

Expository Files



Jon W. Quinn, Warren E. Berkley - Editors

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Front Page

Our Pilgrim Status

Warren E. Berkley

In order to be a Christian, with persuasive power and daily reverence, you must personally come to terms with your pilgrim status. This earth is not our permanent home. (In fact, this earth is not anyone's permanent home, see 2 Pet. 3:10-13). Nobody will live on the earth forever because the earth will not last forever. Peter puts it simply: ***"...both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up!"***

I bring this up because if we don't get this, we cannot effectively learn or apply the teachings of Christ in the New Testament. We must not just play with the idea intellectually, we must personally embrace it. We are pilgrims.

"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation," (1 Pet. 2:11,12).

You cannot consistently abstain from fleshly lusts until you recognize your pilgrim status. You cannot participate in the defeat of those things that war against the soul if you are holding to this earth as your home. You cannot wholeheartedly engage in honorable conduct "among the Gentiles," until your attachment to this world is put in true perspective. You cannot lead

people to glorify God in the day of visitation, while living in denial of your pilgrim status.

As Christians, we are more related to heaven than earth. If we don't get that, we cannot get the rest of it right. May our confession be: "I am a stranger in the earth; do not hide Your commandments from me," (Psa. 119:19).

Survey of Joel Warren E. Berkley

"The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel," Joel 1:1

I would love to know more about men like Joel. Hitchcock's Bible Names says "Pethuel" means *persuasion of God*. According to another scholar it signified, "the openheartedness or sincerity of God," (Keil). Does that supply some hint about his family background? Joel's name means *Jehovah is God*. Perhaps some conclusions can be gathered from his message, especially regarding his conviction and courage. We will have to be satisfied with our ignorance or speculation about such matters. Likewise, as one commentator said: "The date of the book is as conjectural as the life of the man himself," (A Commentary On The Minor Prophets, Homer Hailey, p.#40).

This should not hinder our efforts to read and understand the book of Joel. The following facts are easily discerned from your first reading of the book:

1. The prophet directed the "word of the Lord" to the "elders," (1:2a). References to Zion and Judah in the book would suggest Joel spoke to the leaders in Judah, the southern kingdom.
2. Joel speaks of a calamity unlike anything before (1:2b).
3. The prophet instructed them to transmit the message to future generations (1:3).
4. Joel spoke of a coming judgment as "the day of the Lord," and it was "at hand," (2:1). This "alarm" was to be sounded "in Zion."

5. Judah would be invaded by “a people ... great and strong,” (2:2).

6. The response God instructed through Joel was: “Turn to Me with all your heart,” (2:12).

7. Looking to the future, God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh (2:28ff). For the fulfillment of this prophecy, observe what the apostle Peter said on the day of Pentecost: “But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel,” (Acts 2:16ff).

8. In chapter three, God says He would “bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem,” and deal with “all nations,” for “their wickedness,” (3:1,13).

A clear literary pattern emerges in Joel chapter one. Observing this as you read the chapter can be of great help in studying the book of Joel. Joel describes calamity. *Alongside his description, he tells the people what their response should be.* Notice:

Calamity: “Has anything happened in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?” (Verse 2).

Response: “Tell your children about it...,” etc. (Verse 3). *See Psa. 78:5,6.*

Calamity: Consuming locusts (Verse 4).

Response: “Awake,” (Verse 5).

Calamity: “...a nation has come up against My land,” (Verse 6).

Response: “Lament...,” (Verse 8).

Calamity: “The grain offering and the drink offering have been cut off from the house of the Lord...,” etc. (Verses 9,10).

Response: “Be ashamed...,” (Verse 11).

Calamity: “The vine has dried up, and the fig tree withered ... surely joy has withered away from the sons of men,” (Verse 12).

Response: “Gird yourselves and lament ... consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders...,” (Verses 13,14).

Calamity: “The day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty...,” (Verses 15-18).

Response: “O Lord, to You I cry out...,” (Verses 19,20).

Joel is describing calamity, telling of judgment against the people. The prophet wants the people of Judah and Jerusalem to know, **God is saying something in these events!** Like other men of God, Joel was warning the people to see in their calamity (past, present, future) the hand of God. These events – as described or interpreted by Joel – should have caused the people to return to the Lord, who “relents from doing harm,” (2:13).

What are we to do with this teaching from Joel today?

(1) We learn of the stubborn wickedness of men. Even after men begin to suffer the results of their own selfish ways, they often show no signs of repentance (see Isa. 1:5-9). The blight brought upon us by sin should awaken us to repent, especially when we understand the goodness of God (Rom. 2:4).

(2) We ought to take to heart the patience of the Lord, who “is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm,” (2:13). It was not too late, for the people Joel spoke to, to realize and respond to God’s mercy, rendering their hearts and turning to the Lord.

(3) The outpouring of the Spirit Joel spoke of has a very specific fulfillment beginning on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16ff). “It is evident from Acts 2 that only the apostles received the outpouring of the Spirit on that occasion; and yet Peter quoted the passage from Joel, declaring ‘This is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel’ (Acts 2:16). Later we find the gospel being carried to the Gentiles. The outpouring of the Spirit upon Cornelius and those gathered in his house (Acts 10) confirms the Gentiles’ acceptance of the gospel and the Lord’s acceptance of them. Philip had four virgin daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9), and Paul tells of women who prophesied (1 Cor. 11:5). This receiving of the Spirit would be without distinction of age – ‘old men and young men,’ without distinction of sex – ‘sons and daughters,’ and without distinction of social order – ‘servants and handmaids’.” (A Commentary On The Minor Prophets, Homer

Hailey, p.#54). We who are God's people today are recipients of the blessings Joel prophesied. We are God's spiritual remnant "according to the election of grace," (Rom. 11:5).

While we do not have Joel's among us today (inspired prophets), all of the events we experience and witness on earth should work within us swift repentance. God is in control. As time passes we should take seriously what the Lord said through Joel: "Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the Lord your God, and there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame," (Joel 2:27). "Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, 'Behold, I lay in Zion, a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame,'" (1 Pet. 2:6).

If God is For Us...

John Hagenbuch

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" Romans 8:28-31

When a person becomes a Christian and they are striving to do the very best that they can to live the kind of life that the Lord wants them to, sooner or later they learn that they are going to be confronted with difficulties and challenges that are unique to being a child of God. And, indeed, there are burdens that we have to bear; things that, if we had never become Christians, we would never have to endure.

Some of the things that the Bible speaks about which we invite into our lives by choosing to follow the Lord are things like: **Ridicule** from people who don't care for anything concerning the Lord. People of the world don't care about the values and the allegiance that we pay to our Heavenly Father. The apostle Peter wrote, "In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you" (1 Peter 4:4).

We may experience the **loss of friends** just because we want to now be pure. We want to live a life of purity and righteousness which is acceptable to the Lord; we want to maintain our integrity as children of God. And sometimes what happens is that the people who we use to associate with don't have those kinds of values; they don't share those things. So consequently, they have the tendency to no longer want to have anything to do with us.

Some will **lose their jobs**, simply because they want to be faithful to the Lord. And I have known of people, because of certain commitments that they have made, who have been forced to find different employment.

It could be the emotional pains that come from **divisions that arise within the family unit**. (See Matthew 10:34-35). Jesus spoke about that when He had revealed the truth that He did not come to bring peace on earth, but instead He brought a sword. He plainly stated that there would be division among family members, and many times that is what happens to us.

And all of us can relate to **the inward struggle** that we have to go through in this life - the fact that there are things that tempt us, and sometimes we give in to the temptation. And then what happens is that we feel absolutely horrible (as we should) for betraying our heavenly Father. Every Christian goes through that sooner or later.

Can you relate to any of these things that I have mentioned? Do these kinds of things make it difficult sometimes to be a child of God and to live the way in which the Lord wants us to live? They certainly do.

When these things happen to us, what actually is occurring is a severe test of our faith. And these challenges and difficulties in life are either going to make us, or they are going to break us (as far as our relationship with God is concerned).

Through His word, God has revealed many things that will help us to pass these tests of faith, but perhaps the most simplest and fundamental help is the realization that God is on our side – the truth that “we are His children and He is our Father” reminds us that He is always standing there with us. Just like those of you who are parents, when your children are going through difficulties you understand that these are things that they have to experience in their life in order to grow up; to be people who are profitable, and to learn lessons that are vital to their maturity. But as parents, you are standing

behind them, not condoning their mistakes, but helping them through the consequences of those mistakes; you are *for* your children! And in a supreme way, God is the same. God is for us, and that provides us then with strength that we need to overcome.

Some people seem to have the idea that God is like a wicked father who can't wait for his children to misbehave so that he can punish them. But that description in no way fits our Creator. Although our heavenly Father is a just God, and will punish those who do not know Him or obey the gospel of His Son (see: II Thessalonians 1:8-9), the Scriptures plainly reveal that God is also a loving Father, who does not want to see any perish: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).

In the 8th chapter of the book of Romans, the apostle Paul speaks about the whole concept of salvation. He writes about this beginning in the 29th verse, saying: "For whom God foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." But then notice what he says in 31st verse, where he asks this question: "What then shall we say to these things?"

These "*things*" that Paul is talking about are the things that he had just enumerated: God's foreknowledge, and the predestination (the fact that God had *predestined* how salvation and reconciliation would be accomplished for each soul that obeys and abides in the words of His Son), and the fact that we have been called, and we have been justified...and glorified... Paul emphatically asks: "WHAT ARE WE GOING TO SAY TO THESE THINGS???" ...and here is the answer:

"If God is for us, who can be against us?"

In the context of Romans, chapter 8, the apostle Paul wants us to think about the things that God has done for us and continues to do for us; especially when it comes to the salvation of our souls. And he wants us to think about these things in comparison to the misfortunes and the difficulties that we may have to go through - to understand that there is NOTHING that can defeat God's purpose for us, if we maintain our faith in Him. For he

says: “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Romans 8:37).

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All that the Lord Has Spoken We Will Do
(Exodus 19:1-8)
By Jon W. Quinn

The Lord was ready to allow Israel to enter into a covenant relationship with Him. God is going to bind Himself to certain promises that He would make to Israel. Israel was going to bind themselves to certain obligations unto God. That is how a covenant, or contract, works. This covenant was inaugurated by word of mouth (today we call this a “verbal contract”) and then was written down.

The Scriptures say, “In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain. Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: “You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself. “Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.” So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him. All the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do!” And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD.” (Exodus 19:1-8)

The Lord reminded Israel of certain truths. Though this ancient covenant has been replaced by a new and better covenant made through the blood of Christ, we do find many similarities. Consider them:

“I Bore You On Eagles’ Wings” (v.4)

A rather poetic and picturesque description of the deliverance from slavery in Egypt is employed by the Lord. It vividly portrays God's miraculous provision for His people.

Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage, an enslavement of God's people that had taken place sometime after Jacob's move to Egypt during the days of Joseph 430 years before.

We also are delivered from bondage; enslavement to the cruelest taskmaster of all; sin (John 8:33-34).

God freed us by redeeming us from our former master. Redemption means deliverance from some evil by payment of a price. That price was paid by the love of God at the cross (1 Peter 1:18-19). This was the price of our ransom (1 Timothy 2:6). Without this gift from God, we would have suffered eternal, spiritual death. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23). But now, our prospects are bright with hope as we journey in the wilderness, free at last, and heading for home. "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13-14). For those who experience the victory of faith, it is like being delivered from sin by our God on "eagles' wings." Now, notice some further similarities.

"If You Will Indeed Obey My Voice" (v. 5)

Israel had to obey God to be delivered as well as to remain free. If they had not kept the Passover they would have suffered the tenth plague. If they had not left Egypt, they would have remained slaves. If they had not crossed the Red Sea, they would have been recaptured or slain.

We must obey God to be delivered and to remain free. Salvation begins with the obedience of faith; that is, obedience from the heart. "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18). Salvation continues with a walk of faithful obedience (Hebrews 5:8-9; Philippians 2:12).

"You Shall Be My Own Possession" (v. 5)

Israel became God's special treasure (Isaiah 43:1-4). They were important to Him as a nation as well as individuals. That is true with us today as well. God has grand plans for us, and they begin today. The Lord seeks precious friendship with us so that He might bless us as He is glorified (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9,10). We have been purchased and now it is our privilege to bring God honor and be zealous for good works which He has prepared for us to do.

“Kingdom of Priests” and a “Holy Nation” (v. 6)

Israel was God's kingdom with priest and Christians are God's kingdom of priests. We are the spiritual kingdom of Christ (Revelation 1:6; 5:10) and function as, among other things, its priesthood (1 Peter 2:5,9).

Israel was also God's holy nation. (Leviticus 19:2). Today, Christians are to be a holy nation. (1 Peter 2:9; 1 Peter 1:15-16). This means we are to be set apart from the world in our conduct. Our purpose, our standard and our worship.

And Moses Brought Back the Words of the People to the Lord (v. 8)

Israel and God had a mediator between them in Moses. We also have one between ourselves and God; Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:25). He seeks to bring us together. He is an improvement over Moses in several ways. He is without sin. He identifies perfectly with both God and man. He understands both sides intimately and personally (Philippians 2:5-11).

Conclusion

God has allowed us to enter into a covenant relationship with Him. When Israel of old was offered her privilege of having such a relationship with God, “All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD.” (Exodus 19:8). So let us also say together: "All that the Lord has spoken we will do!” God will bless our lives as He has promised, if we will obey Him as we have promised.

“All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD.” (Exodus 19:8)

Where's A Man of God When You Need One

or Doh! I Knew That!

(1 Kings 13:9)

By Zeke Flores

Where's a dependable man of God when you need one? After reading through the account of the duping of the man of God in 1 Kings 13, one might be tempted to ask that question.

The man of God had delivered a scathing rebuke to king Jeroboam and the northern nation of Israel for their idolatrous worship and had even refused a dinner invitation from the king himself for God had said, "*You shall eat no bread, nor drink water, nor return by the way which you came.*" (1 Kings 13:9) The stranger from Judah was intent on keeping that command. That is, until an old prophet met up with him.

By falsely saying that an angel told him it would be alright, the old prophet misled the man of God into disobeying God's express command. The man of God went to the old prophet's house to eat and drink. Even as they were eating, God's word (for real this time) came to the old prophet and rebuked the man of God for his disobedience. The duped man of God must have slapped himself on the forehead and said to himself, "*I knew better than that! Why didn't I just obey God as He commanded me?*" Further, his punishment was pronounced on the spot and carried out directly on his way home. Torn up by a lion and buried far from home, the man of God met a miserable end after having courageously proclaimed God's word to a disobedient king!

Where's a dependable man (or woman) of God when you need one? In a time when anything goes religiously, where are the men and women of faith who'll stand against a tide of lies and liars to simply obey God's commands? Perhaps they're conversing with angels who say "*Following the gospel as revealed by Jesus and His apostles isn't all that necessary as long as you're sincere.*" Or maybe the angel is saying, "*All paths lead to heaven anyway!*" However, a *real* man of God said, "*Even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!*" Then, for good measure, he repeats the same warning again! (Gal 1:8-9)

True, there are some who don't want to know the way of truth and just want to hear what they want to be true. Then there are those who know the truth and disregard it such as the ones spoken of in 2 Peter 2:20-21. Read it for yourself; if you know better and get caught up in sin again, you'll be worse off than you were before.

The point is this: "*To the one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.*" (James 4:17) However, the one who *does* what he knows is right will be blessed! (James 1:25) That's a promise from the Promise Keeper of all time! Be a *real* man or woman of God; listen and obey.

Topic Page:

The Punishment of Gehenna

David Smitherman

One begins a study on the destiny of the lost with mixed emotions. We are made to feel how small we are as we attempt to probe the mind of God in order to discover what He has said about the future state of the lost, and we are frustrated as we realize that there are some things that we just don't know now about the destiny of men. We experience a feeling of sadness as we discover that the lost will be punished and we are humbled at the realization of the possibility that we could be among those lost ones who will suffer punishment. And yet we have a feeling of confidence that some day God will do what is right in all cases that come before Him for judgment, and a feeling of relief to know that ultimately those malicious, malignant practitioners of evil will receive what is due them.

There are some preliminary propositions that we need to establish as we begin our study. The Bible is clear that there is such a thing as being lost (Lk. 19:10) and that there are more who will be lost than there are who will be saved (Matt. 7:13-14). These are unpopular affirmations with some but they can hardly be denied if Christ is to be believed when he speaks on other subjects. A logical question that arises from these statements of Christ is, "What is the final, ultimate destiny of this multitude of lost individuals?"

The answer to this question is likewise unpopular but just as clear and difficult to deny. Numerous passages affirm that the destiny of the lost is punishment (Matt. 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:8-9; 2 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 21:8). But just

what is the nature of this punishment? To answer this question is the purpose of our study. In order to appreciate what is involved in punishment we need to acquaint ourselves with a number of Greek words which convey this idea in the New Testament.

Ekdikesis (2 Thess. 1:8) “*lit. (that which proceeds) out of justice,*” W.E. Vine, The Expanded Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, vol. 4, p. 184.

Dike (2 Thess. 1:9; Jue 7) Thayer (p. 151) says this word can be applied to the execution of the sentence that comes from a judicial hearing or decision.

Kolasis and **kolazo** (Matt. 25:46; 2 Pet. 2:9) Several sources say these words signify a cutting off, a pruning. “*Punishment is designed to cut off what is bad or disorderly*”, Kittel, Theological Dictioneary of the New Testament, vol. 3, p. 814.

Timoreo and **timoria** (Heb. 10:29) “*Primarily, to help, then to avenge...i.e. to help by redressing wrongs*”, Vine, vol. 3, p. 230

Punishment, then, is a cutting off, a severing of the righteous from the unrighteous. It is likewise justice, a sentence that is fair. And it is vengeance, the redressing or compensation one receives for wrongs done.

In order to impress upon our minds the nature of this punishment, Jesus spoke to the Jews in language they would have no difficulty understanding. He compared the punishment that lost individuals will experience to their being in a geographical locality near Jerusalem with which every Jews was familiar. And in order to help us appreciate Jesus’ use of this place we need to acquaint ourselves with it: **The Valley of Hinnom**.

The name “Gehenna (Greek, “geena”) is a transliteration of the Hebrew “gehinnom”, a valley outside of Jerusalem (Josh. 15:8), the exact location of which is uncertain and irrelevant to this study, although generally thought to be somewhere on the south side of the city. In this valley of Hinnom was place called Topeth (2 Kings 23:10) and it is probable that at one time Hinnom and Topeth were both very beautiful and garden-like in their appearance and pleasant places to visit. However, this beautiful valley underwent a change (possibly as early as the reign of Solomon, 1 Kings

11:7) which allowed Jesus to make use of it as a graphic illustration of what the punishment of the lost would be like.

The exact meaning of the words “hinnom” and “topeth” are uncertain and various meanings are given to them. But whatever the names mean, it is what happened here that is significant to our study. It was here that the Jews, in their lowest spiritual moments, had practiced every form of idolatry possible (2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6; Jer. 7:31; 19:4-5; 32:35) which included the offering of their children in fire to the god “molech” (see comments on 2 Kings 16:3 in The Pulpit Commentary, vol. 5, p. 313. During the reign and reforms of Josiah he had this place “defiled” by tearing down the idols and filling the place with the bones of those who had participated in the idol worship (2 Kings 23:10-14; 2 Chron. 34:4-5), and under Jeremiah the name was changed to what it would now be used for (Jer. 7:31-34; 19:3-6, 10-12).

Concerning Hinnom and Topeth, Albert Barnes says “...it was made the place where to throw all of the dead carcasses and filth of the city; and was not infrequently the place of executions. It became, therefore, extremely offensive; the sight was terrific; the air was polluted and pestilential; and to preserve it in any manner pure, it was necessary to keep fires continually burning there. The extreme loathsomeness of the place; the filth and putrefaction; the corruption of the atmosphere, and the lurid fires blazing by day and by night, made it one of the most appalling and terrific objects with which a Jew was acquainted”. Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament, one volume edition, p. 23. In the areas of the valley not on fire, scavenger dogs roamed looking for food, and maggots were teeming, feeding on the abundance of rotting matter on which such thrive.

Thus it was that Jesus, when wanting to impress his hearers with the nature of the punishment of the lost, pointed to Gehenna and, by implication, to Topeth. “Gehenna” is used twelve times in the New Testament (Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mk. 9:43, 45, 47; Lk. 12:5; Jas. 3:6) eleven times by Jesus Himself, and is the one word that should be translated “hell” for its very derivation connotes every misery and unpleasantness usually associated with all that is “hellish”.

But “Gehenna” was not the only term employed by Christ and others to describe the nature of punishment. A consideration of these other terms will shed further light upon the nature of the fate of the wicked.

“Worm dieth not” (Mk. 9:48). This worm is the maggot already alluded to, *“a worm which preys upon dead bodies...The statement signifies the exclusion of the hope of restoration, the punishment being eternal.”* Vine, vol. 4, p. 234

“Fire and brimstone” (Rev. 21:8) It is probably that “brimstone” originally referred to the gum or resin of trees like cypress or gopherwood, and then *“...it was transferred to all inflammable substances, and especially to sulphur...It is exceedingly inflammable, and when burning emits a peculiar suffocating smell”* John McClintock and James Strong, Cyclopedia of Biblical Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, vol. 1, pp. 893-894.

“Unquenchable fire” (Mk. 9:43) Our word “asbestos” comes from this word and means that which is inextinguishable.

“Eternal” (Matt. 25:46) Robertson says *“The word aionios...means either without beginning or without end of both. It comes as near to the idea of eternal as the Greek can put it in one word”*. Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. 1, p. 202

What, then, can be legitimately deduced about the nature of eternal punishment of the lost in Gehenna?

1-Their punishment will be that of agony and torment. The fact that Jesus alluded to places such as Genenna and Topeth as representative of that punishment seems to justify that conclusion, as does the reference to brimstone with its putrid stench. Such language can only be pointing to what is the ultimate in discomfort. But just as we should be careful not to literalize the language describing heaven (Rev. 21-22), we should exercise the same caution in the interpretation of the language describing hell. Descriptions of both places are couched in accommodative language that is highly figurative. Literalizing the fire, worms, brimstone, etc., misses the point. Regardless of the specifics of the punishment in hell, it is horrible beyond our abilities to understand.

2-The condition of the lost will be eternal in its duration. Because of the language of Matt. 25:46, whatever argument is made against eternal punishment can be made with equal force against eternal life. If one is not eternal, neither is the other. However, if heaven and all of its splendor goes

on unending, so does hell with all of its horrors. If allusions to the worm not dying and an unquenchable fire are not figurative ways of expressing the literal idea of eternity, then language means nothing. *"It adds to the terribleness of these sayings that, as before remarked, there is nothing to put against them; no hint or indication of a termination of the doom. Why did Jesus not safeguard His words from misapprehension, if behind them there lay an assurance of restoration and mercy? One may ask with Oxenham, in a reply to Jukes, 'whether if Christ had intended to teach the doctrine of eternal punishment, He could possibly have taught it in plainer terms.'"* James Orr, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, vol. 4, p. 2502.

<http://www.parkwaychurchofchrist.us/>

The Plan of Salvation **By Jon W. Quinn**

Plan #1

Announced by the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to new believers in Christ who asked what they must do:

"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
(ACTS 2:38)

Plan #2

On the back page of a tract, sinners were urged to pray this prayer to be saved. This prayer is not found in the Bible; nor were alien sinners commanded to pray for their forgiveness.

The Sinner's Prayer:

"O' Lord, I accept that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now accept Him into my heart as Lord and Savior asking for your mercy and forgiveness in His name. Amen."

The editors of Expository Files are happy with plan #1 and thankful to the God of all grace for it. We cannot recommend Plan #2 at all, but will change our minds when this prayer can be shown to us in the Bible.

Final Page
Jon W. Quinn

God is Not the Source of All Tragedy

Often, when tragedy strikes, the victim will ask, “Why did God do this to me?” or perhaps “Why didn’t God keep this from happening?” Insurance companies sometimes refer to natural disasters as “acts of God.” We need to understand that such an idea is foreign to what the Bible teaches. Much of what we experience in these matters are the result of living in a fallen world cursed by sin. These events are consequences of that. The source of these circumstances, according to Scripture, is Satan, not God. We do our Creator a great injustice by laying the blame at His doorstep.

The book of Job makes this very clear - or at least more clear. Job suffered tragedy after tragedy, Both he and his friends thought it was all due to God’s doing. They even tried to reason out why God had done these things to Job... that there must be some tremendous evil that Job had done. What they did not know is that it was Satan’s doings, not God’s (see Job 1:9-12; 2:7).

The ultimate message of the book is that, as human beings, we may not be competent to understand how such events may fit into the general scheme of life and life’s purpose. We are not privy to all the information we need to reach definite conclusions about any particular tragedy. But we also learn that men and women of faith face these situations with abiding trust in God (see Job 38-42:6). God’s people will live by their faith in good times and bad - having as an anchor for their souls a steadfast hope. We do not blame God for misfortune that befalls us because we, at this time, live in a fallen world and understand these things are consequences of that. But we do depend upon Him for strength and guidance now, and a better home for our souls in eternity.

God is not the source of evil, but of good. "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow" (James 1:17).