

victory over sin, hell, and the grave, even if physical death was inflicted upon them as the results of persecution. Note how chapter 7 was also an insertion between the events of opening of the 6th and 7th seals.

### Discussion Questions Chapter 14

1. Compare the teaching of chp. 13 with chp. 14 - regarding the persons involved, the marks, the significance of the marks.
2. Compare and discuss chps. 7 and 14 with respect to the 144,000 saints.
3. Discuss some spiritual requirements of worshipful singing in view of vs. 3.
4. Discuss the Roman Catholic claim that a celibate life is a higher form of spiritual life than a married one in light of vs. 4.
5. What three things were required of mankind according to vs. 7?
6. What was the message of the third angel - vs. 9?
7. What implications are there in John's use of the imagery of undiluted wine for God's wrath in vs. 10?
8. Are the tormented ones conscious of their punishment according to vs. 11?
9. What assurance does God give the persecuted Christians in vs. 13?
10. Discuss God's judgment according to vs. 15
11. Compare the harvest imagery of vs. 16 with Jesus' use of the imagery in John 4:35.
12. What does vs. 19 have to tell us regarding universalism (i.e., that everyone will ultimately be saved?)
13. Read Joel 3:13 and Isaiah 63:1-6 and discuss the judgment imagery of this section of scripture.

### *Special Study*

#### Yes, There Is a Hell!

Many people in the contemporary religious world deny the existence of hell. The denial stems from many supposed reasons. Some contend that the doctrine of hell is barbaric superstition; others hold that the doctrine is in diametric opposition

to the love of God. Still others hold that the Bible does not teach the doctrine of hell. Naturalistic Jews, religious liberals, most contemporary theologians and many cultic groups, i. e., Jehovah's Witnesses all share the common attribute of denying the ultimate reality of hell or a future irrevocable punishment of all who are out of Christ.

From a logical perspective it is impossible to affirm and deny the existence of hell at the same time. Either hell exists or it does not! It is either a biblical doctrine or it is not! Those who are enamoured with the discipline of comparative religion take refuge in the so-called assured results of this field of research. It would not be difficult to show that many claim that the Jewish background of the doctrine of eternal punishment was found in the Persian concepts of Zoroasterianism. Since the biblical doctrine and the teaching found in this non-Christian, eastern religion are radically dissimilar we must demand that the unique elements be accounted for by other than the comparative method.

During the New Testament period, both the Rabbinic schools of Hillel and Shammai held the teaching of the existence of hell or eternal punishment. Our Lord clearly taught this doctrine in His preaching ministry. The doctrine is also present in the early Patristic literature. It is not surprising in view of the opinion of the Fathers concerning the doctrine of hell—that we would find the same thing asserted in the great creeds, and that is exactly what we find. This is all well and good, but we find many things, both in the Fathers and the Creeds which are not only not found in the Bible, but which contradict teaching of the Word of God. If this be true, then we cannot be satisfied merely to know that the doctrine of hell is solidly entrenched in historical theology, but we must examine the source of the fountain of life—the scriptures themselves. The scriptures stand in complete opposition to the universalism of the Alexandrian theologians—Clement and Origen. Their claims sound strangely contemporary. They asserted that God's judgmental punishment was merely remedial, and not for final and irrevocable condemnation. The Medieval Roman Catholic Church maintained that the doctrine of hell was biblically grounded. The great Reformation denominations also adopted the scriptural teaching about hell. From the 17th century down to the present situation there have been those who have maintained various doctrines of Universalism (everybody is going to be saved). Restorationism

(ultimately this is universalism too). Everyone is going to be *restored* to God because of Christ's atonement, regardless of their personal attitude toward Him. Annihilationism (maintained today by the contemporary arians, The Jehovah's Witnesses. When one dies that is the end of everything! Only the redeemed of God will be resurrected to life. There will be no unbeliever, damned, or otherwise, because the bodies of the unfaithful will merely return to the chemistry of the earth—that is their punishment according to this view.

If Jesus is not God incarnate, then He cannot be our saviour. If Jesus is God, then He could not possibly be wrong about what He taught! Jesus taught the doctrine of hell, therefore He could not have been mistaken about the nature and existence of hell, and at the same time been God in human flesh. Though it by no means exhausts the biblical teaching about hell, we shall limit these brief pages to the teaching of our Lord. The following verses by no means exhausts what Christ declared about judgment; but these will be sufficient for any reader to determine for himself whether or not Christ believed and taught the doctrine of hell.

(1) Matthew 7:20-23

20 Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them. 21 Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in the day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons and by thy name do many mighty works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Though this does not specifically assert anything about the nature and existence of hell, it does reveal the severity of God's judgment.

(2) Matthew 10:28

28 And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Gehenna)

This passage makes clear that man is a composite of soul and body; and that there is a hell over which God is sovereign.

(3) Matthew 11:23

And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? Thou shalt go down unto Hades (Greek word is *hades* - this word

is never translated) for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have remained until this day.

Jesus warns this evil and unrepentant city that Judgment will come, then it will be too late.

(4) Matthew 13:41-42

The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth. (See also verses 47-50).

Why would Jesus use this horrible imagery, if there is no hell?

(5) Matthew 25:45-46

Then shall he answer them, saying, verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least ye did it not unto me. And these shall do away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.

Few people would deny that Christ promised everlasting life to those who follow Him. In general, they do not deny that He offers eternal life to believers. (Note that in this verse the "eternal (*aiōnion*) life" which Christ promises). What if it is true that the punishment promised to those who reject Christ is just the same span of time as is the "eternal life" of the righteous? (I am not here implying that eternity is nothing more than endless time. See an excellent, brief discussion of the contemporary theological debate concerning the nature of time and the relationship of Hebrew and Greek thought forms in Dr. James Barr's *Biblical Words for Time*, Alec. R. Allenson, Inc., Naperville, Illinois, 1962. He is of Princeton Theological Seminary).

(6) Mark 9:43-38

43 And if thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having thy two hands to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire. 45 And if thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life halt, rather than having thy two feet to be cast into hell. 47 And if thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out: it is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell; 48 where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Even though this is figurative language, it by no means follows that it is not true. Much poetry (even the Hebrew Poetry, *The Psalms*) is garbed in figurative language, but nevertheless expresses truth--just as a true indicative declaration expresses truth.

(7) Luke 16:22-26

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom: and the rich man also died, and was buried. And in hades (this is the transcription of the Greek word--it is not a translation) he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame. . . .And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that they would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from thence to us.

This teaching of Christ is clear. It will not do to claim that this is a parable and therefore figurative, because it would be no problem to show that as a matter of fact--figurative language does convey truth, both in and out of the scripture. A semantical analysis of the nature and function of our ordinary language will prove this. The form of this teaching is figurative, but its content is clearly believed to be factual by our Lord.

(8) John 5:28-29

Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.

Here, Christ asserts that both the righteous and the unrighteous shall be resurrected--the one for eternal life, and the other for eternal condemnation. This information merely co-operates John's assertion in *The Revelation*.

Does this evidence from the teachings of Jesus sound as though he believed that hell (future punishment of unforgiven sin) is to remedial, restorative, and thus temporal? *Yes, there is a biblical doctrine of Hell!*

Note: Dr. Edward A. McDowell's *The Meaning and Message of The Book of Revelation*, Broadman's Press, Nashville, contains some excellent materials on chp. 14, p. 147. He analyzes the chp. into *Seven Assurances and Warnings*:

1. Redeemed of Earth are in close communion with God and the Savior, chp. 14:1-5
2. The Gospel is Universal, chp. 14:6-7
3. Evil cannot prevail, 15:8
4. The Wicked will be punished, 14:9-12
5. The Reward of the redeemed is sure, 14:13
6. Christ is the sole Lord of the harvest, 14:14-16
7. The Wrath of God will come upon all who refuse Christ's saving work, 14:17-20

## SECTION 46

## Text 15:1

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having seven plagues, which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God.

## Initial Questions 15:1

1. What is unique about the seven plagues in vs. 1?
2. Does this imply that God's wrath is objective or subjective?

Preparation for the Last Seven Plagues  
Chapter 15:1-8

*Verse 1*

Chapter 15 and 16 form a unit structured around the seven plagues. This chapter begins the last of the sevenfold pictures of judgment under the symbol of seven bowls of anger. John has gone through two other cycles of judgment chapters 5-8:1 (7 inserted between 6th seal and 7th seal which is opened at 8:1); the next series is presented through the imagery of seven trumpets and this is contained in chps. 8:2 thru 11. In this particular chapter John begins the outpouring of the seven plagues.

Another vision was now vouched-safe to John. He says, "I saw. . .seven angels having seven last plagues; because in them was finished (*etelesthē* - 1st aor. passive voice - the act of completion was singular, complete and final. The finality was a function of the purpose of God) the anger (the word is *thumos* not *orge* or wrath) of God."