

HELL...IS IT REAL?

Is hell an ever-burning, physical place of torment?

I feel torn between two very different emotions when I think of what awaits man after this life on earth. On the one hand, I am warmed...and thrilled...by the glorious revelation of Scripture concerning the future abode of the believer...his eternal home with our Lord Jesus Christ! However, on the other hand, I am shocked by the awesome revelation of Scripture concerning the awful future abode of those who are lost, and I literally tremble with fear when I think of the prospects of such a terrible place that awaits those who have never accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior.

There isn't any subject which I would rather shun...or try to forget about...than the subject which is now before us...the subject of hell. Feeling this way, why then would I choose to write about this subject? The answer is because I have no choice...Ezekiel 3:17-19 states plainly:

"I have made thee a watchman...therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul."

Psalm 9:17 states, "***The wicked shall be turned into hell***" ...With these decrees, I repeat, I have no choice...I have to "*warn the wicked*"...those without Christ...about their eternal doom!

I want to state from the start that I am a firm believer in the Biblical doctrine of a literal hell...an eternal abode of the unredeemed...a prison house for those who die without Jesus Christ as their Savior. I have numerous questions which, at this point, seem unanswered, but the purpose of this study is to search God's Word and to find out exactly what God really does say about this madhouse of the universe.

The Bible has much to say concerning the doom of the sinner. In fact, the New Testament refers to this place of hell **162** times ...and 70 of those 162 references come from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself. I believe in hell...not because I heard of it in Sunday School ...or because the denomination I was raised in teaches it...but simply because the reality of hell is clearly taught in the Bible and, to reject this reality, is to impeach the words of Jesus Himself.

Jesus loved men too much to lull them to sleep with the false hope that there is no hell...He loved them too much to win their applause by telling them that they are "okay" and that they, therefore, need not worry about the judgment of God.

Many today seem to feel that the idea of hell is some antiquated, moth-eaten, disproved theory of the dark ages...a superstition of the past which cannot be relied upon. Well, mankind in Noah's day did not believe that a flood would ever come either...nor did those of Sodom and Gomorrah believe that God would ever destroy their cities...but the flood did come, and Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed...just as God had warned.

It seems as if most so called "thinkers" have concluded that there are only two kinds of preachers...those who preach about hell-fire and brimstone...and the **educated** ones. To have people believe that there is no hell is one of the devil's most clever lies, and if one is on his way to hell...and his preacher does not **tell** him that he is on his way to hell...he is not being kind to that person, but, rather, he is being that person's worst enemy.

Preachers who believe in...and preach on...the reality of a Biblical hell are called narrow-minded, harsh, and, even, cruel, however, would it be considered cruel to warn passengers of a ship that the ship was on fire?...would it be considered narrow-minded to warn people that a hurricane was headed in their direction?...would it be considered harsh to arouse a family to tell them that their house was on fire? The best friend you can have is someone who will warn you of impending danger, and, therefore, anyone who will warn you of an eternal doom is the best friend you can have.

One man, who was an acclaimed atheist, said: "There is one thing that mars all pleasure in my life, and that is I am afraid that the Bible might be true. If I could know for certain that death is just an eternal sleep, then I could be happy. But here is what pierces my soul...if the Bible is true, then I am lost forever!"

People enjoy sin because they have no thought concerning their eternal state...they have been lulled to sleep by the popular teaching that there is no hell, despite the fact that this teaching runs contrary to what the **Bible** teaches. By actual count, Jesus preached **ten times** more about hell than He did about heaven and, if there really is no hell, than Jesus was a deceiver...and if Jesus was a deceiver than He was not a good man, let alone the Savior of the world. If hell is a place that really does not exist then how can the Bible be trusted since it so clearly teaches about hell? Our faith is based upon the foundation of the inerrancy of God's Word and, if that credibility crumbles, how can one know **what** to believe since, if we cannot trust the Bible, we are unable to know anything about where man came from...how he can be saved...and where he is going after this life!!

Many have accepted Jesus Christ as a result of their belief in a Biblical hell. One missionary, who had been mightily used of God, stated, "It was the fear of going to hell that brought me into God's Kingdom." DeWitt Talmage, a great preacher of the past generation who pastored Brooklyn's great Gospel Tabernacle, said, "If it had not been for my fear of hell I would not have started for heaven."

One may choose to scoff at the thought of a literal hell, as did Voltaire and Thomas Paine, however, when Voltaire lay dying, he cried, "*I am abandoned by God, I am going to hell,*" and, when Thomas Paine knew he was going to die, he said, "*I would give worlds, if I had them, if the `Age of Reason' had never been published. O, Christ stay with me, it's hell to be left alone!*"

One man, who for most of his life had stated that those who believed in hell were ignorant, stupid, and superstitious, when he knew he was going to die, said, "*I would give 30,000 pounds to have it proved to me, beyond all doubt, that there is no hell.*"

Another young man, who also claimed that he did not believe in a hell, married a beautiful girl and they became the parents of a sweet baby daughter. However, tragically, as the little baby breathed her first breath, her mother breathed her last and, because his daughter was

all he had, she became the focal point of his existence...the object of his dreams... cherished and nurtured by him. One day, after she was grown, a young man won her affections and, after deceiving her, lured her into sin which, eventually, ruined her life and, when he finally cast her away, she was a very broken-hearted girl. This father, who all of his life had said, "*There is no hell,*" when he saw the wreck that had been made of his poor, sobbing, broken-hearted daughter...the idol of his heart...now said, "*If God almighty hasn't a hell for fiends like this one who wrecked my happiness and ruined my girl, He, by all means, certainly ought to make one!*" And I think that every decent human being alive would say "**amen**", deep within his soul, to that expressed sentiment!

**SIN MUST, SOMEDAY, BE PAID FOR...MUST, SOMEHOW, BE PUNISHED
...BECAUSE, SOMEDAY, JUSTICE MUST GAIN THE VICTORY!**

When mankind looks at the ruin, blasphemy, debauchery, depravity, and degradation of human beings, his indignation is to cry out, "There has to be a time of punishment for sinners!!"

The basis of all good government is justice that sees to it that evildoers are punished. A good government has laws to punish the thief, the murderer, the liar, and the traitor. Would anyone deny that this is just and right? Every jail...and prison ...is a monument to the necessity of punishing wrongdoers. Would anyone of us want to live where there was no penalty for the criminal? Why then should anyone object to the right of the sovereign God of heaven and earth to punish His rebelling subjects? In reality, denying God the right to punish the ungodly would cause the whole moral fabric of the universe to break down.

This life is so full of inequalities that there **must** be a reckoning day coming. If death ends all...and there is no retribution for evil...how would one ever reconcile the reality that criminals...who oppress their fellowman...who murder, pillage, and subject others to their whims...live in luxury? When one thinks of the Hamans, the Neros, and the Hitlers of history...whose hands are stained with the blood of millions of innocent people...if it is true that there is no hell...that there is no punishment for sin...and that death ended it all for them ...then one's faith in the moral integrity of God must be very broad indeed.

Can God do less than even what human justice demands?

One must realize that God is not just a God of love...He is also a God Who is just. Men have emphasized His love until His justice has been forgotten. Because "***God so loved the world, He sent His only begotten Son***" to die for man's sin, however, because God is also just and holy, He cannot tolerate sin...or be passive toward it.

It was because of their sin of disobedience that God cast the angels out of heaven. Psalms 136:10 gives us a very interesting statement when it says, "*God smote Egypt in their firstborn: **for his mercy endureth forever***", and verse 15 says, "*He overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea, **for His mercy endureth forever***". You see, God's "*mercy*" involves that He judge the evildoers!

One must understand that to believe in a God of mercy does not mean that one believes in a God Who is too weak, wishy-washy, or spineless, to execute justice. Mercy **includes** justice!

God's judgments are proof of His mercy! God inflicted just punishments to **show** His mercy!

If one believes that God is so loving that He cannot exercise justice by meting out judgment on wrongdoers, than how can one ever explain the flood...or what happened at Sodom...or God's dealings with the armies of Egypt...or the 185,000 Assyrians who were destroyed in one night...or etc....etc.?

Proof of the reality of the "wrath of God" is the fact that His wrath is mentioned 469 times in the Bible!

Of course, the reality of God's wrath does not negate the fact that God **is** a God of love...it's just that one must keep in mind that God is perfect in **all** His nature...which means that He will not wink at sin because God...**in** His love...has seen fit to establish penalties for violations of His laws.

One must also bear in mind that God has made possible eternal salvation for "**whosoever**" and that no one **need** go to hell. Why is it that man insists on blaming God for what sinful man deliberately chooses to do? If anyone goes to hell, it is because he **chooses** to go...by rejecting God. Hell is not God abandoning man...because He ceases to love him... but, rather, hell is man choosing to abandon God...and **His** ways.

In order for one to understand the nature of God's love, he must understand the doctrine of the freedom of man's will. Unlike a car that has no choice as to what direction it will go... because it has to go in the direction that it is steered... man **does** have a choice in what "direction...way...he will go. God **could** have operated man according to mechanical principles, but He had a higher purpose for man than that because He wanted to create a being in His own image...one who could know...feel... appreciate...and return...His love and, because love involves choice...because love cannot be forced...God created man with the power **to** choose...God created man with a free will because He would not reduce man to a slave who is forced to go in a certain direction ...God wants man to "choose" to go to heaven to spend eternity with Him.

When a man was drowning at sea those on board a ship attempted to save him by throwing him a lifesaver attached to a rope, however, when he threw the life-saver back to them, they realized that he did not **want** to be saved...Thus it seems to be with many who, likewise, do not **want** to be "saved"!

ARE YOU GOING TO HELL?

After your life on earth is over, you **are** going somewhere because your soul will never just cease to be...it..."you"... **will** exist somewhere. You...and you alone...must decide the issue of **where** you will spend eternity.

In the New Testament, out of the twelve times that the "*lake of fire*" is spoken of, ten of those times it is the loving, gentle, compassionate, kind, and sympathetic Son of God who speaks of it.

Jesus said, "*It would be better to go through this life maimed than to endure the suffering of hell for eternity.*"

It was Jesus Who said, "*Fear not them which are able to kill the body, but rather fear Him (God) which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*"

Jesus said, "*How can ye escape the damnation of hell?*"

Jesus...gentle, kind-hearted, loving Jesus...said, "*In that judgment day, some will hear, depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels' ...and these shall go away into everlasting punishment.*"

In John 8:20, Jesus also tells us that anyone who dies in their sins can never go where He is!

In the story of the richman and Lazarus, Jesus taught that there is a "*great gulf*" between hell and paradise **and no man will ever be able to cross over...or pass...from one place to the other.**

The only time we have to settle our eternal destiny is in this life right **now**...before it is too late! And the only way we can "*see the kingdom of God*"..."*inherit heaven*" as the place of our eternal abode...is to be "*born again*"...is to accept Jesus Christ as our own personal Lord and Savior...as the Redeemer of our souls, and the Forgiver of our sins!