

Rise Up And Build

"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18

Hell! Do You Believe It Exists?

Many people don't. Jehovah Witnesses, Adventists, Materialists, and Modernists of all types deny that there is a place of eternal punishment called hell. Some claim that hell is on this earth, and, if that is true, many people make their own hell here on earth due to the miseries they experience in life, which so often come upon them because of their own misdeeds. Others contend that hell is simply the grave wherein the unrighteous dead suffer annihilation and thus become non-existent. Of course, if this is true, then such persons cease to be persons, because that which is annihilated and, therefore non-existent, has no personality, feelings, or consciousness, and thus is incapable of being punished. After all, how can you "punish" that which does not exist, or that which has neither feelings nor awareness?

There are many passages in the Bible which depict future punishment, a **place** of future punishment, and **subjects** of future punishment. As half-awake travelers, traveling through small towns, sometimes fail to recognize the town's existence, so many unobserving Bible readers blink their eyes, skip over, and fail to notice (or believe!) the passages which speak of future punishment. But they are there, nonetheless!

In the parable of the talents, the Lord is represented as returning from the "far country" (heaven), and reckoning with His servants. The faithful were blessed, whereas "the unprofitable servant" is pictured as being cast into "outer darkness," where "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt. 25:14-30. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus spoke of the time when He would come in judgment, declaring that "before Him shall be gathered all nations," and that those judged would be separated "one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats," v. 32. Concerning those on "the left hand," they shall hear these words, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," v. 41. He further said that "these shall go away into everlasting punishment," v. 46. The **duration** is "everlasting," the **condition** is "punishment." Paul declared that when Jesus "shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels," then He, "in flaming fire," will take "vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Thess. 1:7-8. Peter said "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished," 2 Pet. 2:9. Observe in this verse the three things which belong together: (1) the "**judgment**," (2) the "**day of judgment**," and (3) the **punishment** which follows.

But where will this “*everlasting punishment*” take place? In hell! The Greek word “*Gehenna*” is consistently translated “*hell*,” and always refers to a place of future punishment. Please read the following scriptures: Matt. 5:22,28,30; Matt. 10:28; Matt. 18:8-9; Matt. 23:13,23; Mark 9:43-47; Luke 12:5; and James 3:6. Please note further that this “*hell*” is not “*hell on earth*,” due to the fact that the casting therein follows the death of the body, as well as the burning up of the earth, 2 Pet. 3:10. Jesus said “*Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do, but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell,*” Luke 12:4-5. Could He “*cast into hell*” if hell did not exist? The following are a few of the many awful biblical descriptions of hell: “*everlasting fire*,” “*everlasting punishment*,” “*the fire that never shall be quenched*,” et. Al. (Matt. 18:8; 25:46; Mark 9:43).

This subject could appropriately be viewed from another angle, that being the nature of man. Man is a dual being, composed of body and spirit. In death, the spirit departs from the body, Eccl. 12:7. “*The body without the spirit is dead*,” James 2:26. Because we possess a spiritual nature, we are “*the offspring of God*,” Acts 17:29, God Himself being “*the Father of spirits*,” Heb. 12:9. And God is eternal, Psalm 90:1. Having received our spirits from God, there is therefore a part of us which transcends time and will exist throughout eternity. Once we came into existence, we will never cease to exist, but **where** will we exist in the eternity to come? It will either be in heaven, or in hell!

Paul said “*the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both*,” and on this point the inspired apostle identified himself with the Pharisees as opposed to the Sadducees, Acts 23:6-8. In addition, Jesus affirmed that all the dead will be raised, John 5:28-29, that He will come in judgment, and that all shall be judged, Matt. 25:31-33. Furthermore, we have shown that all possess a spiritual nature and, therefore, transcend time. Hence, **where** will people be in the eternity to come? According to the Bible, the “*where*” will either be in heaven or in hell!

Inasmuch as the Gospel is “*the power of God unto salvation*,” Rom. 1:16, those who desire to gain heaven and escape hell must, therefore, comply with the terms of the gospel, both in order to become a Christian and to abide as a Christian. Friend, based upon your response to the gospel of Jesus Christ, are you heaven-bound or hell-bound?

**** —Bobby Witherington