



Anchor of the Soul
P.O. Box 401
Spruce Pine, NC 28777



Anchor of the Soul

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The Joy of a New Year

by Mark Roberts

I love New Year's. I love New Year's parties and kissing my wife at midnight. I love the Tournament of Roses Parade. I love watching more college football in one day than I have seen the rest of the year. But more than anything else, I love the feeling of a fresh start that each January 1 brings. I am an incurable optimist and so I relish the New Year and its chance to examine where we've been, think a little about where we're going and try to do just a bit better. I love this time when we can start anew.

That must have been how Israel felt in Exodus 12.

Brought out of Egypt by God's mighty hand the Lord announces that He is restarting their calendar: "Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 'This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.'"(Exodus 12:1-2). This was, in effect, New Year's Day, 1444 B.C. It was such an important day and such an important occasion that God started the calendar over for Israel. For Israel everything changed that day. One day there were slaves and subject to Egyptian taskmasters. The next day they were free people, free to go and serve their God. Now that is a real fresh start!

It may be possible for us to waste the wonderful opportunity January 1 brings to us. We can make a few fake resolutions and then go back to business as usual. That isn't good enough, is it? If you are going to maintain the status quo then don't flip the date over, don't call it a new year, just keep marking time with that old Egyptian calendar. However, if you are willing to get serious about changing, if you really want a fresh start, if you are ready to walk with God in a better way, then push forward into 2010 with courage and faith. Grab this New Year by the throat and seize the opportunity to reform, repent, and be the servant of God the Lord wants you to be. Make a fresh start!

Sensible Dancing

By Robert Turner

Dear Sir:

My dad reads your paper; that's how I got the address. I've been talking to him about dancing. He won't let me, because of what it will lead to, and all the preachers he has talked with on the subject say, "No," it isn't good.

But my side: That's just about all the things that teenagers do beside smoking and drinking. I can see where these aren't good and I would never dream of doing them, but "what's wrong with dancing?" It's just something to do for pleasure.

I have already promised to keep my dancing sensible. Other kids (two) at my church (Church of Christ) can. Do you, and the ones you can talk with about this subject, think I should miss out on the fun? Please answer in a letter.

Signed _____, N.Y.

Dear Miss _____,

I certainly do not want you to miss the fun - and I am aware that "what it leads to" makes very poor argument indeed to early teens. But you seem to be very intelligent - try reasoning on your own statements.

By what standard do you reject smoking and drinking? It is done for pleasure; and many contend it can be "kept sensible." Other kids do them, and should you miss out on the fun? Some "other kids" break store windows and bait the police "just for kicks." But you see the end of these things - the alcoholic, death by cancer, etc. These "ends" are physi-

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cal, and more readily seen than the breakdown in morals, and of character. Apparently your dad, and those with whom he has counseled, see some “ends” of dancing that are not yet clear to you. And they know that one’s concept of “sensible” dancing - like that of smoking and drinking - usually change for the worse as we grow older.

You will not long remain a young teen, dancing at school or in supervised parties. In a few short years you will dance at Clubs, Night-Spots, where drinking, smoking and sensuous dancing will be pressured upon you. (Associates there will ask why you should “miss the fun” of things you now know to be wrong, and reject.)

What you reject now, because of their end - the physical breakdown - are not nearly so damaging as those things that attack one’s morals, and destroy character, and cause the loss of one’s immortal soul.

It is difficult, if not impossible, for younger and less experienced boys and girls to see this point. That is why Christian parents have to see, and rule in such matters, for their children. (Pity those whose parents are too weak to accept and meet this responsibility.) But I believe you can understand that the “wrong” in dancing is not the happy association, music and rhythm you might enjoy now. It is the sensuality, immodesty, and lasciviousness (study those words in an unabridged dictionary) of the full grown vice of which we warn. Already you may sense such association being made by older and more bold girls or boys of your public school classes. I’m resting my case on your maturity, and your love for Jesus Christ.

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Book, Chapter, and Verse**

The Reality of Hell, Part 4

By Byron Smith

Thus far it has been established that the Scriptures teach plainly that hell is real. Furthermore, it has been confirmed that hell awaits those who are unsaved. The primary intent of the consideration of such a dreadful subject has been to warn and urge caution regarding such a horrible place. Please reflect further how inspired Bible writers describe hell. This should make your determination to avoid hell firm.

A term that is commonly used to describe hell is “**death**” (cf. Rom. 6:23). This certainly bears a negative connotation. No sane person relishes death. Whereas all men experience physical death (Heb. 9:27), hell is spoken of as being the “second death” that only the unsaved will face (Rev. 2:11; 20:14). Physical death is defined as being a “separation” of body and spirit (Jas. 2:26). The second death is also a separation, but this death relates to that eternal separation of one’s soul from God “in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8).

“**Destruction**” is another descriptive word used with reference to the destiny of those eternally lost. The unsaved will be “punished with everlasting destruction” (II Thess. 1:9; cf. Phil. 3:19; Mt. 10:28). Some wish to pervert the meaning of this word and suggest that it means annihilation, that the wicked will not be punished, they will simply cease to exist. While this view may lend comfort to the wayward it is fraught with problems. The word “destruction” does not suggest or mean annihilation. “The idea is not extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of well-being.” (Vine’s) Furthermore, how could one have everlasting punishment if they literally ceased to exist? Men simply do not want to believe the truth concerning the destiny of the lost.

Be careful not to overlook the word “**everlasting**” in connection with the punishment. This also describes hell. Jesus said, “And these will go away into everlasting punish-

and thanksgiving to God, mixed with requests for blessings and forgiveness. To pray effectively to God I must actively engage my mind in not only what is being said, but in what I *need to say* to God, and on what I want Him to hear from *me*. Am I really thankful for my many blessings? Do I really want to praise God? Am I truly repentant so that I can ask for forgiveness? What blessings may I request?

Partaking of the Lord’s Supper: This physical/ mental act should focus our minds on what God did for us and center around our thankfulness for this wonderful sacrifice. What did God do for *me*? How thankful am I that I do not have to go through the terrible experience of the cross? If this activity is not uplifting, encouraging and a wonderful experience, then my mind has not been focused properly on worship of God.

Bible Study: Listening to the sermon or lesson now becomes an intense mental activity. What is being said? Does it apply to me? Is it true to the “book?” How am I taught to change my life, or my family? Can I teach these subjects to others? Because the Word of God is God speaking great respect is demanded.

Giving: Contributing my money is likewise a mental activity involving a review of the blessings I have received and how I am using them to be pleasing to God. Is this the proper amount to give? Should I be increasing my giving as my prosperity increases? Spectators dig into the billfold for whatever can be found. Worshippers *plan* to give part of their blessings to the furtherance of the Lord’s work.

The Big Question: It is not “how did I like the worship service?,” but “how did God like what I did?” Believe it because *God said it* in the Bible!

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Sunday.....Bible study	10:00 AM
Worship	11:00 AM
Evening Worship	6:30 PM
Wednesday....Bible study	7:00 PM

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1st Down & 10 in the 4th Pew

T.D. Roberts

For many Americans football is an enjoyable, spectator sport. We are not required to actually play. We just sit and watch, and cheer if we want to. If we are not pleased with the general results, we stop attending the games or watching on TV. Would you agree that football is mainly a spectator sport?

In the United States many seem to treat the worship of God in identical terms. Worship has become like a “spectator sport” in that we just watch and listen, and maybe sing if we want to. If we are not pleased we stop attending worship services. When asked about non-attendance at worship services some say, “I just don’t get anything out of it.” Could this be how you feel at some worship services?

The Biblical view of worship is very, very different. Instead of being a spectator activity, worship is a series of activities done by an individual to please and honor God. Worship is something I need to do — an activity — like playing right guard on the football team. If I don’t “do worship” then I have missed the whole point of attending worship services. What value would you assign to a right guard on the team who would neither block nor tackle, but only watched?

Consider the five acts of worship in this new light, namely, what do I need to do, not “what does it do for me” or “do I enjoy it?” Of course, Biblical worship will always bless the worshipper. God arranged it that way. However, the major design of worship is to direct our efforts toward God, not me.

Singing: Singing is praise of God and admonishing/teaching of others (Col 3:16; Eph 5:19). It is much like the right guard who has to think about his assignment on each play. I must think about what I am trying to do in song. Sitting in the pew and mouthing words shows only that I have learned to read. Without involvement of the mind I cannot really worship. In team meetings the right guard can read the plays. But on the field he must think about whom to block. When I sing I must participate with my mind in order to worship in song.

Praying: Prayer is the heartfelt outpouring of praise

ment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Mt. 25:46) “Everlasting” and “eternal” in this passage are from the same word (*aionios*), and they convey the same thought, without end! This describes the duration of hell. How long will hell last? However long the righteous will enjoy eternal life it is for that long the wicked will experience everlasting punishment! While these terms are immeasurable and beyond the comprehension of finite minds they do express one thought clearly, once the fate of a person’s soul is determined by God it is forever fixed and unalterable. Hell is “...forever and ever...” (Rev. 14:10-11; 20:10; cf. Rev. 4:9; 22:5; Mt. 18:8-9).

Much more could be said about hell. It is a place “**outer darkness**” (Mt. 25:30; cf. Mt. 8:12; 22:13; II Pet. 2:17), a place where there will be “**weeping and gnashing of teeth**” (Mt. 8:12; 13:50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30), and yes it is described in terms of “**fire**”. Whether you speak of hell as a lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:10, 14-15; 21:8), a furnace of fire (Mt. 13:42, 50), a flaming fire (II Thess. 1:7-9), a baptism of fire (Mt. 3:11-12), an unquenchable fire (Mk. 9:43), or an everlasting fire (Mt. 18:8), you have accurately portrayed the destiny of those not forgiven of their sins.

What should our attitude be toward hell? In short, we should fear it and make every effort to avoid it! Understand its either heaven or hell! There is no limbo or purgatory as some have imagined. Some may deny hell all-together, some may attempt to re-define hell to be an eternal state of unconsciousness, some may belittle it by foolishly scoffing, and others may simply ignore its reality hoping it will go away. What have you done to avoid such a terrible tragedy? A much better way to react is to accept the truth about hell and to respond by becoming a faithful Christian. This you can do by **believing** in Jesus (Jn. 3:16), **repenting** of your sins (Lk. 13:3), **confessing** your faith in Jesus (Rom. 10:9-10), being **baptized** in water **for the remission of your sins** (Ac. 2:38; 22:16), and by being **faithful** to God until death (Rev. 2:10).

Martyrs, Continued

From Fox's Book of Martyrs

John

The "beloved disciple," was brother to James the Great. The churches of Smyrna, Pergamos, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and Thyatira, were founded by him. From Ephesus he was ordered to be sent to Rome, where it is affirmed he was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil. He escaped by miracle, without injury. Domitian afterwards banished him to the Isle of Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation. Nerva, the successor of Domitian, recalled him. He was the only apostle who escaped a violent death.

Barnabas

Was of Cyprus, but of Jewish descent, his death is supposed to have taken place about A.D. 73.

Stephen

St. Stephen suffered the next in order. His death was occasioned by the faithful manner in which he preached the Gospel to the betrayers and murderers of Christ. To such a degree of madness were they excited, that they cast him out of the city and stoned him to death. The time when he suffered is generally supposed to have been at the Passover which succeeded to that of our Lord's crucifixion, and to the era of his ascension, in the following spring. Upon this a great persecution was raised against all who professed their belief in Christ as the Messiah, or as a prophet. We are immediately told by St. Luke, that "there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem;" and that "they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles." About two thousand Christians, with Nicanor, one of the seven deacons, suffered martyrdom during the "persecution that arose about Stephen."

January Bible Reading

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
						1 2 Kgs. 6-8 Ac. 6
2 Worship With Us! 11 AM & 6:30 PM	3 2 Kgs. 9-11 Ac. 7:1-27	4 2 Kgs. 12-14 Ac. 7:28-60	5 Study With Us! 7 PM	6 2 Kgs. 15-17 Ac. 8	7 2 Kgs. 18-20 Ac. 9	8 2 Kgs. 21-23 Ac. 10
9 Worship With Us! 11 AM & 6:30 PM	10 2 Kgs. 24-1 Chr. 1 Ac. 11	11 1 Chr. 2-3 Ac. 12	12 Study With Us! 7 PM	13 1 Chr. 4-5 Ac. 13:1-26	14 1 Chr. 6 Ac. 13:27-52	15 1 Chr. 7-8 Ac. 14
16 Worship With Us! 11 AM & 6:30 PM	17 1 Chr. 9-11 Ac. 15	18 1 Chr. 12-15 Ac. 16	19 Study With Us! 7 PM	20 1 Chr. 16-18 Ac. 17	21 1 Chr. 19-22 Ac. 18	22 1 Chr. 23-25 Ac. 19
23 <u>Worship With Us!</u> 30 11 AM & 6:30 PM	24 <u>1 Chr. 26-28; Ac. 20</u> 31 2 Chr. 16-19; Ac. 25	25 1 Chr. 29-2 Chr. 3 Ac. 21	26 Study With Us! 7 PM	27 2 Chr. 4-6 Ac. 22	28 2 Chr. 7-10 Ac. 23	29 2 Chr. 11-15 Ac. 24