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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

*Contend Earnestly For The Faith
Which Was Once For All Delivered To The Saints*

THE FAITH under consideration from the epistle of Jude, verse 3, is not a faith, or a faith amongst many other faiths, but **the faith**. The faith that comes by hearing from God's word, (Romans 10:17), and not by hearing men's teachings and testimonies. The Bible's faith is the body of doctrines, revealed in the New Testament that was given by Christ through His ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20), who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. (1 Peter 1:12; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Christ, who has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18), had promised the apostles, "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." A little later He told them, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." (John 16:12,13). Thus the apostles, having received the Helper, the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8; Acts 2:1-4), wrote the New Testament books by His authority.

The expression "once for all" suggests that the faith has been delivered or revealed completely and finally. It also means that the faith once delivered completely and finally in the first century

A.D. in the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, cannot be supplemented in any way, that is, nothing was to be added to it to improve upon. In fact, one stands accursed if he dares to preach a message different from that which was originally delivered (Galatians 1:6-9). The apostle John, in his epistle, in 1 John 4:1 wrote this warning: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God ; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." And then in verse 6 of the same chapter he added, "**We (the apostles)** are of God. He who knows God hear us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

Notice too, according to Jude 3, the faith was delivered to the saints. The word saint means one who has been sanctified or set apart or separated from the world for a holy living. Hence all faithful Christians are saints, having been sanctified in the blood of Christ when they were baptized into His death. (Romans 6:3, 4). It is, therefore, imperative for all Christians to contend and strive for the faith, the faith that comes by hearing God's word . Christians are custodians of the faith and it is obligatory for us to protect and keep the faith from being corrupted by human dogmas and teachings. There always have existed people who try to teach things which the inspired writers of the New Testament never taught. The apostle Paul had such people in mind when he wrote at Romans 16:17, 18, "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple." The exhortation given to Christians in the second epistle of John is still applicable: "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds. (2 John 9-11). The Christian should not accept and greet a man as a "brother" in Christ, unless he is sure that he teaches and practices what is in the New Testament, the doctrine of Christ. Not everyone who claims to be a preacher of the word of God is in fact preaching what the Bible teaches. Many are preaching "twisted scriptures." (2 Peter 3:16). Beware! "By their fruits" Christ taught, "you will know them." (Matthew 7:16).

Putting Off The Old Man Of Sin

Lesson 19

HYPOCRISY

J.C. CHOATE

THE WORD hypocrisy has to do with acting, pretending, putting on. In other words, it is only the imitation, not the real and genuine thing. It is that which is seen on the outside but it does not really represent that which is on the inside. It is deceit, falsehood, a lie.

In relation to Christianity, there are many who go through life pretending that they are Christians when they are not. There are those who go to worship, who leave the impression that they are godly people, but then on other occasions they may involve themselves in worldly and ungodly activities. In such cases, they are but hypocrites.

There probably will be more people lost because of hypocrisy than any other one thing, especially among believers in Christ. This is because the hypocrites themselves will be lost, and then many others will be lost because they are so disgusted with the hypocrisy that they see, that they quit the Lord, and finally, there are large numbers of others who won't obey the Lord because of all of the hypocrites that they see in the church. Actually, they should realize that the hypocrites are going to be lost, but just because they will be lost, that does not mean that they should allow the hypocrites to cause them to be lost. Furthermore, they should realize that one must live with hypocrites either in this world or in the world to come, either in the church in this life or in hell with them for all eternity. So it is just a matter of deciding where we are going to live with them.

Next, we need to admit that there are hypocrites in all walks of life. We may be talking about them from a religious standpoint, but in work, in sports, in the educational field, yes, in every phase of life, you are going to find some hypocrites. So I think sometime that when people bring up the idea of the hypocrite, and not wanting to be associated with them, they are merely using that as an excuse to keep from having to make a commitment to Christ.

But what does the Bible say about hypocrisy and those who are guilty of it? To begin with, Christ had a great deal to say on the subject. Hear Jesus, as he speaks to his disciples, "Take heed that

ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." (Matthew 6:1-6). Please notice the description here of the hypocrite. He gives his alms in public places and he prays where there are many people. Why does he do this? He wants to be seen and heard of men so they will say, "He is a very religious person." In that case, Jesus says that they already have their reward, the reward of receiving the praises of men. But Jesus said also that we should not be like them. He said that it is not necessary to give in such a way as to be seen of others, or to pray out in the open. The Lord knows our hearts and he is able to see and hear us regardless of where we are.

Jesus called the man a hypocrite when he could see the faults of others but he couldn't see his own fault. He therefore illustrated it like this: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." (Matthew 7:1-5).

On another occasion Jesus had an encounter with the Pharisees, a religious sect of that day. We read, "Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands

oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Mark 7:1-7). Surely there was nothing wrong in washing one's hands before eating, or washing the cups and pots, but the fact was, the Pharisees were pretending to be so righteous, and finding fault with Jesus and the disciples for not following their practice. Jesus knew their hearts, and pointed out that while they acted and sounded so religious, in reality their hearts were not right with God. Truly, they were hypocrites.

On another occasion Jesus said, "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves . . . Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee cleanse first that which is with in the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto man, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of

the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:13-33).

The Apostle Paul spoke of things to come, by saying, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron . . ." (1 Timothy 4:1, 2).

James declared, "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." (James 3:16-18).

Then Peter said, "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," (1 Peter 2:1-3).

My friends, I think we can see from the verses of scripture that we have read, that Christ and his disciples were totally opposed to everyone and everything of a hypocritical nature. Christ is real and genuine. He condemned everything that was pretentious. He taught the truth always. He encouraged one and all to obey God, to be sincere and humble in their worship and service to the Lord. Likewise in the scriptures there are many statements that point out the mistake of being deceitful in serving the Lord. Again God's word proclaims Christ and his church to be real. The scriptures themselves are genuinely inspired of God. Christianity is serious in preparing souls for death, judgment, and eternity. Heaven is real and Hell is real and there is nothing to pretend about when it comes to any of these things. We must take them to heart and be serious about them if we expect to be saved in this world and in the world to come.

It is true that you will see among believers in Christ some who are insincere, worldly and ungodly. You will see those who pretend that they are faithful to the Lord but who do the things of the world, are dishonest, immoral, and you name it. But all such people will

have to answer to God one day. Just because some are not what they should be, that doesn't mean that all are bad. At least, we admit that this goes on, and we condemn it with you. What we want to do is to obey the Lord and be faithful to him. and at the same time, to be sure that we never set a bad example, or do anything that would mislead or cause anyone to be lost.

Science And The Bible

WAYNE JACKSON

VARIOUS VIEWS are entertained concerning the Bible. Some hold it to be a strictly human document, respectable with age, but not an inspired revelation from God. It is considered to be one of the unusual, enduring literary efforts of antiquity.

Others feel that Scripture has a vague sense of the "divine," but they do not believe the Bible is a book from God. "It may contain some sacred truth," they allege, "but it also has a mixture of purely human ideology." They contend, therefore, that much of biblical information is flawed; it is scientifically obsolete.

Neither of these views is consistent with the Bible's claim for itself. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NKJV). The sum of its message is truth (Psalm 119:160). If God is the author of nature, and if He is the final source of Scripture, the two will be in harmony, because God is not a God of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). Our focus in this article is: Has modern science disproved the Bible's claim of being the Word of God?

In 2003, Victor Stenger, an adjunct professor of philosophy at the University of Colorado, wrote a book titled, *Has Science Found God?* In it, he argued that evidence for the existence of God is "inadequate." A few months ago, the professor issued his latest book, *God: The Failed Hypothesis: How Science Shows That God Does Not Exist*. In this volume, he contends that the battle is over; "science has advanced sufficiently to be able to make a definitive statement". Stenger contends that the God of the Bible has been vanquished. Science demonstrates the Book itself is a fraud. To get some idea of the professor's logical insight, note his claim of a few years back: "The universe is probably the result of a random quantum fluctuation in a spaceless, timeless void ... the earth and humanity are not conscious creations but an accident ... it is not

sufficient merely to say, 'you can't get something from nothing.' While everyday experience and common sense seem to support this principle, if there is anything that we have learned from twentieth-century physics, it is this: Common sense is often wrong, and our normal experiences are but a tiny fraction of reality".

Common sense and atheism are not amicable companions (Psalm 14:1)! Even David Hume, the Scottish skeptic, was reserved enough to declare: "I have never asserted so absurd a proposition as that anything might arise without a cause".

In his newly published book, *The Dawkins Delusion*, Oxford scholar and former atheist Alister McGrath, who has a doctorate in molecular biology, has an entire chapter titled: "Has Science Disproved God?" He vigorously denies that science is even capable of such. And McGrath is not a fundamentalist.

The late Sir Peter B. Medawar is a Nobel Prize winner and self-acknowledged rationalist. His book *The Limits of Science*, published not long before his death, confessed there are questions that science simply cannot answer, including: "How did everything begin?" "What are we here for?" and "What is the point of living?"

The truth is, the scientific hall of fame is studded with the names of some of the world's most brilliant minds - Kepler, Pascal, Newton, Boyle, Faraday, Pasteur, etc. - who believed in God and revered the Bible as Holy Scripture. For example, Sir Isaac Newton wrote regarding the Bible: "The labors of the centuries have established its Divine origin, and developed in all its order and beauty the great plan of human restoration" (Northrop 338; see also: Graves, *Scientists of Faith*).

THE BIBLE: NOT A BOOK OF SCIENCE

It is occasionally said that "the Bible is not a book of science." There is, of course, truth in that. The Scriptures were not designed to set forth the law of gravity or to explain that water is composed of two gases - oxygen and hydrogen. It is the case, however, that such a statement is intended to send the impression that the Bible is scientifically vulnerable and that it contains, in fact, outmoded scientific data. Such is not the case.

Although the Scriptures do not form a science textbook, when they do incidentally touch on issues that relate to physical or material areas of knowledge, one has every right to expect the sacred documents to be unblemished by error. For example, the Bible is not a book of mathematics. It does not teach us how to

add, subtract or solve fractions. Nevertheless, when it does introduce numerical relationships, we expect it to be mathematically accurate. In Daniel's prophecy of the eventual death of the Messiah, he predicted that certain events would be fulfilled in "seventy weeks"; the sum then was segmented into 62, seven, and one (Daniel 9:25-27). We do not expect a math mistake in such summations. This does not ignore the fact that the Bible sometimes rounds numbers, just as we do.

THE BIBLE'S SCIENTIFIC PRECISION

Although it was completed some 20 centuries ago, the biblical record is always consistent with the continuing discoveries of science. This cannot be said for any modern textbook dealing with scientific issues. Science books often become obsolete rather quickly.

When renowned physicist George Gamow published the second edition of his book, *Biography of the Earth*, he had to write a special preface correcting errors in the first edition. He noted, "many changes have taken place [during the past seven years] in our ideas concerning the origin of the planetary system." (He still had a galaxy of errors in the revised work.) Consider the following:

(1) Many have argued (and a rare few still do) that the universe is eternal; supposedly, there was never a time when it did not exist. But Moses wrote: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). Furthermore, Dr. Robert Jastrow, an agnostic, confesses that "modern science denies an eternal existence to the Universe". This is one of the implications of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Everything is "running down." Thus the universe must have been "wound up" at some point in the past; it had a commencement.

(2) Genesis states that Jehovah's creation ended with the sixth day of the first week (2:1-2). Therefore, there is no creation of "matter" being implemented today. This is consistent with the First Law of Thermodynamics, which points out matter is not being created now. This further suggests matter cannot create itself. It may be altered in form (e.g., from a solid to a liquid or a gas), but it is neither being created nor destroyed.

Contrast these facts with the contention of atheist Bertrand Russell -just 50 years ago: "There is no reason why the world could not have come into being without a cause; nor, on the other hand, is there any reason why it should not have always existed". These

statements are manifestly absurd. The Bible is wonderfully current.

(3) Consider Paul's statement in his address to the philosophers of Athens: "He [God] has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26 NKJV). The expression "of one" translates the Greek phrase, *ek henos*, literally "out of one male." (The word "blood" does not appear in the older Greek texts.)

The inspired apostle affirmed that the entire human family descended from one man - Adam. This asserted the unity of humanity, which was contrary to ancient Greek ideology that boasted the Athenians were an indigenous people - a special creation - and all others were considered barbarian (cf. Romans 1:14).

This idea has had a modern counterpart. Herbert Spencer developed the theory of social Darwinism, which argued that Caucasians are superior to all other races. From this idea Adolf Hitler developed his notion of the "master race." As late as World War II, the U.S. Red Cross segregated blood (for transfusion purposes) according to race. It is now known that a basic unity is shared by all ethnic families of the earth. Anthropologist Dr. Ashley Montague declared that: "all the ethnic groups of man must have originated from a single ancestral stock." He continues, "The more we study the different groups of man the more alike they turn out to be".

ALLEGED INACCURACIES

Unbelievers charge, however, that scientific blunders can be found in Scripture, which ought not be if the narrative derived from God. Here are a few instances commonly cited.

(1) In Genesis 1:6, Moses wrote, "Then God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters." It is charged that this passage suggests the notion of a "solid, inverted dome which holds back the waters above it". There is a mistaken notion all right, but it can be traced back to the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament — 3rd century B.C.). Those translators were influenced by the erroneous ideas of their day in their rendition of the original term. However, the Hebrew word *raqiya* simply means an "expanse" (cf. NASB); it does not imply a "solid" sky.

(2) It is contended that the Bible contains references to the "unicorn," a mythical, one-horn creature (cf. Numbers 23:22 KJV). Again the problem is one of inaccurate translation. It is now known

that the Hebrew word, *re 'em*, refers to a species of extinct wild ox in this context. The biblical animal actually had "horns" (Deuteronomy 33:17) but was pictured in Babylonian and Egyptian relief carvings in profile. Hence the Septuagint translators mistakenly rendered *re'em* by the Greek *monokeros* (one horn). There was no mistake in the original text.

(3) Some allege that Scripture contains a scientific blunder when it refers to the "four corners of the earth" (Revelation 7:1). Supposedly, this is a mistake from those days when unenlightened man believed the earth was flat. But the biblical phrase is simply a figurative expression for the extremities of the planet. Some time back, the U.S. Marine Corps published a brochure affirming that this branch of the military has men "serving the flag at the four corners of the earth." Does our government not know the shape of the earth? Isaiah spoke of God as sitting above the "circle of the earth" (Isaiah 40:22). Though many scholars deny the specificity of this descriptive with reference to the shape of our globe, others have pointed out that the Hebrew word for "circle" (*chuwg*) "is compatible with the notion of the earth as a sphere".

FALSE SCIENCE NOT IN THE BIBLE

Invariably, strictly human writings reflect the science of their day. Even today, science books have to be revised every few years. It would be unthinkable to use a science text published just 10 years ago. Yesterday's science is often tomorrow's superstition. Amazingly, the Bible does not incorporate into its records the pseudo-science of the antique world. This is evidence of its divine character. But note the following.

(1) Aristotle said the brain is a "compound of earth and water." He further taught that the human brain "is larger in men than in women." He suggested that the "region of the heart in man is hotter" than in animals (Chapter 7). The truth is, most birds and many mammals have warmer internal heat than humans. The philosopher's "science" was less than precise.

(2) In the famous *Papyrus Ebers*, an Egyptian medical text (16th century B.C.), there is a prescription to prevent losing one's hair: "When it falls out, one remedy is to apply a mixture of six fats, namely those of the horse, hippopotamus, the crocodile, the cat, the snake, and the ibex. To strengthen it, anoint with the tooth of a donkey crushed in honey".

Although Moses was raised in Egypt, and was "learned in all

the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22), when he penned the Pentateuch, he incorporated no superstition into his narrative. In fact, the Old Testament record is astoundingly ahead of its time. The sanitation regulations incorporated into certain portions of the Law (which presuppose germ theory) cannot be explained except by the fact that God was behind the message (cf. Leviticus 13).

CONCLUSION

When one argues that the Bible is scientifically flawed, he speaks beyond the capacity of his knowledge. As world-renowned archaeologist W.F. Albright notes that "it may be seriously doubted whether science has yet caught up with the Biblical story".

WHAT IS HELL LIKE?

GREGORY ALAN TIDWELL

WHEN I HEAR the phrase "hell-fire preaching," an image comes to mind of a man preaching in a tent sometime in the 1920s. Frenetically waving his arms in the air, the preacher shouts and exhorts his listeners to "turn or burn." This sort of image gives the impression that preaching on hell was a cultural fad of that time.

However, in Matthew 10:28 we read: "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (ESV). This warning comes from the first century, not the 20th. It did not come from a man preaching in a tent in the countryside. Jesus spoke these words.

Jesus often warned His followers to prepare themselves for an eternal judgment that would consign each person either to heaven or to hell. This teaching is found in many of our Lord's parables, such as the parables of the unrighteous steward, the pounds, the talents, the wheat and the tares, the evil servant, the marriage of the king's son, and the 10 virgins. This warning pervades the story of the rich man and Lazarus.

Jesus repeatedly and clearly taught an eternal division of humanity either into eternal blessing or into eternal torment. In the succinct words of Matthew 25:46: "And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

The reality of God sending people to eternal punishment was an essential part of what Jesus taught precisely because the reality of hell is essential to understand Jesus as Savior. For Jesus to be the Savior, He has to save us from something. Moreover, that from which Jesus saves us is eternal damnation. Our salvation in Christ is so wonderful

precisely because the alternative is so terrible. If we do not really believe in hell, we cannot really believe in Jesus as Savior.

Jesus repeatedly used the warning of damnation to encourage right behavior: "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell" (Matthew 5:29).

If the church is going to be faithful to the Master, we must also be willing to follow His lead in teaching the truth about hell.

Much contemporary religion with its "feel good" approach has abandoned teaching about the eternal damnation of the unconverted. Religion of this sort teaches a hollow gospel in which God's grace and God's love are robbed of true power. God's grace and love are so profound because our need is so great. Authentically presenting the grace of God necessitates bringing people to fear.

Faithful Christians, themselves, must fear God. Not a fearful expectation of an eternity in hell, but a fearful realization of what would come were we not in Christ. Without such fear, there can be no appreciation for God's love and grace given in Christ.

There are things we are not to fear. Jesus commands us to fear God alone. Having the proper fear of God delivers us from all other fear. Although it is true that "perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18), authentic Christian love only comes through the experience of God's love saving us from hell. "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

Understanding the truth of God's judgment is essential to the presentation of the gospel. As Paul states, "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others" (2 Corinthians 5:11). As John Newton wrote, " 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed."

Without fear there can be no real knowledge of the gospel of salvation, but with the teaching of God's truth people not only learn appropriate fear, they also find the ultimate solution to all fear in the love of God.

WILL HELL LAST FOREVER?

JOSHUA L. PAPPAS

SINCE THE fall in the Garden of Eden, mankind has feared death and the judgment of, God. Throughout the Old Testament the concept of

a place of blackness is repeated. Sheol, "the pit" or "the grave," awaited every man. The New Testament brought a fuller revelation of coming judgment that caused men to shudder even more, the revelation of a place of misery: "gehenna" or "hell!" Jesus used the word "gehenna" 11 times (Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5). James uses it once in his epistle (3:6). According to Strong's *Dictionary of the Greek Testament*, originally, gehenna referred to "the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the filth and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned; a fit symbol of the wicked and their future destruction."

Few conservative Bible scholars challenge the reality of hell as the ultimate place of punishment for condemned sinners. But considerable disagreement remains about the nature and extent of the punishment of hell. This article will briefly describe the doctrine of annihilationism, examine what the Scriptures say in relation to the doctrine, and finally make some observations about it so that the reader might be able to answer the question, "Will hell last forever?"

DOCTRINE OF ANNIHILATIONISM

The doctrine of annihilationism, also called conditionalism, states that the sentence of hell will not be an eternal one. The basic teaching of annihilationism is that after a period of fitting punishment (the duration of which is decided by God; some advocates allowing only for immediate ex-termination at the time of judgment) the condemned soul will be utterly destroyed, that is, wiped out of existence entirely. Those proposing the doctrine tend to lean heavily on the Old Testament, especially passages in the wisdom and poetic literature. Edward W. Fudge and Robert A. Peterson, in *Two Views of Hell, A Biblical and Theological Dialogue*, cite extensively from Psalms and Proverbs, referring to passages that glorify the deliverance of the righteous and the destruction of the wicked (Psalms 9; 21:4-10; 49:8-20; 58:7-8; Proverbs 2:21-22; 10:25; 12:7; 24:15-20). In many of these passages, the doom of the wicked is likened to ultimate destruction in which the judged are wiped out of remembrance. The writers make their case by comparing Psalms and Proverbs to the book of Hebrews. The Hebrews writer refers to the physical judgments of those who disobeyed the Law of Moses and applies their destruction to the spiritual fate that awaits those who disobey the law of liberty (Hebrews 2:5-8; 4:6-11). If the offenders of old were totally wiped out, the conclusion is that the offenders on the day of judgment will also face a total extermination.

Annihilationists also emphasize the passages in the New Testament that refer to hell as the "second death" or "eternal destruction" and draw conclusions in support of their position (Revelation 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8; Romans 6:23, *et al*). The case for annihilationism can be

convincing. However, upon serious examination of the doctrine some basic and serious faults are evident.

PUNISHMENT IS TEMPORARY

In the first place, annihilationism implies that sin can somehow be temporally punished through the endurance of a certain amount of torment over a certain period of time, after which the punishment will be complete and the soul slain. If this is the case, that God will eventually be satisfied that the lost have suffered enough, then why was it necessary that Jesus die as atonement for sin? Perhaps the annihilationist would answer, "Because the wages of sin is death, man could not receive eternal life except through Christ." But on this point an inconsistency is revealed. Many of the introductions to annihilationist writings and sermons ridicule the traditional view of hell as something utterly cruel that God could not possibly do. If the real punishment for sin is extermination and the only thing the saved really escape is non-existence, then the annihilationist position seems to project God as one arbitrarily torturing souls for a period when He is eventually going to destroy them anyway. If they are to be destroyed, there will be no remembrance of the torment. Why would not God simply exterminate them to begin with?

ETERNAL ANNIHILATION AT JUDGMENT

It is true that some, perhaps realizing this inconsistency, teach an eternal annihilation right at the moment of judgment. But this teaching cannot be reconciled with Scripture if but for one passage. While describing gehenna (hell) in Mark 9:44-48, three times Jesus uses the phrase, "Where 'Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'" While the exact meaning of this description may be difficult, the basic meaning is plain. There will be something about the suffering of hell that will never end. Most likely "their worm" refers to something that eats at and devours the dead, a symbolic reference to the physical grave. Yet the passage strongly implies that the devouring of this worm will be experienced forever. Further, why should the fires blaze for eternity if those cast into them are no more?

The doctrine of annihilationism is certainly a doctrine of compassion. The advocates of annihilationism or conditionalism usually hold to this view because of a belief that it is in keeping with love as the nature of God.

However, when one is content to believe something about the will and nature of God that is false, the belief must be abandoned, and the truth accepted.

One thing is clear from divine revelation, hell will be a terrible place, and no one wants to go there. That is an excellent point of agreement

at which to begin. The case for annihilationism is based on incorrect interpretations of Scripture while the case for the traditional, eternal view of hell is firmly supported by the Bible. In order for the gospel to be preached with all the power of divine truth, every saint longing for heaven will understand the certainty of the eternity of hell. The punishment of hell will last forever!

Annihilation and Immortality

DAVID LIPSCOMB

WE HAVE received queries in reference to the annihilation of the souls of the wicked. One expresses the question, "Are the wicked raised immortal?" Now these questions come from brethren whom, although unknown to us personally, we have learned to esteem. It grieves us sadly, to think of good brethren leaving the clear, plain teachings of the Bible to run after questions fraught with no good and much of evil as these are. We have known quite a number of brethren begin to speculate on these questions, but we have never known a single one yet that gave himself up to these speculations that did not sooner or later make shipwreck of his faith, his usefulness and his morality and, as far as his influence reached, brought opprobrium upon the cause of God. We then, with this unvarying result before our minds, feel a distress of heart to think of any Christian turning aside from the great practical themes that occupied the minds and the bodies of God, Christ, angels and inspired apostles to these questions of fruitless strife.

If the question is simply whether immortality were a proper word to apply to the existence of the soul of the wicked—it would be different—but that is not the object.

Immortality in the Scriptures is not predicated of any thing save God and Christ—as at present enjoyed—Christians are represented as seeking for immortality, as heirs of immortality, and as having the promise of possessing immortality in the future.

In common language, immortality means simply perpetuity of existence, but the immortality of sacred Scriptures means not only perpetuity of existence but also immunity from corruption and suffering. The devil is eternal in existence, but he is not immortal - he suffers.

WHY DOES ONE QUESTION THE EXISTENCE OF HELL?

But the first consideration that propounds itself to us in reference to such a question is, what good would come of the discussion of such a question? Would any one be made more holy and devotional in the service of God? Would the harmony and union of God's people be

promoted thereby? Would the world likely, by being convinced that hell is a myth - that there is no such place as that spoken of by the Son of God, where the "worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44, 46, 48 KJV) - be made more fearful of the paths of sin, and the ways that lead to death? What good then can come of the propagation and spread of such an idea?

This is but the first step toward that insidious form of infidelity, which licenses sin under every form, and then says finite acts do not deserve infinite punishment. What good can come of such an idea? Are men too fearful of hell now, of wickedness and sin that its terrors must be destroyed? Are the obligations of religion too binding, too restraining upon men, upon their passions, tastes and evil desires that one of heaven's means for enforcing restraints upon wickedness must be removed? One of the ever threatening barriers to sin - the fear of future punishment - must be broken down. What motive can prompt a good man to desire to strip sin of its terrors and rebellion against God of its punishment, we cannot conceive.

UNDERSTANDING IMMORTALITY

We say this much that we may not be misunderstood in reference to our appreciation of the tendency of all such speculations. Yet we would state that a failure to understand the meaning of words often involves us in difficulties.

Our conviction is that nothing is immortal, in the scriptural use of the term, outside of heaven. Immortality means freedom from pain, corruption and suffering. No being, then, in the universe is immortal until it has entered that state where suffering, sorrow and corruption are never known.

"Immortality" is frequently used in this age as equivalent to eternal existence. It is nowhere used in the Scripture in this sense. Every thing that is immortal will "exist forever" -but every thing that will exist forever is not immortal. Every particle of mind and matter is possessed of eternal existence. We cannot conceive of the annihilation of a particle of matter, and especially we cannot conceive of the annihilation of a spirit - a soul breathed into man's body by the breath of the Almighty, by the which he became a living soul, like his Maker. We could as easily conceive of the annihilation of God Himself. Matter may be changed in its combinations, may be dissolved, and new ones formed, but no particle of matter is annihilated. It is an impeachment of the wisdom of God to talk, especially of a living soul, created to honor God, being annihilated. Every living soul was created to honor God, and not one will fail of the purpose of its existence. Every soul will honor God through eternity, either by glorifying Him through obedience to His laws and receiving the blessing in so doing, or by paying the fearful penalty for transgressing

His laws.

Immortality is nowhere put as the opposite of annihilation but always of eternal corruption and pain. Then immortality means eternal happiness. Death, in its primitive signification, means suffering, sorrowing, decaying. Whence God said, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). In the day that he ate thereof he became a suffering, decaying, mortal body, separated from God. This was death, as God used the term. Eternal death is an eternal corruption, suffering or separation from God and the source of life. Eternal death means eternal separation from God, hence eternal corruption-and unending woe.

The same term, indicative of duration of time, is equally affirmed of the state of happiness to the righteous and of that of woe to the wicked. The two states are co-existent. No man can conceive of the one without the other.

THE SPIRIT AND MESSAGE OF JESUS

Again, Jesus Christ and the apostles certainly used language that was calculated to make the impression of a punishment eternal in duration and language that has made such an impression on the world. Had the apostles been anxious to make the impression that the souls of the wicked would be annihilated - had they thought it important to the welfare of the world or the honor of God, that such an impression should be made, it would have been clearly and fully made. The great leading truths of the gospel - the plan of salvation, the destiny of man, and the conditions of that destiny, the truths that burdened the souls of the apostles, are expressed in clear and unequivocal language. We have but little faith in theories that depend upon deep processes of reasoning, nice critical distinctions, words of double meaning, and doubtful passages of Scripture for their support.

When we see a professed Christian anxious to develop into importance even a truth, resting upon mere allusions and incidental expressions, we know that a professed Christian fails to appreciate the spirit of the apostles. If he appreciated and possessed their spirit, the great leading fundamental truths that were continually in their hearts and which they made so clear would occupy his attention, zeal and devotion. But the wanting of something new with which to excite the public mind, the resuscitation of these old oft exploded theories, the calling the minds of the people away from the great living principles of the religion of our Savior, betokening an unsteady mind and an unsettled faith, is the result of a false and deceitful philanthropy that would be more merciful than God, but which, in reality, relaxes man's sense of responsibility to his Maker; dissatisfies him with the fixed and steadfast laws, appointments, rule and order of his Maker; and unsettles his faith

and makes him the helpless waif of every wind of doctrine and cunning craft of man and carries him down to the grave a dissatisfied, faultfinding, doubting rebel against God - to be "cast out into outer darkness" where is "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12), where the "worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44), "into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

When we are ruled by the Spirit, we appreciate and love the same themes that the apostles loved while they were full of the Spirit. We will introduce no new theories, no questions doubtful alike in truthfulness and tendency to distract the minds of God's people from the great labor before them that must be accomplished or the world is hopelessly lost. In such questions as the foregoing, much food for strife and schism can be found, but not a single idea that will promote the zeal, devotion or activity of a single Christian or that will have a tendency to draw a single sinner nearer to God. Leave such questions then, my brethren, to others, but let true disciples of the Lord be constantly, earnestly, entirely engaged in doing the Master's work.

We ask our brethren, then, to pause and seriously ask themselves what good will result from the propagation of such sentiments, and, remember well, it is a fearful thing to throw among brethren fire brands of confusion, and that the man of God must avoid "foolish and unlearned questions ... knowing that they do gender strifes" (2 Timothy 2:23).

Does the Bible Teach Celibacy?

JOEL WHEELER

ONE OF THE most discussed subjects of the Bible is that which concerns the laws of marriage. Paul discusses and gives inspired advice to help troubled Christians overcome the trials and temptations of this life. A question that has often been asked is what did Paul mean when he said "For I would that all men remain as I ... It is good for them if they abide even as I (1 Cor. 7:7-8)." Was Paul condemning the marriage bond? Was he saying that it was wrong to marry or remain married? Let us examine what the scriptures say concerning this subject.

In Genesis 2:18 God said "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him." Our Savior is recorded as saying "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they twain shall be one -flesh (Matt. 19:5)." The Lord ordained this bond of marriage from the very beginning in the Garden of Eden. In Hebrews 13:4 the

writer records "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers (fornicators) and adulterers God will judge." Many other passages of scripture condemn adultery and fornication. I Corinthians 3:13, 18; Galatians 5:19; Matthew 5:32; Luke 16:18 are some Bible passages which condemn these.

The disciples on one occasion said "It is not good to marry (Matt. 19:10)." Jesus replied ". . . and there are some eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake (Matt. 19:12)." Some individuals forego the privilege of marriage in order to devote themselves more completely to the service of God. Never was celibacy a command from the Lord or any of his apostles.

Why then would the apostle Paul make such a statement in 1 Cor. 7:7-8? The answer to this question can be found in verse 26 of that chapter. It was because of the "present distress" which was persecution of the saints. Many husbands and wives were forced to choose between Christ and their mates in the first century. Many individuals renounced Christ because the persecutions and affliction of Jews and Romans were too great to bare. This is why the Lord said "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Rev. 2:10)."

One may remain unmarried if he so chooses but must restrain the sexual passions (I Cor. 7:9).

Casual Christianity

DAVID THURMAN

IN HER MIND a little girl once imagined she was a great pianist. Every day she pretended to play the piano, seeing herself performing with great skill before large, appreciative audiences. She badgered her parents until one day they bought her a real piano. She could hardly wait until that piano was delivered. When it finally arrived, she ran to it and eagerly began pounding the keys. In horror she realized she couldn't play the piano! In fact, she had hours, days, weeks, perhaps years ahead of her if she was to play the piano well. She learned that imagining herself to be a great artist was not the same as being one. Having the attitude that she could play was not the same as actually being able to play.

Similarly, some people imagine they are serving God well. They believe they do what He wants in the way He wants. They imagine themselves skillfully managing God's business before an appreciative heavenly audience. But like the little girl they learn, sometimes too late, that imagination and reality are not the same. The challenge for us is that we not be casual in the task of serving God. We must be serious about the effort needed, about the integrity required, about the faith called for. To imagine ourselves as servants doesn't make us servants.

As we read through the letter of Jude, that book will offer us insights into how to address the problem of casual Christianity. Jude wrote when the church was established and seems to have settled into a comfortable way of doing things. Now that the church is mature, complacency seems to have set in. Worse than mere apathy, a false doctrine has sprung up and is creeping into the churches. Jude had wanted to write a letter of encouragement (verse 3) but instead finds himself writing to shake them out of their complacency.

SOME WILL CHANGE GRACE INTO LICENSE

These men were *"turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Jude 4). Like today, the Roman empire had many opportunities to indulge physical passions. Some who imagined themselves Christians thought they could be sensually sinful and still be cleansed by God's grace. They seemed to think that no matter what they did, God's grace would cover it. They corrupted the grace of God, designed to remove sin, and used it as some sort of spiritual gravy they poured over any behavior in which they wanted to indulge. This "grace gravy" was supposed to hide the sinfulness of the behavior.

We all must depend on God's grace to be saved. We cannot be forgiven without God's grace. But to rely on grace while remaining in selfish sinfulness denies the Lord who purchased us with His blood. Jesus didn't die so we could go on engaging in the behaviors that caused Him to die. God's grace will forgive us, will readily and eagerly cleanse us repeatedly, but not if we arrogantly decide to live any way we want and let God's grace make up for our sins. This moves us from the position of wanting to please God to wanting to please self, and letting God pay the price. Instead of self denial comes self indulgence. Jude condemns such arrogance.

God's grace is given to those whose hearts are changed, who more than anything else want to please God. Who, more than anything, want to reflect His holiness in their lives. We cannot live any lifestyle we want and run to God for mercy, then back to our selfish way of life. This denies the Lord who died for us. It denies all His life and death were about.

Jude uses an illustration to make His point. He refers to Sodom and Gomorrah in verse 7. These cities were blessed, were powerful, and stood at the crossroads of commerce in the ancient world. They grew wealthy and then grew self indulgent. Was God merciful to them? Yes, for many years. But eventually God overthrew those cities and punished them. So will God punish any person or people who serve self instead of God. We may think we are righteously serving God, but our imagination is not the same as reality.

THESE PEOPLE ARE DIVISIVE CRITICS

Jude provides several clues to watch for in order to distinguish these false believers from genuine. Jude 8 says they *"speak evil of dignities"* that is, they have no regard for those in positions of authority. They reject those servants who have served for years, disregarding their experience and faithfulness. They think they know more than others. Jude 10 tells us they *"speak evil of those things they know not"*. They criticize what they don't understand, thinking it makes no sense. These complacent servants tend to be critics, thinking that their way is the only way. If they don't understand a principle or a teaching, they reject it through harsh criticism. They are *"murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts"* (Jude 16).

We may not realize it, but murmurers and complainers can be the most selfish of people. They think they know more than others. They give in to their desires to take potshots at servants of God. Casual Christianity has become a problem when God's people get into the habit of complaining, instead of being appreciative of God and others for what they have done.

Finally, they *"speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage"*. This means they flatter others for their own purposes. The flattery may or may not be genuine, but they use it merely for the purpose of getting ahead.

We think of false teachers and those who cause complacency as evil men who engage in all sorts of sexual sin, indulging their sensual natures with alcohol and drugs. But Jude draws a different picture of these people. Yes, they indulge their sensual nature.

Sometimes that is sexual or chemical. But other times it is selfish backbiting, empty flattery, constant complaining and criticism. Many believers imagine they are serving God well when, in fact, they are indulging their sinful natures by being hateful and critical of others. Sometimes Christians get so caught up in winning arguments that they forget the Lord who died. Sometimes they put the winning of arguments ahead of honoring the heart and methods of Jesus.

If the world sees us backbiting, criticizing and hurting each other, the world will know if we are real Christians or not. If the world sees us stealing funds, engaging in sexual sin, caving into chemical abuse, the world will see through our "imagination of being servants" and will know we are not real. But if they see us being critical and hateful they will know just as surely that we are not the genuine article. Casual Christianity creeps in whenever God's people are more interested in harping and criticizing than in service. It occurs whenever we allow our selfish wants to rule over God's will in our lives. It occurs when we let our selfish nature rule, whether in sexual sin or in the hateful things we say to hurt others.

CASUAL CHRISTIANITY CREATES DIVISION

We cannot proclaim to be New Testament Christians and then live so as to deny the claim. Jude is clear in describing the results of self indulgent Christians who think they can say or do any thing and God will forgive. *"Spots in your lovefeasts . . . whose fruit withered, twice dead"* and *"separate themselves"* (Jude 12 & 19). These people are not solid. They pretend to be what they are not. They cause divisions and separations in the kingdom. Anytime people cave in to their own wants and forget the Lord who died for them the church suffers. The church suffers in reputation. Worse, the church suffers from division. How often have God's people split over issues that God had no command or concern for? When people criticize and label each other, when they foolishly give in to their own wants and "say what is on their minds", the church suffers.

Too many want to serve God by serving their own desires. They want grace, but want to be able to live as they wish. This is nonsense when it comes to sexual sin, when it comes to chemical abuse, when it comes to family violence and so on. But it is also nonsense when it comes to our attitudes and words toward others. We cannot claim to be God's people, New Testament Christians and still rip each other apart. To say whatever is on my mind is to give in to

the same selfish desires. Knowing God wants me to encourage and build up the body, how can I criticize the individual members of the body with no regard to their welfare, to the needs of the church? Yet, many will criticize, be hateful and cause division, all in the name of serving God. They imagine they are doing right, when they are blemishes in our assemblies.

REPENT AND RELY ON GRACE

Jude would want all of us to be on guard against any attitude that casually accepts sin as normal and grace as a license to sin. That would include sexual sin and sins of the tongue. That would include sensual sins and sins of the heart and mouth.

We must be on guard, not just against others who bring this disregard for sin into our midst, but on guard ourselves that this apathy not creep into our own walk with God. Let each of us learn to deny ourselves, both sensually and in our speech. Let each of us repent of the sins we have committed. Let every one of us determine inwardly to please God, both in our physical lives and in how we speak of and treat other believers. Then God's majestic grace will indeed cleanse us from every sin.



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