



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man mature in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 44  
Issue 1087

# Unfolding the Layers of God:

## Like Peeling Away an Onion

by — Mark D. Vogt

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

### Key Points:

If humans are complex, God is infinitely more so.....9117  
[God reveals Himself gradually, not all at once, because full knowledge would overwhelm us.....9119](#)

[The doctrine of hell fosters arrogance and a lack of compassion.....9120](#)  
[God gently weans His people off false doctrines, giving faith step by step.....9124](#)

People are complex beings, and none of us have enough introspection (because of death working in us) to know about or examine oneself objectively. The easiest person to fool in a group of friends is ourself. We constantly lie internally in order to assuage our guilt, to be convinced that we are more righteous or noble than we really are, to prove that we really are better than the other guy, or to talk ourselves into the idea that we think we deserve more than what we are getting. We fool the person that we are, more than we fool anybody else.



most complex and inscrutable being in the Universe is our God. Try to unravel Him on your own. It can't be done. As complex as an individual is, try to imagine how complex and inscrutable God is?

*O, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How inscrutable are His judgements, and untraceable His ways! For who knew the mind of the Lord? Or, who became His advisor? Or, who gives to Him first, and it will be repaid him? Seeing that out of Him and through Him and for Him is all: to Him be the glory for the eons! Amen! (Romans 11:33-36, CV)*

The beginning of this problem is that we don't recognize that defect in us. We have no problem in recognizing it in others, but not in ourselves. Even in others it is difficult to objectively understand them.

Human beings are like an onion. An onion can be a metaphor for individuals in that they are complex, and the only way to really know someone is to peel away the layers of that person in order to really get to know them. We hide things from others. It takes time to get to know a person. It is only after trust is built that we begin to reveal our true self.

Now that you have thought about that, what is it like to get to know our Heavenly Father, our "Dad"? The

God's ways are so far higher than ours, and His thoughts above our thoughts that, unless God reveals Himself to us, we would know nothing about Him. That is exactly what God did in His Word, the Bible. But He couldn't reveal everything that He chose to reveal to mankind all at one time. If He did that, it would

[\(continued on page 9119\)](#)

Unfolding the Layers of God: Like Peeling Away an Onion .....	9117
<a href="#">Animals in God's Story, Appendix 1 .....</a>	<a href="#">9122</a>
<a href="#">Animals in God's Story, Appendix 2 .....</a>	<a href="#">9123</a>
<a href="#">The Arrogant Man (quote: King Solomon) .....</a>	<a href="#">9124</a>



# How to Access Our Resources

## Our Main Website:

<https://pilkingtonandsons.com>

## Daily Email Goodies Signup:

<https://www.pilkingtonandsons.com/emailgoodies.htm>

## Bible Student's Notebook Electronic Issues:

<https://www.biblestudentsnotebook.com/volumes.html>

## Bible Student's Notebook Article Audios:

<https://www.pilkingtonandsons.com/audios.htm>

## Bible Student's Notebook Bound Volumes:

<https://www.biblestudentsnotebook.com/volumes.html>

## Bible Student's Notebook Master Index:

<https://www.biblestudentsnotebook.com/bsnindex.html>

## Videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/1424241>

## Audios:

<https://www.biblestudentsradio.com/audios.html>

## Themed Blogs:

<https://pilkingtonandsons.com/ourblogs.htm>

## Bibles:

<https://www.studyshelf.com/bibles.htm>

## Books by Clyde Pilkington:

<https://www.pilkingtonandsons.com/clp.htm>

## Books by Author:

<https://www.pilkingtonandsons.com/author.htm>

## Books by Subject:

<https://www.pilkingtonandsons.com/books.htm>

## Newest Book Releases:

<https://pilkingtonandsons.com/>

## Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/clyde.pilkington>

## Facsimile Project:

<https://www.studyshelf.com/facsimile.htm>

## Donate:

<https://pilkingtonandsons.com/donate.htm>

## Bible Student's Resource Index:

<https://biblestudentsresourceindex.blogspot.com/>

A Directory of Multi-Media Biblical Resources.

## Bible Student's Version:

<https://biblestudentsversion.wordpress.com/>

A Continuing, Composite Translation of Scripture.

## Standardized Scripture Terminology:

<https://standardizedscriptureterminology.wordpress.com/>

Clarifying Confusing Scripture Terms.

## Online Key:

<https://studyshelf.com/abbreviation-key.pdf>

Definitions of abbreviations/acronyms.

## Online Order Form:

<https://studyshelf.com/orderform-studyshelf.pdf>

## e-Books:

<https://www.amazon.com/s?k=clyde+Pilkington+kindle>

## Study Bible Project:

<https://www.pilkingtonandsons.com/StudyBibleDonations.htm>

## Bible Student's Notebook™

*Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal*

ISSN: 1936-9360

Volume 44, No. 1087 – September 15, 2025

*Scripture education in a weekly format!*

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3-4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice,

misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);

- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
  - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
  - union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Ephesians 2:6);
  - adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of saints intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

*We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar*

## Bible Student's Notebook™

PO Box 265, Windber, PA 15963

Office: (800) 784-6010 – Local: (814) 701-0063

[bsn@studyshelf.com](mailto:bsn@studyshelf.com)

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor-in-Chief  
André Sneidar – Executive Editor

Associate Editors: J. Blake Botner, Chris Carnahan,  
James Fine, Rick Lemons, Steve Martin, De Trefethen,  
Mark Vogt, Austin Willis

Copyright © 1989-2025 Bible Student's Press™

completely overwhelm humanity.

Please be aware that God is so complex and so impenetrable that the overwhelming amount of knowledge about God will never be known by people in this life because of our mortality, which veils our ability to understand. God keeps most of Himself hidden from His creatures.

**This revelation of Himself to humanity is done progressively, not only in terms of how much humanity can take, but by how much an individual can take in and understand God's truth.**

Can one even fathom an individual being introduced to the God of the ages with no prior knowledge of his Creator, and in a very short time come to understand the purpose of the death of Christ, the Secret Administration, the role of suffering in the believer's life, or the truth that God introduced sin and evil into the world for His purposes and the glory of His sovereignty?

What is a new "believer" supposed to do with the pervasive doctrine of the Trinity or of hell? How does he or she deal with the truth that none of us have "free will"? Their entire life was operated under the illusion that he or she was a free moral agent, making what they thought were decisions based on their ability to make choices on their own? These truths are at once overwhelming to humanity, as well as to each individual.

*For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little (Isaiah 28:10, KJV).*

The truth is that God teaches us by "spoon feeding" us,

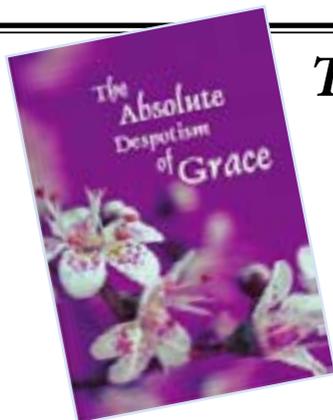
which enables us to absorb what He wants to communicate. I have found this to be so true in my own life.

Growing up in a "Grace Church" in Altoona, PA I thought I had a handle on most of God's truth. I recognized the difference between Peter and Paul and their messages, yet I thought for sure that I knew that if people didn't "accept Christ as their Savior" they were headed for that awful place called hell (doesn't everybody know that?). All I was doing was waiting for that day of the "rapture" when I would be caught up with fellow believers to be with the Lord in Heaven forever, although I couldn't figure out how we could be up there with Him during the Millennial reign of Christ while He reigns on Earth.

Unlike my brother, and a couple of dear friends of mine, I never questioned the orthodox view of God, Christ, hell and future events. I just went merrily along in my life believing what I had been taught, never questioning anything, because, well, my teachers were so much smarter in these things than I was, and surely, they couldn't be wrong.

While in the military during our many travels around the country, when my wife and I had occasion to visit any other local church, we couldn't fathom how wrong they were in their doctrines. Didn't they see the distinction between what Peter said and what Paul said, and that there was a difference?

I remember asking an older gentleman years ago what his thoughts were about the Apostle Paul, and his reply was, "Well, he was a pretty good apostle." In my ignorance and arrogance I pitied him, for I knew the difference.



## ***The Absolute Despotism of Grace***

*A Compilation*

A Compilation of 25 chapters, by 16 authors, spanning over 135 years, expounding on the marvelous, powerful reign of God's grace in our day.

146 pages

See [order form](#) under "Compilations."

I even pastored a small church and had several Bible study groups back in the day. Surely, I knew what I was talking about. Then something happened to me one time while I was at work. I was reading an article by Clyde Pilkington about the reconciliation of all mankind. As I contemplated his assertion, I was struck by the thought that if this was true then this was the greatest thing I had ever heard of, and this certainly was worth looking into to see if this was true. Little did I know how “Dad” was working in my life!

Up to that time I really wasn’t aware of His molding me and teaching me, because I surely thought that I had a handle on what God was doing all along. I mean, I came out of a “Grace Church,” so that should put me a leg up on others who didn’t see those distinctions that “we” did.

Have you ever noticed that, when church people get only so far in their understanding of God’s Word they stop growing, stop searching? It’s as if they think that they have arrived and they have it all, and there is nothing more to learn, so they dig in their heels and refuse to budge from their current understanding.

I did not know that God had other plans. When I comprehended the truth of universal reconciliation, I thought that this was the greatest thing since “sliced bread.” This would begin a journey which would give rise to a fundamental change in my thinking and understanding. “Won’t the people I tell about this truth be so happy and glad that I told them?”

As you might have guessed, neither I, nor my “new knowledge,” was warmly received. That is an under-

statement. It only took a short time to realize the reason why this teaching was not well received. This involves a couple of factors.

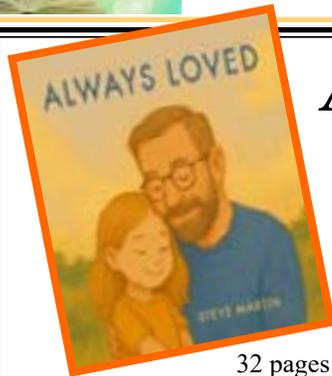
First of all, there is a lack of momentum in searching the Scriptures. Believing a certain way carries with it a certain comfort like an old pair of shoes. Those shoes are comfortable, fit well and have served well. If one thinks that they have a handle on what God has said, then there is little impetus to get into His Word to see if what one assumes is actually correct. This is called inertia, or in this case, a lack of inertia. It takes far less energy, and in this case no energy at all, not to go further in investigating God’s Word.

Secondly, and far more troublesome, is that there appears to be an attitude among believers that not only did they not want to give up their ideas about “hell,” or other erroneous teachings, but that they actually desired people to go to this imaginary place of horror that religion promotes.

Why would that be? Could it be that these “good Christians” felt that they were somehow more deserving of Heaven than others around them? And did they also think that those in the world who have not had the occasion to “trust Christ” were also deserving of this fate? And, more importantly, didn’t some of these same people who had heard the gospel but never took the “opportunity” to trust Christ as their Savior deserve eternal conscious torment? These “holier than thou” people would never admit that, but all one has to do is listen to them talk, and in particular how they defend the doctrine of “hell.”

I know people like this. If you uttered one of the four letter expletives around them, they would be utterly

Check out a **NEW BOOK!**



## *Always Loved* (The Lucy Series, Book 1)

by — Steve Martin

In *Always Loved*, Lucy discovers that God’s love is bigger than mistakes, stronger than fears, and with her every single day. This heartwarming story reassures kids of all ages that nothing can make God stop loving them – ever.

A perfect gift for bedtime reading or encouragement, *Always Loved* wraps young hearts in the truth that God’s love never lets go.

32 pages  
Full-color paperback, with illustrations.

See [order form](#) under “Martin.”

aghast and even offended. Yet the idea of God torturing billions and billions of people in a fiery hell, while their skin sloughs off their bodies being burned beyond comprehension (apparently, they will be given the ability to regenerate their skin only to have it burn off again) doesn't affect them. It seems to mean nothing to them that for all eternity people will be in unfathomable pain, misery and loneliness, desperate for water to help quench their thirst.

A scenario like this fails to move their compassion meter – but oh, just utter one of those four letter swear words and see what they do. These are the same people who never talked to their neighbors, coworkers or even strangers about Christ, because it was too much effort, or more importantly, because they didn't care.

An atheist I read one time made a statement to the effect that if one believed in God and in hell then believers should be willing to crawl across a broken glass strewn parking lot on their hands and knees to reach the other side to tell someone about Jesus Christ and what He accomplished.

There is a disconnect between what people claim to believe and what they actually do. This detachment became strikingly clear to me years ago, even before I had this divine shift in my thinking. While at a Bible

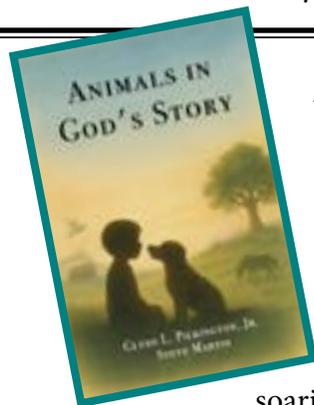
conference, a group of young people were slated to go downtown in a major American city to do some witnessing and to hand out gospel tracts to strangers. A slow but steady light rain began to fall and the trip to go downtown was cancelled. What was the message being sent to these young teenagers and the rest of the people at the conference? The message that I got was that the lives of those strangers they would have met were worth less than the discomfort the teenagers might experience while standing in the rain handing out tracts and witnessing. "Oh, but don't take our belief in hell away from us."

This was just one example of the twisted beliefs that religion has pounded down our throats – years on end. If you say something over and over again, and say it loud enough, it is perceived as truth even though there is not one ounce of truth in what they are saying according to Scripture. Many more examples could be given.

God was gracious with me as He slowly weaned me off of these terrible doctrines of Christianity – hell being only one of them.

In order to do that, God slowly and steadily had to show me the truth. How did He do that? It was and is

(see [UNFOLDING](#), last page)



## *Animals in God's Story* (Pre-publication notice)

by — Steve Martin & Clyde Pilkington

Have you ever wondered why God made animals? What role do they play in the grand story He's telling? Are they simply background scenery – or is there something more?

*Animals in God's Story* invites you on a journey through Scripture and nature to discover how animals reflect the heart of their Creator. From loyal dogs to soaring doves, from lions in prophetic visions to a donkey that speaks, this book uncovers the often-overlooked ways animals have always been a part of God's redemptive plan.

You'll explore:

- Why animals were created and what they reveal about God's nature.
- How animals are used in Scripture to teach, warn, comfort and guide.
- The significance of animals in the coming restoration of all things.
- What it means that God's care extends beyond people to all creation.

This book is for anyone who's ever felt a deep connection with a pet, marveled at wildlife, or sensed that animals know more than we give them credit for. It's a gentle, grace-filled reminder that animals are not just part of God's world – they're part of His story.

# Animals in God's Story

## Appendix 1: How to Comfort a Child When a Pet Dies:

### A Soul Worth Grieving

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

by – Steve Martin & Clyde Pilkington, Jr.



When a beloved pet dies, something in the house feels off. Quieter. Emptier. And if you're a parent, you've likely seen that ache reflected in your child's eyes – confused, tear-filled, broken. How do you comfort a child whose

furry friend is gone?

You start with the truth: This isn't a small loss. It's real. And it matters. Your child didn't lose just an "animal." They lost a companion. A soul that God made on purpose. A creature they loved.

The Bible calls both humans and animals *nephesh* – living souls. That wagging tail, that purr, that nuzzle? It wasn't random behavior. It was grace with fur. Animals weren't thrown into the world as extras. They were crafted to be part of our lives – messengers of comfort, joy and love.

So, when your child cries, don't minimize it. Validate it. Say, "I miss them too." Tell them it's okay to feel sad, and that missing someone is a sign of love that ran deep.

Then, offer them hope that runs even deeper:

"God doesn't forget what He breathes life into."

That pet your child loved – God loved first. He doesn't throw away what He calls good. He's already written the last chapter of their story. And it is grand!



In fact, the Bible speaks of a day when *all* of creation will be made new. A world without death. Without pain. A world full of joy and reunion. That includes the animals who made our hearts bigger.

So, when your child asks, "Will I see them again?" – you can say, "Yes," with confidence rooted in a God Who keeps His promises, not just to people, but to every living creature.

Grief is real. But so is hope. And one day, when all things are made new? That tail will wag again.

And that hug? That beautiful reunion? It's already written in God's story. **BSN**

#### TOPICS:

**Major:** Animals; Creation; Gospel; Grace; Love; Pets; Death

**Minor:** Peace; Salvation of All; Suffering



## God's Purpose in the Heavens

by — John H. Essex (1907-1991)

Much of Christianity has little understanding of God's grand purpose of the Heavens. Essex unveils this divine objective.

38 pages

See [order form](#) under "Essex."

# Animals in God's Story

## Appendix 2: Sample Pet Memorial Ceremony

by – Steve Martin & Clyde Pilkington, Jr.

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

### A GENTLE GUIDE FOR HONORING THE LIFE OF A BELOVED PET

This simple ceremony can be held in a backyard, living room, or anywhere that feels meaningful. It's not about performance – it's about love, grief and gratitude.

#### 1. Opening Words (Feel free to personalize)

“We're here today to remember and honor a soul that was part of our family. Not just a pet – but a friend. A companion who gave us joy, comfort, laughter, and unconditional love. God made this dear creature. He breathed life into them. And He called it good.

So today, as we say goodbye, we also say thank you – for every moment we shared.”

#### 2. Short Reading or Prayer

##### Option A: Scripture Reading

*Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without*

*the Father (Matthew 10:29).*

*All creation is waiting ... to be set free into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:21).*

##### Option B: Prayer

“God, thank You for the gift of this beloved animal. Thank You for the joy they brought, the comfort they gave, and the love they showed. We're grieving, because they mattered.

But we trust You, because You never forget what You breathe life into. We know that they are in Your care until all things are made new. Amen.”

#### 3. Sharing Memories

Invite everyone to say something if they wish:

- “What was your favorite thing about them?”
- “When did they make ([see ANIMALS, next page](#))



## Announcing!

*The Freedom Journey Podcast  
with Steve Martin & Clyde Pilkington*

*Stepping into the Liberty that We Already Have!*

**Current Releases:** (click the titles to follow the links)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 6. <a href="#">Where Did Christianity Come From? (Freedom Snapshots)</a>    | <a href="#">past all things to God alone)</a>  |
| 7. <a href="#">Freedom from Most of the Scriptures! (Freedom Snapshots)</a> | 11. <a href="#">Finding Peace Beyond Others' Hurtful Actions (Freedom Snapshots)</a> |
| 8. <a href="#">Freedom from Regret, Shame &amp; Guilt</a>                   | 12. <a href="#">The Freedom from Sin</a>   |
| 9. <a href="#">Freedom in the Middle of Evil &amp; Suffering</a>            | 13. <a href="#">Freedom From Judging Others</a>                                      |
| 10. <a href="#">Freedom from Circumstances (Seeing</a>                      | 14. <a href="#">Freedom from Unworthiness - The Unstoppable Joy of Grace</a>         |

**UNFOLDING** (continued from page 9121)

by giving me the faith, in small steps, to believe what He says in His Word. I couldn't get it unless He gave me the realization (Colossians 1:1-10; Romans 12:3; Ephesians 2:8-9). "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." God gives faith or realization only through His Word. It is all about God. All we do is sit back and enjoy what God has accomplished, is accomplishing, and will accomplish.

Just as humanity is, so is the individual. We don't get it all at one time. We see God lovingly peeling back the onion that is Himself, one layer at a time. The more layers that He peels off for us, the better is our un-

derstanding of Him. The better our understanding of Him, the more we trust Him. The more we trust Him, the more we get to know Him, and know Him more intimately.

It is God's unmovable goal that His creatures will get to know Him more and more. One day the process will truly be complete, and we will be made in His image. **BSN**

**TOPICS:**

**Major:** Bible; Faith; God; Grace; Growth; Realization; Sovereignty

**Minor:** Christianity; Hell; Love; Progressive Revelation; Reconciliation; Religion; Salvation of All; Study

**ANIMALS** (continued from previous page)

you laugh?"

- "How did they comfort you when you were sad?"

Even a child's one-sentence story matters deeply.

4. Symbolic Goodbye

Choose a simple act to mark the moment:

- Light a candle in their memory
- Place a stone or flower on a favorite spot
- Bury a photo, toy, or note
- Say their name out loud as a final memorial

"We love you. We miss you. Rest well. We will see you in the morning, when all things are made new."

5. Closing Words of Hope

"This isn't the end.

The One Who created your pet – and you – has promised restoration.

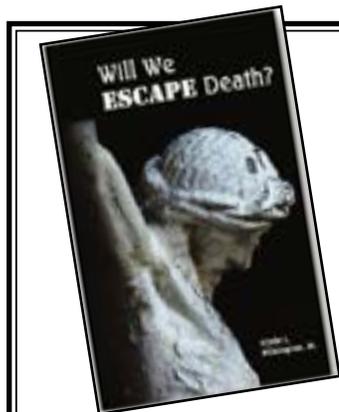
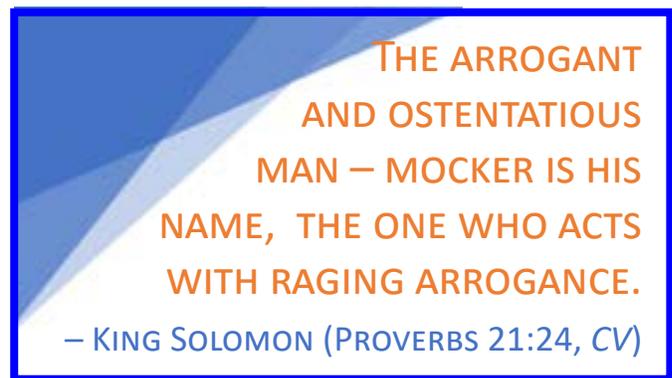
One day, all groaning will give way to joy. And every tail will wag again."

*Behold, I am making all things new* (Revelation 21:5). **BSN**

**TOPICS:**

**Major:** Animals; Creation; Gospel; Grace; Love; Pets

**Minor:** Peace; Salvation of All; Suffering



## Will We Escape Death?

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

The plight of humanity is mortality and death. In every age the believer's hope has always been resurrection from the dead and the glory which lays beyond. It was Satan who first introduced the idea, "Thou shalt not surely die." So, what makes anyone think that Satan was right – that we are actually not going to die? What makes someone expect that, of all of the people who have ever lived before them, they will somehow be the ones who will *escape* death? The answer, in one word: tradition.

55 pages

See [order form](#) under "Clyde Pilkington."