

"IS THE FIRE IN HELL A LITERAL FIRE?"

Will those in hell suffer real torment of body in a literal fire?

There is no question but that the Bible repeatedly...from beginning to end...teaches that hell is a place of "fire." As was stated before, many today feel that the idea of hell is some antiquated, moth-eaten, disproved theory of the dark ages...a superstition of the past which cannot be relied upon...and they simply accept these "theories" on hell without ever seeing for themselves what **God** has to say about hell and, therefore, also about these "theories."

In our culture, men have lost the fear of hell and, with the loss of this fear, they have also lost the soul-winning passion that the Church had in ages past. Because men, today, use the word "hell" as a byword ...a curse word...making a joke of what should be the most serious, sober, thought provoking subject of the whole universe...Calvary has not only come to mean less, but warnings of judgment have also become powerless to stir men's souls to repentance.

If...and only when...the Church returns...without compromise ...or apology...to the preaching of the awfulness and the certainty of a Biblical hell...can it experience...and know ...a genuine soul-winning revival.

Some of the most solemn words in the entire Bible can be found in Revelation 14:10-11 ...speaking of those in hell, these verses say, *"The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into 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 for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night..."*.

It does not really matter what **I** might think is true...or untrue...about the reality of hell...or what **I**...or **you**...might wish is true...or untrue...about the reality of hell, but, rather, what **does** really matter is what **God** has to say about the reality of hell! One may choose not to believe in hell and may choose to close his ears to the subject of hell, but, unfortunately, his unbelief in...and ignorance of...hell will not keep him from going there... or from spending eternity in this "lake of fire".

Would it not disturb you if someone's house was on fire and he just closed his eyes ...stuffed his ears...held his nose...and said, *"What an awful thing to think about my house burning and, because I only like to think of `pleasant' things, I'm just going to take this whole matter of my house burning and just dismiss it from my mind and not even think about it?"*

If I can but wake up one person...who says to himself, *"I don't want to think about the fires of hell"* ...to the reality of those fires...by getting him to smell the smoke...hear the crackling of the flames...or see the light of the burning flames ...I will have not only accomplished an eternal favor for them, but, also, any effort on my part...in the writing of this paper ...will prove to be more than worth it.

SCRIPTURE PROVIDES US WITH:

1. ABUNDANT PROOF THAT HELL IS A LITERAL "PLACE" BECAUSE...IN THE BIBLE...WHEN REFERENCE IS MADE TO HELL, IT IS TO A

LITERAL PLACE.

Luke 16:28 calls hell "a place' of torment"

Scripture pictures **literal, physical bodies** going to Hell...(John 5:28-29 and Revelation 20:13 are but two of these Scriptural examples.)

Matthew 10:28 tells us to, "*Fear Him (God) which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*"

The fact that heaven is a "place" is established in Scripture...Jesus said, "*I go to prepare a place' for you*"...and, the assumption here is that if heaven is a "place", hell must also...and likewise...be a "place".

2. ABUNDANT PROOF THAT THE FIRE OF HELL IS A LITERAL "FIRE" BECAUSE...IN THE BIBLE...WHEN JUDGMENT UPON SIN WAS BY "FIRE", IT WAS A "LITERAL" FIRE!

When God judged Sodom and Gomorrah, Genesis 19:24 tells us that, "*The Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire*"...and verse 28 says..."*And, lo, the smoke went up as the smoke of a furnace.*"

Strangely enough, the above description of God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah sounds very much like the description of hell that is found in Revelation 14:11.

The point is that, whenever God used "*fire*" to judge those who were disobedient during the days of the Old Testament, it was **real, literal** fire!

Dr. Melvin Grove Kyle...who led an archeological expedition of the ruins of ancient Sodom...discovered that, not only were there evidences of brimstone (sulphur) amid the burned rocks around the Dead Sea, but, also, the area was "*covered with lava and volcanic ash*" which gave evidence to the fact that it was literal "fire" and "brimstone" which God sent in judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah!

We read in 2 Peter 2:6, "(God) *turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, **making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly!***"...In other words...what God did to Sodom and Gomorrah is an example...or sample...of what the ungodly can expect to happen to them...which is, to be judged by a **literal** fire!

Because...by putting strange fire in the incense censer within the Tabernacle...Nadab and Abihu deliberately broke God's law, Leviticus 10:2 tells us, "*And there went out a fire from the Lord, and devoured them.*"...which means that God judged them by a **literal, real** fire.

In Joshua 7:15, God said, "*...the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the Lord.*" The "*accursed thing*" turned out to be Achan...verse 25 says, he was "*...burned with fire...*"

When Elijah was facing the captain of Moab and his fifty men, he said, "*If I be a man of God, then let **fire** come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty.*" And there came down **fire** from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. (2 Kings 1:10.) (In the next verse...verse 11...the same thing happened all over again...with another captain and his fifty.)

Several passages in Revelation speak of the "**fire**" of God's judgment and the "**smoke**" that ascends from that fire and, despite the fact that Revelation **does** use symbolic language, the description of these judgments are given so literally that it certainly seems that God is endeavoring to warn man of a terrible judgment of a literal fire...especially since a "**figurative**" fire would not have "*smoke ascending*" from it!

What stands out about the Old Testament sacrifices...which depict the wrath of God on man's sin... is the fact that: (1) The **blood** shed by the sacrificial animal was real and literal, and, (2) The **fire** which consumed the sacrifice was also real and literal.

Again, this is but another example of how...whenever God's wrath on sin is depicted in the Old Testament...there is **always** a literal "**fire**" that is involved.

OTHER SCRIPTURAL PROOFS THAT THE FIRE IN HELL IS LITERAL FIRE ARE THE FOLLOWING:

Luke 16:24, The rich man said, "*I am tormented in this flame.*"

Matthew 5:22, "*Whosoever shall say 'thou fool' shall be in danger of hell **fire**.*"

Matthew 13:41, "*The Son of man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shalt cast them into a furnace of **fire**, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*"...(This is repeated again in verses 49-50.)

Matthew 25:41, "*Then shall He say unto them on the left hand, depart from ye cursed into everlasting **fire**, prepared for the Devil and his angels.*"

Mark 9:43, "*If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched.*"...(This is repeated four times again in verses 44-48.)

These Scriptural verses on hell quote the words which came from the sweet...tender...gentle...soft-spoken...compassionate Jesus!

2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 tells us, "*The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming **fire** taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.*"

Revelation 20:14-15 speaks twice of those who are not found in the book of life being "*cast into the **lake of fire***"...and Revelation 21:8, in speaking of the second death, describes it as, "*the lake burning with fire and brimstone*"!

3. NUMBERS 16:31-35...WHICH SHOULD PROVE...BEYOND ALL DOUBT ...THAT HELL IS A LITERAL PLACE WITH LITERAL FIRE!

As we already learned in lesson two...in reference to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram... Numbers 16:32-33 states, "*the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up*" ...and ... "*they went down alive into hell*" ...The earth literally burst opened...belched forth fire...and, as volcanic eruption devoured them alive, they fell straight into hell!

No one doubts the validity of news reports that tell us about incidents of volcanic eruptions where, again and again, mountains are blown up and fire is shot from the bowels of the earth, thousands of feet into the air...where the earth quakes and red hot lava...in rivers several miles wide...pours down the mountainside.

For example, when Mt. St. Helen erupted, the earth belched forth...and vomited out...**5 billion, 350 million cubic yards of basalt**...(lava)...which all **moved in 27 minutes!**

Since we do not doubt these reports that come to us in the newspaper and over the television, should we, then, doubt the Bible...which is the most scientific book in the world ...when it teaches us that "*Hades*" is in the center of our earth...that it is a place of fire... molten elements...smoke...and super-heated gases?...For example, 2 Peter 3:7 tells us, "*But the heavens and the earth which are now by the same word kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*"...and Ephesians 4:9...when it speaks of Christ having descended into Hades...tells us that Hades...the "*present*" hell...is located in "*the lower parts of the earth.*"

Man is finding out that the earth he knows is really just a thin crust whose inner core is a molten...super-heated...mass of boiling, steaming elements, whose staggering temperatures are estimated to be 1,500 degrees Fahrenheit. In some places, because the earth crust is so thin, the fire, which lies just beneath the earth's surface, produces geysers and lakes of boiling liquid... volcanoes which blow off the tops of mountains, spouting fire thousands of feet into the air and causing 10,000 tons of melted rock to roll from these deep craters.

On page 757, The National Geographic Magazine of December 1942, has an article about the mines of South Africa which is entitled, "**The Cities That Gold and Diamonds Built**" This article states:

*"Once at the bottom of the shaft, we enter tunnels and passageways, cross along an incline, and drop down farther until, eventually, we are standing at **the deepest spot of the earth that men have explored.** Here, dusty, sweating miners, white and black, are drilling and breaking up the dirty gray ore...and it's hot, despite the fact that big air-conditioning machines, both above and below ground, are pouring, what amounts to, thousands of tons of ice onto the workers every day. Rock temperature here at 8,500 feet is 105 Fahrenheit."*

This "*spot*" is **only** one and one-half miles down into the earth and, yet, the heat is so intense that ...without powerful air-cooling machinery...man is unable to exist. With the diameter of the earth being **8,000 miles**, the question is:

...HOW HOT IS IT AT THE CENTER OF THE EARTH?

- Does one need more proof that the fire in hell is a "literal" fire?

In Matthew 13:36-42, when the disciples ask Jesus to interpret the parable of the wheat and the tares, He tells them Who the "*Son of man*" is and what the good seed...the field...the tares ...the Wicked one...the harvest...the reapers...all are symbolic of. Jesus does not leave them in any doubt as to what any of these things mean and, yet, **He does not tell them what the "fire" stands for**...and the reason that He **did** not tell them was, not because He forgot to tell them, but, rather, simply because He wanted to convey...and imply...that the fire was, indeed, a real...literal...fire!

In the story of the rich man and Lazarus in hell, Jesus says...in Luke 16:23, "*In hell he (the rich man) lifted up his eyes...being in `torments'*"...and, in verse 24, He goes on to say that the rich man cried out, "*I am tormented in this flame!*" If anyone thinks that "disembodied spirits" will feel no pain, and that the flames of hell cannot reach them, he ought to hear...and ponder...this rich man's cry, "***I am tormented in this flame!***" The words of this man, who felt the flames of hell, far outweigh the words of 2000 million who have never seen...or been in... hell... because...Jesus tells us that we need to take the word of one who has been there...and, of course, not only has this rich man **been** there, but, also, he is **still** there since once one enters into hell he never, ever leaves!

No one likes to think of...and ponder...that place the Bible calls hell...a "*lake of fire*" ...an ocean of fire...throwing... beating...burning its waves of liquid flames on brimstone beaches, as God's awful, merciless, wrath is poured out on those who have rejected His love and plan of Salvation. Hell is a lonely ...barren...desolate world...a place with no light and no hope because God has locked...for all eternity – this penitentiary of the damned...as 2 Thessalonians 1:8 says..."*in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God...*"

"Hell, the prison house of despair
 Here are some things that won't be there
 No flowers will bloom on the banks of hell
 No beauties of nature we love so well
 No comforts of home, music and song
 No friendship of joy will be found in that throng
 No children to brighten the long weary night
 No loving smile in that region of night
 No mercy, no pity, pardon, nor grace
 No water, O, God what a terrible place
 The pangs of the lost no human can tell
 Not one moment's ease...there's no rest in hell.

Hell, the prison house of despair,
 Here are some things that **will** be there
 Fire and brimstone are there we know,
 For God, in His Word, hath told us so
 Memory, remorse, suffering and pain
 Blasphemers, swearers, haters of God
 Christ-rejecters, while on earth trod
 Murderers, gamblers, drunkards and liars,
 Will have their part in the lake of fires
 The filthy, the vile, the cruel, and mean
 What a horrible mob in hell will be seen
 Yes, more than humans on earth can tell
 Are the torments and woes of eternal hell!"

It is one thing for one to ponder the horrors of the coming judgments of God upon the wicked, however, it is quite another thing for him to contemplate what **his** eternal fate will be!

Because the boundary between this life and the next is so slight...and the arrival into the beyond can be so sudden that one could be there at any moment...the decision...as to where one will spend all eternity...must be made **NOW!**

In the south, a widow...who was in her 80's and had been sick for sometime...lay dying. The children ...grandchildren... and even the great grandchildren...were all summoned and...as they all...all 53 of them...gathered together around her, this dear, old saint prayed with each one of them...kissed them good-by...and then asked that everyone leave the room except her nine children...and...as these children all lined up across the wall...at the foot of her bed...she blessed them and...one by one...told them good-by and that she would see them again in that "eternal morning". However, when she came to one of her sons and said, "*Good-bye, I won't see you in that `eternal morning`"*, he became red with sudden rage and, clenching his fists, started to say something as he went to the door. However, because he no sooner got his hand on the doorknob when the Spirit of God spoke to him, he released the doorknob...took one step across the room ...and said to his mother, "*I don't want to say good-bye, Mama, I want to see you in that `eternal morning`!"*

When it comes to the time of your departure will you have to say good-bye...forever ...to those friends and loved ones who have gone on before you...who are with the Lord...or will you be greeting them hello as you join them because you, too, know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?