



## GOD'S LOVE REVEALED IN HELL FIRE

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An article by a well-known preacher several years ago was entitled "Why God Created Hell." In summary the article said that God had to create hell in order to have some place to put His mistakes. Mistake one was when God created an immortal Devil. Mistake two was when he created man with an immortal soul. Thus he had to create hell in order to have a place to keep His immortal mistakes.

This position contains many mistakes. First: God did not create a Devil. He created a beautiful and glorious angel who of himself chose to rebel. Ezekiel 28:12-16; Isaiah 14:12-14. Second: God did not create man with an immortal soul. Immortality is the gift of God given to the faithful at His Coming. 1 Corinthians 15:16-23, 51-55; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Third: Satan himself is not immortal, but will eventually be destroyed in the lake of fire. Revelation 20:7-9; Ezekiel 28:17-19. Fourth: Only God has immortality. 1 Timothy 6:16. Fifth: The Bible nowhere teaches that the result of sin is an eternal life of torment, but rather that the "wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23) and "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Ezekiel 18:4.

In spite of these biblical facts many continue to preach such abominable things as these following extracts from renowned preachers show.

"The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: His wrath towards you burns as fire; He looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire.... You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder." *Jonathan Edwards, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.*

"The sinner lies chained down on a bed of red-hot blazing fire.... All the body is salted with fire. The fire burns through every bone and every muscle, every nerve is trembling and quivering with the sharp fire. The fire rages inside the skull, it shoots out through the eyes, it drops out through the ears, it roars in the throat as it roars up a chimney. So will mortal sin be punished." *J. Furniss, Tracts for Spiritual Reading.* This as well as the following was written especially for children.

"Look into this little prison. In the middle of it there is a boy, a young man. His eyes are burning like two burning coals. Two long flames come out of his ears. His breathing is difficult. Sometimes he opens his mouth and a breath of blazing fire rolls out of it. But listen! there is a sound just like that of a kettle boiling. Is it really a kettle which is boiling? No; then what is it? Hear what it is. The blood is boiling in the scalded veins of that boy. The brain is boiling and bubbling in his head. The marrow is boiling in his bones! Ask him, put the question to him, why is he thus tormented? His answer is, that when he was alive, his blood boiled to do very wicked things, and he did them.... Ask him, does he think the punishment greater than he deserves? 'No,' he says, 'my punishment is not greater than I deserve, it is just. I knew it not so well on earth, but I know now that it is just. There is a just and terrible God. He is terrible to sinners in hell - but he is just.'" *J. Furniss, The Sight of Hell, p. 20.*

"The smoke of their torment shall ascend up forever in the sight of the blessed... before their eyes... This display of Divine character and glory will be in favor of the redeemed, and most entertaining, and give the highest pleasure to those who love God... Should the eternal torment and fires be extinguished, it would in a great measure... put an end to the happiness and glory of the blessed." *Works of Samuel*

*Hopkins, DD., pp. 457-458.*

Is this what God is really like, a terrible vengeful God who takes delight in the suffering of others? Does the happiness of the redeemed really depend upon the agony of the lost? Does this sound like the God who "so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"? (Please note that those who have the Son do not perish, those who do not have Jesus do perish). "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John 5:12.

Many today, however, teach that if you have the Son you have eternal life, but if you don't have the Son you still have eternal life, only not in heaven. Is this what the Bible teaches? The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus came "that He might destroy the works of the devil", or sin, sickness, suffering, pain, death, etc. (1 John 3:8) and that He might also destroy the devil himself. Hebrews 2:14. Can he be destroyed? Isn't he going to be in charge of an eternally burning hell as described by the above preachers? What is hell? Where is hell? We shall find the answers to these questions from the Word of God.

There are four words in the Bible (one Hebrew and three Greek) that have been translated into the English word hell.

1. The Hebrew word "sheol" is found 65 times in the Old Testament and has been translated 31 times as hell, 31 times as grave, and 3 times as pit. It is the place where all eventually end up, including the righteous. Psalm 89:48; Job 17:13. It was the place that could not hold the body of Jesus. Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27. Acts uses the Greek word hades for the Hebrew sheol.
2. The Greek word "hades" is found 11 times in the New Testament and is also translated as both hell and grave. Jesus holds the keys of "hades", or the grave and death. Revelation 1:18. Hades (grave) and death are repeatedly used together for it is the place all go when they die. 1 Corinthians 15:55. Hades is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew sheol.
3. The Greek word "gehenna" is found 12 times in the New Testament and is always translated "hell". This is a compound of two Greek words meaning "valley of hinnom", a place outside Jerusalem where the garbage was dumped and burned. It is used figuratively as a place where the wicked are gathered and destroyed by fire at the end of the world. It is referred to as hell fire in Matthew 5:22 and is the place where the whole "body" (entire person) is cast. Matthew 5:29, 30. The entire person is destroyed in hell, or "gehenna." Matthew 10:28. Thus it is not a place of eternal torment, but of total destruction.
4. The Greek word "tartaroo" is found only once in the New Testament and is translated hell. It is the place where the devil and his angels were cast when expelled from heaven. 2 Peter 2:4. The place where they were cast is clearly identified in Scripture as this earth. Revelation 12:9, 12. Please note also that the devil even knows he only has a little time left.

Hell fire is to be prepared for the devil and his angels. God does not want to see one person in it, but some will be found there because they have chosen to follow the devil there. However, none will be cast there until the coming of Jesus when He shall separate the righteous and the wicked. Matthew 25:31-33, 41, 46.

Notice that it is the "punishment", not "punishing" that is eternal (Matthew 25:46) and that punishment is contrasted with eternal life; which is nothing less than eternal death. He does not want anyone to "perish" (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9) and the only thing that will place a person in the lake of fire will be to reject Jesus and His love, and Lordship in their life.

The wicked will suffer the same fate as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (Jude 7) which is to be brought to ashes. 2 Peter 2:6. No one would be so foolish as to believe that these cities are burning today. Even Satan will be brought to ashes. Ezekiel 28:15-17; Revelation 20:10, 14, 15. His followers will be consumed as the fat of lambs, and shall totally perish, being brought to ashes. Psalm 37:20; Malachi 4:1-3.

The wicked are not punished until the end of the world, at which time they are destroyed. 2 Peter 2:9; Matthew 13:40; Job 21:30. At that time the whole world will be burned up. 2 Peter 3:10-13. This fire will eventually go out (Isaiah 47:14) and from the ashes God will create a new earth for His people. Revelation 21:1-5.

God freely offers to each of us the only thing that can save us from the lake of fire, and that is the water of life. Revelation 21:6.