

LET THE BIBLE SPEAK SERIES

WHAT IS HELL LIKE?

Ronny F. Wade, Speaker

Our nation is beset by a multitude of perplexing problems. Homes are hitting the rocks in unprecedented numbers. Crime is steadily on the increase, with violations of the law occurring by the millions every year. Demonstrations are commonplace. Political scandals rock the nation to its very foundation. Immorality is a way of life.

Perhaps no generation of people has been less scared of hell or frightened in regard to the prospects of eternal punishment than those now living.

Felix was an extremely evil man, but Paul literally terrified the Roman Governor of Judaea, when he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. Acts 24:25 Unfortunately multitudes today see no terror in hell. They can hear a sermon on it, and are perfectly content to remain unbelievers.

No wonder, in a Louis Harris survey, of certain Protestant seminaries 71% of ministerial students rejected a belief of both heaven and hell. People need to know what the bible teaches on this subject, and become aware of the high price for evil living.

I. False Theories Discussed.

There are many ideas about what happens to man after death.

A. Materialism. The idea that man is wholly mortal and at death ceases to exist. In Luke 16:19-31 both the rich man and Lazarus continued to live in some sense after death. Their existence was not terminated.

B. Universalism. The idea that all will be saved, regardless of behavior. Most really believe this. But in Lk. 16 one of these men was lost. So the theory cannot be true.

C. Baptism for the dead. This is a practice of the Mormons. However in Luke 16 the scripture teaches that is impossible for either of the men to cross the gulf between them. One's destiny is determined at death, and cannot be changed after that.

D. Purgatory. This concept held by Roman Catholics. The idea is that one can be paid or prayed out of Purgatory into heaven. But in Lk. 16 the gulf could not be crossed, hence the idea is false.

E. A loving God would never punish anyone. Some ask "what father would do this to his child?" I answer: "What father would do to his child what God did to Jesus on the Cross?"

It is true that God is good and a God of love but note: The anti-diluvians, Sodom and Gomorra, Lot's wife, and Nadab and Abihu. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God." Heb. 10:31

II. What Is Hell Like?

A. Hell is Eternal. Mt. 25:24 "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life"

1. Everlasting and Eternal are from "aionion":
2. Derived from "aionios" meaning "without end, never to cease, everlasting" Thayer p.22 "Indeterminate as to duration" Harper p. 10
3. A form of this word used in Romans 16:26 (Everlasting God) and (Eternal Spirit) Heb. 9:14. If it is limited as to punishment, then the same would be true of God and the Holy Spirit.

Arguments Against:

1. Eternal is too long. Not right to punish eternally those who live in disobedience only a few years.

Reply: Same type of reasoning would rid the bible teaching about heaven, i.e. it would be wrong to bless one eternally who only served God for a few years.

We must remember that the enormity of the act is not determined by the amount of time it took to commit it. Example: one might spend life in prison for a crime that took only minutes to commit.

2. "Punishment" refers to annihilation or death. The individual merely is cast into the fire and burned up. That is they die.

Reply: The punishment of hell is worse than death. Note Heb. 10:26-31

If we cease to exist after being burned up, how could the word torment be used regarding our punishment? "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." Rev. 20:10.

B. Hell is a Place of Darkness.

1. Descriptions: Darkness---2Peter 2:4 and Jude 6
Blackness of Darkness---2Peter 2:17 and Jude 13
Outer Darkness---Mt. 22:13 and 25:30

One of the plagues that Jehovah brought upon the obstinate Egyptians prior to slave ridden Israel's release from the tyrannical hand of Pharaoh was an extended period of darkness. Note: "And the Lord said unto Moses, stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward

heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." Ex. 10:21-23.

The darkness of hell will be felt.

The plague of darkness was temporary, lasting only three days. The darkness of hell will last forever. But why darkness? Because God is light--The father of lights--But hell is away from God, hence only darkness there. Contrast with heaven Rev. 21:23..."Lamb is the light, no need of sun..."

C. Hell Is A Place of Fire.

John the Baptist referred to the punishment of hell as a "baptism of fire." Mt.3:1

Furnace of fire---Mt.13:42

Everlasting or eternal fire---Mt.18:8 and 25:41

Fire is not quenched---Mk. 9:44,45

Fire and Brimstone---Rev.20:10; 21:8

Brimstone: The Hebrew word connected with gopher-wood--probably signifies the gum or resin that exuded from that tree, hence it was transferred to all inflammable substances, and especially to sulfur, which is found in considerable quantities on the shores of the dead sea. (Smith's Bible Dictionary 1980 Ed.) There will be no fire extinguishers hanging on the wailing walls of hell. The masses there will never be able to quench the fire ignited by the justice of God Almighty.

D. Hell Is A Place Without Rest Or Relief.

The rich man in Luke 16 sought a measure of relief in "one drop" of water. But no relief was given. Think of it, just one drop of water. But it was not to be had.

Rev. 14:11 "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever and they have no rest day or night." When fatigue falls upon the human frame, as it sooner or later does with us all, we at least, in this world, anticipate the happy hours of rest and relaxation. Hell is totally void of rest. Yet millions are racing on the broad way of destruction to get there.

E. There Is No Hope In Hell.

The punishment is eternal---Mt.25:46

How long is "eternal"?

How long would it take a termite to eat a church building? This town? The U.S.? The Earth? The Universe?---However long, eternity is more than this. If hell were for only a 1000 years, or even 10,000 years one could endure because there would be hope. There would be an end out yonder, somewhere. But there is no end to hell.