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Wresting the Scriptures (No. 4)

On Page 99 of **“Let God Be True,”** a book which sets forth the beliefs of the “Jehovah Witnesses,” the following conclusion is drawn at the end of a chapter which is entitled “Hell, A Place of Rest in Hope:” “The doctrine of a burning hell where the wicked are tortured eternally after death cannot be true, mainly for four reasons: (1) It is wholly unscriptural; (2) It is unreasonable; (3) It is contrary to God’s love, and (4) It is repugnant to justice.” On the preceding page it is stated that “Satan himself” is “responsible for this God-defaming doctrine of a hell of torment,” his purpose being “to frighten people away from studying the Bible and to make them hate God.”

More could also be said by introducing the writings of Seventh Day Adventists, who because of their similar views on “soul-sleeping,” likewise maintain that there is “no hell,” or the statements of modernists, who because of their unbelief, believe in neither heaven nor hell! But what saith the **Scriptures**?

There are four words which are frequently translated “*hell*” in the K.J.V. of the Bible. These words are: Sheol, Hades, Tartarus, and Gehenna. **Sheol** is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek word “*Hades*,” and may at times refer to the grave and at other times to the region of departed spirits. At times it is, in the Old Testament, translated “*grave*” and means exactly what it says (cf. Gen. 37:35; 42:38; 44:31). At times SHEOL refers to the unseen state of the dead, and in the K.J.V. is translated “*hell*” (Isa. 5:14; 14:9; Job 26:6; Ps. 16:10; 139:8; et. Al.). **Hades** is the Greek word often translated “*hell*” in the K.J.V., and often has reference to that region of departed spirits — the region in which they await between the death of the body and the coming resurrection.. For example, it was said of Christ “*that His soul was not left in hell, (hades, Gk) neither His flesh did see corruption*” (Acts 2:31), in fulfillment of Ps. 16:10. Christ’s spirit departed from His body at His death (Matt. 27:50; Mark 15:37; John 19:30), but His body was buried in Joseph’s “*new tomb*” (Matt. 27:57-60). At death, the body, formed of the “*dust of the ground*” (Gen. 2:7), shall “*return to the earth as it was: and the spirit unto God Who gave it*” (Eccl. 12:7). Some of the references where “*hades*” (Greek) in the K.J.V. is translated “*hell*” are Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; and Acts 2:27,31. **Tartarus** is also translated “*hell*” in 2 Peter 2:4. It is the place to which “*angels that sinned*” were “*delivered*,” and it also seems to refer to the place where the “*unjust*” are reserved “*unto the day of judgment to be punished*” (v. 9).

The word “**Gehenna**” is used 12 times in the New Testament (11 times by Jesus Christ), and is always translated “*hell*,” and in each reference refers to the eternal abode of the wicked, described by the Lord as characterized by “*the eternal fire*,” or “*the unquenchable fire*” (Matt. 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15,33; Mark 9:43,45,47; Luke 12:5; Jas. 3:6). For other terms descriptive of “*hell*” as used in this sense, please read Mat.13:42; 25:46; Phil. 3:19; 2 Thess. 1:9; Heb. 10:39; 2 Pet. 2:17; Jude 13; Rev. 2:11; and 21:8.

The Lord said the wicked would be cast into the “*everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,*” Matt.25:41. Jesus said “*fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both body and soul in **hell,***” Matt. 10:28. The duration of this “*punishment*” is “*everlasting,*” or “*forever and ever,*” Mat. 25:46; Rev. 14:11). The “*resurrection of damnation*” lasts as long as the “*resurrection of life,*” and that is “***forever!***”

Those who maintain that “the doctrine of a burning hell” is “unscriptural,” need to read the **Scriptures!** Those who maintain that it is “unreasonable” should cease trying to reason out their own plan and accept **God’s** plan! Those who declare that “it is contrary to God’s love and repugnant to justice” should stop pitting the **justice** of God against the **love** of God, and heed God’s warnings so as to be the eternal recipients of His abounding love. The very fact that God will punish the wicked in such a terrible place reflects the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and of man’s need to seek God’s forgiveness. And, to this end, God (out of **love**) has always addressed Himself to man.

No! Satan did not invent the doctrine of hell! Hell was “*prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt. 25:41)! The doctrine Satan invented is the doctrine which denies that there is such a place, and he invented this doctrine so that he may have lots of company in the hereafter. Kind reader, I plead with you to accept what the **Bible** has to say on this and all other subjects.

*** —B. Witherington