

CHRISTIAN ANSWERS

OF AUSTIN, TEXAS
CHRISTIAN DEBATER GUIDE VOLUME 2. NUMBER 3

TURN OR BURN!

REPENT OR PERISH (IN HELL)!



Charles Haddon Spurgeon
(1834-1892)

*A Sermon Delivered,
Lord's Day Morning,
December 7, 1856*

"If the sinner turn not, God will whet His sword." So, then, God has a sword, and he will punish man on account of his iniquity. This evil generation hath laboured to take away from God the sword of his justice; they have endeavored to prove themselves that God will "clear the guilty," and will by no means "punish iniquity, transgression and sin."

Two hundred years ago the predominant strain of the pulpit was one of terror: it was like Mount Sinai. It thundered forth the dreadful wrath of God, and from the lips of a Baxter or a Bunyan, you heard most terrible sermons, full to the brim with warnings of judgment to come. Perhaps some of the Puritanic fathers may have gone too far, and have given too great a prominence to the terrors, and if we dare to tell men that God will punish them for their sins, it is charged upon us that we want to bully them into religion, and if we faithfully and honestly tell our hearers that sin must bring after it certain destruction, it is said that we are attempting to frighten them into goodness.

Now we care not what men mockingly impute to us; we feel it our duty, when men sin, to tell them they shall be punished, and so long as the world will not give up its sin we feel we must not cease our warnings. But the cry of the age is, that God is merciful, that God is love. Ay; who said he was not? But remember, it is equally true, God is just, severely inflexibly just. He were not God, if he were not just; he could not be merciful if he were not just, for punishment of the wicked is demanded by the highest mercy to the rest of mankind.

Rest assured, however, that he is just, and that the words I am about to read you from God's Word are true—**"The wicked shall be**

turned into hell, and all nations that forget God;" "God is angry with the wicked every day;" "If he turn not, He will whet His sword, He hath bent His bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; He ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors." Nevertheless, because this age is wicked it is to have no hell; and because it is hypocritical it would have but feigned punishment. This doctrine is so prevalent as to make even the ministers of the gospel flinch from their duty in declaring the day of wrath. How few there are who will solemnly tell us of the judgment to come. They preach of God's love and mercy as they ought to do, and as God had commanded them; but of what avail is it to preach mercy unless they preach also the doom of the wicked? And how shall we warn men that if they **"turn not, He will whet His sword?"**

I fear that in too many places the doctrine of future punishment is rejected and laughed at as a fancy and a chimera; but the day will come when it shall be known to be a reality. Ahab scoffed at Micaiah, when he said he should never come home alive; the men of Noah's generation laughed at the foolish man, (as they thought him), who bidden them take heed, for the world should be drowned; but when they were climbing to the treetops, and the floods were following them, did they then say that the prophecy was untrue? And when the arrow was sticking in the heart of Ahab, and he said, "Take me from the battle, for I must die"; did he then think that Micaiah spoke an untruth?

And so it is now. Ye tell us we speak lies, when we warn you of judgment to come; but in that day when your mischief shall fall on yourselves, and when destruction shall overwhelm you, will you say we were liars then? Will ye then turn round and scoff, and say we spake not the truth? Rather, my hearers, the highest meed of honour will then be given to him who was the most faithful in warning men concerning the wrath of God. I have often trembled at the thought that, here I am standing before you, and constantly engaged in the work of the ministry, and what if, when I die, I should be found unfaithful to your souls, how doleful will be our meeting in the world of spirits. It would be a dreadful thing if you were able to say to me in the world to come, "Sir, you flattered us; you did not tell us of the solemnities of eternity; you did not rightly dwell upon the awful wrath of God; you spoke to us feebly and faintly;

you were somewhat afraid of us; you knew we could not bear to hear of eternal torment, and therefore you kept it back and never mentioned it." Why, methinks you would look me in the face and curse me throughout eternity, if that should be my conduct.

But by God's help it shall never be. Come fair or foul, when I die I shall, God helping me, be able to say, "I am clear of the blood of all men." So far as I know God's truth I will endeavor to speak it; and though on my head opprobrium and scandal be poured to a ten-fold greater extent than ever, I'll hail it and welcome it, if I may but be faithful to this unstable generation, faithful to God, and faithful to my own conscience. Let me, then, endeavor—and by God's help I will do it as solemnly and as tenderly as I can—to address such of you as have not yet repented, most affectionately reminding you of your future doom, if you should die impenitent. **"If he turn not, He will whet His sword."**

In the first place, what is the *turning* here meant? In the second place let us dwell on the necessity there is for men's turning, otherwise God will punish them; and then thirdly, let me remind you of the means whereby men can be turned from the error of their ways, and the weakness and frailty of their nature amended by the power of divine grace.

I. In the first place, my hearers, let me endeavor to explain to you the NATURE OF THE TURNING HERE MEANT. It says—**"If he turn not, He will whet His sword."**

To commence, then. The turning here meant is ACTUAL, not fictitious—not that which stops with promises and vows, but that which deals with the real acts of life. Possibly one of you will say this morning, "Lo I turn to God; from this time forth I will not sin, but I will endeavor to walk in holiness; my vices shall be abandoned, my crimes shall be thrown to the winds, and I will turn unto God with full purpose of heart"; but, perhaps, to-morrow you will have forgotten this; you will weep a tear or two under the preaching of God's word, but by to-morrow every tear shall have been dried, and you will utterly forget that you ever came to the house of God at all. How many of us are like men who see their faces in a glass, and straightway go away and

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"exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9)

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Publisher
CHRISTIAN ANSWERS OF AUSTIN, TX

P.O. Box 144441

Austin, TX 78714

Phone (512) 218-8022

Director/Editor

Larry Wessels

Director of Research

Steve Morrison

E-mail Address:

cdebater@aol.com

Websites:

www.biblequery.org

www.inerrancy.org

www.muslimhope.com

THE GOSPEL IN BRIEF

There is one, and only one, eternal, true, holy God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Matt 28:19). He created everything by His word. God has told us the truth about Himself in the word He has given us, the Bible, which He commands us to obey. God is compassionate and just to all. God is pure and Holy; sin is destroyed in His presence (Numbers 14:18). However, we have all sinned, falling short in the evil we do, and the good we fail to do. Yet our problem is not just what we do, but also who we are; we are selfish, corrupt, and estranged from God. Because God is just, He will punish sin impartially, yet God still bestows his love to all men. So our Savior, Jesus, the only begotten Son of God (the God-man, John 1:1,14), was graciously sent to suffer and die on the cross for our sins and to purify us from all unrighteousness by the sacrifice of His body and blood. He was born of the virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, and was physically raised from the dead and ascended into heaven. Jesus will physically return to judge the world. God commands everyone to repent and to believe in Him. God's Spirit lives in each of us who believe in Him to guide us into truth, convict us of our sins, and to work in us to sanctify us to live a more holy life, pleasing our Lord. God's children will dwell forever with God, and those who reject Jesus will suffer eternal torment. There is no other way for anyone to come to God except through Jesus (Jn. 14:6). Please do not depend on anyone else, your own efforts, your religion, but simply put your faith in Christ our Master. So as Rom. 10:9 says, "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart the God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." You are urged not to despise God's mercy but call out to the Lord and trust ONLY in Him.

THOUGHTS FROM THE DIRECTOR



Larry Wessels

Hell is one of the most unpopular doctrines in the Bible (only predestination may be more unpopular than hell!). However, the truth of God (Acts 20:27) must be proclaimed, popular or not!

An article appearing in the *Los Angeles Times* of June 19, 2002 entitled, "Hold the Fire and Brimstone," states: "You can go to a whole lot of churches week after week, and you'd be startled even to hear a mention of hell, says Harvey Cox, Jr., author, religious historian and professor at Harvard Divinity School. The tendency to downplay damnation has grown in recent years as nondenominational ministries, with their focus on everyday issues such as child-rearing and career success, have proliferated and loyalty to churches has deteriorated. 'It's just too negative,' said Bruce Shelley, a senior professor of church history at the Denver Theological Seminary. 'Churches are under enormous pressure to be consumer oriented. Churches today feel the need to be appealing rather than demanding.' A 1998 poll by *Barna Research Group*, a Venture company that studies Christian trends nationwide, found that church-shopping has become a way of life: One in seven adults changes churches each year; one in six regularly rotates among the congregations. That fickleness has helped give rise to 'megachurches'—evangelical congregations of more than 2,000 people that mix Scripture with social and recreational programs in a casual atmosphere. Megachurches routinely pay for market research on what will draw people to their ministries and keep them coming back. 'Once pop evangelism went into market analysis, hell was just dropped,' said Martin Marty, professor emeritus of religion and culture at the University of Chicago Divinity School. Hell is far from dead however. A May 2001 *Gallup* poll of adults nationwide found that 71% believe in hell. They just don't want to hear about it.

Today's current trend of social club religion with its "feel-good" theology (thanks to people like Robert Schuller) and the "what has God done for me lately" ideology (care of New Age philosophy and Word-Faith heretics such as Kenneth Copeland, etc.) make a mockery of the Biblical record. The seriousness, gravity and consequence of the cosmic spiritual war churches and their members are in is being thrown out the window in favor of a Rodney King type of sugar-coated Christianity. Naturally, it is no wonder why men, whether in church or not, find sin so inoffensive and hell and judgment so very offensive.

Men, even when they say they believe in hell, will try to redefine it by saying it is just temporary or that people who go there will cease to exist (called annihilationism), or they will use some other excuse to escape the full force of the clear Biblical teaching. Damnation and hell are just as certain as God Himself no matter how many excuses are created.

Hell needs to be preached because Christ died to save us from it. If there is no hell, there is no need for Christ to die, and if that be so, than there is no Christian Gospel. If Hell does not exist, why would Christ have said, "It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." (Matt. 26:24)? Escape for your life (Gen. 19:17)! Escape to Christ!

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN ANSWERS

Our ministry name is derived in part from Peter 3:15 which states, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." (NIV). This is the goal of **Christian Answers** in an increasingly anti-Christian society here in America and throughout the world; giving answers and reasons why the Christian faith can be trusted and believed.

The Biblical commands to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12), to be "set for the defense of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17), to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), to "be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9), to "put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not" (Rev. 2:2), to "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (Matt. 7:15), to "examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21), "with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25), to follow the example of Paul and Apollos who "vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ." (Acts 18:28). These are but a few of the marching orders for the call to ministry, discernment and evangelism.

The inerrant Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17) whereby the gospel is preached, which is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16), is the weapon of our evangelism. As Hebrews 4:12 states, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow: it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." This is the evangelical missionary methodology of **Christian Answers**—to bring the Biblical perspective to a culture that is almost completely ignorant of it; to bring Christian truth, Christian answers to those who, as the prophet Isaiah said, have made "lies...and falsehood" their refuge (Isa. 28:15); to smash lies and falsehoods with the "hammer" of God's word (Jer. 23:29); see also Proverbs 30:5-6, Psalm 138:2b, Isaiah 40:8, John 5:39-47, 1 Cor. 14:37, and Acts 17:11.

Christian Answers utilizes all outreach that God allows us including television, radio, audio cassettes, video tapes, speaking engagements, and the printed page. The materials we have been able to produce have been used by churches, Bible teachers, Christian apologists, laymen and others as well as those seeking life in Christ.

We are not afraid to stand up for Jesus Christ in public forums or wherever the Lord leads. Of course this type of ministry is not for the faint of heart and very often leads to the same type of suffering and persecution that we find in the book of Acts. But as the old saying goes, "one life will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last," and as Paul said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:14), knowing this mortal life is short and God's eternity is only a moment away for all.

Our ministry is "exempt from federal income tax under section 501 (a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in section 501 (c) (3) by the Internal Revenue Service". Donations to our ministry are tax deductible, therefore those who contribute will receive a donation receipt good on your US income tax. This applies to donations only, not sales. We are legally registered in the state of Texas.

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forget what manner of men they are!

Ah! My hearers, it is not thy promise of repentance that can save thee; it is not thy vow, it is not thy solemn declaration, it is not the tear that is dried more easily than the dew-drop by the sun, it is not the transient emotion of the heart which constitutes a real turning to God. There must be a true and actual abandonment of sin, and a turning unto righteousness in real act and deed in every-day life. Do you say you're sorry, and repent, and yet go on from day to day, just as you always went? Will you now bow your heads, and say, "Lord, I repent," and in a little while commit the same deeds again? If ye do, your repentance in worse than nothing, and shall but make your destruction yet more sure; for he that voweth to his Maker, and doth not pay, hath committed another sin, in that he hath attempted to deceive the Almighty, and lie against the God that made him. Repentance to be true, to be evangelical, must be a repentance which really affects our outward conduct.

In the next place, repentance to be sure must be entire. How many will say, "Sir, I will renounce this sin and the other; but there are certain darling lusts which I must keep and hold." O sirs, in God's name let me tell you, it is not the giving up of one's sin, nor fifty sins, which is true repentance; it is the solemn renunciation of every sin. If thou dost harbor one of those accursed vipers in thy heart, thy repentance is but a sham. If thou dost indulge in but one lust, and dost give up every other, that one lost, like one leak in a ship, will sink thy soul. Think it not sufficient to give up thy outward vices; fancy it not enough to cut off the more corrupt sins of thy life; it is all or none which God demands. "Repent," says he; and when he bids you repent, he means repent for all thy sins, otherwise he never can accept thy repentance as being real and genuine. All sin must be given up, or else you shall never have Christ; all transgression must be renounced, or else the gates of heaven must be barred against you. Let us remember, then, that for repentance to be sincere it must be entire repentance.

Again, when God says, **"If he turn not, He will whet his sword,"** he means immediate repentance. Ye say, when we are nearing the last extremity of mortal life, and when we are entering the borders of the thick darkness of futurity, then will we change our ways. But, my dear hearers, do not delude yourselves. It is a few who have ever changed after a long life of sin. *"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?"* If so, let him that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well. Put no faith in the repentance which you promise yourselves on your death beds. There are ten thousand arguments against one, that if you repent not in health, you will never repent in sickness. Too many have promised themselves a quiet season before they leave the world, when they could turn their face to the wall and confess

their sins; but how few have found that time of repose! Do not men drop down dead in the streets—ay, even in the house of God? Do they not expire in their business? And when death is gradual, it affords but an ill season for repentance. Many a saint has said on his death bed, "Oh? If I had now to seek my God, if I had now to cry to him for mercy, what would become of me? These pangs are enough, without the pangs of repentance. It is enough to have the body tortured,

without having the soul wrung with remorse."

Sinner! God saith, *"Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation, when your fathers tempted Me and proved Me."* When God the Holy Spirit convinces me of sin, they will never talk of delays. You may never have another day to repent in. Therefore, saith the voice of wisdom, "Repent now." The Jewish Rabbis said, "Let every man repent one day before he dies, and since he may die tomorrow, let him take heed to turn from the evil ways to-day." Even so we say; immediate repentance is that which God demands, for he hath never promised thee that thou shalt have any hour to repent in, except the one that thou hast now.

Furthermore, repentance here described as absolutely necessary is hearty repentance. It is not a mock tear; it is not hanging out the ensigns of grief, whilst you are keeping merriment in your heart. It is not having an illumination within, and shutting up all the windows by a pretended repentance; it is the putting out the candles of the heart; it is sorrow of soul which is true repentance. A man may renounce every outward sin, and yet not really repent. True repentance is a turning of the heart as of life; it is the giving up of the whole soul to God, to be his forever and ever; it is a renunciation of the sins of the heart, as well as the crimes of the life. Ah! Dear hearers, let none of us fancy that we have repented when we have only a false and fictitious repentance; let none of us take that to be the work of the Spirit which is only the work of poor human nature; let us not dream that we have savingly turned to God, when, perhaps, we have only turned to ourselves. And let us not think it is enough to have turned from one vice to another, or from vice to virtue; let us remember, it must be a turning of a whole soul, that the old man is made anew in Christ Jesus; otherwise we have not answered the requirement of the text—we have not turned unto God.

And lastly, upon this point, this repentance must be perpetual. It is not my turning to God during to-day that will be a proof that I am a true convert; it is the forsaking of my sin throughout the entire of my life, until I sleep in the grave. You need not fancy that to be upright for a week will be a proof that you are saved; it is a perpetual abhorrence of evil. The change which God works is neither transitory nor a superficial change; not a cutting off the top of the weed, but and eradication of it; not the sweeping away of dust of one day, but the taking away of that which is the cause of the defilement.

It is very hard to distinguish between legal repentance and evangelical repentance; however, there are certain marks whereby they may be distinguished, and at the risk of tiring you, we will just notice one or two of them; and may God grant that you may find them in your own souls! Legal repentance is a fear of damning; evangelical repentance is a fear of sinning. Legal repentance makes us fear the cause of that wrath, even sin. When a man repents with that grace of repentance which God the Spirit works in him, he repents not of the punishment which is to follow the deed, but of the deed itself; and he feels that if there were no pit dugged for the wicked, if there were no ever-gnawing worm, and no fire unquenchable he would still hate sin. It is such repentance as this which you must have, or else you will be lost. It must be a hatred for sin.

Do not suppose, that because when you come to die you will be afraid of eternal torment, therefore that will be repentance. Every thief is afraid of the prison; but he will steal to-morrow if you set him free. Most men who have committed murder tremble at the sight of the gallows-tree, but they would do the deed again if they could live. It is not the hatred of the punishment that is repentance; it is the hatred of the deed itself. Do you feel that you have such repentance as that? If not, these thundering words must be preached to you again,—**"if he turn not, He will whet His sword."**

But one more hint here. When a man is possessed of true and evangelical repentance—I mean the gospel repentance which saves the soul—he not only hates sin for its own sake, but loaths it so extremely and utterly that he feels that no repentance of his own can avail to wash it out, and he acknowledges that it is only by an act of sovereign good grace that his sin be washed away. Now, if any of you suppose that you repent of your sins, and yet imagine that by a course of holy living you can block them out—if you suppose that by walking uprightly in future you can obliterate your past transgressions—you have not yet truly repented; for true repentance make a man feel, that

*"Could his zeal no respite know,
Could his tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone,
Christ must save, and Christ alone."*

And if it is so killed in thee that thou hatest as a corrupt and abominable thing, and wouldst bury it out of thy sight, but that thou feelest that it will never be entombed, unless Christ shall dig the grave, then thou hast repented of sin. We must humbly confess that we deserve God's wrath, and that we cannot avert it by any deeds of our own, and we must put our trust solely and entirely in the blood and merits of Jesus Christ. If ye have not so repented, again we exclaim in the words of David, **"If you turn not, He will whet His sword."**

II. And now the second point; it is a yet more terrible one to dwell upon, and if I consulted my own feeling I should not mention it; but we must not consider our feeling in the work of the ministry, any more than we should if we were physicians of men's bodies. We must sometimes use the knife, where we feel that mortification would ensue without it. We must frequently make sharp gashes into men's consciences, in the hope that the Holy Spirit will bring them to life. **We assert, then, that there is a NECESSITY that God should whet his sword and punish men,** if they will not turn. Earnest Baxter used to say, "Sinner! turn or burn; it is thine only alternative: TURN OR BURN!" and it is so. We think we can show you why men must turn or else they must burn.

1. We cannot suppose the God of the Bible could suffer sin to be unpunished. Some may suppose it; they may dream their intellect into a state of intoxication, so as to suppose a God apart from justice; but no man who's reason is sound and his mind is in a healthy condition can imagine a God without justice. Ye cannot suppose a king without it to be a good king; you cannot dream of a good government that should exist without justice, much less of God, the Judge and King of all the earth, without justice in his bosom. To suppose him all love, and no justice, were to undeify him, and make him no longer God; he were not capable of ruling this world if he had not justice in his heart. There is in man a natural perception of the

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fact that there be a God, he must be just; and I can scarcely imagine that ye can believe in a God without believing also in the punishment of sin. It were difficult to suppose Him elevated high above His creatures, beholding their disobedience, and yet looking with the same serenity upon the good and upon the evil; you cannot suppose Him awarding the same praise to the wicked and to the righteous. The idea of God, supposes justice; and it is but to say justice when you say God.

2. But to imagine that there shall be no punishment for sin, and that man can be saved without repentance, is to fly in the face of all the Scriptures. What! Are the records of divine history nothing? If they be anything, must not God have mightily changed, if he doth not now punish sin? Did he once blast Eden, and drive our parents out of that happy garden on account of a little theft, as man would style it? Did he drown a world with water and inundate creation with the floods which he had buried in the bowels of this earth? And will he not punish sin? Let the burning hail which fell on Sodom tell you that God is just; let the open mouth of the earth which swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, warn you that he will not spare the guilty; let the mighty works of God which he did in the Red Sea, the wonders which he wrought on Pharaoh, and the destruction which he brought on Sennacherib, tell you that God is just.

And it were perhaps out of place for me in the same arguments to mention the judgments of God even of our age; but have their never been such? This world is not the dungeon where God punishes sin, but still there are a few instances in which we cannot but believe that he actually did avenge it. I am no believer that every accident is a judgment; I am far from believing that the destruction of men and women in a theatre is a punishment upon them for their sin, since the same thing has occurred in divine service to our perpetual sorrow. I believe judgment is reserved for the next world; I could not account for providence if I believed that God punishes here.

Those men upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you nay. It has injured religion for men to take up every providence, and say, for instance, that because a boat was upset on the Sabbath-day it was a judgment on the persons that were in it.

God usually reserves his punishment for a future state; but yet, we say, there have been a few instances in which we cannot but believe that men and women have been by Providence in this life punished for their guilt. I remember one which I scarcely dare to relate to you. I saw the wretched creature myself. He had dared to imprecate on his head the most awful curses that man could utter. In his rage and fury he said he wished his head were twisted on one side, that his eyes were put out, and that his jaws were made fast: but a moment afterwards the lash of his whip with which he had been cruelly treating his horse entered his eye, brought on first inflammation, and then lock-jaw, and when I saw him he was just in the very position in which he had asked to be placed, for his head was twisted round round, his eyesight was gone, and he could not speak except through his closed teeth. I think the will of the Lord was in it. ***That although the full shower of his wrath does not fall on man in***

this life, he does pour a drop or two on them, to let us see how he will one day chasten the world for its iniquity.

3. But why need I go far to bring arguments to bear on you, my hearers? Your own consciences tell you that God must punish sin. You may laugh at me, and say that you have no such belief. I do not say you have but I say that your conscience tells you so, and conscience has more power over men than what they think to be their belief. As John Bunyan said, Mr. Conscience had a very loud voice, and through Mr. Understanding shut himself up in a dark room, where he could not see, yet he used to thunder out so mightily in the streets, that Mr. Understanding used to shake in his house through what Mr. Conscience said. And it is often so. You say in your understanding, "I cannot believe God will punish sin"; but you know he will. You would not like to confess your secret fears, because that were to give up what you have so often bravely asserted. But because you assert it with such boast and bombast, I imagine you do not believe it, for if you did, you need not look so big while saying it. I know this, that when you are sick none sooner than you cry out for mercy. ***I know that when you are dying you will believe in a hell. Conscience makes cowards of us all, and makes us believe, even when we say we do not, God must punish sin.***

I am tired of this terrible work endeavouring to show you that God must punish sin; let me just utter a few of the declarations of His Holy Word, and then let me tell you how repentance is to be obtained O sirs! Ye may think that the fire of hell is indeed a fiction, and that the flames of the nethermost pit are but popish dreams; but if ye are believers in the Bible ye must believe that it cannot be so. Did not our Master say, "Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." You say it is a metaphorical fire. But what meant he by this? "He is able to cast both body and soul into hell?" Is it not written, that there is reserved for the devil and his angels fearful torment? And do you not know that our Master said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment"; "Depart, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?"

"Yes," you say, "but it is not philosophical to believe that there is a hell; it does not consort with reason to believe there is." However, I should like to act as if there were, even if there is no such place; for as the poor and pious man once said, "Sir, I like to have two strings to my boy. If there should be no hell, I shall be as well off as you will; but if there should, it will go hard with you." But why need we say, "if?" You know there is. No man has been born and educated in this land without having his conscience so far enlightened as to know that to be a truth. All I need to do is to press upon your anxious consideration this thought—Do you feel that you are a fit subject for heaven now? Do you feel that God has changed your heart and renewed your nature? If not, I beseech you lay hold of this thought, that unless you be renewed all that can be dreadful in the torments of the future must inevitably be yours. Dear hearer, apply it to thyself, not to thy fellow-men, but to thine own conscience, and may God Almighty make use of it to bring thee repentance.

III. Now briefly what are the MEANS of repentance? Most seriously I say, I do not believe

any man can repent with evangelical repentance of himself. You ask me to what purpose is the sermon I have endeavoured to preach, proving the necessity of repentance? Allow me to make the sermon of some purpose, under God.

Sinner! thou art so desperately set on sin, that I have no hope thou wilt ever turn from it of thyself. But listen! He who died on Calvary is exalted on high "to give repentance and remission of sin." Dost thou this morning feel that thou art a sinner? If so, ask of Christ to give thee repentance, for he can work repentance in thine heart by his Spirit, though thou canst not work it there thyself. Is thy heart like iron? He can put it into the furnace of his love and make it melt. Is thy soul like the nether millstone? His grace is able to dissolve it like the ice is melted before the sun. he can make thee repent, thought thou canst not make thyself repent. If thou feelest thy need of repentance, I will not say to thee "repent," for I believe there are certain acts that must precede a sense of repentance. I should advise you to go to your house, and if you feel that you have sinned, and yet cannot sufficiently repent of your transgressions, bow your knees before God and confess your sins; tell him you cannot repent as you would; tell him your heart is hard; tell him it is as cold as ice. You can do that if God has made you feel your need of a saviour.

I shall never forget the hour when God's mercy first looked on me. It was in a place very different from this, amongst a despised people, in an insignificant little chapel, of a peculiar sect. I went there bowed down with guilt, laden with transgression. The minister walked up the pulpit stairs, opened his Bible, and read that precious text, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and beside me there is none else"; and as I thought, fixing his eyes on me, before he began to preach to the others, he said, "Young man! Look! Look! Look! You are one of the ends of the earth; you feel you are; you know your need of a Saviour; you are trembling because you think he will never save you. He says this morning, "Look!" Oh, how my soul was shaken within me then! What! thought I, does that man know me, and all about me? He seemed as if he did. And it made me "Look!" Well, I thought, lost or saved, I will try; sink or swim, I will run the risk of it; and in that moment I hope by his grace I looked upon Jesus, and though desponding, downcast, and ready to despair, and feeling that I could rather die than live as I had lived, at that very moment it seemed as if a young heaven had its birth within my conscience. I went home, no more cast down; those about me, noticing the change, asked me why I was so glad, and I said that I had believed in Jesus, and that it was written, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Where art thou, thou chief of sinners, thou vilest of the vile? "Come, now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool, and though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." And all this for Jesus' sake; all this for His blood's sake! "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved ... he that believeth not shall be damned."

SINNER! TURN OR BURN!

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THE REALITY OF HELL



Bob L. Ross
Pilgrim Publications
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The Bible was written in three languages: Hebrew (Old Testament), Chaldee (portion of Daniel), and Greek (New Testament). The Bible that we have today is a translation of the Hebrew, Chaldee, and Greek writings into our language. There are many translations of the Bible, the most popular being the King James Version, which you probably own.

The Word "Hell" in the King James Version

There are four words in the KJV translated "Hell." Of these four words, only one of them is used in the Old Testament. That word is the Hebrew word "Sheol."

In the New Testament, the three words translated "Hell" are "Hades," "Gehenna," and "Tartarus," all Greek words.

What Do These Words Mean?

1. The Hebrew word "Sheol" is translated:

"Hell"—31 times, as in Psalm 9:17: **"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."**

"Grave"—31 times, as in Ecclesiastes 9:10: **"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."**

"Pit"—3 times, as in Job 17:16: **"They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when our rest together is in the dust."**

But actually, the Hebrew word "Sheol" does not mean either "Hell," "grave," or "pit." It means "the unseen world" or "the place of departed spirits." Notice how it is defined:

Strong's Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary says that "Sheol" is "the world of the dead."

Young's Analytical Concordance says that "Sheol" is "the unseen state."

Smith's Bible Dictionary says that "Sheol" is "always the abode of departed spirits."

Fausset's Bible Dictionary and Encyclopedia says that "Sheol" is "the receptacle of the dead."

So Sheol does not strictly refer to Hell, but to the place of departed spirits, irrespective of whether saved or lost. Sheol is simply a term meaning "the state of the dead in general, without any restriction of happiness or misery" (Smith). In many instances where the word is used, however, the reference is clearly to that compartment of Sheol where the wicked are punished. For example, Notice Psalm 9:17:

"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

2. "Hades" is the Greek word in the New Testament which corresponds to "Sheol" and is translated as follows:

"Hell"—10 times; Matthew 11:23: **"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."**

"Grave"—1 time; "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (I Cor 15:55).

But "Hades," like Sheol, does not strictly or exclusively refer to Hell. "Hades" is the corresponding Greek word to the Hebrew word "Sheol," and both have the same meaning.

Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament says that "Hades" is "the place [state] of departed souls."

Young's Concordance: "the unseen world."

A.T. Robertson, world-renowned Greek scholar: "Hades is technically the unseen world, the Hebrew Sheol, the land of the departed" (*Word Pictures in the N.T.*).

The reader is urged to read Luke 16:19-31, where a perfect illustration of Sheol (Hades) is given. This passage draws back the curtain and lets us have a look into both sides of "the land of the departed."

3. "Gehenna" or "the Gehenna of Fire," is the Greek word that strictly means Hell. It is never translated by any word but "Hell," and eleven of the twelve times the word is used, it is used by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Here are a list of the passages in which the word "Gehenna" appears: Matthew 5:22, 29, 30, 10:28, 18:9, 23:15, 23:33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; and James 3:6.

The word "Gehenna" is of Hebrew origin derived from "valley" and "Hinnom." "Gehenna is the valley of Hinnom. "Gehenna is the valley of Hinnom where the fire burned continually" (A.T. Robertson).

The Valley of Hinnom was a place near Jerusalem where Ahaz introduced the worship of fire gods, the sun, Baal and Moloch. The Jews under ungodly Manasseh offered their children as burnt offerings in this idolatrous worship (Jer 7:31). This cruel worship was finally abolished, and later Josiah made the place a receptacle of dead carcasses and the bodies of malefactors (criminals), in which worms were continually gendering. A perpetual fire was kept to consume the putrifying matter. The place was still in existence at the time of Christ, and the Savior illustrated somewhat the condition in eternity, in "the Gehenna of fire," by references to this valley.

The Lord Jesus referred to Hell as the "Gehenna of fire," into which "both body and soul" will be cast. He said that it is "unquenchable fire" and that "the worm [man] dieth not" in the flame, just as the three Hebrew children of Daniel's day did not die when cast into the fiery furnace (Dan 3).

Hell is no myth as infidels, Russellites, Universalists, and Modernists would have you believe. Christ did not warn of Hell simply to scare men. He warned of Hell because it is reality!

4. "Tartarus," the fourth word translated "hell," is used once in the New Testament (II Peter 2:4).

Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament says that "Tartarus" is "the deepest abyss of Hades," and that the word means "to incarcerate [imprison] in eternal torment."

A.T. Robertson: "The dark and doleful abode of the wicked dead like the Gehenna of the Jews."

Fausset's Dictionary: "The deep, or abyss, or bottomless pit."

So this word strictly refers to the place where the unsaved are confined in Divine judgment.

Fire in Hell?

Leaving the passages that contain these four words translated "Hell," notice some passages which teach of Hell in words that even a child

can understand.

Matthew 13:49, 50: **"So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."**

Revelation 9:2: **"And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit."**

Revelation 14:10,11: **"The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture in the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."**

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, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever."**

Revelation 19:20: **"And the beast was take, and with him the false prophet...These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone." (Also Rev 20:14, 15, 21:8; Matt 5:22, 18:8, 25:41; II Peter 3:7; Jude 7).**

Be not deceived by the deniers of Hell-fire. Such false teachers serve Satan and are enemies of your soul. Read these passages for yourself, and cast into the fire the deceptive literature that cunningly "explain away" plain statements of God's Word. The terrors of hell are real!

Everlasting Fire

I have a Watchtower (Russellite, or so-called "Jehovah's Witness") book that tries to do away with the fact that the Bible means what it says in such passages as the following:

Matthew 18:8: **"Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee: cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire."**

The Greek word for "everlasting" is *aionios*. The word means ageless-without beginning, without ending, or both. It is used in Romans 16:26 of God: "the everlasting [aionios] God." This use of the word should clearly show us the meaning of the word "everlasting."

The Greek scholar A.T. Robertson says of the word: "It comes as near to the idea of eternal as the Greek can put it in one word. It is a difficult idea to put into language."

The very same word (*aionios*) is used to describe the future life of the righteous and the future punishment of the wicked in Matthew 25:46: **"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."** If punishment of the wicked is limited, we may likewise limit the life of the righteous! But such cannot be done.

For Ever And Ever

This phrase, "for ever and ever" (*eis tous aionas aionon*), occurs 20 times in the New Testament:

of God—16 times;
of saints' future blessedness—1 time;
of punishment of the wicked and Satan—3 times.

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 5)

Death

Death is never an annihilation, or a ceasing to exist. It is always a separation.

The second death is the final and eternal separation of the unsaved in the "lake of fire" (Rev 20:11-15). That the second death is not annihilation see Revelation 19:20 and 20:10.

Neither does "destruction" mean annihilation. Something can be destroyed without being annihilated. There is much destruction of property, goods, buildings, etc., in war, but such things are not annihilated. The unsaved still exist and will exist for all eternity in the "lake of fire." They experience "destruction" of peace, joy,

Hell Debate

Some time ago, Dr. Erwin Lutzer, head pastor of Moody Church in Chicago, IL debated Dr. Clark Pinnock of McMaster Divinity College on "Open Line," a radio broadcast of Moody Broadcasting Network. Dr. Lutzer defended the historic and orthodox view of eternal, conscious torment for the damned while Dr. Pinnock defended the popular annihilationist view that the damned cease to exist in eternity. The following is a brief excerpt from the debate:

Dr. Erwin Lutzer:

"As I wrestle with the text of Scripture I do not think there is any fair, honest way to interpret the passages other than that of eternal, conscience torment. The annihilationists...would say that when people are thrown into hell the fire consumes them and they are annihilated. Revelation 14:9-11 it says, '...If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives the mark of his name.'"

Now notice here that the fire did not consume these folks. It says that they are tormented by the fire forever and ever, they have no rest day or night; and the strongest language that the Greek language has here when it uses the words "forever and ever," literally into the "ages of the ages," the same words that are used for God who exists from all eternity, are used here to refer to their torment "day and night forever and ever." So I realize that Dr. Pinnock and others may have, if I may say so, ingenious ways to interpret the passage differently, but I really don't think you can be fair to the text and do it and of course this is only one among many of such texts which really do not allow for alternate interpretations.

Dr. Clark Pinnock (response):

"I think Erwin has put his finger on the best text he possibly could have. He says there are a lot of them, there aren't very many, there's just one or two like that. That's definitely the best one he could have cited. That is a very difficult text for my position, I admit that freely."

Dr. Lutzer did a fine job of refuting Dr. Pinnock during the debate. Those interested in obtaining a copy may do so by writing to: Moody Church, 1609 N. LaSalle, Chicago, IL 60614.

Scriptural References for Hell

HELL: THE PLACE OF ETERNAL TORMENT

A. Described as:

Everlasting fire
Eternal punishment
Outer darkness
Everlasting destruction
Lake of Fire

Matt. 25:41, Matt. 13:49-50
Matt. 25:46, Rev. 20:10
Matt. 8:12, Matt. 22:13, Jude 13
II Thess. 1:9, II Thess. 2:10-12
Rev. 19:20, Rev. 20:14-15

B. Prepared for:

Devil and his angels
Wicked men and women
Nations that forget God
Disobedient, Apostates
Beast and the False Prophet
Worshippers of the Beast
Rejecters of the Gospel of Christ
Fake, self-deceived "Christians"
Adulterers, fornicators, drunks, etc.
Those hated by God

Matt. 25:41, II Peter 2:4
Psalm 9:17, Rom. 2:5, Jude 7, Prov. 6:12-7:27
Psalm 9:17
Rom. 2:8-9, Heb. 6:4-8, II Peter 2:21-22
Rev. 19:20, Rev. 20:10
Rev. 14:11
Matt. 10:15, II Thess. 1:8-9, Gal. 1:6-9
Matt. 7:15-23, James 2:14-26
I Cor. 5:9-10, Gal. 5:19-21, Eph. 5:3-5
Psalm 11:5-7, Psalm 5:4-6

C. Punishment of, described as:

Eternal
Bodily
In the soul
With degrees
Unchangeable

Isa. 33:14, Rev. 14:10-11, Rev. 20:10
Matt. 5:29-30
Matt. 10:28, Luke 12:4-5
Matt. 23:14, Luke 20:47, Mark 12:40, Jn. 19:11
Luke 16:22-31, Isa. 40:8, Mal. 3:6

D. Inhabitants of:

Possess memory
Cry for release from, weeping
Cannot escape from God

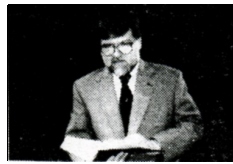
Luke 16:23,25, Isa. 14:9-10, Matt. 12:41-42
Luke 16:24, Matt. 8:12, Matt. 13:41-42
Psalm 139:8, Amos 9:1-4, Jer. 23:23-33

E. Additional References:

Second death
Parable on the 10 Virgins
Hell Fire, Furnace of Fire
Resurrection to life or damnation
Worm will not die, fire not quenched
Unrepentant sinners left outside
Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit
God loves judgment
Wrath of God

Rev. 2:11 (a death that hurts)
Matt. 25 (the door is permanently shut)
Matt. 5:22, Matt. 13:42, 50
John 5:28-29, Daniel 12:2, John 3:36
Isa. 66:23-24, Mark 9:43-48
Rev. 22:15 (turned away from God's kingdom)
Matt. 12:31-32 (no forgiveness ever)
Isa. 61:8, Amos 5:18-24, Heb. 10:26-31
Nahum 1:2-8, Deut. 32:22-43, Rev. 19:11-21

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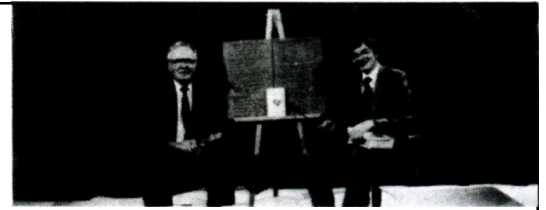
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LETTERS FROM THE FRONTLINE

Dear friends,

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. While I was traveling in the trains, the person next to me, an American, was reading a magazine called *Christian Debater Guide* and quickly I borrowed it from him and started reading, and I praise and thank God for raising up soldiers like you boldly proclaiming the truth.

I started this ministry where God's truths are taught as mentioned in His word. Presently we have about 1000 members. In August we are planning to have a six day seminar called, "The Gift of Salvation" and we want you to come and minister to us and teach God's word. It's so sad that many Americans come here and teach false things to people and the people here are confused because they do not know God's word.

Please send books, literature, and magazines that could be used in the library and when sending them, please send them by air-mail. We pray that through your ministry many would come to know the truth. Yours In Christ,

Pastor R.F.

Nugegoda, Sri Lanka

Dear Christian Answers,

Thank you for the valuable information on Islam, etc. I tell everyone to read Matthew 24.

Your videos have been so much help concerning what sad things the Muslims believe.

I'm thankful for your work and may God bless you too!" Q.E.

Brigham City, UT

P.S. We have a struggle here trying to reach the Mormons with the real Jesus.

Dear Christian Answers,

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

I'm an older third year college student and Christian taking a class on the New Testament. In class, I've had to hear a great deal of scriptural criticism and looked around on occasion to see a sea of confused faces. I decided I truly must be able to "always give reason for the hope" that is in me and, with great relief, wandered on to your website

(www.biblequery.org) this evening. Although I have by no means explored it in detail (I focused on Matthew which is where we are currently studying)...I know it will be a site where I will be spending a lot of time. So many supposed "errors" were explained quite adequately on your website. I truly appreciate your labor and your concern for those, like me, who are seeking truth. It is as a light being held along the narrow path. I'm taking debate next year!

Sincerely,

A.C.L.

From the Web

Christian Answers,

You guys are the best! Keep up the good work.

D.C.

Austin, TX

Dear Christian Answers,

We received your videos on Islam and enjoyed them. We wanted to make sure that you got the payment we sent. If you haven't please let us know. Also, do you have informational videos on Mormonism? Send a list with prices if so.

Yours In The War Against Sin,
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- page 2: Thoughts from the Director
- page 5: The Reality of Hell
- page 6: Scriptural References
- page 8: Letters from the Frontline

"exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9)