

Hell Is For Real

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The theories concerning hell have developed more infidels in this world than any other single factor. The human mind has never been able to harmonize the teachings that God is a God of justice, filled with love, and, on the other hand, that He is a God that delights in eternal torment.

One of the world's great infidels made his decision against God when he was a little boy at his father's knee. His dad was trying to impress him with the horrors of hell in order to force him to obedience through fear of God's judgments. Ingersoll's father told him that little infants were then in hell, destined to burn for thousands and thousands of years. As this small boy's mind grasped the reality of such a statement, he turned to his father and said, "If that is true, I hate God." Thus the seeds of an infidel were born in this young boy's heart. Friends, if such statements were indeed true, I am afraid that I, too, would hate God.

Recently there came to our attention a poem printed on a little yellow card passed out by a religious zealot on the street. It clearly pictures what I'm talking about. This is the poem:

"Infinite years in torment shall I spend
And never, never, have an end.
Ah, must I live in torturing despair
As many years as atoms in the air?
When these are past, as many millions more
As grains of sand that bound the ebbing shore;
When these run out, as many more behind
As leaves of forest shaken by the wind!

"When these are spent as many more to flow
As blades of grass on hills and dales that grow!
When these run out, as many on the march
As starry lamps that guild the spangled arch!
When these are gone, as many millions more
As every moment in the age before!
When all these doleful years are spent in pain
And multiplied in myriads yet again,
I must in that fierce gulf in misery lie
And madly wreathe through all eternity."

Author Unknown

My dear friends, if these words were true, it would be so easy to be an infidel. But thank God that we have not been left in doubt about this issue. God has explicitly given us divine truth and light regarding the subject of hell.

Now don't think for a moment that we young people don't believe in hell. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you must believe in a hell. Hell is no joke. Hell is real. Jesus said:

"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." Mark 9:47.

Friends, we young people believe what Jesus says. Every eye in this hall tonight is headed for either heaven or hell. Jesus taught that the wicked -ire going to be cast alive into hell-fire.

"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Revelation 19:20.

Friends, the destruction of the lost is real. This is one of the sobering reasons why we young people have taken our time to bring you God's last warning message, that you will not suffer the second death. This is why we have preached to you what the "mark of the beast" is and what his "image" is, and have pleaded with you night after night to separate yourself from this power completely and to obey God's law, so that you may be saved in the kingdom of God and live in eternal bliss and happiness rather than partake of the pain and torture of hell-fire.

SECTION 2

In the teachings of Christ we learn that hell is not burning today, but that a hell will function at the end of the world. In the familiar parable of the wheat and the tares Jesus clearly indicated that the field is the world, the good seed are the children of the kingdom, and the tares are the children of the wicked one: that they both would grow together until the harvest, and the harvest "is the end of the world."

"As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and they which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 13:40-42.

Since the wicked will not be burned in hell until the end of the world, you may ask, Where are the wicked dead tonight? One thing is certain -they are not in hell. In our recent subjects we have discovered that when man dies he goes to the grave and waits for the judgment. And it is not until after the judgment that the reward is handed out.

"The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." 2 Peter 2:9.

Did you notice the word "reserved"? The wicked are reserved unto the day of judgment to be punished. Isn't this exactly like the justice we expect an honest court of our land to bring forth? We don't throw a man into prison and punish him for a number of years and then take him out and judge him to see whether he was guilty. Of course not! First we judge the man; then we punish him if found guilty. This is just what God does. The prophet Job taught "Do ye not know . . . that the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath." Job 21:30.

Purgatory is an invention of man, instigated by the supreme deceiver. The Divine Word of God speaks not one single word about purgatory, but consistently teaches the doctrine of hell to be in absolute conflict with this false teaching. The belief in the existence of purgatory, the idea that hell is burning today, originated in pagan philosophies handed down through the centuries, and it is a doctrine that God has asked us to beware of. We are to return to the teaching of the Bible.

Friend, there is not one person in hell tonight. If you have lost a loved one who made no profession of Christ, or of whom there is a question in your mind as to whether he was true to God, let tonight's subject set you at ease, for "the truth shall make you free." We are about to open up to you some of the greatest teachings of the Bible. First of all, let us note that destruction in hell is considered the second death. "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." Revelation 20:14.

You can see immediately that in order to die the second time you must live the second time. And if you are to live the second time, you must die the first time. And the Scripture teaches clearly that the wicked will not live their second life until after the thousand-year period that takes place after the second coming of Christ, which is still future.

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Revelation 20:5. At the conclusion of the thousand years there will be the second resurrection, which is the resurrection for the wicked. Then begins their second life, which will end very shortly in hell-fire. In studying this chapter we find that Satan gathers all the wicked around the city of God, which has come down out of heaven. He marshals this great number of wicked as a mighty army. We are told:

"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Revelation 20:9, 10.

SECTION 3

Friend, this lake of fire will indeed be hell. This is the fire that the apostle speaks of in 2 Peter, the third chapter:

"But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then

that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" 2 Peter 3:7-13.

Isaiah also adds a description of the terrible destruction from hell-fire. "For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompence for the controversy of Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. Isaiah 34:8, 9.

Hell-fire takes place at the end of the millennium and will encompass the whole earth. It will be some eight thousand miles in diameter and twenty-five thousand miles in circumference. The very streams will be turned into pitch, and the dust into brimstone, like a great atomic fire. The whole world will be ablaze, utterly destroying every trace of sin. Only the city of God will escape.

It will be like the ark during the Flood, when God first destroyed the earth with water. Only those who were within the ark were saved; and only those who are within the city of God with Christ and His angels will escape the fire of hell in that day.

How long will hell burn? The answer is that we do not know. Only God knows. But we have been told one thing-it will eventually burn out. Notice carefully the sequence here.

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." Revelation 20:15; 21:1.

Hell will eventually come to an end, and this charred earth will be created into a new heaven and a new earth. But I hear someone say, "Now wait a minute. Doesn't the Bible say that the fire will not be quenched?" True. But does this mean that it will actually continually burn? Let's take the example of a house that catches on fire out in the middle of a desert with nothing available to put the fire out. Would it not be true to say that it cannot be quenched? This does not mean that when everything is burned the fire will not go out. Take the example of the prophecy that God would kindle a fire in Jerusalem that should never be quenched if the people of God did not faithfully keep His Sabbath day.

"But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched." Jeremiah 17:27.

This indeed actually came to pass. Jerusalem was burned to the ground. The fire was not put out until it had accomplished its purpose; but this does not mean that the fire is burning in Jerusalem today.

SECTION 4

But I hear someone else say, What about the expression "to burn for ever and ever"? What is the meaning of this? It means as long as there is life. The righteous will live throughout eternity. Why? Because they never die. They will live forever and ever. But the fire of hell will not continue to burn for eternity because a time will come when there will be no more life to burn. Let's take a Bible example. In the book of Exodus is a story of what happens to a man who is a slave and is offered his freedom, but who does not wish to leave his master. He chooses rather to live forever as a servant. In such a case, this person permitted a hole to be bored through his ear, showing that by his own free will he had decided to remain a servant forever. Let's read the verse now.

"Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; 'he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever." Exodus 21:6.

Now, is this man still a servant today? Is he serving his master? No. He died many, many centuries ago. The term forever, you see, had to do with only so long as there was life. The same meaning is connected with the word eternal. God has plainly given the example of Sodom and Gomorrah as a symbol of eternal fire representing what will happen in hell.

"Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, 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." Jude 1:7.

"And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." 2 Peter 2:6.

Everyone today knows that Sodom and Gomorrah, which were burned with eternal fire, are not burning now. The Dead Sea covers the very spot upon which fire and brimstone were poured out in eternal vengeance, and they became ashes, as God predicted. Verse after

verse can be read from the Scripture to show that the wicked will be brought to utter destruction, completely consumed, and destroyed in hell-fire. The psalmist said:

“But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.” Psalm 37:20.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught that hell will destroy both body and soul. “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him I which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Matthew 10:28.

In the very last chapter of the Old Testament is recorded for us one of the most complete descriptions of hell.

“For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, said the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. ... And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, said the Lord of hosts.” Malachi 4:1-3.

Let us add to these words those of the prophet Isaiah, showing that hell will eventually burn out and come to an end.

“Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.” Isaiah 47:14.

What a day this will be when God finally makes an end to all sin! We shudder at the horrors of hell. It is not a delightful subject. In fact, we don't like to talk about hell; but, friends, within this terrible subject there is also bound up the glorious truth that through the fires of hell, sin will be completely eradicated from the universe.

The redeemed will at last live in an atmosphere where there never again will be a temptation. There will never be a cry of pain, nor will they have to face the awful experience of death. These are the wages of sin. Satan and all sinners will have been completely destroyed with everlasting destruction.

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

SECTION 5

Truly our hearts should rejoice tonight that God has devised a means whereby we can look forward to a new heaven and a new earth in which the former will not be remembered nor brought into mind, and where we can live in an atmosphere of joy and rejoicing.

Seventh-day Adventists believe in hell. In fact, we believe in the hottest hell of all, a hell that will be so filled with divine wrath that it will completely destroy and bring to ashes every trace of evil. But, friends, Seventh-day Adventists also believe that the God we serve is a God of love who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Our God is not one that delights in destruction. He has done everything within His divine power to make a way of escape. He pleads with us. He has sent His Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. He has commissioned His angels to help us. He has personally given to us this last warning message, asking us to separate ourselves from Babylon and to have nothing to do with the “beast” or his “image” or his “mark.” While we present these warnings, Christ Himself is providing a way whereby every sin can be forgiven. He has offered His own life as a sacrifice on Calvary, making an atonement for every sin. While the world and all the wicked are headed straight for hell, God is doing everything possible to turn our feet from the path of destruction and into the way of life. If we are lost, if anyone attending these meetings finds himself facing the fires of destruction, it will be because he refused the mercy of God and chose to be lost.

Some years ago in a Western town there lived a father who tenderly cared for all of his children; but his oldest son was wayward. He cared not for the faith of his dad. Little by little he chose a life of evil. At last he left home and went the way of the prodigal. His father never could give him up. He continually prayed and pleaded with God for his boy.

One day this son decided that he was going to become a bartender, so he sent advertisements throughout the town that on such and such a date he was opening a new liquor store. This news broke the father's heart. He determined that if his son was going to go to hell, he, his father, would do everything within his power to see that his son didn't carry anyone else with him. On the day it was announced that his bar would be open to the public, the son was inside, behind the counter, waiting for his customers. He heard the sound of many feet outside. He knew there were men who were craving for liquor, but no one came in. He wondered why. After an hour or so he went to the door to look out to see what was keeping the men from coming. There he beheld his own father standing

in the stairway, warning the men not to enter this evil establishment. The boy became enraged. He struck his old father down, kicking him and telling him to get out.

The old man looked up at his son and with pleading voice said, "My boy, if any man goes into this saloon, he will have to do so across my dead body."

God has placed many blockades in the road to hell. Divine signposts have been brought to our attention that mark the road to heaven as the path of obedience. If we would be saved we must keep His commandments, and heed the warning against the "mark of the beast" and its "image." We must take our stand with those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus. This is indeed the truth, but most important of all is the fact that Jesus Himself has given His own life as a blockade in the road to hell. If any of us find ourselves faced with the fires of hell, it will be because we have ignored the very life of Jesus who died for our sins. At this moment He stands with outstretched hands, pleading that He is able to save to the uttermost, though our sins be as scarlet.

Friends, tonight Jesus Christ is reaching down into this very room, extending His hand in which there is power for you and me to be victorious over every sin and over the devil. He extends a hand that is able to cover us in the day of His vengeance, and to protect us in the day of hell-fire. Will you accept Him? Will you give your heart to Him tonight? Will you turn to Him with all your heart and soul and accept of His complete salvation, and thus be with those who will be within the city when the eternal vengeance of God is poured out upon sin? May God help us to accept Jesus Christ tonight as our personal Savior is my prayer.

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