



Two Hells

By Pastor James Mattison

W

hat is hell? Which hell do you mean? The Bible speaks of two hells. Revelation 20:14 states, "Death and

hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." Here we find that hell will be cast into hell. There are two hells, then. This is brought out plainly in the Scriptures.

There will be hell fire, as Jesus said in Mark 9:47. "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." Jesus is saying that if you have an offensive sin, get rid of it, for it is better to enter the Kingdom of God than hell fire. Here we see the two possible destinies of man: either the Kingdom of God or hell fire. Hell fire is called in Revelation "the lake of fire." In Revelation 21:8 it is called "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Nearly all professing Christians believe in the lake of fire, or hell fire. The term "hell fire" in English is *gehenna* in Greek. *Gehenna* is found twelve times in the New Testament. *Gehenna* always refers to the lake of fire into which sinners will be cast at the judgment.

Few people realize that the Bible speaks often of another hell that is different from hell fire. This hell is the Greek word *hades* and the Hebrew word *sheol*. This hell is the grave into which all men, both righteous and wicked, go at death. This *sheol*, *hades* hell will not last forever.

Sheol is used sixty-five times in the Old Testament, and is translated "hell" 31 times, "grave," 31 times, and "pit," 3 times. The meaning of *sheol* is "grave." Notice, David said of Christ (Psa. 16:10; Acts 2:25-28), "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell" Christ was God's Son, yet He was going to hell, but God would not leave Him there. David knew that the Messiah would die and be put into the grave, but he also knew that God would resurrect Him out of *sheol* (*hades*) to incorruption. David, too, expected to die and go to *sheol* (the grave), but he also looked forward to the resurrection day when he would be like the Lord. He said in Psalm 17:15, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." We shall be like Christ and like God at the resurrection, as 1 John 3:2 says, "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Job said, "If I wait, the grave is my house." Once again the word is *sheol*. Job again said, "O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave [*sheol*] ... until thy wrath be past" (Job 14:13). Both David and Job knew that they were going to hell, or the grave, at death. All men go to the grave at death. Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 9:10, " whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Death and the grave are linked together. Psalm 6:5 states, "In death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave [*sheol*], who shall give thee thanks?"

Some wonder about hell being cast into the lake of fire. This is *sheol*, *hades*, that will be cast into the lake of fire. In other words, the time is coming when death and the grave will be destroyed. All men will be released from death for the judgment. All men will be resurrected for judgment. Some will have life; some will have condemnation.

Speaking of this release from the grave, and victory over death, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." We go to hell, or the grave, at death because we are mortal. The word "grave" here is *hades*, or "hell." But this is not the same hell as hell fire. We all go into the grave hell because Adam's sin brought death to the human race. We do not have to go into the lake of fire hell because Jesus has come to help us escape that. He came that we might escape the lake of fire and have everlasting life. That is why this passage says, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." In Christ we can escape hell fire. Out of Christ we must be cast into hell fire. This is God's rule of justice.

Jesus Himself went to one hell, as is recorded in Acts 2:31, 32. "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." Yes, Jesus went to hell at death, but God raised Him up again. He went to the grave. This hell is not hell fire. Jesus never was in hell fire, but He was in the grave three days and three nights, as He said He would be, for our sins. Jesus died, and was buried in hell, or the grave, for three days. Then God raised Him from the dead, never to die again. Thus He brings to us not only forgiveness of sins but also the promise of eternal life.

The main difference between the grave hell and the lake of fire hell is that the grave hell is for this age, while the lake of fire hell will not come into existence before the coming of Christ. The word *gehenna*, referring to hell fire is always used in connection with the future. Another difference is that all men go into the grave, but only the wicked shall go into the lake of fire hell.

Let us come back to the thought that *gehenna*, referring to hell fire, is always-used in connection with the future, in connection with the great judgment. Jesus used the word eleven times. He said in Matthew 23:33, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Again, he said, "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council, but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire [*gehenna*]."

The Bible shows that the lake of fire hell will come into existence at the coming of Christ, when the beast and the false prophet will be cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. (Rev. 19:20.) The lake of fire is also spoken of as being in existence at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ. At the great white throne judgment, the rest of the dead, not raised at the beginning of the thousand years, will be raised and judged. If their names are not found written in the Book of Life they will be cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20: 15.)

Since the lake of fire will be the cause of the second death-the eternal death that persons will receive because of their own unforgiven sins-we know that the lake of fire has not yet come. All men shall be raised for judgment. But the resurrection has not yet taken place. The first resurrection will occur at Christ's coming, and the second resurrection will occur after the thousand years are finished. Jesus said in John 5:28, 29, "All that are in the graves 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 damnation." Since the resurrection and judgment have not yet taken place, hell fire has not yet come, but its coming is certain and sure. It will receive into its fiery bosom the people who reject Christ and His Father.

Notice again that hell fire is called the second death. The cause for people being cast into hell fire is sin. Romans 6:23 says the wages of sin is death. People will be cast into hell fire because of their unforgiven sins. The wages of sin is death. The lake of fire is the second death. Hence, hell fire will bring eternal death to the wicked.

Let us believe the actual statements concerning life and death in God's Word. The lake of fire is the second death, the death that many people will die because of their unforgiven sins. Everlasting life is a gift from God that Jesus will give to believers in Him at His second coming. He has never offered eternal life to the unfaithful. Which are you: faithful or unfaithful?