

# **“If Jehovah Isn’t the Real Name of God, What Is?”**

When the Bible was translated, the interpreter translated the name of God as “Jehovah.” My main question is, What was the original name of God? Because I read that his name was translated wrong, and that his real name is YAOHU. Is this true?

Thank you for writing. I will try to explain this to you with the following information:

God is referred to in the Bible by many names, but the primary three are:

## ***Elohim***

Translation: “God,” as in Genesis 1:1: “in the beginning God created...”

## ***Yahweh***

Translation: “Lord,” as in Psalm 23:1: “The Lord is my Shepherd...”

## ***Adonai***

Translation: “Ruler, Master, Lord,” as in Psalm 35:23: “my God (Elohim) and my Lord (Adonai).”

We need to understand the rendering of these three names of God as we find them in our Bibles today, whether in English, Spanish, and all other modern translations. But we must first understand some things about the development of the Hebrew language.

First of all, ancient Hebrew was distinctive, in that there were two traditions which were involved in the handing down of the Hebrew text as we know it today. One was written (Kethiv), and the other was oral, spoken (Qere).

Up until the Tenth Century A.D., all Hebrew written texts in existence and available (for study, worship) had one distinguishing feature: the text consisted of consonants only. In other words, there were no vowels! But since there was also an oral tradition, the Jews who spoke Hebrew knew what the vowels were and just supplied them as they read the text.

Examples in English: McDnlds=McDonalds; prkwy=parkway; frwy=freeway.

Around 906 A.D., a group of Hebrew scholars at Tiberias (on the Sea of Galilee) known as the Massoretes developed a system of little "dots" and "dashes" representing all of the vowel sounds. These were superimposed upon the written Hebrew text at that time. The Massoretes were concerned that the Hebrew language would be lost, as fewer and fewer people knew and spoke it. So these scholars took steps to make sure that all future generations of Jews would be able to speak the language accurately since they would now have a written record of the ancient vowel sounds. All of our modern Hebrew translations are based upon the work of the Massoretes.

Now let's look back at our three names of God.

The term *Elohim* has always meant "God," but is not germane to our discussion of your question.

The issue of *Jehovah* is derived from the other two primary names of God.

The term *Yahweh* is always translated by the word "Lord." But we must understand that every time a Rabbi or any Jew was reading any portion of the Old Testament and came upon this written word "YHWH", he orally said "Adonai," not "Yahweh." The reason for this is that the Jews considered the written term YHWH so sacred that it should never be spoken or expressed with the lips.

That is the reason why, when they were reading (speaking) and

came to "YHWH," they always substituted "Adonai" and spoke it instead. This has been practiced by the Jews back to Jesus' time, and long before.

Now, where does "Jehovah" come from? Well, what were the Massoretes to do when they were adding their vowel-system to the written Hebrew text and they came upon the word, "YHWH?" Since no Jew had ever heard or known the true pronunciation of this most sacred of names for the Hebrew God, they put there the identical vowel-pointings which are rendered for Adonai!

In reality, the Jews were just doing what they had always done: they spoke "Adonai" every time they read "YHWH" in the text.

The vowel sounds in Adonai are "OH" and "AH." Thus, "Yahweh" becomes "YHO VAH" (rendered in English as "Jehovah").

Most scholars have concluded that the term "YHWH" is actually based upon the "to be" verb in Hebrew, "HYH" (HAYAH). The future tense of this verb is YHWH (Yahweh). They refer back to the passage in Exodus where God is actually asked His name. Moses says, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I shall say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now, they may say to me, 'What is His Name?' What shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM;" and He said, "Thus you shall say to the Sons of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.'"

I hope this answers your question. You can see from this explanation that the issue was not that someone translated it wrong. It was done with reverent intention. I hope this answers your question adequately.

Jimmy Williams, Founder  
Probe Ministries

*This e-mail also came in with a similar question:*

This message is in reference to using the word "Jehovah" to mean the God of the Bible. I assume you know that it is YHWH with the vowel points for "Adonai" added. This was to remind the Torah reader to say "Adonai" instead of YHWH, which was (and is) considered sacred to the Jews. I do not see how one can use a hybrid of two names for God and still be correct. If someone were to call me "Jasen" with different vowels inserted, I probably would not respond. I understand God is an omniscient, compassionate God that knows our shortcomings and misunderstandings, but if we can do it right, shouldn't we?

Your questions about the relationship of YHWH, Adonai, and Jehovah have to do with the tradition of the Jews and their reverence for the name of Yahweh, which comes from Exodus 3:13 when Moses asked God to tell him what he should say when Pharaoh and the Egyptians inquired as to who had sent him (Moses) on his mission of deliverance. Remember, the Lord told Moses to take his shoes off because he was on "holy ground."

God's answer was, "I AM THAT I AM." Actually, the word YHWH is a form of the "to be" verb in Hebrew, "eyeheyeh." It ties into the idea in the New Testament where Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Before Abraham was (existed), I AM (that is, I continually exist)" (John 8:58-59). The Hebrew translation is "underived existence."

*Unger's Bible Dictionary* says that "this custom which had its origin in reverence, and has almost degenerated into a superstition, was founded upon an erroneous rendering of Lev. 24:16, from which it was inferred that the mere utterance of the name constituted a capital offense. According to Jewish tradition, it was pronounced but once a year by the high priest on the Day of Atonement when he entered the Holy of Holies; but on this point there is some doubt." (p. 565).

This reverence carried over into the Jewish thinking about the awe, fear, and reverence to which God was entitled. The Jews scrupulously avoided every mention of it. The true

pronunciation of it was known to the Hebrews, but has been entirely lost. They continued to write YHWH in the text, but when pronouncing the text always substituted another name for God, usually Adonai.

You are right in your explanation that the Jews used the vowel pointing of Adonai to YHWH, from which we get the English word, "Jehovah," hence the form Yehowah and name Yehvh. There is a strong possibility that the name Jehovah was anciently pronounced as Yahweh, like Iabe of the Samaritans. But I must remind you that the entire vowel pointing system did not come into use until the 10th century A.D. This was designed by the Massoretes located at Tiberius on the Sea of Galilee, and their desire was to weld together two traditions of the Old Testament text at that time: the KETHIV (written text) and the QERE (spoken, oral tradition).

Let me explain it this way. Until the tenth century A.D., the written Hebrew text contained only consonants. The reason for this is that those who spoke Hebrew knew what the vowels were. The Pharisees of Jesus' day knew the Old Testament by heart, from Genesis to Malachi. This had nothing to do with literacy or education. This is the oral tradition. Even today many Muslims can quote the entire Koran by memory. Since the Jews had this oral tradition, they knew the Scriptures and they knew what the vowel sounds were.

Let me give you an example: Read these modified English words: blvd=boulevard; pkwy=parkway; McDnlds=McDonalds, and so on.

What the Massoretes did was to devise a vowel pointing system which was superimposed over the written, consonantal text. The reason for doing this was to bring these two traditions together and stabilize the text for perpetuity so that the language would not be lost. Amazingly, this same Hebrew is now in operation in Israel. And when you see modern Hebrew written, the vowels are again omitted as in ancient times, because Jews who read and speak Hebrew know what vowels are to

be supplied.

My point with all this is that long before the vowel pointings (which seem to be hanging you up) were created, the Jews were *already* referring to YHWH as “Adonai.” This goes way back in the Jewish tradition, even before the time of Christ. The Qumran community (Dead Sea Scrolls) also had this practice.

In summary, the action of substituting Adonai for YHWH had little to do with the vowel pointing you mention, and everything to do with an ancient practice of the Jews (in respect or perhaps superstition) not to utter the sound of the “ineffable Tetragrammaton” (YHWH cf. *Websters Dictionary*). The practice is not, in reality, a “hybrid” of the two names, as you suggest, but rather a substitution of the one for the other. Your analysis of the vowel pointing is accurate as a means of reminding/warning the reader not to utter “YHWH” after the 10th century A.D. , but we have no knowledge or of any such indicator provided in the written Hebrew text giving such a warning prior to the Massoretic tradition.

I hope this answers your question.

Sincerely in Christ,

Jimmy Williams, Founder  
Probe Ministries

Published June 2003

**See Also *Probe Answers Our Email*:**

- [“Is It Wrong to Speak of God as Jehovah?”](#)
- [“Jehovah Is the Only Name of God!”](#)
- [“Why Did the Jews Not Say God’s Name Aloud When He Never Said Not To?”](#)

---

# **“Salvation Is By Grace, But We Have to Do Our Part”**

Sue,

Thank you for being one who stands up for the principles that our Savior Jesus Christ taught. I applaud your efforts. I have a couple of questions from your article:

I read your [“A Short Look at Six World Religions”](#) and it said that many of Joseph Smith’s prophecies never came true. Which prophecies are those?

I also read, “Both of these religions teach salvation by works, not God’s grace.” I have been a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 8 years of age, and I have always been taught that we are saved by the grace of God. However, salvation is not free. For example, if one chooses to not live the commandments that God has given, then how can he be worthy to live in the presence of God? Here is a quote from the Book of Mormon: “For we know that it is by grace that we are saved after all that we can do.” (page 99-100). Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins, but we must do our part to accept his atonement and live his commandments. Accepting his atonement is not enough. Through the grace of our loving Savior we can be redeemed from our sins and return to the presence of our Heavenly Father clean from all sin, again if we keep his commandments the best we know how. God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ are the perfect examples of mercy.

Have a good day and thank you for teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, who is my best friend.

Hello \_\_\_\_\_,

Jesus is my best friend too! <smile>

*I read your article "A Short Look at Six World Religions" and it said that many of Joseph Smith's prophecies never came true. Which prophecies are those?*

I cited a few of them in another response to an e-mail about my article. Your question prompted me to add a link to that article at the end of the one you read, but here's a [direct link](#) for you..

*I also read, "Both of these religions teach salvation by works, not God's grace." I have been a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 8 years of age, and I have always been taught that we are saved by the grace of God. However, salvation is not free.*

I would agree that salvation was not free for God, for whom it cost Him EVERYTHING. But it *is* a free gift for us. Please note Ephesians 2:8,9:

*"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."*

This scripture is diametrically opposed to Mormon doctrine. We cannot do anything to contribute to our salvation. Isaiah 64:6 says that all our righteousness is as filthy rags; what can we possibly give to God that will overcome the heinous sin of requiring the death of His Son to be reconciled to Him? If someone came in here and murdered one of my sons and then said, "Hey, I don't want you to be mad at me. . . let me do something to help me get myself in your good graces. Here's a nickel. . ." —Well, guess what? That wouldn't work! And it doesn't work with God either.

The question of obeying His commandments is a separate issue. Obedience for the person who has put his trust in Christ is a matter of bearing fruit and walking out the new kind of life



(new heart, new motivation, new source of power) that Christ brings at the point of salvation. Obedience for the person who has NOT put his trust in Christ, but is trusting in himself to earn heaven on his own merit, counts for nothing because Jesus said, "Apart from Me, no one comes to the Father" (John 14:6). It would be like that person who murdered my sons saying, "But I'm keeping all the Bohlin family rules! I'm respectful to the parents, I take out the garbage on garbage day, I put my dishes in the dishwasher, I don't let the dog sleep on the bed! I deserve to be a member of your family!" See how that doesn't work either?

\_\_\_\_\_, I pray the Lord will open your eyes to see that trying to earn salvation with our paltry efforts—even WITH His grace—is a slap in the face of our God. He wants us to come to Him with empty hands and the realization that we do not deserve and cannot earn the gift of eternal life that comes ONLY through trusting in the Lord Jesus.

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin

**It occurred to me as I read your response that we aren't exactly talking about the same definition of "salvation." How exactly do you define it, in the strict sense? By that I mean, tell me what salvation is and what it is not, as you perceive it.**

I am really impressed that you realize we're defining our terms differently. I want to make sure you get the best possible answer, so I'm going to ask my Probe colleague Michael Gleghorn, who has formal theological training, to answer that question, OK?

*Michael Gleghorn's answer:*

Hello \_\_\_\_\_,

Thanks for your e-mail. You ask a very important question. Indeed, entire books have been written on the subject. I will simply offer a broad sketch of some of the fundamentals of this important biblical doctrine.

In its broadest sense, the biblical doctrine of salvation is concerned with the idea of God's deliverance of His people from harm or danger. In the Old Testament, God's greatest saving act occurred when He delivered (or saved) His people Israel from their slavery in Egypt. This event is known as the Exodus. Thus, the biblical doctrine of salvation includes more than just "spiritual" deliverance, it can incorporate physical deliverance as well. The important point is that salvation, in the biblical sense, is ALWAYS THE WORK OF GOD—NOT MAN. Just listen to God's word to the prophet Isaiah: "I, even I, am the Lord; and there is no savior besides Me." (43:11).

This point cannot be emphasized enough—God is the One who saves. Even in the book of Judges, when Israel has many human "deliverers," it is God who appoints them and raises them up for their specific task. Thus, we repeatedly read statements such as the following in the book of Judges: "And when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord, THE LORD RAISED UP A DELIVERER for the sons of Israel TO DELIVER THEM" (3:9; emphasis mine).

And the psalmist also wrote: "Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden, the God who is our salvation. God is to us a God of deliverances; and to God the Lord belong escapes from death" (68:19-20). You get the idea.

The Old Testament Scriptures provide much of the "theological context" for the New Testament doctrine of God and salvation. While some things are certainly "new" and different (see John 1:17, etc.), much remains the same. In particular, salvation is still viewed as THE WORK OF GOD—NOT MAN. Think back to the end of Psalm 68:20: "to God the Lord belong escapes from death." Now listen to Paul in Romans 6:23: "For the wages of

sin is death, BUT THE FREE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD” (emphasis mine).

In the New Testament, as in the Old, God is the only true savior of man. This salvation has been made available through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for our sins. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:3: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS according to the Scriptures” (emphasis mine). Furthermore, Christ is the ONLY way of salvation. As Peter said in Acts 4:12: “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is NO OTHER NAME under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved” (emphasis mine).

Of course, if God is the ONLY savior and, as Jesus Himself said, “No one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6), clearly Jesus must be God. This is the teaching of the New Testament (see John 1:1-3, 14). It’s important to point out, however, that Jesus is NOT God the Father; He is God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity. Of course Jesus is also a Man. (Although I cannot get into it right now, Mormons and Christians not only have a different understanding of the doctrine of salvation, we also have radically different conceptions of God. Pat Zukeran, a colleague of mine at Probe, has recently written an article on [“The Mormon Doctrine of God.”](#))

The Bible claims that Jesus is the only savior, who died on the cross for our sins. But Christ’s death is not merely a means of salvation from sin (as great as that would be in itself), it also makes available to man the perfect righteousness of God! Thus we read in 2 Corinthians 5:21: “He [God] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Salvation not only includes the forgiveness of our debt of sin, it also includes the crediting of Christ’s righteousness to our account! In other words, Christ washes away the stain of our sin and clothes us in His perfect righteousness. Luther

called this "The Great Exchange."

But how does this Great Exchange take place? By what means does it occur? What must one do to be saved? That was the question asked of Paul and Silas by the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:30. Paul and Silas responded by saying, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved" (16:31). In other words, the jailer was told to BELIEVE (i.e. put his faith or trust) in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gift of salvation, like all gifts, must be received. It is received by faith alone. It is with this understanding that we must read Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that NOT OF YOURSELVES, it is the gift of God; NOT AS A RESULT OF WORKS, that no one should boast" (emphasis mine). And again, in Titus 3:4-7 we read: "But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, NOT ON THE BASIS OF DEEDS WHICH WE HAVE DONE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, BUT ACCORDING TO HIS MERCY, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (emphasis mine). Other aspects of salvation include, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO, justification (i.e. being declared righteous by God), adoption into God's family as His beloved children (Galatians 4:4-7), the gift of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14), and the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23). Man receives all that is included in God's gift of salvation BY FAITH ALONE—PLUS NOTHING!

But do works play no role at all in the doctrine of salvation? Actually, they do! HOWEVER, WORKS ARE NOT A MEANS OF SALVATION! Rather, good works are a RESULT of salvation. Salvation is a gift of God, received by faith alone—plus nothing! But one of the RESULTS of a genuine salvation experience is that the believer engages in good works. We recently looked at Ephesians 2:8-9 and Titus 3:4-7. But what

comes after these verses? In Ephesians 2:10 we read: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Notice the progression of ideas in Ephesians 2:8-10. We are saved by grace through faith and not by our works. However, we were saved, in part, FOR good works! I'll let you look at Titus 3:8 on your own, but the same order of ideas is present there as well.

By the way, this is James' point as well in James 2:14-26. Some people think that this passage in James contradicts Paul's doctrine of salvation by grace, through faith—plus nothing. But if we read this passage carefully, it is clear that James is not arguing that we are saved by works. Rather, he is making the very important point that GENUINE faith produces good works. Thus, if no good works are evident, it may be because the alleged faith is not genuine. And of course no one is claiming that a "pseudo-faith" can save; the faith that saves is GENUINE faith—and such faith leads inevitably to good works.

Two final points. First, we are not capable of judging the thoughts and intentions of others. Only God can do that. If someone does not appear TO ME to be engaging in good works, this is no proof that they are not truly saved. Only God knows their heart. However, it might be appropriate to ask that person to examine himself to see whether his faith is really genuine or not (see 2 Corinthians 13:5 for instance). Second, even the good works resulting from the genuine faith of a true believer are not really his own (in the sense that they originate and are carried out solely in his own strength). They also are the gift of God and can only be properly carried out in the power of God's Spirit—NOT in the strength of the believer's flesh! Although many verses could be quoted to this effect, I will mention only two, Romans 8:3-4: "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, GOD DID: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an

offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (emphasis mine).

Please allow me to summarize the main points:

- Salvation is the work of God—not man.
- God offers man salvation as a free gift, based on the substitutionary death of His Son for our sins.
- Salvation includes, but is not limited to, such things as the forgiveness of sins, the crediting of Christ's righteousness to our account, justification (being declared righteous by God), adoption into God's family as His beloved children, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the gift of eternal life.
- Man receives God's salvation by faith alone—plus nothing.
- The object of our faith is the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Good works do not merit salvation, but genuine salvation results in good works.
- Good works are only "good" to the extent that they are done in faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, God Himself is ultimately the Author even of the good works which follow a genuine salvation experience.

I hope this helps. I also hope it makes sense. These ideas are some of the most essential elements of the biblical doctrine of salvation; they do not, of course, exhaust the subject. If the Bible is the word of God, we must pay very careful attention to the means by which God has made His salvation available to us—neither adding to it, nor subtracting from it, but teaching it just as God revealed it to us.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn  
Probe Ministries

---

## **“Were Jesus’ Miracles a Demonstration of His Humanity or Deity?”**

I am writing a thesis about Jesus’ dual nature and I would like to know what you think about the miracles Jesus performed. Were they a demonstration of His humanity or deity? I’ve already heard that He performed His miracles as a man who was been used by the Holy Spirit as some preachers today that have the gift of healing. Please give me biblical references.

Great question!

His deity. Only God can do miracles; there’s nothing in our humanness that can do them.

When Jesus exorcised demons, He simply said, “Be gone,” not “In the name of the Father.” When He calmed the sea, He simply said, “Be still,” not “In the name of Yahweh.” When he fed the 4,000 and the 5,000, He simply blessed the food and kept handing it out. Period.

We do see examples of people performing miracles in the Bible, like Peter healing the crippled in man in Acts 3:6. Peter had no power on his own, but said, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” Jesus never had to appeal to a higher power; He WAS the higher power.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

---

## **“Jesus Was Only Representing Jehovah”**

I read your letter concerning [Jehovah's Witnesses and the Trinity](#). Like you, I like to get my facts straight, that's why I did a little research.

I found out something concerning the Alpha and the Omega. If you turn your bible to the first chapter of Revelations, you will see something that maybe the witnesses you've talked to haven't. In my version it states, “A revelation by Jesus Christ, which God gave him, to show his slaves the things that must shortly take place.” So here you clearly see that when Jesus said he was the Alpha and the Omega, he was representing God, Jehovah God.

I am yet to do some more research concerning that other verse of yours, but please take into consideration that I'm not trying to be rude, and I am listening to what you are saying, what I'm trying to do is help another one in understanding the deep things of God.

I welcome your comments and discussions, and I might be writing to you again. My e-mail is enclosed.

And please don't get the point that I'm some snobby religious person trying to get back at another. I'm 14 yrs old and I read and study the bible everyday so don't think that I'm not coming from anywhere.



## **Anyway, Good Day!**

Thank you for writing. I have read your response to my article and I am glad you are interested in searching for the truth. As you do, let me encourage you to seek answers from the Bible alone, not the Watchtower organization.

In regards to your response, it does not change the argument that Jesus is God the Son in any way. I agree that this message is given by God and mediated through Christ. In 1:8 God the Father is speaking. We know this because after He states, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," He states, "Who is, and who was, and is to come, the Almighty." The phrase "who was, who is, and is to come" refers to God the Father.

When we look at Revelation 22:12-21, Jesus is speaking about himself, not on behalf of God the Father. How do we know this? 22:12 states, "Behold, I am coming soon and my reward is with me." When scripture refers to the coming of the king to earth, it is referring to Jesus. Jesus is the one who is coming. God the Father is not referred to as the one who is coming soon. Jesus is the one coming soon in all occasions. (Matthew 16:27, 24:30-31) Revelation 1:7 makes it clear once again that Jesus is coming because it states that the one who is coming is "pierced." So when Jesus says, in 22:7 and 12, "Behold I am coming soon," He is not quoting God the Father, He is referring clearly to himself. He, Jesus, is coming soon. In 22:16 Jesus states again, "I Jesus have sent my angel..." It therefore does not fit if you look at the grammar of the discourse to say in verse 22:12 Jesus is referring to Himself, then in the same discourse He suddenly switches to quote God in verse 13 and then switches back to refer to Himself in verses 14-21. This is an attempt by the Watchtower organization to manipulate the text to fit their interpretation.

However, if you look at the grammatical context, in verse 22:12 Jesus refers to himself, for He is the one who is

coming. And verses 13-21 refer to Jesus. To say verse 13 suddenly refers to God the Father and not Jesus is being dishonest to the grammar and context of the passage.

I would recommend you read through the entire book of Revelation, outline it and state what the theme of the entire book is. Do not simply accept what the Watchtower teaches you, study the scriptures for yourself. The record of 100 years of false prophecy from the Watchtower clearly displays their record of false interpretation for over a century. God commands us to study His word, not the teachings of an organization. God says, "Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy," (Rev. 1:3) and He is not referring to the Watchtower magazines.

Thanks for writing. Keep studying God's word.

Patrick Zukeran  
Probe Ministries

---

## **"People in Hell Are Destroyed, Not Live Forever"**

I am writing about your answer to the question ["Are People in Hell Isolated and Alone?"](#)

The bible clearly states that the wages of sin is DEATH not eternal life, be it in heaven or hell as you think. Consider these verses:

*Malachi 4:3 plainly says the wicked shall be ashes under our feet. Is.1:28—"...and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed." Is.66:17—"shall be consumed together, saith the Lord." Rev 20:9—"...and fire came down from God out of heaven,*

*and devoured them." Rev 20:14,"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."*

**Doesn't say second life but second death. You should look up some of the Greek and Hebrew words that have been translated into hell, that would make it more clear to you.**

Thank you for your letter. You are correct in noting that the fate of unbelievers is one of heated debate these days, even among professing evangelicals. My own difficulty with the thesis of conditional immortality stems from passages like Matthew 25:46, Revelation 14:9-11 and Revelation 20:10. It is difficult for me to see how these passages can be consistent with the denial of eternal punishment.

For example, in Matthew 25:46 Jesus states: "And these will depart into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. The same Greek term, *aionion* (eternal), is used to describe both punishment and life.

Revelation 14:11 reads in part: "And the smoke from their torture will go up forever and ever, and those who worship the beast and his image will have no rest day or night." What troubles me about this verse is the concluding phrase, "those who worship the beast and his image will have no rest day or night." Again, these unfortunate people appear to be enduring eternal, conscious torment.

Finally, in Revelation 20:10 we read: "And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet are too, and they will be tormented there day and night forever and ever." The beast and false prophet are both human beings. And yet, along with the devil, they will endure eternal punishment. Furthermore, Revelation 19:20 states, "Now the beast was seized, and along with him the false prophet who had performed the signs on his behalf; signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. Both of

them were thrown alive into the lake of fire burning with sulfur." Please note that this takes place prior to the thousand year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:1-7). And yet, when the thousand years are over, the beast and false prophet are still being tormented in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). This lake of fire is the same place where all unbelievers are thrown in Revelation 20:15.

It's true that this is called the "second death," but does the Bible equate "death" with "annihilation"? How do you read Ephesians 2:1-2? The Ephesians were formerly "dead." But does this mean that they didn't have personal, conscious existence? Wouldn't you agree that the Ephesians were spiritually dead (i.e. separated from the spiritual life of God)? And might this not also be what the Bible means by the "second death" (i.e. unremedied spiritual death results in eternal separation from God)? When the Bible speaks of death it does not mean "annihilation." Rather, it means "separation." Physical death is the "separation" of the spirit from the body (James 2:26). Spiritual death is the "separation" of a conscious, living person from God (Ephesians 2:1-2). And the second death is the "eternal separation" of an unredeemed person from God (Revelation 20:11-15).

This, at any rate, is why it's so difficult for me to embrace the doctrines of conditional immortality and annihilationism.

Hope this helps.

The Lord bless you,

Michael Gleghorn

Probe Ministries

---

# **“I Have Questions About the Trinity”**

I still have questions about the Trinity from your article [The Jehovah's Witnesses and the Trinity](#)—here are some of them:

John 17:1-3 The Emphatic Diaglott reads this this way: “Jesus spoke these things, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the HOUR is come: glorify THY son, that the son may glorify thee as thou didst give him Authority over all flesh, so everything which thou hast given to him, he may give to them even aionian life. And this is the AIONIAN life, that they may know thee, the ONLY TRUE God, and him whom thou didst send, Jesus Christ.”

If Jesus Christ is God Almighty, then who was he praying to?

When you quoted Rev. 1:16 and 17, you were taking them out of context, surely, because the first few verses show that God sent his angel (Jesus Christ) to John to give him the Revelation. I am assuming you are going to say that it was Jesus Christ who gave the Rev. to John. If so, then Jesus was quoting the words of God, his Father.

Are you saying that Jesus is God—equal in every way to God—or that he a powerful spirit being as God is? In the page dealing with the Trinity you mentioned that Jesus is the same nature as God, that is why I ask?

I have never believed the Trinity, but if I am wrong in not doing so, I want to find out.

Hello and thank you for your question.

Who is Jesus praying to? He is praying to God the Father. Many people misunderstand the doctrine of the Trinity. The Bible shows that there is one God who has revealed himself in three

distinct and separate persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. What JW's and others misunderstand is that Jesus, the Father and Holy Spirit are all the same person. The Trinity does not teach Jesus is the Father or that the Father is the Holy Spirit or the Son is the Holy Spirit. The Trinity means there exists one God revealed in three distinct persons. As seen at the Baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3, the Father spoke from heaven, the Son arose from the water, and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove.

So who was Jesus praying to in John 17:1-3? It was God the Son praying to God the Father. I hope you go on to read the rest of the verse. 17:5 states, "And now Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began." Jesus shared in the glory of the Father. What a significant statement in light of Isaiah 42:8, where God the Father states, "I am the Lord, that is my name. I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols." The glory of God is His alone. It is evident that this is the glory that belongs to God alone. Why does Jesus have it? Because He is God.

Let us look at Revelation 1:16-17. We are sure this is Jesus speaking because of the context. Verse 1:13 states, "And among the lampstands was someone like the son of Man." Is God the Father ever called the son of man? No, this is the title of Jesus (Daniel 7:13, Matthew 12:8, 32, and 20:18.) Jesus is not quoting the Father in 1:17-18, He is stating what is true of Himself. Look at the context. Verses 1:17-18 go together. The quote begins at 1:17b, "Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last." Then it connects to verse 18, "I am the living one; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!" Is this statement true of the Father or the son? Was the Father once dead and resurrected to life? No, that is clearly true only of God the Son, Jesus who died on the cross and rose from the dead. Jesus would not be quoting a statement from the Father that was not true of the Father. The Father was never dead and

resurrected to life. Context shows verses 1:17-18 are one quote and it is Jesus speaking about what is true of Himself.

Thanks for your question. Keep studying the Bible and the Bible only.

Patrick Zukeran  
Probe Ministries

---

## **“Can a Christian Lose His Salvation?”**

I have been debating a Christian online about whether salvation is permanent, which I believe it is. I have seen many scriptures that show this is the case but the person I am debating has brought up two verses I have never looked at before and I don't know how to respond. The verses are 2 Peter 2:20-21:

*“For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.”*

I looked in a couple of commentaries as well as in *When Critics Ask* (by Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe) and they either said nothing about it or they didn't address the issue at hand. I have just within the last month or two started getting your newsletter and reading your articles/e-mail responses and I have been very impressed. So I was hoping that

**you could shed some light on this issue.**

You have brought up a great question! The security of every believer is a critical issue in the Christian life. John 10:28-30 assures us that if we are given eternal life by God through Jesus Christ, no one can snatch us from the Father's hand. Romans 8:28-39 also guarantees that nothing in all of reality can separate us from the love of God in Christ.

With that said, there is the issue of the "apparent" problem passages. Of them, 2 Peter 2:20-21 seems a real nasty one. But upon reading the entire epistle from Peter, one can see that the people in question are false teachers. Peter's perspective, as that of Jude in Jude 19, is that these false teachers were not truly Christian. As Jude puts it, they are "wordly-minded, devoid of the Spirit." Most likely these teachers publicly professed Christ as their Lord, but their subsequent rejection verified their unchanged spiritual condition.

The Bible as a whole teaches that believers are securely held in God's hand. But let us be careful not to judge others because of what we see or don't see. Challenge one another in perseverance to bear fruit, but leave the final judgment to the word of God that is "able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Thanks so much for your insightful question. God gives understanding to those who seek it as if searching for buried treasure and precious silver. [Proverbs 2:3-5]

Kris Samons  
Probe Ministries

---



# “Help Me Understand Rewards in Heaven”

Dear Sue,

I want to ask about different rewards in heaven. In some classes I've been told that everyone is equal in heaven and there are no levels. Other classes seem to indicate that it is the way you live on earth and the deposits you make in heaven on the rewards you receive. I know that believing in Jesus Christ as your Savior guarantees your salvation, but I am a little confused on the levels in heaven and what this means. I've even been told that it is just different people's interpretation. Please help me understand!

The confusion usually comes from people confusing the differences between SALVATION and REWARDS. Salvation is a free gift, but rewards are earned by our works after we are saved. No one's works will ever earn them salvation—the only ones that count are the ones we perform after becoming a Christian. Salvation is a present reality, but our rewards will be given in the future, in heaven.

They will be given at the Judgment Seat of Christ (you may hear some people call it by the Greek word, *bema* [bay-ma] ), when our works (NOT our sins, which were paid for at the Cross) will be tested and judged.

2 Corinthians 5:10 says, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be paid back according to what he has done while in the body, whether good or evil.” Similarly, Romans 14:10, 12 says, “We will all stand before the Judgment Seat of God. . . and each one of us will give an account of himself to God.”

1 Corinthians 3:9-15 describes what will happen: God will test our works by the fire of motive. If we did things in His

strength and for His glory, they will pass through the refining fire and emerge as gold, silver and costly stones. If we did things in our own flesh and for our glory or for the earthly payoff, we will have gotten all our strokes on earth, and the works will be burned up, not making it through the testing "fire." (Those works are referred to as wood, hay and straw, which are easily consumed by flame.)

There are various kinds of rewards, but the Bible doesn't give a lot of information.

Matthew 10:41 talks about a prophet's reward, a righteous person's reward, and a disciple's reward.

Then there are crowns:

- James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10 refer to the "crown of life" for those who endure, remaining faithful under trials and persecution. (Some have called this the martyr's crown.)
- 2 Timothy 4:7-8 refers to the "crown of righteousness" for those who loved the Lord's coming and lived holy lives in anticipation of His return.
- 1 Peter 5:4 promises the "crown of glory" to those who shepherd God's flock with faithfulness.
- Philippians 4:1 and 1 Thessalonians 2:19 refer to beloved believers that Paul calls his "crown of exultation (or rejoicing)."

All these crowns use the Greek word *stephanos*, which is the crown made of foliage and placed on the head of the victor of a competition.

But it can be made of precious metals as well. Rulers' crowns symbolize dominion and authority over people, and sure enough, God's rewards include dominion and authority:

Revelation 2:26—"He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations,

and he shall rule them with a rod of iron.” This goes along with one of the parables in Luke 19:17 where the master rewards the servant who was a faithful steward of his money; he says, “because you were faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.”

Revelation 2:17—In this book written to people undergoing persecution, Jesus promises, “To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name, written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.”

We can also lose our rewards (2 John 8), and it’s possible for someone to take our crown (Revelation 3:11). So, no wonder God calls us to be faithful and persevering all the way to the end!

I’m so glad you asked this, because I’ve heard people say, “If those who become Christians as small children end up in the same place (heaven) as those who trust Christ moments before they die, then why spend your whole life serving God?” That’s because they don’t understand that what happens at the Judgment Seat of Christ will be very, very different for these two people. Our lives in heaven will be determined by the choices, sacrifices, and actions of earth. Some will be very wealthy, and others will be “barely there.” 1 Corinthians 3:15 says that the deeds of some people will be burned up, and they will suffer loss; they will be saved, but only as those escaping through the flames. It will be like watching your house burn to the ground with every single thing you own in it. . . lost. On the other hand, lots of people will see their works shown for the high quality that they are, and they will be rewarded exceedingly well because God is so generous.

I hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin

Posted November 2001, Updated 2/19/2021

---

# “I Am So Afraid—What If There Is No Heaven?”

I am writing to you because I am very concerned and don't know where to turn for help. I am a Christian and have always felt I had a great deal of faith. I lost my father, my mother and an older sister over the years – and my faith sustained me during those traumatic times.

Recently our 38 year old daughter died quite suddenly. I am just overwhelmed with grief – and I believe the medications given her caused her sudden death. She had kidney problems – but her doctor was aware of that, and the med he gave her should not have been given to her because of her kidney problems.

Now I seem to have lost my faith completely. I cry and want so much to know she is OK and that she is not sad and lonely as we are here without her. I have begun to question if there really is a Heaven? I read recently that Heaven is something Christians invented to take away their fear of death. Is this true? I also read a book called *Embraced by the Light* by Betty Eadie, and it really upset me. She claimed to have had an out of body experience where she went to Heaven, and then she wrote a whole book about what heaven is like – and the different levels there, and how one may stay at a lower level, or advance to a higher level.

I am so afraid – what if there is no Heaven? Or if there is, is my daughter sad and lonely because none of her family are there with her? I just don't know anymore what to believe. I try to pray – but find no peace. I am so afraid.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am so very, very sorry to hear of your tremendous loss. You must be in such shock you don't know how to "do life" at this point.

As a mother who has also lost a daughter, I want to encourage you in how the Lord comforted me. Most especially, I am comforted by the truth of Psalm 139:16—"All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be."

\_\_\_\_\_, your daughter didn't live one day less than God intended for her to live from before the foundations of the earth. It FEELS like a premature death to us who are left behind, but no one is more powerful than God, and HE is the one who determines the length of our days. So even though it is hugely painful and grievous, and even though it's tempting to blame the medications, she died on the day God knew she would die and planned for her to die. Not a day sooner, and not a day later.

Secondly, Jesus said He came from heaven (John 6:51). It is a real place. If there is no heaven, then Jesus lied. If Jesus lied, then he was not the holy Son of God, and His death was meaningless. If His death was meaningless, then none of us have any hope. But our hope is REAL and TRUE! He died to make it possible for us to be united with God and reunited with our believing loved ones.

Paul said that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:6,8). If your daughter trusted Christ, she is immersed in a living sea of light and love and glory, worshiping the Lord Jesus and enjoying the freedom that comes from being released from this fallen, decaying world. When she "graduated" from your womb to your arms, did you ever worry that she was lonely for the comfort of the dark, warm place inside you? I bet not! <smile> She was in a far, far better place when she was born. When people are in heaven, it's like graduating from the womb to our mother's arms only way, WAY

better. Being with the Lord is so much better than this earth that we can't even begin to imagine it, any more than the pre-born infant can imagine what it's like to be nestled in her mother's arms, to look in her eyes, to see a glorious sunset, to listen to a symphony. To eat ice cream! To love and love back. . . all those things cannot be imagined in the womb, but they await the baby, just as the joys of heaven await us if we have trusted Christ as our Savior.

I want to suggest to you that you read Joni Eareckson Tada's wonderful book *Heaven*, because it will make you much more familiar with heaven and it will greatly comfort your heart. Unlike Betty Eadie's book [\*Embraced by the Light\*](#), Joni's book is TRUE and based completely on the Bible.

I pray you will know the warmth of God's comfort in growing measure as you grieve the loss of your daughter. One of the things that makes heaven so real to me is knowing that my daughter and my parents are there. I pray the realness of heaven will grow for you as well.

In His grip,

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

---

## **“Is God the Creator of Evil?”**

I would like to get some help with Isaiah 45:7, which says, “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.” (KJV) Is God the creator of evil? Can you recommend a good book on this?

God is not the creator of evil. Indeed, strictly speaking, evil is not a thing. It doesn't exist in its own right, but

only as a corruption or perversion of some good thing that God did create.

A better translation of this verse, given the context, is what you find at [www.netbible.org](http://www.netbible.org):

I am the one who forms light and creates darkness;  
the one who brings about peace and creates calamity.  
I am the Lord, who accomplishes all these things.

God is sovereign and nothing happens apart from His will (Ephesians 1:11; etc.). This includes calamities and disasters of every kind. Although God is not always the efficient cause of such calamities, He nonetheless allows them to occur in accordance with His sovereign purposes for the world. Almost any good exegetical or expositional commentary on this verse will deal with the difficulty you've noticed.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn  
Probe Ministries