

WHY INCLUSION?

By

Douglas Henderson



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WHY INCLUSION?

INTRODUCTION

Letter to the editor of the Tulsa World, published March 28, 2004.

Check it out

Carlton Pearson is dead wrong. As an evangelical Christian that was what I thought too. But then I visited Higher Dimensions Church.

If the proof of the pudding is in the eating then the proof of correct theology is in the love, grace, joy and peace of its practitioners. That's what blind sided me and sent me back to re-read a Bible I thought I knew.

Guess what? Carlton Pearson might just be right. But it's not that Pearson is right, or that anybody else is wrong; it's that this "Inclusion" may be closer to what God meant all along.

"Everybody goes to heaven" is a gross oversimplification of what Pearson is teaching. But I dare you to check it out for yourself.

Douglas Henderson

This material is provided so you can "Check it out" for yourself.

WHY INCLUSION?



LOOK AT INCLUSION LIKE THIS

Detectives are sent to the scene of a crime. The detectives of course, don't know much about the crime; that's what they are there to find out.

At the crime scene detectives will ***gather evidence***; such as fingerprints, bloodstains or photographs.

Based on that evidence detectives will ***form a hypothesis*** about the crime.

This hypothesis will fit the evidence together to form a cohesive story explaining what happened.

As more evidence becomes available the detective will refine or even discard his original hypothesis in favor of a better one. If he originally thought the crime to be a ***homicide***, but later discovered a ***suicide*** note...he would change his hypothesis to reflect that new evidence.

If enough pieces of evidence come in that don't fit the hypothesis, the detective can't ignore the evidence, he must throw out his hypothesis.

It is not required of a good hypotheses for 100% of the evidence to fit perfectly. In the real world there will be a few loose ends that can't be explained.

A good detective does not get too attached to his hypothesis. It is not seen as a personal reflection on the detective to abandon one hypothesis for a better one. A good detective is not interested in furthering his particular hypothesis over another detective's; he just wants the crime solved.

Think of God like the above crime scene. You and I are detectives.

We come into this world not knowing anything about God. As we live we develop a hypothesis about God based on our interpretation of the available evidence.

We call our hypothesis religion or theology. The things we accept as evidence may include the scriptures, our life experiences, what we have been taught, our logic and maybe even what we saw on TV the other night.

As we encounter more evidence in life we may reevaluate or revise our theology/hypothesis.

It has become my conviction, that "Inclusion" is a better interpretation of the evidence than what I previously believed.

I'm not interested in debating you, or in one of us "winning" by destroying the other person's theology with Bible verses. I suspect you and I both just want to know God as best we can.

With this material all I have tried to do is lay out the evidence so you may evaluate the hypothesis of Inclusion for yourself. With the mind of a detective, just examine the evidence; that's all I ask.

If you approach this with the sole purpose of discrediting Inclusion you will do disservice to the evidence, to God and to yourself.

If the hypothesis of Inclusion better supports the evidence than other theologies...then seriously consider ***accepting Inclusion***.

If Inclusion is not a better explanation of the evidence you have encountered about God in your life, then ***reject Inclusion***.

May God bless you for wanting to know him better.

Doug Henderson



INCLUSION IN A NUTSHELL

We will get into details, scripture passages and more later, but here, in as few words as I can describe it, is the doctrine referred to as “Inclusion”.

“Inclusion” believes that all people will eventually be reunited with God.

This one core point sets it apart from most other Christian religions or denominations, which believe that some people will be reunited with God (saved, redeemed, go to heaven), and those not so will be separated from God (lost, unredeemed, go to Hell).

With this exception, Inclusionists are by and large in agreement with the other doctrinal beliefs of mainstream Christianity.

With this exception, Inclusionists are **not** in **disagreement** with the other doctrinal beliefs of mainstream Christianity.

To define Inclusion as “everybody goes to heaven” or “they don’t believe in Hell” is a gross oversimplification of the doctrine, in the same sense that the Southern Baptist Denomination is more than “once saved, always saved.”

Inclusion is (at least at this point) not a religion or a denomination, but a doctrine.

Since Inclusion is a doctrine, rather than a religion or denomination, it is not directly tied to other points of doctrine. A person who believes in Inclusion may or may not believe in, say, immersion baptism. The two aren’t necessarily connected.

Inclusion is not a new idea. It did not originate with Bishop Carlton Pearson. Inclusion is the name Pearson has given to what has in the past sometimes been called “universalism” referring to the universal salvation of mankind.

Universalism shouldn’t be confused with Unitarianism, which is a significantly different denomination that is outside of this discussion. Perhaps a more descriptive term for the doctrine would be “Universal Reconciliation”.

There is considerable evidence this doctrine was the original viewpoint of the early Christian church for several centuries after Pentecost. This doctrine was the doctrine of the Eastern Church for about 500 years .

WHY INCLUSION?



UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

I believe in Inclusion. I believe the Bible teaches Inclusion. I believe the Bible to be the word of God.

But the Bible is a difficult book. I have personally never met anyone who claimed to understand all of the Bible.

The most learned, educated, qualified scholars I know still admit that there are verses and passages that they don't understand. And probably more frustrating is that the passages scholars do understand, they don't agree on.

But let's not give up on the Bible. Because we don't understand all of it, doesn't exempt us from our responsibility to what is in it. Let's talk about why the Bible is hard to understand and see if we can come up with a better approach to understanding it.

When the Native Americans first saw messages written on paper they were mystified. They called these "talking leaves".

You and I know a piece of paper is not a leaf because it is incapable of photosynthesis. It doesn't have a mouth and is incapable of audible speech.

But for the Indian, this was a perfectly workable term. The notes were thin and flat like tree leaves and communicated information to the receiver. The term was something an Indian living 200 years ago could relate to.

The Bible's task is much more difficult. It is trying to communicate spiritual and heavenly concepts to (and through) physical, earthly beings which lived between two and six thousand years ago.

There are many things words just can't describe, such as love or fear or even kidney stones, for that matter.

For many of the things God wanted man to understand there just aren't words. The writers of the Bible described many things like the Indian's talking leaves; they used what was familiar with to describe what was unfamiliar.

This is attempting to describe the literal by the figurative. While this method is often the only one possible, it is still fraught with difficulties. Notice this passage in Matthew 6. With Jesus, himself talking directly to the disciples they still got it confused.

Or how about the John 3:16 passage. Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born again. Jesus was talking figuratively and Nicodemus was listening literally.

Now let's look at another passage and tell me if we should understand it literally or figuratively.

Matt: 6

6. "Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."
7. They discussed this among themselves and said, "It is because we didn't bring any bread."
8. Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?"

11. How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

12. Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

John 3:

7. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'

9. "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.
10. "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things?
11. I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony.
12. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?"

In the original language Matthew 5:28 literally says that we should gouge out our eye to keep from sinning or we will be thrown into the Jerusalem city dump.

Many people when asked will tell you that they believe the Bible to be the literal word of God, that they believe every word of the Bible literally. In theological talk these people are called literalists.

You will find very few serious Bible scholars who are literalists.

I am not telling you how you should believe the Bible, but I will tell you that for me, I am very careful about taking passages of the Bible literally.

I think much of the Bible tries to speak to us of deeper things than whether or not we have enough bread.

We also have the concern of the translation of languages. But I think this is less of a concern than most think it to be. With very few exceptions I trust the current translations, such as the NIV and the NAS as being very good translations.

But several points of Christians doctrine seem to be based on verses in earlier translations, which were, in my opinion, not as good.

For instance, our ideas about Hell are based on the many verses in the KJV that use the word Hell. Many of those same verses in the modern translations, don't refer to Hell, yet the doctrine is still a part of our theology.

While we will discuss these points at length in other chapters, for now let me just mention that a number of scholars believe that the words translated as **forever**, **everlasting** and **eternity** are in error, and do not mean forever.

Part of my personal work involves the court system. In court cases attorneys will take depositions. In a deposition an attorney verbally questions a witness and the witness' answers are taken down word for word, verbatim, by a court reporter.

An attorney, in a trial, may quote from the transcript of a deposition, but he will almost never be allowed to quote a single sentence. The judge and the courts know that a single sentence is easily misunderstood. Attorney are usually required to quote much longer passages to insure the actual meaning of the witness' words is conveyed.

But sometime even this is not enough. To fully grasp the intent of a witness it is sometimes necessary to read the entire deposition from start to finish, leaving out nothing, not a single word.

I believe to quote any single Bible verse is to risk grossly misinterpreting the word of God. I think no point of doctrine should be based on a single verse.

Reading just a few verses or even a single chapter can be misleading. The larger the portion of Bible you are basing a doctrine on, the less likely it is to be off base.

The doctrine of Inclusion can be easily refuted by individual verses.

But it is my conviction that the great themes of the Bible support Inclusion. The love of God, the mercy of God, the grace of God, the forgiveness of God, the victory of God, the triumph of Good over Evil, the sovereign will of God... all seem to stand in stark contrast and opposition to verses of sinners spending eternity tormented in Hell.

Being careful not to take the literal figuratively or the figurative literally, with an eye on the original meanings of the original languages, without taking any one verse by itself... let's go on to look at some of the scriptures dealing with Inclusion.

Matt: 5

29. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into Hell.

INCLUSION IN THE SCRIPTURES

From the first chapters to the last, the over-arching theme of the Bible is God reaching out to man. What follows are just a few of the scriptures which speak to Inclusion.

IN THE BEGINNING...

In Genesis 3, Adam sins and throws God's entire creation into a descending spiral of death.

Adam does not confess his sin, does not ask for forgiveness, and Adam makes no effort to accept forgiveness. On the contrary Adam and his wife hide from God. They attempt to cover their own nakedness.

But God doesn't send them to Hell, he doesn't even mention Hell and he doesn't destroy them. God certainly punishes the man and his wife but then in a pitiful act of compassion God slays animals to cover Adam's nakedness.

The nakedness that Adam couldn't cover with his own efforts, God covers for him.

In so doing God sets the precedent of sacrificing to himself a substitutionary atonement for the sinner's sin.

The sin was all Adam's but the salvation was all God's. It has always been this way.

Gen 3

6. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

7. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

9. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

10. He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

11. And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

12. The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

13. Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

16. To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

17. To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

18. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

19. 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."

20. Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

21. The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

IN THE PSALMS...

In literally hundreds of passages in dozens of psalms we are told, in one form or another that the mercy or love or compassion of God endures forever.

Not mentioned nearly as often, we are told God's wrath **doesn't** endure forever.

Many of these speak specifically to the nation Israel, but many such as Psalm 117, speak to the nations, which in principle refers to humankind.

Psalm 136

1. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His love endures forever.
2. Give thanks to the God of gods. His love endures forever.
3. Give thanks to the Lord of lords: His love endures forever.
4. to him who alone does great wonders, His love endures forever.
5. who by his understanding made the heavens, His love endures forever.
6. who spread out the earth upon the waters, His love endures forever.
7. who made the great lights-- His love endures forever.
8. the sun to govern the day, His love endures forever.
9. the moon and stars to govern the night; His love endures forever.
10. to him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt His love endures forever.
11. and brought Israel out from among them His love endures forever.
12. with a mighty hand and outstretched arm; His love endures forever.
13. to him who divided the Red Sea asunder His love endures forever.
14. and brought Israel through the midst of it, His love endures forever.
15. but swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea; His love endures forever.
16. to him who led his people through the desert, His love endures forever.
17. who struck down great kings, His love endures forever.
18. and killed mighty kings-- His love endures forever.
19. Sihon king of the Amorites His love endures forever.
20. and Og king of Bashan-- His love endures forever.
21. and gave their land as an inheritance, His love endures forever.
22. an inheritance to his servant Israel; His love endures forever.
23. to the One who remembered us in our low estate His love endures forever.
24. and freed us from our enemies, His love endures forever.
25. and who gives food to every creature. His love endures forever.
26. Give thanks to the God of heaven. His love endures forever.

Psalm 117

1. Praise the Lord, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples,
2. For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord.

IN THE PROPHETS...

The prophet's theme is always the same: Because of sin, punishment is coming, but after punishment, restoration.

Is God asking people to come to him, so he can forgive them, or does v. 22 have the same sense as 23, an all-powerful God commanding a response?

Even those who raged against God will eventually turn to him, contrite and ashamed of their actions.

This "...every knee shall bow..." passage is quoted by Paul in both Romans and Philippians.

There are those who feel this means some will confess Jesus willingly and go to heaven, while others will confess this under duress and then go on to Hell.

Could it be possible that this means the day will come when all will confess him as Lord and be saved?

Isaiah 45:

22. "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.

23. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.

24. They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.'" All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame.

Rom 14:11

10. You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.

11. It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God."

12. So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

13. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

Phil. 2:

9. Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

10. that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11. and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Isaiah prophesying about the coming messiah, says that the messiah will "justify many, and he will bear their iniquities". Upon this messiah the Lord has laid, "the "iniquity of us all."

Jesus justifies the "many" whose iniquities he bore.

And he bore the iniquities of "us all".

The "many" and "us all" are the same group. So all are justified.

In this verse, since ALL MANKIND bows down then apparently ALL MANKIND looks upon those who rebelled against the Lord...the rebellious must refer to someone beside ALL MANKIND. Perhaps the Devil and his angels.

ALL MANKIND seems to be a separate group from those whose "worm dies not and whose fire is not quenched."

This was written to give hope to someone (in this case, the nation of Israel) who had sinned and is suffering punishment for it.

Inclusion doesn't say sin isn't punished, but that the punishment of the Lord is not eternal damnation in burning pits of Hell.

Inclusion teaches that the punishment of the Lord is ultimately remedial; corrective.

Isaiah 53:

5. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

6. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the "iniquity of us all."

~~11. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied ; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.~~

12. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Isaiah 66:

23. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the LORD.

24. "And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind."

Lamentations 3

29. Let him bury his face in the dust-- there may yet be hope.

30. Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace.

31. For men are not cast off by the Lord forever.

32. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love.

33. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.

36. to deprive a man of justice-- would not the Lord see such things?

37. Who can speak and have it happen if the Lord has not decreed it?

38. Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come?

39. Why should any living man complain when punished for his sins?

THE GOSPELS...

If Jesus is the good shepherd, will he fail to find the lost sheep he is looking for? Is there a place a sheep could hide that the shepherd couldn't find him?

Matt: 18

12. "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?

13. And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off.

14. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.

If only a few people are to be saved, how is the birth of Jesus "good news of great joy" ..."for all the people?"

When Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the temple they were met by a priest by the name of Simeon, who prophetically spoke these words.

Takes away the sin of believers? ...or the sin of the world?

Luke2

8. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

9. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

10. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be **for all the people**.

11. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

28. Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

29. "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace.

30. For my eyes have seen **your salvation**,

31. which you have prepared in the sight of **all people**,

32. a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

John 1

28. This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

29. The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the **sin of the world!**"

Yes, I understand your objections; the verses say, “whoever believes...shall not perish,” and “whoever does not believe stands condemned already.”

If you believe in Hell, you immediately perceive this condemnation to refer to Hell. But does it?

Condemned is the greek word **Krinō**, meaning to distinguish, choose, give an opinion upon, judge, sometimes denotes to condemn, in the sense of **not approved**.

Krinō is **not** the word used to describe a criminal condemned to death; that would be a strengthened form of Krinō; **Katakrinō**. Jesus condemned by the Jews to die was not Krinō; but Katakrinō.

But whatever you think about these verses, notice it says, “God so loved **the world**,” not just some or not just believers, but “the world.” It also says, “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world.” So is God going to condemn the world or save the world?

If God sent his son to save the world, did Jesus accomplish his task or not? If Jesus failed to save the world, why, on the cross, did he say, “It is finished?”

Is Jesus the savior of the world or not?

The KJV phrases this...“hath given **all things** into his hand. By “all things” the writer means **all people**; we’re not talking about insignificant “stuff” here but people.

God has given **all people** to Jesus. All people God has given to Jesus will come to Jesus.

Jesus will lose none of those “all people” that come to him, or to whom he comes.

John 3:

14. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,

15. that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

16. “For **God so loved the world** that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

17. For **God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world** through him.

18. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.

19. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

John 4:

41. And because of his words many more became believers.

42. They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is **the Savior of the world**.”

43. After the two days he left for Galilee.

John 3:

35. The Father loves the Son and has placed **everything** in his hands.

John 6:

36. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.

37. **All** that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

38. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

39. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of **all that he has given me**, but raise them up at the last day.

40. For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

No one comes to Jesus unless God draws (drags) him to Jesus.

They will ALL be taught by God.

Jesus came to save the world, even those who do not keep his words.

Here again the use of the word **Condemned** is the greek word **Krinō**, meaning to distinguish, choose, give an opinion upon, judge, sometimes denotes to condemn, in the sense of **not approved**.

Krinō is **not** the word used to describe a criminal condemned to death; that would be a strengthened form of Krinō; **Katakrinō**. Jesus condemned by the Jews to die was not Krinō; but Katakrinō. The word condemn is not the word used for a condemned criminal.

John 6

44. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

45. It is written in the Prophets: '**They will all be taught by God.**' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.

John 12

32. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will **draw all men to myself**."

John 12:49

46. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

47. "As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I **did not come to judge the world, but to save it.**

48. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.

THE EPISTLES...

More Christian doctrine and theology come from the writings of the Apostle Paul than anywhere else. And of all his writings the book of Romans is the most theological. Deep and profound, this book deserves our greatest scrutiny.

In Chapter 1 Paul sets the stage for his argument, as he describes degenerate sinful people: LOST humanity.

And while Paul speaks of God's judgement and God's wrath and God giving these men up to their own desires...he never states that such people will burn in Hell for eternity. This is something we have presumed to be there, but it isn't.

Then in Chapter 2 and 3, Paul turns his focus from these obviously sinful, lost men to those who judge these, referring to self-righteous men, not God. He builds the case that all (both the obviously lost and those who judge the obviously lost) ALL... are lost.

Chapter 4 brings in Abraham and how Abraham was justified in the sight of God by Faith.

To start with read Romans 5: 18. This says that Jesus' one act of righteousness was "**justification that brings life FOR ALL MEN**", because this one act is just like the one trespass that brought condemnation FOR ALL MANKIND.

Verse 19 restates the same thing.

In the same way that one man's disobedience results in "the many" being made sinners... one man's obedience results in "the many" being made righteous.

Could "the many" refer not to all, but to just the many people who will become Christians?

In the first part of 19, "the many" who were made sinners, is not referring to just Christians, but to all mankind, so the many being made righteous must refer not to just Christians, but to all mankind.

Paul is NOT talking about TWO separate groups in this passage (the righteous and the ungodly) but just ONE group: the formerly ungodly who are now the righteous (that's all of us too). Go back and re-read the entire passage and see if it doesn't make more sense.

ALL were sinners, Jesus Christ died for ALL and now ALL (in terms of legal standing with God) are made righteous. ALL are redeemed.

This doesn't mean intrinsically righteous, but positionally so, or legally so, based on justification.

Romans 5:

6. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

7. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.

8. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

10. For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

11. Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

12. Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned--

13. for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law.

14. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

15. But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!

16. Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.

17. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

18. Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

19. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also **through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.**

20. The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,

Paul speaks here of Israel's rejection of Jesus as Christ... they are not beyond recovery, but because of their rejection, **salvation has come to the Gentiles.**

The rejection of the savior by the Jews has resulted in **the reconciliation of the world.** Not part of the world, or the part of the world that believes....but the entire world.

All Israel or part of Israel? All Israel or only those who believe? Or will there come a day when **all Israel** will believe.

Notice how little they have to do with it: God takes away their sins. Salvation is of the Lord and him alone.

The KJV translates this considerably different: "*For God hath concluded them all in unbelief.*"

So the Gentiles didn't believe, then the Jews rejected the savior (didn't believe), with the whole world in unbelief, God has mercy on them all.

The mercy of God is not because of man, but in spite of man.

This is beyond figuring out.

"All things" as stated before, is not stuff, but all men, all people, all humanity.

So our salvation is from Jesus, through Jesus, thus bringing to Jesus the savior all men.

Romans 11

11. Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.

12. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!

13. I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry

14. in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them.

15. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

26. And so **all Israel** will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

27. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

32. For God has bound **all men over to disobedience** so that he may **have mercy on them all.**

33. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

36. For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.



Because of Adam's original disobedience, **all men** face death. They do not "accept it." They do not choose it; God chose death for them. They die whether they "believe" in death or not.

Because of Christ's original obedience, all men are made alive. They do not have to "accept it." They do not choose it; God chose it for them. They have been given life whether they believe it or not.

The passage I want to focus on here, is not the primary subject of I Timothy 4, but something Paul says in passing, as if he is referring to something obvious and already understood by Timothy.

Paul is instructing Timothy concerning the benefits of godly living when, without introduction or explanation, he makes the comment in the latter part of verse 10.

You can read this in a dozen translations and they all come out the same: the Savior of ALL MEN (people) especially those who believe.

This would seem to say that God really is the savior of all men, but those who believe he is even more so, their savior.

This passage in I John is like the one above in that the statement is just made; John seems to be stating this as a fact, not an opinion or something debatable. John, in writing this to his readers, seems to be stating something that they are already in agreement with. He doesn't present any arguments to convince them of this.

He is the Savior of all men, and the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

I Corinthians 15;

21. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

22. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

I Timothy: 4

8.but godliness has value for all things, holding the promise for both the present life and the life to come.

9. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance

10. (and for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.

I John 2:

1. My little children, I write this to you so that you will not sin, But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

2. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

WHAT HELL IS LIKE

We all know about Hell; I'm just put it down in writing. The next few pages will openly talk about what is rarely preached or taught anymore. Here is the commonly held evangelical Christian doctrine of Hell and the Bible verses on which it is based.

Simply stated: Hell is a place of punishment.

Hell is described as being a pit or a lake burning with fire and brimstone. And even though it is on fire, it is completely dark.

The people being punished in Hell are being burned alive, but they don't die. They will continue to burn for eternity, never dying, never ceasing to be tormented.

Now this is hard to grasp unless you have smelled the smell of burning human flesh, unless you have seen a badly burned person before they have received treatment, unless you yourself have suffered a third degree burn complete with charred flesh and scorched meat.

The people in Hell are conscious. They are in full possession of their mind. They know who they are, why they are there and they remember what they did when they were alive.

They are in complete possession of their senses; they can see, hear, smell, taste, touch and speak.

This punishment lasts forever. Not a lifetime, not a hundred years, not even a thousand years; it lasts forever.

There is no chance, no opportunity of release from Hell. There is no second chance after death to accept the gift of salvation.

Matthew 25:

46. "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Isaiah 14:

15. Yet thou shalt be brought down to Hell, to the sides of the pit. KJV

Rev. 20:

10. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur....

Jude

13.... wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.

Rev. 20

41. ...'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

Rev. 20:10b ...They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Luke 16: 23.

In Hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw ...

24. 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.'

25. "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things,

Hebrews 9:

27. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

HOW LONG SHOULD HELL LAST?

I have always struggled with the apparent injustice of an **eternal** Hell.

This is hard to say, because I am obviously in no position to say, "Wait a minute, God...I don't think you are being fair here; you're not doing right."

But still, it seems unfair, unjust, to sentence a person to such a long eternity (millions and millions and millions and millions and millions and millions and millions of years) for a short lifetime (maybe seventy years) of sin.

It seems like the time doesn't fit the crime.

I mean, if a guy got started in a life of crime at age 10, and spent the entire rest of his life being as bad as he could possibly be, then died at a ripe old age...that would still be less than one century of sin, yet a holy, merciful and just God would recompense that one life of sin with a hundred lives of punishment.

Something doesn't seem right here. Are we sure this is what the Bible says?

WHO WILL BE IN HELL?

There are people in Hell from the Old Testament era, the New Testament era, the middle ages, the dark ages, and the modern era. There were millions and millions of them.

There are people from every country, race and creed in Hell. While it's not really preached it was understood that all Jews were in Hell, not because of antisemitic beliefs, and not because they had crucified Jesus, but because they had not accepted him as savior.

All the Muslims, all Buddhists, all Confucianists and all Hindus were in Hell. They did not believe in Jesus.

American Indians, Eskimos, and all the tribes of Africa, Australia, South America, and the Pacific Islands are all in Hell because they did not believe in Jesus. Of course they didn't believe in Jesus; they had never heard of him.

It was noted with some irony, smugness really, that there are no atheists in Hell.

Children who were over the age of accountability, but have not accepted Jesus are also in Hell.

What is the age of accountability? While it is not stated directly in the Bible, which some people think it is twelve years of age, because that's when Jewish boys are bar mitzvahed and the age Jesus was when he went to the temple. Others believe it is when a child is old enough to know right from wrong and knowingly chooses wrong. How old would that be? Maybe four? Six?

By this measure, the vast majority of the human race will be in Hell. Only a small percentage of the human race will be in heaven.

There are both wicked and morally good people in Hell. Wicked people are in Hell, **not because they were wicked**, but **because they didn't accept** the gift of Salvation which is available to all through faith in Jesus Christ.

Morally good people will be in Hell, **in spite of their moral goodness**, **because they didn't accept** the gift of salvation. Wicked people (or people who were wicked) who have **accepted the gift** of Salvation, won't be in Hell, but will be in Heaven, because they accepted the gift of Salvation.

DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE IN HELL?

If, as a Christian, you believe all unsaved people will go to Hell when they die...then what are you doing reading this?

If you really, in your heart of hearts, believe that the vast majority of people were headed for eternity in Hell, then wouldn't you spend every waking minute working to prevent that?

How could you waste valuable time doing **anything** (like earning a living, or going to school or going to church or sleeping or eating) when so much is at stake for so many people?

How could any church which believes that non-believers spend eternity in Hell justify spending sermon time teaching *The Purpose Driven Life*, or *The Prayer of Jabez*, have marriage enrichment seminars, or financial stewardship conferences?

If Hell is real how can a church justify building a gymnasium?

If Hell is real shouldn't every moment of every day and every dollar of every offering be spent on evangelism?

Imagine if there was a fire in the lower stories of high-rise hotel. People in the upper stories have just a limited amount of time to get out before they will be trapped and burned to death. A group of people know the hotel is on fire, know people inside are in danger but all they do is leave. They have the obligation to warn others and the opportunity to rescue some but these people do not do so.

What monsters. What evil terrible monsters.

Such people would be tried and convicted in a court of law for the crimes of failure to warn and for negligent homicide. Such people would be punished.

Yet very few Christians witness. Less than one percent of Christians engage in any missionary work.

Christians say they believe in Hell, but their actions suggest otherwise.

My point is, by the very fact that we do continue to go to work, school, church, sleep and eat , by the very fact that our churches don't evangelize says that in our heart of hearts....**we don't really believe people are going to spend eternity in Hell.**

I guess this could just be denial, but I don't think so. I think something deep within us tells us that this can't be right. There must be something else to this. Surely, this isn't what's going to happen.



WHY INCLUSION?

HELL: WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

If everyone who doesn't accept Jesus Christ spends eternity in eternal torment in pits of fire, then you would think that would be the most important doctrine in the Bible. You would think this would be stated very specifically, often and emphatically...but is it?

I don't claim this to be a scientific method for measuring the importance of theological issues. But just as a way of comparison consider this.

Approximate number of times select words appear in the Bible(KJV)	
Hell.....	53
Heaven.....	570
Love.....	402
Jesus.....	969
Lord.....	7,795
Jehu.....	58

In the King James Version of the Bible, the word Hell occurs 53 times; 31 in the Old Testament, 23 in the New Testament. By comparison, the word Heaven is used 570 times.

If Hell is what Christianity has said it to be...why doesn't it show up more in the Bible?

Four different words in the original languages of the Bible are translated as Hell in the English King James Version. These words and their definitions are as follows.

Sheol *Hebrew*; equivalent to the Greek word Hades or the unseen world of the dead.
The grave. Death. Good and bad alike are here.

Hades *Greek*; equivalent to the Hebrew Sheol, the place (state) of departed souls;
The grave, Death.

Gehenna *Greek*; a valley near Jerusalem named for the owner; (the son of) Hinnom;
Used at one time as a place of worship for the idol Molech, turned
into a dump by King Josiah. Carcasses were thrown there and
fires burned the refuse.

Tartaroo *Greek*; to incarcerate in eternal torment. Actually this is a verb, meaning to
cast into Tartarus.

Although the word Hell appears 54 times in the King James Version (produced 1630), in the New International Version (see sidebar) things came out differently.

The word Hell **does not appear** in the NIV Old Testament and only 14 times in the NIV New Testament.

In English, as you know, the word Hell refers to a place of eternal punishment in pits of fire.

But the dozens of international, interfaith scholars who translated the NIV from the original languages were in **agreement** that a place of eternal punishment in pits of fire--Hell-- was **not** what was being referred to by the use of the words Sheol and Hades in the Old Testament.

So...and this is a big statement....the word Hell does not appear in the Old Testament in the New International Version of the Bible.

In the NIV, arguably the best translation available, the Old Testament doesn't teach everlasting torment in Hell for the wicked.

To the best I can figure out that only leaves us with two possibilities. Either Hell didn't exist so it isn't mentioned, or Hell does exist and God didn't bother to tell anyone about it.

If Hell existed and was God's original intention...why wouldn't he tell anyone?

God, in spelling out the punishment for Adam's original sin doesn't mention it to Adam or Eve.

God, in pronouncing punishment on Cain for slaying his brother, doesn't mention it.

Moses, in giving the Law, doesn't mention it. All the punishments for disobedience to the Law occur in this life, or result in death. Endless torment after death doesn't seem to a consideration.

The prophets, one after another, prophesy of many dour consequences to the nation of Israel for their idolatry and disobedience....but eternal punishment in Hell is not described.

Endless torment for the wicked doesn't appear in the Apostle Paul's writings.

On the following page are all the places where the word Hell is used in the NIV translation of the Bible.

The NIV

The NIV is considered by many scholars to be the best English translation of the Bible commonly available.

It is a late translation, completed in 1973 from the original languages, it is not a "translation of a translation".

The NIV was produced by over 100 scholars working directly from the best available Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts. These scholars came from the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and represented the Anglican, Assemblies of God, Baptist, Brethren, Christian Reformed, Church of Christ, Evangelical Free, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Nazarene, Presbyterian, Wesleyan and other churches.

Genesis 3:

16. To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

17. To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

18. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

19. 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."

Genesis 4:

10. The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.

11. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

12. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

13. Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear.

NIV Verses containing the word Hell.

Matt 5:

22. But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of Hell.

29. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into Hell.

30. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into Hell.

Matt 10:

28. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in Hell.

Matt 18:

9. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of Hell.

Matt 23:

15. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of Hell as you are.

33. "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to Hell?

Mark 9:

43. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into Hell, where the fire never goes out.

45. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into Hell.

47. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into Hell,

48. where "their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."

Luke 12:

5. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into Hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.

Luke 16:

22. "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried.

23. In Hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.

James 3:

6. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by Hell.

2 Peter 2:

4. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to Hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment;

The passages in Matthew, Mark and Luke are all spoken by Jesus. James and Peter are doing the talking in their respective books.

Notice the passages in Matthew 5 and Mark 9 appear to be part of the same discourse. Matthew 18:9 appears separately but says the same thing as the other two.

Matthew 10:28 and Luke 12:5 appear to quote the same sermon.

WHY INCLUSION?

Exception for the Lazarus passage in Luke, the words Jesus used that were translated **Hell** was **Gehenna**.

Gehenna, the valley of Hinnon, was an actual geographical location outside of the old city of Jerusalem where trash, garbage and the bodies of condemned criminals were burned. To say the least, a horrible place, a pretty good metaphor for Hell.

Jesus spoke these passages to people who understood Gehenna as being the town dump.

Jesus spoke these passages to people who did not understand Gehenna to be an eternal cosmic place of punishment for lost souls.

Some writers feel Jesus was trying to get across to the meaning that wicked people are like trash thrown into the dump, discarded, unusable to God, not tormented for all of eternity.

Now I'm not trying to just explain away verses, but I'm trying to see what God's real intention is in putting these things in the Bible.

Notice that Hell itself is not the main subject of these passages, but a side issue.

In all the passages about gouging your eye out....the passages are not about directly about Hell, but an exhortation to righteous holy living.

In the passages in Matthew 10 and Luke 12 Jesus is not teaching about Hell, but telling believers not to be afraid of what men can do to them.

In Matthew 23, Jesus is not teaching about Hell, he is reading the Pharisees the riot act. "Son of Hell" is an expression; like "son of a bitch" is an expression. Of course I'm not saying Jesus cussed out the Pharisees. I'm just saying Jesus' intent in using the word translated Hell here is not to teach us about the afterlife.

James' passage using the word Hell is teaching against gossip, not teaching about eternal punishment for the lost.

Peter's reference is unique. This is the only place **Tartarus** this word appears in the Bible. It's root is in Greek mythology; Tartarus was described as a deep, sunless abyss far below Hades. In this only reference to Tartarus it is not people who are there, but angels who have sinned.

The only passage left is the story of the rich man and Lazarus.

Taken at face value this seems to be a teaching about Hell, providing us with details we don't really get elsewhere.

In the other passages Jesus uses the word Gehenna, in this one he uses Hades.

I admit that I don't have any explanation for this passage, so I won't try to discount it or ignore it. It seems to be a direct teaching on Hell.

But, it seems to be the only one.

This strikes me as odd. If eternal punishment in fiery pits of Hell await the sinner, why is this not mentioned directly, specifically more than just this one time?

What are we missing here?

Let me end this section with a passage from J.W. Hanson's ***The Bible Hell*** (published in 1888) in which he quotes a theologian by the name of Dr. Thayer. I do not know have any information on who this Dr. Thayer was, but do listen what he says in reference to the use of the word **Hell** as translated from the word **Gehenna**.

"The Savior and James are the only persons in all the New Testament who use the word. John the Baptist, who preached to the most wicked of men did not use it once. Paul wrote fourteen epistles and yet never once mentions it. Peter does not name it, nor Jude: and John, who wrote the gospel, three epistles and the Book of Revelations, never employs it in a single instance.

Now if Gehenna or Hell really reveals the terrible fact of endless woe, how can we account for this strange silence? How is it possible, if they knew its meaning and believed it a part of Christ's teaching that they should not have used it a hundred or a thousand times, instead of never using it at all: especially when we consider the infinite interests involved?

The Book of Acts contains the record of the apostolic preaching, and the history of the first planting of the church among the Jews and Gentiles, and embraces a period of thirty years from the ascension of Christ. In all this history, in all this preaching of the disciples and apostles of Jesus there is no mention of Gehenna. In thirty years of missionary effort these men of God, addressing people of all characters and nations never under any circumstances threaten them with the torments of Gehenna or allude to it in the most distant manner!

In the face of such a fact as this can any man believe that Gehenna signifies endless punishment and that this is part of divine revelation, a part of the Gospel message to the world?

These considerations show how impossible it is to establish the doctrine in review on the word Gehenna. All the facts are against the supposition that the term was used by Christ or his disciples in the sense of endless punishment. There is not the least hint of any such meaning attached to it, nor the slightest preparatory notice that any such new revelation was to be looked for in this old familiar word."

WHY INCLUSION?



MY THEOLOGY

I was raised in Zion Hill Free Will Baptist Church in a rural area between Collinsville and Oologah, Oklahoma. My family had deep, deep roots in that church. My Grandfather had hauled logs out of the Caney River bottom with a team of horses to build that church. My mother, was actually born on the day the Zion Hill was dedicated as a church.

I was saved (definitely, really truly saved) as a Free Will Baptist at the age of seven. I remember the details of the moment like it was yesterday. The summer church camp, how hot the unairconditioned tabernacle was, the preacher, the altar, the prayer, all of it.

My first theology was based not really on evidence I had gathered (at age seven you haven't gathered much evidence) but on what I was told about God by my loving family and my church.

The Free Will Baptist hypothesis about God sort of goes like this:

God is good. God punishes bad people (sinners) by sending them to Hell. Everybody has sinned and is a sinner. If you ask Jesus (confess and repent), he will forgive your sins and God won't punish you. But if you don't ask him...he won't. Whether or not you ask for forgiveness is your choice, your free will.

You get "born again," become a Christian by praying the sinner's prayer. At that point in time God forgives all of your previous sins, all sins **up to** that point.

Sins committed after being born again must be dealt with also, but this is pretty fuzzy. If you sin too much or too many times you can "backslide" or lose your salvation. If you ask for forgiveness, God will forgive you again.

If you die with too many unconfessed sins you go to Hell instead of heaven. The exact amount of unconfessed sins necessary to send you to Hell...is not really specified.

Free Will Baptists claim to be saved by grace, but if you pursue the chain of thought very far...you find a works based salvation.

Free Will Baptist doctrine says:

- You are saved by Grace
- You get that grace by the Work of asking for it.
- You stay in Grace by the Work of not sinning.
- And you can lose that Grace by sinning.

This is a fairly simple, tidy system in that Salvation is free for the asking, but after receiving Salvation, the believer "stays" saved by being good. Bad people are punished in Hell.

The conclusion is that while Jesus died for my sins and paid for my sins...the responsibility for my salvation rests primarily on my shoulders. I am responsible for my own salvation. This, of course, is the idea behind free will: salvation is **my** choice.

And while God's own Son paid the price for my forgiveness... I could only get that forgiveness by **asking** for it. Like playing "mother, may I?" when we were little kids.

Sort of like, the doctor (God) has the cure (forgiveness) for my illness (sin) and someone else (Jesus) already paid for the cure...but the doctor won't give me the cure unless I ask for it nicely (repentance).

Now if this were a human doctor...his license to practice medicine would be revoked for failing to live up to his Hippocratic oath to save lives and alleviate suffering. It would be unthinkable for a human doctor to be so petty and even cruel.

If this were a financial transaction, it would be as if my banker (God) would be unwilling to cancel my debt (sin), even though someone else (Jesus) had already paid my debt...unless I asked him to.

Bankers don't typically care who pays the debt or whether or not it is asked for...they just want the debt paid.

Neither a human doctor, nor a human banker would be so petty to demand being asked...but God, Almighty God, would?

This doesn't seem right to me. It doesn't seem to fit with what I know and believe I know about God. This seems inconsistent with the personality of God.

This theology must be wrong.

Flaws in the Theology

When I was about sixteen I guess, I received as a gift a Schofield Study Bible. The more I read and studied the Bible, the more I thought about it...the more dissatisfied with the FWB hypothesis of God I became.

It made sense to me, that when Jesus died for my sins, paid for my sins ...he died and paid for ALL my sins. Not just the ones committed **prior** to my being born again.

If all my sins (even those committed **after** my acceptance of Jesus Christ) were paid for...then for what reason would I go to Hell?

Was there sort of a double jeopardy where even though a sin was paid for, I was still held accountable for it? Even though Jesus **paid** for it, I would have to **pay again** for it?

I spent many years:

- hoping I was saved (I had been good and hadn't sinned recently).
- fearing I was lost (I had recently sinned).
- not sure if I was lost or saved (some sins, but not big ones, and some being good).

This is an almost schizophrenic way to live. It's like driving a car down the road, veering back and forth over the center line; some days you are on the "saved" side of the road, some days you are over on the "lost" side of the road.

You just hope that on the day you die...you were driving on the saved side of the road.

I recall a pastor who had left the Free Will Baptist Denomination. His epiphany occurred when he was praying one day and God convicted him of not reaching out to the lost. At the very moment he told God, "**"I can't reach out to the lost; I'm too busy trying to keep myself saved!"**" he realized he had a works salvation.

I did not find spiritual peace of mind or heart in this theology.

This theology did not work well on a practical basis; there was no peace in it.

This theology did not work well on a logical basis; the more I thought about it the less sense it seemed to make.

But more important to me than what I feel in my heart, or think in my head, this hypothesis did not seem to fit the overall message of scripture.

There were isolated scriptures that seemed to bear out the theology, but from the perspective of how the whole

thing fit together...there were too many pieces of the puzzle that didn't fit.

Like a detective with too many clues not fitting his hypothesis, I was forced to abandon my original hypotheses about God.

MY SECOND HYPOTHESIS.

From what I read in my Schofield Study Bible, and what seemed reasonable to me, I came to believe that Jesus paid for **all** my sins on the cross, not just the ones I had committed **prior** to believing in him, or being born again.

And if all my sins (past, present and future) were paid for, then there was nothing that could send me to Hell, or as the Apostle Paul puts it so nicely... *nothing could separate me from the love of God in Jesus Christ*. I was safe. My soul was secure. As Southern Baptists refer to it, this is the doctrine of eternal security. As some put it: "once saved, always saved".

This proved to be a better way to live than my earlier theology. You can sleep at night knowing your soul is safe. If you should suddenly drop dead of a heart attack, die in a fiery car crash, step out in front of a bus, etcetera, you would still go to heaven. Don't misunderstand me, it's not that I was obsessed with this, it's just that it was always kind of there, lingering in the back of your mind.

There is definitely a peace in knowing you are saved.

If you are not really thinking about this, this works pretty well. But if you are really seeking God, if you do think about this it becomes painful.

You are **saved**, eternally secure; **but others aren't**.

These unsaved others may be your children or your spouse. To deeply love a person destined for Hell is terrifying.

Most people with this theology end up in one of three positions:

- **They are in denial.** They turn a blind eye to the situation of those who don't believe, never giving it a second thought.
- **They become missionaries.** They try to get the lost saved. Sometimes, this works. But more often, (speaking from personal experience), they push the lost farther away. The thought that you have pushed someone you are trying to reach for Christ farther away, is like killing a person you are trying to save.
- **They become Calvinists.** One way to reconcile this "I'm saved, but they're lost" standpoint is to come to believe that it is this way because God has chosen it to be this way. You are saved because God chose you to be saved. They are lost because God chose not to save them. While a person with this theology can at least sleep at night...it's a cold heartless way to go through life. You become more and more isolated from people in general, from different cultures, from anybody not also chosen. It is very difficult to **care**...and be a Calvinist.

MY PRESENT HYPOTHESIS

In the summer of 2003 I was deeply frustrated with all of the hypothesis I had come up with about God. Nothing worked well. This...was the best plan God could come up with for the human race?

By no choice or virtue of my own, I found myself at Carlton Pearson's Higher Dimensions Church. If there ever was a fish out of water, I was it. Higher Dimensions is an upscale, metropolitan, charismatic, primarily African-American church. I, am a working class, rural, baptist Caucasian. But, I didn't really care about the those differences (and neither did they) I found myself interested in what they **believed**.

Pearson's Inclusion stuff seemed unlikely, even heretical. But the church as a whole and Pearson as an individual surprised me. Their joy, compassion and love was very real. Their outlook on others and the world was different. The idea that mankind was not a saved/lost proposition, but a reconciled one unaware of the fact, worked.

I did not immediately find answers to all my questions, but I found enough to cause me to dig deeper. Over a period of time I found that "Inclusion" did not begin with Pearson, that many over the centuries shared this belief, including apparently the early church. I found that the Bible as a whole fits together better when looked at from the standpoint of Inclusion.

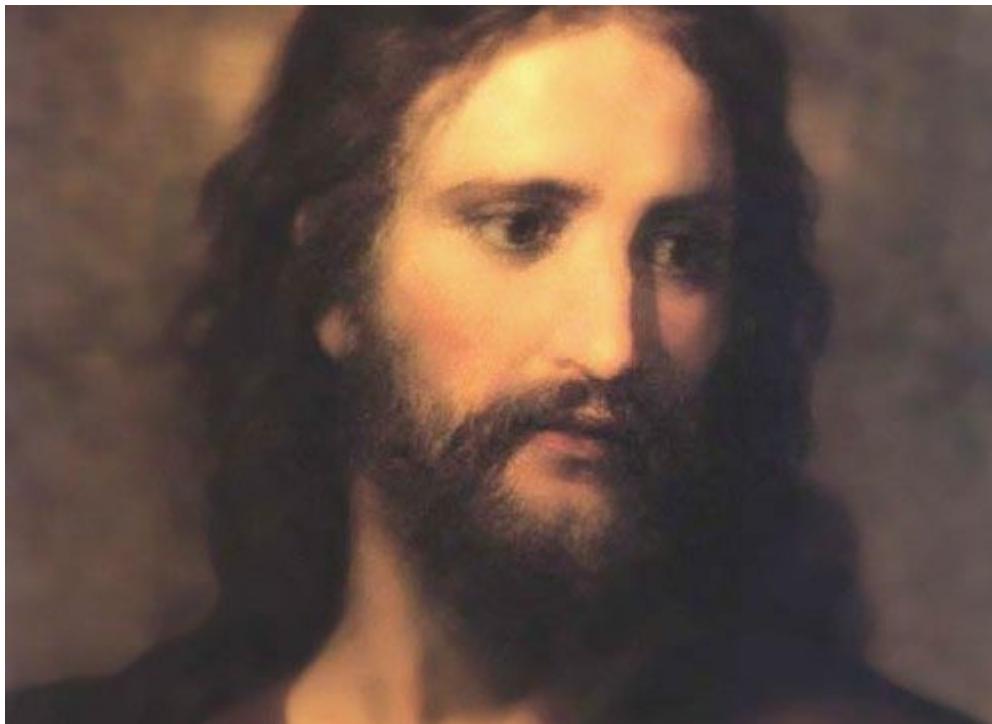
I found a hypothesis about God that fit better than anything I had found before.

MY LAST HYPOTHESIS?

Is Inclusion the final, complete hypothesis that explains everything about God? NO. I feel certain that when we get to heaven and finally see God face to face, all our hypotheis, theologies and reliegions will be in for some serious revisions. I suspect God is going to be bigger than we ever imagined.

Until then, I admit that I still have questions about God and there are scriptures that I don't know quite what to do with. But from a scriptural standpoint, a personal standpoint, a church standpoint, a world outlook standpoint, and an eternity standpoint, this crazy hypothesis of Inclusion works better than any other I have found.

I will not tell you what to believe, but I would strongly recommend that you check out Inclusion for yourself.



INCLUSION COMPARED

I hate to make broad general statements about someone's beliefs, especially someone else's beliefs but I understand you are wanting short, direct answers to your questions about Inclusion. So bear with me here and forgive me for the broad, oversimplification and overgeneralization that is about to occur. If we were to compare in their most bare, nutsHell form the beliefs of mainstream Evangelical Christianity with the beliefs of Inclusion the comparison would look something like this:

MAINSTREAM CHRISTIANITY

- All are lost because of sin.
- Jesus died on the cross, thus paying the debt of sin.
- Salvation is:
 - a gift to all who accept it.
 - accepted by believing in Jesus.
- Those who accept Salvation:
 - enjoy God's blessings in this life.
 - go to be with God after this life.
 - have the responsibility of sharing the gospel with those who have not heard.
- Those who do not accept Salvation:
 - reap what they sow in this life.
 - spend eternity separated from God, burning in Hell.

INCLUSION

- All are lost because of sin.
- Jesus died on the cross, thus paying the debt of sin.
- Salvation is:
 - a gift to all whether they accept it or not.
- Those who accept Salvation:
 - enjoy God's blessings in this life.
 - go to be with God after this life.
 - Have the responsibility of sharing the Gospel with those who have not heard.
- Those who do not accept Salvation:
 - Reap what they sow in this life.
 - are held accountable to God, but will not spend eternity separated from God, burning in Hell.

I think you will agree that mainstream Christianity and Inclusion are exactly alike on most points, but completely different on at least two big points. Inclusion believes that Salvation is the gift of God to all mankind and that no one will spend eternity in Hell.

NAGGING QUESTIONS THAT WON'T GO AWAY

1. The word **Gospel** means **Good News**. The Gospel of Jesus Christ means **the Good News about Jesus Christ**. But if the coming of Jesus Christ only saved the small percentage of mankind that is Christian, and the rest of the human race is condemned to eternity in torment...HOW IS THIS GOOD NEWS?

2. If most of mankind will be eternally lost without Jesus, then WHO IS VICTORIOUS, GOD OR THE DEVIL?

3. Sending people to Hell for eternity would SERVE WHAT PURPOSE FOR GOD? Revenge? Entertainment? How would that benefit the people sent to Hell? Is this just to punish them without redemption?

4. With millions and millions of lost souls on their way to spending eternity in Hell, why on earth would James say that religion our God accepts is LOOKING AFTER ORPHANS AND WIDOWS? Doesn't that seem like a misplaced priority?

James 1:

27. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.



RELIGIOUS PRIDE



VS.



Birds of a Feather Flock together.

It is just part of human nature that we gravitate toward those who agree with us, to those who make, or have made the same choices we have and away from those who chose differently.

This is comforting. This causes us to have less arguments, conflicts and discord as time goes on, if for no other reason than that we are around fewer people with whom we disagree.

This reaffirms our choices; it causes us to feel we have made the right decision, and we all want to feel we have made the right choice.

Chevy or Ford?

Lets say I drive a Chevrolet pickup. Being around other Chevy pickup drivers is comforting to me; it says I made the right choice, if for no other reason than that they made the same choice.

Ford drivers, however, make me uncomfortable. If I drive a Chevy and they drive a Ford...do they know something I don't know? Why don't they drive Chevys? Should I drive a Ford? It's especially disturbing when they seem happy driving those Fords. Would I be as happy as they are if I drove a Ford?

I'm better off just being around Chevy drivers. As time goes on, more of my friends will be Chevy drivers and less will be Ford people. The more I'm around my reaffirming Chevy people, the less I will like Ford people. It may reach a state that I will come to put a decal in the back window of my Chevy pickup of a cartoon character urinating on the Ford logo.

The bad news is I may completely miss perfectly good things in a Ford truck

The badder news is that this trait may separate me from some really great people who just happen to drive Fords.

But the worst news is that a group with this problem develops a sort of attitude inbreeding. Over time they become more and more inwardly turned and more and more adverse to outside ideas, and outside people.

This trait of gravitating toward those who agree with us/away from those who disagree seems to be across the board; it doesn't just apply to choice of pickups. You guessed it. This also applies to religion.

Baptist or Charismatic or...?

I grew up in a small, country Baptist church. It was never stated from the pulpit that Baptists were the only ones going to heaven, but it was sort of communicated that the further a person/church deviated from Baptist theology the less likely they were to make it. By the time you had deviated all the way down to Catholicism you didn't have a chance.

I knew these things to be true, and all those around me felt the same way. After all; they were Baptists also.

When I was about 17, I took art lessons from a Polish Catholic artist by the name of Krystina Bonyetski. I had never met anyone like her. The Nazis had persecuted her and her husband during WWII because they were Polish and because they were Catholic. Her husband had spent over a year as a prisoner in one of the Nazi death

camps.

These Holocaust-surviving Catholics had a faith in Jesus that had sustained them through a Hell I will never experience and can scarcely imagine.

This was weird to me. How could these people have such faith? ***They're Catholic!***

These people drank wine, spoke of the Pope, and did not "get saved" like I did. Krystina would speak of, "Mary, Mother of God" and it would just send chills down my spine. I could not deny their faith in Christ, but it just DID NOT COMPUTE. These were the ultimate Ford drivers.

Jonah and the Ford driving Ninevites.

The Book of Jonah is short, only four chapters. If you haven't read it lately, why don't you read it again and notice these things.

At the time God spoke to Jonah, the Jewish nation was politically declining in power while their enemies the Assyrians, whose capital city was Nineveh, were on the rise. God told Jonah that he was going to destroy the city, and Jonah was to go and preach to the Ninevites. After a brief fishing trip Jonah did just that.

Then the story gets really interesting. On hearing Jonah's message from God the pagan Ninevites pray to God.

Jonah 3:

5. The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

6. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.

7. Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink.

8. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence.

9. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."

10. When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

Surprise: God hears their prayer and doesn't destroy them.

Jonah 4:

1. But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry.

We look down on Jonah's narrow-mindedness, but for just a minute let's look at this from Jonah's perspective.

In Jonah's mind, the Jews were God's chosen people and the rest of the world...wasn't.

From Jonah's point of view, the Ninevites couldn't pray to God...they didn't know how.

In Jonah's theology, the only place where God could be worshipped was the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, which those people didn't have. They also lacked a Levitical priesthood to offer sacrifices for them.

Yet in spite of the lack of good theology, look what happens, look again at verse 10.

10. When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

While Jonah knew in his mind that their theology was lacking, he knew in his heart God still cared for these people.

There are three points I want you to get out of this.

- 1) It was not a letter-perfect theology that saved Nineveh; it was their reaching out in faith to God.
- 2) This didn't fit Jonah's theology,
- 3) It did fit with what Jonah knew about God.

Jonah, Chevy Man.

Jonah, along with the rest of the Jewish nation, God's chosen people, so to speak had been around too many Jews for too long. Like Chevy drivers, they had become narrower and narrower in their focus and definition of who God was and who they were.

Water Management 101.

In the land of Palestine there are two bodies of water and one river.

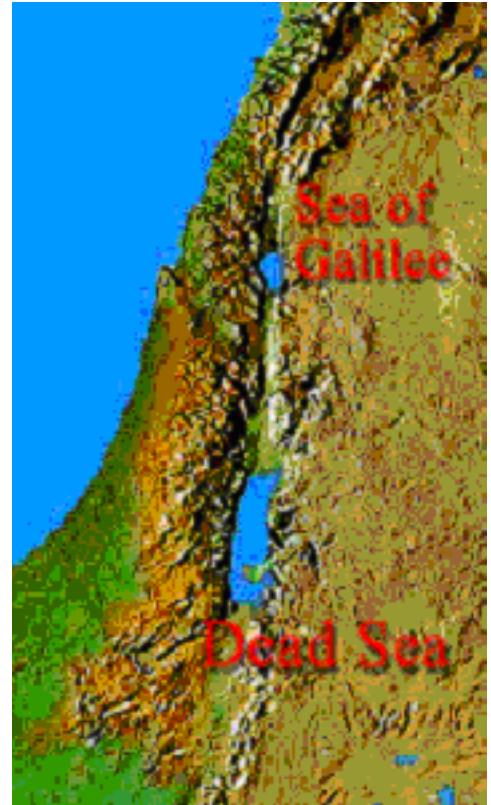
In the northern part is the Sea of Galilee. Water enters this lake from springs and rain runoff then exits this lake via the Jordan River. The constant turnover of water keeps the lake fresh and alive. It teems with life and has been an inexhaustible source of fish for thousands of years. The Sea of Galilee is a vessel.

In the southern part is the Dead Sea. Water enters this lake the same way it does the Sea of Galilee, but the Dead Sea has no exit. Water and minerals have accumulated there over the centuries and it has become stagnant. No life exists in the Dead Sea. No fish and no plant life; it's 100% dead. The Dead Sea is a container.

In God's apparent original plan was for the whole world to be blessed through Abraham's offspring, the Jews. They were to be the vessel through which God's blessings would flow to the rest of the world. But they didn't go that way.

Instead of being a vessel they became a container and attempted to bottle up the blessings of God.

This is easy to see looking back at Jonah and the Jews, but does it apply to evangelical Christianity? Tell me what you think: If today, a Muslim got down on his knees and reached out to God in faith, with his imperfect Muslim theology..would God hear that Muslim's prayer?



DOES FOREVER MEAN FOREVER?

There are many places in the English translations of the Bible describing something as going on forever. These places use terms such as **eternal**, **everlasting**, **forever**, **forever and ever**, **eternity**, and others.

Some of these are referring to God, others are referring to the punishment of the lost.

Almost all of these words are translated from the original Hebrew word **Olam**, and its Greek translation which is **Aión** or **Aiónios**.

But forever is not what Aión or Aiónios means.

Many scholars have worked on this, and it's pretty complicated. One of the best examinations of this, J.W. Hanson's takes over 65 pages of long, deep, dry word study. I don't want to spend the bulk of this material on this one point, but if you want more on this, you can read J.W. Hanson's Aión--Aiónios online at www.tentmaker.org.

If you are willing to accept my short version of this, here goes...

Olam, and then Aión and Aiónios are adjectives that are **relative to their subjects**.

To try to give you an example of this, if I told you of a **big** bug, a **big** house and a **big** country, you wouldn't think the bug, the house and the country were all the same physical size. You would know that a big bug is big in relation to other normal-size bugs. The big house is big in comparison to other houses and the country is large compared to other countries.

Big isn't a specific size.

The words Olam, Aión and Aiónios aren't a specific time. They're a **relative** time.

When these words describe God, who really is eternal, the words mean eternal. But in several places the words are describing things which are demonstrably **not** eternal and the words in those instances don't mean eternal.

For instance; Jude 7 teach that Sodom and Gomorrah serve as an example of the punishment of eternal fire. But if you go to Israel, to the end of the Dead Sea where Sodom and Gomorrah once stood, there is no fire burning.

The eternal fire...did not mean forever.

Much of our concept of an eternal Hell is founded on the mis-appropriation of these words. I think the Bible clearly assigns punishment to those who sin and reject the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, but the punishment does not last forever and forever; it is not eternal.

I would call that good news.

Jude:

7. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

CARLTON PEARSON & INCLUSION

The character of the witness effects the credibility of his testimony.

Carlton Pearson is the main personality associated with the doctrine of Inclusion. If Pearson's character is suspect, the doctrine probably is also.

Prior to the summer of 2003, I had never met the man. In April of 2004 I got to know him quite well. I won't go into the details that have no bearing on this article, but I did end up spending three and a half weeks with Pearson on a fact-finding trip to Africa. True colors were bound to show.

He did not authorize me to write this and I am not being paid to write this. As honest as I can be, this is what I saw.

Carlton Pearson seems to be rock solid. I never once saw him do anything that caused me to question his integrity or his motives.

We had some very trying times on the trip, yet I never once saw him lose his temper or become verbally abusive. I never heard him say a single cuss word (not even a little one). I think he probably got madder at me than he did anyone else, but he never lashed out or got "snippy". The worst I saw was a curt, direct disagreement, and that was it.

During a very low point, with him ill in a hospital, he didn't lapse into a pity party, and during a very high point, being made an honorary tribal chief he didn't get egotistical.

Pearson never flirted with anyone, never drank. He never so much as told an off color joke. He tips well and frequently gives money to panhandlers and street beggars. His wife and children are on his mind and come up often in conversation. He frequently worries about his congregation.

At the most inopportune times, someone would come up and want to talk with him, or want him to pray for them or want their picture taken with him; and he always accommodated them with a smile.

The man is human; I'm not saying he's perfect or deserves to be nominated for sainthood, but my experience has been that he is as honest and trustworthy as the day is long.

One telling indicator of Pearson's personal conviction concerning Inclusion is that it has cost him, personally, professionally and financially, rather than benefited him.

He hasn't made any money off of it. He has in fact, **lost** money believing and teaching this. He has lost about half his personal income and three-fourths of his congregation. He has been removed from the board of regents at Oral Roberts University.

Pearson is an honest man, and he honestly believes the doctrine of Inclusion.



IS CARLTON PEARSON A FALSE TEACHER OR PROPHET?

To ask if Carlton Pearson is a false teacher or prophet is perfectly justified. We are instructed in the word of God to "test the spirits".

The test given to recognize the spirit of God is whether or not the spirit (teacher or prophet) acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.

Carlton Pearson has publicly declared repeatedly that Jesus Christ is the son of God, born in the flesh to Mary, physically died on the cross and was physically raised again on the third day.

Jesus himself instructed us to beware of false prophets. He told us we could know a false prophet by his fruit.

Pearson as an individual has a clean reputation. He and his church, Higher Dimensions Family Church, are known for civic activity including prison ministry and post-release prison ministry, adopt-a-school, adopt-a-team(high school literacy) marriage mediation and reunification, AIDS research, Purity With Purpose, Raven's Nest (a feeding ministry) and others.

No one who has ever heard Pearson speak could accuse him of "denying the sovereign Lord".

Whatever can be said, good or bad, about Carlton Pearson, he simply doesn't fit the criteria for being a false teacher or prophet.

1 John 4

1. Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.
2. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,
3. but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.

Matt: 7

15. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.
16. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?
17. Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.
18. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
19. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.
20. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

2 Peter 2

1. But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them--bringing swift destruction on themselves.



IS INCLUSION A LICENSE TO SIN?

Inclusion is not a license to sin.

But people have never needed a license to sin, have they? People have been sinning without a license from day one.

People (perhaps such as yourself) who strongly believe in Hell, still sin, don't they?

Consider the moral state of the United States; Hell, as a way to keep people from sinning doesn't seem to be working very well.

But I still understand your concern. Without the threat of Hell hanging over there heads, won't society lose all moral restraint?

I don't think so. Consider this:

Standing in front of a preacher and many witnesses your spouse took a marriage vow, promising that they would not leave you no matter what.



Since this spouse of yours has promised NOT to leave you no matter what, there is nothing to keep you from hopping into the sack with the first hot body you find, is there?

At first thought that's what it sounds like, but the reality works out differently. Because your spouse vowed NOT to leave you...aren't you LESS likely to cheat on that spouse, rather than MORE? Doesn't their vow make you want to stay, rather than stray?

Now let's look at the flip side of this. Let's say your spouse has already kicked you out of the house. NOW are you more or less likely to hop in the sack with this hypothetical hot body?

Inclusion says God has vowed to never reject me. Based on that info, I could do anything I want, but I don't. That vow doesn't make me want to stray, it makes me want to obey.

If my theology causes me to believe that God had already kicked me out of his presence...would I be more or less likely to sin?

I think you will find in reality that the love of God constrains men more than the fear of God.

The problem with the world is that they are unaware of God's vow, and think he has kicked them out.

Sin is still a really bad idea. Even with God's forgiveness and without the threat of Hell, sin is still not the choice you want to make.

INCLUSION & JUSTICE?

Where is God's Justice in Inclusion? What about sin? Isn't everyone getting away "scott free"?

Several puzzling things about God fall into place when this one foundational truth is understood:

THERE IS NO MERCY APART FROM SACRIFICE.

The wages, or cost of sin, is death. God's justice requires that **every sin** be paid for.

God's mercy doesn't mean that a sin is ignored, or not counted or overlooked. **All sin** must be accounted for.

I dislike putting spiritual things in financial terms, but this is probably the easiest way to understand this.

A banker cannot "forgive" a debt until the debt is paid in full. Until someone pays the debt... no forgiveness is available.

Jesus paid our debt to God on the cross. Jesus paid the debt of **every sin**; **all sin**; **everyone's** sin...on that cross.

Because 100% of sin has been paid for....God's justice is 100% satisfied.

God didn't overlooked your sin. He saw you and your sin, front and center, with 20-20 vision in broad daylight... and then with you on his heart, he paid for it in full with the blood of his own son.

When you fully grasp this in the depths of your soul...then things get right between you and God. You sit down and shut up and quit pointing out your good points to God.



WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

If everyone is saved...what is the purpose of the church?

The 21st century inclusive church has the exact same purpose as the first century church: to share the good news, the gospel, that man is reconciled to God.

God through Jesus Christ has reconciled the world to himself and it is our duty, privilege and responsibility as believers to tell the world. Look at what Paul says to us in 2 Corinthians:

Before, we looked at people from the world's viewpoint: Us and Them. The world believed it was separated from God and we believed that also. But the world, that is to say: people, through Jesus have been reconciled to God.

People no longer have to be afraid of God. It is not necessary or beneficial to feel guilty and ashamed anymore. God, because of Jesus' sacrifice doesn't count men's sins against them anymore...but they don't know that.

Like a condemned man who doesn't know he's been pardoned, the world awaits our news.

Believers, those who have been reconciled first, those who by accepting Jesus know him best and most and deepest and most personally are God's best tools for getting this news to the world.

God is invisible. The only way the world can see God is in the hearts, words, lives and actions of believers.

The only way the world can see reconciliation is to see it in us.

Ghandi said that the only way a hungry man can see God is in a loaf of bread. We need to show hungry people God.

There is much wrong in this world. Used to it didn't matter: they were all sinners going to Hell anyway. They were separated from God and we weren't. It didn't matter if things were going bad due to: crime, drugs, divorce, racial prejudice, war, AIDS, hunger, political corruption or anything else...we were going to be raptured out of here and sinners left behind were just getting their due.

But not anymore. We are the church, the called-out ones, specially chosen of God to reconcile HIS world to him. We have his spirit, his resources and his goal in mind, to save the world. Let's get busy.

2 Corinthians 5:

14. For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

15. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

16. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.

17. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

18. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:

19. that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

20. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

21. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

OTHER RESOURCES

AUTHORS:

William Barclay: (1907-1978) A world-renowned New Testament interpreter and a Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism at Glasgow University in Scotland. Author of over 50 books and commentaries. An excellent easy to read, commentator and expositor. His works are available at most any Christian book store.

J.W. Hanson, D.D.: Hanson writes from the late 1800s, and his language and depth of investigation reflect that. Most of his works are available in electronic format (.pdf's) from the www.tentmaker.org website or available for purchase from the same.

Harold P. Lovelace: Holds a Bachelor's Degree of Theology and a Master's Degree of Theology in Biblical Studies from Florida Theological Seminary, Inc. and a Doctor of Divinity Degree from Cornerstone University. His most popular work is ***Read and Search God's Plan***, a short, passionate exposition of scripture regarding Universalism. Available from Dr. Harold Lovelace Ministries, Spiritual Development Fellowship, P.O. Box 995, Saraland, AL 36571-0995.

ON LINE:

<http://tentmaker.org> Tentmaker Ministries and Publications has been gathering over the years hundreds of books, articles, tapes, etc on the subject of the Doctrine of Inclusion and Hell. They have a large library on these subjects (as well as many other subjects) some of which they have reprinted. They have also written a number of books, articles, CDs, videos and DVDS. Much material is available for free on their internet sites.

<http://what-the-Hell-is-Hell.com> Large website with many articles and books available for online viewing, downloading or purchase in hard copy from their own line bookstore. Also discussion groups and message boards.

www.higherd.org Higher Dimensions' website has numerous articles and information. Also many tapes, videos and CDs are available through Higher Dimensions' bookstore.



BELIEVERS AND SUPPORTERS OF CHRISTIAN UNIVERSALISM

The following list has been used by permission of Gary Amirault of tentmaker.org. It has been edited slightly from its original form.

Christian Universalism: The belief that everything in heaven and on earth will ultimately be reconciled back to the Creator through the work of Jesus Christ, his Son. In plain language, no one is going to be endlessly tortured as has been commonly taught.

Famous people throughout the centuries who have declared publicly or strongly hinted that they believe all mankind will ultimately be saved. Remember, during most of Church history, openly declaring this belief often cost one their lives. The list includes early Church Fathers and leaders, theologians, scholars, historians, royalty, writers, poets, statesmen, humanitarians, scientists, and other streams of life. While some may not be well known to Americans living in the twentieth century, they are well known in the countries and times in which they lived. These men and women left written evidence behind declaring their views. Behind them stand millions who, while not having left behind a written record of their beliefs on earth, nevertheless, will one day brightly manifest to all creation as a Great Cloud of Witnesses.

This list was compiled from several sources among which are: "A Cloud of Witnesses" by J.W. Hanson, first published in 1885 and reprinted by Concordant Publishing Concern; "Mercy and Judgment" by Canon F.W. Farrar, published in 1881; "Christ Triumphant" by Thomas Allin, first published in 1890, reprinted by Concordant Publishing Concern; and "Universal Reconciliation and the Evangelical Covenant Church." Dean Hough, Editor of *Unsearchable Riches* also contributed greatly to the list.

- Paul, the Apostle (I Tim. 4:9-11)
- John the Apostle (John 4:42)
- Pantaenus, 1st head of catechetical school at Alexandria
- Clement of Alexandria, 2nd head of catechetical school at Alexandria
- Origen, greatest scholar of the early church
- Athenasius, Archbishop of Alexandria
- Didymus
- Ambrose, Bishop
- Ephraim
- Chrysostom
- Gregory of Nyssa, Bishop
- Gregory of Nazianzus, Bishop and President of the second Church council
- Titus, Bishop of Bostra
- Asterius, Bishop of Amasea
- Cyril
- Methodius, Bishop of Tyre
- Eusibius, early church historian
- Hillary, Bishop of Poictiers
- Victorinus
- Macrina, the younger
- Eriena
- Dionysius
- Barsudaili, Abbott of Edessa
- Diodore, Bishop of Tarsus and Jerusalem
- Theodore of Mopsuestia
- John Cassian
- Maximus of Turin
- Proclus, Bishop of Constantinople
- Theodoret the Blessed, Bishop of Cyrrhus
- Peter Chrysologus, Bishop of Ravenna
- Theophylact, Archbishop of Achrida
- Hermes Trigistus
- Joachim of Flora
- Thomas Hobbes
- Francis Quarles
- Sir Harry Vane
- La Fontaine
- Sir Isaac Newton
- Daniel Defoe
- Joseph Addison
- Isaac Watts
- Dr. Edward Young
- Chevalier Ramsay
- William King, Archbishop of Dublin
- William Duncombe
- Bishop Joseph Butler

- John Donne
- James Thompson
- Dr. Philip Doddridge
- Peter Bohler
- Dr. David Hartley
- Thomas Say
- Samuel Johnson
- Jean Jacques Rousseau
- Frederick the Great
- Ferdinand Oliver Petitpierre
- Henry Brooke
- Mark Akenside
- Immanuel Kant
- Thomas Gainesborough
- William Cowper
- James Neckar
- Dr. Joseph Priestley
- Jung Stilling
- John Frederick Oberlin
- Alison Rutherford Cockburn
- Johann Kasper Lavater
- Anna Letitia Barbauld
- Dr. John Prior Estlin
- Samuel Parr
- T. W. Goethe
- Thomas Belsham
- Rev. Robert Aspland
- George Crabbe
- Ralph Cudworth
- Henry Moore
- Samuel Richardson
- Bishop Rust
- Jeremy White
- Bishop Stillingfleet
- Dr. Burnet, Master of the Charter House
- William Whiston
- Bishop Newton
- William Law
- J. Windet
- R. Clark
- J. Relly
- Sir George Stonehouse
- W. Dudgeon
- Capel Berrow
- C. Charnay
- Elhanan Winchester
- John Murry
- Ershine of Linlathen
- Anne Bronte
- Whittier
- Robert and Elizabeth Browning
- Robert Burns
- Johann Schiller
- Joanna Baillie
- Samuel Rogers
- Sir James Mackintosh
- Alexander Von Humboldt
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- John Foster
- Edna Lyall
- George MacDonald
- Mrs. Oliphant
- James Hinton
- C. Bronte
- Emily Bronte
- Miss Mulock
- Alexander Pope
- William Wordsworth
- James Montgomery
- Thomas Dick
- James Hogg
- Robert Southey
- Fredericka Bremer
- Ellice Hopkins
- Hesba Stretton
- Florence Nightingale
- F. Schlegel
- Ralph Waldo Emerson
- Bishop Ewing of Argyll
- Canon Kingsley
- John F.D. Maurice
- Dr. Samuel Cox
- Baldwin Brown
- Bishop Westcott
- F. W. Robertson
- Sir G. W. Cox
- Andrew Jukes
- Rev. Lucius R. Paige
- Thomas Whittimore
- J. H. Hanson
- Archer Gurney
- Phillips Brooks
- Professor Mayor
- Canon F. W. Farrar
- Principal Caird, the Bishop of Meath
- Dean Church
- Johann A. W. Neander
- Martensen
- Friedrich A.G. Tholuck, German Professor
- E.A. Thomas Rawson Birks, secretary to Evangelical Alliance
- Erik Jakob Ekman, author
- Karl Johan Nyvall, author
- Peter Paul Waldenstrom
- Reuss
- Spener
- Kristofer Jakob Bostrom, prof. of Philosophy, University of Uppsala
- Johna Wilhelm Personne, Swedish Lutheran Bishop, author
- Nils Ignell, pastor, author
- Rev. Dr. Littledale

- Rev. H. B. Wilson
- Bishop Forbes of Brechin
- Bishop Moorhouse of Melbourne
- Dean Stanley
- Rev. Prof. Challis
- Archdeacon Reichel D. D.
- Rev. Prof. J. B. Mayor
- A.J. Beresford-Hope
- Rev. T. Griffith, Prebendary of St. Paul's
- Archbishop Tillotson
- Richard Coppin
- Gerard Winstanley
- R. Stafford
- Bishop Stillingfleet
- Rev. Dr. Thomas Burnet
- Dr. Doddridge
- Archdeacon Paley
- Rev. Dr. Hey, Prof. of Divinity
- Rev. Presbendary Constable, M.A.
- Rev. R. W. Dale
- Rev. Edward White
- Rev. Henry Allon D. D.
- M. Guillaume Monad
- Nathaniel Scarlett
- Paul Chatfield
- Helen Maria Williams
- F. W. Faber
- Charles Lamb
- Mrs. Mary M. Sherwood
- F. W. T. ScHelling
- Sarah Flower Adams
- Walter Savage Landor
- Henry Crabb Robinson
- Thomas Campbell
- Horace Smith
- William Ellery Channing
- Rev. L. Carpenter L.L.D.
- F. De La Mennais
- Washington Irving
- Bernard Barton
- Leigh Hunt
- Thomas De Quincey
- John Pierpont
- John Wilson
- Prof. Espy
- Dr. T. Southwood Smith
- H. H. Milman
- Felicia Dorothea Hemans
- William Cullen Bryant
- William Whewell
- J. G. Percival
- Horace Mann
- Hartley Coleridge
- T. C. Lockhart
- Gerritt Smith
- Theophilus Parsons
- Thomas Hood
- McDonald Clarke
- Dr. F Hase, professor of theology
- Chauncey Townsend
- Frederika Bremer
- Johann Peter Lange
- Dr. C. F. Kling
- Lydia Maria Child
- William Leggell
- Thomas Guthrie
- Bishop Ewing
- George Sand
- Nathaniel Hawthorne
- Mary Bowitt
- Hans Christian Andersen
- John Stuart Mill
- Rev. J. C. Street
- Rev. T. Latham
- Emile Girardin
- Elizabeth Oakes Smith
- N. T. Willis
- John Sterling
- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
- John Greenleaf Whittier
- Rev. L. C. Marvin
- Abel C. Thomas
- Christian Edward Baumstark
- Caroline E. S. Norton
- John R. Thompson
- Ross Winans
- Oliver Wendell Holmes
- Alfred Tennyson
- Richard Milnes
- Prof. J. S. Blackie
- John R. Beard D.D.
- Edward Clodd
- Mary Carpenter
- Theodore Parker
- Margaret Fuller Ossoli
- J. S. Taylor
- George Moore
- Martin Tupper
- Charles Sumner
- Horace Greeley
- W. M. Thackery
- J. H. Scholten
- Harriet Beecher Stowe
- Norman MacLeod D.D.
- Charles Mackay
- Charles Dickens
- Lewis Carroll
- Henry Ward Beecher
- J. Ross Browne
- Sylvester Judd
- Rev. C. A. Bartol
- Rev. Fergus Ferguson

- Caroline M. Sawyer
- Daniel Schenkel
- Franz Delitsch
- Johann Tauler
- Jean De Ruysbroek
- Johann Arndt
- Johann Wilhelm Petersen
- Matthew Reuz
- Johan Conrad (Christian) Dippel
- John Henry Haug, Prof. at Strasburg
- Dr. Ernest Christoph Hockman
- Count De Marcy
- Francesco Giorgi
- David Joris
- George Klein-Nikolai, author
- Anna Letitia Barbauld, English poet and writer
- Sarah Flowers Adams, hymnist
- Elisabeth Arundel Charles, hymnist, writer
- Elisabeth C. Clephane, hymnist
- Eliza Scudder
- Alison Rutherford Cockburn, writer
- Joanna Beittie, author
- Mary M. Sherwood, writer
- Lydia Child, writer
- Caroline Norton, writer
- Mary Carpenter, English philanthropist
- Margaret Fuller Ossoli, writer
- Caroline Sawyer, writer
- Sarah G. Edgerton Mayo, writer
- Francis Power Cobbe, author
- Lucy Larcom, writer
- Dinah Muloch Craik
- Mrs. Bloomfield, writer
- Mrs. E.H.J. Cleveland
- Helen L. Bostwick
- Julia H. Scott, writer
- Fredrika Bremer, Swedish novelist
- Rev. Alexander Schweizer
- Rev. John Page Hoppe
- Rev. G. Vance Smith D.D. Ph. D.
- Bishop Colenso
- Jules Francois Suisse Simon, French Statesman
- George Dawson
- Charles Reade
- John Cooper Vail
- Philip James Bailey
- James Gaylord Clark
- John Sare
- J. A. Fronde
- Acton Warburton
- James Russel Lowell
- Dr. R. A. Lipsins, Prof. of Theology
- John Ruskin
- Arther Hugh Clough
- Walt Whitman
- Louis Figuier, French Scientist
- Charles Kingsley
- J. C. Holland
- Sarah G. Edgerton Mayo
- Prof. E. H. Plumptre
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- Thomas Griffith
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- Bayard Taylor
- Dinah Mulock Graik
- Elizabeth Arundel Charles
- Henry James
- S. A. Tipple
- John Brown, M. D.
- Mrs. Bloomfield
- Eliza Scudder
- Charles G. Ames
- Joseph John Murphy
- James Hinton
- Mrs. E. H. J. Cleaveland
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- Theodore Winthrop
- Alexander Smith
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- Canon Wilberforce
- Pastor Oberlin
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- Hannah Whitall Smith, Evangelist and Bible teacher
- Clara Barton
- Christopher Sauer, Bible Publisher
- Charles Chauncy
- Dr. Benjamin Rush
- William Sargent
- Hosea Ballou
- Christopher Marshall
- George de Benneville
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- Jane Leade
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- Johanna Eleonora von und zu Merlau
- Abraham Lincoln
- Benjamin Franklin, encouraged the first Universalist Church in Philadelphia
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- Rev. Charles A. Pridgeon, President Pittsburgh Bible Institute
- Rev. E. L. Clementson, theologian
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- Jacques Ellul, theologian
- William Barclay, theologian and translator
- Robert Short, author
- A.E. Knoch, Bible student and translator
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- J. Preston Eby, writer
- Ray Prinzing, writer
- A.E. Saxby, author
- Warren Young Kimball, author
- Adlai Lousy, author
- John H. Paton, author
- Guy Marks, author
- Vladimir Gelesnoff, author
- Charles P. Schmitt, pastor
- Dorothy Schmitt, writer, radio programs
- Dr. Ernest L. Martin, author
- Morton Kelsey, author
- Ruth Carter Stapleton, Billy Carter's sister
- Walter Kunnenh
- Paul Althaus, theologian
- Nels Ferre, theologian
- Herbert Farmer, theologian
- Nicolai Berdyaev, theologian
- Hendrikus Berkof, theologian
- H. Dodd, theologian
- H. H. Farmer, theologian
- Vernard Eller, professor
- P. T. Forsythe, theologian
- Karl Heim, theologian
- John Hick, theologian
- F. D. Moule, professor
- T. Niles, church leader
- Mathias Rissi, theologian
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- Thomas Talbott, Professor
- David L. Watson, professor
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- Madelein L Engle, author
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