

## **Does hell exist?**

### **I. Introduction**

This lecture deals with the traditional concept of hell as the place of everlasting torments which God determined for disobedient human souls for their sins.

The subject of hell can be approached from different perspectives.

- a) An atheist, who doesn't recognize the existence of God will not recognize the existence of hell as well.
- b) Some people recognize the existence of God, but do not recognize the existence of hell. Jehovah's Witnesses are the example of a religious organization that denies the existence of hell.
- c) Others recognize the existence of God as well as the existence of hell. Christian Church in Prague is the example of a church whose members believe in existence of hell.

Concept of hell is concept of a spiritual place and thus cannot be experienced (perceived) by human senses. Whatever approach we take towards the subject of hell, it will always be based on our faith. The question is not whether to believe in hell or not, but which of the beliefs is reasonable? This is a legitimate question, for every person accepts many things in his/her everyday life on bases of faith, but not every faith is reasonable.

Examples of reasonable faith: Each of us accepts his/her personal identity by faith. We believe that our name, date of birth, place of birth, and the names of our parents are exactly those that are stated on our birth certificate, although we don't remember any of it ourselves. We accept by faith world news reported in different media. We accept by faith that it is safe to drink tap water, eat meals served in restaurants or even breath air (remember Bhopal gas tragedy). We accept by faith that buildings or means of transportation are constructed safely. Based on faith we expect that other people will treat us well and will not put our life nor lives of our close ones in danger.

Faith in all these things is based on an authority that is higher than the authority of an individual person. It is the authority of law. The law appoints not only when, how and by whom the official documents certifying birth, marriage, and death must be issued, but also hygienic and safety standards as well as what kind of act is crime that will be prosecuted by state, etc. All these laws have their lawgiver whose authority is above the authority of individual people, and he has the right to set a penalty for breaching the laws. Penalty and the fear of it is the mechanism that ensures the rule of law in human society and its peaceful coexistence.

Examples of unreasonable faith: Faith in superstitions like Friday 13. Faith in horoscopes. Faith in evolution, i.e. faith that highly organized universe regulated by many laws with intelligent human life created itself out of nothing, without any logical reason, without any purpose and sense, without a higher intelligent creator and lawgiver who would hold His created beings responsible for their actions.

No one reasonable would believe that something can come into existence and develop itself out of nothing into intelligent order and even intelligent life. Yet you will find many people that believe just that in case of whole universe with intelligent mankind!!!! Where is the logic? Where is the reason? Where is the reasonable faith?

## II. Answer to atheists

My answer to an atheist's rejection of God: "Do not let yourselves be deceived! You are not a product of blind chance of unintelligent evolution! No wise 'Mother Nature' created you on her own!" There is nothing like that! Everything has its maker and everything bears the testimony of its maker. Whether it is Prague Castle or Prague's panelaks. Whether it is a Mercedes or a Trabant. Every result has its cause and the cause must be higher than the result. Thus only intelligent humans can build houses, bridges, transportation and communication systems or write books of beautiful prose, love poetry or compose breathtaking musical compositions. Billions of monkeys playing with typewriters for billions of years will not write a simple essay by any chance. It is because they are not created to God's image and therefore they do not have spiritual (mental) capacity for that. They are void of such intelligence, intent, will, talent, knowledge of intelligible language and writing skills that only educated humans have and that enable educated humans to write simple essays. In other words, monkeys are not an adequate cause for such a result.

You as intelligent beings are the greatest evidence of the existence of higher intelligence that created you. When you think, when you create, when you act selflessly, when you discern good from bad, when you expect responsible actions on the part of others, when you forgive someone who hurt you, when you help someone who needs help, when you condemn evil, in all these and many other things you bear the testimony of your creator, God, who creates, loves, forgives and condemns. Without a great imagination and lots of unreasonable faith you cannot find any resemblance between you and any so-called links of evolution (??? nothing - single cell – monkey – human ???).

If there is an honest atheist here today, please pay attention to these words recorded in the Bible that claim to be inspired by almighty God: Romans 1:18-21.

You can know that there is God, if you think about his creation work all around you. You will have no excuse before God, who loves, forgives, but also condemns!

If there is an honest atheist here today, please pay attention to these words recorded in the Bible: Hebrews 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Do you know why? Because man sinned, i.e., committed evil, that separated man from Holy God in whom is no evil. Sin is the greatest problem of men! The justice of God requires that every sin has to be punished, but God in His great love and mercy towards people sent His Son Jesus Christ, who underwent a terrifying death on the cross for the sins of those who submit to God's Will recorded in the NT Scriptures of Bible. However, those who do not submit to God and refuse the sacrifice of Jesus will themselves bear the punishment for their sins. God provided evidence to mankind that the Bible is His true Word and that He will judge all men by Jesus' resurrection from dead. Acts 17:24-31 The resurrection of Jesus is the core of Christian faith. Had Jesus not been raised from dead, there would be no Christian faith.

If you are an intellectually honest person, you have every reason to believe in the existence of God.

Different question though is, whether it is reasonable to believe in existence of hell as a place of eternal torments. I am going to deal with this question in my:

### III.

#### **Answer to those who claim to believe in God, but reject hell**

Jehovah's Witnesses deny the existence of Hell as a place of eternal punishment of human souls. One of the arguments they use is that a loving God cannot torment people for eternity. Another argument they use is that the human soul is mortal, i.e. it is a mere physical body that breathes. Once man dies, he ceases to exist and thus cannot suffer eternally. Both these arguments are false and I can deal with them in the question and answer period, if anybody would be interested in it.

Teaching that there is no hell is very appealing to human nature. People who are concerned with the fate of their close ones who are deceased can find comfort in "no hell" teaching, especially when they hear from a JW that the deceased will be given a second chance in the future to make their relationship right with God.

Although the idea of hell is not appealing, we need to take it for a fact, if God teaches it in His Word. What does God's Word say about hell?

#### **What Jesus has to say to concept of hell?**

*Matthew 13:24-30, Here Jesus gives a parable of tares and wheat. From v. 24 it is clear that the parable has some spiritual meaning that is relevant for understanding something about the Heavenly Kingdom. The core of the parable is that good seed sown on the field was corrupted by enemy with tares, but only till the day of harvest when both tares and wheat will be gathered and separated. While tares will be burned, wheat will be put in a barn.*

Jesus said this parables to many people, but later He explained the parable to His disciples.

*Matthew 13:36-43. Jesus is the sower, good seeds are God's children, tares are devil's children who are identified as those who practice lawlessness. Harvest day is the last day when devil's children will be gathered and cast in the fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. God's children will be in the Kingdom of their Father.*

What is the lesson of Matthew 13? That on the day of judgement there will be a separation of people on those who are on God's side and those who are on devil's side. While God's children will be in God's Kingdom, devil's children will be cast into fire (pur).

If Matthew 13 was the only place in the whole Bible speaking in such graphic language about people cast into fire, we would have to be careful in its interpretation, but it's not so. Several chapters later Jesus says openly to His disciples what is going to happen when He comes back next time in His glory.

*Matthew 25:31-34, 41, 46. When Jesus comes on the last day, all nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate them into two groups. One group of people will go to the Kingdom and they'll have everlasting (aionos) life, and the other group will go to the everlasting (aionos) fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*

Can you see the similarities between Mt 13 and Mt 25? Wheat and tares, God's sons and devil's sons. One will go to the Kingdom of the Father, the other will be cast in fire. And the fire is described as everlasting fire and everlasting punishment.

## **What Paul has to say to concept of hell?**

*2 Thessalonians 1:3-10. When Jesus is revealed from heaven, He will give rest from the suffering to those that are worthy of the kingdom of God and take vengeance in flaming fire (pur) on those who don't know God, and don't obey the gospel of Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting (ainonos) destruction from the presence of the Lord.*

## **What the author of Hebrews has to say to concept of hell?**

*Hebrews 10:26-31. Those who sin willfully after they learned the truth will be devoured by fiery (pur) indignation. It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

There are other verses that teach the concept of hell as the place of eternal punishment.

To sum it up, God's Word teaches that some people will be cast in fire. It will be everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. The spiritual nature of the devil and his angels tells us about the nature of everlasting fire as a place of everlasting torments determined for spiritual beings. If the human soul was a mere physical mortal body, it could not be cast into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Although it is hard to imagine how will look the place of everlasting torments, one is for sure: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. That doesn't indicate anything pleasant. As Jesus says: "He who has ears, let him hear!"

Further, the word "everlasting" is translated from the Greek word "aionos" and Bible uses the same word "aionos" to describe everlasting God. - Romans 16:26. That shows us that when God says "everlasting fire" or "everlasting life", He really means everlasting.

## **What early Christians have to say to concept of hell?**

### EPISTLE OF IGNATIUS [A.D. 30-107.] TO THE EPHESIANS, CHAPTER 16:

Do not err, my brethren. Those that corrupt families shall not inherit the kingdom of God. And if those that corrupt mere human families are condemned to death, how much more shall those suffer everlasting punishment who endeavor to corrupt the Church of Christ, for which the Lord Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, endured the cross, and submitted to death! Whosoever, "being waxen fat," and "become gross," sets at nought His doctrine, shall go into hell.

### THE FIRST APOLOGY OF JUSTIN [A.D. 110-165.], CHAPTER 19

(Addressed To the Emperor Titus Aelius Adrianus Antoninus Pius Augustus Caesar 138-161):

And hell is a place where those are to be punished who have lived wickedly, and who do not believe that those things which God has taught us by Christ will come to pass.

### IRENAEUS [A.D. 120-202.] AGAINST HERESIES, BOOK 3, CHAPTER 18, written between A.D. 182 and A.D. 188:

...and He did not speak of any other cross, but of the suffering which He should Himself undergo first, and His disciples afterwards. For this purpose did He give them this exhortation: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to send both soul and body into hell;" [thus exhorting them] to hold fast those professions of faith which they had made in reference to Him. For He promised to confess before His Father those who should confess His name before men; but declared that He would deny those who should deny Him, and would be ashamed of those who should be ashamed to confess Him.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

It is reasonable to believe in existence of hell as a place of eternal torments that God determined for souls of those men who disobeyed God and rejected the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for their sins.

God's message for you in the NT Scriptures of Bible is that He loves you. He even sacrificed His Son Jesus Christ on the cross for your sins and raised Jesus from death. If you believe in God, confess His Son Jesus Christ as your Lord, repent of your sins, and are baptized by immersion under water for forgiveness of your sins, your sins will be forgiven. Your relationship to God will be restored. If you further abide in God's Word that is revealed in the NT Scriptures of the Bible, you will have hope that you will avoid hell and will be received into God's Heavenly Kingdom for eternity. The decision and responsibility is yours. The consequence of your decision is yours as well – eternal life if you obey God, or eternal punishment if you disobey God. Do not let yourself be deceived!

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