

STUDIES IN THE BIBLE



Eternal Punishment And Reward

Lesson 30

There is life after death. This teaching is one of the foundation stones of Christianity. No man can accept the Bible without believing that there is a place of reward for the righteous and of punishment for the unrighteous. Since all must stand before the Lord in judgment, it is imperative that each conduct his life so that he will receive everlasting life instead of punishment. Jesus said, "**For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?**" (Matt. 16:26.)

Eternal Punishment

Outside Jerusalem in the time of Christ there was a valley which had been made a disposal place for the city's refuse. Known as the Valley of Hinnom, or "Gehenna" in the Greek, it burned continually. The English translation is "hell". Christ applied this term to the place of punishment in eternal fire after death. There is another Greek word which is translated hell in the King James Version which should not be confused with Gehenna. It is "hades", meaning "the unseen world" in the abode of the dead. Confusion of Gehenna and hades has led some to conclude that hell is simply physical death instead of everlasting fire. In most translations hades is rendered as "hades" instead of "hell" and the difficulty is removed. All uses of "hell" in this lesson refer to Gehenna.

What is hell like? Christ describes it as a furnace of fire. "And shall cast them into a **furnace of fire**: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth . . . So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the **furnace of fire**: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. 13:42, 49, 50.) Hell, then, must be a place of conscious suffering rather than of annihilation as some believe.

Christ emphasizes this in saying, "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 the worm dieth not, and the **fire is not quenched**." (Mark 9:43, 44.)



Since the fire will never go out, hell must be everlasting. "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into **everlasting fire**, prepared for the devil and his angels . . . and these shall go away into **everlasting punishment**; but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt. 25:41, 46.) Although a fire, it will be a place of absolute darkness. "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast into **outer darkness**: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. 8:12.)

If possible, hell is described even more vividly in Revelation. "These both were cast alive into a **lake of fire** burning with brimstone." (Rev. 19:20.) Some reason that the fire cannot be literal and hence that hell cannot be so bad. Regardless of what may be the nature of the fire, we are told that it is a place of

torture. This is the important thing. "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." (Rev. 20:10.) Torment denotes excruciating pain. It also implies that the one suffering will be conscious. And John further teaches that this conscious anguish will never end. Who will inhabit this place? "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." (Rev. 21:8.) Hell is here called "death" to denote the eternal conscious separation from God and from everything which is good.

Some suppose that between heaven and hell there is purgatory where those whose lives are neither extremely good nor extremely evil will suffer until they have atoned for their sins at which time they will go to heaven. Pleasing as this idea may be, there is absolutely no mention of purgatory in the Bible.

Eternal Reward

One of the most beautiful descriptions that can be found is that of the eternal home as portrayed in the last two chapters of Revelation. Yet is it impossible for mere words to give an adequate description of the beauties and glories of that home of the soul called heaven.

In heaven is the holy city — the New Jerusalem. It is foursquare, around which is a wall with twelve gates, three on each side. The foundations of the wall also number twelve and are of twelve kinds of precious stones. Each gate is a pearl. There is a street in the city of pure gold appearing as transparent glass. A river proceeding out of the throne of God runs through the midst of the city. On each side of it is the tree of life which enables one to live forever and which bears twelve kinds of fruit. Since God Himself is there we find no temple in that eternal home. But those who are permitted to inhabit it will be privileged to look upon the face of God and worship Him.

In contrast with this earth, nothing in heaven is unpleasant or distasteful. There is no sorrow, no pain, no death. The tears shed in this life will all be taken away. It is a place of continual joy and of rest for the weary. The gates of the city are never closed since there is no night there. The New Jerusalem is lighted, not by sun or moon, but by the glory of God and Christ. And since heaven is eternal and there is no death, there will be no need to reckon time.

Will we know our loved ones in heaven? No passage clearly answers this. Some think that Matthew 8:11 indicates that we will. It reads, "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

Our resurrection will be in a spiritual body rather than a physical one. (I Cor. 15:44.) Since none of us has ever seen a spiritual body we cannot know exactly what it is like except that it is incorruptible and will not die. We do know that we will bear the image of Christ. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him." (I John 3:2.)

Which Will Be Your Choice?

The choice of heaven or hell for your destiny is in your hands. It is the choice of accepting or rejecting Christ. Only faithful Christians will inhabit that eternal home. All others will be consigned to the place of everlasting punishment. It is our hope that through this series of lessons you have been led to a better understanding of God's word and that as a result your hope of life everlasting has been made more sure.

Do you have any problems which you feel we might assist you in solving? If so, we stand ready to help you. Let us know if we may be of assistance.

“Seek and Ye Shall Find”

Write yes or no:

- 1. Does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?
- 2. Was the Valley of Hinnom a place of continual fire?
- 3. Does “hades” mean “the unseen world”?
- 4. Does the Bible teach that hell is annihilation?
- 5. Will those in hell suffer consciously?
- 6. Is purgatory mentioned in the Bible?
- 7. Is the New Jerusalem foursquare?
- 8. Will there be anything unpleasant in heaven?
- 9. Will we be raised in a physical body?
- 10. Will we be like Jesus in the resurrection?

After each scripture location write the exact phrase at the right which is used in that scripture to describe hell. Some phrases are used more than once:

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| Matthew 25:41 | |
| Mark 9:44 | |
| Revelation 19:20 | everlasting punishment |
| Matthew 3:12 | lake of fire |
| Matthew 25:46 | furnace of fire |
| Mark 9:48 | fire is not quenched |
| Matthew 13:42 | everlasting fire |
| Matthew 18:8 | unquenchable fire |
| Revelation 20:10 | |
| Matthew 13:50 | |

Read Revelation 21:1 through 22:5. Fill in blanks:

The holy city is called new All tears shall be wiped away by in that home. But the fearful, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters, and all will have their part in the lake of fire and

There are (number) gates to the city and at the gates stand twelve The city measures (number) furlongs and the length, breadth, and of it are equal. The wall measures (number) cubits. The walls are built of and the city itself of pure

The fourth foundation is of and the twelfth is an Every gate is a Since the glory of God lights the city, it has no need of or

Out of the throne comes a pure of water of life, clear as On either side of the river is the tree of

God's people will see His face and His name shall be in their

Student may write here any comment, question, or request.

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Name..... Grade.....

Address..... Date.....

City..... By.....