

## Is There a Hell?

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Donald Grey Barnhouse was called to the hospital by a doctor friend. An atheist who disliked Barnhouse was dying. Barnhouse responded, "I'll come right over to see him." The doctor noted, "But he doesn't like you." But Barnhouse insisted he was coming anyway. He entered the patient's room, grabbed a chair, sat down and folded his arms and said nothing. The atheist was curious and irritated. "All right, what do you want, Barnhouse?," he finally asked. Barnhouse answered, "I've come to see what it's like when an atheist goes to hell." Then he proceeded to lead him to Christ.

Voltaire, on his deathbed, addressed his doctor: "I am abandoned by God and man. I will give you half of what I am worth, if you will give me six months' life." The doctor replied, "Sir, you cannot live six weeks." Voltaire replied, "Then I shall go to hell, and you will go with me." Soon after he expired.

It seems that the doctrine of hell disappeared from the church and nobody noticed. The doctrine of hell seems to be out of step with our times. The only people who use the words "hell" and "damn" are those who curse or swear and take the subject of eternal punishment lightly. Hell is mostly a curse word or joke work among people today. Many laugh at the very idea of such a place. They scoff at the Word of God, which teaches about an eternal place of suffering. In today's pulpits hell is a vanishing doctrine. Unbelievers disbelieve in it and many Christians ignore it. Is there a hell? Jesus said that there is a hell just as sure as there is a Heaven. In fact, Jesus spoke more about hell than He did about Heaven while He was here on earth. Jesus said more about hell than all the other preachers in the Bible combined. If we were to model our preaching and living after Christ then hell should be a major theme for all of us as we speak to lost people.

J. Herbert Kane said this concerning Jesus' teaching on hell:  
"It might not be out of place to remind ourselves that all we know about eternal life and heaven we learned from Christ. Likewise, all we know about death and judgment we obtained from the same source.

What right have we to accept His teaching on the one and reject it on the other? If He is an authority on heaven, He is also an authority on hell.”

The church today needs to come to grips with the subject of hell. In Matthew 23:33 Jesus said to the religious hypocrites of His day, “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” This is perhaps the most terrifying question that Jesus ever asked. These are not words that will promote ecumenical rallies with liberals and modernists but they are Jesus’ words. During His earthly ministry Jesus spoke about people being damned to hell for all eternity or condemned and judged in a place of torment if they failed to place their faith in Him for their forgiveness of sin and salvation from hell.

In Matthew 23:14 Jesus tells religious self-righteous people that they would receive “the greater damnation” in hell for the life that they lived. Jesus also spoke about those who would be in “danger of hell fire” (Matt. 5:22). Jesus talked about people being “brought down to hell” (Matt. 11:23) and then in verse 24 He immediately says, “But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.” In Luke Jesus spoke about people being “thrust down to hell” (Luke 10:15).

God’s faithful servants have always warned about hell fire and judgment. D.L. Moody said, “The same Christ that tells us of Heaven with all its glories, tells us of Hell with all its horrors.” Billy Sunday said, “You will not be in Hell five minutes until you believe there is one.” A more recent evangelist, Jerry Johnston, said this: “People screaming in hell will make my voice a small voice.” R.A. Torrey said, “I claim to be a scholarly preacher. I have a right to so claim. I have taken two degrees, specializing in Greek in one of the most highly esteemed universities in America. I have also studied in two German universities. I have read the Bible in three languages every day of my life for many years. I have studied a large share of what has been written on both sides of the question in English and in German. I have written thirty or forty different books which have been translated into many languages. Yes, I believe in scholarship and I believe in the old-fashioned doctrine regarding Hell.”

More important than all these quotes is what Jesus actually said. In John 5:29 Jesus spoke about the “resurrection of damnation.” Jesus also said, “he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). When a person fails to trust in Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection for their salvation it can be concluded that the wrath of God presently abides upon them as they await their actual future punishment in hell. Surely Jesus believed in hell and damnation for He clearly taught that there was such a place called hell where the eternal damnation of souls occurred. Let me say today that there is still a Heaven to gain and an everlasting hell to shun. It matters not what modern day preachers and people pleasers are saying. We must continue to preach it with undaunted courage and bravery.

The late Bishop J.C. Ryle, who died in 1900, said:  
“If you would promote faith, defeat the devil and save souls, preach Hell!”

### Universalism and Annihilationism

Today the doctrine or teaching of endless punishment in hell is being questioned. In a very real sense hell is under fire! The Biblical picture of a hell with unending punishment is being diminished through omission or either moderation of its severity. Universalism says that hell is inconsistent with the love of God and in the end everybody wins by being saved. Conditionalism (conditional immortality) is a theory that says the unsaved will not exist forever experiencing God’s punishment. Eternal existence (immortality) is conditioned upon whether or not a person believes and is saved. The condition of unbelief assures a person that they will not live and suffer forever in the horrors of hell. There will be no eternal existence for the unsaved. Instead, they will be annihilated and cease to exist as a personal being. The fire of God will consume the lost and condemn them to extinction. God will not raise the wicked to torture them but rather to annihilate them. The consequences (extinction) will go on forever but not a person’s suffering in hell. So the theory of universalism saves everybody while conditional immortality annihilates the unsaved. Both teachings attempt to take the “forever” out of hell.

The denial of an eternal hell is not only found among liberal Protestantism but also among various groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists. Sadly, this teaching has been filtering into mainstream evangelical Christianity and popular authors are denying the eternal suffering of people in hell by espousing an annihilationist viewpoint.

Clark Pinnock writes in the March 20, 1987 Christianity Today: "The fire of hell does not torment, but rather consumes the wicked" (Christian News, March 23, 1987). "Let me say at the outset that I consider the concept of hell as endless torment in body and mind an outrageous doctrine (Clark Pinnock, Criswell Theological Review, April 2, 1990).

John R. Stott concluded: "The fire itself is termed 'eternal' and 'unquenchable,' but it would be very odd if what is thrown into it proves indestructible. Our expectation would be the opposite; it would be consumed for ever, not tormented for ever."

For many the subject of hell is toned down and redefined in less severe terms. Due to the reluctance to contend for this doctrine even those within the ranks of so-called evangelicalism are denying the literalness of hell and the eternal nature of unbelievers suffering in hell. Will unbelievers live forever in conscious torment? In Matthew 10:28 Jesus said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Jesus spoke of an eternal place where both soul and body will suffer the eternal vengeance of God.

When Jesus used the words "destroy" (Matt. 7:13; 10:28) and "perish" (John 3:15-16; 10:28; Luke 13:3) during His earthly ministry He was not teaching the total annihilation of a person's soul and body as the cults teach but the spiritual and physical ruin that a person will experience throughout the ages of time following the resurrection. When a person perishes or experiences destruction it renders a person useless in respect to the purpose for which they were created which was to experience eternal life with God and glorify Him. A broken vessel is rendered useless (Matt. 9:17) and can no longer be used and such is the case with a person who perishes from God's presence.

Revelation 20:10 confirms the eternal nature of suffering and judgment in hell when it says that the beast and false prophet were already suffering God's judgment for 1,000 years and would continue to be "tormented day and night for ever and ever." The dream that the lost will be annihilated does not square with what Jesus or Scripture says. Jesus spoke about those who would be "cursed, into everlasting fire" (Matt. 18:8; 25:41) and "go away into everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25:46) – not everlasting annihilation. We must ask: In what sense would punishment be eternal if the wicked were annihilated? When someone says that eternal punishment does not mean eternal punishment I like to ask, "Does three months' punishment mean three months of punishment? If so, then eternal punishment means eternal punishment." Christ clearly taught that both groups (saved and unsaved) would exist forever in different places.

Jesus also spoke about someone receiving "greater damnation" (Luke 20:47) and having a less tolerable judgment (Matt. 10:15; 11:22). How absurd and foolish to talk about someone receiving greater annihilation or a less tolerable annihilation than someone else? How can this be? It's an oxymoron to teach something that could be called an everlasting, greater, or more tolerable annihilation. Such statements do not make sense since it's understood that annihilation is forever and one person's annihilation can't be greater than somebody else's annihilation. Revelation 14:10 says, "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."

Daniel spoke about unbelievers experiencing "everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2). In addition, Jesus spoke of eternal fire (Mark 9:43, 44 – "into the fire that never shall be quenched"). In the same verses He also warned how "their worm dieth not." These statements do not make any sense unless we take them to mean that the suffering of hell will go on forever. It's not enough to say that the fire continues after the wicked have been annihilated. What purpose would this serve? There is no getting around it. There is no other honest interpretation of these passages. Let's stop fooling ourselves! Jesus said that there is a hell and it will last forever for those who go there.

Adolphe Monod, a French preacher, made a very penetrating observation when he wrote: "I did everything I could to avoid seeing eternal suffering in the Word of God, but I did not succeed in it. ... When I heard Jesus Christ declare that the wicked would go away into eternal punishment, and the righteous into eternal life, and that therefore the sufferings of the one class would be eternal in the same sense that the felicity of the other would be ... I gave in; I bowed my head; I put my hand over my mouth; and I made myself believe in eternal suffering."

The eternal torment of the lost is mentioned in Revelation 14:11 where it says, "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever ..." A similar expression "for ever and ever" ("aionas aionon") is used many times in the book of Revelation. Sometimes we read about the eternal existence of God (Rev. 4:9-10; 5:13) and His eternal reign (Rev. 5:13; 11:15). Another time we read about the eternal existence of the saints in Heaven (Rev. 22:5). Several times a similar expression is used for the eternal torment and suffering of the lost (Rev. 14:11; 20:10). Whether it is translated "aionas aionon" or "tous iaonas toon aionon" makes little difference when it comes to the basic understanding of the phrase.

The meaning of the combined word construction based on the word "aion" (age) is determined by its usage and a quick comparison of all the verses would connote that this expression always refers to eternity and not temporary suffering or annihilation. Thus, when the combined words are used "forever and ever" it actually means "the ages of the ages" or indefinite periods of indefinite periods of time." This was the Greek's way of expressing eternity or that which is everlasting or eternal.

Let us pause and ponder the thought of eternity. C.H. Mackintosh said: "Yes, he must live forever somewhere. Tremendous thought! Many do not like it. They would fain be able to say, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' They would like to pas away as the beast that perish; and this very desire, we doubt not, has been, in many cases, the parent of the notion that punishment is non-eternal.' The wish is father to the thought.' But, ah, man must face that dreadful reality, ETERNITY. Saved or unsaved there is no escaping that. He must either deny the immortality of the soul, or admit the eternity of

punishment. ... ETERNITY! ETERNITY! ETERNITY! He cannot get rid of it; he cannot shake it off, He is shut up to the stern fact that he must live forever."

Dear friend, think what it means to be lost forever in the damnation of hell! John Bunyan wrote, "When thou hast been in hell so many thousand years as there are stars in the firmament, or drops in the sea, or sands on the seashore, yet thou hast to lie there forever. Oh, this one word forever, how will it torment thy soul!"

The eternal torment for lost humanity is also given in the same context (Rev. 20:10) where the eternal and hellish punishment of the beast and false prophet are mentioned. Revelation 20:11-15 records their awful and eternal fate: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

The later epistles come to the same conclusions of Jesus. Romans 2:5 speaks about a person gathering or treasuring up "wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteousness of God." Romans 2:8 then talks about the "indignation and wrath" that will come against ungodly Christ-rejecting people. There are repeated warnings about the spiritual ruin of people after they die and descend into judgment. Here are a few examples: "fitted for destruction" (Rom. 9:22); "whose end is destruction" (Phil. 3:19); "who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thess. 1:9); "which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. 6:9); "and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. 2:1); "unto their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:16).

The epistles speak about the unsaved or lost man experiencing everlasting ruin from God's presence. But these verses do not convey that people are annihilated from God's presence and cease to exist. We must come to grips with the truth about hell and understand that the words "destruction," "ruin" and "perish" mean something other than annihilation or extinction. They suggest the concept of spiritual ruin and missing out on God's intended goal and purpose for one's life. Let us repeat something we already said. When a person experiences ruin he is missing out on God's original purpose for his life, which is to experience everlasting life in God's presence. When a person perishes from God's presence he is not put out of existence but becomes unfit for his intended purpose, which is to glorify God in Heaven throughout eternity.

### Symbolism – Is the Fire of Hell Literal?

Another theory, which we will term as symbolism, has also become a popular step away from the Biblical teaching on hell. This view is held by many evangelicals today and basically says that Hell's torments are lasting and conscious but changes the nature of these punishments. It insists that we understand Christ's words, not literally, but metaphorically. Whenever Christ spoke about hell He spoke symbolically. The thinking of today runs something like this: "Fire does not mean real fire. Whatever it means it is probably something far worse." This sounds scholarly but it actually becomes a denial of the literal interpretation of Scripture. Symbolism takes the fire out of hell. Some popular theologians and preachers hold to this view.

Hodge says, "There seems no more reason for supposing that the fire spoken of in Scripture to be literal fire, than that the worm that never dies is literally worm. The devil and his angels who are to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, and whose doom the finally impenitent are to share, have no material bodies to be acted upon by elemental fire."

Dr. Pieters said, "The fire that is not quenched, the worm that dieth not, etc., are symbols, not literal realities."

Billy Graham said this about hell: "There is another fire that may be worse than literal fire. This is the fire of unfulfilled passions, the fire of desires that are never satisfied." "I think that hell essentially is



separation from God forever. And that is the worst hell that I can think of. But I think people have a hard time believing God is going to allow people to burn in literal fire forever. I think the fire that is mentioned in the Bible is a burning thirst for God that can never be quenched" (Graham, Orlando Sentinel, Orlando, Florida, April 10, 1983).

J.I. Packer says he does not believe that "the essence of hell is grotesque bodily discomfort." That idea, he conceives, "misses the deeper point of the lurid word-pictures drawn by Dante and Jesus, and the New Testament writers." He says: "The essence of hell is surely an inner misery of helpless remorse, with recognition that in assigning one to an eternity of self-absorbed unwillingness to receive and respond to divine goodness--the unwillingness that in life one was always cultivating--God is being totally just and had done what is entirely right. Self-hated and God-hated will feed each other in Hell forever" (Calvary Contender, Dec. 15, 1991).

Herb Vander Lugt of Radio Bible Class also said: "A hell in which all burn in a literal fire does not allow for significant degrees of punishment. ... It's important to remember that the Bible often uses fire as a symbol" (Herbert Vander Lugt, What Does the Bible Say about Hell?, 1990).

I disagree with the conclusion of these brethren. There are many others that have espoused this symbolic view of hell who are popular writers, speakers, and authors. Although I do not place those mentioned below in the same category with those previously mentioned one must wonder why there is so much agreement among more conservative and liberal writers and teachers concerning the doctrine of hell. Is it because the human mind wants to become God's counselor or instructor and correct Him (1 Cor. 2:16) and His ways (Isa. 55:8)? Let us remember that God does not look for our input on how to run the universe (Rev. 15:3). So in spite of what popular authors and preachers are saying hell is still a literal place where people suffer for eternity.

Robert Schuller disagrees. He says: "And what is 'hell'? It is the loss of pride that naturally follows separation from God—the ultimate and unfailing source of our soul's sense of self-respect. 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' was Christ's encounter with hell. In that

'hellish' death our Lord experienced the ultimate horror—humiliation, shame, and loss of pride as a human being. A PERSON IS IN HELL WHEN HE HAS LOST HIS SELF-ESTEEM. Can you imagine any condition more tragic than to live life and eternity in shame?" (Schuller, *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation*, 1982, pp. 14-15,93).

C.S. Lewis, the popular "British author, said hell is not a place God sends people who disbelieve the gospel, but a state of mind one chooses to possess and become. "And every state of mind, left to itself," he wrote, "every shutting up of the creature within the dungeon of its own mind--is, in the end, Hell" (Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, p. 65)" (*Calvary Contender*, June 15, 1991).

The most recent example of the denial of hell as a place of eternal literal fire and judgment came from the lips of Pope John Paul II. He stated that hell is not a physical place but "the state of those who freely and definitively separate themselves from God." He denied that Hell is a place of fiery torment and described it rather as "the pain, frustration and emptiness of life without God." He further claimed that hell is not a punishment imposed externally by God and that eternal damnation "is not God's work but is actually our own doing" (Reuters, July 29, 1999).

Of course, Roman Catholicism has relegated hell to Purgatory. Purgatory has no Biblical basis. Jesus never referred to the existence of such a place and neither did the Old Testament or New Testament prophets and apostles. Purgatory was an idea borrowed from the pagan mythologies concerning a place where temporary punishment occurred of people until they could finally be extricated. Think of this. Roman Catholicism has always taught that people are made righteous before God through their participation in the sacraments and their good works. The problem was this. The people never had assurance that they would accumulate enough works to please God and be made acceptable in His sight. Therefore, the teaching of purgatory was adopted by Romanism as a temporary place of punishment. It was thought to be a place where people could go, until they are purged from their sins, with the prospect of finally becoming righteous enough to enter heaven.

Later the notion arose that it was possible to actually pay a fee to the Roman Church for relatives so that their time in purgatory would be shortened. This is why the Reformation began. Martin Luther began to base his teaching on the Bible rather than promoting self-righteous works and the pagan mythologies about purgatory. In any event, this teaching has absolutely no Scriptural merit. The Bible says in Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (not purgatory).

Jesus taught about a literal fire that people would eternally experience when He spoke about casting people into a furnace of fire where great agony, pain, and weeping will occur (Matt. 13:41, 42, 49, 50). Jesus never said anything that would lead us to believe He was referring to figurative fire. Rather, He used fire to inform His listeners that lost people will experience pain and suffering in the regions of the damned. In fact, fire produces the greatest possible physical pain known to mankind. The readers would be well aware of this and would interpret Jesus' words in a literal fashion.

The symbolic interpretation of hell and its suffering has always been a popular diversion from the Biblical teaching on hell. But we might ask this simple question. Why should we conclude that the Lake of Fire mentioned in Revelation 20:11-15 is a place that is only symbolically representing fire? Who is to say by this context that we should ever come to this conclusion? If the fire is not a literal fire, then one must wonder if the Lake of Fire is a literal place? Where do we stop? I do not believe a person is practicing sound Scriptural hermeneutics when they conclude that the fire is symbolic in these texts of Scripture. It's true that other parts of Scripture within their appropriate contexts view fire as symbolic (1 Cor. 3:12-15; Heb. 12:29; Rev. 2:18; 11:5; 15:2; 19:12). However, we must beware about coming to some general conclusions about the subject of fire when studying the Bible. There are plenty of other places where the imagery of fire is not used symbolically.

Genesis 19:24 says:

"Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven."

Would anyone close to an evangelical position dare to conclude that the fire that God rained upon the two wicked cities was not literal fire?

Jude 1:7 also states:

“Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

You will notice that the fire that fell from the sky to devour the wicked sinners of these cities was but a prelude to the eternal fire that will burn them throughout an eternity in hell. If the literal fire that fell from heaven burned these twin cities it would only be proper hermeneutical practice to conclude that the eternal fire mentioned in the same text of Scripture also connotes literal eternal fire. Nothing in the context would lead us to believe otherwise.

Exodus 9:24 states:

“So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.”

Would any logical Bible believing exegete conclude that the judgments upon Egypt did not include literal fire? The universalist claims that the fire is not literal fire for all will be saved in the end. The liberal claims that the fire is not literal because God is a God of love and will not judge any person. Even the more conservative believers now come along and are saying that the fire is only symbolic of the human pain of psychological suffering. Others say that the fire is only a picture of annihilation.

These are all invalid claims that overlook the obvious intent of what Scripture is saying about the eternal suffering of the lost. It's very clear that the fire of hell is some type of literal fire that burns and causes pain and it's an eternal fire. It's a type of fire that is compatible with the “outer darkness” of hell (Matt. 8:12). God can make a flame or fire that one can feel and yet not see. God can take out the light that fire produces and still burn people. In the midst of darkness there can be a perpetual burning. Even the appearance of God on Mount

Sinai combined a burning fire with great darkness (Deuteronomy 4:11; 5:22, 23).

Experimental science demonstrates that the purer the flame and the hotter the fire, the less light will be emitted from the fire. Certainly, this is the case with hell. Scientists have calculated that as a flame gets hotter, you have a yellow flame, orange flame, and then a blue flame. Then beyond blue flame there is a green flame, and if the flame gets much hotter than this, the flame actually becomes entirely clear and gives no color at all. So there is no light in Hell because the flames are so hot they have no color and light. They are simply clear.

God can also very easily regulate the degree of punishment or suffering in hell accordingly. If God can raise the bodies of the wicked dead He surely can judge them with an eternal flame that will not consume the bodies of the lost or wicked but be regulated to punish them according to their works (Rev. 20:11-15; Matt. 10:28). There is no reason to believe that the fire of hell will not be literal fire. This is because the bodies of those present will have been recreated and made indestructible by God. Those who are condemned to hell will be raised and given new bodies for the sole purpose of being punished forever in those bodies (John 5:25-29; Daniel 12:2).

Some people think that hell will only be experienced by the inner consciousness. This is not true. The body will also experience hell since there is a physical resurrection prior to going to the eternal hell. Transcendent eternal bodies are going to be given to the damned; they will suffer in those bodies forever. The bodies men have now wouldn't be able to endure hell because they would be consumed in a moment. But God can give a body to someone that will be able to endure burning without being consumed. Thus, the contexts and literal interpretation of Scripture leave us with the inescapable conclusion that the fires of Hell are literal and unending. What saith the Scripture?

I think Russel K. Tardo gave an accurate Scriptural summary of the fires of hell: "Perhaps you imagined that where there is fire there must be some degree of light, but not so in hell! The fires of hell are of a different and far more horrible nature than fire here. Hell fire produces

no light, but leaves men in total darkness. They see and feel the lick of the flame but cannot see through its black walls. Here on earth fire devours and reduces its prey to ashes, and burns out when it runs out of fuel but not so in hell. There the fires burn with fierceness that none can comprehend but the ones who experience it, yet it does not consume them and never will! They shall ever be burning; they shall ever be tormented, yet never consumed!”

We do know that the second death (Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8) is an eternal death or separation from God that involves both the spirit and resurrected body of a person. Both the spirit and body will be separated from God's presence in a second or final (eternal) way at the Great White Throne Judgment. Jesus and the Bible teaches that a lost individual will experience eternal death or separation from God in both a spiritual and physical way (Matt. 10:28). They will exist in an eternal state of death (separation) from God. This death or separation will involve the eternal banishment of their spirit from God and the eternal banishment of their bodies in the fires of Gehenna (Matthew 5:22). Both their spirit and body will be judged in the future.

Exodus 3:2 records:

“And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.”

Here we see that God created a bush that was on fire but was not consumed! Cannot the same God resurrect a body that will burn in fire and not be consumed? God can keep people from being consumed when they are in fires even as He did to the Hebrew children who were flung into the fiery furnace during Daniel's' day (Daniel 3:19-25). Let us bow before the God who says what He means and means what He says!

These examples alone teach us that God can keep people from being burned up or totally consumed in fire and cause them to suffer pain and agony without annihilation. Jesus said that “For every one shall be salted with fire” (Mark 9:49) implying that they shall be preserved in a fire that burns them without consuming them. Thus, the expressions “everlasting fire” (Matt. 18:8; 25:41) and “unquenchable fire” (Matt. 3:12) connote that lost people throughout the ages of time

will experience an eternal hell fire that will continually burn them but not consume them.

In regards to the literalness of the fire of hell we must be dogmatic that Jesus meant what He said during His earthly ministry. To try and invent manmade supplements to what Jesus and the Scriptures mean about fire, worms, darkness, smoke, brimstone and punishment is a travesty upon the truth of Scripture and the literal understanding of the Word of God.

Let me ask several questions to drive home a valid point of hermeneutical exegesis. If the fire of hell is not literal, then is the darkness of hell literal (Matt. 8:12; 2 Pet. 2:17; Jude 13)? If the darkness of hell is not literal, then is the brimstone of hell literal (Rev. 14:10; 20:10; 21:8)? If the brimstone of hell is not literal, then is the smoke of hell literal (Rev. 14:11)? And if the fire, darkness, brimstone and smoke of hell are not literal, then is the pain that people suffer literal (Luke 16:24; Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30)? Furthermore, if nothing mentioned about hell is literal, then is hell a literal place? Perhaps it is actually a symbolic expression of the transmigration of the soul into a less glorious life form. Furthermore, if hell is only described in symbolic terms then could it not simply symbolically refer to annihilation? When one starts to evaporate the clear meaning of Scripture then the meaning of Scripture is left to the interpretation of man and not God and always leads to a distortion of truth.

The late Sir Robert Anderson once wrote:

“So awful is the teaching of the Lord Jesus respecting the doom of the impenitent, that every statement on the subject ought to adhere strictly to the very words of Scripture.”

As the Biblical writers describe judgment they are describing a painful judgment caused by burning fire. Fire is used to support the fact that there will be conscious torment by that fire throughout eternity. The Bible is not some technical science book. The imagery of fire is used by the Biblical writers in a sense that the people of their day would know and understand it to mean. And they would understand that fire causes pain and suffering from the human standpoint. Thus, the imagery of fire was used in this manner to convey suffering and pain.

People will be tormented by literal fire throughout eternity. This is why the biblical writers used the imagery of fire. And to conclude that the fire is only a symbol is doing a great injustice to the plain sense of Scripture.

John Wesley used to say:

“Put your finger in the candle. Can you bear it for one minute? How then will you bear to have your body plunged into a lake of fire burning with brimstone?”

Henry Ward Beecher once remarked:

"The thought of future punishment for sinners which the Bible reveals is enough to make an earthquake of terror in every man's soul."

During an interview on television a reporter asked a girl involved in punk rock, "What are you looking forward to?" She said, "I'm looking forward to death." The reporter asked her why. She said, "I want to die so I can go to hell and have fun!" How terribly misinformed this woman and millions of others are concerning hell. Hell is not going to be a place of fun; it is going to be a place of weeping, screaming, grinding of teeth in pain, and unrelenting torment.

The conclusions of humanists, cults, atheists, the liberal clergy, and even the New Evangelical popular speakers of our day concerning the subject of hell mean absolutely nothing. What matters is what Jesus said about hell. Hell is not a myth, hell is not here on earth, hell is not the grave, hell is not war, and hell is not merely some kind of mental psychological anguish that people experience when they are separated from God. Hell is an actual place where the damnation and judgment of souls and human bodies occurs for all eternity (Rev. 20:15). To come to any other conclusion is to move outside the realm of orthodoxy and disbelieve the simple teaching of Jesus Christ and the Bible.

Now what is our responsibility as God's people in light of our present study? The answer is very simple. We must be a better witness for Jesus Christ. When we contemplate eternity and unsaved people being judged for their sins forever in the agonies of an eternal hell it should cause us to possess a new burden for souls and launch out



into evangelism. We are all to be witnesses for Jesus Christ sharing the message of the Gospel to a lost and dying world (2 Cor. 5:20).

With millions of people lost and headed toward an eternal hell we need to become more interested in the souls of lost mankind. What are you doing about it? Jude 1:23 says, "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." Some suggest that the fire mentioned here is the fire of their lustful passion that burns within them but this seems to defy the judgment context of Jude which warns of fiery judgment and punishment (vs. 7, 11, 13, 15). This text informs us that there are many people who are close to hellfire, and we must go after them with a sense of urgency. We must warn them of their great peril seeking to lead them to faith in Jesus Christ.

One writer said it this way: "I think it is a reasonable thing to endeavor to frighten persons away from hell. They stand on its brink and are just ready to fall into it and are senseless of their danger. Is it not a reasonable thing to frighten a person out of a house of fire?"

Have you made any difference in the life of some poor lost soul that is headed toward hell? Is there some lost soul you can pull out of the fire this week by sharing the Gospel message with them? Many are walking close to the fires of hell and they don't even realize it. As God's people we must be aware of the urgent need for lost souls to hear the Gospel message before it is too. There are many today who are so close to entering the fire. They are ready to drop into the fires of eternity. We must go now and share Christ with them before it's too late.

C.T. Studd said:  
"Some want to live within the sound  
Of church or chapel bell.  
I want to run a rescue shop  
Within a yard of hell."

The Old Testament talks about the importance of being a watchman in order to warn others of approaching danger (Ezekiel 3:17; 33:6-7). In one sense God has told us to warn people of the coming danger of hell fire that awaits them if they fail to repent of their sin and turn in faith to Jesus Christ as their only Savior. Have you been a good

watchman? Have you been warning others of their coming fate if they reject Christ as Savior?

“Does it make any difference to you?  
Does it make any difference to you?  
If a soul dies in sin God has told you to win,  
Will it make any difference to you?

Will His blood be required at they hand?  
Do you warn the lost as He planned?  
Do you make plain the way?  
Do you work while its day?  
Is the Lord working daily through you?”

#### A Voice From Hell

You lived next door to me for years;  
We shared our dreams, our joy and tears.  
A friend to me you were indeed,  
A friend who helped me when in need.

My faith in you was strong and sure;  
We had such trust as should endure,  
No spats between us ever rose;  
Our friends were like – and so, our foes.

What sadness, then my friend, to find,  
That after all, you weren't so kind,  
The day my life on earth did end,  
I found you weren't a faithful friend.

For all those years we spent on earth,  
You never talked of second birth.  
You never spoke of my lost soul,  
And of the Christ who'd make me whole!

I plead today from hell's cruel, fire,  
And tell you now my least desire –  
You cannot do a thing for me;  
No words today my bonds will free.

But do not err, my friend, again –  
Do all you can for souls of men.  
Plead with them now quite earnestly,  
Lest they be cast in hell with me!”

- Author Unknown

### The Teaching of Jesus on Hell

In the remainder of our study I would like to look at several key passages of Scripture that speak on the subject of eternal punishment. They once again confirm that there is a hell or a place of suffering for the unsaved in the afterlife. To deny this is to deny what Jesus Himself affirmed and turn a deaf ear and blind eye to the simple conclusions of Jesus Christ. The first passage is found in Luke 16:19-31.

#### Luke 16:19-31

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 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. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them

from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

We find from this reading of Scripture and many other portions of Scripture (Phil. 1:21; 2 Cor. 5:8; Heb. 9:27) that there is life immediately after death. Man does not cease to exist after death, nor is he unconscious and oblivious to feelings, sensations, or pain. You will live forever in the place of your choosing. Where you will spend eternity is chosen and decided by you, and you alone! May I ask you a personal question? Where will you be one minute after you die? Will you enter the blessing of a blissful life with God or the peril of punishment in hell?

Those who want to deny the literal nature and character of hell do so by concluding that this section is a parable. I often wondered what difference it really makes whether or not it is parable. In the first place, when Jesus spoke using word pictures He often used clear illustrations concerning such things as birds, flowers, and rain, which were literal and real things (Matt 5:45; 6:28). Many of the figures He used were not meant to be imaginary things describing something else. Jesus used many literal descriptions to verify and illustrate truth and convey literal realities.

Second, just because Jesus spoke in a parable does not mean that everything in the parable must automatically be construed as a symbolic description of something that could never literally occur. Those who contend that Jesus’ description of hell is symbolic do so forgetting that when Jesus used common illustrations in parables He always referred to things that could literally occur. It’s interesting that most things mentioned in the parables that Jesus gave could literally take place and do take place (Luke 15:1-23). Therefore, illustrations are not given in the parables to present to us the idea that certain events could never occur in a literal fashion.

In His parables Jesus always used common everyday elements such as merchants making money, stewards taking care of property, servants serving masters, people attending banquets, and farmers sowing seed, which were all understood to be literal realities and events that could occur. Thus, it would not be out of the question for

Jesus to use the descriptions and language of fire, torment, and suffering to describe literal realities concerning the afterlife that do occur on a regular basis for those who are lost. In this story Jesus was actually describing literal realities concerning hell that were used to convey the deeper meaning of suffering and punishment in the afterlife. I firmly believe that this passage of Scripture in Luke 16 is an illustration of the afterlife that vividly and graphically portrays literal realities which people face when they die. The descriptions are literal while at the same time the images convey and illustrate how terrible the judgment will be for the wicked and lost.

The whole dispute over the parabolic nature of this passage means absolutely nothing to the literal character of hell and how the unsaved suffer after death. The entire Biblical teaching or whole counsel of God on the subject gives ample proof that hell is a literal place where unsaved people go and experience physical suffering or judgment. In any event, Jesus never did say this was a parable. Furthermore, Jesus spoke of a specific man named Lazarus.

Jesus never gave specific names in any parables like He did here. This could signify that the story was a true-life experience. Perhaps Christ is recounting the history of some rich man who had lived in the past. The whole point is this. The descriptions that Jesus gave of hell confer with the descriptions in both the Old Testament and later epistles. Jesus was not speaking in symbolic terms when using the imagery of fire, worms, water, torment, pain, and darkness in the hell accounts. All these descriptive items are literal and must be taken literally or else one reads into the Bible their own biased ideas and conclusions.

#### 1. The Prelude to Hell's Judgment (Luke 16:19-23a)

What happens in a person's life before they go to hell? The Bible says that they live their life independent of Jesus Christ refusing to repent of their sin and place faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. This was true of the rich man who lived a luxurious life that was independent of God. The portrait of the rich man, sometimes called Dives (Latin for rich), was that he wore only the most expensive, custom-made clothing, and his table was filled with the choicest gourmet foods. He lived for self, catering to bodily pleasures and

appetites. He had no genuine love for God, no care for his fellow man, and saw no need for repentance and faith in the Messiah.

This man's riches kept him from repentance and salvation. Jesus said it was hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God (see Luke 18:24-25). This man did not go to hell because he was rich. Rather, he went to hell because he lived for riches rather than preparing himself for eternity. Riches have a way of keeping people from seeing their need for Jesus Christ and His salvation. People can find security in their own wealth and position in life and see no need to place saving faith in Christ. Riches can produce a spirit of self-sufficiency in people. Those who are rich from the world's perspective might believe that riches will solve all of their problems in this life and throughout eternity. Many die with faith in their material gain and hope to think that their wealth will provide the answer and ticket for life after death. The problem is this. You can't buy a ticket to gain eternal life (James 5:1-3).

In a similar way, we must understand that the beggar did not go into eternal rest because he was poor. He went there because his poverty drove him to the place where he saw his need for Jesus Christ. He realized that there was no hope in this life and that the only hope he would ever have was found in Jesus Christ and the promise of eternal life. In any event, Jesus was contrasting these two types of people to inform us that many times the tables are turned in the next life. He reminds us that a person's status throughout eternity will be much different than his position and prestige that he had while living on earth.

The Bible says that when the beggar died he was "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (vs. 22) or Abraham's side. Abraham's side or bosom is an expression to denote the place of bliss where Old Testament believers went prior to the resurrection. Apparently this refers to a place of paradise for Old Testament saints where they immediately entered at the time of death (Luke 23:43). In the Old Testament we discover that Abraham went to Sheol and the Old Testament repeatedly says that he would be "gathered unto his people" in this place (Gen. 15:15; Gen. 25:8). To any Jew, the thought of enjoying fellowship with Abraham in the heart of the earth

would suggest inexpressible bliss. When Jesus died and promised the thief to be with Him in paradise He could not possibly mean Heaven since Jesus did not go to Heaven when He died. He went into the heart of the earth (Matt. 12:40) into the place called Abraham's bosom. Not until the resurrection of Christ was this compartment emptied out (Eph. 4:8) and paradise was transported to Heaven (2 Cor. 12:4).

Many question whether angels actually participate in transporting the souls of believers into the next life but this account seems to suggest that there is a heavenly escort that takes a person into the next life of bliss and happiness. We see no reason for doubting the plain sense of these words. Good angels minister to believers in this life and there seems no reason why they should not do so at the time of death. However, what about the wicked angels or demons? Do they transport unbelievers like the rich man to the place of burning and judgment? We might well believe that they do. When the rich man died his spirit left his body (James 2:26) and he was no doubt transported in a similar way by the wicked angels (grim reaper) into the place of judgment. The text says, "And in hell he lift up his eyes" - vs. 23a.

I seriously doubt that most people and congregations would take the hell fire preaching of days gone by. The following are some excerpts from a sermon entitled "The Horrors of Hell." In this sermon the preacher speaks about the departure of unsaved infidels into hell's fire as they, like the rich man, are presumably escorted by the wicked angels into the next life of damnation and judgment only to lift up their eyes in a place of terrible judgment. As we close this first point on the prelude to hell's judgment listen to what the old-time preacher said:

"The first encounter that a lost soul has after death (sometimes even before death) is with the fiends of darkness. These fiends of hideous looking devils who drag lost terrified souls down, down into the dreadful regions of Hell. ... In the book Dying Testimonies of Saved and Unsaved (1898) many well attested death-bed scenes of infidels and atheists have been recorded from authentic sources. The record relates that in those days many unbelievers died in awful agony. They did not have the drugs we do today. Hence dying of that age were not

eased out into eternity like they are today in our hospitals. People back there mostly died at home in their own bed while fully conscious.

In some cases, the blood curdling terrifying screams of the lost, while in the throes of death, could be heard blocks away! Infidels have died screaming that they could see devils in the room waiting to drag their lost souls to Hell. So dreadful were some death-bed scenes that relatives fled out of the house and would not return unto the screaming man expired! Nurses who have attended some noted dying infidels have stated that they wish never again to go through such a terrifying ordeal.

Oh what horrors must pierce the lost soul, when at the moment of death, he sees the devils leering at him out of the darkness; and coming to drag his terrified soul down into the dreadful regions of the damned. Oh to dwell forever in everlasting fire with devils and damned spirits. Oh the suffocating stench of burning brimstone, and the terrifying screams of darkened souls as fiends plunge them in liquid fire. Oh the monstrous shapes of horrid devils who wait for you to take your last gasping breath. Above the hiss of the unquenchable flames rolls the thunder of Hell's eternal cry. The wailing chorus of the damned will be forever heard in Hell's burning madhouse, God's Word declares – "I am tormented in this flame."

The groans and screams of the damned will be an awful hellish madness which the lost must forever endure. ... The eternal gnawings of their everlasting burning and tortured conscience will cause thee to scream out in mad despair – too late – too late – it is forever too late! Oh, thou vile, foolish wretch! Thou must now forever endure the everlasting torments of Hell. Think on this all you mad brained blasphemers! Think on this all you sneering Bible critics! Here me all you booze hounds, dope fiends, sex perverts, whoremongers, hippies, liars, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Christian Scientists, atheists, agnostics, and all Christ rejecters. Here these words and hear them well. Unless you repent and accept Christ as your Lord and Saviour you will forever burn in Hell."

I wonder how many congregations with their positive thinkers and sentimental preaching could sit down and listen to a message like this



today? The doctrine of hell and eternal torment is a frightening reality and Jesus mixes no terms when speaking about it.

## 2. The Peril of Hell's Judgment - (Luke 16:23-26)

The peril of hell's judgment is seen when the text says that this man found himself "in hell" (vs. 23) after his death. The Greek word behind the English word hell is "hades" which occurs ten times in the New Testament. The most detailed information on this place is found right here in our present text of Scripture. The same place is alluded to in the Old Testament under the Hebrew expression of "sheol" which contextually can refer to the place of departed spirits in the inner earth (Isa. 14:9-10). Hades or Sheol was evidently an inner chamber in the center part of the earth where people went when they died (Ps. 16:10). However, one compartment in this earthly chamber was for the suffering of the wicked or lost. This is where the rich man went when he died. Apparently this compartment is still there today. In fact, do you realize that the rich man is still in hades today suffering God's fiery vengeance? He has not yet received the drop of water for which he so desperately longed.

Today as you listen to this sermon on hell the rich man is still there awaiting the final judgment of the Lake of Fire. Hades is not the final destination of those who reject Christ. However, it is a place of torment for them until they are resurrected to stand before the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). It will not be until the last judgment that hades will be dumped into the Lake of Fire. This compartment of judgment in the place called hades can be viewed as a temporary holding tank for the lost souls of mankind until the resurrection day. Although we use the English translation of hell to refer to this place it is more accurately termed as hades. This is where people go today when they die without Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### The Peril of Pain

The peril of hell's judgment is described as one of torment in the flame that tortures and burns the lost individual ("torments" and "tormented" – vss. 23-25). Since this place is a holding tank of judgment, prior to the final resurrection of the lost, we must consider

how an immaterial soul or spirit can experience pain and torment. Apparently, even spirit beings in their immaterial state can have the senses of a human body functioning (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10). They can actually experience pain and agony from God's judgment. This is clearly seen even in the intermediate state of the unbelieving rich man, prior to their bodily resurrection (Luke 16:23-25). Even without a physical body the senses of seeing (vs. 23 – “eyes”), pain (vs. 23 – “torment”), heat (“cool my tongue” – vs. 24) and memory (25 – “remember”) are still present.

The immaterial soul is capable of sensing torment. The senses in the after life can and will be retained even without a human body. God can bring judgment against the spiritual part of a person's existence even without a body. Such will be the case between death and the resurrection of the human body. You might ask, “How can God do this? How can God allow a person to have bodily senses without possessing a body?” I don't know but let me ask you something, “How can God create the world from nothing (Heb. 11:1-2) and how can God eternally exist without every having a beginning (Gen. 1:1)?” There are some things we cannot answer. We simply accept them by faith and we know that they are true because God's Word says so and because there is no other reasonable faith than to believe in God as the eternal Creator.

There can be no getting around it. This man was being tortured in the fires of hades prior to the resurrection. He retained all his earthly senses while in the intermediate state between death and the resurrection of his body. He was in agony requesting that Abraham would allow the beggar to dip his finger in water and give him one drop of water. The text says the lost man in hell cried out, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” Let me say first of all that there is no mercy in hell. You might cry for mercy when you are in hell but there will be no mercy in this awful place of the damned. If you want mercy you need to accept it in this life (1 Pet. 1:3; 2:10; 1 Tim. 1:15-16; Eph. 2:4). There is mercy with the Lord today. When I trusted Jesus Christ as my Savior in this present life I discovered the truth of the hymn writer:

“Mercy there was great, and grace was free;  
Pardon there was multiplied to me;  
There my burdened soul found liberty,  
At Calvary.”

Dear friend, if you want mercy then you can have it in this life. You will receive no mercy in hell. Did you know that it's only the mercy of God that keeps you from dropping into the judgment of hell?

Jonathan Edwards gave more consideration on the doctrine of hell than any other preacher. He referred to the mercy and good pleasure of God from keeping people out of hell. Here is what Edwards said:

“Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in the covering so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen. ... There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor anything to take hold of, there is nothing between you and hell but air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up. ... His wrath burns against you like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else than to be thrown into the fire. ... you hang by the slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder.”

We must understand that hell is a place of intense physical pain and suffering. The rich man said he was “tormented in this flame” (vs. 24). The fiery flame suited for his judgment was real. It was not merely a psychological or emotional judgment but a judgment that inflicted literal pain and agony that could be felt and experienced. Jesus repeatedly spoke of hell's judgment as inflicting great pain and agony on those who enter this awful place (Matt. 8:12; 13:42; 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30). In these verses Jesus described the future punishment of the wicked in hades as a time when they will experience intense suffering and pain. There will be “weeping” or intense wailing that is caused by the horror and inflicted pain that comes from this terrible place. The weeping or wailing will naturally be triggered by all the factors which make hell so terrible – the environment, the remorse, and the torment and agony.

The cries of the damned will go on for eternity. There will also be “gnashing of teeth” or grinding of the teeth in excruciating pain when the lost are tossed into what Jesus called “the furnace of fire” (Matt. 13:50). The context of fiery judgment would indicate that the real wailing and grinding of teeth is in response to a person’s punishment in the fires of hell. Dear friend, these are words that cannot be diluted or changed to mean anything else. We cannot sit idly by and stop our lips from echoing the truth about the future destiny awaiting those who reject Jesus Christ as their Savior. We dare not dismiss or diminish the serious nature of these words. We must reaffirm what Jesus taught concerning punishment and not allow the silence to continue in the church today. Hell is no joke. Hell is for real. Hell is eternal.

One honest writer said this about hell: "There is no way to describe hell. Nothing on earth can compare with it. No living person has any real idea of it. No madman in wildest flights of insanity ever beheld its horror. No man in delirium ever pictured a place so utterly terrible as this. No nightmare racing across a fevered mind ever produces a terror to match that of the mildest hell. No murder scene with splashed blood and oozing wound ever suggested a revulsion that could touch the border lands of hell. Let the most gifted writer exhaust his skill in describing this roaring cavern of unending flame, and he would not even brush in fancy the nearest edge of hell."

You may say to me today, “I don’t like what Jesus said about hell.” Well, the fact that you hate something does not change it! You might hate rats, snakes, and spiders but they will not cease to exist just because you hate them. If you don’t like the fire and judgment of hell then take it up with Jesus. The judgment of hell is real. But you say, “How can a loving God send me to hell.” The answer is simple. A God of love cannot send you to hell and will not send you to hell. But a God of absolute holiness, righteousness, and justice will send you to hell (Hab. 1:13; Ps. 145:17).

This is the other side of God’s character which nobody wants to talk about it. This is the other side of God’s character that man forgets. Man can’t deal with God. He cannot understand God. But one thing is for sure. God demonstrated the greatest act of love ever known to mankind when He left His Son die on the cross of hell-bound sinners

who had offended His holiness and justice (John 3:16). There is no problem with God's love and there is no problem with God's justice sending people to hell when they reject a free and living offer of salvation in this present life (John 5:40).

### The Peril of Memory

The peril of hell's judgment is further described as one of psychological torture. This can be illustrated in the words "Son, remember" (vs. 25). God tells us that we will never lose our memory in the next life, even if we enter God's judgment. The rich man was to remember the way he lived His Christ-rejecting days while he was on earth. He had all the opportunities in the world to repent of his sins, turn to the Messiah or Savior, and change his way of living. However, he chose to live independent of God, salvation, and eternal life.

Memory can be a blessing or a curse. In hell it will be a curse. One of the plaguing perils of hell will be memory. The memory of misspent days and even Christ-rejecting days will no doubt haunt the hearts of the damned throughout eternity. Jesus said that unsaved and unbelieving mankind will give an account of every idle word in the Day of Judgment (Matt. 12:36). No doubt the lost and damned people of eternity will be able to remember their sins and how these unforgiven sins brought judgment against them. Oh how terrible it will be to live forever with the memory of haunting sins that have damned you to an eternal hell. "Son, remember."

John Blanchard wrote:

"Every sinful word, thought and deed, all the pride, envy, jealousy, hatred, selfishness, dishonesty and impurity, every neglected opportunity to hear and respond of the gospel, every failure to help those in need, all these will be endlessly replayed, endlessly remembered, and be the cause of endless remorse."

The remembrance of a misspent life filled with sinful living will cause a person to experience "shame" (reproach) and "contempt" (disgrace) throughout eternity (Dan. 12:2) for the type of life they lived while on earth. The damned of hell will be caught in a vicious vortex of accusation, guilt, regret, shame, and contempt. Their memory of all

their sins and past life will plague them forever. This is a horrible aspect of hell. “Son, remember.”

“Memory like an adder stingeth,  
All wasted past upbringing.  
If I could that viper strangle  
Half my misery would be o’er.”

Oscar Lowry said:

“Hell will be a place of ceaseless memory and remorse. Torments will haunt you from every side. Years will slowly drag by; centuries will slowly pass, thousands and millions of millenniums will creep on; and still you will have no less time to mourn your fearful fate. On an on you flee, writhing and screaming with pain as the flames of hell scorch your quivering body, while before your mind flit the shades and ghosts of every murdered opportunity you had of hearing and accepting the gospel of salvation.”

George Mundell, writing a booklet on “The Destiny of a Lost Soul,” said this: “One thing that really shakes me is that some man or woman will carelessly and foolishly read this message, or one like it, and never have another opportunity to accept the Lord as Saviour. That one will go out into a lost eternity. While there he will forever remember reading these truths. All that he will be able to do, out of the longing of his soul, is to think: ‘If only I had heeded that warning. If only I had accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior right then. If only – if only!’ He will be weeping and wailing and thinking: ‘If only I had – if only I had – accepted the Lord.’”

Dear friend, we see from this text that it will be impossible to lose consciousness in a lost eternity. The torment of pain and even memory will go on forever. The memory of hell’s occupants will never cease as they reflect upon their misspent days in sinful living and their missed opportunities for salvation. These thoughts will haunt them for billions and billions of unending years.

Sir Francis Newport, who ridiculed Christianity, is quoted as saying these terrifying words on his deathbed: “Oh that I was to lie a thousand years upon the fire that never is quenched, to purchase the favor of God, and be united to him gain! But it is a fruitless wish.

Millions and millions of years would bring me no nearer to the end of my torments than one poor hour. Oh, eternity, eternity! Forever and forever! Oh, the insufferable pains of hell!”

So the memory of missed opportunities will undoubtedly haunt the damned throughout eternity. But I’m also prone to think that the desires a person had before death will also go on throughout eternity. Many will possess their same wicked desires they had while living on earth but never have those desires fulfilled. It can be illustrated that when God’s judgment falls on lost men they still are not willing to repent of their sins.

Revelation 16:9 says: “And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.”

The fact that man does not repent of his sins in the face of judgment would illustrate that his memory of how he loved sin and wanted fulfillment through sin will remain intact. In fact, this memory about sinful passion will haunt man because there will be an unfulfilled passion related to sin that will exist throughout eternity. Those who are filthy will desire to remain filthy even when they are lost in an eternal hell (Rev. 22:11 – “he which is filthy, let him be filthy still”).

This would mean that throughout eternity the alcoholic will still crave his drink but never have the craving fulfilled. The dope addict will want a fix but will never get it. The person who was a slave to tobacco will crave for that cigarette. The sex addict will crave for another victim but never be able to fulfill that desire. The memory of fleshly sins will continue to haunt people throughout eternity but no fulfillment of the flesh will take place. These unfulfilled desires will be part of the torment that the unsaved will experience throughout the eternal ages of time. Never again will they be able to demonstrate their pride, fulfill their lustful passions or cravings, or view the things that they choose since they are in the blackness of hell forever.

So going to hell is like a two-edged sword. There will be regret for a misspent life while at the same time there will be regret for no longer being able to live out a sinful life and fulfilling fleshly desires. In fact, I’m convinced that if Jesus Christ would give a second chance for

people to be saved after one billion years of suffering in hell (this won't happen) that they still would not repent of their sinful deeds ("and they repented not to give him glory" - Rev. 16:9). The depravity and hatred of man for what is righteous would lead people to endure the pain of hell rather than repent of their sins. It's interesting that the rich man did not say that he wanted to repent of his sins and change his heart. Rather, he wanted the hearts and lives of those on earth to be changed before they came to the awful place of hell. This will be seen in our final point.

There is something that we need to contemplate today. People die like they live. In other words, if you live like a sinner who is proud, cursing, lying, self-centered, and worldly then you will die as a sinner and go to hell. Don't be deceived into thinking that you will someday have a change of heart. People die like they live. Furthermore, they live on in hell like they lived on earth as an unrepentant sinner.

One newspaper carried the account of a horrible airliner crash that killed its crew and almost 100 passengers. Reports stated that during take-off the huge plane failed to gain sufficient altitude, and though the pilot tried desperately to prevent it from happening the plane crashed. The passengers died instantly with no chance to "get right" with God. Airline officials were anxious to retrieve the black box from the wreckage in order to determine what might have caused such a disaster. They wanted to hear the last words of the pilot and crew before they met death and stepped off into eternity. All were shocked to discover that the pilot's last remarks were a barrage of four-letter words too filthy to print. He died cursing, not repenting!

My point is this. Those who live cursing, die cursing. Those who live blaspheming, die blaspheming. If you live in sin you will die in sin and be damned eternally. Dear friend, you must not gamble. Eternity is at stake! You cannot put repentance off until later (Acts 17:30), for you may find, like the passengers and crew of his plane, that those who wait until the eleventh hour to get right with God, die as 10:30.

Someone once asked, "Where is hell?" The answer is simple. Hell is at the end of a Christless life. This man and millions of others who follow in his train will remember how godless they lived while on earth and how they failed to repent of their sins and live independent of



God and His offer of salvation. Such was the case with the rich man in Luke 16.

### The Peril of Separation

Luke 16:26 speaks of yet another peril that the damned in hell face. It is the peril of a solitary life. Abraham said to this man that there was a “great gulf” or giant opening (chasm) between the righteous and unrighteous that is “fixed” or permanently established. Dear friend, hell has no exists! Furthermore, this account of separation tells us that there is no returning or sending back of messages from hell. This means that there is no reincarnation, nor spiritism, as it taught today. God creates a chasm of separation from the saved and unsaved. Modern spiritism invokes demons and not the spirits of dead ancestors.

The imagery of a great gulf or chasm suggests that prior to the resurrection of Christ both the righteous and unrighteous dwelt in the place called hades (Greek word) or sheol (Hebrew word) and that there were two compartments separated by a vast opening. One compartment held the saved and righteous whereas the other compartment held the unsaved and wicked. Between these two compartments of bliss and suffering there was a great chasm that no one could pass over.

It was not possible to pass back and forth from the two compartments. All hope of communication and fellowship would be cut off from those who were previously known on earth. In fact, those in hell will receive no assistance or help from others for in hell there is only separation and loneliness. In hell there will be no one who can offer a sympathetic ear, no one to lend a helping hand or shoulder to cry on. Imagine the utter loneliness and separation that a person will feel when they are rejected from seeing others and most of all rejected by God for all eternity.

I've heard people say that they were going to hell and were looking forward to it because they were going to see all their friends there. One man told me, “My friends and I are going to play cards there and we will drink beer together once again.” This is insanity. You are wrong if you think you'll see you former friends and loved one there.

Hell is a place of “outer darkness” (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30) and where the “mist of darkness” (2 Pet. 2:17) or cloud of darkness envelops people. This is why no meetings will occur in hell. Hell is a deep and black burning caldron, which will keep you from seeing former friends and acquaintances. Hell is a place of total isolation. There is no friendship or “company” in hell! Hell is a place of torment and loneliness. It’s not an eternal New Year’s Eve party where sinners have a good time doing what they used to do on earth.

You will probably hear the groans of the damned and the cries of agony but in the blanket of thick darkness you’ll never see them. The inhabitants of hell will spend eternity alone in a fiery pit of darkness. There are no visiting rights in hell as we see from this text. If unbelievers are next to each other in hell they will be of no comfort to one another. They will probably only add to each other’s agony through expressions of hatred, accusations, and curses (Isaiah 14:9-11). No comfort will be derived from the presence of others for everybody in hell will be consumed with the torment of their own judgment and the misery of their unforgiven sins.

Dear friend, hell is a place of utter hopelessness. Someone once said that a sign on the outside of hell would probably read: “All hope abandon, ye who enter here.” In no uncertain terms, the Bible declares that the condition of the damned in hell is hopeless. There will not only be great suffering and torture in the eternal flame but no one in hell that will be able to calm you or even care that you are in hell suffering such eternal misery.

Please note that this narrative refutes the so-called theory of soul sleep as promoted by the cults. This theory teaches that the soul is in unconscious death and sleeps until the day of resurrection. But in this Biblical account we discover that both the rich man and Lazarus were conscious. One was enjoying comfort and the other suffering torment. Dear friend, it is a solemn thing to ponder one’s eternal destiny and realize the reality of divine punishment. The soul never sleeps. It lives on after death in the place of its choosing (Eccl. 12:7; 2 Cor. 5:8).

When Jonathan Edwards preached “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” the people were terrified with a fear of God. They were so afraid that it is recorded that some held onto the church pillars for fear

of the ground opening under their feet and hell swallowing them up. The famous English preacher George Whitefield believed in eternal punishment and preached it, often describing hell so vividly that people wept and moaned for mercy throughout his great congregations.

One day while George Whitefield was exhorting from the pulpit, he was overcome by emotions and he began to weep quietly. Then lifting up his hands, he exclaimed, "O my hearers, think of the wrath to come! Think of the wrath to come! Flee to Jesus for refuge and salvation right now while there is still time." One who heard him said, "His earnestness brought tears to my eyes, and for weeks afterward I couldn't get the picture of that concerned soul winner out of my mind. My own heart was warmed by his zeal. Eventually the Gospel that he preached with such conviction resulted in my conversion."

### 3. The Prayer in Hell's Judgment (Luke 16:27-31)

"Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment" (vss. 27-28). Please note that the rich man was praying in hell. He was petitioning God – "I pray thee" (vs. 27). Imagine this. People pray in hell! If you don't pray in this life you just might learn to pray in the next life. In death, the rich man suddenly became evangelistic! Incredibly, this man became interested in missions! He wanted someone to go to his five brothers and warn them about hell so that they might not come to the same place of torment. How terrible it must be for those in hell who contemplate the fate of their loved ones coming to the same place ("I have five brethren" – vs. 28).

How awful it must be for those daddies and mommies in hell who have never told their children about the Gospel message of salvation through Christ. How terrible it must be to think about their own children some day being thrown into the same fiery judgment that they are experiencing. How horrible it must be for a damned daddy to contemplate their Johnny or Susie coming down into the same judgment that they are facing. Surely there is a sense of urgency in this man's request.

The rich man did not ask to send money but to send Lazarus with the Gospel message of salvation and deliverance to his loved ones who were still living. Imagine this, those who are lost and eternally damned, possess a burden for souls. I often think that if we could just experience one minute in hell we would never be the same. We would never stop telling people about the Savior and their need to be saved. One minute in hell would change every Christian. We would start opening our mouth telling our family, friends, and foes of their need to be saved before it is everlastingly too late. Surely this scene must grip our hearts today. If you can read the words of this rich man in hell and not become stirred over lost souls headed toward their doom then you need a spiritual transplant in your heart.

“Give me a passion for souls, dear Lord,  
A passion to save the lost;  
O that Thy love were by all adored,  
And welcomed at any cost.

Jesus I long, I long to be winning  
Men who are lost, and constantly sinning;  
O may this hour be one of beginning  
The story of pardon to tell.”

“Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (vss. 29-31).

The rich man in hell wanted Lazarus to return from the dead and warn his family about hell. He wanted his family to “repent” (vs. 30) or change their mind about their sinful living and turn to God for salvation from hell and eternal life. But the response of Abraham to the rich man was very clear. His brethren have “Moses and the prophets” (vs. 29) and they should “hear” these witnesses. The word “hear” is used twice in connection with hearing the word of God (vss. 29, 31). Why? It’s because “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17) and not by people claiming to come back from the dead. In other words, people living on the earth have the witness of the Scriptures to tell them about the afterlife and the

way of salvation. They don't need people being resurrected from the dead in order to convince them about hell.

The fact of the matter is this. You could bring back hundreds of people from the dead but this would not change the human heart. It takes the Word of God to change the mind and heart of people who are going to hell (James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23; Eph. 5:26). It does not take the shenanigans of spiritism, faith healers, and the alleged miraculous claims of our present century. It takes the Scriptures to deliver a man from hell and damnation. It's the Scriptures that show to a man that he is a hell-doomed sinner and in need of saving grace. Will you "hear" the Scriptures today, which are telling you that you are a lost sinner going to hell without any hope? Are you ready to repent of your sins and turn to God for salvation? You can be saved from hell today and forever if you change your mind about your sinful living and turn to Jesus Christ in simple faith.

The Bible teaches that everybody has sinned (Rom. 3:23) and that sin deserves a penalty (Rom. 6:23) which is separation from God in hell. But the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ took your sin and penalty upon Himself when He died on the cross.

1 Peter 2:24 says:

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

Galatians 3:13 then reads:

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed (damned or judged) is every one that hangeth on a tree."

Jesus Christ bore your sins and hell (judgment) upon Himself on the cross. He was judged in your place and paid the penalty for your sin, which was hell's judgment. While Jesus hung on the cross the judgment of a holy God was meted out on Him. Jesus died in your place so that you could be preserved from judgment and go free! Dear friend, sin demands an immeasurably great and holy payment and only Christ, who is God, could make such a payment for your sin that would satisfy the demands of God. The fire of God's wrath fell on

Christ so that we might be shielded from His wrath and the flames forever. How wonderful. How glorious. How gracious. How loving.

Jesus then rose from the dead triumphantly proving that He can save you today and give you eternal life (1 Cor. 15:3). Are you ready to be saved today? Do you want to escape hell? Then it's time to repent of your sin. You must see your sin as separating you from God, offending His holiness, and desire release and freedom from your sins. When you truly repent then you are ready to place faith or belief in Jesus Christ for salvation.

Jesus said in John 6:47, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." Faith or belief is when you make the personal decision to move or transfer all your trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for salvation. It's a commitment of your faith to Jesus Christ alone for salvation. John 1:12 expresses it this way: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Make your decision today to believe on Jesus Christ to you might spend eternity with God.

#### Mark 9:42-50

"And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."

## Introductory Remarks

Today the word hell is being mentioned more frequently in street talk than it is in Sunday sermons. The word hell has become a word of profanity in regular conversation and talk. There are multitudes of people who use the word hell in a flippant and profane way within our society. People talk lightly about hell in their angry moments of living by combining this word with many other words. I have heard people damn shovels, hammers, cars, trucks, watches, shoes, shirts, and people to hell without blinking an eye. The word hell is used so lightly today in the speech of our world that it has become a matter of insignificance and something that is taken lightly. I'm amazed at how unsaved people talk about hell while the church of today remains silent on this teaching.

In Mark 9:42-50 Jesus brought up the subject that is almost never mentioned in religious congregations across America. It's the subject of hell. The sophisticated congregations in the average church today do not want to hear the truth that there is a hell. But God has not changed His word for our generation! Jesus says that when people die in their sins apart from the Lord Jesus Christ that they go to a place where the fire is not quenched and where the worm never dies. Hell is a terrible place of punishment. It is a place where sin attains its full damnable results. In the ninth chapter of Mark Jesus makes it clear that anything is better than being sent to hell to forever burn in the fiery judgment of God.

Jesus leads into his teaching on hell by condemning the actions of child abusers. When Jesus talked about offending "one of these little ones that believe in me" (Mark 9:42) He was obviously referring to physical children. He had just spoken about children (vs. 36-37). In fact, Jesus was probably still holding a child in His arms when He began talking about causing children to sin. True, Jesus did speak about grown people becoming as spiritual children (Matt. 18:3) through conversion and probably using the illustration of a physical child in His arms to drive home an important truth about His spiritual children.

According to Mark's gospel, Jesus was no doubt illustrating that the same way we receive physical children (Mark 9:36-37) is the same

way we are to receive and accept those who are His spiritual children that are converted, and who are doing the work of God (Mark 9:38-41). No doubt this was Jesus' underlying intent when giving the discourse on children. Nevertheless, it seems better to take the words about children at face value. Reading all the gospel accounts together it seems that Jesus had physical children in mind and used physical children to teach a spiritual lesson to his disciples concerning the treatment of God's spiritual children.

Jesus was talking about offending actual physical children and uses this as an illustration and springboard to teach that His followers should not offend God's spiritual children who are doing the work of God (Mark 9:38-41). As we will see, Jesus is going to use a physical illustration about unsaved people exploiting children, and going to the literal place of hell, in order to teach a spiritual lesson to His disciples or followers concerning sin. More on this in our next point.

It was the offense of physical children that opens up the discussion on hell. The word "offend" (skandalidzo) in Mark 9:42 has the idea of causing a child to sin. It means to put a stumbling block in front of child in order to entrap them or trip them up in some way. Metaphorically it would mean to entice a child to sin or sin against them in some way, so as to create a sinful scandal with this child. We get our word scandal from this Greek word. Jesus is saying that when an adult brings a sinful scandal against a child's life and causes that child to sin then it would be better for this adult to have a large millstone (grinding stone) put about his neck and drowned in the sea.

A millstone refers to a large stone used in a mill for grinding, this particular type being large enough to require a donkey to move it. Why would it be better to drown with a millstone around your neck? Because the following verses will tell us it would be better that a person never committed such a sinful atrocity as this than to die and go to hell with this kind of sin hanging over his head. It would be better for a person to die before committing such a terrible sinful atrocity as this and repeating such terrible sins like these. The reason being is that he will suffer great judgment in the fires of hell for all eternity for committing these wicked and terrible sins against children.



Matthew makes it even clearer that Jesus was talking about those who cause children to sin. In Matthew 18:10 Jesus said, "Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones" while in Matthew 18:7 Jesus uses the strongest of language when saying: "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" Jesus is saying that to offend or cause a child to sin is so serious that immediate death would be better than further involvement in the sin since this would bring greater judgment upon the sinner. Jesus is going to judge those who cause children to sin and rob a child of their innocence. Jesus is going to bring hell's judgment against the unsaved crowd who commits sinful scandals against the lives of little children.

I wish every child molester would read this study. Can you even imagine how hot a person's place in hell will be who commits sinful atrocities against children? Every child molester and child pornographer today had better listen to the words of Jesus Christ. Unsaved people who commit such sinful atrocities against children will burn in hell suffering the vengeance of God's eternal and fiery judgment. I recall hearing about the terrible child prostitution that occurs in other countries. Where young children are sold as sex slaves and grow up knowing nothing but this kind of perverted life style. Jesus is saying that those who commit such sins like these against children would be better off drowning themselves immediately so that they might not suffer the judgment of God for such wicked sins.

I remember reading how certain parents would pour alcohol down the throats of their young children and get them drunk. I once witnessed a young child drinking vodka and it broke my heart. Jesus said, "Put a donkey grinding stone around your neck and drown yourself in the deepest sea if it will keep you from committing such sins, and causing God's judgment to come against you in hell, for practicing these terrible and outrageous sins.

What about those who are teaching our children in the halls of learning that we don't have to pray to God any longer, that abortion is okay, that same-sex relationships and the alternative gay lifestyle is normal, and that evolution is the reason for our existence? What about those who are leading our young generation from the truth and

what is right by these humanistic philosophies? What about those parents who are teaching their children to lie, steal, and listen to rock music, which is frying the minds of their children?

Lastly, what about those abortion doctors who are taking the lives of unborn babies that are still in the wombs of their mothers? How terrible will their place and judgment be in hell if they persist in their ways and reject Jesus Christ as their Savior? Jesus said in Matthew 18:7, "Woe unto the world because of offences!" Children have a special place in the heart of Jesus and He is saying, "Don't you tamper with my little ones. If you do, then you will suffer my judgment in hell."

When Jesus uses the word "hell" in these verses He was referring to the place He called "gehennah" which was the place south of Jerusalem, the valley of Hinnom, where child sacrifice was committed during Israel's apostasy. Speaking of offences against children! During the days of the king's idolatry had set into the nation. The people were worshipping the god called Molech (Acts 7:43). It was in this place where child sacrifices repeatedly took place (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5; 1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 32:35). A figure of the god of Molech was heated like a furnace and in their demonized idolatry the adults would take their own small children and sacrifice them to Moloch. In the fiery valley of Hinnom you could hear the shrieks and cries of those precious children as they were thrown into the fire.

Think of the eternal damnation that people will face who commit such sinful atrocities against children. Every abortionist doctor in hell will remember taking the lives of unborn babies in the womb. His sins will haunt him forever. He will remember every time he took those killing devices to torture and kill a little child. He will remember his terrible sins while the judgment of God will be meted out on him forever and forever in the damnation of hell.

### The Relationship to the Followers of Christ

Many have asked what hell has to do with Jesus' disciples? Jesus said, "It is better for thee" (the disciples – vs. 43, 45, 47). Why did Jesus bring up the discussion of hell when talking to His disciples?

Were His disciples in danger of hell fire and judgment? Of course they were not since their names were already recorded in heaven (Luke 10:20). Furthermore, when Jesus saves a person who believes on Him they never perish or go to hell (John 3:15-16; 3:36; 6:47). Jesus was talking about the unsaved going to hell for He repeatedly spoke of “their” judgment (vss. 44, 46, 48) and not the judgment of His disciples.

Jesus was talking about unsaved sinners committing sins and going to a literal and physical place called hell in order to teach His own disciples about their conduct as His children of light (Matt. 5:14-16). Therefore, the main emphases of Jesus’ words were actually directed to His disciples in order to teach them a lesson on purity and righteous living. They must learn to never cause others to sin (vs. 42) and also keep themselves from sinning (vss. 43-47) by cutting themselves off from anything and everything that would lead them into sin. We must refuse to use the members of our body to sin. We must cut them off from being the vehicles and instruments of sin or else we will be overcome by sin in the same way the unsaved are overcome by hell’s judgment – “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched”).

So Jesus uses the physical illustration to teach a spiritual truth to His followers. God’s children must learn to never dabble with sin and set themselves up for a fall. If you as God’s child and follower have some habit that is causing you to sin, then you need to take the initiative to stop using your hands, feet, or eyes which lead you into sin.

“Oh be careful little hands what you do.  
“Oh be careful little hands what you do.  
For the Father up above is looking down in love,  
So be careful little hands what you do.

Oh be careful little feet where you go.  
Oh be careful little feet where you go.  
For the Father up above is looking down in love,  
So be careful little feet where you go.

Oh be careful little eyes what you see.  
Oh be careful little eyes what you see.

For the Father up above is looking down in love,  
So be careful little eyes what you see.”

When you start going places you shouldn't go, looking at things you should not look at, then you are in danger of being overcome by sin much like the unsaved are in danger of being overcome by hell's judgment - "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." In other words, learn the lesson well that you can't play with sin and get away with it. It's foolish to think you can tame a rattlesnake! If you have some habit in your life that is causing you to sin, then cut it off, or cut yourself off from the habit. Don't use your hands, feet, and eyes to bring you to the place of sin. Stop setting yourself up! Romans 13:14 puts it like this, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

Jesus was using an imaginary scenario of amputation that could never occur ("it is better" – vss. 43, 45, 47). In other words, it would be better if you could amputate your hand, foot, or pluck out your eye, but since this is not possible you must avoid sin at any cost. His point was that His disciples should not use their hands, feet, and eyes to lead them into sin. Jesus was not telling His disciples to literally and physically amputate a hand or eye since a person can sin without using these members of the human body.

We know this is true for if the right eye were lost, the left would continue to look lustfully, and if the right hand were cut off, the left would still remain to carry on sinful acts. In Jewish culture the right eye and right hand represented a person's best and most precious faculties. The right eye represented one's best vision, and the right hand a person's best skills. Jesus' point is that we should be willing to give up whatever is necessary, even the most cherished things we possess, if doing that will help protect us from evil.

We also know that man's sins originate from the realm of his heart or inner being (see Mark 7:21-22) so no amount of mutilation could ever do away with man's sinful nature. You can sin without hands, feet, and eyes. Jesus was obviously using figurative language and was informing His disciples to cut themselves off from everything and anyone that would lead them to sin. Your hand (9:43) represents what you do. Is there any action, or anything that you are doing in

your life, that is not pleasing to God? Your foot (9:45) represents where you go. Are you going anywhere that causes you to sin? Are you frequenting any place that brings compromise into your life? Your eye (9:47) represents what you see, and also your true ambitions and desires in life. Are you looking at anything that brings sin into your life? Jesus is saying that we must learn the secret of judging ourselves by refusing to use the members of our body to sin. In so doing, we must learn to cut ourselves off from anything and everything that gets in the way of our spiritual growth, living, and service for the Lord. Cut it off!

For instance, if you have a girlfriend or boyfriend that keeps you from being what God wants you to be then stop seeing this person right now. Don't allow your feet to go over to their home any longer. Cut it off. Does your friend make you love Jesus more or less? If you cannot say they are directing you to Jesus, but causing you to stray from Jesus, then you must sever the relationship and get out of the relationship right now. Don't allow a spiritual cancer to get into your life and zap your strength, living, and commitment to Jesus Christ. When something or someone keeps you from praying, reading the Bible, and loving Jesus as you should then you must take the immediate steps to separate yourself from such people or practices. God's children or followers must learn the secret all separating from all people, places, and things, which have the potential to cause them to sin and hinder their spiritual life.

Are you watching TV shows that you should not be watching? Then shut them off. Are you listening to things you should not listen to? Then turn off the radio. Are you compromising with religious apostasy? Then separate from such wickedness (2 Cor. 6:14-17). Do you have books and magazines in your home that lead you astray? Then get rid of them. Do you have a bitter attitude toward someone else, then stop thinking in this way? Do you have a foul mouth? Then stop talking in this way. Deal with the action. Cut it off.

Jesus was not teaching mutilation or asceticism but practical separation from anything, anyone, and everything that would cause us to stumble and sin. Judge yourself, evaluate what you are doing, and learn to control yourself (1 Cor. 11:31). Change where you go, what you do, how you think, and who you spend time with. Our Lord

is emphasizing the seriousness of sin and the need to do whatever is necessary to deal with it (1 Cor. 9:27). Stop! Run! Get out of the way of sin! Take drastic action to avoid sin. This is what Jesus is saying. It was a very practical lesson for His followers and should be a good lesson for all of us, to follow today? Jesus said in Luke 9:23, “And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”

So what is the correlation or application of the disciples lives to the unsaved that are going to be judged in hell? It's this. If a follower of Christ does not forsake sin, by learning to get out of the way of sin, then they will be overcome by sin like those who are overcome with God's judgment in hell – “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is never quenched.” A follower of Christ sets themselves up to experience the unending nagging torture of sin much like those who are in hell experience the unending suffering and judgment of God for their sins - “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” Our sin will be like a burning fire that never is quenched and a worm that never dies. It will consume us.

Jesus applied the teaching on hell to his followers in this way. In fact, at the close of this section on hell fire (vss. 49-50), Jesus applies the judgment of people in hell, being preserved in fire (“everyone shall be salted with fire”), with the way His followers can be preserved from sin's power in their own life. Every “sacrifice” (vs. 49) that His followers make, by judging themselves and avoiding sinful patterns of living, will result in God preserving His followers by giving them victory and moral stability in life (“every sacrifice shall be salted with salt” – vs. 49).

This was an expression that spoke of preservation since salt was used as a preservative in ancient days. Salt was used to prevent meat from going rancid or decaying. So Jesus was saying that those sacrifices, which His followers make to avoid sin and live for Him, would result in God keeping His disciples clean from moral decay and spoilage. This is an important truism. Their efforts and willingness to steer away from sin will enable God's children to stay pure and free from spiritual spoilage much like salt prevents meat from spoiling.

To finish the analogy Jesus says in verse 50 that it is important that salt does not lose its ability to preserve food for when it does the food will spoil. Thus, the disciples were encouraged to remain salty (“have salt in yourselves” – vs. 50) or keep taking the initiative to cut themselves off from sinful patterns of living so that they might stay pure or free from moral spoilage. Elsewhere Jesus said that they were to be the “salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13).

When His disciples practice being salt and keep themselves from moral corruption they will have “peace one with another” (Mark 9:50) instead of fighting between themselves concerning who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Mark 9:34; Matt. 18:1). Their humility in seeking to live holy will keep them from comparing themselves with each other (2 Cor. 10:12) and judging others who are doing an honorable and profitable ministry for the Lord (Mark 9:49-50).

The point is this. Christ’s followers will be overtaken by sin much like those who are overtaken in God’s judgment in hell. In today’s language we might say that every follower of Christ will be burned if they don’t take the appropriate measures to separate from sin (1 Cor. 15:33). Thus, Jesus uses the physical reality and truth of people suffering in a literal hell, a hell composed of literal fire and maggots (“Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched”), in order to convey a spiritual lesson to His children and followers about their own personal lives.

It’s not the lesson that His followers die and go to hell when they sin but that sin becomes a nagging and persistent reality when it is not avoided at all costs. The suffering of hell is literal and is used to convey a spiritual reality to his present day followers concerning the plaguing nature of sin and its heartache when God’s children fail to take the appropriate measures to separate from it. Jesus calls for drastic action against sin. Although only unbelievers are in danger of hell, believers can understand from these statements the seriousness of sin and of leading others to sin in the present life. We must refuse to use the members of our body to sin. We must cut them off from being the vehicles and instruments of sin. Sin must be cut off!

## The Relationship to the Unsaved

Although this discourse on hell was given to teach Christ's disciples about their need to avoid sin at all costs it naturally speaks of the unending torture of the damned in hell for all eternity. It was already understood and accepted that unsaved people, who do not possess Christ's salvation, die and spend eternity in hell. Therefore, Jesus provided this information on hell as a backdrop to his deeper lesson or teaching concerning the disciple's need for purity through separation or cutting themselves off from sin.

Since the doctrine of hell was already accepted as being true (Mark 3:29; 12:40; Matt. 23:14, 23; Luke 13:3, 5), the information that Jesus gave concerning hell was not hyperbole or figurative language, but literal language and a frightening description of the horrors that await those who die without Jesus Christ as their Savior. Verse 42 sets the stage for Jesus' teaching on hell when He speaks about those who commit sins against children. Then in verses 43-48 Jesus turned from the offense of others to the offense of one's self. It is possible for a person to place a stumbling block in his own way and commit many sins. Unfortunately, for the unbeliever who does not have his sins forgiven, he will experience the judgment of God for his sins by going to hell for all eternity. His sins are piling up treasured of God's wrath that will be meted out against him in the future judgment (Rom. 2:5).

Looking at the background teaching, which Jesus gave on hell, opens the unsaved person up to the horror and reality of a burning hell, where there is fire and maggots that will plague them throughout the eons of time. This is a sobering reality. It has been said that D.L. Moody never mentioned Hell without a tear in his eye. May this be true in our hearts and lives today as we contemplate the horrible fate of unbelievers who die without the salvation that Jesus Christ offers. As I reflect upon the solemn nature of this warning given by Jesus I can only say what the hymn writer said, "Give me a burden for souls dear Lord." May our hearts yearn to see people saved (Rom. 10:1) while there is yet time for them to be saved. The word "go" is in the Gospel. Let us go with the Gospel today witnessing and praying that souls will be saved before it is everlastingly too late.



“Ye Christian Heralds, go proclaim  
Salvation through Emmanuel’s Name;  
Top distant climes the tiding bear,  
And plant the Rose of Sharon there.”

There are four facts that can be seen about hell from this passage.

1. Hell is a literal place of judgment.

The word translated “hell” in this passage (vss. 43, 45, 47) is the Greek word “gehenna” is transliterated from two Hebrew words meaning “Valley of Hinnom,” a place south of Jerusalem where children were once sacrificed to the pagan god Molech (2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6; Jer. 7:31; 19:5-6; 32:35). Later, during the reforms of Josiah (2 Kings 23:10) the pagan sacrifices were stopped and the site became Jerusalem’s refuse dump where fires burned continually to consume regular deposits of worm-infested garbage. The valley became a place to dispose of rubbish, dead animals, and unburied criminals. To consume all of this, a fire known as “Gehenna Fire” burned continuously. In Jewish thought the imagery of fire and worms vividly portrayed the place of future eternal punishment for the wicked. Jesus used the word Gehenna as referring to the final destiny of the lost or unsaved who reject Jesus Christ as their Savior (Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 18:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5).

In Luke 16 the Greek word “hades” is translated hell and refers to the temporary holding tank of judgment where the unsaved go prior to the final judgment of the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15). However, the word “gehenna” with its repeated emphasis on unending fire apparently references the eternal place of judgment that the book of Revelation unveils as the Lake of Fire. In fact, Revelation 20:14 says that “death and hell (hades) were cast into the lake of fire” which tells us that Gehenna must refer to the final damnation of the lost in this awful place. The terrible reputation of this valley, with its association with fire and judgment, made it an appropriate description of the place of final punishment for the wicked. So what Jesus was referring to in this textual passage (Mark 9) was the final destiny of the lost when they experience a second and final death or separation from God in the Lake of Fire.

Hell was originally created for the devil and the angels that followed him in his rebellion (Matt. 25:41). Unfortunately, Satan coerced the human race to follow him in rebellion (Gen. 3). As a result, those who reject the salvation that Jesus Christ offers must also suffer in this place of eternal judgment and unending doom. The government and justice of God demands that sinners are punished forever in hell. Apparently God created this awful place sometime after the rebellion and fall of the angelic order. But where is hell or this Lake of Fire? What is the location of this everlasting Gehenna of fire and judgment? We don't know? However, we do know that it will not be associated with planet earth, where Hades is now located, since the present earth will be destroyed and a new earth created (2 Pet. 3:10). It is highly unlikely that it will be on the new earth that is created since the new earth will be a place "wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13).

A fiery cauldron tormenting billions of unrepentant sinners forever would surely seem out of character with the new earth. The Bible gives no definitive answer on where the Lake of Fire is located. It may be located in some far corner of the universe infinitely removed from the new earth and its holy city (Revelation 21:1-8). It may be some blazing star that is a million light years removed from planet earth. A star, after all, is precisely this, a lake of fire. In fact, there are stars and galaxies that are burning which do not give off light in the visible part of the spectrum. They consist of fire and blackness, which is descriptive of the "mist of darkness" (cloudy darkness) that Peter talks about concerning Gehenna (2 Pet. 2:17).

Perhaps Jesus was confirming the eternal and final suffering of the lost in Gehenna when speaking of the "outer darkness" (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30) that people will experience. The unsaved will be cast into the judgment of hades when the King returns, prior to the Great White Throne of judgment, awaiting their second death in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15). Jesus may be saying that this judgment, prior to the establishment of His kingdom, will become a prelude and confirmation of the eternal suffering that the lost will experience in the Lake of Fire, which was a place originally prepared for the devil and the angels (note Matt. 25:41).

So Jesus may be referencing a person's ultimate and eternal judgment that they will experience even prior to their actual punishment and banishment in the place called Gehenna. If so, this description of eternal judgment as "outer darkness" may reference a place or location that is on the outer regions of God's universe. One might also suggest a "black hole" in God's created universe that is going to be the place of Gehenna and the final destruction of the unsaved. 2 Thessalonians 1:9 speaks of those "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." The connotation "from the presence of the Lord" may suggest an eternal judgment that exists in a region far away from God in a remote place. One thing is for sure. Hell is a literal place of judgment where unrepentant and unsaved people will experience the wrath of God forever. It is a place of unending doom for lost sinners who refuse the salvation that Jesus Christ offers.

## 2. The imagery of hell is literal.

A. J. Pollock said this about Jesus' description of hell:

"We believe the very language of Scripture should be used by the preacher, and if he does not use it he is lacking in faithfulness to his hearers."

As we have already seen, Jesus said that there is a place called hell. I'm confident that it is a place, and it is a place just like He describes it. Although liberals and New Evangelicals alike have tried to dismiss the literal nature of the fire, brimstone, and worms in hell, there is no reason to deny the literalness of these descriptions. When Jesus told the religious hypocrites of His day that they could not escape "the damnation of hell" (Matt. 23:33) they were no doubt looking over to the garbage dump that was continually burning and full of maggots. Perhaps Jesus pointed over to the dump sight and said to the people that this is where you are going to spend eternity! You can be sure that the language of Jesus was not understood in a symbolic manner by those who looked over into the Jewish dump sight.

No person looking over into that Jewish dump sight, full of fire, putrefying stench, and crawling maggots, would have questioned the Lord by saying: "Jesus, we know that you are only referring to non-literal symbols that are a but a faint and figurative expression of what

lies ahead for those of us who refuse your claims.” This kind of talk sounds like the same kind of nonsense that some evangelicals are saying today: “We know that a hell in which all burn in a literal fire does not allow for significant degrees of punishment.

We should not portray hell as a literal furnace of fire where all the lost will scream in pain throughout all eternity. We also know that unscriptural and repulsive overstatements of hell will turn some people away from the gospel. We must be careful that we do not go beyond the Scriptures and portray hell as a place where all the lost will scream in pain forever and ever. This picture gives a wrong impression of God. It is perhaps wise for us to avoid excessive speculations about the suffering of hell.”

How absurd and ludicrous it would have been for any person to come up to Jesus and talk to him in these unbelieving terms! Everybody knew what Jesus meant when He spoke of hell. When Jesus said that unsaved people would be “cast into a furnace of fire” (Matt. 13:41-42) He meant what He said. Who are you to determine that Jesus meant something else of less severity? If words mean something than the people of Christ’s day took His descriptions and expressions of hell literally without every questioning their literal character and dismissing them as figurative folklore. The fire and judgment of hell is literal. It’s nothing less than what Jesus said. In fact, to contemplate people suffering in hell fire and brimstone for all eternity is a description of something far worse than man could ever imagine.

Jesus spoke five times of “the fire that never shall be quenched” (Mark 9:43, 44, 45, 46, 48). Five times! Cannot we believe what Jesus said and stop reading between the lines? Hell is a place of fire where people will experience the burning pain of God’s fiery judgment throughout eternity. This is confirmed by the imagery of the Lake of Fire where the unsaved are cast in the end of time (Rev. 20:14-15).

To dismiss the fire as referring to “a burning thirst for God that can never be quenched” (Billy Graham) is nothing short of disbelief in the words of Jesus Christ. Others speak of the fire of hell as “the fire of unfulfilled passions, the fire of desires that are never satisfied” and “the body aflame with lusts that cannot be quenched” or “the place of

unquenchable, raging, unmet emotional needs, without painkillers or sedation.” These are statements of disbelief made by evangelicals that border on heresy. Everybody wants to take the fire out of hell. Liberalism and compromise always takes people away from the literal realities of hell, the saving wonder of the blood of Christ, the physical resurrection, and return of Jesus Christ.

A burn in this life is probably the most painful injury a person could suffer. A burn is an unceasing, gnawing pain that throbs and pounds at the flesh and causes great suffering. In our present human bodies of flesh there is a limitation to the amount of pain and suffering one can endure. If pain becomes too severe one can faint or die. But not in hell! The soul and eternal body that the unsaved will have will be free from all physical limitations. It will have a capacity to experience pain, which can be multiplied a thousand fold. What a horrible fate for the unsaved. Many who have died without Jesus Christ as their Savior are reported as sensing the fire that they were about to enter.

The skeptic Robert Ingersoll said,  
“You do not have to tell me there is no hell, for I already feel its flames.”

The last words of Charles IX, who ordered the massacre on St. Bartholomew’s Day, were: “What blood! what murders! I know not where I am. How will all this end? What shall I do? I am lost forever. I know it.”

Sir Francis Newport, the head of an English infidel club, said to those gathered around his dying bed, “You need not tell me there is no God for I know there is one, and that I am in His angry presence! You need not tell me there is no hell, for I already feel my soul slipping into its fires! Wretches, cease your idle talk about there being hope for me! I know I am lost forever.”

A newspaper article referred to a striking story in an anonymous book of memoirs published not long ago. The writer met the woman who nursed the great agnostic, Professor J. H. Huxley, through his last illness. She said that as he lay dying the great skeptic suddenly looked up at some sight invisible to mortal eyes, and, staring a while, whispered at last, “So it is true.” Dear friend, it is true. There is a hell

of eternal fire because Jesus said so and some day if you die without Jesus Christ you are going to enter this awful place where the justice of God will be carried out forever and forever.

Jesus also repeatedly mentioned about “their worm that dieth not” (Mark 9:44, 46, 48). Writers who do not take Jesus’ words literally have unanimously concluded that this must refer to a person’s conscience eating away and tormenting them as they remember their past life. Many conclude that the expression Jesus uses concerning “their worm” must symbolically represent a person’s nagging internal torment, which they experience in their conscience, as they remember their misspent sinful life and missed opportunities to receive Jesus Christ as Savior.

But once again this conclusion takes away from the literalness of Jesus’ words. If the worm is not literal, then the fire is not literal, and if the fire is not literal is the darkness literal, and if the darkness is not literal, then is the brimstone and suffering literal, and if none of these descriptions are literal one must wonder if hell is a literal place? Dear friend, believe what Jesus says!

The expression “their worm” connotes that each person will continually exist in hell with the horror of a self-propagating worm infested body.

The word “worm” (skolex) refers to a type of worm that preys on dead bodies. Webster defines scolex as “the frontal segment of a tapeworm, having suckers or hooks for attachment.” Jesus likened hell to a stinking garbage dump where maggots and other repulsive creatures live in all of the decaying, putrid refuge, tearing, gnawing, devouring, and yet never consuming the filth and corruption there. According to Christ, hell is a place where loathsome creatures bite, tear, and devour the inhabitants, inflicting unimaginable torment upon them, yet never totally consuming them, so that people will never be relieved them from their agonies. You will remember that Herod was “eaten of worms” in this life (Acts 12:23). So it will be in the next life for unbelievers.

Dr. Jean Sloat Morton comments on the actions of worms eating Herod and then comments on what Jesus said about concerning

“their worm that dieth not.” “The phrase “eaten of worms,” in Greek is skolakobrotos. The root word skolax means “a specific head structure of a tapeworm.” Since the word scolex (Plural scolices) is applied to the head of tapeworms, Herod’s death was almost certainly due to the rupture of a cyst formed by a tapeworm. There are several kinds of tapeworms, but one of the most common ones found in sheepgrowing countries is the dog tape, Echinococcus granulosus. The heaviest infections come from areas where sheep and cattle are raised. Sheep and cattle serve as intermediate hosts for the parasite. The dog eats the infected meat, then man gets the eggs from the dog, usually by fecal contamination of hair.

The disease is characterized by the formation of cysts, generally on the right lobe of the liver; these may extend down into the abdominal cavity. The rupture of such a cyst may release as many as two million scolices. The developing worms inside of the cysts are called scolices, because the anterior region constitutes the major part of development at this stage. When the cyst ruptures, the entrance of cellular debris along with the scolices may cause sudden death. The use of the word scolex is not limited to this reference about Herod; the term also appears in Mark 9:44.

A literal translation of the phrase in Mark 9:44 would read, “where their scolex dieth not.” This usage is very interesting because the tapeworm keeps propagating itself. Each section of the worm is a self-contained unit which has both male and female parts. The posterior part matures and forms hundreds of worm eggs. The word scolex in this text portrays a biological description of permanence which the text demands for the comparison. (Science in the Bible [Chicago: Moody, 1978], 261–62)

The tapeworm parasite keeps propagating itself and this is why “their worm will never die.” There will be a constant tapeworm infestation in the bodies of the damned. There are other texts like this one that speak literally of people being eternally consumed or eaten by worms. Isaiah 66:24 says, “And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.”

The dead bodies of the soldiers of Armageddon will be eaten by worms throughout eternity and burned with fire because of their unrepentant hearts toward Jesus Christ and His saving message. Delitzsch says that Isaiah is “speaking of the future state but in figures drawn from this present world.” The awful fate of those without Christ is linked to a maggot infested body.

Merrill F. Unger writes:

“The scene is presented as an illustration of the final destruction of all sinners and their consignments to gehenna (Rev. 20:11-14), where their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched (Mark 9:44, 46, 48), and image of eternal hell (separation from God forever). The figure is derived from bodies left unburied in the Valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem and from the ever burning fires devouring the refuse from the city (Isa. 30:3).”

The maggot infestation of the valley of Hinnom is an accurate picture of hell’s eternal judgment. In a similar way, another prophetic scene is given by Isaiah, which envisions the descent of the King of Babylon into Sheol or the place of judgment. The king of Babylon’s antitype (the devil) will also one day be cast into judgment within the bottomless pit (a compartment of sheol or hades) where he will be judged until the 1000-year kingdom has expired (Rev. 20:1).

This is what Isaiah is prophetically envisioning in Isaiah 14:10-11:

“All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.”

Like the King of Babylon’s decent and reception into the regions of the damned, so will be the devils. It will be one of mockery and judgment. Like the King of Babylon, instead of a royal robe, worms shall cover him, and instead of a gorgeous couch, a bed of maggots will be underneath him. Hell is always pictured as a place of infested maggots that will create discomfort and misery for the damned. Their physical senses yet retained will cause them to know that they are being internally and eternally eaten by worm infestation. In fact, the worms will be spread about them and in them, which creates a picture of horror and absolute misery.



The final hell (gehenna) is a place where the fire will continually burn and where worms will continue to propagate themselves within the bodies of the damned for all eternity. Jesus said that it was comparable to the Jewish dump sight. This is a terrible reality but it is what Jesus said. Added to the fire and maggots will be the stench of brimstone or burning sulphur (Rev. 14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8). Revelation 14:10 says that the unsaved "shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." So we have seen throughout this study that fire, brimstone, darkness, maggots, and terrible suffering will be experienced by the lost in the netherworld or the regions of the damned.

One writer reflected on the eternal judgment of the damned when saying: "The Bible describes hell as a place of great suffering, intense agony and torment. It is a place of horror, pain, grief, punishment and tears. Scripture depicts it as an awful place of choking, stinking sulfuric fumes; a burning, churning sea of fire where the ear is continually tormented with the loud yelling and continuous outcries of the damned; where the nostrils are smothered with sulphurous flames and the tongue with burning blisters, and the whole body rolled in flames of liquid fire. It's a place where all of the powers and faculties of the soul shall be violently, excruciatingly tormented, continually, ceaselessly, eternally!"

Isaiah 5:14 says:

"Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it."

Isaiah 14:15 warns:

"Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."

Psalms 9:17 concludes by saying:

"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

I purchased a little booklet on hell many years ago in a Plymouth Brethren bookstore. The author was Reverend George Gordon

Macleod of Carnwath, Scotland. His words are very pointed as they comment on the verse above – “The wicked shall be turned into hell.”

“I remember when a boy reading a book entitled The Horrors of The Damned, in which a harrowing description of the torments of the lost was given; but words fail to paint hell. You must go there. You shall be turned into hell. It will be by force. No entreaties shall save you. No power can rescue you. The arm of God Almighty will turn you into hell! ... Drunkard! you shall be hurried from your cup, smitten of everlasting thirst. Swearer! God will rivet the last oath on your tongue, and drag you to judgment. ... Ye drunkard-makers, who put the bottle to your neighbor’s mouth and money by the murderer of souls, you shall be turned into hell, damned for ever! ... I warn you, decent and respectable sinners, you shall be turned into hell. All ye shall be turned into hell. Your decency is damning you while it keeps you from Jesus. ... Decent unbelievers, you are going from the communion table to and endless hell. ... Cowardly and unbelieving, you shall have your portion with the hypocrites, where is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

3. There will be degrees of punishment in hell.

Jesus used strange language when speaking about people cutting off their hand (vs. 43), foot (vs. 45), and plucking out their eye (vs. 47). We have already addressed this but because of the complexity of Jesus’ statement let’s restate some things. Was Jesus speaking in a literal fashion and condoning the practice of bodily mutilation or dismemberment? Let me answer this question like this. Jesus was using a figurative illustration of amputation to teach a spiritual principle and lesson to His disciples. We must refuse to use the members of our body to sin. We must cut them off from being the vehicles and instruments of sin. We must avoid sin at all costs.

As we have already discussed the entire literal teaching about the unsaved being overcome with God’s judgment in hell becomes an illustrative picture of how sin can overcome the followers of Christ. The truth about hell is used as a teaching lesson for Jesus’ followers. Our sin will be like a burning fire that never is quenched and a worm that never dies. It will overcome us and consume our lives. The only way to escape the affects of sin is to take the drastic measure to

avoid it at all costs. We must take sin seriously and stop playing around with sin.

Fortunately, it is never morally necessary to physically amputate a hand or foot or to cut out an eye. Jesus was not teaching his followers to practice bodily mutilation for a person could still sin without an eye, foot, or hand. We've already mentioned how sin originates on the inside of the human heart (Mark 7:21). If we were to physically cut off every limb, eye, or organ that was used as an instrument of sin, then we would possess a body without any arms, feet, eyes, nose, lips, tongues, or ears. We would be totally crippled and strange looking people incapable of functioning in life. Certainly Jesus was not advocating amputation and dismemberment of the human body for his disciples.

Jesus was using a fictitious scenario of amputation that would never take place ("it is better" – vs. 43, 45, 47). In other words, it would be better, if you could do, this but since you can't listen to what I'm saying. When Jesus spoke about cutting off our hands and feet He was obviously teaching a spiritual lesson from the physical illustration. The lesson is this. His disciples should take whatever drastic action is necessary to avoid sin. The idea is that we should avoid sin at all costs. We should refuse to use our hands, feet, or eyes as instruments or vehicles of sin. In short, we should cut ourselves off from sin in every way we can. This was actually His message to His followers or disciples who would one day enter into the life of the eternal kingdom.

The expression of a person being able to "enter into life" (Mark 9:43) has to do with entering the earthly kingdom that Jesus was seeking to establish. The parallel expression in Mark 9:47 is "enter into the kingdom of God" and denotes that the Jews looked at the earthly kingdom as an entrance way into the next phase of life that would bring great blessing and joy to their hearts (Mark 10:30-31). They viewed eternal life as their entrance into the kingdom and the glorious reign they would have with the King. In any event, these expressions about life are the opposite of people going to hell and are to be understood as referring to the life of the saved in the eternal kingdom.

Although this discourse on hell was given to teach Christ's disciples about their need to avoid sin at all costs it naturally speaks of the unending torture of the damned in hell for all eternity who choose to openly and defiantly engage in sin. The underlying teaching about the judgment of hell is a frightening reality. If we turn the tables, it would be equally true that the unsaved should avoid sin at all costs. This is because every sin that the unbeliever commits will increase the judgment of God against them. Romans 2:5 says, "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

In the coming Judgment Day Jude records that unsaved mankind will be judged for all the "hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (Jude vs. 15). When an unbeliever enters into hell with two hands, feet, and eyes, which have caused him to live in ongoing sin and iniquity, then he will face a greater degree of judgment from the hand of God. When a person enters hell after using his hands, feet, and eyes to sin high-handedly and without restraint, it's then that he will receive a greater degree of judgment from God. In this lesson Jesus clearly points out that those who sin without any restraints attached to their lives will suffer greatly in the next life.

Jesus did not suggest that the unsaved should practice such extremes. All He said was it would be "better" (if possible) to sacrifice the use of these organs than to be dragged down to hell by their abuse. Jesus was using an impossible, imaginary, or fictitious scenario. If it would be possible for a person to do this, it would be better off for them. Think of this way. When a person uses their body as a vehicle of sin, they build up a sinful account that will be held against them in the judgment day. Consequently, they drag all of those sins to hell with them.

What Jesus was teaching by these strange statements is that it would be "better" (if possible) to sacrifice the use of a hand, foot, or eye in this life than to use them as an instrument of sin and bring God's greater judgment against you in the next life. Jesus is teaching that judgment in hell will be meted out upon a person in accordance to their degree of sin. The greater sin means the greater judgment. The

more a person uses their body to sin the greater judgment will be inflicted upon them (2 Peter 2:12, 14, 20: Jude vs. 7). Thus, it goes without saying that the more a person uses their hands, feet, and eyes as a vehicle or instrument of sin in this life the more judgment they will face in the next life.

In this solemn passage of the Bible Jesus says that the dangers of hell are so serious that it would be “better” (if possible) to suffer great loss on earth, such as getting rid of the hand, foot or eye, since these parts of the body are used as an instrument or vehicle of sin. It would be “better” to lose a limb in this life instead of allowing it to be used as an instrument of sin. This is because your judgment in hell will be meted out upon you in accordance to your degree of sin, which you commit in this life. The general point Jesus was making is this. The more a person uses their body to sin the more judgment will be brought upon them in the next life in hell. This is what we see in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 20:11-12 records these prophetic words:

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

You will notice that the unsaved of all the ages will be judged “according to their own works” or according to their sinful deeds, which they have committed in this life. Romans 2:6, “Who will render to every man according to his deeds.” The way in which a person uses their body to sin in this life will bring the appropriate judgment upon their body in the next life. There is no getting around it. There will be degrees of punishment in hell. This is why Jesus gave a fictitious illustration of body mutilation. He said it would be “better” (if possible) to amputate those parts of the body that are used as vehicles to sin and which will be counted against you in the Day of Judgment.

Have you ever noticed that when you attempt to talk with a dying man about sports or business, he is no longer interested? He now sees

other things as more important. People who are dying recognize what we often forget, that we are standing on the brink of another world! To die without Jesus Christ as your Savior is to die without salvation from hell's damnation. It means that you will die and face the judgment of God. It means that you will die and be eternally judged for every sin that you have ever committed. It means that you will die in despair, misery, and without any hope.

Though Dante added many of his own ideas to the superstitions of his day when he wrote "The Inferno," the sign he read in the vestibule of hell does portray the biblical teaching of hopelessness and abandonment that people face in hell.

"I am the way to the city of woe,  
I am the way to a forsaken people  
I am the way into eternal sorrow.  
Sacred justice moved my Architect.  
I was raised here by divine Omnipotence,  
Primordial love and ultimate intellect.  
Only those elements time cannot wear  
Were made before me,  
and beyond time I stand.  
Abandon all hope ye who enter here."

#### 4. There will be no end to hell.

Those who make an appeal to the annihilation of the wicked do so out of sentiment and for their own carnal reasons. They exclaim that God cannot do this and will not do this. They sit on God's judgment seat and take His place. But "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh" (Ps. 2:4). What man feels or thinks will never change what God says! God is in control of the events of time and eternity and God categorically says He will judge people forever in hell fire and damnation to demonstrate how terrible sin is in the sight of an awesomely holy God (Ex. 15:11). God is holy and cannot compromise His standards. He is also just and requires that sin must be dealt with (Gen. 18:25).

Five times Jesus spoke of "the fire that never shall be quenched" (Mark 9:43, 44, 45, 46, 48). The fact that the fire will never be

quenched denotes that there will be something continually in hell to keep the fire burning. The fires of gehenna will never run out of fuel to keep them ignited and burning because people will continue to exist in hell forever and forever experiencing the wrath of Almighty God. The statements that Jesus gave about the fire never being quenched and their worm never dying clearly illustrate that those in hell will not be annihilated. The fact that the fire continues to burn and their worm never dies conveys the truth of their eternal existence under the judgment of God. They will continue to live on throughout the ages of time “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude vs. 7). Hell will never freeze over!

One author summarized what Jesus said in this way:

“How do we know that the damned will have eternal bodies for hell? First, the Lord said that hell is a place "where their worm dieth not" (Mk. 9:44, 46, 48). When a body is put into a grave, worms begin to consume it. Once the body is consumed, the worms die. But in hell, the worms that consume the bodies will never die because the bodies will never be totally consumed. In other words, the Lord was saying that the unrelieved torment of the body will go on forever in hell. Second, the Lord described hell as a place where "the fire is not quenched" (Mk. 9:44, 46, 48). A fire always dies out when there is nothing to give it fuel. But because the fire in hell will never run out of fuel, it will never die out. Hell will be a place of unrelieved torment for both body and soul.”

Jesus then concluded that in hell “every one shall be salted with fire” (Mark 9:50). The focus is still on the judgment of God in the first part of this verse. We know that salt was widely used as a preservative for meats in the ancient world. So this expression of the lost being “salted with fire” suggests the eternal nature and preservation of the unsaved in the suffering of hell. It obviously means that the unsaved will be preserved in this fiery sea of judgment forever and forever and forever. Instead of the fires of hell consuming the lost they will actually preserve the lost. Hence, the fire will never be quenched. We must once again reaffirm that there is no such thing as annihilation in hell.

The “second death” (Rev. 20:14-15) in the Lake of Fire (Gehennah fire) involves a person passing through a final and eternal separation

from God's presence in relationship to their spirit and body. This separation from God will result in judgment within another timeless existence. It has nothing to do with annihilation. To the inhabitants of hell physical death followed by a state of unconsciousness would be a welcome relief. But in hell they can't die because they are already dead! They are already separated from God's presence and fully aware and conscience of their condemnation to this prison of eternal fire! They will live on forever in spiritual death or separation from God in the agonies of an eternal hell.

William Hendriksen states:

“When Scripture speaks of unquenchable fire, the point is not merely that there will always be a fire burning in Gehenna, but that the wicked will have to endure that torment forever. They will always be the objects of God's wrath, never of his love. Thus also their worm never dies, and their shame is everlasting (Dan. 12:2). So are their bonds (Jude 6, 7). ‘They will be tormented with fire and brimstone ... and the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever, so that they have no rest day or night’ (Rev. 14:9–11; 19:3; 20:10).”

Hell is forever. Dear friend, think what it means to be lost forever! A Christian traveling on an ocean liner offered a Gospel tract to a passenger. The man accepted the literature with a scowl and then with a flourish tore it into tiny pieces, cradled the fragments in his hand for a moment, and finally tossed them overboard. The Christian went away with a heavy heart, while the unbeliever headed for the ship's bar. As he lifted a drink to his lips, however, he noticed a small piece of paper adhering to his coat lapel. Quickly plucking it off, he inspected it and discovered it was a tiny scrap of the discarded tract. Only one word appeared-- "God." As he turned it over, he was startled to read on the other side-- "eternity." Suddenly the Holy Spirit winged the arrows of conviction into his soul and he went back to the man who had given him the tract and was gloriously saved.

May I extend to you today the wonderful salvation and grace of a loving God? The Bible teaches that God has already demonstrated His love toward you when He allowed His only begotten Son to die in your place on the cross (John 3:16). Romans 5:8 says, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Sin demands an infinite penalty that Jesus Christ



bore in your place. In short, Jesus took your hell, the judgment of God upon himself, so that you would not have to spend eternity in hell. Jesus was cursed upon the tree in your place (Gal. 3:13). Jesus died in your place taking all your sins upon Himself and the judgment that those sins deserved. He then rose again the third day.

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Jesus died for you, as you, and in your place. He took all the sins that you would ever commit, and the judgment you deserved (hell) for committing those sins, upon Himself. He died in your place as the perfect holy sacrifice satisfying the justice and wrath of God. He did it all for you. He then rose again proving that He can now save you forever by granting you the gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23) instead of eternal death or separation from God in hell.

So what must you to be saved from hell? Only believe. Acts 16:31, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...” John 6:47, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” To believe on Jesus Christ means that you must commit your faith only to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for salvation. Belief means you must take the initiative to move your will to only trust in Jesus Christ for salvation from hell. You must make the choice to step into the lifeboat and be saved today through committing your belief only to the death and resurrection of Christ for salvation.

Dear friend, when you come to Jesus Christ as a sinner broken over your sin, desiring deliverance from your sin, then you are ready to place simple child-like faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. Will you come to Him today? 2 Peter 3:9 says that God is “not willing that any should perish” or experience His eternal wrath in hell. A loving God will not send you to hell. A loving God wants to save you from hell. Just now, will you trust in His saving provision through Christ? Just now, will you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Just now, will you come to Jesus Christ for salvation? Jesus said “him that cometh unto me I will no wise cast out” (John 6:37). To come to Christ is to make a personal commitment of your faith in His death and resurrection for

your salvation. Only when you come to Christ can you be saved. Revelation 22:17 says, "And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." I pray that you will come today.

"You have wandered far away;  
Do not risk another day;  
Do not turn from God thy face,  
But today accept His grace.  
Why not now? Why not now?  
Why not come to Jesus now?  
Why not now? Why not now?  
Why not come to Jesus now?"