

There is a REAL HELL FIRE!

A leading Protestant theologian recently said, "It is doubtful whether many educated Protestants today believe in 'heaven' and 'hell' as literal physical places. . . ." Yet to many millions hell is frighteningly real! Is there a real hell, a real fire, a real torment—what does the Bible say?

by David Jon Hill

ADMITTED—the *modernist*, the *agnostic* and the *atheist* do not believe in a real hell—but then, they don't believe in the Bible or the plain statements of Scripture either!

Even among theologians who claim to recognize the final authority of God's Written Word there is much disagreement about hell.

Most agree that hell and its fire are for the *punishment of sin*. Yet beyond this point they differ—sometimes *violently!*

WHY?

Some quote scriptures as proof that God uses hell for the purpose of inflicting *never-ending* torture on the damned; while others also quote scriptures as proof that hell is the instrument God uses to *destroy* the wicked, body and soul!

Do These Scriptures Contradict?

Does one scripture contradict another? NO! God's Word plainly says, ". . . *scripture cannot be broken!*" (John 10:35.) How can one set of scriptures be used to "knock in the head" another set of scriptures then? The answer is, it CANNOT BE DONE—*honestly!*

Unfortunately millions have been *deceived!* Some scoff, and shrug off the whole idea of hell. Some say the very idea of a *loving* God making people suffer the torment of fire *eternally* is not logical. Yet others say God *will punish sin forever*, that the sinner well deserves every pain of hell and more!

It is the habit of those who quote scriptures on the subject, to use only PART of the verses pertaining to the subject—they read a false meaning into them. By subtle *half-truths*, by vivid

pictures, by peddling *popular*—not Biblical—teachings, they shackle Christendom to *unreasoning fear* or insult the intelligence of the educated into *complete disbelief!*

We *must not* read our inherited or desired meaning into any particular passage of scripture—"no prophecy of the scripture is on any private interpretation," (II Peter 1:20)—but each passage is interpreted by, and in the light of, *other texts!* The only way to get the TRUTH ABOUT HELL is to understand ALL THE SCRIPTURES on the subject—straight from God's Word, not distorted by popular, but unproved belief, for "*Thy word is truth!*" (John 17:17.)

Common Concept of Hell

First, let's read what is the generally accepted common belief in our Western world about hell. Here is the terse and brief summation of this popular belief, quoted 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 have angered Him. It is the place of divine revenge, untempered, never ending."

Did this idea of hell come from the Bible? Did Jesus teach that lost souls are going to suffer eternally in hell's fires?

What about the verse, which some quote, that reads: "And ye shall tread

down the wicked; for *they shall be ashes* under the soles of your feet?" (Mal. 4:3.) And what about the scripture, quoted by some, saying, "the *soul* that sinneth, *it shall die!*" (Ezek. 18:4.)

How do you reconcile these verses with Jesus' statement, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into *everlasting fire!*" (Mat. 25:41.)

You need to *know* the answers to these questions! Don't *kid* yourself! *There is a real hell fire!* Let's look into a few of the most commonly used scriptures on this subject, and UNDERSTAND THEM in the clear light of *God's Own Word*—let's see what they REALLY SAY!

What About Lazarus and the Rich Man?

The 16th chapter of Luke has been used universally by those who believe in an *eternally-torturing* hell.

If you will carefully read the chapter beginning in verse 19 and reading through to verse 31—the entire parable of Lazarus and the rich man—you will notice there is *no mention of time in the entire description!*

Since this is so universally *misunderstood*, and there is not the space here to cover the background needed to *thoroughly* discuss the subject because of the need to answer many other questions, I will put down here a brief excerpt from the very core of a booklet we have on the subject. This booklet goes thoroughly into this particular subject of Lazarus and the rich man—you may have the entire booklet FREE, upon request, just write and ask for the booklet, "*Lazarus and the Rich Man.*" The following is an excerpt, only part of what is contained in the entire book-

let covering the subject thoroughly:

The Fate of the Rich Man

Now let's see what happened to the rich man—and *when!*

Jesus said of him: "... the rich man also died, and was buried" (Luke 16:22). Jesus did not say the rich man was taken immediately *at that time* to an eternally burning hell. He did *not* say the *body* was buried but that the rich man himself was plunged immediately into a burning hell. He said the rich man *died*—and the *rich man*, himself, *was buried*.

Now one would hardly say of one being put into the burning caldron luridly described as the imaginary hell that the act of throwing one into that burning region was a BURYING of the person, would he? One is not *buried* unless he is *covered up*.

People are *buried* in a grave, and covered with earth. But the imaginary hell that was invented by Dante Alighieri accepted by the Roman Catholic church and later by most Protestants is never pictured as a place of BURIAL! But this rich man died and *was buried!* He, *himself*, *was buried*—not a "house" he had lived in. JESUS SAID SO—read it in your Bible! The rich MAN *was buried!*

What Kind of Hell?

In the next verse, Jesus said, "And *in hell* he lifted up his eyes" (v. 23).

So the rich man was in a place called "hell," after all, wasn't he? And *in* this hell he "lifted up his eyes." His eyes had been *closed*, in death, and now there came a time when they opened—he "lifted up his eyes!"

What kind of "hell" is this?

Startling though it may be, the rich man was *buried* in the *same kind of "hell"* Jesus *was buried in!* Yes, Jesus died and was buried—and *in "hell!"*

In the first inspired sermon preached by Peter on the day the New Testament Church started, Peter said: "He [David] seeing this before spake of the RESURRECTION of Christ, that *His soul was not left IN HELL*, neither his flesh did see corruption" (Acts 2:31).

Jesus, too, died and was buried. And in "hell" He, too, *lifted up His eyes*—WHEN HE WAS RESURRECTED!

Now let me explain that, and make it plain!

The New Testament was written in the Greek language. *Your Bible* is a translation in the English language. In the English language your Bible probably reads "And *in hell* he lifted up his eyes." However, in the original Greek in which the New Testament was written there are three different Greek words, each having a totally different meaning, but all three of which were translated into the "King James" and Catholic translations by the English word "hell."

One of the Greek words is "*tartaros*," which refers only to the present condition of darkness, or perversion, and of restraint, of the fallen angels, or demons. Another is "*gehenna*," a place at the bottom of a high ledge at the south end of Jerusalem, where garbage, refuse, and bodies of dead animals and the worst criminals were dumped over the ledge to be *burned up*. Down below, the fires were kept continually burning. They *burned up*, or *consumed*—*totally destroyed* the bodies and refuse dumped there. This is the word Jesus used when He spoke of being finally DESTROYED IN "HELL FIRE."

But this rich man was not buried in *that* "hell." He was not in "gehenna." The third, and most commonly used Greek word was written here by Luke—"hades." And "hades" means THE GRAVE—a place of BURIAL in the ground!

When the King James translation of the Bible was made, Englishmen spoke commonly of "putting their potatoes in *hell* for the winter." They buried them in the ground!

This is the "hell" Jesus was buried in—the "hell" His soul was not left in—the grave, or tomb, from which He was RESURRECTED! And *this, hades*, was also the "hell" in which the rich man was BURIED! . . .

What Is This Flame?

But when he is resurrected, he sees a *flame* which torments him. What is this?

Now Jesus did, on other occasions, speak of *perishing* and being *destroyed* in "*gehenna* FIRE." What is this? It is described in Rev. 20:14-15, as a "*lake*

of fire."

"Scripture everywhere describes the final fate of the wicked as being burned up by fire. It is this "lake of fire," which is "the second death," from which there shall be *no resurrection!* The PUNISHMENT is death by fire! They remain *forever* DEAD! This death is for ALL ETERNITY—ETERNAL PUNISHMENT—but it is *not* eternal punishing!

Now, opening his eyes in his grave, this rich man SEES Abraham, and Lazarus in his "bosom"—his embrace! Yes, Jesus told the Pharisees that *they* would SEE Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom and they themselves thrust out! This rich man sees them! He also sees this awful flame of fire—this LAKE OF FIRE which is about to destroy him forever! *He is* TERRIFIED!

What happens when one is suddenly so horrified with fear? His mouth goes dry. His tongue sticks to his mouth and throat!

The rich man cries out in this mental agony: "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."

Now if the rich man were in the kind of "hell" most people seem to believe, his *whole body* would be on fire—you would think he would have called for at least a bucket of water to put out the fire, wouldn't you?

Look at this!

How much water did he call for? He said to Abraham: "... send Lazarus, that he may *dip the tip of his finger in water.*" Just a couple of drops—that's all the water he requested! Doesn't that strike you as strange?

Why did he call for water? To put out the fires of all "hell"?—the kind of hell people would have you believe he was in? Ah, no! He only wanted a mere couple of drops of water on Lazarus' finger—WHY?—"to COOL MY TONGUE!" That's what the rich man *said!* Open your own Bible again, and *read it!*

The flame, he said, was *tormenting* him. This word "tormented," used in verses 24 and 25 is translated from the original Greek word "odunasai." This is defined in *Liddell & Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* as "to cause pain, to

pain, distress:—From ODUNE—pain of body, but also, 2, of *mind, grief, distress.*"

Why, of course! This rich man opens his eyes in his grave in a resurrection. He is resurrected MORTAL, just as he was before he died—not immortal like Lazarus! He sees this lake of fire. Now he *knows* the frightful, the AWFUL doom he is to be thrust into—to be *burned up—destroyed!* He is suffering mental anguish such as he never experienced in his lifetime. HIS TONGUE IS DRY. He breaks out in cold sweat. He cries for a little water on the tip of Lazarus' finger TO COOL HIS TONGUE! He is in a condition of WEEPING and GNASHING OF TEETH!

The Final Hell Fire

Now once again READ THIS IN YOUR BIBLE! Read exactly *what Jesus said*, not what the "hell-fire" preachers have told you He said! Did Jesus say this rich man was going to suffer *endlessly and forever—always burning—being on fire—yet never burning up?* DID HE? Of course not!

There is *not one word* here about *how long* his anguish is to last.

Jesus was saying these things to the Pharisees (verse 14). What did He want to make them understand, when He gave this account about Lazarus and the rich man? Jesus answered this question for us in Luke 13:27, 28 where He said to these same Pharisees: "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. There shall be *weeping and gnashing of teeth*, when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves *thrust out.*" Yes, they are going to be in exactly the same position as this rich man! Jesus is using him as an illustration to show the Pharisees what is to befall them! They are to be THRUST OUT—into the LAKE OF FIRE which shall consume them, leaving them neither root nor branch, as the Scriptures say! (Mal. 4:1, 3.)

The wicked are going to be cast into the *lake of fire!* When they lift up their eyes in their resurrection, they shall KNOW that they are doomed, now to be cast into the lake of fire to be burned up!

This rich man cried out for help

because of his mental and physical anguish—KNOWING what was now to befall him! He knew he was GUILTY! When a man realizes he is guilty, and faces his just and terrible retribution, the very *first* part of the body to be affected is *the tongue*, which dries out—seems to be on fire!

Be sure to write for the *entire* booklet—"Lazarus and the Rich Man."

Immortal Worms?

A startling statement is found in Mark 9:48. In this passage of Scripture, Christ spoke of a worm that "dieth not." Whoever heard of the immortality of worms? 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 these words in *no way* refer to a man. Christ was not teaching the immortality of people or worms!

Actually, Jesus was here warning his listeners that those who would "offend"—who would live a life of rebellion against God and His children—would be cast into "hell fire." Most Bibles show in the marginal rendering that this was "Gehenna fire." Jesus was referring to Gehenna as a type of the second death in the "lake of fire" which will befall the ungodly.

Gehenna, or the Valley of Hinnom, was located outside of Jerusalem and was a place where trash, filth, and the dead bodies of animals and despised criminals were thrown. 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, or maggots are the larvae which develop from eggs

deposited by flies. They continue for only a *few days* in this larval stage, then pupate and finally emerge as flies, later dying. 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 stage 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 Tim. 1:7). Let's rightly use the minds God gave us!

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 "dieth 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. Also notice that this verse plainly says people are going to *see*, "look upon"—this does not take place in the center of the earth hidden away in some hole in the ground.

Startlingly, a clear and thoughtful reading of this particular verse (verse 24), shows that the verse is *not talking* about LIVE people, but the "CARCASSES of the men that have transgressed against me."—They are not alive and consciously suffering!

Tormented Forever?

Many are confused by Revelation 20:10, partly by a mistranslation; and partly because they do not let the Bible interpret the Bible. "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).

In your King James Version you will notice that the word "*are*" is in *italics*—this means that the word was supplied by the translators and is not in the original Greek. This is the mistranslation that misleads, indicating that the beast and the false prophet are still in the lake of fire at the time that the devil and his demons are cast into this

lake. According to the chronology of Revelation itself both the beast and the false prophet were cast alive into the lake of fire at the beginning of God's thousand-year reign on the earth" (Rev. 19:20). By merely using God's definition of what happens to human bodies when they are cast into fire, we can realize that they will be burned up just like so much fat on a hot stove (Ps. 37:20), and therefore the phrase in Revelation 20:10 should be translated "where the beast and the false prophet WERE."

Simply by applying the rules of grammar you will see that the latter part of this sentence, "and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever," refers to the *devil*, and to the demons, who are the subject of this entire sentence. Yes, God's Word plainly says Satan the devil and all his demons are going to be tormented day and night forever and ever. Since the devil faces this horrible sentencing, he has endeavored to make mankind think that the punishment of sin for *mankind* is going to be an eternal punishing—in order to get sympathy for himself.

What Is This Everlasting Fire?

In Matthew 25:41 Jesus said, "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.*" Jesus here plainly showed that the everlasting fire was prepared for Satan and his angels. Yet He goes on to show that human beings who are ultimately judged unfit for eternal life, and are not granted the *gift* of LIFE—something they do not have of themselves—are also to be cast into this very lake of fire, as verse 46 says, "And these shall go away into *everlasting punishment*" (verse 46). This final punishment which sinners suffer is *eternal* DEATH by fire. It is not eternal *punishing*! Once they are burned up and now dead they are going to *stay dead* FOREVER—this makes the punishment EVERLASTING!

When these people are cast into this lake of fire it is by God's definition—the Bible definition—an eternal, everlasting DEATH from which there is no resurrection forever, called "the second DEATH!" "But the fearful, and unbe-

lieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars [that is, all those who insist on breaking God's laws, who persist in sin—I John 3:4], shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is *{by God's own definition}* THE SECOND DEATH!" (Rev. 21:8.)

Smoke Ascends Forever!

Does the scripture, ". . . and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever . . ." (Rev. 14:11), contradict the passage which reads, "And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be *ashes* under the soles of your feet . . ." (Mal. 4:3).

Notice that verse 8 gives the TIME SETTING of this passage. It is speaking about the impending fall of "Babylon"—a great religious-political system which is the RESURRECTED ROMAN EMPIRE led by the symbolic harlot "woman"—the great apostate, paganized *church* falsely calling herself "Christian."

Verses 9 and 10 say: ". . . If any man worship the beast [the coming United States of Europe—the resurrected Roman Empire] and his image [the Papacy], and receive his mark . . . he shall be tormented with *fire and brimstone* . . . in the presence of the Lamb" (that is, at Christ's second coming)!

Those who have a part in this church-state system of "Babylon," and who receive this frightful punishment from Almighty God, have "no rest day or night" as long as they remain in that land falling under God's wrath! They will either have to flee that area and seek God's mercy or be tormented by sulphurous fumes *till they perish*.

Notice that this passage does NOT say these individuals are being tormented forever in an ever-burning hell. Verse 11 says: ". . . The SMOKE of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever. . . ." It is the smoke that ascends forever. It does not say the fire burns forever, but that the smoke that is already up there continuously ascends! It happens even today whenever fires burn up, but smoke is still in the air!

This fire is on the earth, not in some "hell" away off!

So the Bible plainly teaches that flesh and blood is subject to combustion and death. Malachi 4:3 says the *ashes* of the wicked will finally be under the feet of the righteous. And if the wicked are forever *ashes* after the earth is burned, then their smoke (or *ashes in the air*) will remain in the atmosphere "for ever and ever." So there is no contradiction between these verses! The wicked will be DESTROYED and will die that death—the second death—from which there is never to be a resurrection (Rev. 20:6, 14).

Fire Never Quenched!

"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!*" (Mark 9:43—see also Matt. 18:8-9 where same question is treated).

Does that mean burning forever, and never burning up? Try this test: Put a piece of paper in a pan. Light it with a match.

Now, *don't* QUENCH that fire!

Don't put it out—for that's what "quench" means. Very soon the paper will *burn up*. Then put it down on the floor and step on it! NOW it's merely ashes under the sole of your feet—precisely as YOUR BIBLE plainly says the wicked shall be! In Jer. 17:27, God warned the Jews that Jerusalem would be *burned*, and the fire would *not be quenched*—unless they repented. In Jer. 52:13, you read the account of the burning of Jerusalem. That fire was NOT QUENCHED! It is NOT still burning! It just burned itself out.

Example of Hell Fire

God does not leave the answer to these questions for man to reason about and come up with his own ideas. In the stern warning to those who were in need of getting back to the faith once delivered, God, through His servant Jude, left the perfect example of the effect of ETERNAL FIRE! "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!" (Jude 7.)

These cities of Sodom and Gomorrah suffered from the vengeance of eternal fire—are these cities still burning and yet not being consumed?

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 there is no question as to the plain meaning of God's Word. All who will insist on rebelling against Him unrepentantly will be burned to a crisp in a very REAL HELL FIRE!

God Is Love—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 OVER-ALL PURPOSE OF GOD in putting man on this earth, of offering him the gift of eternal life for obedience, or of everlasting punishment (not *punishing*) 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 would make man fit for *eternal life*. God gave ancient Israel His commandments, "that it 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!