



# The Country Preacher's Newsletter

"...speaking the truth in love" Ephesians 4:15

## Hell Hath No Fury?

By Randall F. Matheny

"Hell Hath No Fury" (US News & World Report, January, 2000, pp. 45-50.), identified several modern rebirths of revisionist thinking regarding the nature of "hell." A Vatican audience was instructed that "rather than a place, hell indicates the state of those who freely and definitively separate themselves from God." Referring to a "US News" poll, the report states, "that more Americans believe in hell today than did in the 1950s or even 10 years ago. But like the Pope, most now think of hell as "an anguished state of existence" rather than a real place." According to a professor from Eden Theological Seminary, St. Louis, a literal hell is "a part of an understanding of the cosmos that just doesn't exist anymore." The 1960's are pinpointed as the decade during which teaching about an eternal hell "all but disappeared from the religious mainstream" and that "theological discourse on the subject at the nation's divinity schools almost evaporated. And while polls showed that the majority of Americans professed to believe in

hell's existence, almost no one thought he would go there." Some "conservative theologians" suggest that hell is not eternal torment, but rather annihilation, or the cessation of existence. Finally, a professor at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, suggests that the main concern regarding hell is, "retribution in this life . . .

**If hell is to be understood simply as a state of being rather than a place, then so must heaven, but those who wish to relegate hell to pure symbolism are hesitant to do so with heaven.**

in the harmful ways we treat each other."

The Bible speaks of hell in the type of language that it uses to speak of heaven: as eternal (Mat. 25:41, 46), and as a prepared place of consciousness (Mat. 13:49-51; Jn. 14:1-4). Consequently, if hell is to be understood simply as a state of being rather than a place, then so must heaven, but those who wish to relegate hell to pure symbolism are hesitant to do so with heaven. The Bible uses symbolic language to describe both heaven and hell, but it is not because heaven or hell are themselves symbolic. Temporal beings have no experience that can help them comprehend the blissful splendor of heaven, or the horrendous

terror of the place prepared for the Devil and his angels, so symbolic language is used to portray heaven as a place that is beyond the ability of the human mind to comprehend in terms of splendor and glory, and likewise, hell is portrayed as a place that is beyond the ability of the same mind to comprehend in terms of hostility, horror and torment for the lost soul. In other words, heaven will be better than the human mind can possibly imagine, and hell will be exceedingly worse. The removal of the biblical doctrine of hell from modern theology has also removed the basis for contrasting ultimate good with ultimate evil making sin more difficult to define. If hell only exists in this life and there is no ultimate accountability for personal behavior, then there is no credible restraint against evil, period. The desire to wish hell out of existence is foolish from all angles. If we do not choose heaven, and view it as a place worthy of all effort to get there, then the only alternative place is hell, where anyone can go without even trying (Mat. 7:13-14).

• • •

Permission is granted to copy and reproduce articles appearing in this publication as long as they are not edited for content and the author and the publication are appropriately credited.

## The Whole Truth

By Randall F. Matheny

Many views of the nature of the Bible are bandied about in scholarly circles today, as they have been for ages. We will examine some of those views of its inspiration in the next several articles.

One view of the Bible's nature is that it only contains truth -- the word of God -- which implies that it also contains error and that which is not the word of God. An argument put forth in support of this is that it records the statements of many uninspired people, and on several occasions, the words of Satan himself. Another argument is that the original writings of scripture were much shorter than they are today, and took their present form due to numerous editorial additions and embellishments. If either argument is true, the promise that the Lord's word would be preserved was an empty one (1 Pet. 1:25). This does not mean that His word cannot be corrupted by those of dishonorable intent, but that it would be available to those who seek it with pure motives (Mat. 5:6; Jn. 17:20-21; Rom. 10:13-15). One of the many internal evidences of inspiration is that the Bible typically provides information that is not typically seen in other ancient writings which show nations and peoples in the most favorable ways. In other words, it does not seem reasonable, when compared with other writings of cultures contemporary to them, that Hebrew writers would record a history that so often shows their

nation in such a bad light. The Bible calmly records not only the great exploits and victories of people of faith, but also the errors and blunders of the unfaithful, the faithless, and even the momentary lapses of otherwise godly people, with equal candor. The Bible's record of the statements of the ungodly, the uninspired, and even Satan, does not mean that what is recorded is not true. To the contrary, the word of God bears a true record regardless of whom it tells about. When Paul wrote that, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (2 Tim. 3:16a), he meant all, including what is said about the good, the bad and the ugly. Further, the Bible repeatedly reminds its readers that they are viewing the word of God and not that of man. Statements such as "thus says the Lord," "the word of the Lord," "the word of God," and "the Lord says," appear 737 times in 731 verses in both of the Testaments. Jesus declared that He spoke the word of the Father (Jn. 12:49; 17:8) and His apostles affirmed that they spoke by inspiration (1 Cor 2:13; 14:37; Gal. 1:11-12; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Rev. 1:1). The Bible is the truth, the pleasant and the unpleasant, from cover to cover. As such it not only reveals God's will for mankind, but it uncovers the nature of mankind as we are and shows us what God would have us to be (1 Cor. 13:12; Heb. 4:12). If it were any different, even slightly deficient, it could never be "... profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped

for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).



Visit

### Countrypreacher.com

And the home page for the church of Christ, Warren, Pennsylvania.

### Subscribe and Unsubscribe Information

To subscribe, send an e-mail message to: <newsletter@countrypreacher.com> with the word "Subscribe," without quotation marks, in the Subject field. To unsubscribe, send an e-mail message with the word "Unsubscribe," without the quotation marks, in the subject field.

Edited by  
Randall F. Matheny  
PO Box 911  
Warren, PA 16365-0911

Visit the *Country Preacher's*  
Links to:

- Sermon Outlines, Essays and Articles
- Bibles and Other Specials at the General Store
- Free Bible Correspondence Courses
- Home Schooling Links

Scandia Technologies

For Computers, Electronics and More!