



*The* BIBLE STANDARD  
and Herald of Christ's Kingdom

# To Hell and Back

— *How do we get there?*

— *How do we get back?*

*Also . . . Bible Question Box*

## TO HELL — AND BACK

*“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death”*

— Hosea 13: 14 —

**THE NATURE OF HELL** has for centuries tested the imagination and the reasoning powers of thinking Christians, and — thank God — in recent times many have been relieved that superstitious medieval horrors of a place of eternal torment, fire, and brimstone have lost their stranglehold on the minds of most believers.

In this modern world, the idea of an “inferno” somewhere in the bowels of the earth, where after death wicked people are tortured for ever, is largely debunked in the mind of the modern man and woman. And unfortunately, under the misconception that the Bible actually teaches such a devilish doctrine, many have rejected the *entire* Divine revelation as a collection of myths, and have given up any pretense of faith.

Yet there are many who still hold that God’s purpose toward sinners is to punish them eternally, even in a literal place of burning fires, and claim that this is the teaching of the Bible. Others who reject this appalling concept argue that the fires are “fires of remorse,” which will after death for ever torment those who in this lifetime do not repent of sin but remain obdurate as to the grace of God.

### What is the truth of the matter?

What does the Bible really teach? Is it the Creator’s intention to punish everlastingly those who, during their few short years of life on earth, fail to measure up to His standards of faith and obedience? Can a loving God, who sent His Son to be man’s redeemer, be also a merciless autocrat who takes revenge on men, women, and children who never had a real opportunity to know Him and accept of His grace?

Some may be inclined to dismiss the discussion as being necessarily based only on conjecture. “What can anyone know about hell? Surely no one has ever returned from there and told us what it is like?” *Yes — and No!* Yes — our Lord Jesus, as the creeds have it, “descended into hell, and on the third day rose again.” No — He left us no

records of His experiences during that time. A few others died and were re-awakened — the son of the widow of Nain, the daughter of Jairus, and our Lord’s friend Lazarus. Whether supposedly for a while in heaven or hell, in bliss or torment, they gave no account of their absence from their loved ones. They were evidently unaware of it at the time, and their silence is significant.

What about Jesus? Did He really descend into hell? St. Peter so taught. “Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: . . . For David speaketh concerning him . . . thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Acts 2: 22–27).

Why did God’s “Holy One” descend to hell? We know that He tasted death for every man and gave his life “a ransom for all” (Heb. 2: 9; 1 Tim. 2: 6). Jesus stated His mission in John 3: 15–17: to save the world from *perishing*, and to restore life. St. Paul understood that Christ *died* for the ungodly, for sinners (Rom. 5: 6, 8). Are we then to understand that our Lord went to hell to take upon Himself the Divine punishment for the sins of mankind, and secure their release from custody? Yes — Christ died!

### THE HIDING PLACE

“Hell” is merely an arbitrary translation of the Hebrew word *sheol* and the Greek word *hades*, which both mean the grave, the *death condition*. It is the abiding place of all who go down into death after this span of life on earth is finished. The Apostle Peter speaking on the day of Pentecost of the resurrection of Jesus, reminded the people that even King David had not ascended to heaven, but remained dead and buried (Acts 2: 29, 34).

Because *all* inherit a sentence of death from the first parents of the human race, the grave — *sheol* — is the inevitable destiny of each of us. *We all descend to hell*. Psalm

“Lift up a standard for the people” — Isa. 62: 10

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116 seems to be the song of thanksgiving of an Israelite rescued from premature death. He recalls: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell [*sheol*] gat hold upon me" (v. 3). Or as *The Living Bible* puts it: "Death stared me in the face — I was frightened and sad." Life is precious. Man's natural desire is to shun the grave and to cling to life, no matter how intense the suffering, how bleak the outlook, or how remote the prospect of relief. And for many, the vague dread of an unknown future makes death a fearful prospect.

### Are the departed suffering for their sins?

No — they are *asleep*. They are in a state of oblivion that can know no suffering, feel no pain, mark no passing years (Eccl. 9: 10). Successive generations "slept" with their fathers, as the Scriptures express it. They did not join ranks of wrongdoers undergoing endless torment, nor were they consigned to some place of purgatory where they might suffer a while to expiate their sins and perhaps be admitted to heaven at some future time. They were unconscious, oblivious, sleeping the sleep of death. And in this respect theirs is the common experience of all humanity.

The words of David reflect this thought of sleep: "If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there" (Psa. 139: 8). In the death condition none are hidden from God's power, and He can and will exert that power in due time to awaken those that sleep — to *bring forth* all that are in the graves, as affirmed by our Lord Jesus (John 5: 28, 29).

Given the assurance of an awakening, the sleep of death can even be welcome at times of great affliction, and the Hebrew understanding of *sheol* rendered it at times a place of refuge from distress. To the Patriarch Job in his extremity, death seemed desirable. Overwhelmed by a series of sore trials that fell upon him, he maintained his integrity, but prayed:

"O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee" (Job 14: 13–15).

Job in longing for *sheol* had no thought of a place of torture, and the translators of the King James version of the Bible, realizing the absurdity of translating *sheol* as "hell" in this instance, correctly used the word "grave."

### Hell an English Word

In old English usage the word hell meant to hide, to conceal, to cover. Records refer to the helling of potatoes — which were put into pits and covered over for preservation. *Sheol* is indeed translated "pit" three times in the Old Testament. Strictly speaking, therefore, "hell" was not improperly used, synonymously with the words "grave" and

*Jesus and the Apostles were certainly not responsible for the idea of eternal torment, nor did such a prospect have any real hold on the minds of Jewish believers in their day. Martha, after her brother Lazarus had died, affirmed her belief that he would "rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Until then, Lazarus was dead.*

"pit," in indicating the secret or hidden condition of death.

Yet in the religious doctrinal climate of the times, the use of the word "hell" as the translation of *sheol* wherever possible in the King James version of the Bible, served to sustain for many centuries a blasphemy which dishonored the name and character of a God of justice and love — a God who never decreed an eternity of punishment for a brief life span of disobedience. The Divine penalty for sin was not everlasting life in torment. *It was death.*

### THE DEVIL'S INVENTION

But how did "hell" acquire its malign significance, so predominant in Christian tradition? Jesus and the Apostles were certainly not responsible for the idea of eternal torment, nor did such a prospect have any real hold on the minds of Jewish believers in their day. Martha, after her brother Lazarus had died, affirmed her belief that he would "rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (John 11: 24). Until then, Lazarus was dead.

The eternal torment theory had its roots in ancient heathen religions which embraced an intense belief in all manner of supernatural wickedness, a world of malevolent gods who required to be appeased in return for favors they had the power to confer. Naturally, there had to be a dwelling place for such an evil fraternity, and the supposed "underworld" — *hades* — became that place. Greek mythology abounds in tales of the antics of the gods so-called, and the Apostle Paul when he visited Athens "saw the city wholly given to idolatry" (Acts 17: 16).

The indispensable error underlying the whole superstructure of deceit was devised at the dawn of man's history by the one whom Jesus described as "the father of lies" (John 8: 44) — "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world" (Rev. 12: 9).

Expressed in the simplest terms, the Creator's requirement of obedience on the part of the first human couple, was conveyed thus:

"Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2: 16, 17).

The serpent's contradiction set the pattern for all liars from that time forward: *attribute to one's opponent one's own guilty act*. "Call God the liar!"

He subtly enquired of the woman: "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Eve explained the one prohibition. Satan continued: "Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3: 1, 4, 5).

St. Paul says that the woman was deceived, but Adam himself was not deceived (1 Tim. 2: 14). However, the seeds of doubt were sown, soon to become rooted and to flourish, until the mistaken belief in the immortality of the human soul became almost universal. In process of time, the lie was accepted even into the Christian faith and served as a goad to conformity with the demands of power-grasping clerics who might ease one's path to heaven, or consign one to the depths of hell.

The hope of heaven had its basis in Bible truth. Satan is a wise enough serpent to permit a little light to shine, to appeal to the intelligence of his victims, all the while working in the shadows to distort the truth. So it seemed natural to conclude that if, after death, the souls of the good went to heaven, there had to be a place where the souls of the wicked could be confined, if only to restrain their disruptive influence on the peace and harmony of creation as a whole.

Satan's motives in the drama of Eden are a study in themselves. It has to be admitted that his plans were logical, and carried out with great success, so that the Scriptures declare him "the prince of this world" (John 14: 30), and "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4: 4). Possibly he deceived even himself, and really expected to capture an immortal race, so that when he realized he held captive only the weak and dying human family, his vexation would drive him and his minions to greater extremes of evil invention, making life for most of mankind what they might indeed describe as "hell on earth."

### THE "REFUGE OF LIES"

All life is the gift of God. Even under sentence of death on account of sin, it is "in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17: 28). But for His life-support constantly animating our bodies and stimulating our minds, we cannot exist. Constituted of the elements of earth, Adam was not a living being until the Lord God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2: 7).

Adam did not become an *immortal* soul. Immortality is the condition of deathlessness, which St. Paul indicates is a Divine attribute (1 Tim. 6: 16), requiring no life-support from another. Neither was a soul *given* to Adam, as an adjunct to the body — some indefinable spirit quality that would remain conscious even if in course of time the body ceased to function.

The Bible records that through disobedience our first

parents incurred the death penalty, and they died. When the breath of life is withdrawn, it is not merely the body that dies; the soul — *the person* — ceases to exist. As "the Preacher" observed: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Eccl. 12: 7). When our Lord Jesus gave His life for the sins of the world, it was His *soul* that He poured out unto death (Isa. 53: 12), the body therefore relinquishing life.

Adam and Eve did not die instantly. From God's standpoint "the day that thou eatest thereof" is a period of 1,000 years (2 Pet. 3: 8): we note that they died within that period. The marginal reading of Gen. 2: 17, "dying thou shalt die," seems to emphasize the certainty of the penalty, but also suggests the progressive nature of its application. The dying *process* would be instructive to our first parents, who were to generate a race — albeit with impaired life — who would be schooled through generations of experience with evil to learn thoroughly the disastrous consequences of sin. And that experience would provide an object lesson for all eternity, as the unfolding of God's purpose for His earthly children would in due time reveal.

It has not been difficult for Satan to deceive all mankind into believing a lie. However, instinct and reason tell us that death is unnatural, and we cannot accept that God created us without some lasting purpose. To lose forever each lifetime of learning, to mourn the loss of kith and kin, to spend our days seeking to please the One who is our Father and Life-giver, only to be cut off in death, is an unthinkable and incomprehensible prospect.

Satan's cunning lie therefore, has fallen almost without exception on willing ears, and God's pronouncement of death is unpalatable to all but a very few. Those few, however, have noted that the Creator in His great love, even at the time of the fall of man, offered a gleam of hope. The seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3: 15). That seed was Christ.

Satan's "refuge of lies" is crumbling and will soon be swept away (Isa. 28: 15, 17). All the deceived who have taken shelter in false hopes, and all who, through fear of hellfire were enslaved in evil systems, will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8: 21).

In the New Testament, two other words besides *hades* are translated as "hell" — *gehenna*, and *tartaroo*. The latter occurs only once and relates to the imprisonment of fallen angels. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Pet. 2: 4). *Tartaroo* stems from *Tartaros*, a mythological abyss or prison, the lowest region of the supposed underworld, where the wicked were punished. The reference here seems to be to the expulsion from heaven of Satan and the other fallen angels, and their remand to an ignominious status.

## ANOTHER KIND OF HELL

*Gehenna* is the Greek term corresponding to the Hebrew “Valley of Hinnom.” This valley was a ravine just outside the southern wall of Jerusalem, used as a refuse dump. Fires were kept continually burning to consume the city’s garbage, brimstone (sulfur) probably being added to aid combustion and ensure complete destruction. Whatever escaped the ravages of the flames would breed worms and be as thoroughly destroyed as all that was burned. No living thing was cast into *gehenna*, the Jews being forbidden to torture any creature. Under normal circumstances the dead were buried in the valley of Jehoshaphat, to the east of the city, but the bodies of exceptionally wicked criminals were thrown into the rubbish dump, making them detestable in the eyes of the people.

Naturally enough, such a place provided a fitting illustration in Scripture for total extinction — annihilation. An examination of the words of our Lord Jesus shows that He referred to *gehenna* in a symbolic sense, conveying the idea — not of an eternity of conscious torment — but of complete and utter destruction.

### The Difference Between the Two Hells

In the commonly accepted view, there is no difference between the *hades* hell and the *gehenna* hell, because the arbitrary translation tends to confuse the matter. But a careful study of the relevant texts, as we have seen, makes it clear that the first hell — *hades* or *sheol* — relates to the grave, that condition of death from which there is to be an awakening. The second hell — *gehenna* — conveys the thought of permanent destruction. There can be no return from *gehenna*.

From the temporary death, Adam and the whole human family will be raised. Having learned the disastrous consequences of sin in their former life under “the god of this world,” a new experience will be given them of life under the righteous rule of Christ’s Kingdom. The true-hearted will pass the character tests of that “judgment day,” gaining for them the everlasting, perfect human life that God originally intended should be theirs.

It seems clear, however, that some will prove to be irreformably wicked, and Divine wisdom consigns these to be destroyed in *gehenna* — *the second death* (Rev. 20: 14). (See the following article.) In this text death and the grave are portrayed as perishing for ever in “the lake of fire,” indicating that they would no longer exist. Revelation is of course a book of symbols. It provides in vivid pictorial language a

detailed prophecy of things which must come to pass. Jesus Christ “signified” it to His servant John (Rev. 1: 1). Perhaps the flames of the Valley of Hinnom seen from the city walls under the night sky gave the appearance of a “lake of fire,” making it an apt metaphorical portrayal of utter destruction.

With the sole exception of those who will live through the Time of Trouble and enter Christ’s Kingdom, all mankind go into the first hell, *hades* — the grave. All have inherited Adamic imperfection and come therefore under the original death sentence: “In Adam all die” (1 Cor. 15: 22). Even in the dying *process* we are considered from the Divine standpoint as being already dead (Luke 9: 60).

None will go into the second hell, *gehenna* — permanent destruction — for the sin of another, but the persistently evil man will die for his *own* sin. “In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge” (Jer. 31: 29, 30). We may be sure that the merciful provisions of Christ’s Kingdom will make it easy in that day for all to come into complete harmony with the principles of truth and right

living. Yet it appears that some will remain obdurate, and the Lord in His wisdom and mercy will remove them from the scene, thus cleansing the earth of all that might defile man’s eternal home.

### THE HELL DEBATE

A recent publication by The Evangelical Alliance of a discussion on “The Nature of Hell” brought into sharp focus the misgivings many evangelical Christians have concerning the traditionalist view of hell. The orthodox teaching has been of course that unbelievers will be condemned without exception, but the concept of *conditional immortality* is gaining sympathy among evangelicals, which necessarily involves a re-assessment of the nature of hell. The debate has been conducted amicably enough, though some eminent theologians taking the “conditional immortality” stand, have resigned their appointments in traditionalist establishments. Generally speaking, the present ecumenical climate — the efforts of Christians of all persuasions to live harmoniously together — has promoted a degree of tolerance and a willingness to disregard differences of opinion for the sake of survival.

The questions concerning hell and human immortality are not new. It may be that throughout the history of the





Christian church there have been some who have struggled with the idea of a vindictive God whose revenge on sinners seems at odds with His mercy. Doubtless there were those who stifled their misgivings, but a revealing report published as long ago as 1912 confirmed that many Christian ministers had by that time discarded the old hellfire doctrine and were no longer teaching the eternal torment of sinners. Here are a few extracts:

- The famous R. J. Campbell, of London, representing the Non-Conformist view, said: "I don't know any clergymen here who believe in eternal punishment; nor do I think an educated clergyman has done so for many years."

- Rev. Arthur L. Odell, a St. Louis pastor, said: "I do not know of any Presbyterian Minister who believes or preaches this idea. Of course, this literal hell was an idea widely held in earlier years, but the church is breaking away from many of the conceptions of past ages."

- Archbishop Glennon, although evading the direct question, leaves the impression that the Catholic clergy no longer believe in literal hell. He said: "It's too hot to talk about such a subject today [! — *Ed.*]. As to whether Catholic clergymen preach hell fire, I will say that we preach the faith, and our faith is the faith of the church."

- Rev. David S. Phelan, Editor of *Western Watchman*, stated: "Catholic priests do not preach a hell of fire. The church has not taken a definite position on the subject."

- Rev. Dr. James W. Lee, of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, stated: "I do not believe in a fire-and-

brimstone hell, and I think I have never heard but one sermon in which that belief was expressed, and that was down in Georgia years ago."

- Rabbi Adolph Rosentreter is quoted as saying with emphasis: "I do not believe in a literal hell of fire, of course. Orthodox Jews do not hold that idea."

- The *Christian Leader and Way* prints the following: "The American Association for Bible Study has solemnly stated that there is no hell. A conference of English ministers has adopted the same view. A few days ago the Ministerial Association of Marietta solemnly promulgated or indorsed a like doctrine. In other words, the authorities of the Christian churches seem to agree that the old Biblical conception of a hell of unending torment, of fire and brimstone, is illogical and untruthful."

That some still hold to the blasphemous doctrine of eternal torment in hellfire, 90 years after such testimonies were given, illustrates the compelling power of Satan's great lie: "Ye shall not surely die." But will any doubt their eyes and ears, when the dead return from their long sleep in hell? Surely when they return from the grave with the breath of life restored, and are given a new opportunity for life, even unto the attaining of perfection in the image and likeness of their Creator, they will rejoice and give thanks to the God who has ransomed them from the power of the grave, and redeemed them from death!

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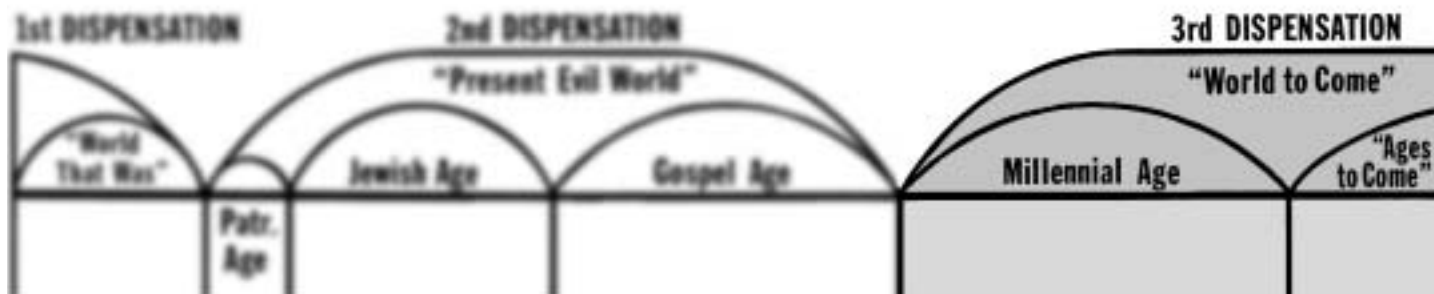
- Is hell a place of eternal torment? Did Christ go to hell and return? What does the parable of the Sheep and the Goats mean?

- These and many other questions about hell are answered in our booklet, *The Hell of the Bible*. Please send for a free copy (normally \$ .25).

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# THE FUTURE HELL



Part 9 in our series on Habakkuk 2: 2: "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it."  
This article deals with the "hell" of the dispensation to come.

**WE HAVE SEEN** that the words *sheol* and *hades*, as used to describe the first hell, do not refer to (1) a place of torment, nor to (2) a place of two compartments, one being of bliss for the righteous and the other of torture for the wicked; rather we found that they refer to (3) the unconscious condition of the first death — *oblivion* — to which all were sentenced as a result of Adam's sin, and from which a recovery is promised in the resurrection. This being true, we recognize that when all the dead in Adam are awakened from the unconscious condition of death, the first hell will be entirely destroyed (Rev. 20: 13, 14).

The statement of verse 14, "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire," plainly refers to another, a second hell, for how could hell be cast into the lake of fire if there were only one hell? This second hell is the Second Death (Rev. 20: 14; 21: 8), brought on by individual, *totally wilful* sin. It is the condition of utter, complete, and eternal annihilation. While Jesus, by paying the ransom-price for Adam and his race guarantees to all a resurrection from the first hell (Hosea 13: 14; John 5: 28, 29), there is no provision for a return of any from the second hell, for Christ "dieth no more," according to the Scriptures (Rom. 6: 9; Heb. 10: 26). Thus those who fully sin away their grace have no hope of eternal life, seeing their sin would require a re-crucifixion of the Son of God as their individual ransom-price (Heb. 6: 4-6). Their destruction is eternal annihilation — the second hell, *from which there is no resurrection*.

## VARYING FIGURES OF SPEECH

The second hell is mentioned in the Scriptures in at least five different ways: (1) the lake of fire; (2) gehenna; (3) everlasting fire; (4) eternal fire; and (5) sheol. In this article we will treat of the first, and consider some pertinent Scriptures.

Since all of the occurrences of the expression, "lake of fire," are in a figurative book (Rev. 19: 20; 20: 10, 14, 15; 21: 8; in three of these passages "brimstone" is added to "lake of fire"), we regard it as a figurative expression.

That Revelation is a figurative book is indicated in Rev. 1: 1: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John." The word *signified* in this verse gives the thought that this book was generally told in signs and symbols rather than literally.

The book of Revelation portrays in this manner the final disposal of evil and the incorrigibly wicked — their eternal annihilation. This is pictured by their being hurled into the lake of fire, which is the Second Death. The addition of brimstone intensifies the symbol, for the fumes of fire and brimstone were the deadliest destructive agents known to the ancients. The combination of these symbols emphasizes the thought of eternal annihilation.

## Fire a Biblical symbol of destruction

Many Scriptures, aside from Revelation, use fire as a symbol for destruction. Mal. 4: 1 reads: "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, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." The day here mentioned is the great day of Jehovah's wrath, in which destruction will be heaped upon the present order of affairs. This is indicated figuratively by its "burning as an oven." The proud, the great ones of this present evil world, who are under Satan's domination, shall figuratively be burned, as stubble, so that there will be neither root nor branch left for further development.

James 3: 6: "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." Hell in this verse comes from the Greek word *gehenna*. In symbolic language, St. James points out the pernicious influence of an evil tongue — a tongue set on fire (figuratively) by Gehenna, which also pictures the second hell. The office of the tongue is such that if not ruled

properly, it defiles the whole person — one's character, work, honor, office, position, and relation to others. It injures all with whom it comes in contact, and if allowed to have free course, with no control, will bring all, when on trial for life, into the Second Death.

### SIX THINGS CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE

Other passages which demonstrate that the Scriptures frequently use fire as a symbol of destruction include: Lam. 4: 11; Zeph. 3: 8, 9; Rom. 12: 20. Moreover, this is proven also by the teachings of the literal passages of the Bible concerning the fate of all six things which are mentioned as being cast into the lake of fire: the Devil, the Beast, the False Prophet, death, hell, and incorrigible (fully wilful) sinners. We will consider each separately:

(1) *The Devil* is to be cast into the "lake of fire" as is indicated in the first part of Rev. 20: 10: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are." Compare this passage with a literal scripture which clearly indicates his final fate — Heb. 2: 14: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Jesus was made man so as to become the ransom sacrifice for Adam and his race. It is this sacrifice that is the foundation for rendering Satan powerless, and which will eventually lead to his destruction.

(2) *The Beast* is also to be cast into the "lake of fire" (Rev. 19: 20; 20: 10). The true Christ consists of Jesus, the Head, and the Church, which is His Body. The Beast, symbolic of the great Antichrist, consists of a counterfeit Christ: the papacy as its head and the hierarchy as its body. This is styled "the mystery of iniquity" (2 Thes. 2: 7). It began to work in its first faint beginnings and activities in the unholy ambition of certain leaders among the brethren in the Apostles' day. The prophetic descriptions of the Antichrist have been fulfilled in this great system as shown in the books of Daniel and Revelation, as well as in 2 Thes. 2: 7-9. In this literal passage its final fate is described (v. 8): "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." *The spirit of his mouth* here refers to the Truth.

(3) *The False Prophet* is likewise to be cast into the "lake of fire" (Rev. 19: 20; 20: 10). The False Prophet also refers to a great religious system — Federated Protestantism. From a comparison of Rev. 19: 20 and 16: 13 with Rev. 13: 11-17 we learn that the False Prophet and the image of the beast are identical. After the image begins to speak, it sets forth false teachings, which makes it the False Prophet. Note that the Beast and the False Prophet being destroyed does not refer to the destruction of *individuals*, but to religious systems.

(4) *Death* is to be cast into the "lake of fire" (Rev. 20: 13, 14). In 1 Cor. 15: 26 we read: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." St. Paul is here referring to the Adamic dying process and death state. He says in vs. 21-23, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." During Christ's presence in the Millennial Age, all those who reform will gain the right to live forever.

(5) *The first Hell* is also to be cast into the "lake of fire" (Rev. 20: 13, 14). Hosea 13: 14 reads: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." In this verse, the word *grave* comes from the Hebrew word *sheol*. Sheol occurs 65 times in the Old Testament — three times translated *pit*, 31 times *grave*, and 31 times *hell*. The whole human family has been going down into sheol (the death state). In this passage, God promises that he will annihilate the first hell by the awakening of the dead, which will take place during the Millennial Age. He has made provision for its destruction by giving His Son, Jesus Christ, to be the ransom-price to offset the death penalty that is against the whole human family through Adam's sin.

### Incorrigible sinners eventually destroyed

(6) *Incorrigible sinners* will be cast into the "lake of fire" (Rev. 20: 15; 21: 8). Many literal passages show that these will be destroyed — eternally annihilated. Job 31: 3 reads: "Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?" Psa. 9: 5: "Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever." Those who during and at the end of the Millennial Age will not have properly submitted to the righteous laws and corrections of the Kingdom will die, either as the accursed at 100 years of age, or as those who have not filled their days with good, in connection with Satan's temptation of mankind in the Little Season (Isa. 65: 20). As is the case with Satan, all of these will be cast out of God's memory. They shall never return again, for He will utterly annihilate them.

Psa. 145: 20: "The Lord preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy." Here the continuance of the righteous is contrasted with the destruction of the wicked, which therefore will last eternally. Those who teach the eternal torment theory would interpret this passage somewhat like this: The Lord preserves all that love Him — He continues them in everlasting life; but all the wicked will He destroy, which means to preserve in everlasting torment in fire and brimstone, in the charge of devils with pitchforks. This is a perversion of the meaning of the word destroy, for they make it mean the very opposite — to preserve! God will not preserve, but will utterly destroy,



*annihilate*, the wicked, so that they will never again come into existence. “They shall be as though they had not been” (Obad. 1: 16).

### **Destruction of bodies and souls**

Some wrongly conclude that the destruction of the incorrigible mentioned in the above passages is the destruction of their bodies, but not the destruction of their souls, which, it is claimed, live on in a place of torment — the lake of fire and brimstone. This is a wrong conclusion, for many Scriptures speak about the destruction of souls. (For more information on the soul, please send for our free booklet, *What is the Soul?*) We will quote some pertinent Scriptures: Psa. 35: 17: “Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions.” Psa. 40: 14: “Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil.” David is the speaker in both of these texts. He realized that if they were to take his life, it would mean the destruction of his soul (David, however, not being an incorrigible sinner, the destruction of his soul would not be permanent). David is sometimes used as a type of Jesus and the Church, who also experienced the persecutions of those who sought to destroy them.

Acts 3: 23: “And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.” St. Peter quotes here from Deut. 18: 19. This great prophet is the Christ, Head and Body, who will be the teacher to the world in the Millennial Age. All will be given an opportunity to understand His teachings and to obey them. Some, however, refusing to obey, will after 100 years of trial be destroyed (Isa. 65: 20). Others, who obey outwardly, but refuse to hear Him from their hearts, will continue until the end of the Millennial Age. Because of living selfishly, therefore not properly using the opportunities of the Millennial Age, nor producing fruitage to God, they, as the old men who will not have filled their days with good, will succumb to Satan’s temptations, and be destroyed from among the people.

Rev. 20: 15: “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” To be found written in the book of life which in the Millennial Age will be the New Covenant, here means to have a character which is in harmony with its arrangements, teachings, spirit, and work. (See our July 2002 issue on covenants.) But whoever will not be found in perfect harmony with the New Covenant teachings at the end of the Millennium, will be cast into eternal annihilation, symbolized by being cast into the “lake of fire.”

### **THE SECOND DEATH**

It will be noted that this symbolic “lake of fire” is called “the second death.” This destruction, or death, is called the Second Death in contrast to the first, or Adamic death. This does not mean that everything which goes into it dies a

*Had Christ not given Himself as the ransom, Adam and his race would enter and remain in the death state eternally. But the ransom merit gives Jesus the right to bring the race out of extinction, into life again (Psa. 90: 3; Rev. 1: 18); and this right He will exercise in His future Millennial Mediatorial Reign.*

*second* time. For example, *death* (the Adamic dying process) and *hades* (the Adamic death state) are to be cast into it (Rev. 20: 14), but in no sense were they ever previously destroyed. Therefore this lake is defined as the Second Death in view of the fact that for the wicked humans it is indeed their second death, their first death having been in Adam (1 Cor. 15: 22).

The Bible teaches that all have died once — legally — in Adam (Rom. 5: 15). This first death state would be eternal annihilation, *if it were not for Christ’s ransom sacrifice*, which gave Him the power to put away the Adamic death process and the Adamic death state (Rev. 1: 18). The difference between the first and the second death states is not in their nature as such, but in their relation to Christ’s ransom and God’s viewing of and treating them. Had Christ not given Himself as the ransom, Adam and his race would enter and remain in the death state eternally. But the ransom merit gives Jesus the right to bring the race out of extinction, into life again (Psa. 90: 3; Rev. 1: 18); and this right He will exercise in His future Millennial Mediatorial Reign. But first He will need to appear before the Father in heaven, to present His ransom merit on behalf of the world, as He did on behalf of His Church at the beginning of the Gospel Age (Lev. 16: 15).

The ransom merit of Christ guarantees a trial of life for the world, and for this reason God reckons all the Adamicallly dead as alive, “for all live unto him,” hence all who have not already been on trial for life during the Gospel Age will be raised out of the death state (Luke 20: 37, 38). For the Second Death, however, no ransom is provided, for God’s law states that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6: 23). As no ransom is provided for the Second Death to end its eternity as is done for the first death, the Second Death is eternal. These “shall be punished with everlasting destruction” (2 Thes. 1: 8, 9).

\* \* \*



**Q** What sort of sin would make one liable to the “second death”?

**A** We first need to define the term, Second Death. It is only referred to by name in Rev. 2: 11; 20: 6, 14; 21: 8, though the concept is widespread throughout the Scriptures. Its being called the *second* death implies that there is a first death — the death which came upon the entire human family through the disobedience of Father Adam. This first death is appropriately spoken of as the Adamic Death.

God, foreseeing Adam’s disobedience, purposed in His Divine Plan to send Christ into the world as a man to sacrifice His life as a ransom (corresponding price) for Adam and the entire race in Adam’s loins. Therefore, every human being will in due time be released from the condemnation of the first, or Adamic death, and be given a full and fair opportunity to attain perfection and eternal life (1 Tim. 2: 5, 6).

#### **Two Separate Trials for Life**

For a few, their due time, their trial for eternal life has come during the Gospel Age. This includes repentant believers who went on to become footstep followers of Christ by consecrating their lives to God, to the doing of His will. They were begotten of the holy spirit, and if they proved faithful, gained as a reward a place in Christ’s Little Flock, His Church.

For the rest of mankind, the vast majority, their due time, their trial for eternal life will come in the next age, during the Mediatorial Reign of Christ and His Church. They will return from the death state and be placed on trial for life. Those who are successful will be rewarded with perfect human life upon the earth forever.

The Scriptures indicate that some would fail in their Gospel Age trial, and that some will fail in their Millennial Age trial, and consequently go into the second death. The difference between the first death and the second death is that with the former, a redemption, or recovery, and an opportunity to gain eternal life is provided. With the second death, however, there will be no redemption. Those entering the second death will be annihilated, become extinct.

#### **The Sin unto Death**

1 John 5: 16 (second part), 17 reads: “There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.” This text speaks of two kinds of sins — those not unto death and those unto death.

The sin which is not “unto death” describes those sins which are at least partly attributable to inherited Adamic weakness and imperfection, of which we all are guilty. Sometimes

these trespasses are wholly Adamic, and beyond our control; at other times there is mixed in with them some wilfulness.

The sin unto death, on the other hand, describes a completely wilful, deliberate, and intentional sin against full knowledge and light, one in which Adamic weakness and imperfection plays no part. The unforgivable nature of wilful sins is in another place spoken of as “blasphemy against the Spirit,” a sin which cannot be forgiven those who commit it during the Gospel Age, nor those who commit it during the Millennial Age (Matt. 12: 31, 32, *New International Version*). (Only the spirit-begotten can commit the sin unto death in this life.) The wilful part of mixed sins would need to be purged from one’s character through chastening experiences, which God is faithful to provide. A completely wilful sin would condemn one to the second death. It is important to realize that the feeling of sorrow for one’s sin is a guarantee that we have not sinned unto death (Heb. 6: 6).

For those on trial for life during the Gospel Age, the Scriptures present the thought that the sin unto death could approach in one of two forms: (1) doctrinal retrogression, and (2) moral retrogression (Heb. 6: 4-6; Heb. 10: 26-29). 2 Pet. 2: 20-22 seems to refer to both of these classes as well. An important point to bear in mind is that the condition that would consign one to the Second Death can only be reached gradually, either in this Age, or in the Age to come. Psalms 19: 12-13 describes this gradual decline.

#### **Present Day Responsibility and Warning**

Our understanding is that neither the Lord’s people, nor the world in general are presently on trial for life, for their trial will come in the next Age. Though not now amenable to the Second Death, this does not take away responsibility. Just as every step toward righteousness elevates character, so every step toward unrighteousness degrades character, and every step taken downwards will need to be retraced, and that with great difficulty, in due time. Particularly dangerous are infractions against conscience, especially for the Lord’s people, for that would indicate a measure of wilfulness. Though not on trial for life, our Lord practically despaired of the Scribes and Pharisees eventually recovering, for their heart condition had become deeply degraded (Matt. 23: 13-33).

The lesson for all, especially the Lord’s people, is to seek to develop pure hearts, tender consciences, and honest lives (1 Tim. 1: 5).

\* \* \*

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### GENERAL CONVENTIONS FOR 2002

*At-a-glance (in alphabetical order)*

**England:** *Sheffield*, October 26, 27

**France:** November 2, 3

**Nigeria:** *Osusu Amukwa*, September 29; *Danfodio Road Primary School, Aba*, Abia State, November 22-24; *Akwa Ibom State*, Nduetong Oku, November 22-24

**United States:** *Illinois*, October 4-6; Oklahoma, November 8-10

*Details*

#### United States

*Chicago, Illinois*, October 4-6 *Site:* Holiday Inn, 3405 Algonquin Road, Rolling Meadows, Illinois 60008; telephone: (847) 259-5000. *Rates and Reservations:* \$72.15 per room (\$65 + tax at 11%); up to 4 per room. Reservations can be made direct with the hotel. *Reservations must be made by September 19. Be sure you tell them you are attending the LHMM Convention to obtain the discount rate.* A luncheon will be provided on Saturday, October 5.

Rolling Meadows is west of Chicago and 20 minutes from O'Hare International Airport; courtesy limousine available. If you want limousine service from the airport, please give your arrival time and airline when making reservations. Make all other inquiries to the class secretary: Mrs. Audrey Hammer, 1702 Highland Ave., Arlington Heights, IL 60005.

#### SERVICES BY VISITING MINISTERS

**Carl W. Seebald**

Minneapolis, Minnesota, September 21, 22; Chicago Convention, October 4-6

**Ralph Herzig**

Auburn, Massachusetts, September 8; Chicago Convention, October 4-6

**Richard Blaine**

Fort Lauderdale, Florida, September 15; Chicago Convention, October 4-6

**Jan Wojnar**

Springfield, Massachusetts, October 6; Auburn, Massachusetts, November 10

**Leon Snyder**

Chicago Convention, October 4-6

**Baron Duncan**

Chicago Convention, October 4-6; Springfield, Massachusetts, September 1

#### Evangelists' Services

**Robert Branconier**, Keystone Heights, Florida, September 1; Sebring, Florida, September 7; Port Richey, Florida, September 8; Pittsfield, Massachusetts, October 13; Colorado (North), November 17, 23

**Tom Cimbura**, Alberta, Canada, August 17, 18; Chicago, September 14, 15

**Jon Hanning**, Derry, Pennsylvania, September 21, 22; Beechgrove, Tennessee, November 9, 10

**Daniel Herzig**, Boston, Massachusetts, October 27

**Don Lewis**, Muskegon, Michigan, September 7; Grand Rapids, Michigan, September 8

**David Lounsbury**, Reidsville, North Carolina, September 15

**E. Tomkiewicz**, Muskegon, Michigan, November 2, 3

**Harold Solomon**, New Haven, Connecticut, October 20

**Robert Steenrod**, Erie, Pennsylvania, October 12, 13

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