

What Hope Does Christianity Offer This World?

We are living in an age when most people, because of worldwide circumstances and too often personal problems, are pessimistic about the future.

There have always been pessimists but now there is a general feeling of hopelessness.

To try and blot these thoughts out of their minds most are turning to seeking personal pleasures, even using alcohol and drugs to blot out the thoughts of a hopeless future.

This is especially prevalent in young people who face a bleak future as far as employment is concerned.

With the advent of tactical nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists and countries supporting them fear is engulfing our planet.

Where does the heart of these seemingly unsolvable problems lie?

Note the following quotes:-

Modern man in search of a soul – by Carl Jung

“It is becoming more and more obvious that it is not starvation, not microbes, not cancer or AIDS, but man himself who is mankind’s greatest danger.”

Albert Einstein – *“The real problem is in the hearts and minds of men. It is not a problem of physics but ethics. It is easier to denature [change the nature] of plutonium than to denature the evil spirit of man.”*

Life against death – by Norman O. Brown

“Today, even the survival of humanity is a utopian hope.”

The step to man – by John Rader Platt

“The world has now become too dangerous for anything less than utopia.”

This problem of lack of hope and ignorance as to the very meaning of life is **not** unique to our generation.

For a large segment of the population this life is all there is, with no hope beyond the grave, but this idea is nothing new.

Quotations of great thinkers of the past:-

“Once a man dies, there is no resurrection.” – **Aeschylus**

“There is only hope for those who are alive, but those who have died are without hope.” – **Theocritus**

“When once our brief light sets, there is one perpetual night through which we must sleep.” – **Catullus**

Against this background of past and present pessimism, Jesus Christ of the Christian Bible offers real, practical, assured hope.

Jesus Christ offers humanity the opportunity to become right with our Creator God, and also other humans in our world today.

The result of accepting this offer that Christianity brings to all humanity is a life full of hope for the present and the future.

John 10:10 [NIV] *“I [Jesus Christ] have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

This abundant life never ends at physical death.

John 11:25-26 [NIV] *“Jesus said to her, **“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”**”*

How can we have faith in this promise that Jesus Christ made?

Matthew 28:16-20 [NIV] *“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. **Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**”*

The resurrected eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ has all the authority and the power to make anything happen that is within the will of the Creator God.

What is the will of God as far as human beings are concerned?

Genesis 1:26 [NIV] *“Then God said, **“Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”**”*

The purpose the Creator God had before anything was created was to make a human being in His “image” [the Hebrew word means the shadow of the real thing] and His “likeness” [referring to character and nature].

Genesis 1:27 [NIV] *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”*

Note at that time, humans, both male and female, were **only** made in the “image” of God **not** as yet the “likeness.”

Every human who has or will ever exist is to be given the opportunity to be moulded into the “likeness” of God, the very character and nature of our Creator God.

This is the key that unlocks hope for a world that has no hope in what its leaders can or will do to overcome the problems we as human face.

To test the first humans as to their willingness to be moulded into the character and nature of God, their Creator gave them one simple command.

Genesis 2:16-17 [NIV] *“And the LORD God commanded the man, **“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”**”*

God was saying as a finite and a very limited being I do **not** want you to choose what is good and what is evil, I want you to rely on my infinite and eternal wisdom to be guided in your newly given life.

Did the first humans accept this condition to having a full and abundant life?

No.

Genesis 3:1-6 [NIV] *“Now the serpent [Satan – see **Revelation 12:9** [NIV]] was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” **“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”** When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.”*

Rebellious sin against their Creator.

What was the result of this sin?

Genesis 3:16-19 [NIV] *“To the woman he said, **“I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”** To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ **“Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”**”*

Adam and Eve didn’t die physically for many years, but they did die spiritually.

What is meant by this?

Genesis 3:22-24 [NIV] *“And the LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live for ever.” So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.”*

Both Adam and Eve were banished from the presence of God, and the chance to be given eternal life by eating of the tree of life, symbolic of eternal life.

Why did God banish them?

Out of His great love for them He did not want them to live for ever in this rebellious state of mind and nature.

All humanity has followed this path of rebellion against their Creator ever since.

Humans have since then decided for themselves what is good and what is evil, with destructive results.

Did God give up His plan for humanity?

No.

Genesis 3:21 [NIV] *“The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.”*

Why did God do this?

This is symbolic of the way in which humanity can be reconciled to God and be received back into His presence.

For this to happen a life had to be sacrificed that was of more value than all humanity collectively, that a Holy God can accept in His presence unholy humans.

I believe the animal that lost its life for these skins that covered the shame of their rebellion and sin was a lamb.

A lamb provided by God that pointed forward in time to Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

John 1:29 [NIV] *“The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*

Jesus Christ whose sacrifice of His own life would take away the penalty of the rebellious sins of all humanity, by dying as a substitute for our deserved death.

Romans 6:23 [NIV] *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

All we can earn by our deeds is death, the gift from God is eternal life because of what Jesus Christ has done for us.

John 3:16-17 [NIV] *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*

Jesus Christ is the One who saves every human being from their rebellious, sinful nature.

What is the result of this entrance of Jesus Christ the Son of God into human history?

2 Corinthians 5:14-19 [NIV] *“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died [to sin]. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no-one from a [selfish] worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”*

This is the message of hope that Christianity brings to the world of human beings.

We all can be reconciled to our Creator and then He can through the work of the Holy Spirit mould us into His likeness, character and nature, which is love.

How does this happen?

John 14:15-17 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*

The Spirit of Truth, that is the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, certain things will happen to us.

John 16:7-8 [NIV] *“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:”*

Convict us of our rebellious sins, show us how to receive true righteousness and be fully prepared for the day of judgement, when God decides if we are to receive eternal life in His presence.

This relationship with the Holy Spirit produces certain “fruits” in our lives.

Galatians 5:22-23 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

Just as the characteristics of our parents “rubbed off on us” as we lived with them in our childhood, so as children of God His characteristics will “rub off” on us as we walk with the Holy Spirit who is God.

All the fruits of the Spirit are the very nature of our Eternal Creator God.

Read slowly and meditate on this following passage of scripture for this is the hope that Christianity offers to a world that sees no hope for the future.

Romans 8:18-39 [NIV] *“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*