

" IS THE TORMENT IN HELL ETERNAL?"

Will the unconverted be tormented forever in an eternal hell? Will there be no end... century after century...age after age...to their anguish and punishment?

Anyone would have to have a heart of stone to not be moved.. to the depths of his soul...by a serious consideration of, not only the awfulness, but, also, the duration, of this place which ... in God's Word ...is called "*hell*." The very idea of an infinite, eternal torment is so painful that most Christians are rarely willing to discuss it. However, it is the loss of a belief in a Biblical, eternal, hell that is largely responsible for the appalling increase in suicide ...because...unless one is so emotionally disturbed that he is not responsible for his actions... no one...if he believed in the reality of hell...would ever "*jump from a lifelong frying pan*" ... no matter how great the sorrow, or suffering, of this present life might be... "*into an everlasting fire*."

And, also, it is the loss of a belief in an eternal hell which is largely responsible for the frightful crime wave that is sweeping our land. If those who, unhesitatingly stain their hands with blood, realized that their crimes meant an eternity in hell, their violence would subside into the great calm of righteous-ness.

Re-establishing a real faith in a Biblical hell would do more to lift our land out of the awful chaos of crime and terror into which it has fallen than improving...or increasing our police forces...or devising...and executing...more severe laws.

The greatest need of our day is a restoration of real faith in the teachings of Christ... including His teachings on an **eternal** hell.

The thought of an eternal hell is so horrifying that, all who are not reverent Bible believers, will vehemently deny such an idea. The thought that the people in hell know a conscious torment that is eternal...a despair and pain that is never ending...is so distressing that one's first inclination is to search the Scriptures to see if they don't hold out some ray of hope that the torment of the lost **will**...at **some** time...cease...However, since the Scriptures do **not** hold out such a hope, one soon finds out that his search has been in vain.

Because I'm unable to teach about a thing as terrible as an eternal torment unless I am convinced...beyond all doubt...that it is clearly taught in God's Word...this teaching has come only after my having read **every** passage of Scripture...and...the more I study the Bible ...the more overwhelming my conviction is that...despite the natural mind's tendency to reject such a thought...there **is**, indeed, an eternal place of torment for those who die without Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Jesus taught that we are to read God's Word with a simple, child-like faith...which means that we should take the following Scriptures at face value:

Daniel 12:2, which says, "*Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and **everlasting contempt**.*"

Matthew 25:46, where Jesus...when referring to eternity...teaches, "*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.*"

In Mark 9:43-48, where three times Jesus tells us that the wicked shall enter into hell, into the "*fire that never shall be quenched...where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*"

Luke 16:26, where Jesus records the words of Abraham who is in Paradise, to the rich man, who is in hell..."*And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.*"

Jude 13, where we are told, "*to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.*"

Revelation 14:10-11, which is pretty explicit when it states, "*The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever, and they shall have no rest day or night.*"

Mark 3:39, which refers to hell as "*eternal damnation*"

Hebrews 6:2, which calls hell "*eternal judgment*"

Jude 7, which, when referring to the doom of judgment, refers to the "*everlasting fire*" that the wicked are sentenced to suffer.

Matthew 18:8, where Jesus says, "*It is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into everlasting fire.*"

Matthew 25:41, where Jesus says, "*Then He will say to those at His left hand, `Be gone from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*"

Once again, remember that Jesus said that one is to accept the Bible with a child-like faith...and...if one accepts the simple language that the Bible is written in...approaches the Bible with an unbiased mind with nothing but a sincere desire to know what God teaches ... believes that the Bible is God's Word and is, therefore, trustworthy and incapable of deceiving mankind...then...the only conclusion that one can come to is that hell is a place of **eternal** torment for those who die without Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

One cannot afford to approach God's Word with wary caution ...or with some feeling that maybe God means to trip us up by using vague, symbolic language...but, rather, one must approach the Bible knowing that when God...through His Word...speaks to man about his eternal destiny...His words...and the meaning of His words...are to be taken...and understood...**literally!**

**AS FAR AS SCRIPTURE IS CONCERNED, SOME KIND OF
RECONCILIATION FOR THE LOST IN HELL IS UTTERLY
... AND COMPLETELY ... IMPOSSIBLE!**

When it comes to the subject of hell, the following are the only **four** possible positions that one can take:

1. That man has no soul and, therefore, there can be no future punishment for mankind. This is the attitude of the infidel and the atheist who have no interest in what the Bible has to say because they do not believe it to be God's Word.
2. That all mankind will, somehow, eventually be reconciled back to God. (This point was dealt with in the last lesson)
3. That man, after this life, will cease to exist and will become nothing! This is the "*annihilation*" theory.
4. That there is, indeed, eternal torment in hell...an indescribable suffering throughout an infinite eternity...and to take **this** position is to believe what the **Bible** teaches!

Because there are those who feel that there are some Scriptures that teach that the wicked will be "*annihilated*," let's look at some of these Scriptures to see if this is what they really teach:

In Malachi 4:1, in referring to the wicked, God states, "*...the day that comes shall burn them up, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.*" Since this verse is referring to "*the day of the Lord*"...that day when Jesus shall come back in power and great glory to set up His kingdom on earth...what this verse is saying is that, in the warfare of "*the day of the Lord*", many wicked will be destroyed by the fire of His wrath, but this does **not** mean that there will not be eternal punishment for these wicked...no more than it means that if a wicked person's house catches fire and he is burned to death...and he dies without Christ...that he'll be spared going to hell.

Psalms 49:12 says, "*He (the unwise man) is like the beasts that perish*"...and verse 14, says "*like sheep they are laid in the grave.*" When these verses are taken in context, one can see that what God is saying is that the body of an ungodly man...no matter how much wealth has been used to pamper and take care of it...will, someday, "*die like a beast.*" This passage certainly does not purport that man's soul will ever be annihilated...or pass out of existence.

Ecclesiastes 3:19-20 states, "*For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.*" What God is saying here is, not that man is annihilated like the beast, but, rather, that man's "***animal existence***" is not above that of the beast's...man and beast both breathe the same air...live by the same natural means... and, when they die, they both "turn to dust"... that is...their "***bodies*** turn to dust." We must not overlook verse 21, which says, "*Who knoweth the **spirit** of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?*" Obviously, this verse does **NOT** teach annihilation!

Also, note Ecclesiastes 12:7 which states, "*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God Who gave it.*"

Neither does Ecclesiastes 9:5 teach annihilation, as some seem to think. This verse states, "... *the dead know not any thing...*" If this verse were to mean that the dead were annihilated, it would have to include **all** the dead...which would have to mean, then, that even the righteous are annihilated! What God is simply saying in this verse is that, without divine revelation, one cannot know anything. Verse 4 tells us that, as long as one is **alive**, one has hope of "knowing" ...finding...God's revelation, but, once one dies...is "dead" ...that hope is gone...God's revelation must be discovered in **this** life...while one has a free will to decide to receive God's wonderful truth of salvation.

Psalms 146:4 says, "*His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.*" (The New International Translation says, "...their **plans** come to nothing.") Once again, this verse is referring to the fact that man's purposes, desires, and plans of **this life** come to nothing when he dies...this verse is **not** referring to the fact that man is annihilated.

2 Thessalonians 1:9 says, "*And, they (those who obey not the Gospel) shall be punished with **everlasting** destruction from the presence of the Lord.*" There are those who argue that the word "destruction" indicates that the wicked will be "annihilated", however, the word "destruction" is translated from the same Greek word that "perish" is translated from and when this word is found in several places throughout the New Testament, it does not mean "annihilated" ...for instance, when this word is found in the well known verse, John 3:16, as well as in the parables of the "**lost**" coin...the "**lost**" sheep...and the "**lost**" prodigal son of Luke 15, note that, while these were "lost", they were **not** annihilated ...their true purpose was "destroyed", but they did not cease to **be**...in fact, the coin was found...the sheep was rescued ...and the prodigal son returned home.

Again, when Jesus referred to putting "*new wine in old wine skins,*" which caused them to "**perish**," the Greek word from which the word "perish" is translated from is the same Greek word that is also translated as "destroyed" ...and when Jesus spoke about the old wine "skins" ..."bottles"..."perishing", He was not indicating that the bottles were "annihilated," but, rather, that they were simply broken and could, therefore, not be used for the purpose for which they were made.

Rather than try to put our own definitions to the words that the Bible uses, we must let the **Bible** interpret the meaning of the words it uses.

PLEASE INDULGE ME IN ONE MORE WORD STUDY...

...the study of the word "everlasting" ...and the study of the phrase "forever and ever:"

Daniel 12:2 says, "*Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to **everlasting** life, and some to shame and **everlasting** contempt.*"

Because the word "everlasting" is used to describe God, it can only mean: **eternal... never ending...lasting forever!!!**

The expression, "*forever and ever*", translated from the Greek phrase, "*Tous aionas ton aionon,*" is used 13 times in Revelation alone...9 times it is used to describe the eternal

existence of Almighty God ... 1 time to describe the eternal existence of the saints in heaven ... 1 time to describe the eternal torment of the Devil in hell...and 2 times this **identical expression** is used to describe the duration of the lost in hell.

Because the phrase, "*forever and ever*"...like the word "*everlasting*"...is also used in Scripture to describe God...it, too, can only mean **eternal...never ending...lasting forever**. The literal Greek translation of this phrase means "*unto the ages of the ages*" and the word-picture is that of ages toppling over ages in eternal succession.

In Luke 16, Jesus...when He tells us of Lazarus going to heaven when he died and the rich man going to hell...infers that the eternal comfort of Lazarus in Paradise is matched by the eternal torment of the rich man in hell. The rich man, despite all his other requests, never once asked to be let out of hell because he knew, once he heard the clanging of the gate behind him, that there was no escape out of this place for the lost...he knew that there was hope for those still living, but he knew there was no hope for the dead...that if one died without Christ, he was eternally doomed.

Whenever anyone dies without knowing Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, **he goes to hell**...period! There **is** a judgment day coming, but one's eternal destiny will already be settled before that day comes because the judgment day is simply the day when the wicked dead are sentenced to...cast into...the lake of fire...the last...and final...hell. Rather, than be annihilated, the wicked **will** exist with consciousness. Cain has been in hell for over 6000 years **and he is still there**! Judas has been in hell for almost 2,000 years and he is still suffering the agonies of that terrible place!

In Revelation 20:1-3, we see where the devil is cast into hell for one thousand years ...and, in verse 7, we see how, even after the 1000 years have expired, **he is still there**! In verse 10 we see that the "*beast*"...the antichrist (a man)...and the false prophet (a man)...**are also in hell for 1000 years and will be "tormented day and night forever and ever"**! Even after being in hell for 1000 years...rather than being annihilated...or burned up...they are still suffering...and will **continue** to suffer... forever and ever...What a terrible thought!

How dreadful it is to suffer the fierceness...and the wrath ...of Almighty God **for even just one moment**...AND YET...IN HELL THERE IS NO END TO THIS HORRIBLE MISERY.

All that one has to look forward to in hell is millions and millions of ages...an endless eternity...of being tormented by the merciless vengeance of an angry God, Whom he rejected in this life.

The Bible says that the punishment in hell is **infinite**! Who can adequately describe the state of a soul in such circumstances because **anything** that one might say to try and define the agonies of one in hell can only be a very faint, feeble representation of what is such an inexpressible, inconceivable horror.

And...when one begins to get a picture in his mind of the terribleness of hell...and the fact that hell is "*everlasting*"...he is unable to comprehend it, and his natural reaction is to reject the idea of hell altogether!

Hell will grow more hellish as eternity marches in a slow never-ending pace. In our life here on earth, we can count the weary hours until our time of suffering is over and, at times, death could almost be worshipped if it would relieve the pain and sickness that life sometimes brings...but, of hell, God says... "*They shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever*"...**that's** what God says about the torment of hell...which is one more reiteration that hell's torment is **forever and ever!!!**

And, if "*death*" could enter into hell and end the torment of this terrible place, every tongue would sing its praises and every cavern would echo with shouts of triumph. However, the terrible reality is that, "*Their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.*"

ETERNITY CANNOT BE DEFINED

Because it has no past, no future, no ends, no middle, no "*parts*" at all...because eternity always **was**...always **is**...and always **will be**...eternity is an unoriginated, beginning- less, endless, measureless, imperishable, indescribable, indefinable thing...**it is its own only definition**...Eternity is older than the world...older than the sun...older than the stars...older than the angels...and yet, at the same time, eternity it is no older now than when all these things were made...**Eternity is as old as God, Himself**...Eternity will never be any older... nor will it ever be any younger...Eternity is an infinite, unending circle.

As the idea of eternity deepens...widens...and towers...we become confounded and crushed...and we shrink into our finite littleness. Frightened...and in an endeavor to try and hide from the awful realization of how long eternity is...we mentally take flight into some safe place and close the doors because the concept of eternity seems too much for us to grasp and it leaves us dizzy, and reeling, as we try to take...and digest...the realization of it into our human brain!!!

Our language begs for one word that will describe eternity, but we cannot find any. We compile illustration upon illustration in our attempt to somehow understand eternity's length, but, still, we cannot **begin** to conceive of it!

One of the most vivid descriptions of the future condition of the lost is found in Pollock's "*Course of Time*", which reads:

"Through all that dungeon of unfading fire
I saw most miserable beings walk.
Burning continually, yet unconsumed
Forever wasting, yet enduring still.
Dying perpetually, yet never dead
Some wander lonely, in desert flames
With curses loud, and blasphemies.
That made the cheek of darkness pale
And as they fought and cursed
And gnashed their teeth and wished to die,
Their hollow eyes did utter streams of woe
And there were groans that ended not,
And sighs that always sighed,
And tears that ever wept and ever fell.
But not in mercy's sight.
And sorrow, and repentance and despair
Among them walk, and to their thirsty lips
Presented frequent cups of burning gall;
And as I listened, I heard these beings
Curse Almighty God and curse the Lamb
And curse the earth, the Resurrected Morn,
And seek, vainly seek, for utter death
And to their everlasting anguish still
The thunders from above responding spoke
These words, which through the caverns of
Perdition forlornly echoing, fell on every ear,
`Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not'".

The Devil does **not** want you to know that there is an eternal hell awaiting those who will not turn to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. May God use this lesson to help enlighten any who may be so deceived by Satan..