

Lives and Times *of* *The Bible*

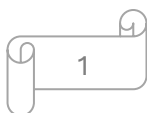
A biblical study in greater depth

Book IV

An Approach to the faith of our fathers

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Disclaimer

The bible, was, of necessity, written in compressed form. Its' authors, arguably aware of causes vs. effects and problems vs. solutions, chose not to include everything they knew in their writing efforts. Therefore, the research required to produce this book were efforts intended only to uncover some of that information.

No attempt was made to use only information supporting the doctrinal or theological position of any denomination. There was effort made to use sources considered reliable and that were not known to be intentionally controversial. Therefore, any information found contrary to any standard doctrinal thought is simply a report of what was found.

The author's only intention has been to discover what objectively oriented authors had to say about a specific topic.

Quoting a theological friend, *place the plow to the ground, and let's see what turns up.*

Acknowledgments

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The Trial of Jesus Christ

Points of Note:

1. *A traitor was involved who was a coward.*
2. *Prosecutors used questionable evidence to convict.*
3. *Prosecutors abandoned the long-standing Corroboration Rule.*
4. *The prosecutor allowed politics to influence criminal law.*
5. *There were two trials, not just one.*
6. *The death penalty could only have been used against slaves and foreigners. Jesus, a Jew, was neither a slave nor a foreigner.*

Trial # 1:

The Gospel of Mark is the New Testament's oldest Gospel. Reference to the trial starts with Mark seeming to argue that Jesus was innocent of any criminal wrongdoing of which any Jewish court could convict a person.

The immediate statutory charge against Jesus appeared to have been that of having made a false prophesy. However, that charge was premised on an ancient Law of Moses written in Deuteronomy 18:20:

The prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name which I have not commanded him to speak.

Even if convicted of such a charge, it was not a criminal offense – **and the Sanhedrin knew it!** The Sanhedrin consisted of persons who were both politically and economically of an elite class of people. They, to a person, **knew The Law!** They were a group of political leaders who, in this instance, were acting as a legal court under Judean law.

Regarding the Sanhedrin, this comment of Jesus is consistent to this admonition: He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is a sin.

One of their first legal errors was that the traitor, Judas, who caused Jesus' arrest, failed to testify at Jesus' trial. It is not certain whether Judas had committed suicide before or after the Sanhedrin- trial. Any respectable prosecuting attorney would have made certain that the initial accuser was preserved to testify at the impending trial.



Jesus before the Sanhedrin, by foienchrist.org

A second error of the Sanhedrin trial involved the Witness Corroboration Rule. The rule requiring the corroboration of more than one witness to convict a defendant began before recorded human history.

Mark 14:55-59:

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him. "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man'" Yet even their testimony did not agree.

There are three concerns relevant to this development. First, the Sanhedrin should have dropped the charges, having used disqualified corroborating witnesses.

Such law regarding corroborating witnesses was eventually enacted into British Common Law and later into American jurisprudence.

Second, there is prima facie evidence that they had coached the witnesses. Coaching witnesses, if followed legally, could have placed the entire Sanhedrin at considerable legal risk.

Judean law required multiple corroborative witnesses of which they had none.

The high priest appears to have assumed an argument: Why would they lie?

There is still a third legal error in the Sanhedrin trial: **Jesus pleaded The Fifth**, he refused to testify against himself.

And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

Again, the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"

"I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.

Jesus invoked a principle of law ahead of its' time, i.e., the right against self-incrimination or the right not to testify against oneself. This right originated

much later in time as a hedge against using testimony obtained because of torture. Jesus knew what he was doing!

Jesus' response, I am . . . had been to a totally different question. His silence had been a refusal to corroborate their witness's false testimony.

Jesus properly agreed to their question regarding his deity.

The falsely obtained conviction of Jesus at his first trial was of False Prophecy.

Mark's Gospel was right.



Caiaphas Tearing His clothes, WordPress

Vv 63-65

The high priest tore his clothes, "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all condemned him as worthy of death. Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him.

By then, it was early Thursday morning. The Sanhedrin bound Jesus, having been found “guilty” of blasphemy – based on false testimony, and an initial traitor who had been absent from the trial.

Judean law had no authority to make a criminal conviction. The Judean method of execution would have been by beheading, fire, or hanging – not crucifixion.

They transported Jesus from their Judean court, which could not sentence Jesus to death, to a Roman court which could.

Jn 18:29-30:

So, Pilate came out to them and asked, “What charges are you bringing against this man.”

“If he were not a criminal,” they replied, “we would not have handed him over to you.”

Pilate said, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.”

“But we have no right to execute anyone,” the Jews objected.

Trial # 2:

A Roman court could execute slaves and non-Roman citizens. Jesus was a non-Roman citizen.

Pilate had legal authority to review the death sentence of Jesus from the Sanhedrin. But Pilate chose, instead, to conduct a new trial, a Roman trial of his own.

The Roman government was accusing Jesus of claiming to be the King of the Jews. The new charge against Jesus was a political one, not civil, as had been the Sanhedrin’s charge.

Judas, the traitor, was again absent. They should have retained him for testimony presuming that his testimony was significant.

To have reviewed the Judean charge against Jesus, i.e., blasphemy, and to have executed Jesus from that charge alone would have constituted a challenge to the authority of the Roman government. Therefore, Pilate chose a new and different charge of his own; that of claiming to be the King of the Jews.

Again, when asked the most salient question, in cross examination, Jesus “Took the Fifth.”

Mk 15:2

And Pilate asked him, “Art thou the King of the Jews?”

And he, answering, said unto him, “Thou sayest it.”

The chief priests accused him of many things, but he answered.

nothing.

Pilate asked him again, saying, “Behold how many things they witness against thee.” But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate was marveled.

Pilate went out to the crowd and said,

I find no basis for a charge against him. But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of Passover. Do you want me to release “the king of the Jews?”



Jesus Before Pilate, by Mihaly Munkacsy

They shouted back, “No, not him! Give use Barrabas!”

There are those who believe Pilate’s comment to the crowd constituted a **Third Trial**. Such a declaration is moot.

Some theologians argue that Jesus’ trials were of Christianity vs. Judaism, a faith issue. The facts make that a weak supposition.

First, there were far fewer Christians then and with a very small following as compared with the number of Judeans.

Second, there was a desire among the Romans to do a “political killing”, thwarting a possible rebellion forming against the Roman government and its’ Judean puppet.

There is further information regarding a desired “political killing” apparent in another study: the Politics of Jesus Crucifixion.

The Politics of Jesus' Crucifixion

Points of Note:

1. ***Exculpatory Evidence: that supports the possibility of innocence.***
2. ***Direct vs. Circumstantial Evidence.***
3. ***Direct Evidence: often unreliable. E.g., witnesses giving unreliable testimony.***
4. ***Confessions, Statements, Hearsay Evidence, Involuntary confessions are suspect.***
5. ***Illegally obtained evidence cannot be used.***
6. ***Defendant's right to defend themselves.***

Joseph Caiaphas, High Priest and prosecuting attorney of Jesus, the Christ

1. ***He was Jewish and a high priest.***
2. ***He served in Jerusalem from 18-36 AD, longest ever to serve as High Priest.***
3. ***Son of Annas, another high priest.***
4. ***He was a Sadducee.***
5. ***He had been appointed by the Roman prefect, Valerius Gratus (Gratus preceded Pilate).***

Note: Josephus serves as a primary source of information regarding Caiaphas.

Political Conference before a Civil Trial

The Jewish leaders had numerous issues to consider regarding Jesus.



Jesus Raising Lazarus from the Dead, theministryofjesus.com

John's Gospel, Ch. 11, states that the high priests called a gathering of the Sanhedrin in reaction to Jesus having raised Lazarus from the dead.

Jn 16:45

Therefore, many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. . .

"What are we accomplishing?" They asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.

v. 49 Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.

So, from that day on, they plotted to take his life.

There was a second occurrence that motivated the Sanhedrin to arrest Jesus. It was the issue of Lazarus, the beggar positioned outside the gates of the rich man. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Lazarus died and went to live in Abraham's bosom (a sub-division of Heaven). The rich man died and in torment looked up and saw. . .

Luke 16:23-24.

Abraham far away, with Lazarus at his side. So, he called to him, "Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire."

vv. 27-28 ". . . I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment."



The Rich man and Lazarus, tidings.org

Luke 16:28-30: It has been argued that the Sanhedrin perceived a put-down in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, i.e., a symbolic attack on Caiaphas.

There was a similarity between the story of the rich man and Lazarus and the family of Caiaphas.

Caiaphas had a father-in-law, and Caiaphas also had five brothers.

There was a possible third concern of Jewish leaders. They were seriously concerned about what direction Roman rule might take if an insurgent Zealot movement arose to eject Romans from Israel. The Zealot movement was very real.

They were well aware of a man named Simon the Zealot who, though a believer, had been associated with Jesus of Nazareth. The political intensity of Simon the Zealot was not known, but the Jewish leaders were concerned.

Zealots would stand in a crowd where Roman soldiers were present. A Zealot, using a sharp knife, would stab a Roman in the back and instantly yell for help; “someone has injured this man!” The zealot would then mingle with the crowd unobserved.

Special Issues

Still other issues faced the Romans. They were reluctant to perform executions for fear of violating the Jewish Halakha.

Acts 2:47 . . .praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 4:4 But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.

Acts 5:14 Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

Acts 6:7 So the word of God spread.

The followers of Christ chose “The Way” as the name for their new-found faith. But that posed a serious problem.

Halakha was literally translated as “the way.” It contained the writings both of the Torah and the Talmud as guides for the daily lives of the Jewish people.

Caiaphas was concerned that The Way, as interpreted by The Law, was in danger of being redefined by The Way, as defined by the followers of Christ.

For the Jewish community, then as today, tradition in their daily lives was paramount.

The Last Straw!

Acts Ch 4 says Peter and John had gone to see Annas and Caiaphas after having healed the crippled beggar; that both Caiaphas and Annas had questioned these apostles' authority to perform such acts of healing.

Responding, the apostles had said their authority had come from Jesus of Nazareth. This confession convinced Caiaphas that the miracles of the apostles and the Halakha of Jesus had spread much too far to be refuted by them.

First, they told Peter and John to stop talking about what had accumulated to be the Halakha of Jesus' life and of their own lives.

Both Peter and John gave a classical response to Caiaphas:

Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.

Worse yet, a charge of Jesus proclaiming himself to be the Messiah would have been seen as a return of the Davidic Kingship.

Clearly, the Sanhedrin could not "win on the issues." They had to destroy the man himself.

A Calamitous Decision was made.

As a result of so many social/legal/political concerns, the Sanhedrin concluded that a charge of blasphemy alone would not matter to Pilate.

But Pilate had thoughts of his own regarding these charges. A charge of Jesus proclaiming himself King of the Jews (a political matter) was relevant in the mind of Pilate.

Jewish Opinion of the House of Annas

There is a poem written in the Talmud that reveals much about how Jews felt the family of Annas.

Woe to the house of Annas!

Woe to their serpent's hiss!

They are the high priests.

Their sons are keepers of the treasury,

Their sons-in-law are guardians of the temple,

And their servants beat people with staves. (Pesahim 57a)

It could be concluded that Annas and Caiaphas were not preferred among the Jewish population!

First: Caiaphas had chosen to be an enemy of the Lord and for personal status.

Second, he condemned Jesus by seeing only what he chose to see; this, as a means to affect his own position with the Romans.

Thirdly, he defamed Jesus and initiated Jesus' death as a strategy to keep peace with Rome.

Death of Caiaphas

Josephus says Roman Governor Vitellius removed Caiaphas from his position of high priest in 36 AD. That decision, if accurate, would have been immediately following the crucifixion of Jesus.


Caiaphas' tenure in office had been the longest of all high priests.

Informed sources declared that Caiaphas was likely deposed because he had been associated with the stoning death of James, brother of Jesus.

Some say Caiaphas died of natural causes. Others conclude he was stoned to death or thrown off a cliff by an angry Jewish mob blaming him for the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem.



One source says he died in 33 AD following the crucifixion of Jesus. The date, 33 AD, is spurious.

Still others say he moved to Crete where he died in 66 AD of old age and of sorrow for having betrayed Jesus.



1990 - Ossuary of Caiaphas

- From the Caiaphas family tomb in Jerusalem, this ossuary bears the inscription "Yehosef bar Qafa: (Joseph, son of Caiaphas), and it is dated to the Second Temple Period. Caiaphas is the name of the High Priest who presided over the trial of Jesus.



Ossuary Box Containing the Bones of Caiaphas, Biblical Archeology

God's Justice is Slow but Certain:

Purim

It was the 5th Century BC, and the Jews residing in Persia were under a royal decree ordering their execution – the entire race of Jews residing there. There seemed to be no possibility for their deliverance from the decree. It was during the Achaemenid Empire.

Principal participants in the drama were:

Ahasuerus, Xerxes, the King, who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush (modern Sudan)

Vashti, his wife, daughter of Belshazzar of Babylonian fame

Haman, his Royal Visier, "Secretary of State"

Mordecai, uncle to Esther

Esther, Mordecai's niece

Satraps (governors of the provinces).

The Inciting Force to this conflict began with a decision by Vashti, the Queen, to disobey her husband, the king. It was only his third year in office that Xerxes had chosen to give a drunken party to which he invited all his governors, military leaders, princes and nobles from all 127 provinces (Esther 1:1-4). The celebration lasted 180 days.



Queen Vashti of Persia,

When this lengthy feast had ended, the king gave a banquet in the enclosed garden of the king's palace and invited all the people who were in the citadel of Susa, an ancient city located on the southwest area of modern Iran.

Evidence indicates that Xerxes had kept the alcohol flowing to all of his partygoers, for 180 days + 7 more days. Gold, silver, precious stones, were displayed. Wine was served in goblets of gold where each goblet had been fashioned to look different from all the other goblets. Each guest could drink his fill.

Queen Vashti had given her own banquet for the women in the royal palace of Xerxes.

Indications are that everyone was thoroughly intoxicated from drinking so much wine when Xerxes, himself exceedingly drunk, asked his seven Eunuchs, Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas to bring his wife, Vashti in wearing her royal crown.

Commentators indicate that Xerxes had wanted his wife to display herself to his guests wearing only her royal crown. He wanted his guests to see how beautiful his queen was.

Vashti refused!

Xerxes flew into a rage!

It was customary for a king, facing such a refusal, to consult with his closest advisors. Xerxes did this. Their advice was that if Vashti was to continue unpunished, all the women in the kingdom would treat their husbands similarly, with disrespect.

Therefore, following the advice of his wisest men, Xerxes banished Vashti from ever entering his presence again.

Following this advice, Xerxes sent out a decree to all 127 provinces to hold a beauty contest to gather in the most beautiful maidens in each province. Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king.” (2:2) Each and all maidens found were to be brought in to the king’s harem.

They all were to be given six-month long beauty treatments. Then, let the king view them each and all, choosing the one who pleases him most to be the replacement for Vashti (vv2:3-4).

The Plot Begins

In the city of Susa, there was a beautiful maiden named Hadassah who was chosen to be taken to Xerxes’ harem. No one knew that Hadassah as a Jewess. While her real name was Hadassah, she was known as Esther. Both her father and mother had died leaving her alone. Mordecai, her uncle, had taken custody of her in their absence.

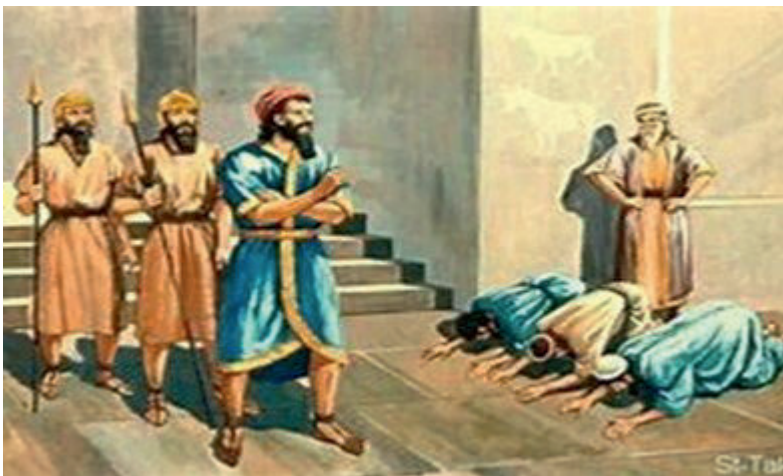
Any maiden chosen for the harem went through six months of beauty treatments with oil of myrrh plus another six months of perfumes and cosmetics. Esther found favor with the king and was given a special place of honor in the harem. Mordecai visited her daily asking her not to reveal her Jewish identity.

If the king asked, Esther would visit the king in the evening and return to the harem the next morning. The king found much favor with Esther.

The Plot Thickens

Mordecai, trekking the palace grounds, overheard a plot by two palace guards, Bigtham and Teresh, to assassinate King Xerxes. Mordecai told Esther of the plot. Esther told Xerxes, the king, giving credit for the discovery to Mordecai.

Because of Mordecai's discovery, the two palace guards were found, tried, and hanged. Mordecai, then, was allowed to sit at the palace gates. That decision placed Mordecai in a position to witness Haman, Secretary of State to Xerxes, as he entered and exited the palace grounds.



Mordecai Refuses to bow to Haiman, by pinterest.com

(3:1-2) Xerxes for an unknown reason, promoted Haman. All the nobles sitting at the king's gate would kneel down to Haman as he entered and exited the grounds; that is, all but Mordecai. Mordecai did not kneel down to Haman.

The nobles sitting at the gate noticed Mordecai's refusal to kneel to Haman and asked him why. Mordecai had told them he was a Jew. This admission meant that if Mordecai was Jewish, then, so was Esther!

Haman, white hot angry over Mordecai's refusal to kneel down to him, wanted not only to destroy Mordecai, but to destroy all Jewish people living in the 127 provinces.

Be Sure Your Sins Will Find You Out.

In Haman's plot to annihilate all Jews in the kingdom, he sought and was granted funds and permission to carry out his plan of annihilation.

3:8-11 Then Haman said to King Xerxes,

"There is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will put ten thousand talents of silver into the royal treasury for the men who carry out this business."

So, the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. "Keep the money", the king said to Haman, "and do with the people as you please."

Dispatches were sent to all 127 governors of the provinces informing them of the plan to annihilate all Jews.

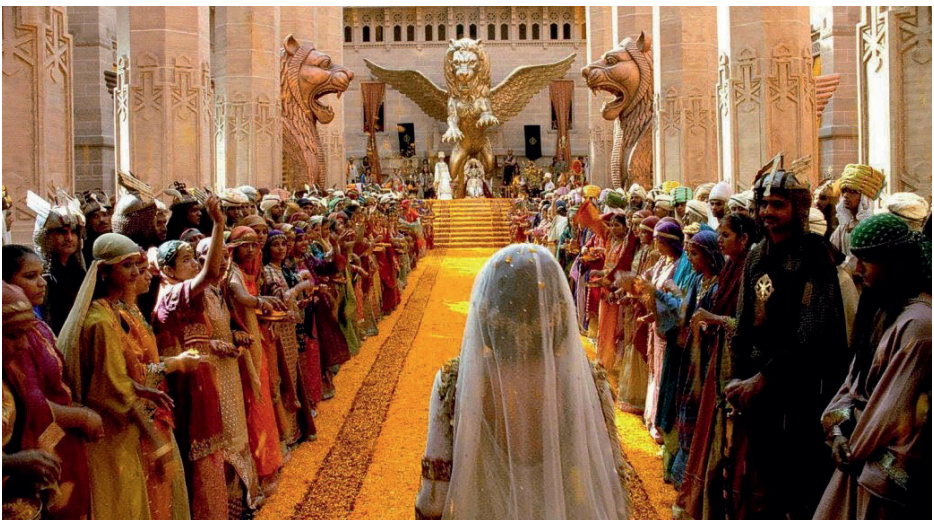
Meanwhile, Mordecai learned of Haman's plan. In response, Mordecai and all other Jews put on sackcloth and ashes, a sign of intense mourning. Esther learned of what Mordecai had done.

She told her uncle she was fearful of approaching the king about the decree; that no one could approach the king without having been invited to do so under penalty of death.

They exchanged numerous messages, one of which told Esther that her life was at risk if she told Xerxes about it or even if she did not tell Xerxes. Being a Jewess, Haman would have her killed along with her fellow Jews.

Two things happened at about the same time. First, Haman built a scaffold on which he planned to publicly hang Mordecai the following day. As he was doing this, Esther, ever the states-lady, employed a plan of her own.

Her reasoning was, *If I perish, I perish!*



Queen Esther Entering the Court of Xerxes

That night, Xerxes suffering from insomnia, had court records read to him as a means of inducing sleep. In the reading, Xerxes learned of Mordecai's services and of the plot against Mordecai. Learning that Mordecai had not been properly rewarded for his services, Xerxes asked Haman, not naming Mordecai, for suggestions as to how to honor someone who has been instrumental in serving the king.

Haman, thinking the king meant he himself was to be honored, said such a man should be paraded through the streets on horseback proclaiming, *"This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor."*

Haman did as the king commanded, surprised that it was not himself being honored.

Esther, employing her own plan, scheduled a banquet and invited the King. While the banquet was in process, the king's eunuchs arrived at Haman's house to transport Haman to the banquet.

Esther had said she had a request to be made of the king. Xerxes' response:

Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.

Esther, now in the dominant role, said:

If I have found favor with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life –this is my request. For I and my people have been sold for destruction and slaughter and annihilation. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king.

King Xerxes asked Queen Esther:

Who is he? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?

Esther said:

The adversary and enemy is this vile Haman!

The king, angry, bolted outside into the palace garden. While the king was outside, Haman began begging for his life. He fell onto the couch where Esther was sitting just as the king re-entered the Banquet Hall. Seeing Haman on the couch near Esther, the Queen, Xerxes bellowed:

Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?

Harbona, a eunuch nearby said:

A gallows seventy feet high stands by Haman's house. He had it made for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king.

The king said, "Hang him on it!"

Don't Mistreat God's People!

Haman was hanged on the same gallows constructed for Mordecai.

A Side Note:

Hitler, on September 1, 1939, as his troops invaded Poland, was heard to have

The Feast of Purim

Purim began as a celebration with this deliverance of the Jews from the clutches of evil Haman. The feast of Purim has been celebrated annually from the fifth century BC until and including the twenty-first century AD.

The modern celebration includes a reading of Megillah (the Book of Esther) in the evening and the morning of Purim.

Folk dress up in costumes and/or dress-up clothing. It is sometimes called the Jewish Halloween.

Children dress up in costumes reminiscent of the 5th century BC.

They call it Mishloach Manot, sending gifts to each other as acts of friendship.

Friends and families gather to share meals including sweet pastries called hamantaschen, triangular pastries with sweet filling.

Wine is served during the Megillah reading. Some say they should drink until they can no longer tell the difference between “the blessed Mordechai” and “the cursed Haman.”

said to his officials, *“There will be no Feast of Purim in Poland this year.”*

a fate True, there was no feast of Purim in Poland that year. But Hitler, himself, suffered similar to that of Haman. But no one made the connection.

Purim touched a chord with Hitler. He suffered a similar outcome as Haman



The Adams Family

How did man come to be? Who started all this? These and other similar questions have been asked for millennia.

Some authors indicate that Jewish priests and rabbis created stories, parables, each with a lesson to be learned. Their people could neither read nor write, and so the stories helped teach the people lessons in everything from history to philosophy, and faith. Whether the story of Genesis is literal or allegorical will remain moot among scholars.

Followers of the Christian faith believe it to be literal.

The writers of Christian publications attempt to explain it all. Adam, as used in Genesis 1-5 refers to the first human being. Further in Genesis, Adam is used as a pronoun, as in a collective sense – as mankind.

In Genesis 2, God formed Adam as a single male human being – out of the dust of the earth and places him in the Garden of Eden.

Gen 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

Adam is the first human being aware of God. Adam seems to be associated with mankind as much as with a specific person. No nationality. Adam is put to sleep by God, man's first experience of an anesthetic.

Gen 2:19-23 says God caused all animals to parade before Adam to be named by him, and it seems, to look for one that could help Adam rule over all the earth and subdue it. None could be found. Adam was to rule over all nature – not his fellow man.

Gen 2:19 Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that

was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.

God caused Adam to fall asleep, the first of mankind's experience with an anesthetic – and God was the anesthesiologist!

Gen 2:20b-22 But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So, the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

Eve is formed for Adam from Adam's rib. The wording, formed, Gen 2:7 presents an image as of a potter making an exquisite piece of art. The formation of both Adam and Eve takes on the imagery of an intimacy between mankind and God not shared by animals, lower creations. Genesis 1:28, read along with Psalms 8:5 indicates that God had created mankind a little lower than the angels; that God had crowned man with glory and honor (Ps 8:5), as though having made man a vassal king to rule over God's entire creation; not a small matter!

When Adam awoke as a human, he did not see plants Gen 2:5-7). Plants came after Adam's own birth. The implied message from this section of creation was that all good and perfect gifts come from God.

An Aside: God gave man only a few things with which to work and further his creation.

Dirt

Plants

Air

Water

Animals

people

The Hebrew bible does not mention Adam again except I Chronicles where he is listed as having started the ancestry of mankind.

The Fall

The serpent in the Garden of Eden is not presented as being Satan. The first reference to the serpent as being Satan is in first century Jewish Apocalypse of Moses, written in the Jewish-Christian (New Testament) book of Revelations (Rev 12:9, 20:2).

Rev 12:9 The Great Dragon was hurled down – that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

Rev 20:2-3a He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil, or Saten, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over hm to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended.

Revelations, by its' origin as being given by God himself, it is reasonable to conclude that the serpent and the devil are synonymous.



The Fall of Man: Driven from the Garden by pinterest.com

Gen 3:1-7. The Serpent beguiled Eve into eating of the forbidden fruit. The story lays blame for the fall on Eve; however, the match-up for the debate was among unequals.

Satan was an experienced debater, having debated God himself. Eve was not yet even aware of herself as being a human being. However, it happened, having eaten of the Tree of knowledge, mankind became self-aware, a massive watershed in man's development.

The Sentences for Having Disobeyed God:

To the Serpent:

Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly, and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.

To the Woman:

I Will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.

To the Man:

Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.

God not only banished the earth's first couple from the Garden, but he also placed guards at its' entrance to keep them from returning to eat of the Tree of Life.

Conclusion:

- 1. The Fall of Man came following a theological debate.**
- 2. Mankind was created by God at the end of a week's work!**
- 3. The debate was among unequals. Neither Adam nor Eve had moral, ethical, or theological self-awareness, no experience with theological debate.**
- 4. Eve's first debating experience was with a being who had just debated God himself (and lost).**
- 5. The Serpent had told Eve only a partial truth.**

Gen 3:1b-4 He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from ANY TREE in the garden?'"

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

- 6. The Tree of Knowledge was not named by God. God had mentioned the tree that was in the middle of the garden.**
- 7. Having eaten of the Tree of Knowledge, their eyes, indeed, were opened. They were like God (in his image); and they were able to differentiate between good and evil. Satan's lie to Eve was that Eve would not die if she ate the fruit.**

"The Way" became Christianity

It happened in Antioch of Syria, now part of Turkey. Built c300 BC by Syrian emperor, Seleucus in honor of his father, Antiochus, it was given the father's name, Antioch.

Steeped in Hellenistic, Greek culture, it ranked with Rome and Alexandria as one of the great cities of the Greco-Roman world. Its population was estimated at half-a-million people. Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, and King Herod all added to the beautification of Antioch.

It's businesses traded with countries of the Mediterranean world. It's seaport, having been improved by the engineers of Rome, could accommodate the most modern ships of the time.

It lay on the principal land route using the Via Maris highway going from Egypt up through Israel, through Asia Minor and on to Rome. That brought them into contact with Syria, Palestine and Egypt, trading in wine, grain, dried fruit and leather dealing with Italy and Gaul.

While its economy and its political acumen made it a major player in the Mediterranean area, it also attracted emerging personalities of The Way.

Its' population was a mixture of Macedonians, Greeks, Syrians plus a colony of Jewish veterans of the Seleucus' armies. The Jewish veterans had been given land for their families who themselves flourished having benefited from the wealth and sophistication of the Greek culture.

The Roman population copied some of their culture from the Greeks including:

Lavish Gambling

Chariot Racing

Brothels: both legal and controlled

Exotic Banquets

Jews: fully franchised and protected.

Some mystery religions.

Both Jews and Gentiles there were attracted to monotheism and ethics more than they were attracted to that of Greeks and Orientals. One person *attracted* to monotheism and ethics was a proselyte named Nicholas of Antioch (Acts 6:5). Nicholas was one of seven men ordained by the Disciples to provide goods and services to the poor thus allowing the disciples free time to preach the gospel.

The followers of Nicholas came to be called The Nicolaitans ref. Rev. 2:6 But you have this in your favor: You hate the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. The followers of Nicholas had come to believe a heresy that declared: there was no connection between one's spirituality and one's physical body. God, upon one's death, would reclaim a person's soul, since He gave it, but the body would be left behind to decay back into the earth from which it was made.

Added to this fact, Jerusalem was becoming a turbulent place following the crucifixion of Jesus 10-15 years prior. Antioch was not turbulent.

ISLAM

THE RELATION BETWEEN MUHAMMAD AND MUSLIMS

Muslims trace their heritage back to Abraham's two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. They believe they owned the lands of the Middle East before the Israelites came to it. According to Muslims, they were dispossessed by the Jewish conquest of Canaan Land after Moses led them out of Egyptian Bondage.

Again, by their reckoning, they were dispossessed again by Jews when the Jews returned to Palestine following WWII (1948).

Although they trace their heritage to Abraham, they trace the structure of their faith only back to 570 A.D.

HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN

Muslims trace their heritage back to Abraham's two sons, Ishmael, and Isaac. Muslims believe they, through Ishmael, possessed the land of the middle east before the Israelites (through Isaac) came.

At one point in history, Isaac's name was changed to Israel. Therefore, from that time on, his descendants were called The Children of Israel.

Muslims today trace their heritage back to Abraham, though the structure of their faith appears to date from 570 ad.

Mohammad was born at c570 ad. Mohammad's father died near the time of Mohammad's birth. To that personal tragedy, his mother died when Mohammad was only about 6 years old.

From the time of his becoming an orphan, his uncle had become the head of the prominent Hashim clan in Mecca, Saudi Arabia on the coast of the Red Sea.

At the time, there was a thriving trade between Saudi Arabia and India. Mohammad's uncle traveled this route along with a caravan of either camels or donkeys. Each caravan would include as many as 3000 animals with 1-6 drovers along per animal. Mohammad, aged 6-7, went, too.

The route the caravans likely travelled would have started at Mecca, moved northward along the Transjordan side of the Jordan river along what was called The king's Highway. The caravan would have stopped along the way at various cities either to trade with the locals or to pay a tax for having used that part of the highway for their business.

Dating from the 700s A.D., although the Romans had sacked Jerusalem, The Temple, and driven the Jewish community into exile, Christianity was flourishing in the middle east. The stories of Christ's birth, life, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension would likely have been part of daily conversation among residents near Capernaum.

The caravans all stopped in Capernaum to pay a tax. The career of Matthew, a disciple of Christ, had been to "sit at the seat of customs" collecting taxes from these caravans.

There, on that trade route, Mohammad would have learned about Christianity and of Monotheism, one God. He would have learned these facts from traders, not theologians. Understanding orthodoxies was an issue.

Growing up, Mohammad took a wife, Khadijah, a 40 yr. old widow. Mohammad *was 25 at the time. Khadijah affirmed in Mohammad the concept of Monotheism. Mecca, at that time followed a polytheistic theology, numerous gods.*

Sometime during Mohammad's 40th year of life, he was in a retreat in the hills outside of Mecca. In that retreat, he had his first experience of Islam. In that experience, Gabriel appeared to him and told him he, Mohammad, was god's chosen messenger.

Mohammad went home to tell Khadijah about it, and Khadijah was converted to Islam. From that time, he began preaching the revelations Gabriel had given him both during and following his initial retreat.

Understandably, Meccans, followers of a polytheistic theology, rejected Mohammad's messages. He was persecuted for his preaching.

He fled Mecca in 622 to a place 250 miles north of Medina. There, he started his Muslim Calendar.

He continued his battle with the Meccans for another 8 years. By 630 A.D., he went back and took Mecca by force. Then, he formed an Islamic Society, with himself as Head of State, diplomat, military leader, and legislator. He then launched an offensive into Syria.



Haiku Deck, by Colin O

Nearing the end of his life, he declared having made a pilgrimage to Mecca in 630 AD then back to Edina where he died in 632 A.D.

Back in 620, Muhammad declared that Allah had confirmed him as a prophet. This was a result of his having been translated to Jerusalem at night. Jerusalem was 1000 miles away. There in Jerusalem, he was taken by ladder to the 7th Heaven from the Dome of the Rock. That experience seems to have served as his Inciting Force for his career as a prophet of Allah.

Muhammad had two sons both of whom were assassinated. As well, two of Muhammad's successors were assassinated.



Mecca, by Britannica

DOCTRINE OF ISLAM

Islam adopted the original Ten Commandments. However, they teach that their interpretation of the Ten Commandments is both a continuation and correction of what Christians find in their Old Testament. Among their corrections of the Christian bible, are these:

Jesus was born of a virgin.

Jesus was NOT resurrected.

Jesus was nailed to a cross, but since Allah doesn't permit one of his

prophets to be humiliated, Allah replaced Jesus on the cross with someone who looked like him.

Jesus was a prophet, but NOT the son of God.

Jesus distorted God's message when He introduced a code of behavior that stressed spirituality over ritual law. Freedom, Muslims say, is a myth.

There is no such thing as ORIGINAL SIN. Adam and Eve were privileged as messengers. They repented and became regents entrusted to care for the earth – as Muslims do not.

Abraham almost sacrificed Ismael, NOT Isaac.

Jesus was NOT God incarnate but a prophet.

Allah protects his prophets from torture and humiliation. Therefore, Jesus was NOT crucified. Allah lifted Jesus to heaven and replaced him On the cross with someone who looked like him.

The code of Muhammad replaces Judeo-Christian teaching. Islamism more properly addresses the human condition as the condition evolves.

Creation is the realization of Allah's will in history. Humans were Created to worship Allah. Prophets are Allah's act of mercy to us to Ensure that we DO worship Allah.

Angels were created from light; are immortal; are a link between

Allah and all humanity.

Gabriel, an angel, gave Allah's message to Muhammad.

Satan, a former angel, is the only one who can disobey Allah.

Refused to be subservient to humans, as other angels are, so he was

Condemned to forever try to lead humans astray. Humans have a

Knowledge angels cannot acquire.

Allah will never leave nor forsake his children.

They're not sure if people can actually see or hear Allah. Doubters

Argue that it would make Allah human-like if people could see or hear

Him.

Free Will vs. Predestination: If man does evil, it's because Allah created

The evil (OR); how can Allah punish sinners when Allah created the

Sin?

Therefore, Freedom is a myth; people should NOT be free to make

Their own decisions.

Allah is just and will hold mankind accountable for his own actions.

There is one Allah, angels, Paradise, Hell, and a Day of Judgment.

The argument is made that, by calling Christians People of the Book, they mistakenly made Jesus into a God.

Sura IV, Section 21 c. 68 The people of the Book went wrong: The Jews in breaking their Covenant, and slandering Mary and Jesus, and their usury

and injustice; and the Christians in raising Jesus the Apostle to equality with God. God's revelation is continued in the Qur-an which comes with manifest proof and a clear light to those who understand.

They may slay all pagans (that's Christians, too).

Sura IX, #5 But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); But if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them: for God is oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.



The Quran, by getwallpapers.com

FOUNDATIONAL (RITUALISTIC) PRACTICES OF MUSLIMS

They must confess their faith DAILY, i.e., declare that there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.

Salat: they must pray FIVE times each day.

[a] before sunrise,

[b] at noon,

[c] mid-afternoon,

[d] after sunset,

[e] before midnight]

They must fast and refrain from engaging in sex from sun-up to sundown during the month of Ramadan (Saum)

They must pay an alms tax (Zakat) equal to 2% of their net worth (not strictly enforced).

The tax is levied annually and pocketed (tho' intended for the poor).

Levied on livestock, crops, precious metals, cash, and all who live in the household.

They must make at least one pilgrimage to Mecca in their lifetime. In a few Muslim countries, failure to observe these five beliefs is punishable by death.

THEOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF ISLAM

Allah is all powerful.

Allah is all knowing (omniscient).

Allah created the universe.

To become a Muslim, simply declare your faith. No confirmation, etc. is required.

MODERN ISLAM HAS MORPHED IN FORM AND PRACTICE

These are at least some of the terms current in Islam.

Islam: The religious faith of the Muslims.

Muslims: An adherent to the religion of Islam. Someone who has submitted (surrendered) totally to Allah (god).

Arab: A member of the Semitic people who live in the Arabian Peninsula.

Allah: meant to be the same god as that of Christians.

Traditionally, there have been at least five sects (denominations?) of Islam.

Shi'ites in Belief. Popular in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria.

Kurds: Have wanted their own nation for a long time. ½ of them live in Turkey, 1/4th of them live in northern Iran; 17% of them live in western Iraq.

Sunni's: Account for 90 % of all Muslims. They live in the Gaza Strip; Golan Heights; the Sunni Triangle of Iraq; West Bank, Lebanon, Qatar.

Wahabi's: A more violent people. Osama Bin Laden and the House of Saud in Saudi Arabia are Wahabi.

18th Century firebrand, Muhammad ibn al Wahhab (1703-92) forged an alliance with Saud clan then engaged with the Ottoman Empire Overlords.

A Wahhab version of Islam became the established religion of the kingdom. The Wahhabi faith, supported by oil wealth, spread intolerant Islamism in competition with the more tolerant version of the faith.

Some say radical Saudi Arabia is more potent than such rogue states as Iraq and Libya.

Osama Bin Laden was from Saudi Arabia. Many of the 911 terrorists were from Saudi Arabia.

A BRIEF HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAM

In the Dark Ages, as with 911, Islam struck first and in a way that the West had to respond. Muslims started the 1st war -- and won it. They also have started the 2nd war . . .

There are three periods of battle that form a background for understanding Muslim vs the west relations.

Battle # 1: Persians (Iran) stormed Jerusalem in 614 and won. They were in their ascendancy elsewhere.

Roman Emperor, Heraclius, (and Christian) had received a letter from the prophet Muhammad inviting him and his kingdom to join Islam. Heraclius viewed the letter as a challenge to his own Christian faith, and he refused the offer.

Emperor Heraclius reclaimed Jerusalem and chased Muhammad out.

Elsewhere: By 711, Muslims controlled all of North Africa.

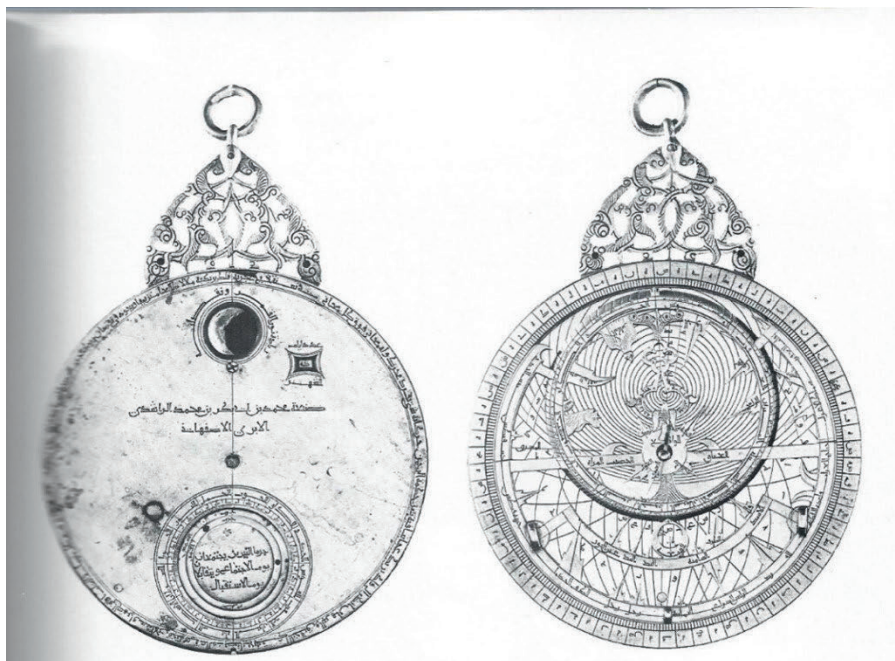
Muslims also controlled much of Spain. The emerging medieval mind was deeply immersed in superstition and symbolic thinking. Few if any were investigating nature. Further, there was no investigation system by which such an investigation could occur.

In 1085, the Arab citadel of Toledo, Spain fell to incoming Christian troops. Those troops found amazing treasures, of which they had never even dreamed.

Europe had heard of a culture south of the Pyrenees. The northern portion of Spain was Christian, never settled by the Arabs who had arrived in Spain around 711 A.D., landing around Gibraltar.

Over two hundred years, the land bloomed becoming very rich. The Umayyad Caliphate took power in Cordoba, the then jewel in the crown of Islam.

Arab Astrolabe, a device to tell date, hour from the position of stars. Movable sights on the instrument were aligned with the star and relevant numbers and signs could be read off from windows on the left or from the circumference on the right.



One Arabic Product Found in Spain

Irrigation systems turned the plains of Andalusia into an agricultural paradise. Hakam, the second ruler to follow in the Umayyad Caliphate built a city where half-a million people lived in 113,000 houses. There were 700 mosques, 300 public baths in a city with 21 suburbs.

There were more than 70 libraries in his new “kingdom.” The great Central Library in Cordoba, Spain, built in the royal palace around 970 had a catalogue of 44 volumes referencing over 400,000 titles, more than in all of France.

They introduced rhyming poetry, rhythmic music and more.

ARAB INVOLVEMENT IN MAN'S WORLD VIEW

Arabs, at that time, had an evolving world view not unlike scientists elsewhere in the world. Newton, it is thought, had his revelation regarding gravity as he watched an apple fall from a tree. Archimedes was bathing and lept out of his bath crying “eureka” when he realized the meaning of displacement. Gutenberg described his concept of a printing press as he had observed a ray of light.

With each of these and other discoveries came a refinement of man's body of knowledge and with them, a corresponding change in the world view.

With the arrival of Greek and Arabic sciences along with the logical thought processes of Aristotle. By the twelfth century, man's thought processes were changing.

Until this time, man's thought processes were contained in an unquestioning mystical and passive world view.

Where with St. Augustine man followed *Credo ut intelligam*, “I come to understanding only through belief”, with the advent of Greek-Arabic thought processes, man's thought process changed. Now man slowly came to follow *Intelligo ut credam*, “belief comes through understanding.”

Such a watershed change in man's thinking processes brought about what we know today as scientific investigation.

Jebel al-Tariq, a Muslim commander, stepped onto a huge rock in southern Spain and named the rock **Jebel al-Tariq**. Over time the name was corrupted to **Gibraltar**.

But, as in all things, time made a change in the Arabic thought processes and their resulting world view.

In 1013 internal rifts sprang up between major elements of the Arab power structure which led to the end of the Umayyads. Much destruction followed including the destruction of many libraries.

Spaniards had retreated into the mountains. Muslims bypassed them pushing across the Pyrenees into France and taking their culture with them.

The French stopped them at the Battle of Tours. The French defeated the Arabs at Tours, but kept the science, literature, and other cultural elements.

Muslims regrouped from the battle and, in time, invaded Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica by the 9th Century.

Battle # 2: Muslims attacked outlying areas of Rome in 846 – center of western Christianity. This would be comparable to the United States attacking Mecca (something the US has never done).

Byzantines, in 950-960, (Eastern Roman Empire) counterattacked; recovered Crete, Cyprus, and parts of Asia Minor and Syria.

On October 18, 1009, Fatimid calif al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, an insane Muslim ruler, persecuted Christians and ordered the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.

That church, also known as the Church of the Resurrection, is in the Christian Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. The church is said to be the location of the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Later, under Emperor Constantine IX, it was reconstructed with modifications.

Christian population of the Holy Lands had begun to shrink.

Hakim was deposed soon, but permanent relational damage had been done between Muslims, Jews and Christians.

Battle # 3: 1071 Byzantine Emperor, Romanus Diogenes confronted Seljuk Turkish Muslims – and lost.

The emperor had asked Pope Gregory VII for help – was turned down.

The emperor, then, asked Pope Urban II for help and got it (1091).

Seljuk Turks converted to Islam in 900's.

Seljuk's, very aggressive, conquered Iran and Iraq!

Meantime, Seljuk Turks drove the rest of Christian Priests out of the Holy Land.

1095: 1st Crusade to take back Jerusalem – ended in bloody massacre of Jerusalem's inhabitants (1099). They won and controlled Holy Land until 1291.

In 1291, Muslims took Jerusalem back.

Later crusades failed to win back the Holy Land from the Muslims.

For 200 years, Islamic power decline because they lost out on trade. They had no naval technology, and they had no significant land-based trade.

In 1683, Ottoman Turks (Muslims) launched the last attack in Europe laying siege to Vienna. They had conquered Serbia, Hungary, Albania, and Bulgaria back in the 14th Century.

Polish forces led by Jan Sabieski caught the Turks by surprise and halted the siege of the city. The surprise was so sudden they found Croissants and coffee abandoned on Muslim tables. The Polish forces introduced those delicacies to western tables.



Croissants, an invention of Muslims, by delicious.com

Muslims never made another serious attempt again in Europe.

Only now, in the 21st Century, are the Muslims re-emerging as a world-class force – again based on terror, not on trade or manufacturing.

Yet today, they have limited world trade. They cannot manufacture a product. Even with a product, they lack the ability to market a product.

They still possess no naval technology.

They still possess no air technology.

They still possess only limited manufacturing technology.

However, Muslims today see these three battles as Western acts of rape against them and “their land.”

This, even though they started the battles.

Western minds have tended to apologize for atrocities done during the crusades.

Muslims have never apologized. Some call their efforts today a counter crusade – calling western forces unjust aggressors.

Muslims believe they still have a right to conquer all Christian lands.

They do not believe Christians have a right to exist outside Islamic Law.

Osama Bin Laden was in a struggle defining (redefining?) the core of Arab beliefs throughout the Middle East.

With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, European colonization ended.

Arab regimes, having limited governing experience, failed to govern themselves effectively.

They based their regimes on Western models but did not appear to understand those models.

Their nations became despotic states.

Egypt gave lip service to creating a Pan-Arabic League, but it did not happen and probably will not happen.

Israel's '67 War victory destroyed that dream.

Out of this struggle came a highly politicized version of Islam.

Sayid Outb (an Egyptian) was hanged in '66 for plotting to kill Gamel Abdel Nasser and return Islam to Shari, a pure Islamic law, i.e., NO division between church and state.

They had been slipping; some had given approval to such a separation of church and state.

Saddam Hussein tried to conquer Iran and Kuwait and was looking at Saudi Arabia. Two western interventions have prevented his success.

Libya may have had such plans, but western diplomacy thwarted those plans.

So, where the west goes from here depends on how nations view the intentions of Islam.

If the west views Islamic aggressions as criminal, like organized crime, the west will respond one way.

- 1.The west would send the international police looking for the Islamists.
2. They would try Islamists in world courts.

If the west views Islamist behavior as an internationally structured and systematized aggression, the west will respond another way.

- 1.They will likely send an international army after the Islamists.
- 2.They will likely engage Islamists in military campaigns, battles of attrition.

*** Remember, Muslims have lost many battles, but they've never lost a war – and they know it!**

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Hell!

The bible teaches it! We are told people go there! Our responsibility is to believe it exists and explain to sinners that Jesus Christ is their only hope of avoiding it.

Preface

The subject of hell is complex. Opinions on the subject vary greatly from one denomination to another; opinions vary even within denominations. The concept of hell seems less certain in the Old Testament than in the New Testament.

References given in the New Testament, taken literally, do not all agree giving rise to a skepticism or wonderment about what is true, i.e. whether it is literal or figurative, eternal or temporal, a place of fire or of darkness or even whether it is a place where somehow the punishment for sin is made to fit the crime of sin.

God's choices do not depend on what we like or prefer. Our expectations matter little, if at all. Neither does what makes us comfortable or uncomfortable make any difference in the reality of the subject.

Dictionary of the Bible and Christian Doctrine, by Truesdale, Lyons, Eby and Clark define hell as a place of separation from God. It is eternal. They refer to three words of significance regarding hell: Shaol, a Hebrew word for hell; Hades, the Greek word for hell; and Gehenna, another Greek word for hell.

Gehenna was a place where the residents of Jerusalem disposed of city trash, the city dump. Jesus used the term, Gehenna in reference to hell. (See below: **What does the Bible say about Hell**)

Three Views on Hell

Our view on hell depends on our view of one's soul, its' nature and destiny.

TRADITIONAL VIEW: Perhaps most of humanity believes few people will be saved, i.e., most people will lose their souls. Each will, at death, be judged by God and sentenced either to eternal life and pleasure or eternal condemnation, and sorrow.

Hell, for the traditionalist, embodies endless and conscious punishment for one's sins. Some interpret scripture to indicate that this punishment is literal torment; that this torment may include spiritual suffering in terms of being eternally separated from God.

Some traditionalists believe there are variations of punishment depending on the severity of the individual's sins. Some Calvinists believe God's sovereignty allows him to punish whom he chooses. God can also elect whom he chooses to enjoy eternal blessings. Such a belief seems to remove individual choice, in favor of God making the choice for the person.

Roman Catholics believe there is a distinction between hell and purgatory; that purgatory is a place of temporary residence where the individual proceeds through a purification process, assuming that person is destined for heaven.

It is unclear exactly under what conditions the resident of purgatory is released or what requirements must be met.

Either way, from the traditionalist point of view, and excepting purgatory, once one arrives, **there is no way out!**

IMMORTALITY vs. ANNIHILATIONISM (VS. CONDITIONAL) VIEW -- MAYBE

According to this point of view, the soul of man is not naturally immortal. One's eternal existence is a gift from God i.e., if one is redeemed. The soul is eternal only when God affirms its immortality in heaven – the gift of salvation. Some individuals will not receive that gift.

Indeed, an unrepentant individual will go through a period of conscious punishment, but it will be temporary. There will be, ultimately, a final resurrection at which time the unrepentant will be completely destroyed, i.e., they will simply cease to exist. Therefore, the biblical term, fire, is a totally consuming fire.

No explanation has been found for why the unrepentant individual must remain in the grave awaiting a resurrection that will inform them of the punishment that awaits.

There are some Conditionalists who believe an unrepentant person, somewhere in the process, will receive a second opportunity to repent, or to, again, reject God.

Annihilationist's reject Conditionalists argument saying that God irrevocably conferred immortality on all humans at the point of creation; that annihilation of the unrepentant is a misinterpretation of scripture.

Annihilationist's point to the Greek word, *aion*, commonly used in Greek translations, saying it often is used to mean "forever." They say its' more literal meaning refers to "age", i.e., referring to a lengthy period of time where there is a sense of justice involved where "the penalty is made to fit the crime."

In fact, the word, *aion*, used in translations of Greek is used to mean eternity as often as it is used to mean an age of time.

UNIVERSALISM – RESTORATIONISM VIEW

God will ultimately restore all of creation to its' original condition of perfect harmony. Everyone will be saved! They do not refer to it as a "new heaven and a new earth," but the theory implies it.

According to this theory, it is against the nature of a loving God to condemn anyone to eternal punishment. God's divine will includes with it the power to will salvation for everyone regardless of their unrepentant deeds.

Punishment, then, is remedial trending the unrepentant toward ultimate union with God. Under this condition, not only all persons, but even Satan can be saved, all without the presence of individual choice.

Some universalist theologians in history have hedged their arguments saying, while we cannot dogmatically say that all will be saved, neither can we say that they won't.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT HELL?

Note: The following Old Testament scriptures discuss the Valley of Ben Hinnom as a place where human sacrifice occurred, but no specific mention has been found of hell – only the awfulness of human sacrifice to appease the god, Moloch.

Old Testament

The term Valley of Hinnom is referenced in the Old Testament. Hinnom had taken its name from an ancient hero, ref. Joshua 15:8, where, in a deep rocky-sided ravine, southwest of Jerusalem, humans (and often, children) were sacrificed by fire. Hinnom separated Mount Zion from this "Hill of Evil".

Jews related this horrendous valley to, a) the suffering of victims who had been sacrificed in that valley, and b) the filth and corruption accumulated over time by what had happened there.

From this historical narrative, the Jews associated the Valley of Hinnom with the abode of wicked people (obviously referring to those who offer human sacrifices).

Eventually, the valley's name morphed into **Ge-Hinnom**, Gehenna. Gehenna, in turn, morphed into meaning a place of eternal torment.

The Valley had a nickname, the “fire-stove” where children were burned alive.



Valley of Ben Hinnom (later: Gehenna) (still later: Gidron Valley beside Temple Mount); Where thousands of humans were sacrificed.

Brief Old Testament References Implying Hell

Deut 32:20-22 “I will hide my face from them” he said, “and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful.

They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols.

I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding.

For a fire has been kindled by my wrath, one that burns to the realm of death below.

It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire the foundations of the mountains.

Ps 139:7-8 Where can I go from your Spirit Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you are there; If I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

Common Allusions as References to Hell

II Chron 28:3 This scripture refers to Ahaz worshipping Baal and offering human sacrifice in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. He even sacrificed his own sons there. Scripture, however, does not specifically mention hell.

II Chron 28:1-5 Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David, his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord. He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and also made cast idols for worshipping the Baals. 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. He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places, on the hilltops and under every spreading tree.

Therefore, the Lord his God handed him over to the king of Aram. The Arameans defeated him and took many of his people as prisoners and brought them to Damascus.

Isa 34:8-10 Here, the prophet referred not to hell but to the nations that harassed Israel.

For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion's cause.

Edom's streams will be turned into pitch, her dust into burning sulfur; her land will become blazing pitch!

It will not be quenched night and day; its smoke will rise forever. From generation to generation, it will lie desolate; no one will ever pass through it again.

Jer 7:32; Again, reference is made to human sacrifice in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, sacrifice by fire. There, they burned both their sons and their daughters. No mention of hell.

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.

Jer 19:5 refers to further human sacrifices in the Valley of Ben Hinnom under the worship of Baal. No mention of hell.

Ben Hinnom was Destroyed

Josiah eventually rendered Ben Hinnom ceremonially unclean by spreading human bones over the filth that covered the area (2 Kings 23:10; 2 Kings 23:13; 2 Kings 23:14).

After Josiah, the valley became a cesspool where sewage was dumped. The sewage was then reported to have been carried off by the waters of Kidron. The Kidron Valley was a wadi where waters flowed through after heavy rains.

New Testament is Quite Specific

Matt 10:28

Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Matt 13:49-50 Jesus likened the kingdom of Heaven to fishermen who separated the bad fish from the good fish. Then, applying his analogy to people, he said:

This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them in to the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matt 25:41-46 Jesus, speaking of the sheep and the goats, declared that those who did not provide for the needs of others will suffer eternal punishment.

Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

For I was hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger, and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes, and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.

They also will answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?"

He will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

The preceding scripture, taken verbatim, says that even the non-violent socio-cultural interactions of people has eternal consequences.

In the following scriptures, there is a question implied as to whether hell is conscious punishment or final destruction.

Phil 3:19 Paul wrote that believers, imperfect as they all are, still should press toward the goal Christ had set up for them; that God was calling Paul heavenward.

Paul wrote:

Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven.

1 Thess 5:3; While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

2 Pet 3:6-7 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Rev 20:10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Scripture's Most Graphic Description of Hell

Rev 14:9-11 A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on his forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.

And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.

Great Men in History Gave their Opinions Regarding Hell

ORIGEN, 185-254 A.D. Hell, to Origen, was an extreme form of discipline intended to shock mankind into repentance. He hoped that even Satan and his demons would repent and return to God in what was called, apokatastasis, a final restoration of all creation.

His thinking was condemned as heretical at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, nearly three centuries after Origen's death.

ATHANASIUS 296-373 A.D. A believer in Christ's full divinity, Athanasius believed, the unbeliever falls back into nothingness when separated from the divine through sin. Jesus had redeemed mankind as a whole by taking on the just punishment for our sins with his death.

He seemed to believe that the term corruption meant the unbeliever would slowly slide toward nothingness – not ever quite getting there.

AUGUSTINE 354-430 Augustine was a strong influencer of western theology. He defended the concept of eternal punishment. He seemed to think that God, having condemned mankind through original sin, then graciously chose some from the mass of those condemned for ultimate salvation.

THOMAS AQUINAS 1224-1274 A.D. A recognized theologian, Aquinas argued that eternal punishment exists. It is because the unrepentant person had rejected God in favor of temporal gods on earth. Further, the unrepentant person perennially preferred temporal gods.

MARTIN LUTHER 1483-1546 A.D. Luther basically thought of hell as being alienated from God because of the persons' futile efforts to self-justify through works.

JONATHAN EDWARDS 1703-1758 A.D. Edwards was thoroughly traditional in his beliefs. As in his famous sermon, Sinners in the hands of an angry God, Edwards viewed God as holding mankind over the pit of hell as though man were some insect and threatening to drop the person into hell.

JOHN WESLEY 1703-1792 A.D. Wesley believed in hell as a place of eternal punishment. The focus of the punishment would be on one's loss of fellowship with friends, with God, and on endless suffering from the burning.

THE OXFORD DECLARATION c.1960 A.D. This declaration, signed by 11,000 Church of England clergymen, declared their affirmation that the punishment of the cursed, equally with the life of the righteous, is everlasting.

Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy, written in the 14th century described what Dante declared were seven levels of punishment in hell:

Level # 1: Limbo: an area reserved for people who are non-Christian, who are unbaptized, but yet are virtuous.

Level # 2: Lust: an area reserved for people whose commitment is of sin which is lust-driven.

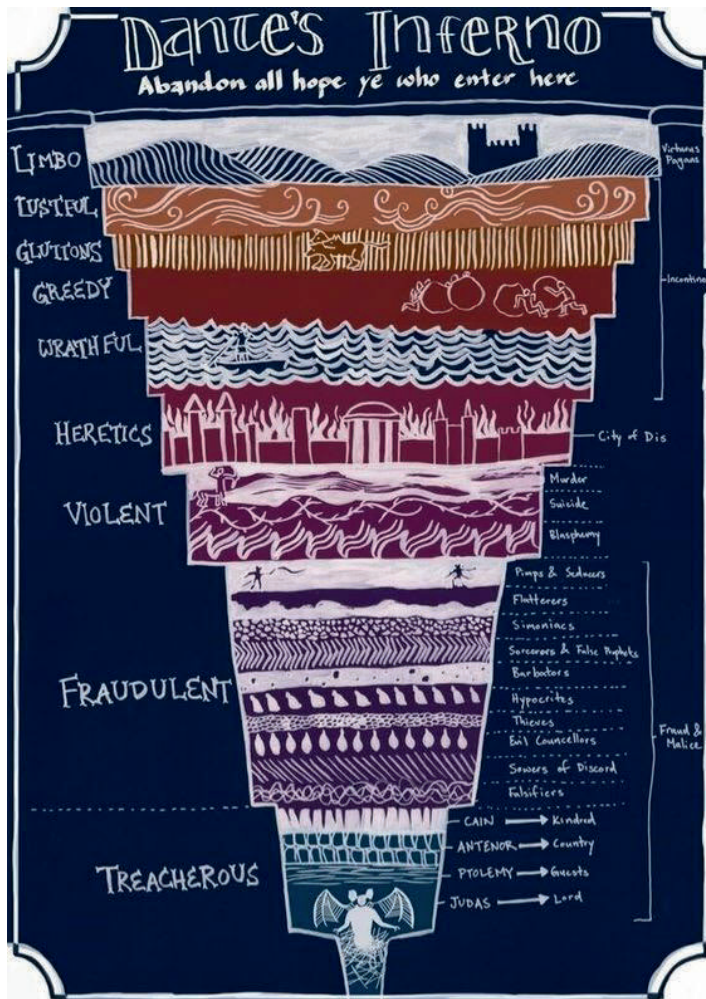
Level # 3: Gluttony: An area reserved for people who are driven by overindulgence.

Level # 4: Avarice and prodigality: an area reserved for greedy and non-generous people.

Level # 5: Anger: an area reserved for the wrathful; people consumed by anger and hatred.

Level # 6: Heresy: an area reserved for people who either have spoken or acted against the plan of God.

Level # 7: Violence: an area reserved for people whose blood boiled forcing them to become violent against others.



A concept of Dante's Inferno with Hell being in layers of torment

Dante's Inferno by Caleb Lin

Literal or Figurative?

1. The word group that includes “destroy” has been used in a variety of ways some of which do not imply a cessation of existence.
Destruction, they say, can occur without extinction of one’s being.
2. The imagery of “fire” in hell is meant as a metaphor. Once in the New Testament, it is alluded to as “utter darkness. In another instance, it is

referred to as “a lake of fire.” These two descriptions cannot co-exist. They cannot both be literal.

3. Hell is not about the magnitude of our sins. It is about the magnitude of God. Is the magnitude of our sin created by our own status or by the degree of offense we’ve committed against the sovereign, transcendent God?
4. Our blameworthiness comes not from how long we have offended divine dignity, but by how high the dignity is that we have offended.
5. Finally, are all sins equal in their damage to one’s relationship with the divine? Should one be condemned to spend eternity in hell because of an offense that consumed only a few seconds?
Should punishment for murder be equated with telling the minister you liked his sermon when, in fact you did not like it?
6. If sin is defined in scripture, why do some denominations define sin for themselves?



Where is it, if it is Literal?

The Hebrew Bible depicted the cosmos as being a great dome under which there were three levels: Heaven, shamayim, was a flat space on top; earth, eres, was a flat space in the middle; the underworld, sheol, a place of the dead (hell) was a flat space on the bottom.

The dome was supposed to have had holes in it out of which rain could descend.

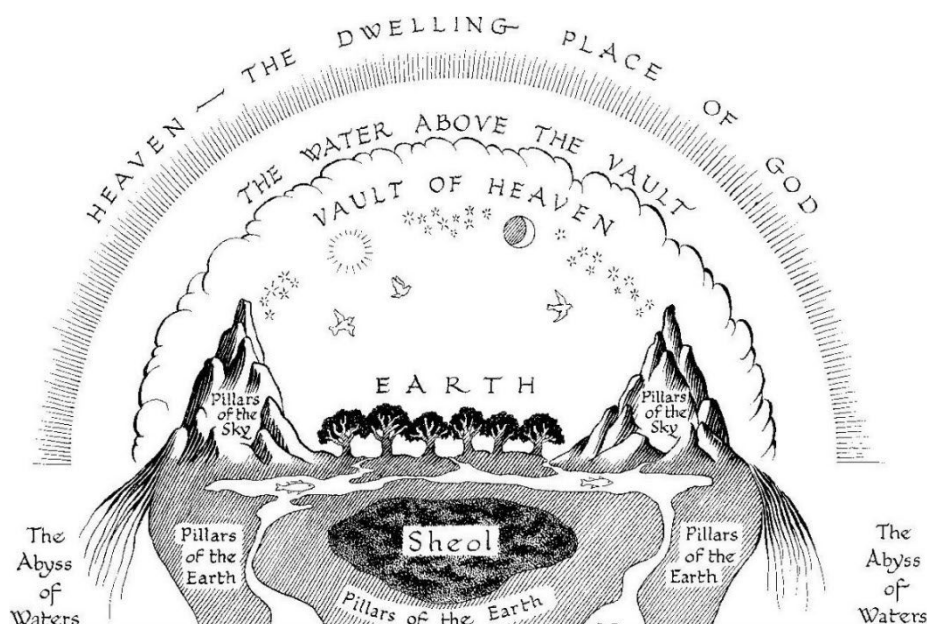


Figure 1: A picture of biblical cosmology (Reyburn and Fry 1998:27).

Semanticscholar.org

Considering this BC concept as acceptable, it would be logical for some in the early church to take literally these scriptures:

Deut 32:22 For a fire has been kindled by my wrath, one that burns to the realm of death below. It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire the foundations of the mountains.

Ps18:7 The earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook. . .

Ps 82:5b They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

Isa 14:9 The grave below is all astir to meet you at your coming. . .

Isa 24:18b The floodgates of the heavens are opened, the foundations of the earth shake.

Isa: 48:13 My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens. . .

Some modern ministers consider hell existing in the center of the earth core. Scientists indeed believe the earth's core is exceptionally hot, perhaps molten.

One minister declared volcanoes as being “pop valves” from hell.

Some declare hell to be on earth pointing to human trafficking, the Black Plague, The Spanish Inquisition, enormous natural disasters, war, the Holocaust, the ancient “Iron Maiden”, and either man-made or God-made disasters.

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The Blind Men and the Elephant

John Godfrey Saxe

It was six men of Indostan to learning much inclined.

Who went to see an elephant (though all of them were blind)

That each by observation, might satisfy his mind.

The first approached the elephant and happening to fall

Against his broad and sturdy side at once began to bawl

“God bless me! But the elephant is very like a wall.”

The second feeling of the tusk cried, “Ho what have we here,

So very round and smooth and sharp? To me ‘tis mighty clear

This wonder of an elephant is very like a spear!”

The third approached the animal and happening to take

The squirming trunk within his hands thus boldly up he spake

“I see”, quoth he, “the elephant is very like a snake!”

The fourth reached out an eager hand and felt about the knee

“What most this wondrous beast is like is mighty plain” quoth he

“Tis clear enough the elephant is very like a tree.”

The fifth, who chanced to touch the ear, said “e’en the blindest man

Can tell what this resembles most, deny the fact who can

This marvel of an elephant its very like a fan.”

The sixth no sooner had begun about the beast to grope

Then seizing on the swinging tail that fell within his scope

“I see, quoth he, the elephant is very like a rope.”

And so these men of Indostan disputed loud and long;

Each in his own opinion exceeding stiff and strong

Though each was partly in the right, and all were in the wrong.



Sant Mat Meditation and Spirituality - Medium

Moral

So oft in theologic wars, the disputants, I ween

Rail on in utter ignorance of what each other mean,

And prate about an “elephant” not one of them has seen.



By Believe.com

Heaven

Prologue:

Heaven exists! People go there! The requisites for residence in heaven vary between both denominations and cultures. The terms, Heaven and God are sometimes used interchangeably, adding, perhaps, to the misunderstanding of some and the confusion of others. One Gallup Poll reported 81% of Americans believe in heaven. Gallup also reported that many of that 81% do not believe in God; that regardless of their faith's basis, they will go to heaven when they die.

Views on Heaven:

JOHN WESLEY: Wesley, in his sermon, *The General Deliverance*, and a second sermon, *The New Creation*, said that both people and animals, especially dogs, go to heaven. Wesley did not mention cats. He had based his comments on Romans 22:

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.



By Millenium Arc

Wesley's argument was that animals, as with man, existed in heavenly bliss before The Fall of Man in the garden. Therefore, animals, like man, groan under the pain of The Fall; that in heaven, that pain will be released.

Rev 21:4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

Wesley said the term, *their*, referred to animals as well as to mankind. Wesley failed to address the issue of resurrection as related to animals. However, ceatures will no longer harm each other.

The cycle of brokenness endemic to all creation will end in heaven. Further, Wesley believed the concept of heaven included the celestial realm involving all of creation. The *heavens*, i.e., the sky, would ultimately give way to perfect harmony and order where there would be no “falling stars” or comets. All would be serene.

Said Wesley, *We live in a strange house* (our bodies); *pilgrims in a strange land* (this world).

BARCLAY COMMENTARY: *We are exiles of eternity.*

DANTE ALIGHIERI: Dante’s *Divine comedy* placed saints all in heaven. He also placed some church-politicians, Henry VII and at least one pope in heaven.

Dante’s fictional account of heaven included nine spheres. In his guided journey through heaven, he met many souls who arrived there in spite of the fact they had been driven by ambition. Examples included Justinian, byzantine Emperor, Ceasar Augustus, Jesus (not ambition-driven), Boethius, Solomon, Bede, St. Thomas, to name a few. These, and others’ residences were dispersed throughout the nine spheres of heaven.

C. S. LEWIS: Lewis’ authorship had a significant effect on the Christian world. In one work, *The Great Divorce*, Lewis described bus passengers arriving at a heavenly area. But most of the passengers chose to leave the area upon learning that to remain there required them to submit to the lordship of Christ.

Lewis, in *The Last Battle*, said things would happen that are beyond human imagination.

DALLAS WILLARD: Dallas, a Christian author and professor of philosophy, was afflicted with cancer. Willard, during his decline days, spent time thinking about and talking about heaven and the afterlife. He recalled spending time in a

“hallway” between earthly existence and a heavenly one. He reportedly had taken no mind-altering drugs.

In this hallway, he had met people in what he appeared to describe as his “great cloud of witnesses”. He wondered if heaven included the kind of environment where people receive all of the bliss and love that God can provide for them, limited by their ability to accept the love.

He wondered if, regarding hell, God might be providing for people the best that person’s personality can accept, hence, punishment – or that is the best God could do for them.

BILLY GRAHAM: Will there be animals in heaven? Graham quotes:

Gen 1:24-25 NKJ, Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle. . . and everything . . . on the earth . . . And God saw that it was good.

Isa 11:6 The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.

Ps 150:6, In that day death and evil will be destroyed, perfect peace will reign, and everything that has breath, including animals, will praise him.

Luke 22:30, people will eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.

Jesus said, Rev 2:7 I will give [my creatures] the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Rev 22:2, On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month.

Following Jesus' resurrection, and in his glorified body, Jesus asked his disciples if there were anything to eat.

Luke 24:42 wrote that: *they gave him a piece of broiled fish . . . and [He] ate it in their presence.*

Luke 13:29, *People will come . . . and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.*

People will see things.

Isa 33:17, *Your eyes will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar.*

Rev 5:6, 13, *Then I saw a Lamb . . . I heard every creature in heaven . . . singing: "to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory for ever and ever."*

John, in Rev 21:11, 21, *Its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal . . . The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.*

Graham said that when the believer arrives in heaven the believer will gaze at His nail-scarred hands, fall at his feet, and weep with joy, praising his wonderful name. That is what one will experience in heaven.



By Ignitum Today

Where is Heaven?

Clearly, no one knows. Science has concluded that the universe does not consist of three levels where heaven is the top level. Yet, Jesus ascended upward from the Mount of Olives while his disciples stood gazing into the heavens. Adherents to theology investigate such elusive topics as the resurrection, glorified bodies, a thousand -year reign on earth of believers, and the New Jerusalem.

Space probes have been sent from earth to the outer limits of our universe and on into outer space beyond our universe all without finding heaven. Some on earth declare heaven is here –not “out there”.

Some theologians argue that the believer will not go up to heaven, but that heaven will come down to them.

Without definitive answers regarding what it is, where it is, or what is going to happen and in what sequence, many are left simply. . .

Looking for Home

The thoughts of mankind regarding heaven are as varied as cultures or personalities. It is a safe assumption that most if not all humanity searches for a location or state of existence where they can be comfortable. In all cases, they fear that once they find that “perfect state”, a benefit of their wealth or social position, it can be lost.

Here is one poignant believer’s statement on the matter: *mankind is a heavenly being with an earthly mission*. That mission, for many, is fraught with trials, social complexities, and a variety of earthly hardships.

II Cor 4:17-18 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal.

I Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

v.11 Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul.

AN ASIDE: Laying aside all lengthy abstract theological efforts, and focusing on home-spun type thinking, consider this: An untrained believer without the benefit of deep theological perspective – only private thoughts, made this observation:

We’ve all experienced a baby lying on the living room floor on its’ back and looking up at nothing in particular.

Suddenly, it begins to giggle and squeal in delight, flailing its' fat little baby arms and legs as though to say, "pick me up!" "pick me up!" You, the observer, see nothing but the baby; however, the baby does see something.

Said the observer, "the baby was playing with angels." Remember, the body is made on earth following protocols all adults understand. But the soul in that baby came from God in heaven. The most recent memory the baby has is of having played with angels.

Perhaps, in this instance, the baby is enjoying its' most recent memory of heavenly angels.

In time, the baby will become an adult, live out its life, and die. The baby's body, made on earth, will return to the dust from which it was made. Its' soul will return to the God who gave it.



The above fantasy may or may not be factual. However, there seems to be a divine spark in all individuals, placed there at birth – or in utero – giving the person a deep longing for the soul to return to its' original state, i.e., **looking for home.**

DIOGENETUS, The soul is imprisoned in the body.

Our humanity both confines what we can do and at the same time, distracts our attention from what many authors call the “divine spark.”

THOMAS HOOD: British mathematician, physician, author, wrote this bit of wistful thought.

I remember the fir-trees dark and high.

I used to think their slender spires were close against the sky.

It was a childish ignorance but now 'tis no joy

to know, I'm farther from heaven now than when I was a boy.

He was not farther from heaven, only distracted.

WORDSWORTH: Of Ambleside, England, wrote that a child comes from Heaven; that through time the years slowly take this memory away.

Said Wordsworth:

*Trailing clouds of glory do we come, but shades of the prison house
begin to close about the growing boy; soon, the boy-man is totally
earthbound, and heaven is all but forgotten.*

Clearly, man struggles with his dual-identity, creatures living with a divine spark while having an earthly experience.

The exiled Jew still constructs his synagogue so that when he enters, he is facing Jerusalem – facing “home.”

The Greek term for the exiled sojourner is *Paroikos*, parishioner. *That is the believer (sojourner) finding his way home.*

The term, disciple, in Greek, means “follower.” The believer is here to learn. Greek: *Mathitis* (*Math-ay-tes*) means, “an intentional learner.

The believer, like the exiled Jew, lives in the present but with eternal loyalties.

Heaven’s physical location, in the final analysis, is inconsequential.

The believer, here only temporarily, will go there.

THE EPISTLE TO DIOGENETUS: *Christians are not marked out from the rest of mankind by their country or their speech or their customs.*

. . . They dwell in cities both Greek and barbarian, each as his lot is cast, following the customs of the region in clothing and in food and in the outward things of life generally; yet they manifest the wonderful and openly paradoxical character of their own state.

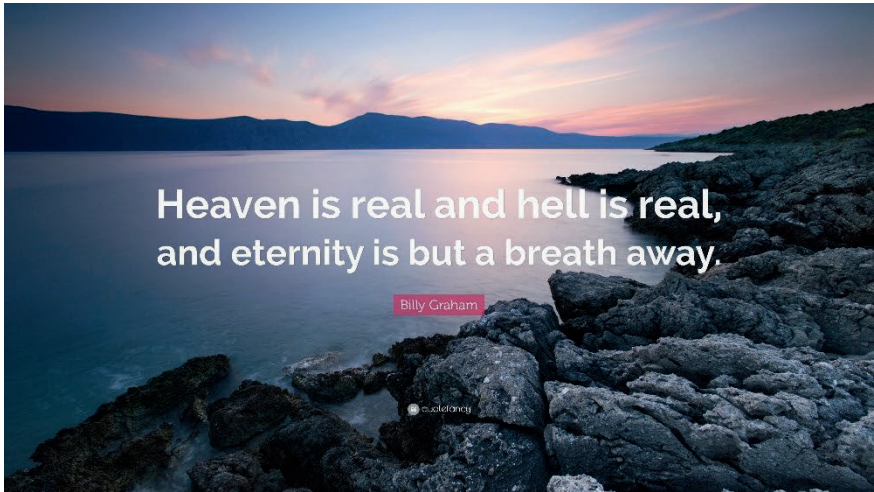
They inhabit the lands of their birth, but as temporary residents thereof; they take their share of all responsibilities as citizens and endure all disabilities as aliens.

*Every foreign land is their native land and every native land a foreign land . . . They pass their days upon earth, **but their citizenship is in heaven.***

Regarding who will go there, the believer will always feel a strangeness, a “tug” somewhere inside indicating that something’s “not quite right.” It isn’t – right. Theologians argue the tug is from the individual’s soul simply **looking for home.**

Is Heaven Literal or Figurative?

The best phrasing likely is that authors all use figurative language to describe what they believe is a literal phenomenon. Their comments originate on the relationship between their personal beliefs and quotes of scripture.



Billy Graham quote

Ten Commandments



Lazer Engrave File

Exodus 20:1-17

It is commonly thought that the Ten Commandments occupy a unique place in The Law. One unusual fact concerning the Ten Commandments is that they represent the only portion of the Old Testament narrative written by God to all of God's people. (Ex 24:12; 31:18; 32:15; Deut. 10:4)

All else written represents the words and thoughts of Moses, relating to the Israelites what God had revealed to him.

The Ten commandments were not always listed as they are today. In Judaism, there was a prologue that read, *I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery*. Then, they listed the commonly recognized verse, *“You shall have no other gods before me.”*

The Greek Orthodox and Protestant Reformed churches combine the prologue and the warning against false gods as one commandment.

The Ten Commandments became a part of the Christian faith around the 13th century. Then, they were made a part of the instructional documents useful for those wishing to confess their faith.

The Ten Commandments date from the period after 750 BC, that is, after the times of Amos and Hosea.

Some consider the commandments a collection of legal and priestly traditions of the Israeli nation. Those thoughts belong to a period later than Amos and Hosea.

The commandments relate to concepts of morality common to a period of time even more ancient than that of Moses. Over time, the commandments as given to Moses were modified to incorporate evolving socioeconomic and ethical concepts.

Author, Martin Buber pointed out that, considering the strict interpretation of Hebrew grammar, a re-statement of the commandments would read, e.g., *You will not have*, or *You will not make*, etc. implying someone living in a covenant relationship with God instead of living under a commanding imperative from God.

Continuing with the thoughts of Martin Buber, the Ten Commandments become individual as well as being a national covenant with God.

Not presented as God's imperative against his people, the Ten Commandments can be regarded as an act of Grace supporting his people.

Commandment # 1: (Ex 20:7)

Abram concluded there was one God over all. Hundreds of years would pass before God would write the first commandment on Moses' tablet, *You shall have no other gods before me.*

This commandment calls to mind the interaction Josephus wrote about as having occurred between Abram and his father, Terra. Josephus indicated that Abram challenged his father, Terra on the fact that Terra worshipped multiple gods.

Supposedly asked why so many gods to worship, Terra replied that he did not want to make a mistake in case one of them was false.

Abram concluded, here in paraphrase, that the fire god was quite powerful; that it could cook food, heat the house, etc. But the rain god must be more powerful because when the rain god appeared, the fire god would cease its' activity.

Further, the sun god must be more powerful than the rain god because when the sun god appeared, the rain god would cease.

The caution does not seem to be a denial of the existence of other powerful forces; that one should worship only the true and living God.

Commandment # 2:

(Ex 20:4-6) *You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.*

The prohibition appears to address man's proclivity for making images and giving the images priestly blessings. The blessings are thought to attribute to the image an element of deity. Such attribution would weaken if not destroy the first commandment, *You shall have no other gods before me.*

Such thoughts regarding images could apply as well to pictorial representations of God. However, many thoughtful people recognize the cultural value of having symbols; that symbols do not inherently possess deistic characteristics; that a human cannot convey deistic characteristics to a statue by simple statement or ritual.

The ability to give an object divine attributes or power would of necessity assume the one performing the ritual or making the attributing statement also has the power or authority to do so. Such a behavior would demean the first commandment.

Commandment # 3:

(Ex 20:7) You shall not misuse the name of the lord your God for the lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

Upon learning through Moses that they were not to misuse the name of the Lord their God, the Children of Israel created a word for God that could not be pronounced, YHWH.

However, they proceeded to create other names that referred to God, *Yahweh, Jehovah, etc.*

There are at least three reasons for this commandment.

- a) Some use God's name as a magical ingredient in their ritual. Many believers will use the phrase, *in Jesus' name*. Some argue that such

usage of Jesus' name implies that its use insures a favorable divine response.

It is a more likely true that such use of Jesus' name is more from habit than attempting to invoke a more favorable divine response.

- b) Profanity exists in multiple forms. At times, profanity includes one or more references to the divine. Such use clearly breaches the imperative against the misuse of God's name.

However, many terms considered profane do not employ the name of God. Instead, they employ terms considered by polite society to be course, crude or an egregious misuse of the language.

One observed as follows, *Well, if the use of course words is not profane, then there will be a lot of "potty-mouthed" people in heaven.* Such a comment displays ignorance of what the commandment means. The use of such profane terms can equally imply a loose or non-existent relationship between that individual and God.

- c. The third reason for the commandment is the often careless use of the term. Such use shows disrespect for God and all that divinity represents. The use of divine references intending only to relieve one's own stress, anger, frustration shows both disrespect for God and an immature application of the gift of speech.

Commandment # 4:

(Ex 20:8-11) Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath to the Lord your God.

This commandment relates to people's use of their time. There are two issues involved with this imperative:

- a. People should not work constantly. It is not considered a breach of God's law, but an impracticality.

To work seven days each week causes the individual to become enslaved to the work. The low income of some may require such constant effort to survive.

Others are psychologically driven to work constantly, a seeming demand of their personality. Such individuals are enslaved by their work.

- b. The commandment says that people should work six days and reserve the seventh day, the Sabbath, and to keep it holy. Scripture says to do it but does not tell how it should be done.

Each denomination seems to claim the right to determine how one should keep the Sabbath Day holy.

Commandment # 5:

(Ex 20:12) Honor your father and your mother that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

The family is the fundamental building block of any culture. The culture itself will be dissolved if the family unit is destroyed.

The commandment become an issue in the circumstance where uninformed parents abuse their children. It has been reported that one-in-four children (specific culture unidentified) are either physically, sexually, emotionally, or financially abused.

Regrettably, such abused children, assuming the above reference to be true, grow up to enter the professions, legal, ministerial, social, medical, etc., and possibly conduct behaviors they were taught by their parents.

Though unstated in scripture, people might consider the obverse of the commandment: *Parents, honor your children!*

Commandment # 6:

(Ex 20:13) *You shall not murder.*

A loose interpretation of Prov 22:13 could read, *an unauthorized killing, or a needless killing.*

There clearly are multiple scenarios involving having caused the death of another being. It is difficult, if not dangerous, to make a blanket statement regarding the taking of a life.

Too, there is a distinct difference between *kill* and *murder*. Murder implies intent without regard, e.g., to propriety, self or cultural preservation.

Further, murder may, e.g., involve the intentional destruction of another person's livelihood, or the legal destruction of another person's family.

Of importance to this commandment is the term, *needless*.

Commandment # 7:

(Ex 20:14) *You shall not commit adultery.*

Scripture allows no tolerance for sex between married people who are not married to each other. Jesus made adultery a matter involving the sin of both partners, not just the woman.

Commandment # 8:

(Ex 20:15) *You shall not steal.*

This commandment centers on the concept of ownership, whether of wealth, possessions, accomplishment, or goodwill.

There are multiple ways to steal. Someone can without authority, take money or property. They can steal your identity. They can steal credit for the accomplishment of someone else.

An issue regarding theft is having a viable definition of the term. What constitutes theft? Is it theft if you borrow an item from another person having forgotten to ask permission?

Too, if the item is inconsequential, e.g. a paper clip. Is it theft if you pick it up from another person's possession without having requested it?

Some denominations seem to assume that such issues as sub-ethical.

Commandment # 9:

(Ex 20:16) *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.* Is it a lie if one tells the truth but not the whole truth? Is it a lie if the utterance does not involve your neighbor?

Finally, is it a lie if a husband tells his wife her new outrageously ugly hat is beautiful?

Again, many denominations consider such matters to be sub-ethical. In other words, *God understands!*

This commandment seems to relate to legality as much as ethics. It appears to be a caution that intentionally misrepresenting information regarding one's neighbor is damaging or destructive to any culture.

No culture can continue if truth and ownership are not preserved.

Commandment # 10:

(Ex 20:17) You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not cover your neighbor's wife or his manservant or his maidservant, his ox or donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

The commandment means more than *desire* or *admire*. It implies a selfishness inherent in some individuals where those persons desire to take what they have no legal or moral authority to have.

An Alternative Explanation of the Ten Commandments

Moses was leading a huge group of former slaves through the wilderness of Sinai. He needed to establish an entire culture for these former slaves. They knew little or nothing about legality, ethics, morality, or structured religion.

Viewed from this perspective:

Commandments 1-4: relate to an elementary structuring a faith.

Commandment 5: relates to the establishment of the family as the foundation of their new culture.

Commandments 6-9: relate to legality. They were introduced to the concept of ownership; of needlessly taking someone's life; of the moral/legal issues of adultery; of the necessity of truth as an essential element maintaining a culture.

Commandment 10: relates to the ethics of allowing the lifestyle and possessions of another person to be inviolate.

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