

TURNED INTO HELL.

"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." – Psa. 9:17.

This statement of the Lord recorded by the Psalmist, we find without any qualification whatever, and we must accept it as a positive fact. If the claims of "Orthodoxy" were true this would be indeed a fearful thought. Hell, to them, means a place of unmitigated woe, where untold millions of human beings writhe in anguish, tortured by literal fire or the gnawing of conscience, which, say some, is even worse. Under this fearful sentence they see the vast majority of mankind hastening, as they believe, to their dreadful doom; yet feeble indeed are the efforts put forth to rescue them. Babylon still has plenty of time for social enjoyment and festivity, which according to their belief should be spent in an almost frenzied endeavor to save the perishing. And she still has plenty of money to spend in gratifying the pride of life and the lust of the eye which might be applied to the same purpose; but instead, witness her costly temples of fashion, her grand organs, her costly apparel, her contempt of the poor, her greed of gain and strife for worldly honors.

But let us look at the true meaning of the word hell, into which God says he will turn the wicked and forgetful nations. We find that it is the translation of the Hebrew word sheol, which simply means the state or condition of death. There is not in it the remotest idea of either life or torment; and no scholar can by any manner of twisting or turning make it to mean anything else. Suffering of any kind would be impossible where there is no consciousness, no life. The Psalmist says, "In death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave (sheol) who shall give thee

thanks?" (6:5.) And again it is written: "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave (sheol) whither thou goest." (Eccl. 9:10.) The corresponding Greek word is hades, which also means the state or condition of death, and no other can properly be attached to either. Every minister, unless he be very ignorant indeed, knows that this is true: and ignorance on this subject is in no wise excusable in these days when books are so plentiful and so cheap. But still they go on preaching this false idea of hell, which is nothing short of a slander against the character of God, as though they were still enveloped in the ignorance of the dark ages. This very text which we are now considering, is quoted and preached from over and over again by men who ought to know, and many of whom do know the true meaning of the Hebrew word sheol, and who nevertheless in their attempt to uphold the **[R552 : page 5]** frightful doctrine of eternal torture, knowingly pervert this Scripture. **[R553 : page 5]**

Well, you inquire, How, then, did this idea first originate, and then obtain such universal acceptance? We answer, that it originated with Papacy, and was a part of her scheme for raising money from her ignorant and deluded subjects. Papacy taught that this place of torment was prepared for all who did not seek the protection of THE (Papal) Church. All heretics were sure to go there; while those of THE Church not counted worthy of heaven, were permitted to tarry in purgatory, there to suffer reformatory punishment, which might be shortened and relieved by the liberality of their friends in securing the prayers of the priests.

No other doctrine of the Romish Church ever did so much towards holding her captives in the bondage of fear, and increasing her revenues. The Protestant Churches in emerging from Romanism, rejected the doctrine of purgatory, but retained the

worse doctrine of eternal torture in hell. Though the increase and spread of knowledge has proved it to be false, yet like Papacy, finding it to be such a powerful agent in binding her subjects, and exacting her revenues, she is loathe to part with it; and since reasoning and enlightened minds are beginning to question this dogma, her policy now is, to put the brakes on reason, and to hurl her anathemas against investigation. If this bondage of fear were once broken, and God's children relied entirely on His Word, these great systems of Babylon would soon dissolve.

If we substitute the true meaning of the word sheol, our text will read: "The wicked shall be turned into the condition of death, and all the nations that forget God." This we believe; but who are the wicked? In one sense all men are wicked, in that all are violators of God's law, but in its fullest sense the wicked are those who, with full knowledge of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the remedy provided for their recovery, wilfully persist in sin and refuse the remedy.

As yet few, only consecrated believers, have come to a knowledge of God; the world knows him not and the nations cannot forget God until they are first brought to a knowledge of him. The consecrated have been enlightened, led of the Spirit through faith, to understand the deep and hidden things of God, which, though expressed in his Word, appear only as an idle tale and foolishness to the world, but which to the consecrated believer reveal the glory of God's character.

But, as we have hitherto seen, it will not be so in the age to come, for then "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. 11:9.) Much that we now receive by faith will then be demonstrated to the world by sight. When he who has ransomed man from the power of the grave (Hos. 13:14) begins to gather his purchased possession back from the prison-

house of death (Isa. 61:1.); when the sleepers are awakened under the genial rays of the Sun of Righteousness, they will not be slow to realize the truth of the hitherto seemingly idle tale, that "Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man."

We have also seen by previous investigation, that the gradual ascent of the King's Highway of Holiness in that age will be easy and possible to all, when all the stones – stumbling blocks – shall have been gathered out, and straight paths made for their feet. It is in that age that this text applies. Those who ignore the favoring circumstances of that age, and will not be obedient to the righteous Judge or Ruler – Christ – will truly be the wicked. And every loyal subject of the kingdom of God will approve the righteous judgment which turns such a one again into sheol – the condition of death. Such a one would be unworthy of life, and were he permitted to live, his life would be a curse to himself and to the rest of mankind, and a blemish on the work of God.

This will be the SECOND DEATH, from which there shall be no resurrection. Having been ransomed from the first or Adamic death (sheol) by the sacrifice of Christ, if they die again on account of their own sin, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." (Heb. 10:26.) "Christ dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." (Rom. 6:9.) This second death should be dreaded and shunned by all, since it is to be the final end of existence to all those deemed unworthy of life. But in it there can be no suffering. Like the first death, it is the extinction of life: in fact it would not be called a second, if it were not like the first. The work of Christ is to destroy the Adamic death.

It is because mankind had, through sin, become subject to death (sheol, hades) that Christ Jesus came to deliver us and save us from death. For this purpose Christ was manifested, that he might destroy death. (1 John 3:8; Heb. 2:14.) Death is a cessation

of existence, the absence of LIFE. There is no difference between the condition in the first and second deaths, but there is hope of a release from the first, while from the second there will be no release, no return to life. The first death sentence passed upon all on account of Adam's sin, while the second death can be incurred only by wilful, individual sin, and can come only upon those who have first been released from the first death – either reckoned or actually released.

That this last proposition is true is evident, since a man cannot lose his life (die) twice, without having it restored once in the interim. The world will in the next age have existence actually restored to them by resurrection, and then, unless obedient to the favorable arrangements of that time, will merit and receive the second death, or death a second time. (Compare Ezek. 18:2-4 and Jer. 31:29,30.) During this age only those can be liable to the second death, who first by faith in Christ have been justified and reckoned as free from the Adamic death. These can become liable to the second death by sinning willfully, counting the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified a common thing. (Heb. 6:4-6 and 10:29.)

But the application of our text belongs to the coming age, when all shall be set free from sheol or hades, for saints and sinners all go into sheol now, and this scripture indicates that, in the time when it applies, only the wicked shall go there. And the nations that forget God must be nations that have known him, else they could not forget him; and never yet have the nations been brought to that knowledge, nor will they until the coming time, when the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth, and none shall need to say unto his neighbor, "Know thou the Lord," for all shall know him from the least to the greatest of them. (Isa. 11:9; Jer. 31:34.) Again, we find that the Hebrew word shub, which in our

text is translated turned, signifies turned back, as to a place or condition where they once were. They once were in sheol, and were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and will be brought out of sheol; but if then they are wicked, they, and all who forget God, shall be turned back to sheol.
