

## HELL

The Bible description of Hell, the eternal place of punishment and torment, is extremely graphic. No one desires nor enjoys being burnt by fire here on earth and therefore the idea of being continuously burned with fire for all of eternity is a terrifying thought. So terrifying, in fact, that many have begun to dismiss what the Bible clearly teaches about Hell. In its place – a doctrine called “Conditional Immortality” or annihilationism. This teaching claims that while God will reward good people eternally, He will not punish the wicked for the same amount of time. Rather, God will allow the evil doer to be burned up, extinguished, annihilated and therefore cease to exist.

Annihilationists have decided to make Jesus’ warnings about Hell foolish and out of place. If there was no Hell, no place of eternal punishment, why would Jesus warn of the “danger of Hell” (Mat. 5:22)? Man is “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psa. 139:14) in the image of his Creator – God Almighty (Gen. 1:26-27). God is Spirit (John 4:24) and in His image He made man spiritual as well. God is eternal (Rom. 16:26; Heb. 9:14) and by making man, His greatest creation, a spiritual being, He made man eternal also. Jesus said, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die (John 11:25-26). Jesus was obviously not speaking about living eternally in a physical sense because “it is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb. 9:27) and when Jesus returns “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10). Thus, the only logical conclusion is that Jesus was making reference to a spiritual life after physical death. Though annihilationists want to equate Hell to a place where wicked souls are incinerated, the Bible teaches that Hell is a real place “prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat. 25:41). Hell is a place with an “everlasting fire” (Mat. 25:41) that never goes out (Mark 9:48). It is a place of “outer darkness” (Mat. 25:30) and a “lake of fire and brimstone” (Rev. 20:10). It is the farthest place from the presence of God and therefore separated from light. God is light (1 John 1:5) and Jesus is the “light of the world” (John 8:12). Jesus also describes Hell as a “furnace of fire” where there will be “weeping” (Mat. 25:30), “wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Mat. 13:42). Jesus used the Greek word “Gehenna” when speaking of Hell, the eternal abode for the wicked. “Gehenna” is a transliteration from the original Hebrew meaning “the valley of Hinnom.” The valley of Hinnom was just south of Jerusalem and was known for its garbage dump that was always burning. Thus when Jesus stated that Hell was a place “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48), He meant that the fire would never cease. This “is a picture of the unending torture and destruction of hell” (Wycliffe Bible Commentary). Using the word picture created by the use of the word “Gehenna,” Hell can be viewed as a garbage dump for the wicked. Since the grave is never full and opens “her mouth without measure” (Isa. 5:14), the eternal place of punishment will never lack for new occupants. The flames of Hell have plenty of new fuel to keep it burning “day and night for ever and ever” (Rev. 20:10).

Though the Bible states succinctly that Hell is both real and eternal, there are those who still refuse to acknowledge these truths. Jesus proclaims that the wicked “shall go away into **everlasting** punishment: but the righteous into life **eternal**” (Mat. 25:46, emphasis B.G.). Hell and all that accompanies it are forever. Once physical life ends, eternity begins. At that point, man’s fate is sealed. For the wicked, the opportunity to repent and obey has passed. The

righteous will enjoy bliss and comfort awaiting these most beautiful words, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mat. 25:34).

The Bible teaches that man is a spiritually immortal being. He will be judged by the words and commandments spoken by God and His Christ (John 12:48). Man will be accountable for the way he has lived “for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecc. 12:14). Hell is real and it is a place of eternal punishment. No soul has ever nor will ever cease to exist. Annihilationism is a false doctrine concocted by many who are attempting to soothe their own consciences without having to wholly and fully submit their lives to God’s Will. Still others devise such a teaching in order to help God out of what they see as a dilemma – the dilemma of a loving God sending His greatest creation to a place of eternal torment separated from God’s holy presence. God is not in a dilemma. He is holy (Rev. 4:8) and just (1 John 1:9). It is man who chooses and decides his eternal destiny: Live obediently to God’s Word and be eternally saved. Live contrary to God’s Word and be eternally lost.

Let us heed the multiple warnings given to us in God’s Word and escape the horrible destination of the disobedient.

– *Brad Green*