

Welcome to Issue 53.

Armand Newrick challenges us to know Christ more on page 1. His conference address on Gehenna is on page 3: The idea that Gehenna was a perpetually burning rubbish dump has been contested by some notable scholars. Armand addresses the question, if the Lord Jesus's teaching on Gehenna was not drawn from the concept of the "rubbish dump" where did he draw the concept from? Armand suggests that Jesus used Old Testament imagery to communicate judgement on Jerusalem and challenges us to think about how we should be using the term today given it was a very Jewish concept.

On page 12 Jefferson Vann reviews *Neighbor to the Nations* a biography of Dr. Fred Piper. On page 13, a Media Update includes Edward Fudges' new book aimed at the lay reader and news of the movie *Hell and Mr. Fudge*. This issue concludes on page 16 with the final part of "*What Happens When we die*". I leave you with a quote from the article:

*So inseparable is the NT hope of participating in a resurrection from the grave, with Christ's resurrection from the tomb, that the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:12- 14 :*

*"But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith!"*

*To put it another way; if we believe that when we die we go consciously straight to heaven or hell as a spirit our preaching is useless and so too is our faith! And worse still we may even be affirming, in ignorance, the Devil's original lie that diffused the dynamite of the angel's announcement on that first resurrection morning!"*

God's Richest Blessings to you all.

Tarnya Burge Wessels

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# Knowing Christ More

by Armand Newrick (Philippians 3:10-12)

Who of us wants to know Christ Jesus more this day?

The Apostle Paul in writing to the Philippian church said – ***“I want to know Christ...”*** **Saul was converted and came to know Christ.** What an odd thing to say when Paul already knew Christ. On the road to Damascus (as Saul) Paul was on his way to round up Christians from the synagogues to take them back as prisoners to Jerusalem. However, he was stopped in his tracks by a bright light from heaven and an encounter with the risen Lord Jesus. To cut a long story short Saul was converted. He became Paul and he came to know Christ.

**I want to know Christ more.** So when Paul writes many years later to the Philippians ***“I want to know Christ...”*** we suspect that he is saying is that he wants to know Christ more.

**How do we get to know Christ more?** How can we as believers get to know Christ more? How was Paul suggesting that he could get to know Christ more?

**Read more of the Bible?** Perhaps Paul is suggesting that we should read our Bibles more and get to know

Christ better this way. As fundamental as a disciplined devotion life to the study of the Scriptures is I don't think that this is what Paul had in mind when he wrote about getting to know Christ more.

**Pray more?** Perhaps then Paul is suggesting that we should have a more committed prayer life in order to know Christ more. As fundamental as a disciplined life of prayer is I don't think that this is what Paul had in mind when he wrote about getting to know Christ more.

**Paul means that he wants to Identify with Christ more.** When Paul writes ***“I want to know Christ {more}...”*** what he means is that he wants to identify with Christ more fully.

In other words Paul is not writing about getting to know about Christ more but rather that he becomes like Christ, more, through sharing in his sufferings and even his death.

**Paul certainly shared in Christ's Sufferings.** Now there's a new concept when it comes to knowing Christ more. Paul certainly did

identify with Christ in this way in his life didn't he? He suffered greatly for the Gospel of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He often went without in order to benefit the Church and to also see others come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; except for the chains that he often wore.

**Paul's Life was a Sacrifice for God's Glory.** Paul's life could be described as a drink offering being poured out for God's glory. Paul was such an example of someone who was prepared to sacrifice their own life and their own personal benefits in order to benefit others and bring glory to God.

**Paul paid the Ultimate Price of Martyrdom.** More than this, if tradition is correct, the Apostle Paul paid the ultimate price of becoming a martyr at the hands of the Emperor. Paul could not have known Christ more fully, as far as identifying with him, than to die this way.

**Why would Paul do this?** Why would he put his personal life at risk?

**He lived like this because he knew that he would also share in Christ's Resurrection**

He did this because he knew that if he identified with Christ's sufferings

he would also be identified with Christ in his resurrection. To share in Christ's glory demands sharing in something of his suffering. The Lord Jesus taught in Matthew 5:11

*"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven..."*

**The hope of a better Resurrection Spurred Paul on**

The Apostle Paul could live this way and persevere against such great opposition because his hope spurred him on for a better resurrection. Above all things Paul pressed on for the reward that awaits all those who have longed for that blessed day of our Lord and Saviour's appearing. Christ himself had laid a hold of Paul and Paul wanted to be certain that he was doing all that he could to lay hold of Christ.

**Paul didn't anticipate an Intermediate state**

Paul didn't anticipate an immediate disembodied presence with Christ at the point of death. Rather he anticipated that he would somehow attain to the resurrection from the dead and it is in this hope that we also labour ■

# Tracing the Road to Gehenna

by Armand Newrick

(CIANZ Conference address May 5th 2012)

## Introduction

Our task for this afternoon is to trace the steps from Genesis through to the development of the NT concept of Gehenna – translated as “hell” in our English Bibles.

Many of us will be familiar with the fact that there are also other words which have been translated as “hell” in our English Bibles.

*Sheol* : The Hebrew word in the OT used for the place of the dead. Its meaning moves between the ideas of the grave, underworld and the state of the dead. It is used over 60x and most frequently in the Psalms.

*Hades* : The unseen place of the departed – the lower regions – the grave. It is the Greek word substituted for Sheol by the translators of the Septuagint LXX (200 BC). It is used in the NT 10x. Only in Luke 16:23 are people spoken of as being conscious there – yet in a parable!

*Tartarus* : The deepest abyss for the incarceration of disobedient “angels.” The term is used only once in 2 Peter 2:4 but shows up in the Jewish writings that pre-date the NT.

*Gehenna* : Used 11x in the NT. Ten of those times by the Lord Jesus himself

in the Gospel accounts and once in James 3:6. The Hebrew term Gehenna is derived from the Hebrew *ge-hinnom*, the Valley of Hinnom, which lay just outside ancient Jerusalem.



## Was Gehenna a Perpetual Burning Rubbish Dump in the 1st Century?

It has been popularly said that the Lord Jesus borrowed the imagery of *Gehenna* from a perpetually lit rubbish dump outside Jerusalem that was used for consuming the cities rubbish and even to destroy the godless. It is understood that such graphic imagery would have helped Jesus to convey what the end-time judgment will be like. Apparently this idea was first written about in a commentary by a Rabbi by the name

of David Kimhi who lived around A.D. 1200.

However, this notion of Gehenna as a perpetual rubbish dump has been contested by some notable scholars. Herman Strack & Paul Billerbeck, scholars of Judaism and its related writings, state that there is neither archaeological nor literary evidence to support this claim in either the early intertestamental literature or later rabbinic sources. In 1986 Lloyd R. Bailey in his book “The Topography of Hell” came to the same conclusion.

There is evidence, however, that part of the valley was used for a cemetery over many centuries due to a number of burial chambers that have been found there by archaeologists (6th cent. BC – 1st cent. AD). Also the Romans apparently performed cremations there in the first century. Perhaps these facts may have influenced Rabbi Kahli’s speculation that the valley was a perpetual rubbish dump in Christ’s day.

So if the Lord Jesus did not draw his imagery from the popular concept of the “rubbish dump” where did he draw the concept from?

To answer this question we now turn to the OT account of Genesis to

see if we can find any reference to its origin there.



### **The Genesis Account – Judgment & Death**

At the outset we notice that the “Valley of Hinnom”, from which developed the concept of Gehenna, was nowhere near the Garden of Eden which we read about in Genesis chapters 1-3. It was geographically located just outside the city of Jerusalem in the New World following the Flood. However, what we do find at the outset of the OT is the all important general theme of “Judgment” which we could liken to an umbrella under which all later concepts, such as Gehenna, need to be considered.

We are told that this “Judgement” for Sin, in Genesis, entails nothing more than the ultimate price of death – “*from dust*

*you are and to dust you will return.*"<sup>1</sup> When God confronted Adam and Eve with their act of disobedience, in taking from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they were to pay with their lives. It was only by a remarkable act of grace that God took the lives of animals, as a substitute, to extend the lives of the first human beings in order to perpetuate the human race – *"The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them."*<sup>2</sup>

This would be the model, or pattern followed in the OT sacrificial system, upon which we would be redeemed by our Lord and Saviour's atoning death as our substitute. Therefore, the judgement of God, upon Sin, was death.

As Paul so succinctly writes in Romans; *"The wages of sin is death!"*<sup>3</sup>

### **Israel's Introduction to the Valley of Hinnom**

So thus far, from the very outset, there is no mention of the "Valley of Hinnom", from which developed the concept of *Gehenna*, until we read of it for the very first time in Joshua (near the end of the 15th century B.C.). We are introduced to it after the Israelites had entered into the Promised Land of Canaan when the land was being described

for allotment to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

*"Then it ran up the Valley of Ben Hinnom along the slope of the Jebusite city (that is Jerusalem). From there it climbed up to the top of the hill west of the Hinnom Valley at the northern end of the Valley of Rephaim."*<sup>4</sup>

*"The boundary went down to the foot of the hill facing the Valley of Ben Hinnom, north of the Valley of Rephaim. It continued down the Hinnom Valley along the southern slope of the Jebusite city and so to En Rogel."*<sup>5</sup>



So, thus far, the Valley of *Ben Hinnom* is described as nothing more than a geographical location.

### **The Horrors of Canaanite Practices in the Valley of Hinnom**

We now pause to consider what took place in this valley.

But before we do, I want to draw attention to the fact that many people believe that God is cruel and unfair because in the book of Joshua, from which we have just read about the Valley of Ben Hin-



nom, God instructed the Israelites to destroy all the human life in the land which God had told them to take possession of.

Why? Well for one reason the existing inhabitants of Canaan, whom the Israelites were told to dispose, through annihilation, had been sacrificing their children to a god by the name of Molech for centuries. This practise was a detestable way of treating human life in the eyes of the Sovereign God who made heaven and earth.

We read in Leviticus 18, after listing all the sexual sins that characterised the Canaanite inhabitants, – *“Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the Lord.”*<sup>6</sup>



In other words, do not follow the evil practises of the Canaanites, whom God used the Israelites to remove from the land, after the land becomes yours.

### **Who was Molech and where or what was Topheth?**

Who was Molech and how were the Canaanite's children sacrificed to him? In the Valley of *Ben Hinnom* there was what was termed a high place called *Topheth*. The etymology of the word *Topheth* might suggest a fire place and also shame. It was here that the Canaanites burnt their children to death in the fires lit for sacrifice. This was appalling, detestable, and inconceivable. No wonder these people had to be destroyed.

### **The Israelites Followed Suit**

It is difficult to imagine any culture on earth becoming so depraved. However consider this: King Ahaz of Judah (732-715BC), 7 centuries after the Israelites entered the Promised Land, along with making cast idols for worshipping the Baals, sacrificed his sons in the Valley of *Ben Hinnom*.

*“He burned sacrifices in the Valley of Ben Hinnom and sacrificed his sons in the fire, following the detestable ways of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites.”*<sup>7</sup>

This is shocking!

However, if that is not enough, King Manasseh of Judah (696-686 BC) continued the practise into the next generation.

*“In both courts of the temple of the Lord, he built alters to all the starry hosts. He sacrificed his sons in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practised sorcery, divination and witchcraft, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the Lord, provoking him to anger.”<sup>8</sup>*

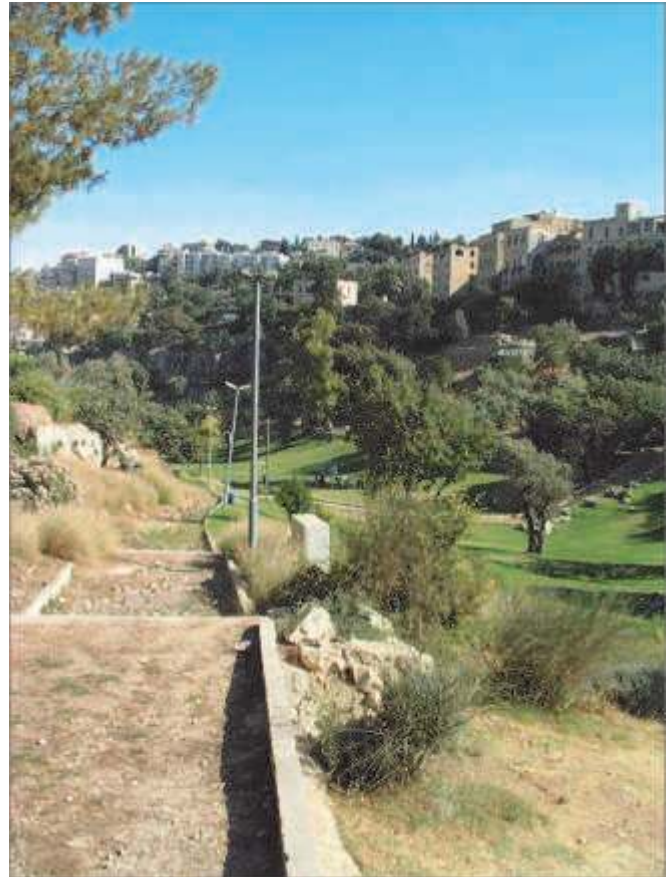
The grandson of this evil King Manasseh, Josiah, who came to the throne at only 8 year old (640-609 BC), attempted to reform Judah in the hope of averting God’s judgment upon the nation for these practises.

*“He desecrated Topheth, which was in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, so no one could use it to sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire to Molech.”<sup>9</sup>*

How could the Jews, of all people, stoop so low?

These practices certainly put colour into the geography of *Ben Hinnom* now don’t they? We note that our contemporary traditions around the NT *Gehenna* (as a place for disembodied eternal conscious torment) is not remotely related to what we have looked at so far.

Anyway, what was God to do with his chosen people?



### **The Valley of Ben Hinnom in the Writings of the Prophets**

We now turn to consider the writings of the OT prophets, in regards to the geographical location of *Ben Hinnom*, in search of further illumination to the development of the NT concept of *Gehenna* that the Lord Jesus used.

Jeremiah is the only prophet to take up the imagery of the Valley of *Ben Hinnom* in his writings. He does so in order to use the graphic horror of fiery sacrifice in order to confront Judah’s sin. Although Jeremiah is the only prophet to draw on the place name *Ben Hin-*

*nom* in the prophet Isaiah we do have one reference to *Topheth* which was the high place in the Valley of *Ben Hinnom* for these child sacrifices.

*“Topheth has long been prepared; it has been made ready for the king. Its fire pit has been made deep and wide, with an abundance of fire and wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of burning sulphur, sets it ablaze.”*<sup>10</sup>

We see here, in Isaiah, that *Topheth* has been conceptually modified into a place prepared for a future judgment upon Israel’s enemies. The “king”, to whom the prophecy is referring to, is the king of Assyria (see Isa 30:31). It is interesting to note how familiar the language of the breath of the Lord is in the way it sets its wood on fire and a stream of burning sulphur sets it ablaze.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Valley of *Hinnom* becomes an Image of Judgment for Jerusalem’s Sin**

However, Jeremiah’s conceptual modification of *Ben Hinnom*, I think, is of the greatest interest to us this afternoon as we pursue this subject; particularly in light of his message being delivered in relation to the imminent judgment upon Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

We read –

*“The people of Judah have done evil in my eyes declares the Lord. They have set up their detestable idols in the house that bears my Name and have defiled it. They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire - something I did not command, nor did it enter my mind. So beware, the days are coming declares the Lord, when people will no longer call it Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter, for they will bury the dead in Topheth until there is no more room. Then the carcasses of the people will become food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten them away.”*<sup>12</sup>

Now, for the first time, the Valley of *Ben Hinnom* has become a scene of future judgment upon those of Jerusalem. It is a judgment that bears strong similarity to how the earlier Kings Ahaz and Manasseh sacrificed their children to the god Molech. The cup that they filled up is now the cup which the prophet has them drinking from. Notice the familiar end-time



language of the birds of the air and the beasts of the field feeding on the slain (compare Rev 19:21) – but more importantly note that it is the Jews who are in view here!

Let's read some further on in Jeremiah chapter 19 of this use of *Ben Hinnom* as a place of judgment against Jerusalem.

"This is what the Lord says" 'Go and buy a clay jar from the potter. Take along some of the elders of the people and of the priests and go out to the Valley of Ben Hinnom, near the entrance of the Potsherd Gate. There proclaim the words I tell you, and say, 'Hear the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah and people of Jerusalem. This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: *Listen! I am going to bring disaster on this place that will make the ears of everyone who hears them tingle. For they have forsaken me and made this a place of foreign gods; they have burned sacrifices in it to gods that neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah ever knew, and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent. They have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fires as offerings to Baal – something I did not command or mention, nor did it enter my mind. So beware, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when people will no longer call this place Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter. In this place I will ruin the plans of Judah and Jerusalem. I will make*

*them fall by the sword before their enemies, at the hands of those who seek their lives, and I will give their carcasses as food to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth.*"<sup>13</sup>

*Ben Hinnom* is referred to once again in Jeremiah 32:30-41. However, in that chapter, we are told that even though they sacrificed their children in *Ben Hinnom*, God will still show mercy on them and gather them back to Jerusalem following the imminent Babylonian invasion. So from the writings of Jeremiah *Ben-Hinnom* appears to have been used as a Jewish prophetic metaphor for temporal historical judgments upon the Jews. These prophecies on Judah and Jerusalem should be factored in to our considerations of the concept of *Gehenna*, under the general umbrella of God's Judgment, when we read of it in the NT.

### **Jesus Christ's teaching on *Gehenna***

So what do we now find in our 10 usages of the concept of *Gehenna* off the Lord Jesus own lips.<sup>14</sup>

Firstly, in the very Jewish book of Matthew, note that it is used 6 times. Yet in the very Gentile book of Luke it is used only once.

Only in the one reference in Mark (9:48) does Jesus combine the

term *Gehenna* with the imagery of the “unquenchable fire and worm that dieth not” that we find in Isaiah 66:24. In Isaiah those who are subjected to the unquenchable fire and non-perishing worm perish! It is only the righteous in verse 22 who are said to endure before God. This is not an ethereal image but an image rooted in this physical world. The wider context of the chapter, in which we find this “fire and worm” verse, tells us clearly that the ungodly are slain.<sup>15</sup>

Further, the other well known imagery of the “weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth”, which has its origins in Psalm 112:10, is never connected to the technical term *Gehenna*.<sup>16</sup> It is, however, used to convey that the Jews, who thought that they were guaranteed heirs of the Kingdom, will react this way when they are shut out and others, whom they naturally excluded, are invited in. From the original source in Psalm 112:10 these, gnashing their teeth, are said to waste away and all their hopes perish along with them.

We find that that this term *Gehenna* is being used, in its original setting, to address Jews who presumably would have known of

Jeremiah’s development of the concept into a future judgment reserved for Jerusalem’s sin.

So, was the concept of *Gehenna*, as developed in the writings of Jeremiah, intended for a specific audience’s ears? Was Jesus drawing on the Scriptural associations that his original Jewish audience would have been familiar with?

### **Why such an Absence of *Gehenna* in the Rest of the NT?**

The reason that I ask this question is because the term *Gehenna* is never used in Acts, in Paul’s writings, Peter’s writings, John’s writings and even in the Book of Revelation with all its graphic apocalyptic imagery.

The only other use of the word is found in James 3:6 where we read:

*“The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.”<sup>17</sup>*

James does not give us many clues as to how the fire of *Gehenna* can light the tongue. Perhaps James is drawing associations with the level of depraved evil, practised in historical *Ben Hinnom*, as a similar evil which can motivate the misuse of the human tongue. Certainly he is writing very creatively.

## Conclusion

If the Lord Jesus teaching on *Gehenna* was aimed at a particular Jewish audience, for which the concept of *Gehenna* was a prophetic judgment upon Jerusalem, as we have seen in the writings of the prophet Jeremiah, is it appropriate that we use it today? None of the NT writers used it but for James. Or should we treat the technical concept of *Gehenna* as a concept synonymous with the future judgment of fire?

There are many references in the NT to fire being the agent used in the final judgment to purge the world of sin.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps using the term “fire”, is a much less loaded word than using the prophetic Jewish concept of *Gehenna*? Perhaps the technical term *Gehenna* simply didn't hold currency in the Gentile world. So what do we all think?<sup>19</sup> ■

## References

<sup>1</sup> Gen 3:19.

<sup>2</sup> Gen 3:21.

<sup>3</sup> Romans 6:23.

<sup>4</sup> Josh 18:16.

<sup>5</sup> Josh 15:8.

<sup>6</sup> Lev 18:21.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Chron 28:3.

<sup>8</sup> 2 Chron 33:5-6.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Kings 23:10.

<sup>10</sup> Isa 30:33.

<sup>11</sup> Compare Rev 14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8.

<sup>12</sup> Jer 7:30-33.

<sup>13</sup> Jer 19:1-7.

<sup>14</sup> Matt 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5.

<sup>15</sup> Isa 66:16.

<sup>16</sup> Compare Mt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30 and note that all the references are in Matthew.

<sup>17</sup> Jam 3:6.

<sup>18</sup> E.g. 1 Cor 3:13; 2 Thess 1:7; Heb 10:27; 2 Pet 3:7.

<sup>19</sup> A Discussion followed at conference. You may wish to discuss this article on our new forum on the website:

<http://www.afterlife.co.nz/forums/>



**Armand Newrick has had a keen interest in theology since his teenage conversion and came to the condition-**

**alist position about eight years into his walk with the Lord. He is married to Suzanne and they have two children Daniel and Emma.**

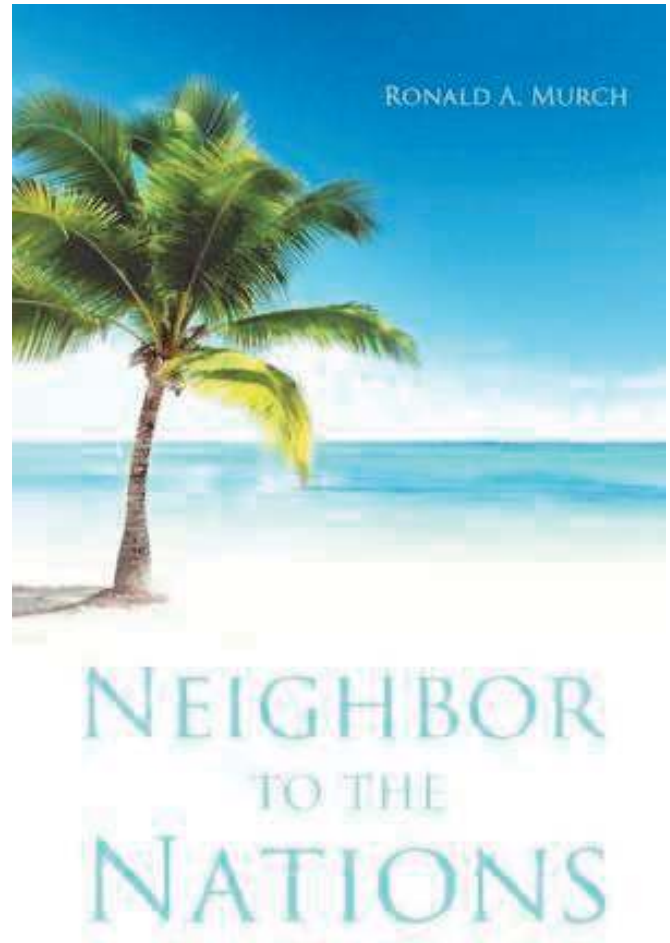
## *Neighbor To The Nations*

by Ronald A. Murch

Reviewed by Jefferson Vann

Ron Murch has given readers a great gift in this short biography of Dr. Fred L. Piper. Piper was a pastor, author, educator and poet, but it was a short term missions trip to Jamaica that proved the highlight of this man's life. His passion for reaching the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ led him to endure the hardships and uncertainties of that trip. He made an impact on the lives of the people he met, and the experience impacted him for the rest of his life.

Missionaries who have had similar experiences will enjoy reading this book. Those engaged in any Christian ministry will be encouraged by its pages. It reveals the heart of a man who – while still young, suffered the heartbreak of losing his wife to a serious illness. This tragedy did not turn Fred from his devotion to Christ and the lost. In fact, it made him more compassionate.



Fred spent most of his life as a promoter of missions, and seeking to make connections between other supporters and those who were doing the work.

Theologically, he was a conditionalist. He believed that immortality is not an innate possession in humanity, but is a gift of grace available on condition of faith in Christ. Opponents of this

view often claim that conditionalists lack the zeal to promote evangelism and missions because they reject the fear factor involved in the popular notion of a perpetual hell for the lost. Piper was living proof that this is not the case. Conditionalists are moved to reach out to the lost with the gospel because the God we know wants them to live for eternity with him.

This story was first written as part of a college assignment, and is just now being published over 50 years later. The story itself is timeless, because it captures the passion of a man who spent his life loving God with all his heart and his neighbour as himself ■



**Jefferson Vann, missionary with Advent Christian General Conference, and elder at McAlpin Advent Christian Church in Florida. He is pictured below with one of his grandsons Jeffrey. You can find more of writings at [jeffersonvann.blogspot.co.nz](http://jeffersonvann.blogspot.co.nz)**

## Media Update

### Afterlife's Forum

You are invited to join the new afterlife online forum found at [www.afterlife.co.nz/forums/](http://www.afterlife.co.nz/forums/)

It is place to share and discuss conditional immortality and annihilationism.



I hope the forum will provide an opportunity for you to share your unique perspective and be heard, as well as a place to learn from one another.

***What are the characteristics of great debate?***

*Can I suggest the following: firstly, genuine love for my partner in debate. Unless I love that person who holds the alternative viewpoint, I will never be genuinely free to learn. Secondly, I must have the*



capacity to attentively listen; and thirdly, the ability to patiently question. Finally, I will be genuinely prepared to change my view in response to the debate, for surely it is the case in real debate that I willingly become vulnerable to my opponent. I submit the sureness of my viewpoint to the critique of this other person. I allow for the possibility that I may be wrong, that I may need to alter my view. God give us all the grace to realise that we may be wrong!

Genuine debate will most likely be uncomfortable. It may assault the stronghold of my certainty and security. Nevertheless, in debate I am willing to embrace this tension because of my love for truth and my commitment to the quest for truth. For Christians, genuine debate will always result in a re-engagement with the gospel to which the Scriptures bear witness, the bottom-line for our lives and pursuit of truth.

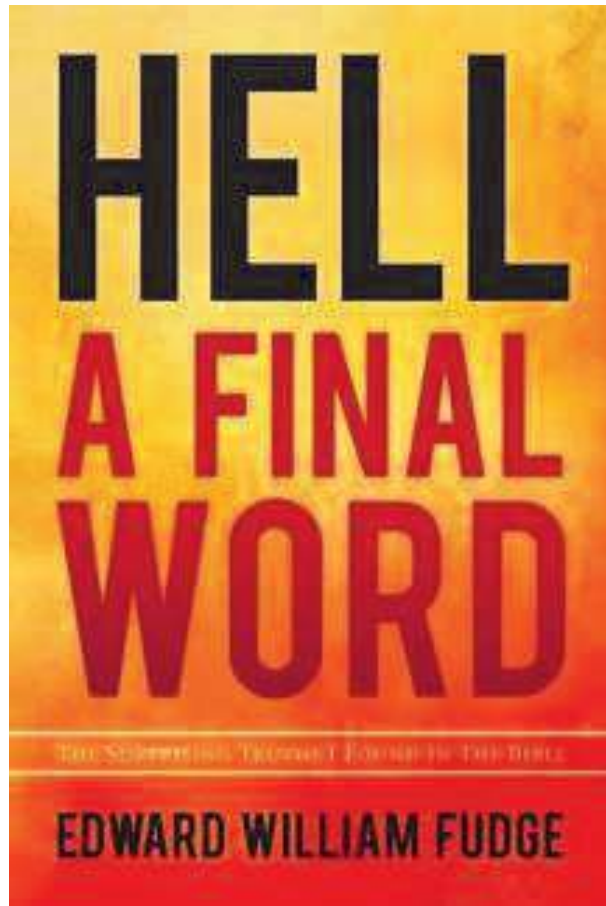
God, grant us intelligent and incisive partners in debate. May genuine, robust debate become a context in which we all move closer to mature love, faith and hope, grounded in the gospel of God's grace in Christ.

Quoted from [www.laidlaw.ac.nz/\\_blog/Our\\_Blog/post/Great\\_Debate/](http://www.laidlaw.ac.nz/_blog/Our_Blog/post/Great_Debate/)

My prayer for the forum is that it moves us closer to mature love, faith and hope, grounded in the gospel of God's grace in Christ.

Please email me if you have any technical difficulties or suggestions for improvement for the forum:  
respublishing@slingshot.co.nz.

## A New Book from Edward Fudge.



[Hell: A Final Word](#), is under 200 pages and it is accessible to the lay Christian. It is currently available from [fishpond](#) for \$17 with free shipping or from the [Book Depository](#) (free international shipping). **Those that are not comfortable with online book ordering are welcome to contact me (contact details can be found on the back page of this publication) and I will arrange shipment of the book to you. ( Offer open to New Zealand readers only).**

One reviewer wrote: " For what it sets out to do, Edward Fudge's Hell: A Final

Word, is very successful. It gives a good overview of the arguments for conditional immortality and against the traditional view of Hell as a place of eternal conscious punishment. It gets just in-depth enough to where you can understand what he means and to where you can follow his reasoning, without getting specific enough to demand a much more lengthy book. “

## A Movie:

### Hell and Mr Fudge.

*In 1970's Alabama, a young preacher struggles with his faith, and attacks from his church, after being hired to prove whether or not Hell exists.*

Set to be released on 7th July 2012. I don't know yet if it will come to theatres in New Zealand, but we will try to keep you updated and seek to get some copies on DVD. ■



# What Happens when we die:

## The Significance of the Empty Tomb (Part IV)

By Armand Newrick

*(This is part of a series of messages that was preached at Hamilton Church of Christ, New Zealand in April 2011. The full audio version and text is available on the web-site.)*

*(Daniel 12:1-4 & 1 Corinthians 15:12-26, 50-58)*

### Introduction

In all that we have covered over the last 3 weeks on the subject “what happens when we die”, please listen again to these words spoken by the angel on that first resurrection morning:

*“Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He is risen from the dead...!’”<sup>1</sup>*

### Isaiah 26:19

That message should have dropped into its original Jewish setting with the power of an atomic bomb! In Isaiah 26:19, penned some 700 years before the angel made this announcement, we read of an anticipated resurrection hope

for the nation of Israel –

*“But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.”*

This is incredible! After all that we had established in our first session in that the Jews understood that nothing consciously survives the issue of death, God reveals through the prophet Isaiah that one day the Jews could anticipate an astonishing re-creation from the grave.

### Psalm 16:9-10

Also, King David in Psalm 16:9-10, written 1000 years before the angel made this announcement, penned this phenomenal prediction that the anticipated future Messiah’s body would not decay in the grave -

*“Therefore, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body will also rest secure, because you will*

*not abandon me to the grave, not will you let your holy one see decay.”*

### **Daniel 12:1-2**

And again in Daniel 12:1-2, centuries before the angel made this announcement, a general resurrection of all people from their graves is anticipated in the future – *“But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”*<sup>2</sup>

### **The Diffusion of the Hope of Resurrection in the Face of Death**

This is amazing! Even though the Hebrew understanding of what it is to be human, throughout the OT, did not in any way suggest that anything of the person consciously survives death there was, woven between these pages, an anticipated hope of being resurrected out of the grave at the end of time.

Therefore, when the angel announced on that first Sunday “He has risen from the dead” why didn’t the message drop with the power of an atomic bomb into the hearts and minds of the original Jewish audience whose Scriptures anticipated this event? The

reason why they were blinded to the significance of this historic event was because the pay load of dynamite, which this announcement was charged with, had already been diffused by the subtle introduction of foreign ideas about what it is to be a human being and what happens when we die. Some Jews were already entertaining ideas about a disembodied afterlife that were no longer dependent upon the OT notion of a future resurrection from the dead.

### **Christ is risen from the dead-so what?**

Therefore, “Christ has risen from the dead – so what!” “So what” when death had been re-interpreted to assume that the “real identity” of a person never really died anyway? Why would we require a resurrection from the grave if death has been re-interpreted as nothing more than a release of the “real person” from the body? Even in Athens, the heart of the Greek culture of that time –

*“When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, ‘We want to hear you again on this subject’”*<sup>3</sup> the

pay-load of the announcement had also been diffused for many throughout the Greek speaking world into which the Apostle Paul took this message.

### **Tracing the Origins of the Lie**

When God originally said to Adam in Gen 2:17 “the day you eat of it you will surely die”, the serpent responded to Eve’s defence against the temptation with these famous words - *“You will not surely die.”*<sup>4</sup> How accurate are the words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ – *“He was a murderer and a liar from the beginning.”*

Even though God substituted the animals to clothe Adam and Eve nakedness of sin, so that they were spared the death penalty that day, their mortality was sealed and they eventually returned to the dust from which they were formed as God had said.

Perhaps Adam and Eve continued to believe the serpent’s lie that

they wouldn’t die; but they must have smelt a rat when the gray hairs started coming along with all those achy joints and wrinkles. Despite the 100 % strike rate of death we still pedal the original lie that was fed to the original parents of humanity – *“you will not surely die”*. We hear it at funerals, we see it on TV, we tell it in our Saint Peter at the pearly gates jokes and somehow we would really like to believe it.

### **Perpetuating the Lie will keep the World in Ignorance of the Truth**

However, as long as the world continues in the belief of some sort of natural survival of the “real person” from death, and as long as we believe we’re off to new spiritual worlds unseen when we die, then the announcement of the angel that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead will continue to be of little, if any, significance to humanity. This is a humanity who desperately needs to know that death is real and therefore Christ’s resurrection from the dead is the logical antidote to the grave.



## Christ's Resurrection and Ours are Inseparable

So inseparable is the NT hope of participating in a resurrection from the grave, with Christ's resurrection from the tomb, that the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:12-14 –

*“But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith!”*

To put it another way; if we believe that when we die we go consciously straight to heaven or hell as a spirit our preaching is useless and so too is our faith! And worse still we may even be affirming, in ignorance, the Devil's original lie that diffused the dynamite of the angel's announcement on that first resurrection morning!

Paul tells us in 1 Cor 15:18 that if Jesus Christ wasn't literally resurrected out of the grave then – *“those also who have fallen asleep in Christ [died] are lost!”* How could they be lost if the tradition is correct that says they are safely in the arms of Jesus in a conscious interim state. Wouldn't such a belief render the future resurrection unnecessary?

## Christ is the First fruits of those who sleep in Death

Christ is the 'first fruits' of those who have fallen asleep. Paul tells us in 1 Cor 15:20. In other words he is the model upon which the end time resurrection harvest of the dead will follow. We are told in verse 23-24 that there is an order for this –

*“Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.”*

When does the resurrection of the dead take place; at the point of an individual's death? No; when he {Jesus Christ} comes.

It is amazing to me that although this resurrection hope is so conspicuous throughout the NT there are many Christians for whom such a notion seems completely foreign; even after having been a Christian for many years! And so it is no surprise to hear a Christian, who has had their attention brought to this NT hope, to ask *“how are the dead raised?”* Indeed Paul anticipates just such a question in verse 35.

## How are the Dead Raised?

Paul likens the details of the fu-



ture resurrection to planting a seed in the ground. This kind of analogy for such a truly miraculous event is one which his audience might better grasp. He says in verse 36 that a seed doesn't come out of the ground, as the plant that it will be, unless it first gets put into the ground to die. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead Paul tells us in verse 42; *"The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable."* Nowhere are we told with more specificity that death is truly a state of unconsciousness in the grave in anticipation of a future resurrection from the grave: *"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable and will be changed. For*

*the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written {in Hosea 13:14} will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?'"<sup>5</sup>*

### Conclusion

Yes the announcement of the angel on that first resurrection morning was packed with dynamite for those who have ears to hear – "He has risen from the dead." However, what one believes about death and afterlife is critical for how one understands the true significance of the empty tomb and the angel's announcement that he has risen ■

### References

- <sup>1</sup> Matthew 28:5-7
- <sup>2</sup> See also Dan 12:13; Psalm 17:15; Ezekiel 37:12-14; Job 19:25-27.
- <sup>3</sup> Acts 17:32
- <sup>4</sup> Gen 3:4.
- <sup>5</sup> 1 Cor 15:51-55

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## Statement of Faith

1. We believe in God and His one and only Son, Jesus the Christ. Heb. 11:6; John 14:1; 3:16; 20:31; Mat. 16:16.
2. We believe in the Holy Spirit. 2Pet. 1:21; 1Cor. 6:19; Jude 20; Eph. 3:5.
3. We believe that Jesus died for us and gave himself a ransom for all. Rom. 5:8; 1Cor. 15:3; 1Tim. 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. Rom. 10:9; 14:9; 1Cor. 15:20; John 3:16.
5. We believe that baptism is commanded by Christ, was practiced by His Apostles, and is taught in the New Testament. Mat. 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. 2Tim. 3:16,17.
7. We believe that human beings are by nature mortal. Gen. 2:7; 3:19; 1Tim. 6:16; 2Tim. 1:10; Rom. 2:6-7.
8. We believe that human beings in death are unconscious. Psalms 6:5; 115:17; Ecc. 9:5,10. This is likened to "sleep". Job 14:12; Psalms 13:3; Jer. 51:39; Dan. 12:2; John 11:11-14; 1Cor. 15:51.
9. We believe that immortality is obtained only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. 1Cor. 15:21-23; 2Tim. 4:7-8; 1John 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; Rev. 20:12,13.
11. We believe that evil and evil-doers shall be finally destroyed. Psalms 145:20; Mat. 10:28 Rom. 6:21; Phil. 3:19; Heb. 2:14; 1John 3:8; Rev. 22:3.
12. We believe in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Acts 1:11; John 14:3; 1Thes. 4:16.