactic at best) most reasonably educated people find the concept so ridiculous they laugh at it. Conditional immortality offers a 'reasonable' as well as Scriptural understanding of final judgment.)

ADVENT CHRISTIAN MISSIONS NEW ZEALAND



WORKTEAM 2001/2002

Another Workteam is being organised to go from New Zealand to Oro Bible College in the Philippines at the end of this year. This will be our 6th team to the Philippines and their task will be the completion of the Faculty Housing at the College. This project was started in 1999, and given a big boost when our previous team went to Oro Bible College in Dec1999/Jan2000. But the College is out of funds to finish the 80% completed and badly needed block of 4 flats, and it remains unusable at present.

We plan to change that unsatisfactory situation.

The flats need an estimated \$NZ 40,000 to complete - a figure well beyond us also ! But by providing a workteam we can knock about one quarter off that figure, and with donations from NZ and USA we aim to complete the job. Even the completion of 2 units

will make a huge difference.

The College has grown in the past few years and is seeking Government registration. To obtain this, faculty members are taking extra studies to obtain Masters Degrees, and housing for them needs improving (at present some live in virtual hovels). The 4-unit Housing Project will provide a reasonable Filipino standard of housing.

PRAY that our Lord will draw together the right people for our workteam, and pray that all necessary arrangements will proceed well.

Anyone wanting information about the team should contact either:

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AWAITING COMPLETION - THE UNFINISHED FACULTY HOUSING PROJECT - JANUARY 2001

OTHER FIELDS

Advent Christian congregations meet in 28 different countries across the world. Most of these are self-governing and

self-supporting groups of believers. The newest group to link with the Advent Christian identification is in **Cameroon, West Africa**. Most groups have a notable zeal for

evangelism, but not without some cost.

Pastor Desire Ahola in Croatia has been beaten up for his faith, to try to stop (unsuccessfully!) his preaching. Pastor Sesay, sent in 1999 from Liberia, West Africa as a missionary into the neighbouring country of Sierra Leone was killed by rebels last year along with some members of his congregation.

The Advent Christian work in China continues to witness, but with considerable danger to its leaders.

Pastors in India are under increasing harassment and persecution for spreading the Gospel.

PRAY that leaders in all the fields will stand firm for the Lord in spite of opposition, and that the Gospel will still be proclaimed effectively.

FINANCE

We are thankful to those who send in donations for Advent Christian Missions. In November we remitted to India the amount of \$3800, of which \$500 went to the College of Evangelism in

Kodiakanal, and the balance to provide finance for Capital Projects. In December we sent \$3500 to Oro Bible College in the Philippines, of which \$2200 was for students assistance ('The Blessing Fund') with a Christmas bonus, and the balance for the Faculty Housing Project.

If you wish to send a donation, please address it to

Advent Christian Missions PO Box 20-438 Auckland 7

A receipt is always given in return.

Carey Park Report

Where do you start? At the beginning I hear you say. Good thinking, so "In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth" and then He said it was 'good'.

Let me explain why that is relevant in the context. At our 'Kids' holiday camp this past Christmas, we decided one night that we would sleep under the stars - actually it was under a big tarpaulin. We explained to the kids that God made the heavens and the earth and that we were about to use both. We intended to get the kids up at 2AM (they didn't know about that part)

and have them lie on the ground and look up at the heavens and see what a great job God had done.

What a great idea, after that we were going to feed them 'moon pies & extraterrestrial fizzy drink' after they had looked at the stars and then send them back to bed. Did you know what plans are made for? We found out that they are made to be washed away and that's what happened. It rained!!!!

No stars - that we could see, plenty of rain though. Needless to say we 'let sleeping --- lie' to coin a phrase and told them about it the next day. The theme was

G.O.D. 'Great-Out-Doors' we not only used God's creation but also spoke about our wonderful creator God and His desire to have a relationship with us.

We also had a 'back-to-front' day when their breakfast started with ice cream & fruit salad, followed by sausages & chips and can no doubt guess what dinner was - that's right weetbix & yogurt. (they



had those nice hot pies etc. for supper). But they had to wear their clothes back to front and sit with their chairs around the wrong way & their sauce went on the plate before the pie - sound like fun?? It's amazing what we do to make kids 'happy'. We had 10 kids with disabilities from CCS with us again and what a joy they are. Anyway the camp was great with a really positive response to the gospel. I had a girl rush up to me and say 'Uncle Tim I have just asked Jesus into my life' makes all the other crazy things we do, like sleeping out, worthwhile. Would you or could you be interested in coming as a leader or maybe as a camp parent or grand-parent???. let me assure you that it's just great. Give Tim a ring 837 0494.

To run a 'Teen Camp' requires strong leadership skills a determined & unbreakable spirit; a sense of humour & the love of God. Cameron on our staff and a group of dedicated leaders had 30 teens to contend with and they had a great time. There aren't many groups holding teen camps now so we really blessed to have them come to us. They did their fair share of 'crazy' things (like eeling & they got the 'star gazing' thing in one fine night). They went on a train ride in the Waitakere's and slept out over

They 'hung out' as YP do, had a coffee bar outside and spent a lot of time just talking. The studies dealt with al

the usual YP areas, talked about Christian standards in relationships & behaviour. One of the tension areas in running these camps is that YP have a very liberal concept of relationships & respect within that. So it's a hard role as a leader trying to get them to observe a Christian perspective on girl/guy relationships based on respect & not animal instinct. We are very pleased the way these Teen camps are going but ask that you would pray that there would radical spiritual change & progress in their lives.

Soccer Camp was another



very good camp. Kim Beale is the visionary behind these camps, he also speaks

at them. We had about 40 guys & girls this camp & the kids not only learnt soccer skills but also heard about the Lord Jesus. Kim arranged for Wynton Rufer to come & speak to the kids plus share his testimony and that was a real privilege. Another of the Kingz soccer team came and shared his faith with them as well, it's such good value for these kids to hear someone who has succeeded in their sport but also have given their lives to Christ. Had a big impact. Unfortunately the guy from Kingz had an 'impact' all of his own, after leaving camp, he crashed into a car and wrote his one off. The kids when they heard this prayed

for him and by the grace of God he only missed 1-2 games afterwards - but he certainly scored with the kids. It was Paul who said he would use all things so that he might win some, great to see that the gospel is relevant to everyone and in all walks of life.

On the camp front, we are going through an uncertain time because bookings are not great and the size of groups are smaller making it very difficult to balance everything financially. We have a very deep conviction that we are on the right track and that we just have to work our way through this. It appears to be 'common to camps' throughout NZ. And there's all sorts of reasons for it. Please pray with us in thanking God for the way He has led us and is most definitely leading us right now and also ask that we will be sensitive to His directions in the future. We are mindful of those marvelous verses in Ephesians 2 which tell us that because of our relationship with Christ "we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ so that in the times to come that He can display His incredible grace". The very reason for our existence is to display to all ages and from many walks of life, His grace. We want to continue ~~to do~~ that because in doing that we a fulfilling His purpose. So we are confident that we will see His hand on us, please pray with us.

Hell - A Hot Topic

Part Two of an address given by Dr Edward Fudge during his visit to New Zealand. Remuera Baptist -
13.08.00

The majority literature says that the Old Testament doesn't say anything about the end of the wicked, but these Psalms do say something about it (see last issue. *ed.*). The second thing that the Old Testament does say about it is in two historical examples of divine judgment that occurred in time. The first of these is the great Flood in the days of Noah. The second is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

These are important for two reasons. Maybe more, but two that I can think of.

First of all, because the vocabulary that is used for the destruction of the Flood and the destruction by fire of Sodom and Gomorrah is the same vocabulary that is used in the New Testament about the final end of the wicked. So if these words that are used have meaning in the context of the Flood and of Sodom they must mean the same thing, or there has to be good reason why they don't, when the New Testament uses those very words about the end of the wicked, and we will look at these in just a moment.

The second reason that the Flood and Sodom and Gomorrah are important in

understanding the subject is because New Testament writers use both of those events as examples which they say show us what will happen to the wicked at the end of the world. We will see that in just a moment in 2 Peter and in Jude.

First the Flood, just notice the language that is used in connection with the Flood.

Genesis 6, first of all as God contemplates what He's going to do.

Genesis 6:5-7 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the

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earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. And the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, ... but Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

Then in v13 God tells Noah

"I am about to destroy them with the earth."

In v17 "I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life...."

Then we come to chapter 7 where it tells us what happened. When the waters had prevailed over the tops of the mountains, then it says, Genesis 7:21-23 And all flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land ...

And then at the end of the story Noah comes out of the ark with his family; God makes a covenant that He will never do this same thing again and this time He speaks of it like this:

Genesis 8:21 ... the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man ... I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.

So here we have such words as destroy, perish, die, blotted out. God says, 'I will do that'; it says, 'He did do that';

and He says He won't ever do that again. But these are the words that He used to picture it. Now what happened in the Flood? You can't say it any plainer than that - the people died; they perished; they were destroyed; they were blotted out. When we come to the New Testament the most common language for describing the end of the wicked are the words 'die', 'perish' and 'destroy'. Yet it's been the custom of the Christian Church majority since the Fifth Century to say die doesn't mean die; it means stay alive forever in conscious torment. Perish doesn't

mean perish, it means they never will perish. And destroy doesn't mean destroy, it means they can't be destroyed because the soul is indestructible.

Now wait a minute folks! Either I'm really dumb or something strange is going on here. Why don't die and perish and destroy mean what they meant in the flood? When we come to 2 Peter and Peter says "God will destroy the world now with fire, and evil-doers as he destroyed them with the flood in the days of Noah." So this was an example of God's earthly judgment which is used in the New Testament as a model for His final judgment and the vocabulary of judgment is exactly the same as the vocabu-

lary of judgment in the New Testament. "The soul that sins it shall die." (Ezekiel) Or you come to the New Testament - "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." Or "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not **perish** but have everlasting life."

It's been the custom of the Christian Church majority since the Fifth Century to say that die doesn't mean die; it means stay alive forever in conscious torment...

Or "He who sows to the flesh shall in the flesh reap **corruption**."

Die, perish, destroy - these words occur over and over and over in the New Testament talking about the end of the wicked and they remind us of Noah's flood and what happened to the evil doers in that day, but the next time it will be with fire not with water.

Another example in the Old Testament is one which gives us a great deal of vocabulary of judgment. It is found in Genesis chapter 19 in connection with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Most of the most common language that is used when talking about 'hell' or the end

of the wicked comes from this example of Sodom and Gomorrah. the exceptions are 'the fire that is not quenched' and 'the worm that does not die' (which come from Isaiah 66). Listen to the way it is described:

First of all in Genesis 19 the angels tell Lot that he is to take his family away from the city because, in v13, "we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the LORD that the LORD has sent us to destroy it." So whatever happens to Sodom and Gomorrah is what it means to destroy something.

Then v24 says, "Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire." I grew up in the southern United States with fundamentalist preaching hearing about 'fire and brimstone', and people talked about 'hell-fire and brimstone preaching'. What does that term mean? It means something that came from Sodom and Gomorrah - God rained down burning sulphur, which is what brimstone is, and the city was destroyed. The burning sulphur emits a toxic fume which asphyxiates people. The fire that's involved with it in all this may be something similar to a volcano actually. It destroys whatever is left until there's nothing left but smoke, as we will see in just a moment.

But fire and brimstone, which are used throughout the Old Testament as a symbol of God's judgment (e.g. Deuteronomy 29:23, Psalm 11:6, Isaiah 30:33, Ezekiel 38:22). It is always a picture of a kind of total destruction such as befell Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19.

So that's a vocabulary of judgment that comes from Sodom and Gomorrah. But that's not all. Genesis 19:27-28 says that after this happened "Abraham arose early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before the LORD; and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended." So the second vocabulary of judgment from Sodom and Gomorrah is the picture of smoke that ascends; smoke that rises. What did it mean when he saw smoke rising? I think a modern example is the mushroom shaped cloud. What does that symbolise? Atomic destruction. Does it mean that people are suffering in agony when you see this mushroom shaped cloud? No, it means there are no people left. It means that terrible things have already happened; it's over with; the people are all dead; there's nothing left but smoke. That's what it meant with Sodom. Abraham looked and all he

saw was smoke ascending like smoke of a furnace.

If we go to Isaiah 34:10 God describes the destruction of the land of Edom, and He says it will be fire and brimstone by the way, which means total obliteration, and then He says Edom's smoke will rise forever. It doesn't mean they will always be burning and suffering but it means they will be destroyed so completely there will be nothing left but smoke. That's what it means their smoke is ascending, but when he says it will ascend forever, it means it will never be rebuilt. It's destruction will be perpetual, everlasting. It's a punishment of obliteration, of annihilation, which is never reversed. That's what it means by "It's smoke ascends forever."

When you come to the Book of Revelation you have mention of "the smoke of their

When I read an expression like 'fire and brimstone' I would get out my concordance and look for every place it appears - and lo and behold a picture emerges!

torment that ascends forever", or it says, "day and night forever". It doesn't mean the people are suffering forever, it means the people are destroyed and they never come back again. We

learn that from the way it's used, first in Genesis 19, then Isaiah 34. One of the things that, not knowing where I was going when I did this research, I thought all I can do, besides pray very hard, is rely on the best tools of evangelical, biblical study that had ever been able to learn. One of those is you let the Bible explain itself. So when I would read an expression like 'fire and brimstone' I would get out my concordance and look at every place it ever talks about it. And lo and behold a picture emerges.

In Genesis 19:29 we read, "Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, etc, etc." So we have the vocabulary of Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction - first 'fire and brimstone' means something like a volcanic eruption which destroys with burning sulphur, toxic fumes, and fire burns up what is left.

Last year my wife and I were privileged to go on a tour of Israel and along the way we went through Italy and we visited Pompeii. We saw the remains of people in different positions that had just been covered up with 'fire and brimstone' you might say. And it was this kind of destruction that sud-

denly wiped out the village that happened to Sodom and Gomorrah.

The picture of smoke ascending comes from Sodom and Gomorrah. The picture of smoke ascending **forever** is from a passage in Isaiah 34 that adds to this and means it is irreversible. The picture of God destroying also tells us something about Sodom and Gomorrah.

Now we turn to the New Testament. I'll just note two passages. 2 Peter 2:5,6 If God "did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing *them* to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly thereafter" and then in verse 9, "the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment." In other words what happened to the people in the flood, what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah, shows us that God is able to deal with ungodliness. So this is in fact a picture of what will happen to those at the end of the world.

But if we turn to Jude, Jude says it even more explicitly than that. Jude 7 "Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example, in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire." So here's another bit of vocabulary of judgment - 'eternal fire'. What happened to Sodom and Gomorrah? They are so totally destroyed by fire and brimstone and nothing's left but rising smoke - and they said "You'll be de-

Sodom and Gomorrah show us that God is able to deal with ungodliness.

stroyed." But this fire of Sodom and Gomorrah is a fire which made a permanent destruction. They never rebuild; they disappear from the face of the earth; they may be at the bottom of the Dead Sea; they will never be reconstructed. So this is a permanent destruction, and that's what it means when it says "Sodom and Gomorrah are undergoing a punishment of eternal fire." Fire which had eternal results. It's irreversible; it's irremediable; it will never be undone again and they will never be rebuilt. And Jesus speaks in Matthew 25 of 'eternal fire' meaning

the same thing - fire which destroys so thoroughly that there's never ever going to be a reconstruction of what has been destroyed. There's no resurrection; there's no return; there's no remedy. The lost, once destroyed in hell will be gone forever. They will be gone as 'forever' as the saved are enjoying eternal life. It's an eternal punishment, eternal destruction, just like it's eternal life on the other side.

So this is one of the first surprises that I encountered. How is it that people would say the Old Testament doesn't say anything about it, when it says so very, very much indeed?

There are at least six to ten examples of Messianic passages in the Old Testament which are clearly used in the New Testament to talk about what Jesus will do which describe the end of the wicked in similar terms. I go into those in the book "Two Views of Hell". I'm not really trying to sell the book but if you want to know more about it that's one way to find out. Anyway there's much more that could be said.

Part Three in the next issue.

See back cover for details about purchasing Dr Fudge's book.

Editorial

I happened to run into an acquaintance of mine, a fellow pastor, in a bookstore recently. We exchanged pleasantries and asked after the church each of us was involved in. I mentioned a Sunday Evening series of seminars I was running at the time and his immediate, and earnest, question was, "Are you teaching them doctrine?" Knowing a little about the man and his ministry I knew that this was the centre of his ministry and the goal of his church - to teach doctrine. I couldn't help but think how inadequate doctrine, in and of itself, was as the ministry of a church.

Yes, I teach 'doctrine', as part and parcel of a church that ministers to children, youth, families, the elderly, the poor, etc; a church with a heart for mission; a church that enjoys singing praises in both hymns (still!) and

choruses; a church that endeavours to be balanced in its approach to being 'church'. And, yes, I am well aware that there seems to be an increasing number of churches who minimize teaching and major on experience. But the answer is neither one extreme nor the other.

Our model is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself. As I read the Gospels I am continually reminded that Jesus not only taught 'doctrine', he also told stories, cared for the sick and poor, dined and even partied with all sorts of people, prayed and on at least one occasion sung with his disciples. His life was complete, well-rounded and full. As the body of Christ we ought to be aiming at the same.

How does this tie in with condi-

tional immortality? It probably appears to some that doctrine is all that we are interested in. This is not the case. Although we were established to promote conditional immortality we believe that this is only one part of the overall picture. Our role may major on promoting what we understand is correct teaching, but we don't see this as an end in itself. We believe that the Christian faith concerns our whole life. But we do firmly believe that our faith, our lives, need to be grounded on truth - both the person of Jesus Christ (who is the Truth) and the Scriptural principles that we may discern with the help of the Holy Spirit. Conditional immortality is one part of the truth. A very important part, but it isn't all there is to the faith by any means.

Carl Josephson
Editor

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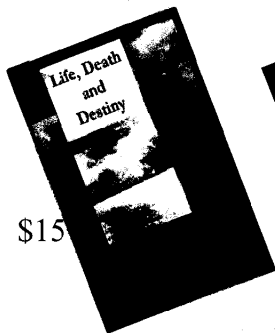


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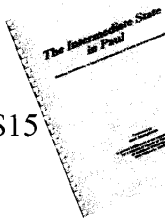




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