

ETERNAL DESTRUCTION

There is a group of people, fortunately small in number, claiming to be far wiser, and more understanding than the rest of us by averring there is no eternal punishment or destruction of the wicked. If, as this small minority informs us, the fate of the wicked is destruction, then it must be the case that souls of unregenerate, impenitent sinners will simply be annihilated. How this infinitesimally small group of people can miss adjectives such as “everlasting” in Matthew 25:46, 2 Thessalonians 1:9, or “eternal” in Mark 3:29 and Jude 1:7, is a total mystery. Annihilation indeed! What kind of punishment would that be? I do not recall non-existence being especially uncomfortable before I was born, and cannot perceive it would be something I would necessarily seek to avoid after death. After this life, with all of its trials and difficulties, the only word that comes to mind to describe fitly the prospect of being no more is relief. There are a few things of which I will confess to having fear, but nothing, is not one of them!

One of the human emotions the gospel touches to bring a person to obedience is fear. *“And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh”* (Jude 23). Jesus describes hell as a place where *“their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”* Revelation 14:11 says, *“and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day and night, who worship the beast, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”* If the wicked are annihilated, the smoke ascending up could not be smoke of torment, for there would be nothing to torment. Because the bulk of Scripture refers to the punishment in hell as eternal or everlasting, death in Revelation 21:8 must necessarily be used in the figurative way “death” is used in many other Scriptures to mean separation. The abominable bunch described in this verse, have already suffered one separation, physical death. Now, they will suffer the “second death,” eternal separation from God.

Some people, if told they must give up their sin or merely go out of existence at judgment, would respond, “Bring it on.” Many of such people already believe that man is a single natured being who like “the little dog Rover when he dies he dies all over.” Were he told cessation of existence is the eternal punishment of the unquenchable fire, he would profanely think, “No sweat.” On the contrary, if people are shown from the Scripture that sin leads one to eternal or everlasting punishment that is so great it can induce a selfish rich man not only to beg for a drop of water to cool his tormented tongue, but also create in him concern for someone other than himself, then someone, potentially a lot of some-ones, can be persuaded to seek for the glory that fades not away, eternal in the heaven of heavens.

If you have not begun the march to the celebrated home of the soul, where cares and burdens are laid down at the feet of the God of all comfort, won’t you enlist in the ranks of the army of the Lord today? The march commences by hearing the gospel (Rom. 10:17), believing it (John 8:24), confessing faith in Christ (Matt. 10:32, 33), repenting of sin (Luke 13:3), and having one’s sins washed away in the blood of the Lamb by being baptized into Christ (Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:27).

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