

THE MEANING OF HELL – MH

The word “HELL” is used 55 times in the KJV Bible and comes from 4 different Greek and Hebrew words with 3 different meanings. Thirty-one times in the Old Testament it comes from sheol and 11 places in the New Testament it comes from the Greek word hades; these words have identical meanings. Compare Ps. 16:10 with Acts 2:31.

1MH – 1 Corinthians 15:55. One time hades is translated “grave” (Margin, “hell”) in the KJV. The prime meaning of hades and sheol is the grave. One time in the New Testament “hell” comes from the Greek word tartarus (2 Peter 2:4), which means a dark abyss. In this particular text it refers to this dark world, to which Satan’s angels were cast down when they were expelled from heaven to this earth, Rev. 12:9. 12 times in the New Testament “hell” comes from the Greek word gehenna, which refers to that final lake of fire into which the wicked will be cast alive in bodily form with all their members after the second resurrection at the end of the 1,000 years of Rev. 20. There is no place in the Bible where “hell” means a lake of fire which is burning now, or where the wicked will be burning through all eternity.

2MH – Revelation 14:9-11. The disobedient are spoken of here as having no rest day nor night: this refers to the suffering they must endure during the seven last plagues which come upon sinners just before Jesus comes the second time. The smoke of their torment ascending forever does not mean that they will be burning through all eternity (for they become ashes, Mal. 4:1-3), but that they will be forever burned up. There is no resurrection from the second death, Rev. 21:8. Also compare Rev. 19:3 with Rev. 18:8,21.

3MH – 1 Samuel 1:22,28. Biblical terms are best understood by their usage in the Bible. The word “forever” is used sometimes to denote just an ordinary lifetime. See also 1 Sam. 28:2; Ex. 21:1-6; Gen. 44:32.

4MH – Jonah 2:6. Here the word “forever” meant only three days and nights – this time of such great distress seemed forever: a type of the sinner’s lot. So the word “forever” according to Biblical usage means a period of limited duration as well as an infinite duration.

5MH – Ezekiel 18:4. The punishment for sin is not eternal life in misery, but death – THE SECOND DEATH, which will last through all eternity, Rom. 6:23; Rev. 21:8. So the punishment of the wicked will last just as long as the eternal life of the righteous. The righteous receive everlasting life, and the wicked receive everlasting death, which is the everlasting punishment mentioned in Matt. 25:46.

6MH – 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9. Destruction is called a punishment: therefore everlasting destruction must be the everlasting punishment.

7MH – Palms 37:9,10. There is not and cannot be any such thing as an eternally burning hell, because the time is coming when the wicked will not exist – even his place shall not exist. The story of the rich man in hell and Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom in Luke 16:19-31 was not told by Christ to show what happens to people when they die. Before this story, He had declared in plain language that the wicked would not be cast into the fire until the end of the world (Matt. 13:40-42), and that every man would be rewarded at His second coming, Matt. 16:27. This story harmonized with the idea which the Pharisees had of the hereafter, and was given to rebuke them for their covetousness in teaching that riches are a mark of God’s favor, and that poverty is a mark of His curse.

8MH – Isaiah 47:14. When God gets through with the wicked, there will not be enough fire in hell to warm a man’s hands on a cool morning. What will happen to the wicked? The Bible tells us in 15 places that they will die: which means that they will cease to live; in 12 places the Bible says that they will PERISH, which means they are blotted out of existence.

9MH – Revelation 21:4. There will never again be pain – this could never be so if there were an eternal hell-fire. God will have a clean universe free from sin and sinners, Rev. 5:13.