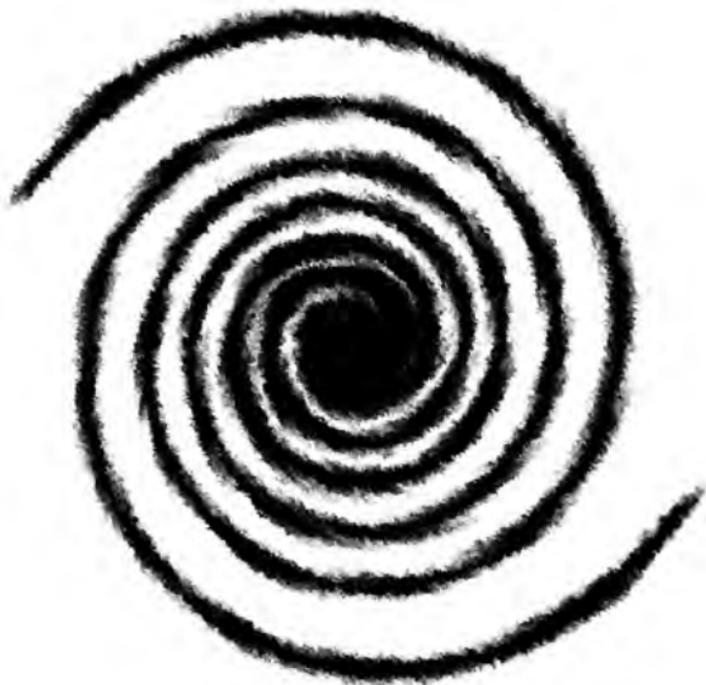

FREE

Nihilism



all things go to nothing?

Nihilism

all things go to nothing?

1. the general rejection of established social conventions and beliefs, especially of morality and religion
 2. a belief that life is pointless and human values are worthless
 3. the belief that there is no objective basis for truth
 4. the belief that all established authority is corrupt and must be destroyed in order to rebuild a just society
 5. *ni·hil·ism* or *Ni·hil·ism* a political movement in late 19th-century Russia that sought to bring about a just new society by destroying the existing one through acts of terrorism and assassination
-

Why are we (mankind) existing today? Or are we? Who really knows? Why are we going shopping in the malls today to buy clothes? To look pretty... impressive... but for whom, if we don't have a purpose for existing? Is that all there is to life?

Does anything matter anymore? Why should it, since we are all going to oblivion* anyway, going to nothingness? We are just a finite pee dab anyway, compared with the infinite but purposeless universe. Purposeless... except for maybe the sun and the moon to give light for our meaningless existence on this planet — the life that we pretend to not think about. "Eat, drink, and be merry,

for tomorrow we shall die," as someone said. But then what?

So what is the meaning for my life? Why was I born? Would it have been better if I had never been born? Should we all take on that slogan King Solomon came up with and pretend that



A Nihilist from 1880s Russia

oblivion — the state of being unaware of what is happening around oneself; the state of being forgotten; destruction or extinction.

that's all there is to life? Or as Peggy Lee sang, "If that's all there is, my friends, then let's keep dancing. Let's break out the booze and have a ball, if that's all there is..."

Why don't people of the world admit that life obviously has no meaning? Maybe they will admit it, but won't face up to its realization. But what can they do then? What is life, anyway? Could someone explain it for me, or define it? What's it for you? Can you please tell me? Why are people living? What are they all living for? They get sick and are about to die, and then they are put on some machine that keeps them breathing as long as possible. But what for? Why? What good do they do? Or what good will it do to just

keep on breathing a little longer, since their life has no meaning anyway? We're all going to die anyway, and after you die, it doesn't matter anyway... or does it? Then what?

What difference does it make whether we live a few breaths longer, or whether we die? What is death? Is it peace? No problems? No hurts? Is it oblivion? Is it really obvious (easily perceived or understood), or are we oblivious to the facts of life and death? What made it this way in the first place?

To keep things simple, maybe we should just take up the Latin slogan: *Ex Nihilo Nihil Fit* — "Out of nothing comes nothing; nothing is made from nothing."

So here we are, a finite

existentialism — a literary philosophic cult of nihilism and pessimism popularized in France after World War II by Jean-Paul Sartre. Each man exists as an individual in a purposeless universe and must oppose it by free will.

pragmatism — an approach that evaluates theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application.

pee dab, an insignificant speck of protoplasm pitched against the infinite extent of the universe, and we figured out that we, too, like the universe, are purposeless. Then what difference does it make if the sun by day and the moon by night lets us see? What can a blind man see anyway?

So should we show our finite existence by standing up and opposing this hostile environment through the exercise of our free will? Have we all become *existentialists*, persuaded that each of us exists in a meaningless life in a purposeless universe? What energy can we muster up to oppose this hostile world, as we see ourselves in a mirror?

What chain of causes and effects can cause me to change the world from the way everyone else has caused it to be? But I would not want to make it my way

either. What shall I do, then? How did we all get into this human predicament? Are we *existentialists** or *pragmatists**? Or shall we reject it all and become Nihilists?

Nihilism — in philosophy, the denial of the existence of any basis for knowledge or truth; the general rejection of customary beliefs in morality, religion, etc.

Political Nihilism — the thought that all social, political, and economic institutions must be completely destroyed in order to make way for a new institution, as the 1860-1917 revolution in Russia, which advocated such revolutionary reforms and attempted to carry it out through the use of terrorism and assassinations, as in militant Islam thought today.

The philosophy of Nihilism is based on pessimism — that man exists in a purposeless

world and that he must oppose it by the exercise of his free will.

The prophet laureate of the Nihilist movement is the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who in the end suffered a mental collapse and died an untimely death. Shall we then follow his course and likewise arrive at his destiny? Or does that thought scare you too much?

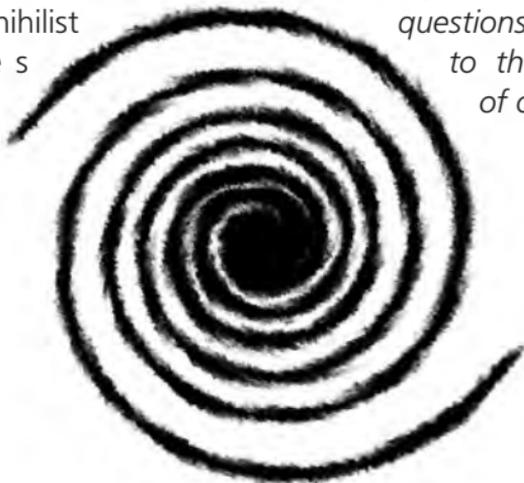
Nihilism is nothingness, the state of one who is nihilistic, which is characteristic of nihilism and nihilists.

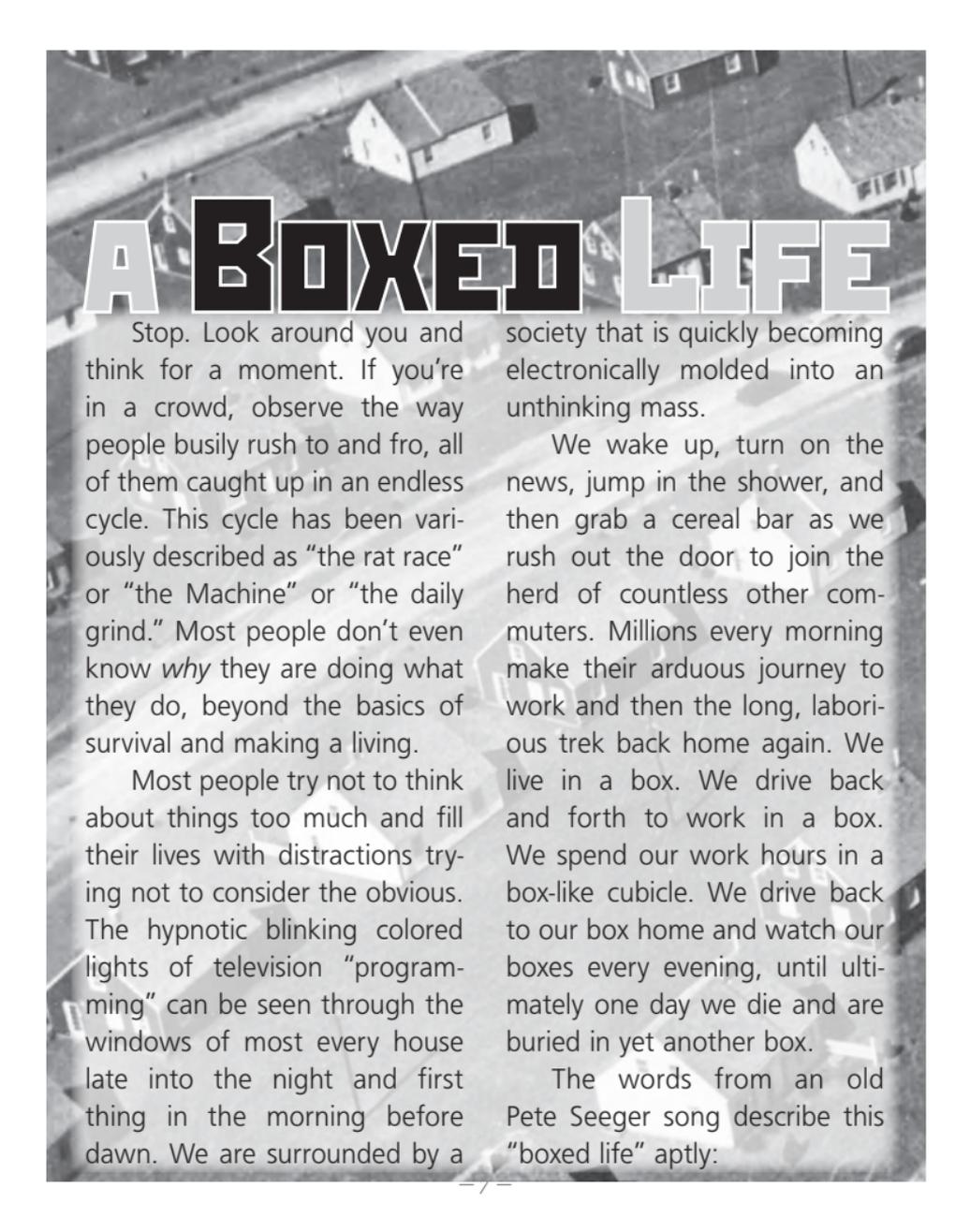
The nihilist believes (whether

he realizes it or not) that out of nothing comes nothing, and nothing is made from nothing, so all you see and hear is nothing at all, and you are nothing when you look at yourself in a mirror. (Man did not even come from a monkey.)

So where does that leave us?

These questions are deep and profound. Philosophers have pondered these matters for millennia with endless circles of reasoning. Join us now as we explore these deep questions pertaining to the meaning of our lives. ♦





A BOXED LIFE

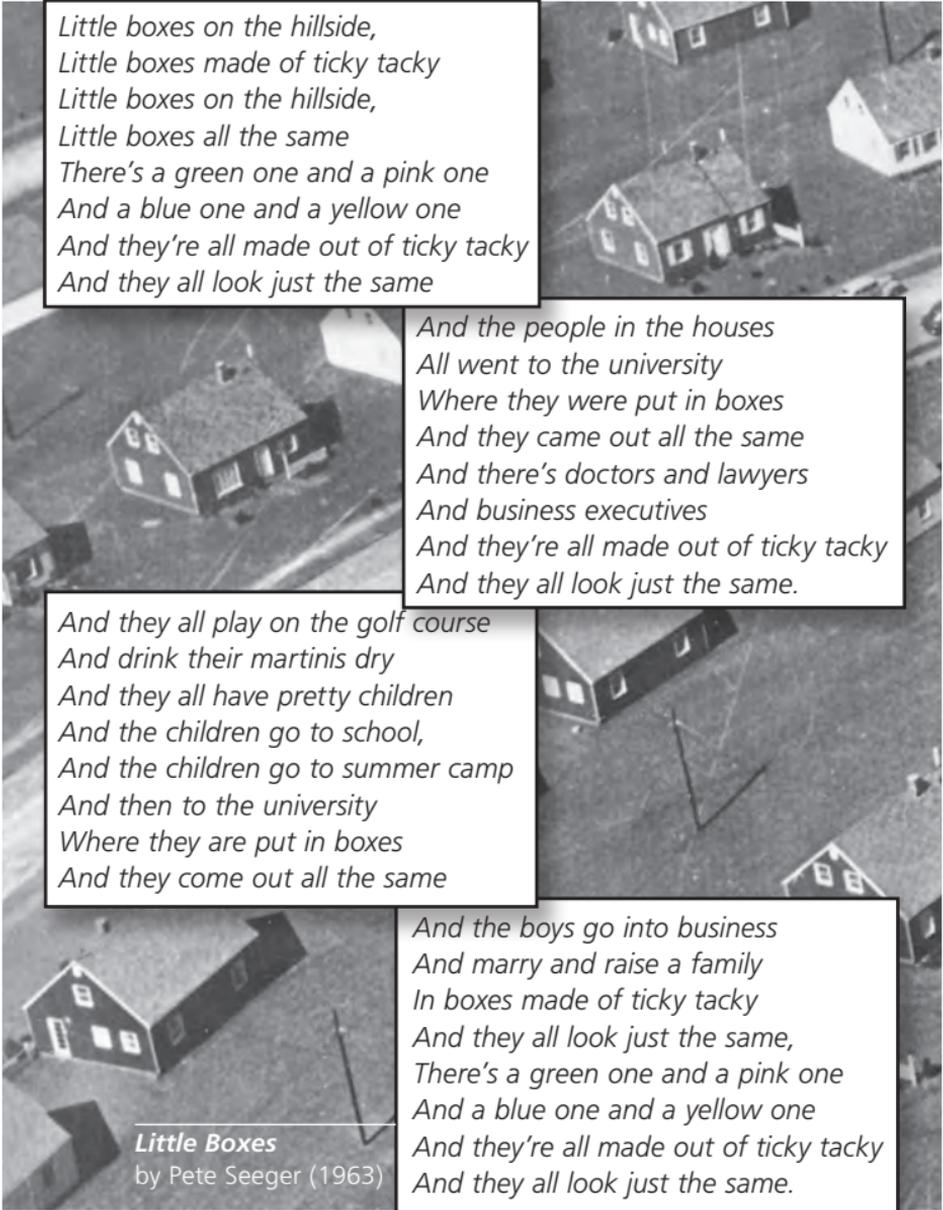
Stop. Look around you and think for a moment. If you're in a crowd, observe the way people busily rush to and fro, all of them caught up in an endless cycle. This cycle has been variously described as "the rat race" or "the Machine" or "the daily grind." Most people don't even know *why* they are doing what they do, beyond the basics of survival and making a living.

Most people try not to think about things too much and fill their lives with distractions trying not to consider the obvious. The hypnotic blinking colored lights of television "programming" can be seen through the windows of most every house late into the night and first thing in the morning before dawn. We are surrounded by a

society that is quickly becoming electronically molded into an unthinking mass.

We wake up, turn on the news, jump in the shower, and then grab a cereal bar as we rush out the door to join the herd of countless other commuters. Millions every morning make their arduous journey to work and then the long, laborious trek back home again. We live in a box. We drive back and forth to work in a box. We spend our work hours in a box-like cubicle. We drive back to our box home and watch our boxes every evening, until ultimately one day we die and are buried in yet another box.

The words from an old Pete Seeger song describe this "boxed life" aptly:



*Little boxes on the hillside,
Little boxes made of ticky tacky
Little boxes on the hillside,
Little boxes all the same
There's a green one and a pink one
And a blue one and a yellow one
And they're all made out of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same*

*And the people in the houses
All went to the university
Where they were put in boxes
And they came out all the same
And there's doctors and lawyers
And business executives
And they're all made out of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same.*

*And they all play on the golf course
And drink their martinis dry
And they all have pretty children
And the children go to school,
And the children go to summer camp
And then to the university
Where they are put in boxes
And they come out all the same*

*And the boys go into business
And marry and raise a family
In boxes made of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same,
There's a green one and a pink one
And a blue one and a yellow one
And they're all made out of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same.*

Little Boxes

by Pete Seeger (1963)

That song was written around 1963 during the post-WWII building spree as the babies were booming and suburban sprawl was taking root as *the* way of life for a growing majority of America. It was everyone's dream to own their own house – to have a little piece of land and have the freedom to drive into the city to work during the week. This trend was taking over most of the country and became notorious and garnered the label *sprawl* – yet this was just the symptom of a much larger problem. What was slowly being created more than ever before (not just limited to the housing market) was a cookie-cutter culture where people would think less and less about what they were living for and continue to chase after the elusive carrot dangling on a stick – monetary security and personal comfort.

Occasionally a prophet would come along and take

note of the meaningless societal treadmill that most of the Western world is running on. With passion they might point out the problems with laser accuracy. But then they die of a heroin overdose or fade into the memory of the gray or simply become numb themselves due to their success. It seems that nothing ever changes – all of the movements fizzle out. The world machine churns on with ever-increasing power, while few seem to notice.

So what good was our life on this planet? What good are we doing? What was the purpose for living our seventy-or-so years in all those boxes? In the end, the box contains our bones until who knows when, or until they turn back to dust along with the casket.

As the Bible says, you were made of dust, and to dust you shall return. But then what? What good is it to return to dust? When you're dead, you're dead. It doesn't matter how

long you lived. What good did you do for others who are going to die also? So why should you try to be good? How good will you be dead?

Many people — or a few anyway — have come to their senses and cried out, “*What am I living for? Why was I created? What am I doing here on earth? If I was created, where is my Creator? And who is He? God? I want to know. I want to know!*”

Only when one comes to the realization that the life he is living here on earth has no meaning, and he comes to the end of pretending, or trying to pretend that it does, will he ever know his purpose. Are we going to spend the rest of our lives trying to pretend that our life has eternal significance or consequences? And if it doesn't, then why are we living in the first place?

The truth is, the majority of people are not living up to their created potential. All of mankind

has been endowed with great worth and purpose — an original intended destiny of filling the universe with the likeness of the Creator, since human beings were made in His exact image. Humans were declared to be “exceedingly good,” the crowning achievement of all creation, and given the charge to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Yet we all know the story of how Adam and Eve fell from that original state and entered into an irrevocable contract with death.

You have such value and inherent worth as a human being. An eternal destiny awaits you, far beyond the finite peedab existence you settle for now. You can experience a foretaste of eternal life now in this age by following the true Prophet — Messiah Yahshua* (see page 42). We write this because we want you to know that it is possible to *break out of the box* and find true freedom.



SIGNIFYING NOTHING

*To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.*



Macbeth
by William Shakespeare,
Act V, Scene V

QUIET DESPERATION

One night very early on in his life, a young boy lay back on the rocky New England soil, contemplating the heavens, “looking through the stars to see if I could see God behind them.” This quest became one of the primary motivators of his life — one might say he never stopped looking into nature for the ultimate truth.

But what did Henry David Thoreau mean by his famous observation, “Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them”? In it, Thoreau recognized the deep spiritual truth expressed in Romans 8:26, that men have “groanings too deep for words.” Most everyone battles with inexpressible, deep inner struggles nearly impossible to voice. The song within is low and inarticulate, expressing

deeply felt yearnings. What is it they are desperate for? And why are they quiet about it — that is, if they are really and truly desperate?¹

Desperation is a state of despair or utter hopelessness — the abandonment of all hope. The recklessness that grows out of despair is a powerful motivator, affecting many people’s actions and life choices. The spirit of man yearns to know the purpose for his life.

“Man is an enigma to himself,”² but there is a common thread connecting all of mankind: God created each one of us with an empty hollow, a desperate neediness for our Creator so that we would seek for Him. If we are sensitive, this reveals our extreme and very great need for God. Man is desperately needy for God — just

¹ *desperate* — arising from or marked by despair or loss of hope; dangerously reckless or violent as from urgency or despair. ² Carl Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*

as our bodies need food, how much does our spirit need God? Food is only temporary, but God is eternal.

Many people live lives wasted on the temporary things, such as food, fun, or frivolity. They spend their lives seeking for what will satisfy for the moment — “whatever fills the gullet.” Others, more keenly aware of their inward groanings, look for deeper fulfillment which lies beyond the shallow façades presented on every side. The heartfelt song of man’s inner longing has persisted through the centuries and has been alluded to in the ancient writings:

I am benumbed and badly crushed; I groan because of the agitation of my heart. (Psalm 38:8)

Why, O LORD, do you reject me and hide your face from me? From my youth I have been afflicted and close to death; I have suffered your terrors and am in despair.

(Psalm 88:14,15)

Here, the psalmists speak not of their own isolated experiences, but one common to all men — experiencing the deep struggle of groping for God. The Creator hides Himself so that men will seek for Him (Isa 45:15). If that search is given up, how easy it is to fall into despair, and hopelessness sets in. “Why are you in despair, O my soul?” This refrain, often echoed in many men’s hearts, is repeated three times in the Psalms:

“Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.” (Psalms 42:5-6,11; 43:5)

To *despair* is to become destitute of hope. The complete abandonment of hope leaves the soul apathetic and numb, reaching a state of utter hopelessness. Having reached rock

bottom, you could care less — about everything. Perhaps you feel that your Creator doesn't give a damn about you. You may think He doesn't, but He really does. As a father to a son, His care and concern is not based on your own subjective feelings as the tides of life wash over your emotions.

So why are you in despair, O my soul? Perhaps the greatest cause of despair is having no purpose for one's life, no real or fixed goal, no resoluteness. Content to wander or meander through life, the mass of men lead lives focused on countless insipid amusements — all the while telling themselves they're having fun. To this end, Thoreau elaborated on his earlier statement:

"The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console your-

self with the bravery of minks and muskrats. A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things."

Thoreau wanted men to rethink their own lives, even as he spent his own life creatively rethinking his — always asking questions, always looking for greater intensity and meaning for life. In his statement, he crystallized the idea that each man must have the courage to live life to its fullest, and to stand against the mundane trends of his own time.

So what is your *raison d'être* — your reason for being, the purpose that justifies your own existence? Why are you alive and breathing? If you're not living to your fullest potential, but just taking up air, what's

the point? Are you alive on this green, grassy planet just to keep the lawn mowed? Or does God have more in mind for your life?

Is your desperate, hopeless condition confirmed? Are you resigned to your lot in life? Have you given up? Perhaps you've turned to booze and find your only consolation in a bottle. No one sees you shedding futile tears that fall in your darkened room, to no avail. Quiet desperation washes over you.

Death and the fear of its effects drive men to desperate, hopeless actions, yet they remain held in its inescapable clutches. They go to the grave, still singing the same song that ran through the course of their lives. The song in men's hearts goes a little something like this:

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are

*the words of my groaning.
(Psalm 22:1)*

These words were penned looking ahead to Messiah, yet do not refer merely to His cry during His physical suffering. Each man can also relate to the desperate groaning for deliverance from death. This is what it means to be a prisoner of death, living under its dark shadow:



For He looked down from His holy height; from heaven the LORD gazed upon the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to set free those who were doomed to death. (Psalm 102:19,20)

So what are you going to do now? What are you going to do with the rest of your life? If you give up your groaning — your earnest longing — what's left? If that's all there is to life, then let's keep dancing. Let's break out the booze and have a ball. If that's all there is, then eat drink

and be merry, for tomorrow you will die and go hell.³

I say that for the shock value, certainly. But it is for a good cause — perhaps it will rouse you from your passive slumber or slap you out of your stupor. You see, desperation also has a different meaning, one that requires action to be taken on your part:

Desperate — *desperately determined; showing extreme courage; especially of actions courageously undertaken in desperation as a last resort; showing extreme urgency or intensity especially because of great need or desire.*

If you're really and truly desperate, you should courageously undertake action as a last resort. Desperate times call for desperate measures, and desperate men will do just about anything. [In Latin: *extremis malis extrema remedia* — "extreme remedies for extreme ills."] How ill is the human soul, infected

with the disease of hopelessness that drives them to make the choices they do? We want you to know there is hope. He hears the cry of your heart and longs to set you free from the curse of death and its effects on your everyday life.

If you really have exhausted all hope, maybe you shouldn't be quiet about it. Maybe you should do something drastic due to your great need or desire. Maybe you should run out to the woods or look up in the heavens tonight and cry out with all your guts to the One who made you and can save you from the miserable condition of your life. Scream, pray, cry out for Him to show you the purpose He made you for. If you do, you won't be disappointed. He will hear your desperate cry and answer you. He will bring you home, to the only place you will be satisfied. ♦

*"The only despair is man unexpressed."**

³ Isaiah 22:13 *poet Gerrit Kouwenaar



IS THAT ALL THERE IS?

*Why am I alive? What's the purpose for my life?
Why are there so many questions and so few answers?
What happens when we die? Is this all there is to life?
Is that all there is?*

MAYBE YOU REMEMBER the famous, Grammy-winning song *Is That All There Is?* recorded in 1969 by Peggy Lee. It's poignant, melancholy refrain strikes a chord deep in the heart of human beings, voicing the burning questions that echo through our minds as we live our lives searching for meaning and fulfillment:

Is That All There Is?

spoken:

*I remember when I was a very little girl,
our house caught on fire.*

*I'll never forget the look on my father's face
as he gathered me up in his arms
and raced through the burning building out
to the pavement.*

*I stood there shivering in my pajamas and
watched the whole world go up in flames.*

And when it was all over

I said to myself,

"Is that all there is to a fire?"

Is that all there is?"

sung:

Is that all there is,

If that's all there is my friends,

then let's keep dancing

Let's break out the booze and have a ball

If that's all there is

Many of us have experienced some tragic circumstance at one time or another in our lives — some great and some small. The woman in the song describes the personal tragedy of her house burning to the ground.

Perhaps your dog, your best friend, ran away and got run over by a car. Perhaps your parents divorced, shattering your little existence, leaving you wondering if it was your fault. Your parents

were everything to you in your younger years. They were your pillars, your security. They were like God to you, so when they separated, it seemed as if God didn't give a damn about you. You felt abandoned, orphaned — alone.

Most people have faced

devastating personal tragedies and undergone great personal pain, but quite a few have also experienced large-scale misfortune — natural disasters on a catastrophic scale. Raging forest fires sweeping across the countryside, burning



homes, farms, and ranches to the ground, leaving families homeless and destitute. Massive earthquakes destroying entire overpopulated cities in third world countries, leaving survivors

to extract the corpses of their loved ones from the rubble. Or even the recent tsunami, reckoned by many to be one of the worst tragedies of all time, taking the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in southeast Asia. The waters, which had been their source

of food and livelihood, turned on them and became a means of destruction, washing away entire shorefront villages. The death toll piles up in its wake as the waters recede back out to sea.

At times such as these, in the face of great heartbreak and pain, many cry out to God, wondering why He would let such things happen. Some even blame Him for the devastation. If He's the all-powerful one, how could He

be so heartless as to not stop such misery from coming upon them? Does He really see all these things going on and not do anything about it? If that is the case, *why?* "How come You do nothing about it when You see it all happening before Your eyes? Why?!" we scream at a God who doesn't seem to exist in our little hostile world.

How many little girls are left there shivering (not from the cold), wondering, "Is that all there is to a fire?"

spoken:

*And when I was 12 years old,
my daddy took me to a circus,
the greatest show on earth.*

*There were clowns and elephants and dancing bears.
And a beautiful lady in pink tights flew high
above our heads.*

*And so I sat there watching the marvelous spectacle.
I had the feeling that something was missing.*

*I don't know what, but when it was over,
I said to myself, "Is that all there is to the circus?
Is that all there is?"*

Some fritter* away their lives chasing after petty amusements, looking for some relief to the emptiness and pain. A circus or carnival is a good example of this. The bright lights and colorful amusements wherever one turns, with loud, cheerful music blaring from every corner, all blur together into a garish mosaic designed to distract people from their miserable lives.



For a brief moment, reality is held in suspension, kept at bay as the crowds whoop and holler with gleeful abandonment.

I have a friend who worked at a carnival for a little while. He did well and the promoter of that little “vanity fair” wanted to make

him his second-in-command. Yet it was at that time, as things were looking up and he had hopes of “making it” and becoming successful, that all the futility of the world pressed in upon him. As he walked down the midway, all of the petty amusements — food, fun, and frivolity — seemed to be closing in on him. As the barkers called, h a w k i n g their fleshly

amusements, he could feel his head swimming. He felt dizzy, disoriented — his whole world closed in on him. Gravity seemed twice as great upon his shoulders — it was as if a great hand were pressing him down. He collapsed onto a bench in the middle of all the colorful lights and the

*fritter — wasting time, energy, money on trifling matters

hubbub of the crowd. He buried his face in his hands, weeping over the condition of his life and the state of the human beings all around him. Everything seemed to be just a pale shadow, a hollow, empty husk of what life in its fullness was meant to be.

Then, in the midst of it all, God spoke to him.

No, it wasn't some thunderous voice booming from the sky, nor was it an apparition enshrouded in brilliant, blinding light. Instead, it was a still, small voice in the recesses of his heart, echoing through his mind and burning into his consciousness.

"Is this what I created you for?"

A simple question, but one that strikes at the very meaning of our human

existence. Does what we're doing justify our time spent on this green, grassy planet? Or are we wasting our time, just taking up air and only keeping the grass mowed? If we're not doing what we were created for, why are we breathing anyway? When the amusement is all over and the Fat Lady sings,



and the show packs up and hits the road, leaving a pile of litter in its wake, will we be left wondering,

"Is that all there is to a circus?"

"I said to myself, 'Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself.' And behold, it too was futility. I said of laughter, 'It is madness,' and of pleasure, 'What does it accomplish?'"

(Ecclesiastes 2:1-2)

sung:

*Is that all there is,
is that all there is
If that's all there is my
friends, then let's keep
dancing*

*Let's break out the
booze and have a ball
If that's all there is*

I walked downtown the other night. It was a Saturday night and all the bars were full. I looked through the plate glass windows. Inside, the dim, smoke-filled atmosphere was crowded with laughing people, drinking to escape their sorrows. The alcohol freed them from their inhibitions, releasing



them to be the person they always wished they could be. They could sing, dance, be funny, or the life of the party. Booze was their ticket to friendship and popularity. Yet when they woke up the next morning with a splitting headache from a terrible hangover, where have they gotten themselves? At least they could temporarily forget their troubles.

*"Let's break out the
booze and have a ball..."*

*"Give strong drink to
him who is perishing and
wine to him whose life is
bitter. Let
him drink
and forget
his poverty
and
remember
his trouble
no more."*

(Proverbs
31:6-7)

spoken:

*Then I fell in love with the most wonderful boy
in the world.*

*We would take long walks by the river
or just sit for hours gazing into each other's eyes.*

We were so very much in love.

*Then one day he went away and
I thought I'd die, but I didn't,
and when I didn't I said to myself,
"Is that all there is to love?"*

Some look to love for fulfillment. Women can invest all their hopes and dreams into finding their "Prince Charming," the one who will sweep them off their feet and together will ride off into the blissful sunset. They look toward the day when the happy plastic bride and groom atop a tiered wedding cake will represent themselves. They have bridal magazines on their



dresser, daydreaming of that day when complete happiness will be theirs, as all the bridesmaids look on in envy.

"We would take long walks by the river or just sit for hours gazing into each other's eyes. We were so very much in love."

There are some men who know full well that this works deep in the female psyche and prey upon such women, going from one to the

next. Such predators wreck women's lives and emotions, leaving them abandoned — pregnant and emotionally devastated.



die... but I didn't"

But maybe you wish you had. And maybe the child in your womb will wish he had

never been born, too.

"One day he went away... and I thought I'd

"Is that all there is to love?"

spoken:

*I know what you must be saying to yourselves,
if that's the way she feels about it
why doesn't she just end it all?*

*Oh, no, not me. I'm in no hurry for that final disappointment,
for I know just as well as I'm standing here talking to you,
when that final moment comes and
I'm breathing my last breath,
I'll be saying to myself*

sung:

*Is that all there is, is that all there is
If that's all there is my friends, then let's keep dancing
Let's break out the booze and have a ball
If that's all there is*

So why not end it all? Why not take a gun to your head and blow your brains out? Too messy? Well, a rope's pretty cheap and there's not much mess. But maybe it'd be simpler to pop a few pills and just fall asleep, drifting off to a final sublime unconsciousness.

So what holds you back? Like the woman in the song, is it the fear of the unknown? Fear that on the other side is just one final disappointment after a lifetime of disappointments? What is *death*? Is it peace — a place of no problems, no hurts? Is it oblivion*? Or is it torment — weeping and gnashing of teeth? Maybe that's why death is so feared and people will do just about anything to avoid its sting.

"Oh, no, not me. I'm in no hurry for that final disappointment..."

"But man dies and lies prostrate. Man expires, and where is he? As water evaporates from the sea, and a river becomes parched and dried up, so man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens be no more, he will not awake nor be roused out of his sleep. Oh that You would hide me in Death, that You would conceal me until Your wrath returns to You, that You would set a limit for me and remember me! If a man dies, will he live again?" (Job 14:10-14)

Is that all there is? That question echoes through most people's minds at one time or another in their lives — if they're not too sedated or distracted by the myriad of petty amusements that daily assault our senses. Is what

**oblivion* — the state of being unaware of what is happening around oneself; the state of being forgotten; destruction or extinction.

keeps us going merely a carrot being constantly dangled in front of us — enticing us onward — that one more amusement, one more relationship, or one more spiritual quest will lead us to the ultimate answer to life.

Is that all there is? Is that all there is to life? If so, then let's keep on dancing. Let's break out the booze and have a ball, if that's all

there is. For what difference does it make? This question is not new. It stretches back to the time of the ancient prophets (and still further back):

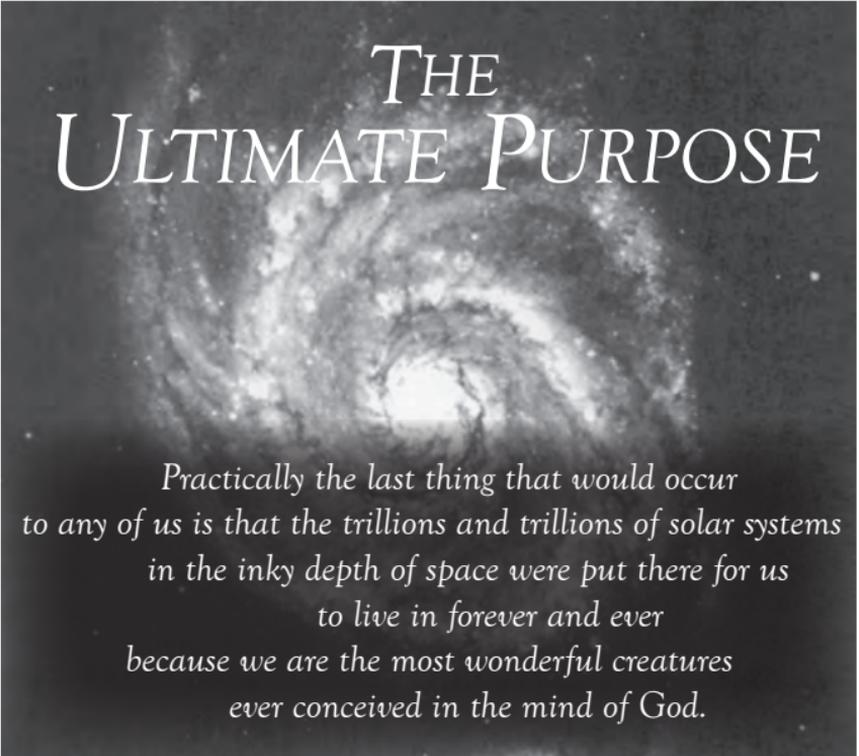
But instead, you dance



and play ...you feast on meat, and drink wine. "Let's eat, drink, and be merry," you say. "What's the difference, for tomorrow we die." (Isaiah 22:13, NLT)

If you're seeking for self-fulfillment, you're certain to come up empty. The greatest fulfillment, the greatest satisfaction is to live for *others* rather than for yourself.

Such fulfillment is lasting and doesn't fade away, but it costs everything to obtain it. If that is the song your heart yearns to sing, you're invited to partake of what's been missing — the rest of *what there is*. ♦



THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE

*Practically the last thing that would occur
to any of us is that the trillions and trillions of solar systems
in the inky depth of space were put there for us
to live in forever and ever
because we are the most wonderful creatures
ever conceived in the mind of God.*

I WAS PRETTY DULL TO THE UNIVERSE before that night as I lay on my back in the middle of the tennis courts on campus. I had always thought of the stars as points of light in something called the sky that hung over my head all the time. Every once in a while I noticed that they were up there, and maybe I was glad they were pretty. But that night I changed my point of view. Spread-eagle on a patch of grass, somehow clinging to this thing called earth, I felt myself suspended over a vast, deep darkness. I imagined myself falling into it, if the earth ever let go of me, and thought about how

far I would fall. I got the sense that some of the stars were closer than others. I imagined that I would fall past these stars first, and then others, and then others, and then others, and then others... In my mind, the stars rushed past me in the blackness like snowflakes under a streetlight.

The experience only lasted a few minutes, but the impression stayed with me forever. And I'm really grateful the earth didn't let go of me that night and drop me into space. I can't imagine how lonely I'd be right now if it had.

The universe is so enormous, people tell me, that just about the only thing that can travel through it is light. And light moves really fast. Someone said that if a hunter had a rifle capable of firing a bullet that traveled at the speed of light, and if that bullet would follow the curvature of the earth once he

fired it, then when that hunter missed a deer the bullet would pass by the deer, circle the earth, and go by the animal again seven times before it had time to react.

Traveling at this tremendous speed, it still takes four and a half years for the light of the closest star to reach earth. Scientists say it is 26 trillion miles away, whatever that means.

Anyway, both our own solar system and that nearest star are part of the Milky Way galaxy. I've been told that when we look up at night and see the Milky Way, we are on the edge of our own galaxy, looking in. And if we were able to travel at the speed of light, it would take us a thousand years to get to the other edge of it. And that's just our own galaxy, one of the innumerable galaxies in the universe. If we tried to reach the nearest other galaxy, it would take us two

million years, traveling at the speed of light.

Man dreams of space travel. I grew up reading books about it. But when you consider how vast the universe is, it is really sobering. I mean, really, how much space travel can man accomplish in his short life span with his little putt-putt rockets?

The most powerful instruments that man has invented to probe the edges of the universe have detected things called *quasars*. They are incomprehensibly far away and, scientists tell us, are moving farther and faster all the time. Nobody really knows where these most distant objects are. We are only able to detect where they were when the energy that is now reaching us left them, countless ages ago.

So here we are, clinging to our warm, grassy planet in the suburbs of the Milky Way in an endlessly expanding universe,

some of us wondering what we're here for, and others of us just trying to keep the grass mowed. Practically the last thing that would occur to any of us is that the trillions and trillions of solar systems in the inky depths of space were put there for us to live in forever and ever because we are the most wonderful creatures ever conceived of in the mind of God.

One time, when I was little, I watched a science fiction movie about flying saucers that hovered over the earth and destroyed cities with beams of radiation. My mind fired with visions of space invaders, I took my magnifying glass out in the back yard and ruthlessly attacked an ant hill, frying the helpless little insects with concentrated sunlight.

After I carried out my fantasy, I got sick at heart over the senseless destruction I was responsible for. I was too little to think up excuses

or justifications for what I had done. But I wasn't too little to know that there was something horribly wrong with me.

Growing up didn't make things any better. Instead of hurting ants when I carried out my fantasies, I began hurting people. And not only that, they started hurting me. Some people said it was just normal that we acted this way, but their psychological views didn't stop the ache inside. I know that nothing I could do would make up for the hurt and the destruction I was responsible for.

So it is no wonder that I never considered the universe being filled with people like me. I hardly ever considered the universe, period. You start thinking about the universe and pretty soon you start wondering about your purpose in it. You start thinking about how small you are and how big it is, and where it came

from, and where you're going. You think about how long the stars have been around and how much longer you're going to be around. And then you start considering your life and how you've lived it, and it's amazing how all the things you're ashamed of start popping up.

I could never forget them – from the ants in the backyard, to the stupid comment I made in fifth grade, to that relationship in high school... all the lies, the greed, the unfaithfulness, the unkindness, the selfishness... I could justify, deny, ignore, rationalize, and avoid thinking about them, but I could never forget.

Something always reminded me. I would try my best to be kind, and I hung around some pretty kind people, but something would always come up – the bottom line, the limit of my love, the place where self always took over... *always*.

I hated it, but I was stuck with it. Everyone I knew was stuck with it. And a lot of people I knew settled for it. But I couldn't buy the psychological garbage that tried to make *self* acceptable or even desirable. I knew better. All human misery came from self. It is like poison in our veins. Self is the *opposite* of love, and even though what we wanted was true love, what we had was *self-love*. We were stuck with it, and we were powerless to do anything about it.

The only thing we could do was try to escape thinking about it — get stoned, get busy, or get into one more fantasy. The song said, "We are starlight, we are golden, and we've got to get ourselves back to the Garden." It felt good to sing it; it felt good to think that way; but we didn't have the slightest idea *how* to get ourselves back to the Garden. It was just another

fantasy.

I had a longing in me for the Garden. I think we all did. It is deep in human beings — just like knowing how to smile. You don't have to practice smiling in front of a mirror to get it right. And you don't have to study the ancient scriptures to sense the loss of what man had in the Garden.

Man, male and female, was created and placed on this planet as the highest and most magnificent of all creatures in the universe. In fact, he was made in the exact likeness of his Creator, and he lived in total dependence on his Maker for every thing. He needed God like a child needs his father. He didn't know what to say or do without receiving it from his Source. There were no barriers between the Creator and his creatures, and so there was also peace between the man and the woman.

There was true love. The woman trusted the man and loved him so much that all she wanted to do was support him and submit to his direction. The man cherished the woman and cared for her with absolute love and wisdom, directly guided by the One who created them both.

They were placed in a garden, a paradise called Eden full of every good tree and every good fruit. There was only one tree there of which they could not eat – and their Source warned them that eating from it would result in their death.

Of course, they had no idea what death was like. We barely understand what death is today. All they knew is that they were to have children and expand the borders of Eden until it filled the entire planet. And then what? There was a tree in the garden which had the power to give them everlasting life. If they ate

from that tree and continued having children, eventually the planet would fill up with immortal human beings.

Of course, they couldn't all stay here. But in the heavens there were countless solar systems and planets. Eventually the universe would start filling up with creatures who perfectly expressed the character and nature of their Source. And Divine nature, which is spirit and therefore invisible, would be able to be seen through human nature, which is both spiritual and physical.

But our Source had an enemy. One of the most powerful angelic rulers in the universe – a spiritual creature so intelligent and mighty that we can scarcely comprehend him – had a fantasy that he wanted to carry out. The prophet Isaiah described that fantasy: "You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will

set my throne on high; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.”

This angelic ruler was not content to exercise his authority *under* his Creator. He wanted to usurp the authority of God altogether. He was bringing rebellion into the universe.

The eternal, uncreated, all-powerful God would have had no problem in destroying his enemy the moment he conceived his first evil thought. But our Source did not desire to prove who was the stronger. He had a plan by which the creature, man, would expose the evil nature of the enemy and subdue him. Thus a created being would deal with the rebellion of a created being. Just as man was to subdue the earth and rule over it, so he would subdue and rule over the enemy. And the way he would carry out this

most important task was through his relationship with his Creator, by trusting and depending entirely on him.

But the enemy is a genius. Taking possession of a serpent, he transformed its appearance into something fabulous and intriguing and approached the woman in this form. His attack was aimed at her trust, persuading her that her Creator’s intention towards her was not kind and good. If she ate from the forbidden trees said the serpent, she would not die, but rather become equal to God. And that was why, he suggested, God had commanded them not to eat of it.

She was completely deceived by his slander, ate from the tree, and offered some to her husband. But he was not deceived.

It’s hard to imagine what the man went through that day. He knew for certain that his wife was cut off from

him, in rebellion against their Source, headed for death. All hope of doing what they were created to do was gone. Without the woman, there would be no children, no subduing of the earth, no ruling over the enemy, no filling the universe. The horrible reality of division had suddenly appeared in paradise. The glory was gone. The wonderful, intimate, trusting relationship between man and woman had disintegrated. The woman would be going to death — alone. The man would be left behind in an empty paradise — alone.

Impulsively, without depending on his Source for direction, he took the fruit from the woman. Fully knowing the consequences, yet unwilling to be separated from his wife, he ate, and plunged himself into rebellion and death with her. It was the greatest act of natural love the world has ever seen.

From that moment on, the entire human race was doomed. Man had chosen to obey the enemy, making himself and all his seed slaves to the evil that was now inside of them. Just as the seed of a thorn bush cannot produce grapes, so the seed of fallen man could only produce human beings enslaved to the enemy. Humanity, created in the likeness of divine nature, had taken on the enemy as their source. The earth, given to man to rule, now lay under the domain of the evil one. And every person from that time on was doomed to disobey the Creator and wind up going to death.

Death — if we really knew what it was, we'd do anything to avoid it. The horrifying loneliness of being cut off... our imaginations can't even grasp it. No eyes to look through, no ears to hear with, no hands to reach out and touch anyone else who's

not even there. No smell and no taste — nothing to distract the mind from dwelling on all the things you're ashamed of. No justifications, now, and no psychological arguments to explain away your unkindness, your selfish deeds, and all the hurt you caused, and all the time you wasted, and how you missed out on what you were created for... And when all this horror gets over with, there's still a judgment to undergo to see if you can escape the *second* death — the one that goes on forever and ever.

It's easy to talk about death when we're not facing it. And it's hard to understand from a distance. But those who come close can sense the horror. It's amazing what a person would do to live one more minute — the compromise he would give himself to when the dread of death comes upon him. They say that some of the people in Nazi concentration camps would offer to help

with the exterminations, just to prolong their own lives one more minute.

It's hard to understand how, in spite of the ugliness inside of us, our Creator still loves us. When the man and woman gave themselves over to the enemy and totally wrecked their Maker's plans for eternity, he did not react to them in wrath, but in compassion. The fact that men would die did not please our Maker. He wanted to provide a way out of death for them and all men. And though he told them what the consequences of their deeds would be — how the ground would be cursed, how childbirth would be painful — he also promised that the "seed of the woman" would crush the head of the serpent. And, before he exiled them from the garden, he tenderly took the skin of an animal (probably a lamb) and fashioned garments for the man and the woman to shield

their naked bodies from the harsh environment they were going to have to live in.

Thousands of years passed and we human beings continued in our predicament. To the logical mind, the situation seemed hopeless. God had promised that a human being would crush the head of the serpent, but all human beings were born under the dominion of the enemy, helpless to cast off their bondage to *self*, for it was part of their very nature since birth. And even though many of them hated the corruption inside them and struggled against it, they were unable to have total victory and to cast off the rule of the evil one.

Then it happened. The divine Spirit came upon a woman — a virtuous, pure Hebrew maiden named Miriam — and a child was conceived in her womb. This was not just another human being from

the fallen seed of man. This human being was conceived from an unfallen human seed, provided by the same Creator who had created the first man in his unfallen state. In fact, the Apostle Paul called him the “second man” or “last Adam.”¹ And just as Adam,² he also was called the Son of God.

So he was born of a woman, but not of fallen seed of man, that he could fulfill the promise that “the seed of the woman” would crush the serpent’s head.

In this little baby the eternal Word of God took up residence in human flesh.³ He was not born under bondage to the enemy. He did not have the corrupt nature inherent in man’s seed. He was the beginning of a new race of man, a new creation. By the great, unfathomable wisdom of God, there was once again hope that man could do what

¹ 1 Cor. 15:45-47 ² Luke 3:38

he was created to do.

The name of this man was Yahshua,* and his primary purpose in life was to die. He lived a perfect, selfless life, completely obedient to his Source. He proved to be a true Son, never even having one *thought* independent from his Father's will. And his purpose in living a perfect life was mainly that he could take our place in death. If he had disobeyed even once, he would have gone to death for his own rebellion. But since he was not born into rebellion and never once gave in to the schemes of the enemy, he was able to be a substitute for us all. Despite intense pressure to compromise, despite mockings, beatings, betrayal, and even death itself, he never once acted independently from his Source. Where the first man failed, the second man, Yahshua, succeeded.

The enemy, in his desperate attempt to get him to disobey

or in any way violate his submission to his Source, made one fatal mistake. He killed him. Yahshua was an *innocent* man, not even born under the enemy's rule like the rest of humanity, and so the evil one had no right to put him to death. It was murder. The enemy now has been judged, and all his legal rights to authority over mankind have been stripped from him.

Now, any person who wishes can escape the control of the ruler of this world by coming under the authority of Yahshua. The enemy no longer has any power to make people disobey their Creator. Freedom is available to anyone who trusts in Yahshua. The only way the enemy can keep people under his sway is by lying to them.

Yahshua has brought judgment to the ruler of this world. The enemy has been sentenced to eternal torment in a lake which burns with fire

and sulfur, and is awaiting execution. But Yahshua didn't come to judge the human beings. He came to rescue us. And so the one who trusts him is not judged, but will escape the judgment that awaits all mankind.

When Yahshua returned from death, he demonstrated that the power of the enemy was broken forever. When he died, he died as a substitute for all. And when he was raised from death, he showed that death had no more sting. All those who were held captive through the fear of death to do the will of the enemy could now be released. All mankind was now free from bondage to *self*. Anyone, no matter

how wretched and shameful his life had been, could now be forgiven and enter into Yahshua's realm and escape the realm of darkness and death.

The great tragedy, however, is that many people — *most* people in fact — will not trust in Yahshua or believe in his victory over death. They will not follow Yahshua, but will continue to follow a loser. In fact, some of the evil one's most avid followers are those who deny his existence. And all those who follow the evil one will end up where he is. This is the tragic part, for our loving, kind, patient, and generous Creator never intended for human beings to

³ John 1:14 * **Yahshua** is the Hebrew name of the Son of God. It is what his father Yoceph (Joseph) and his mother Miriam (Mary) called him when he was born, as recorded in Luke 1:31 and Matthew 1:21. The footnote for this verse in the NIV New Testament reads: *Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua*. In Hebrew, as in old English, there is no "J" sound, and the name is more accurately rendered *Yahshua*. It means "I am powerful to save," since it is constructed from *Yah*, the name of the Father (as in *Hallelujah*, meaning "Praise Yah"), which means "I AM," and *shua*, which means "power and authority to save." We call him *Yahshua* because that is truly his name.



Eternity is a long time. If a little bird were to take a grain of sand in its beak from the shore of the ocean and somehow manage to fly it to the furthest quasar in the universe, and if it returned and repeated the process until all the sands of the seas and oceans were gone, eternity would just be beginning.

suffer eternal torment along with the evil one. In fact, he even sent his Son to take our place in death so that we wouldn't have to experience death of any kind.

Eternity is a long time. If a little bird were to take a grain of sand in its beak from the seashore and somehow manage to fly it to the farthest

quasar in the universe, and if it returned and repeated the process until all the sand of the oceans, both from their beaches and bottoms, were gone, eternity would just be beginning.

Yahshua has made it possible for the original purpose in creating man to be fulfilled. Divinity took on humanity in Yahshua, even taking our place in death, in order that we human beings could be forgiven and cleansed of our corruption and take on Divinity.

Those who love and trust in Yahshua will obey him and follow him and the Divine Spirit will come to them and dwell eternally in their spirits. Not only are human beings restored to the exact likeness

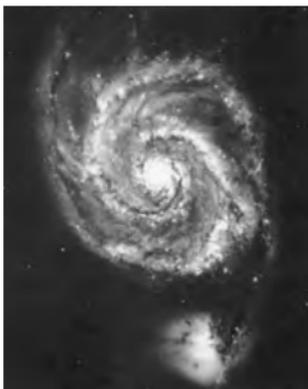
of their Creator, but he even takes up permanent residence within them, so that they can fully and perfectly represent him throughout eternity.

In this age, we who are disciples are being changed on the inside to become completely like Yahshua. This is accomplished through the closeness of living together in communities as parts of a tribe of Israel. Through our love and unity the God of peace will crush the Enemy under our feet. At that time, Yahshua — who is waiting for us in the universe — will return for us and our mortal, flesh-and-blood bodies will be changed to be like his immortal body. Every tear will be wiped away. Sorrow, pain, and death will be no more.

Finally, all who have waited in death will be

raised to life again and will be judged, according to what they have done. Many of these will, in the mercy of our Creator, be allowed to live. And the universe itself will be changed — so that immortal man can inhabit an immortal universe, one in which the stars no longer blow up or collapse in on themselves.

How long ago do you think that God first conceived of man? The answer is that man has *always* been conceived in the mind of God, according to his *eternal* purpose. There was never a time when he didn't think of you, even though he has waited until now to bring you into existence. But his kind intention towards you is that you would carry out his ultimate purpose. This is the purpose that we have left behind everything to be a part of. ◆



THE NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES

In the days of John the Baptist and the Son of God, the preserved language of the devout Jews in the land of Palestine was Hebrew. So, when the angel Gabriel brought the good news to the Hebrew virgin, Miriam (or *Mary* in English), that she would give birth to the Savior of the world, and told her what His name would be, what language do you suppose he spoke? Hebrew, of course! And certainly Miriam and Yoceph (or *Joseph* in English) named the child just as the angel had commanded them — *Yahshua*.

In Matthew 1:21, your Bible probably reads, "...and you shall call His name *Jesus*, for He will save His people from their sins." But the name *Jesus* is a modern English adaptation of the Greek name, *Iesous*, which is itself a corruption of the original Hebrew name *Yahshua*.

The name *Jesus* or *Iesous* has no meaning of its own, but the Hebrew name *Yahshua* literally means *Yahweh's Salvation*,¹ which makes sense out of what the angel said in Matthew 1:21, "...you shall call His name *Yahshua* [Yahweh's Salvation], for He shall save His people from their sins."

If you look in an old King James Bible, you will find the name *Jesus* in these two passages:

*Which also our fathers that came after brought in with **Jesus** into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David... (Acts 7:45, KJV)*

*For if **Jesus** had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. (Heb 4:8, KJV)*

However, if you look in any modern Bible, including more recently printed King James Bibles, you will find that in place of the name *Jesus* they use the name *Joshua*, for in the context it is clear that it is speaking there of Moses' successor and not the Son of God. But in the Greek manuscript the name in both of these verses is *Iesous*.

You see, *Joshua* is the popular English transliteration of the Hebrew name *Yahshua*. Joshua of the Old Testament had the same name as the One called *Jesus* in the New Testament, for Joshua was the prophetic forerunner of the Son of God, bringing Israel into the Promised Land and leading them to victory over their enemies. But since the translators obviously know this fact, why do they only translate *Iesous* as *Joshua* in these two verses, and as *Jesus* everywhere else?

In Matthew 1:21 the NIV New Testament notes "*Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua.*"

The fact is, the name of God's Son was not even

pronounced as "Jesus" in English until the 16th century, simply because there was no "J" sound or letter in English until then.² The modern letter "J" developed from the letter "I" which began to be written with a "tail" when it appeared as the first letter in a word. So in old English the name now written as *Jesus* was actually written and pronounced much like the original Greek *Iesous*. Eventually the hard "J" sound crept into the English language to accompany the different way of writing the initial "I" in the name.

You may also find it interesting that in Acts 26:14-15, it says that the apostle Paul heard the name of the Son of God pronounced "in the Hebrew tongue" by the Son of God Himself, so he certainly didn't hear the Greek name *Iesous* or the English name *Jesus*, but rather the Hebrew name, the name above all names, *Yahshua*.³

Wouldn't it be better to call the Son of God, the Savior, by His true name — *Yahshua*? 🙏

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*What's the purpose for my life now...
Where does love and peace abound?*



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