

The Wages of Sin

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The Scripture is very plain as to the penalty of sin:

“For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

Contemporary Christianity still has not shaken off the Roman, Dark-age superstition that the penalty of sin is eternal conscious torment of the wicked in hell.

Tradition would have us believe that Romans 6:23 really means “the wages of sin is eternal conscious torment in fiery hell.” Nonetheless, the Scriptures say that the penalty is death.

In fact, if the penalty of sin is eternal conscious torment of the wicked in hell, then Christ cannot be the Saviour of the world, for He has not made such a payment for sin.

Christ is the Saviour of the world, and He did make the full and complete payment for sin. He did so by dying for the sins of the world.

“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures” (I Corinthians 15:3).

“Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree” (I Peter 2:24).

THE GRAVE

All men go to the same place.

“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again” (Ecclesiastes 3:19-20).

The dead are not in heaven.

“And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven” (John 3:13).

“Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. ... For David is not ascended into the heavens” (Acts 2:29, 34).

Death does not take one to be with the Lord. Death is an enemy (*“the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death”* – I Corinthians 15:26). The only way believers can go to heaven and be with the Lord is for Him to return and get them at His coming.

“For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven ... So shall we ever be with the Lord” (I Thessalonians 4:17).

The dead are in their graves.

“... All who are in their graves shall hear His voice” (John 5:28).

“... Them that sleep in the dust shall awake ...” (Daniel 12:2).

“... Ye that dwell in the dust ...” (Isaiah 26:19).

The dead are always said to be where their bodies are.

“... Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah ...” (Genesis 23:19).

“... There was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife” (Genesis 25:10).

“So David slept with his fathers, and was buried ...” (I Kings 2:10).

“Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day” (Acts 2:29).

“And Solomon slept with his fathers, and he was buried in the city of David his father ...” (II Chronicles 9:31).

“And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him” (Acts 8:2).

“Death of the body” and “resurrection of the body” are not biblical expressions. Death is the death of the *person*. Resurrection is the resurrection of the *person*. In the Bible it is the *person* that is said to die.

HELL

Eternal conscious torment was a part of the sadistic teaching of Augustine. Hell was a profitable institution for Rome.

Our English word “hell” is the translation of one Hebrew and three Greek words.

Hebrew: *sheol*

Sheol is translated:

“grave” 32 times

“hell” 31 times

“pit” 3 times

Concerning *Sheol*, E.W. Bullinger has written,

“As to the rendering ‘hell,’ it does *not* represent *sheol*, because both by dictionary definition and by colloquial usage ‘hell’ means the place of future *punishment*. *Sheol* has no such meaning, but denotes the *present state of death*. ‘The grave’ is, therefore, a far more suitable translation, because it visibly suggests to us what is invisible to the mind, *viz.*, the state of death. It must, necessarily, be misleading to the English reader to see the former put to represent the latter.

“The student will find that ‘THE grave,’ taken literally as well as figuratively, will meet all the requirements of the Hebrew *sheol*: not that *sheol* means so much specifically ‘A grave,’ as generically, ‘THE grave ...’

“*Sheol* therefore means *the state of death*; or the state of the dead, of which the grave is a tangible evidence. ... It may be represented by a coined word, “Grave-dom, as meaning the dominion or power of *the grave*.”¹

Greek: *hades*

This Greek word *hades* is defined by the Holy Spirit.

In the Old Testament, He wrote:

“*For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [sheol]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption*” (Psalms 16:10).

1. E.W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament*, p. 367.

Then in the New Testament, quoting the Psalms He writes:

“Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [hades], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Acts 2:27).

Therefore, the Holy Spirit defines the Greek word *hades* as the Hebrew word *sheol*.

Greek: *gehenna*

Gehenna was a historical place. It was the dump where Jerusalem burnt its trash. It is used metaphorically of the “removal of your trash.”

Greek: *tartaroo*

One of the three Greek words translated “hell” in the *King James Version* appears only one time. *Tartaroo* (English transliteration “*tartarus*”) is Strong’s Greek Lexicon #5020, translated “hell” in II Peter 2:4.

Peter warned,

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (II Peter 2:1).

Damnable heresies are “heresies of destruction or perdition.”

Concerning these things, E.W. Bullinger has written,

“The teaching that the punishment of the unrighteous begins at the moment of death is a very serious blot on the justice of God. If this is the truth, then Cain, who died about six thousand years ago has already endured six millenniums of punishment, while another murderer who dies today begins to suffer today. Therefore Cain will have to suffer six thousand years more for the same crime than the murderer who dies today.

“If two men charged with identical crimes and equally guilty were sentenced, one for five years and the other for ten years, all men who love justice would cry out against such a miscarriage of justice. Shall we not also cry out against any teaching that insists that one man suffer six thousand years more than another for the identical crime? It is indeed a fearful travesty of truth to teach that men are tortured for their sins before they ever have their day in court, and that later they do have their day in court merely to receive a sentence that is determined beforehand. Would not this make the justice of the great white throne to be of the same character as the justice ordered by a Mexican general who said, ‘Give the man a fair trial, then shoot him.’ Can this be the justice of God? Can this be the teaching of the Word of God? Do you know that it is? Are you sure that it is? Or can it be that you just do not care?”

“The contention that God’s holiness is of such nature that His justice can never be satisfied by anything save [except] eternal conscious suffering as the penalty for sins needs to be carefully examined. If this dogma is true, then this is the penalty Christ should have paid when He died for our sins. He paid the debt that we owed to God, but He did not suffer eternally. If the debt we owed was ‘eternal suffering’ then that debt has never been paid. Jesus Christ suffered just six hours on the Cross. He did not suffer eternally.

“If we would know of God’s wrath against sin, we need to look at the Cross. We will learn from this that our God does punish sin, but we will also learn that the wages of sin is death and not eternal conscious torment.”²

Speaking of the roots of “hell,” Bullinger writes,

“This is a heathen word and comes down to us surrounded with heathen traditions, which had their origin in Babel, and not in the Bible, and have reached us through Judaism and Romanism.”³

2. Cited by Otis Q. Sellers, *The Study of Human Destiny*, 1955, page 17.

3. Bullinger’s Lexicon.

Taken from chapter 2 of *The Salvation of All: Creation’s Final Destination* (A Biblical Look at Universal Reconciliation). Available from StudyShelf.com for \$16.²⁵ (+\$3.²⁵ s&h).

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