

## CHAPTER 12

### Hell

The dictionary says that HELL is "the place where wicked people are punished after death." There are many people today who do not believe in a real hell. They might say something like this: **"I do not believe that a loving and kind God would ever punish people in hell!"**

God is very loving and God is very kind, but God is also very HOLY, JUST and RIGHTEOUS. "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in \_\_\_\_\_: neither shall \_\_\_\_\_ dwell with Thee" (Psalm 5:4). Who is God angry with (Psalm 7:11)? \_\_\_\_\_ How often (Psalm 7:11)? \_\_\_\_\_ We must never forget that God is HOLY and He **hates sin** (compare Psalm 5:5)!

Consider a human judge. A judge is supposed to be fair and just and to make the right decisions. A judge is supposed to abide by the LAW. If a person has broken the law he is guilty and should be punished. If a person has not broken the law he is innocent and should not be punished. A fair and righteous judge should "justify the righteous and \_\_\_\_\_ the wicked" (Deut. 25:1). What would you think of a judge who said this: **"Even though you robbed the bank and shot the female teller at the window, I am going to pretend that you never did this and I am going to let you go unpunished because I am such a loving judge."** Would this be the right thing to do? Would this judge be doing his job in the right way? Is it really fair and just to let criminals go away unpunished? \_\_\_\_\_

God is the PERFECT JUDGE. In Nahum 1:3 we read, "The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will \_\_\_\_\_ at all acquit the \_\_\_\_\_." This means that the LORD will not let the guilty go unpunished. He must punish the guilty ones! How many people are guilty before God (Romans 3:19,23)? \_\_\_\_\_ How many people are innocent before God (Romans 3:10-12)? \_\_\_\_\_ What about you? Are you innocent or are you guilty? \_\_\_\_\_ Do you deserve to be punished? \_\_\_\_\_ Everyone **deserves** to go to hell, but the amazing thing is that "God so loved the world" (John 3:16) that everyone who believes on His Son will not perish in hell. God has provided a way for sinful men to be saved from hell's punishment! He sent His Son to be punished for us! Jesus Christ was made sin F \_\_\_\_\_ U \_\_\_\_\_ (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus Christ once suffered for S \_\_\_\_\_, **the Just** (that's Jesus Christ) for **the unjust** (that's us, the unrighteous ones!) that He might bring us to G \_\_\_\_\_ (1 Peter 3:18).

#### What Did Jesus Teach About Hell?

Did the Lord Jesus Christ believe in a real hell (read Mark 9:43-48)? \_\_\_\_\_ Did Jesus Christ believe that there will be a real place of fire and punishment (Matthew 25:41,46)? \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, Jesus Christ believed in a real hell. In fact, Jesus said more about **hell** and taught more about **hell** than did Moses or Isaiah or Peter or Paul or any other person in the Bible. He warned men about the dangers of hell and about the dangers of future punishment.

Suppose you were walking along a road late at night and you see a fire burning in the basement of a house. Suppose that the people who live in the house are sleeping upstairs. If you really love these people would you warn them? Would you try to let them know about the danger they are in? If you really love them, what would you do?

The Lord Jesus really loves us and that is why He has warned us about hell. What are you going to do with the warning? Think again of the people in the burning house. Suppose that you shout to them: "FIRE! FIRE IN THE BASEMENT! WAKE UP! GET OUT OF THE HOUSE BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE! HURRY UP! FIRE!" What will these people do? They can believe your warning and believe that there really is a fire and run out of the house or they can say, "WE DON'T BELIEVE YOU! YOU ARE JUST PLAYING A JOKE ON US! WE ARE GOING BACK TO SLEEP!"

They can believe and be saved or they can refuse to believe and perish. The same is true with Jesus warnings about hell.

### Life Beyond the Grave

Man does not know what lies beyond the grave. We do not know what happens after death. We have never died ourselves and we have never talked to anyone who has died!

Suppose there were an island in the ocean called "THE ISLAND OF NO RETURN." When people go to visit this island, they never return! Suppose you had never been to this island. How would you find out what this island is really like? Could you talk to someone who has been there? \_\_\_\_ There is no way to learn about this island unless you go there yourself! The same is true with the place people go after death. People do not know what this place is like because they have never been there. Are they able to talk to people who have been there? \_\_\_\_\_

There is Someone who does know what lies beyond the grave! There is Someone who does know about the place people go after they die! This Person is **God Himself!** God is the only Person who can answer man's questions about life after death. So if we really want to know about where men go after death, what should we read (circle the correct answer):

|                      |                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| a. The newspaper     | b. The encyclopedia      |
| c. The Bible         | d. Magazines             |
| e. Internet websites | f. Science-fiction books |

God's answers are found in the Bible. The Bible is the only Book which can answer man's questions about life and death, heaven and hell. Let's open the Bible and find some of these answers:

### The Place Called Hades

In Luke 16:19-31 we learn about a poor man who was saved (Lazarus) and a rich man who was not saved (his name is not given). When Lazarus died he was carried by the angels to a place of comfort and happiness where Abraham and the other saved people were (Luke 16:22,23,25). But

when the unsaved rich man died, in what place did he find himself (Luke 16:22-23)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Was he happy or miserable in this place (Luke 16:24)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Was he comfortable there (Luke 16:25)? \_\_\_\_\_ Did he want his five brothers to come to this same place of suffering (Luke 16:27-28)? \_\_\_\_\_

The word HELL in Luke 16:23 is the Greek word HADES. HADES is the place where this unsaved rich man went when he died. Jesus called HADES a "place of T\_\_\_\_\_ (torture)" (Luke 16:28). We are also told that it is a place where people suffer in some kind of fire (see Luke 16:24--"flame"). Jesus described Hades as a terrible place of suffering and misery. It is also a place where people can get no relief from their suffering (Luke 16:24-26). The rich man wanted just ONE DROP of water (the amount of water that a tip of a person's finger would hold--Luke 16:24), but he did not get any relief.

Actually Hades was the place where the dead went and it included both the place of torment (Luke 16:23-24) and also the place of comfort where Lazarus and Abraham were (also called "Abraham's bosom").

### Where Do People Go When They Die?

In the days before the cross, people would go to HADES when they died. In HADES there was be a place (compartment) for the saved and a place (compartment) for the unsaved:

| <b>Hades<br/>(the underworld)</b>  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>PLACE FOR SAVED</b>   |  | <b>PLACE FOR UNSAVED</b>  |
| <b>Abraham's bosom</b><br>(Luke 16:22)<br><b>Paradise</b><br>(Luke 23:43)<br>LAZARUS and ABRAHAM | <b>GREAT GULF FIXED</b><br>(Lk. 16:26) | <b>Place of Fire</b><br>(Luke 16:24)<br><b>Place of Torment</b><br>(Luke 16:28)<br>RICH MAN |

Now that Christ has died, risen again, and ascended into heaven, things are different. Today when people die, they go straight to heaven (Philippians 1:21,23; 2 Corinthians 5:8; 12:2,4). When Christ ascended up to heaven he took Lazarus and Abraham and all the saved people with Him (compare Ephesians 4:8-10). But when unsaved people die today, they still go to the same place. They still go to HADES, the same place the rich man went in Luke chapter 16.

### The Place Called Gehenna

There is another word for HELL which is found in the New Testament in Mark 9:43-48 and other places. It is the Greek word GEHENNA.

In Old Testament times GEHENNA was a place located outside the city walls of Jerusalem. It was also called the Valley of Hinnom. It was at this place that children were sometimes sacrificed and burned in flames. Children would be passed through the flames (see 2 Chronicles 28:3), and this wicked practice took place at Gehenna. In Old Testament times when people

thought of this place they thought of bodies being burned in fire!

Years later Gehenna became the city dump! The Jews living in Jerusalem would throw their garbage and worthless things into this valley. Even the bodies of dead animals would be thrown into this place to be devoured by the maggots and the flames. Sometimes the bodies of unburied criminals were thrown into Gehenna after they were executed or crucified. A fire was kept burning in this valley in order to consume the waste and rubbish and dead bodies that were thrown there. It seemed that the fires in this valley never went out. The place even came to be called THE GEHENNA OF FIRE.

Jesus used the word GEHENNA to describe HELL (the place of everlasting fire--see Matthew 25:41). In Matthew 5:29 this word is used (the word HELL is the word GEHENNA). How horrible it would be to have one of your eyes plucked out! Just think of the pain and agony! Jesus was saying that Gehenna is much worse than that! If you had to make a choice between plucking out your eye and going to Gehenna, it would be much better to have your eye plucked out!

How would you like to have a huge rock tied to your neck and then be thrown into the ocean (see Mark 9:42)? Jesus taught that this is much better than going to HELL (Gehenna--compare Mark 9:43-44). Do the fires of GEHENNA ever go out (Mark 9:43-44)? \_\_\_\_\_

Down through the centuries many Christians have been put to death by being burned at the stake. These Christians knew that the fire which they had to go through would only hurt them for a brief moment. But their enemies who put them to death would someday have to suffer in flames that would last forever! Polycarp was a Christian who lived a long time ago (in the second century A.D.). His enemies decided to burn him at the stake if he did not deny Christ. One of these men said, "I will have you consumed with fire unless you change your mind." Polycarp replied, "You threaten fire which burns for an hour and is soon quenched; for you are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and eternal punishment reserved for the wicked" (see Matthew 25:41,46). The fire that Polycarp suffered through for a brief moment was nothing compared to the fire that the unsaved must suffer through **forever!**

### The Temporary Prison and the Final Prison

When an unsaved person dies, he goes to HADES (as we saw in Luke chapter 16). HADES is like a temporary prison. Unsaved people will not be in Hades forever. They will only be there until the Great White Throne Judgment (see **Chapter 11**). After the Great White Throne Judgment they will be cast into the FINAL PRISON which is called the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ (Revelation 20:14-15 and see also Revelation 21:8). This is the place that Jesus meant when he used the word HELL or GEHENNA. It is the place where the fire never stops burning.

The lake of fire is the final place where the unsaved will be for all eternity. Those who go into the lake of fire never come out! They will suffer there forever! The fire will never go out. They must stay in this prison forever! The lake of fire is also called the S \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_ (Revelation 20:14 and see 21:8). Death means SEPARATION. The second death is when a person is separated from God forever. Someone has once said, "**Those who are born twice** (that is, born again) **die once; those who are born once die twice**" This means that those who are born again only have to die once (they die physically). Those who are not born again will not only die physically but they will also be cast into the lake of fire which is the SECOND

DEATH. The SECOND DEATH is for all that have never been born again into God's family. This is one of the reasons Jesus said, "Ye \_\_\_\_\_ be born again" (John 3:7).

### Why Do People Deny the Reality of Hell?

Hell is a terrible reality and we don't like to think about it. But God's Word, which is absolute TRUTH (John 17:17) tells us about hell. God wants us to understand hell, and Christ died to save us from it. People deny hell for two main reasons: 1) **They don't understand the terribleness of sin in God's sight;** 2) **They don't understand the awesome holiness of God.** If we really understood these twin truths, we would not have a problem understanding why the wicked must suffer in hell forever.

### What is Hell?

When you think of HELL you should always think of two things: 1) **Separation from God;** 2) **Punishment by God.** Look up the following verses and see if you can find these two things:

1. **Matthew 25:41**

SEPARATION

\_\_\_\_\_

PUNISHMENT

\_\_\_\_\_

2. **Matthew 25:46**

SEPARATION

\_\_\_\_\_

PUNISHMENT

\_\_\_\_\_

3. **2 Thessalonians 1:9**

SEPARATION

\_\_\_\_\_

PUNISHMENT

\_\_\_\_\_

4. **Names for Hell:**

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>SEPARATION:</b> | Hell is called " <b>THE SECOND DEATH</b> " and this reminds us of separation. |
| <b>PUNISHMENT:</b> | Hell is called " <b>THE LAKE OF FIRE</b> " and this reminds us of punishment. |

### Jesus Suffered Hell for Us!

What happened to Jesus when He died on the cross? Read Matthew 27:46. Was He separated from God? \_\_\_\_\_ Read Isaiah 53:4,5,6,10 and 1 Peter 3:18. Was He punished by God? \_\_\_\_\_ Indeed, this is the good news found in the Bible! Jesus Christ was separated from God so that we would never have to be separated from God! Jesus Christ was punished by God so that we would never have to be punished by God! Jesus Christ died so that we would never have to be hurt by the second death (Revelation 2:11)! Christ died to save us and deliver us from so great a death (2 Corinthians 1:10)!

Have you really believed that Jesus Christ did this for you? Have you thanked Him for being willing to be separated from God so that you could have fellowship with God? Have you thanked Him for being willing to be punished by God so that you could be forgiven by God?

**HELL IS VERY REAL**, but what Christ did on the cross is also very real. God's hatred of sin is very real and God's love for sinners is very real.

**THE CROSS** will forever prove that God loves sinners. **HELL** will forever prove that God hates sin! **BELIEVERS IN HEAVEN** will forever prove how gracious and kind God is towards those who have received His Son as Saviour. Have you done this?

Are you **REALLY** saved or are you **REALLY** separated from God? Are you safe in Christ right now (Romans 8:1; John 5:24) or are you under the wrath of God right now (John 3:36)?

Heaven is **REAL**. Hell is **REAL**. Your choice is **REAL**. *Your decision will determine your eternal destiny.*

