Jan 23 '65

AMBASSADOR COLLEGE

Bible CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

LESSON 15

WHAT Is HELL?

WILL THOSE in hell *leave* hell at the time of the resurrection — or are they confined eternally to hell, so that they shall be *unable* to take part in the resurrection?

WHAT DID JESUS MEAN when He said in John 5:28-29: "The hour is coming, in which ALL THAT ARE IN THEIR GRAVES shall hear His voice, and SHALL COME FORTH . . . they that have done evil, UNTO THE RESURRECTION OF JUDGMENT"?

If "they that have done *evil*" — the *un*saved — "shall come forth in the *resurrection of judgment*," what is the connection of that resurrection of the *un*saved, and there being an eternal hell-fire?

HOW does it happen that the evil who have died are *ALREADY* supposed to be SUFFERING the punishment of "eternal HELL-FIRE" when they have not yet even been resurrected to a *judgment* for their sins, which Christ plainly showed was yet in the *future?*

It's about time we took this question out of hiding, and took a good look at it! WHAT IS THE *TRUTH?*

The Common Idea of Hell

First, what *is* the generally accepted common belief in our western world about hell? Here's the terse and brief summation of this POPULAR BELIEF, from the *Encyclopedia Americana:*

". . . As generally understood, hell is the abode of evil spirits; the INFERNAL REGIONS . . . whither lost and condemned souls go after death to suffer indescribable torments and *eternal* punishment. . . . Some have thought of it as the place created by the Deity, where He punishes, with inconceivable severity, and through all eternity, the souls of those who through unbelief or through the worship of false gods has angered Him. It is THE PLACE OF DIVINE REVENGE, UNTEMPERED, NEVER ENDING. This has been the idea most generally held by Christians, Catholics, and Protestants alike. It is the idea embodied in the Mohammedan's conception."

From the Pagans

NOW where, and how, did THIS POPULAR BELIEF about hell ORIGINATE?

The *Encyclopedia Americana* states: "The main features of hell as conceived by Hindu, Persian, Egyptian, Grecian, and Christian theologians *are essentially the same*." The Western religious leaders through the Middle Ages borrowed the doctrine of eternal torture FROM THE PAGAN PHILOSOPHERS. Certain of these writers of the Middle Ages had such tremendous influence on the Christian-professing world, that their writing and teachings came to be generally accepted and believed, until it became the doctrine of the Christian-professing world. Among these influential writers were Augustine, and Dante Alighieri. Dante lived, 1265 to 1321 A.D.

DANTE wrote a tremendously popular book, titled *"DIVINE COMEDY,"* in three parts — *Hell*, Purgatory and Paradise.

It has been said of Dante Alighieri, in the book titled *"DANTE AND HIS INFERNO,"* that "of all poets of modern times, he was, perhaps, the greatest educator. He possibly had a greater influence on the course of civilization than any other man since his day . . . he wrote, in incomprehensible verse, an imaginative and lurid account of a dismal hell — a long poem containing certain phrases which caught the

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attention of the world, such as, '*all hope abandon . . . ye, who enter here!*' This had a tremendous impression and influence on the popular Christian thought and teaching. His 'Inferno' was based on Virgil and Plato."

Dante is reported to have been so fascinated and enraptured by the ideas and philosophies of PLATO and VIRGIL, pagan philosophers, that he believed they were divinely inspired. Here is an article on Virgil, from the *Americana:* "Virgil, pagan Roman poet, 70-19 B.C. belonged to the national school of pagan Roman thought, influenced by the Greek writers. Christians of the Middle Ages, including Dante, believed he had received some measure of divine inspiration."

Plato was a pagan Greek philosopher, born in Athens, 427 B.C., a student of Socrates. He wrote the famous book, *PHAEDO*, on the immortality of the soul, and *this* book is the real origin of the modern belief on the immortality of the soul.

So our concept of "hell" is admittedly a product of centuries of *man's thinking* on the great problem of reward and punishment which man associates with human deeds. It did not come *fully revealed* from God, but is rather the product of *man's thinking* — using *human reason* to decide what *only God* can *reveal!*

What About the Millions of Heathen?

Now, before we examine this idea to see whether man's idea of hell is *true*, let us consider where this concept of hell, if true, leads us!

On this earth are some two and a quarter billion people. The most populous lands are China, India, and other parts of Asia, and in spite of missionaries from the west, actually *MORE THAN HALF* OF ALL THE PEOPLE on the earth have *NEVER so much as HEARD* THE *ONLY* NAME BY WHICH MEN MAY BE *SAVED* — the name of Jesus *CHRIST!* For your Bible says of "the name of Jesus *Christ* . . . for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we *must* be saved" (Acts 4:10, 12).

Is there some *other* way by which man may be saved? Your Bible says here that there is *not!*

This means that *billions* of people here on this earth have lived, and *died*, without having known anything about *Christ*ian salvation — without *saving knowledge* — neither having heard the *only* name by which men may be saved! Now think what that means. IF all *un*saved have GONE IMMEDIATELY TO HELL at death — the hell commonly believed in — THEN MORE THAN *HALF* the people who have *ever* lived on this earth have been consigned there — and they are there, now, without ever having been given so much as a *chance* to escape it! They are LOST!

Ask yourself candidly, do you believe *that* is the plan by which an all-wise, all-merciful, loving *God* is working out His purpose here below?

Now WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

We face this alternative: Either THE HOLY BIBLE is the inspired *Word of God*, by which the Creator REVEALS the *truth* on this subject, or else we must fling up our hands and confess we *just don't know* — we are *ignorant* on the question — because no one has ever *come back* from such a hell to tell us about it. We must believe what the Bible says, or we can believe *nothing*, if we are rational and honest!

Is there even such a thing as "hell-fire"? Does the *Bible* say anything about "hell-fire"? Didn't Jesus say something about hell-fire? Yes, He did!

Final Instruction

We are about ready for the actual lesson. But first, read this instruction!

Have you your Bible in front of you? If not, don't read another word until you GET YOUR BIBLE — or Bibles if you have more than one translation.

Also have several sheets of PAPER, and a PEN, pencil OR TYPEWRITER so that you can make whatever *notes* you need as an aid to remembering what you read. You have them?

That's fine. Remember — you must OPEN your Bible TO EVERY PASSAGE. Never say to yourself, "Oh, I think I know what the Lesson is referring to" — and then pass over the Scripture. You need to keep your nose in the Bible, so to speak. You must read and re-read and *STUDY* EVERY PASSAGE in your Bible. Don't forget, this

is a BIBLE STUDY COURSE — not just a study of these words we send you.

This LESSON is INTENDED merely to direct you to the Bible — to HELP YOU *LEARN HOW* you can better STUDY the BIBLE.

Now, with your Bible, a good DICTIONARY, and CONCORDANCE if you have one, and your stationery, here is the METHOD of study. WRITE DOWN neatly on your paper the TITLE and underscore it. Write down the QUESTION SECTION HEADING. Then, underneath, number each question as you come to it. For each question write down the ANSWER, together WITH ANY PERTINENT IDEAS that may come to your mind.

Be sure also to WRITE OUT THE SCRIPTURE which answers each question if you have not done so before, in previous lessons. Writing down your material — the answers, and every word of each Bible passage, and ANY COMMENTS you wish to make as you go along — *will AID you GREATLY IN REVIEWING AND REMEMBERING.*

Now we are ready . . .

LESSON 15

Christ Spoke of a Hell-Fire

1. What punishment did CHRIST WARN would happen to those who allowed their hands to do evil things? Mark 9:43. Did He say they would "go into *HELL*"? Same verse. And did He say there would be a *FIRE* there? Same verse.

Then there really is a *hell*, if *Christ* says so, is there not?

COMMENT: Christ spoke these words. When Mark recorded these words Christ had spoken he wrote them in *Greek*, for Greek was the commonly spoken language among the nations in Christ's day. The Greek word that Mark wrote down for "hell," when he recorded what Christ spoke here, was "*GEHENNA.*" And, as this same verse also says the sinner is "to go into hell *into the fire,*" it follows that Christ clearly stated here that those who transgress will receive punishment by *fire* as their ultimate reward. Note that Christ associated the Greek word *Gehenna* with *fire.*

2. Did Christ, *for greater emphasis*, repeat, in Mark 9:45, that this punishment by fire would befall those who transgress?

COMMENT: Mark wrote down the *same* Greek word *Gehenna* here in verse 45 that he used in verse 43. Those who translated this Greek word into English, when they made the English Bible, selected the English word "Hell" to represent this Greek word "Gehenna."

3. Did Christ repeat a third time, for the greatest of emphasis, that anyone who allows any part of his body to persistently serve sin will receive this punishment by gehenna "*fire*"— "hell-fire"? Verse 47.

COMMENT: Again, the Greek word which Mark used in this verse was "Gehenna." *GEHENNA* CERTAINLY *DOES* REFER TO *FIRE!!*

English Word "Hell" Applied Wrongly

On the use of the word "hell" in the New and Old Testament let's read what an outstanding Bible Dictionary, called "A Dictionary of the Bible" edited by James Hastings, a leading authority on such technical matters, says. Keep in mind, as we read his material, that the Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew language, and that the New Testament was originally written in the Greek language.

Hastings says: "In our Authorized Version the word 'HELL' is unfortunately used as the rendering of *THREE distinct words, with different MEANINGS.* It represents, **1.** the '*sheol*' [GRAVE] of the Hebrew Old Testament, and the 'hades' [grave] of the [original Greek written] New Testament . . . It is now an *entirely misleading rendering* especially in the New Testament passages. The English revisers, therefore, have substituted the original Greek word 'hades' for the word 'hell' in the New Testament.

"In the American revision the word 'hell' is entirely discarded in this connection . . . The word 'hell' is translated **2.** as the equivalent of the Greek word '*tartaros*' (II Peter 2:4); [A PLACE OF RESTRAINT FOR FALLEN ANGELS] [OCCURS ONLY ONCE IN THE BIBLE] and, **3.** as the equivalent of the Greek word 'Gehenna' [GEHENNA-FIRE PUNISHMENT]."

So we see that the real *meanings* of three different words—"sheol" ("hades" in New Testament), "tartaros," and "gehenna" — have been confused with each other because translators have attempted to make the *one* English word "hell" cover all *three* meanings! But now let us amplify the foregoing facts:

The original Old Testament HEBREW word "SHEOL" and the New Testament GREEK word "HADES" mean THE SAME THING —

THE *GRAVE*. These original words have been translated "grave" in many places. "*Hell*" is an old English word, and over 350 years ago, when the Authorized Version was translated, the people of England commonly talked of "putting their potatoes in *HELL* for the winter" — a good way of preserving potatoes — for the word then meant merely A *HOLE* IN THE GROUND which was covered up — a dark and silent place — a *grave*. But PAGAN TEACHINGS gaining popular acceptance have CAUSED PEOPLE TO APPLY TO THE ENGLISH WORD THE MEANING OF "HELL" WHICH CAME OUT OF THE *IMAGINATIONS* OF *DANTE*.

Note, too, that the Greek word "*tartaros*," which has also been translated into the English word "hell," occurs only once in the New Testament — II Pet. 2:4 — and does not refer to humans, but to the condition of fallen angels. Its meaning, translated into English, is "darkness of the material universe," or "dark abyss," or "prison."

And "*gehenna*"? This Greek word represents "the Valley of *Hinnom* which lay just outside of Jerusalem and was the place refuse was constantly being burned up." Christ used it to picture what would happen to the unsaved.

But of the foregoing, remember this especially: In *most* of the passages of the New Testament where we see the word "hell" in our English Bible translations, the *original Greek word* was a *different* word than the word "Gehenna." This other different word is the word "hades" — which does *not* refer to *fire* at all, but has an entirely different meaning. Yet the translators have used the *ONE* ENGLISH WORD — "*HELL*" — FOR these *TWO* ENTIRELY DIFFERENT *GREEK WORDS* THAT HAVE TWO *ENTIRELY DIFFERENT* MEANINGS!

Let us examine.

1. Does Luke 12:5 contain the word "hell"?

COMMENT: You see that this verse does have the word "HELL" in it. Were you a Greek scholar and looked up the *original Greek word* that is here translated into the English word "hell" in this passage, you would find it to be "GEHENNA." This Greek word "Gehenna" means a PLACE OF PUNISH*MENT*, and Christ indicated this would be carried out by *fire!*

2. *But* now notice the *same English word* "*hell*" in Acts 2:31!

COMMENT: To read the *English* version of these two scriptures — Luke 12:5 and Acts 2:31 — it would *seem* that the word "hell" would have the same meaning in both. *But* the original *Greek* word which is here translated by the English word "HELL" in Acts 2:31 is "*HADES*." "Hades" means "*GRAVE*"! The English word "hell" can have *different* meanings! So, when we come to the word "hell" in our New Testament, we must carefully distinguish whether it is speaking of punishment by fire, or of the grave where ones lies quietly buried. *These two vastly different meanings for the word "hell" we* MUST CONSTANTLY KEEP IN MIND when we see the word "hell" in the New Testament.

So, when you see the word "HELL" in your Bible, LOOK IT UP IN A STRONG'S Exhaustive CONCORDANCE if you want to know its true meaning.

Where To After Death?

When the sinner dies what happens to him? When he is interred in his grave, does he lie quietly and silently there, knowing not anything and awaiting the RESURRECTION? Or, at death, does his "soul" descend immediately into an inferno of eternal hell-fire torture for his sins? Would Satan delude people into feeling pangs of terror and revulsion against a supposedly harsh cruel God who would send them at once to punishment, rather than to the quiet of a grave?

Indeed Satan would!

What *is* the truth? What does *God* reveal about the state man is to be in after he dies?

1. Do MAN AND BEAST all go to *one* place — the *same* place — when they die? Ecc. 3:20. You have never heard of beasts going to a "hell" to be *tortured*, have you? Same verse. Beasts go to the grave!

2. Does this same event — RETURNING TO *ONE PLACE* — happen to both the righteous and the wicked? Ecc. 9:2. Then one doesn't go immediately to heaven, and the other to hell, do they?

3. Where then do all go—back to the DUST from which they were made? Gen. 3:19. Does Ecc 3:19-20 verify this?

4. Does Psa. 146:4 show that no one is able to think after he perishes? Are they even unable to remember God? Psa. 6:5. Then *ALL* MENTAL AND PHYSICAL PROCESS of an individual come to a HALT at death, do they not? Same verses. Then isn't it true that a dead person has no more consciousness residing outside his dead body in the form of an "immortal soul" than a dead animal has?

5. What *place* does God say man goes when he dies? Ecc. 9:10. Did Job, as a man, say his next immediate destination would be the GRAVE? Job 17:13. Were worms of the *earth* to be his companions? Verse 14.

6. Must *all* people die once? Heb. 9:27. Does I Cor. 15:22 verify this also? Did Christ take upon Himself the same mortal flesh of which we are composed? Heb. 2:14. And didn't He also have to go to the grave the same as all mortal men do? Acts 2:31.

COMMENT: The original Greek word which has been translated "hell" in this verse was "HADES" which, as you now know, means

"*grave.*" Christ did *not* go down into a fiery hell but merely into the *grave*. God does NOT condemn anyone TO A FIERY HELL immediately after he dies, BUT MERELY TO THE *GRAVE*.

7. Did Jacob, in speaking of his son, whom he thought to be dead, know that his son would be in the *grave?* Gen. 37:35.

COMMENT: How overpowering the evidence is that the unrepentant sinner or anyone else does not go immediately at death to a place of torment! They go to the grave, where they know not anything!

Resurrected to Judgment

You have heard much about people going directly to the fiery tortures of hell when they die. But have you ever heard of a *judgment* — a *formal sentencing* — of these people by God, *before* they go to their punishment? You say, "I never got the idea clearly in mind." No wonder you say this! *Is* what you have been hearing the *truth?*

What did Jesus mean when He said in John 5:28-29: "The hour is coming, IN which they that are in their GRAVES shall hear His voice, and SHALL COME FORTH . . . they that have done evil, UNTO the resurrection of *JUDGMENT*"?

Obviously, Christ said the judgment of the evil dead who are now in their graves, is yet ahead. Then how could they now be receiving punishment when they have not, as yet, even received *judgment* for their sins? The two ideas contradict each other!

Where *do* the dead go from their graves? Learn here what *YOUR* BIBLE REVEALS.

1. Is there to be a day of judgment? II Pet. 2:9.

2. Is it to be a time when the unjust are judged for punishment? II Pet. 2:9.

3. When is this judgment to be? Heb. 9:27.

COMMENT: It is plain that at SOME TIME AFTER HE DIES a person will receive final judgment by God.

4. Is man resurrected from death by God so that he can be judged? I Sam. 2:6. Isn't God able to bring people up from the *grave?* Same verse. Does Rev. 20:13 also prove there is to be this great future "resurrection to judgment"?

COMMENT: Notice that those who are in their watery graves in the water — the "sea" — are to be resurrected, and those who are killed by other means and left unburied — "death" — are to be resurrected, and those who are in earthy graves — "hell" [the Greek word here is "hades" which means the "*grave*"] — are also to be resurrected at this time. So *all* the dead on land or in the sea, WHEREVER THEY MAY BE, ARE TO BE RESURRECTED TO JUDGMENT in the FUTURE. No one is, or ever has been, down in a fiery hell dancing around in anguish!

The Wages of Sin Is Death

What is the *penalty* — the "*wages*" as Jesus expressed it — of sin? Is it *eternal consciousness* in torment, or *eternal oblivion?* Let us see.

1. BY WHAT STANDARD will people BE JUDGED in the last day of judgment? John 12:48. Will the condemnation they receive be according to how well they acted upon the precepts and COMMANDS GOD SPOKE THROUGH CHRIST? Same verse.

2. What does Paul warn will be the judgment of those who, knowing God's commands, *WILFULLY SIN* against them? Heb. 10:26-27. Notice that this judgment comes on people because they *sin*.

3. And what is the "wages of sin"? Rom. 6:23.

COMMENT: The WAGES OF SIN IS *DEATH!* — *ETERNAL* DEATH for every part of you! The word "death" is directly opposite in meaning to the word "life"!

4. Does Jesus compare the false ministers to trees that bring not forth good results — bring not forth "good fruit" — for His work? Matt. 7:15-19. What did He say would happen to such people? Verse 19. Isn't wood put into a fire to be *burned up?* Did Christ say *all* people who do not bring forth good fruit WILL BE CAST INTO FIRE? Matt. 7:17-19, 23.

5. What did Christ tell people would happen to them unless they repented of their sinful ways? Luke 13:3. "*Perishing*" certainly *cannot* mean living on in another form, can it? Same verse.

Hell-Fire Will Destroy— Not Just Torment!!

Many people have been WRONGFULLY TAUGHT to believe that the "SOUL" OF MAN CANNOT BE DESTROYED.

But we learned in the previous lesson that man is composed of dust (Gen. 3:19), and that the thing that gave man *life* was the air that God blew into his nostrils (Gen. 2:7). And as *living* man is thus composed of only these two materials, air (breath), and dust, he *can* be forever destroyed. *All* of him!

For we know that breath or air *can* be caused by physical means to leave the body, and the human body *can* be caused by physical means to return to the dust, and, as a result, man's CONSCIOUS MENTAL ATTITUDE, his "SOUL" — for which Christ used the Greek word "PSUCHE" in Matthew 10:28 — CHRIST SAID *CAN* BE DESTROYED! Read it in *your* Bible, in Matthew 10:28, for yourself. The "soul" *can* be destroyed! All

these things God says He *can* do. The only question is what God *will* do.

GOD HAS *NOT* DECREED ETERNAL *LIFE* IN TORMENT FOR THE SINNER! The punishment revealed in the Bible is *death* — cessation of life forever. Eternal life is something we must seek to *put on* (I Cor. 15:53) — something we do not now have — it is a *gift* of God given some time *after* birth to those that *obey* Him. Eternal life and eternal death are contrasted all through your Bible!

Now notice what God says He *will* do with the sinners — the incorrigibly wicked on whom He has decreed, "The wages of sin is *death*" (Rom. 6:23).

1. Did Christ show by His parable of the tares that there was to be a future harvest? Matt. 13:24, 29, 30.

COMMENT: Christ, through verses 24-30, was here representing the earth as a field (verse 24), the obedient people as wheat (verses 25, 29), and the disobedient as tares (verses 25, 29, 30).

2. Did Christ say the EVIL PEOPLE—the TARES—will be *BURNED?* Matt. 13:30.

3. Does Psalm 37:20 also indicate the ultimate fate of the wicked will be destruction by *fire?*

4. Is there going to come a time that is extremely hot? Mal. 4:1. Will this time be so hot that it will *burn — CONSUME* THE WICKED? Same verse. If this heat consumes the wicked and their offspring, no one will be left but the righteous, will there?

5. Will the righteous ultimately walk on the wicked? Mal. 4:3. In what *form* will the wicked be? Same verse. Who will burn the wicked up?

6. The wicked and their leaders, the false preachers, will all have the same end. What did Christ warn the false preachers of His day — the scribes and Pharisees — would be their fate? Matt. 23:33.

COMMENT: The original Greek word translated here as "hell," is "*gehenna*" — meaning the Valley of Hinnom. Christ was referring to the fire found in the Valley of Hinnom as a type of complete destruction by fire. CHRIST was thus ASKING these sinning people HOW *they* COULD POSSIBLY ESCAPE A COMPLETE DESTRUCTION BY FIRE SUCH AS THEY SAW DAILY AT THE CITY DUMP located in the *Valley of Hinnom* BY JERUSALEM.

7. Isn't the Bible hell-fire, gehenna fire — which *consumes completely* those who are put in it — a lot HOTTER THAN DANTE'S "HELL-FIRE" which is only hot enough, supposedly, to *torment?*

COMMENT: Yes! The Bible hell-fire *will* consume the disobedient for all eternity. *NEVER* WILL THEY EXIST AGAIN. This is a fearful warning to those who *know* God's truth and still *refuse* to obey it! "For the wages of sin is *death;* but the *gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). If you believe this scripture means what it says, then you know the *truth.* But, unfortunately, most theologians *and their blind followers* try to *twist* and *distort* what Paul said into something else — to eternal life in torment.

Could anything be clearer than this Scripture? The wages, or reward, of sin is shown to be *death,* but *eternal life* is stated to be a *gift* from God — *not something we already have.*

Death means just that — cessation of life and consciousness — *total oblivion!* In spite of the vain attempts of many preachers to make *death* mean *separation from God,* you *cannot* reconcile this with Scripture. Nor does *death* mean *eternal life* in the horrifying torments of an imaginary "hell."

The non-consuming, but only torturing, *false* hell-fire doctrine, which is used to frighten so many deceived human beings, is a preposterous falsehood. Its author is the father of lies — Satan the Devil! If you are one who has been deceived by this doctrine, and are suffering mental torment because of it, MAY GOD HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND HERE THE TRUTH!

HELL Is Earth's Destruction by Fire

And now comes a most interesting revelation! Of what does hell itself consist? Forget now all ideas you yourself may have had as to what it is supposed to be, and all the ideas you have been led to believe it might be. Read now *in your own Bibles* what God the Father reveals to you hell-fire is *going to be.* For hell-fire *does not even exist yet!* Did you know that? Read now the truth in your own Bible!

1. If people persist in using the various members of their bodies in disobeying God, where did CHRIST WARN such about where they would ultimately find themselves? Mark 9:43-45. Will they not find themselves in HELL-FIRE — GEHENNA FIRE — *a place of destructive fire?* Same verse.

2. Are not whoremongers, murderers, liars, and such types, people who use the various members of their bodies — their hands, feet, eyes — to disobey the commands of God (Rev. 21:8; Ex. 20:14, 13, 16) ultimately to find themselves in this "*LAKE*" OF FIRE and brimstone?

COMMENT: A *large fire* often has the *appearance* of a fiery lake. That is *why* this colossal world-end *fire* is *compared* to a "*lake*" of fire!

3. Will it cause their death? Rev. 21:8. *Which* of their deaths will it cause? Same verse.

Comment: ALL OF US DIE ONCE, because we just "WEAR OUT" (Heb. 9:27), BUT IF anyone DIES THE *SECOND* DEATH, referred to in Rev. 21:8, it is because

that person has been *judged* guilty of persistent disobedience. The *second* death is *ETERNAL* DEATH!

4. Does Rev. 20:13 verify the fact that the evil will be cast into this coming lake of fire only *AFTER the COMING JUDGMENT?*

5. Will *all* not written in the book of (eternal) life be cast into this lake of fire? Rev. 20:15.

COMMENT: *Here* is God's — not man's — but *God's* description of what *hell-fire will be!* It is yet in the future, having never yet occurred. And nothing is said anywhere in the entire Bible about *descending* beneath the earth into this final hell-fire, or of *torture* for all eternity! Rather, the Bible shows *destruction* for all eternity of all unsaved human beings within this lake of fire. All contrary ideas have been handed down from paganism.

6. What is this ultimate veritable "lake of fire" *actually* to be—our earth burning up? II Peter 3:10. Are all the things man has created on this earth to be burned up along with those who will not have been found worthy to be born as spirit beings into the Kingdom of God? Same verse.

COMMENT: The small *prototype* "lake of fire" of Rev. 19:20, foreshadows the final end fire which destroys all the earth!

7. What is meant in Revelation 20:14 by the words, "DEATH AND HELL were CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE"?

COMMENT: The original Greek word, which is here translated "hell" was "hades," which means the *grave*. Destruction of mortal human beings from the earth will mean that there will be *no more death*, so neither will there be *graves*.

8. What will be SATAN'S PART in this coming hell-fire? Rev. 20:10.

COMMENT: Satan will be cast into the same conflagration that will destroy wicked mortal people. As he is a spirit being, he will not burn up.

Notice that Satan never has had anything to do with a hell-fire for none has existed as yet. Observe that when a hell-fire does occur in the future, Satan will be in it, NOT IN THE ROLE OF TORTURING PEOPLE, as he is represented, BUT in the role OF himself BEING "TORMENTED" MENTALLY IN IT.

The word "are" in the phrase "where the beast and false prophet *are*," has been added by the translators. In some Bibles this word is in italics, which shows it was added later by the translators. This word is not in the original Greek manuscript. The phrase *should read*, "where the beast and the false prophet *were*," for these two *mortal individuals* — the coming great military leader, and religious leader will long since have been destroyed by the time Satan is put in this flame.

Hell-Fire "Never Be Quenched"?

What did Jesus mean in Mark 9:43-48 when He repeated five times for emphasis, that this coming hell-fire (gehenna) which shall destroy the wicked, would *never be quenched?* The vast majority of people have CARELESSLY ASSUMED that the phrase, "go to hell, into the fire that *never shall be quenched*," was just one more proof THAT A FIERY HELL FOR ETERNAL TORMENT OF THE WICKED HAS BEEN ROARING CONTINUOUSLY UNDERGROUND DOWN THROUGH THE AGES, and would continue to do so. But how does *God*, through His own book, the Bible, interpret these, His own words? Examine!

1. CHRIST constantly USED THE JERUSALEM refuse or GARBAGE FIRE, which burned in the VALLEY OF HINNOM that bordered Jerusalem on the south, TO ILLUSTRATE the FINAL HELL-FIRE — the final "*GEHENNA FIRE*" which is to occur at the time of the future destruction of this earth. This is actually the reason why Christ used the word *ge*henna fire in referring to the world-end fire, for "*GE*" means "*LAND*," *and with the word* "HINNOM," means "LAND OF HINNOM." It will be a fire similar in many respects to the fire that was constantly going in this Land — or Valley — of Hinnom, just south of Jerusalem. Now notice this! Was the fire that burned the city refuse there in those days quenched?

COMMENT: The fires in the Valley of Hinnom kept BURNING AS LONG AS THERE WERE BODIES OF DEAD PEOPLE, animals, or refuse, TO BURN. *Then they went out!* It is important to notice that these fires accomplished their purpose of consuming the dead bodies and refuse, and that it was only *after* they had accomplished this purpose that they *BURNED THEMSELVES OUT*. But they NEVER were *QUENCHED*. The flames merely died out when they had nothing more on which to feed to keep themselves burning. It could have been said of these fires, "*They shall not be quenched by anyone.*" They didn't have to be!

2. Jesus declared the unquenchable fire in the Valley of Hinnom bordering Jerusalem, which went out only after there was nothing more on which to feed, would be a type of the great future world-destroying gehenna hell-fire.

Now LET the BIBLE ITSELF INTERPRET the *meaning* of "unquenchable fire." Look around you in the world today. What do you see? IS there a BIG DESTRUCTIVE FIRE CONSUMING THE CITY OF JERUSALEM TODAY that has been burning for hundreds and hundreds of years? NO. But God said (2500 years ago) that He would kindle a fire in Jerusalem's gates which would devour the palaces there, and that fire, GOD SAID "SHALL NOT

BE QUENCHED"! Jer. 17:27. It was to be an unquenchable fire, God ordained. This fire did come a few years later and it did "destroy all the houses of Jerusalem" Jer. 52:13. Then as God said no person or thing would quench this fire ("it shall not be quenched"), and as it is not burning today, IT WENT OUT *BY ITSELF* after accomplishing its purpose, didn't it? Same verses.

3. And now for another example. Were the notorious cities of SODOM AND GOMORRAH to "suffer the VENGEANCE OF *ETERNAL* FIRE"? Jude 7. Is there still a fire burning in those cities which God set afire long ago and destroyed?

COMMENT: Of course not. "*Eternal* fire" means a fire whose results are *permanent* or everlasting. Sodom and Gomorrah have *never* been rebuilt.

The fires which burned Sodom and Gomorrah went out of themselves. Clearly NONE OF THESE SCRIPTURES can be used to SHOW that "fire that shall not be quenched" will TORMENT PEOPLE FOREVER AND EVER.

4. Now try this experiment. Get a pan and some paper. Strike a MATCH TO THE PAPER. A flame is burning the paper. Then what happens? the fire goes out *of itself* after it consumes the paper. No one *quenched* it, did they? No. Note, incidentally, that *ashes* were *all* that were left.

5. Are the wicked to be reduced to *ASHES* by the final earth's surface-destroying fire? Mal. 4:3. How can *ashes* be tormented forever by anyone? Then the "wages of sin is *death*" by a reduction of the sinner to ashes, and is an eternal — everlasting — punish*ment*, and *not* an everlasting punish*ing* by torment, isn't it?

COMMENT: Punish*ing* is a continuous action. Punish*ment* has a time *limit!* God is *merciful!*

6. Does not God promise the righteous a better world after this one? II Peter 3:13.

God Is Love — and Justice!

The primary reason so many men and organizations of men have a *false* conception of "hell" is that they view the doctrine of hell just as an *isolated* doctrine. They FAIL TO LOOK AT THE *OVERALL PURPOSE* OF GOD in putting man on this earth, of offering him the gift of eternal life for obedience, or of everlasting punish*ment* (not punish*ing*) for disobedience.

God created man in His own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26). In the Garden of Eden, He told man the way that would lead to *eternal life.* Then He told man that doing the *wrong* thing — eating of the fruit of the tree which God had forbidden — would lead to *death* (Gen. 2:17). But Satan, the father of lies (John 8:44), told the woman, "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4).

Man has been believing that *lie* — of being born with *immortality* within himself — ever since!

God's purpose is to develop holy, righteous character in man which will make man fit for *eternal life.* God gave ancient Israel His commandments, "that all might be well with them and with their children for ever" (Deut. 5:29).

God's decrees are always for man's *good.* They are not designed as arbitrary decrees which God has set in order to have some excuse for plunging men into flames of fire! Where do men get such ideas about God? Certainly not from the Bible!

God created man in His own image in order that man might be brought to the place where God could entrust him with the precious *gift* of *eternal life.* Notice that God offered Adam and Eve *life* on one hand, and *death* on the other.

IF man would rebel against God and make it impossible for God to entrust him with eternal life — knowing that he would ABUSE that LIFE — then the KINDEST THING that God could do would be TO LET MAN *DIE.* Then, stubborn, sinning man would be unable to bring any further misery on himself or others by his *wrong* ways. He would just *cease to exist,* and thus would not interfere with the happiness of others who were found worthy of eternal life.

This is *exactly* what God said would happen to Adam and Eve if they disobeyed! The reward of *eternal life* for obedience — and of death — *ETERNAL DEATH* — for disobedience is stressed all through *your Bible.*

Only this is consistent with the Scriptures, and with God's plan and purpose — and His character of supreme *love!* Yet God will not, because of His infinite *love,* take away anyone's life because of ignorance or weakness, but because they *wilfully* and *knowingly* refuse to obey their Creator.

The warning of a hell-fire should be a *FEARFUL WARNING* to those who know God's truth and still *refuse* to obey it! It should bring a somber realization that unless we *surrender* to God's will and His way of love, and refuse to let *anything* turn us aside, God will *take away* forever the life He has given us!

"Worm That Dieth Not"

A startling statement is found in Mark 9:43, 44. In this passage of Scripture, Christ spoke of a WORM THAT "DIETH NOT." Who ever heard of the IMMORTALITY OF WORMS? He said of the sinner who would not use the various members of his body properly in obedience to God that it would be better for them to "enter into [eternal] life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell [gehenna-fire], into the fire that never shall be quenched:

where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:43, 44). For emphasis, He *repeated*, in verse 48, that their worm would not die. What did Christ mean?

SOME PEOPLE THINK that JESUS was REFERRING TO *PEOPLE* AS WORMS AND WAS TRYING TO SAY that these "people" never died — but LIVED ON IN AGONIZING TORMENT. Those who say this fail to notice that Jesus does not call the wicked *people* "worms" but instead speaks of *their* worm. The Lexicons define the Hebrew (Isa. 66:24) and Greek (Mark 9:48) words translated "WORM" as a grub or MAGGOT and in *NO way* does the word "worm" refer to a MAN. Christ was not teaching the immortality of people *or* worms! Notice:

If anything, especially a dead body, landed on a ledge above the fires, it would be devoured by many worms or maggots which were kept alive by the animal and vegetable substances deposited there.

It was to these worms that Christ was referring when He said "their worm dieth not." But Christ didn't mean that each individual worm continued to live forever!

Actually, these worms come from eggs deposited by flies. Here is the cycle. These eggs give rise to larvae — *maggots* — *which eat flesh.* They continue in this form a few days, then go through a change called pupation, and finally emerge as flies, later *dying! The worms don't die — they become flies!*

These are scientific facts, known by any real student of science. And yet some people think that Christ *ignorantly* stated that these larvae continued to live *forever* in that state of development! This just goes to show that we should always be careful to use wisdom and common sense in studying God's word. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of a *sound mind* (II Timothy 1:7). Let's rightly use the minds God gave us!

The Greek word which was inspired, and translated into the word "worm" in this passage, simply means a grub or maggot, and is a *collective* expression, like "fish" or "deer," for worms that devour dead matter. Yes, the *flies* that these worms become, like all other creatures *will* return to the dust from which they came. "*All* are of the dust, and *all* turn to dust again" (Ecc. 3:19-20).

This same reference to worms is found in Isaiah 66:24. Here we again find that the inspired word simply means a common grub or a maggot. These worms or larvae also feed on the dead bodies for a few days, and then emerge as flies. Thus, these worms "die not" but continue to develop into flies just as any normal, healthy worm! The flies continue to deposit their eggs *only as long as* there are dead bodies or other matter for the larvae to feed on.

NEITHER DO THESE WORMS HAVE IMMORTAL SOULS! Ecc. 3:19 shows that *no creature*, man or beast, is born with an immortal soul.

The BIBLE is one book that MAKES GOOD SENSE! So let us always study these perplexing scriptures through, before we jump to our own conclusions.

Let us live by God's word, so that we may be worthy of the *gift* of eternal life. Then we need not receive the wages of sin — death — (Rom. 6:23). This will come by a fire which will not be quenched — *but* will *burn itself out* by consuming this earth and the bodies of all the wicked. Neither will we need to worry about THESE "WORMS" which WILL LIVE ON THE BODIES OF TRANSGRESSORS — not at first consumed by fire — UNTIL THERE ARE NO MORE BODIES LEFT. THEN *all* will RETURN TO THE DUST and ashes (Mal. 4:1).

But if we will *honestly* search the scriptures and live by them, we will be accounted worthy to inherit eternal life.

Lazarus and the Rich Man

The account of Lazarus and the rich man is perhaps one of the most — if not the most — outstanding text used by those who seek to prove there is a fiery hell of torture, and that the wicked are in it today. SUPPOSE what is commonly believed were true. Then SAVED MOTHERS would see the writhing and HEAR THE SHRIEKS of their own LOST CHILDREN DOWN IN HELL!

Stop and think! Would you, being saved, want to spend eternity being forced constantly to gaze upon your own loved ones who were lost, hearing them frantically screaming to you for help you would be unable to give, gazing constantly upon their indescribable agony, as they, on fire, are burning — burning — yet never actually burning up? Would you be happy? Could you be happy?

Did Jesus really give this illustration to portray the terrible situation which the saved will have to *endure* for all eternity? If not, what *did* Jesus intend to illustrate? Let's get the facts straight!

1. Did LAZARUS, a poor but righteous beggar mentioned in this account, die — and was he CARRIED by angels TO "ABRAHAM'S BOSOM"? Luke 16:20-22.

COMMENT: God gave Abraham and his "seed" the promise of the earth for an eternal inheritance. If we are Christ's we are considered by God as Abraham's seed — children — and are thus also heirs along with Abraham, of this promise (Gal. 3:29). Through *faith* we may all become "*children of Abraham*" (Gal. 3:7). This is an INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP — a close or bosom relationship — to Abraham. We are to be in close contact with Abraham in SHARING

THIS PROMISE. It is like being "*taken to Abraham's bosom.*" (Luke 16:22). Lazarus was taken to Abraham's bosom.

When, then, did Abraham actually receive these promises? The startling answer of Scripture is—HE DIDN'T!—*he has not, even yet in our day, inherited these promises!*

Scripture reveals this through the inspired speech of the very first Christian martyr, Stephen, who was stoned to death for these very words.

It is in Acts 7: "And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our Father Abraham . . . and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into THE LAND which I will show thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans . . . into *this land*, wherein ye now dwell (Palestine). And *He gave him none inheritance in it* . . . yet He *promised* that he would give it to him for a possession, and to *his seed* after him" (Acts 7:1-5).

Again this amazing fact is stated in the FAITH chapter—Hebrews 11: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a *place* which he should *after* receive for an inheritance, obeyed; . . . By faith he sojourned in *the* LAND *of promise*, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the *heirs* with him of the same promise: . . . *These all DIED in faith, NOT HAVING RECEIVED the promises*, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:8-13).

Abraham *died*, but has not to this day inherited the promises!

Abraham died, and was still DEAD, not liv*ing* on earth or in heaven or anywhere, but was still DEAD, at the time of Christ's earthly ministry. "Abraham *is* dead." John 8:52. At that time — centuries after he died, Abraham was DEAD! He is still dead today. When, then, is he to INHERIT THE PROMISES?

AT the time of the RESURRECTION of the just, of course! The Kingdom of God is the government to be set up in PALESTINE to rule all nations after the second coming of Christ.

Then it is that Abraham will be resurrected and will receive the promises. And what about Lazarus the BEGGAR? He, being in intimate relationship with Abraham, will ALSO receive the promises when he is resurrected at that same time! Lazarus — a type of Abraham's children — is yet to receive his promises, too, at the resurrection.

2. But what about the wealthy, but *UN*-DESERVING RICH MAN? Did he also *die?* Luke 16:22. And is not the next picture we see of him one where he is lifting his eyes from the *grave* — not from a fiery hell of eternal torment — but the *grave*, and calling to the resurrected Abraham for a *few drops* of water to *cool only his tongue*, being in torment? Luke 16:23-24. How could he lift up his eyes *unless he were resurrected?*

COMMENT: The word "*hell*" used here is from the original Greek word "hades," which you know means "grave." This word "hell" in Luke 16:23 is *not* from the Greek word "gehenna," which represents the gehenna fire which, in the future, will destroy the wicked forever. The rich man, at this moment, is still pictured as ABOUT TO COME UP OUT OF his *GRAVE* through a resurrection.

When Christ comes, the righteous will be resurrected to immortality, and CHRIST WILL SAY, "COME ye blessed [who are here ABRAHAM AND THE BEGGAR] INHERIT THE KINGDOM prepared for you . . ." (Matt. 25: 31-34). Abraham and Lazarus WILL HAVE ESCAPED through the sacrifice of Christ the judgment of ETERNAL DEATH by hell-fire — they will have been immortal for over 1000 years at the time the rich man calls to them for water. BUT the RICH MAN, now awake, and about to rise from the grave, SEEING the FLAMES of hell [*gehenna*] fire surrounding him (Rev. 20:15), WHICH WILL DESTROY HIM forever, IS IN great *MENTAL* AGONY— he will ask for just a *little* water — to cool his tongue which is dry from this *mental* agony. He does not ask for *buckets full* of water to put the fire out. An impossibility, he knows.

3. What will Abraham then answer the rich man? Luke 16:25, 26.

COMMENT: The great GULF between the two will be IMMORTALITY. Those who are made immortal shall never die because they will be born of God (Rev. 20:6). ABRAHAM AND THE BEGGAR will be ON THE *IMMORTAL* SIDE of this gulf — the *mortal* unrighteous RICH MAN ON THE OTHER, facing eternal death by fire.

And many of the condemned will, like the rich man, want their relatives warned, refusing to accept the fact that at that time *all* will *already* have had their chance. (Luke 16:27, 28.) (For additional information on this parable send immediately for Mr. Armstrong's *free* booklet, "Lazarus and the Rich Man." You have never read anything like it!)

How clear that the PARABLE of "Lazarus and the Rich Man" DOES NOT PROVE ETERNAL PUNISH*ING* by God! RATHER, by this parable, Christ was preaching the *Good News* of salvation!! He was PICTURING THE RESURRECTION TO ETERNAL LIFE, and the inheritance of the Kingdom of God on this earth forever.

Christ was ALSO picturing the ALTERNATIVE OF ETERNAL DEATH if one does not accept the Good News of how we may be saved, and act upon it!