

GEHENNA FIRE A FIGURE OF SPEECH

Symbolizes the Second Death. A Total Extinction.

WHERE THEIR WORM DIETHNOT?

Pastor Russell Leads an Exploration Party of Toronto Bible Students in a Critical Investigation of "Gehenna." Stripped of Superstitious Accretions, He Declares It "the Second Death."



PASTOR RUSSELL

Toronto, Can., July 16th.—Pastor Russell delivered three addresses here today under the auspices of the "International Bible Students Association." By request two of his addresses were more particularly to the Hebrews, on "Zionism in Prophecy." Another was specially to Bible Students, and it was reported that his text was, "Where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched" (Mark ix, 44). The speaker said:—

There are other and much more beautiful topics than the one I have chosen for this occasion. Nevertheless, "Handsome is that handsome does." This text has stood in the way of God's people for centuries, and still continues to be the way of many of them. To such it was the Almighty Creator to be a most unkind one, a most un-fatherly one, view the matter as we will. Some say, lovingly and illogically, that God provided for before the foundation of the world a great *gehenna* of fire, torture, suffering, and that all mankind were doomed on account of father Adam's transgression, but that through Jesus' death arrangement was made by which the small number who walk in His footsteps in the "narrow way" may escape this awful eternity.

Others say, not so; God is love, and these unquenchable fires and immortal worms are matters of necessity which His love cannot overcome, because, by some slip of unwisdom in the beginning, or by some lack of power since, the Almighty is unable to do better than to save the mere handful and to allow the great mass of mankind to suffer endless torture in the fire that never shall be quenched, and where the worm will never die.

The Great Teacher Misunderstood. These words from the lips of our Master, the Great Teacher, have been grievously misunderstood. The teaching of our Protestant childhood was to the effect that only the saintly elect would go to heaven and that others would not only lose heaven, but gain an eternal life in torment. Thus our text was understood to portray what practically the whole world of mankind would be compelled to endure.

This hell was pictured to our childhood minds from outside the Bible as heated to a white heat. If we expressed wonder or surprise that any creature could endure such conditions so long the answer was that God would exercise his omnipotent power to make us fire-proof and pain-sensitive. Some theologians of the Thomas a Kempis school of thought went so far as to picture the poor creatures in their sufferings and to show that the heat would form a kind of an asbestos covering which would shield them from a measure of its intensity. But those deluded theologians proceeded to explain that these outer coverings would crack and shell off every little while, leaving the poor victim freshly tender that his suffering might be the more intense.

Of course, these theologians of the past had their difficulty in dealing with the worms. They could imagine devils who would oversee the torture as being made immune to pain by the chief torturer, the Almighty God. But just how to imagine the worms getting along in so great a heat and how they would in any wise increase the torture of the poor sufferers was to many a perplexity. But patient thoughtfulness along these cruel and devilish lines enabled some to formulate the theory that the worms would be fire-ones, living in fire, delighting in fire—worms that would bore through the incrustations and add still further to the horrible sufferings of the world of mankind.

Was This What Jesus Meant? Did the Great Teacher intend that such conclusions should be drawn from His language? And did He stop short of the description from reasons of sympathy or modesty or shame? Is this the general teaching of God's Word or has a great and terrible mistake been made? And have we mistaken a figure of speech and treated it as literal? We erred. We misunderstood.

The Great Teacher who rebuked His disciples, James and John, when they desired to call fire from heaven upon the City of Samaria, because the people thereof refused to sell them food for the Master—the sympathetic One who said to them, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them"—could that Son of man in any wise intend to tell us that our great Heavenly Father had less of the spirit of love and righteousness than the two impetuous disciples?

Bank Officers Indicted. Vancouver, Wash., July 20.—Indicted on charges of accepting deposits when they knew the bank to be insolvent, President Hugh C. Phillips and Cashier Gilbert W. Daniels, of the Commercial Bank of Vancouver, were arrested today and released on bonds of \$10,000 each.

The disciples might impetuously have been willing to destroy the earthly life of the Samaritans, the Heavenly Father, of still more demoralized disposition, would treat practically all mankind ten million times worse than that and use Divine Power to all eternity to perpetuate the sufferings of His earthly creatures, which His own Word declares were born in sin, shapen in iniquity, in sin did their mothers conceive them—earthly creatures, too, whose environment was unfavorable and whose Adversary, the Devil, God neither destroyed nor bound?

"Gehinnom"—"Gehenna"—Hell. As we have heretofore seen, the only Hebrew word translated hell, from Genesis to Malachi, is *sheol*, which is indiscriminately translated grave, pit and hell in our Common Version of the English Bible—the greater number of times *grave*—its proper translation. Its Greek equivalent in the New Testament, we have seen, is *hadai*, which likewise is indiscriminately translated *grave* and *hell*, but should always be rendered *grave*. We repeat again that no scholar in the world will claim that there is the slightest thought of life or suffering or joy connected with these words.

The Scriptures distinctly declare that "there is neither wisdom, nor device, nor knowledge in *sheol*"—to which all, both good and bad, go at death, and where they remain until the resurrection. In the New Testament the word *tartarus* occurs once only and is translated *hell*, whereas it should be rendered *our earth's atmosphere*. It has no reference to humanity in any way, but to the fallen angels. The Apostle says that as a punishment "God cast them down to *tartarus*" and they are "reserved in chains of darkness until the judgment of the great Day."

But today we will examine the fourth and last word translated *hell* in our common English Bible. This word in the Greek is *gehenna*. It occurs but twelve times, as follows: Matthew v, 22, 29, 30; x, 28; xviii, 9; xxiii, 33; Mark ix, 43, 45, 47; Luke xii, 5; James iii, 6. One of the occurrences is in connection with our text today. The question is, To what does this word *gehenna* refer? Is it a name for Purgatory? Or a name for a still worse place of unending torture, as our Protestant creeds declare? We answer, No. It is a figure of speech used to symbolize the Second Death—the death from which there will be no resurrection, no resuscitation—the everlasting destruction mentioned by St. Paul, and of which St. Peter says that they which experience it perish like the brute beast (II Thessalonians i, 9; II Peter ii, 12). This is very plainly stated in Revelation xx, 14, where of this "lake of fire" it is declared, "this is the Second Death."

The Valley of Hinnom—Tophet. The Greek word *gehenna* is the synonym for the Hebrew word *Ge-hinnom*, which means "The valley of Hinnom." This valley is repeatedly mentioned in the Bible. It was owned by a family named Hinnom. The first reference to it is in Joshua xv, 8. Looking at any Bible map of the city of Jerusalem, the valley will be seen to the southwest of the city wall. At a time when the Israelites became sadly involved in idolatry, this valley was used as a sacred place. An image of the heathen god, Moloch, made of brass, and hollow, was erected. It was so constructed that the chair, which was a part of the image, constituted a furnace fired from the rear, and the head of the image was the top of a flue.

The image held out its arms as though to receive something and, heated red hot by the fire, was a receptacle in which deluded Israelites placed their children as sacrifices, while trumpets were blown, drums beaten and the people shouted, stifling the cries of the tortured infants (II Kings xxiii, 10). When the good King Josiah came to the throne all this idolatry was abolished and the proper worship of God in the temple was resumed. Then, lest the people should ever again resort to such atrocious customs, the valley was desecrated. It became a valley of abomination. It was used as a dumping place for the filth of Jerusalem. Dead dogs and dead cats were thrown there, and it is claimed that some of the vile criminals, after execution, were thrown therein instead of being given burial—to typically illustrate that there is no future life for such obnoxious beings—that they will be refused.

The valley of Hinnom is now filled up and an orchard grows there; but originally it was quite deep. The carcasses of animals were thrown there intended for destruction, the worms feeding upon them. No one sought to hinder the worms from making a complete destruction. In the bottom of the valley fires were kindled for the consumption of the waste debris, and brimstone was added that the fumes of it might destroy any germs of disease. No one thought of quenching that fire; it was one that was desired. This was the *gehenna* of our Lord's day. He uses it in a figurative or pictorial sense as illustrating the Second Death, which will be the portion of all willful sinners. He used it also symbolically, in connection with other symbols, in the book of Revelation, where as already seen He explains it to mean the Second Death.

The worms of that valley were no people immortal than any other worms or maggots and the fires kindled there are not burning now. This expression, "Where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched," merely signifies that the destruction of the class represented would be complete, that nothing would interfere to save them from destruction. Adam's death will be destroyed, as the Scriptures declare. Christ died that He might have the rightful authority to destroy Adam's

and perhaps disrupt the understanding which exists between England and France with her reported demands for territory in the Congo, is expressed by the press here.

death and uplift all of Adam's race who will accept His favor back to all that was lost in Adam, and redeemed at Calvary. But the Second Death is a friend to God and to all who love righteousness, since it will utterly and forever destroy such as have love or sympathy for sin and refuse to be obedient to the Divine will after full enlightenment.

The Antitypical "Gehenna."

As the earthly Jerusalem was a figure of the Jerusalem from above, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God that is to be established in all the earth, so *gehenna* and its "fire" and "worms" prefigured the destruction of the Second Death upon every willful sinner, during or shortly after the termination of Christ's Mediatorial Kingdom and reign and the delivery of the Kingdom back to God, with righteousness fully established.

As the New Jerusalem will not be a literal city, with literal streets of gold and gates of pearls and walls of jewels, neither the valley of Hinnom nor the lake of fire outside the city of Jerusalem will be literal—both are symbolical. The one represents harmony with God, the Divine blessing and everlasting life; the other represents separation from God, everlasting destruction, the Second Death.

Fire is never used as a symbol of preservation, far from it. It is always a symbol of destruction. The addition of brimstone intensifies the figure, because burning brimstone is one of the most deadly influences known in the world. It is not only deadly to humanity and the larger animals but also to insects and microbes and everything that has life.

An Old Testament Reference.

This same lesson of the destruction of willful transgressors, as represented in the destructiveness of the valley of Hinnom (*Gehenna*), is furnished by the Prophet Isaiah (lxv, 22-24). A familiar sight in Isaiah's day was the literal valley of Hinnom, used as a figure by the Holy Spirit speaking through him, pointing to the antitype and telling of the New Heavens and New Earth—the new religious and secular organizations of mankind which will be accomplished by Messiah's reign—and that then evil doers shall not escape but shall be completely, utterly destroyed. "They shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men who have transgressed against Me, for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorrence unto all flesh." Nothing is said about looking at living beings suffering torture, nor is this the thought. God never approved of torture, but always condemned it. "A carcass is a dead body."

How glad we should be to realize that God's great Plan will not include a great torture chamber containing countless kinds of His creatures but, as the Scriptures declare, "Every creature in heaven and in earth and under the earth will be heard saying, Praise and glory and honor and dominion and might be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever."

Let Honesty and Truth Prevail.

Having demonstrated that neither the Bible nor reason offers the slightest support to the doctrine that eternal torment is the penalty for sin, we note the fact that the various church creeds, and confessions, and hymn-books, and theological treatises, are its only supports; and that under the increasing light of our day, and the consequent emancipation of reason, belief in this horrible, fendish doctrine of the Dark Ages is fast dying out. But alas! this is not because Christian people generally are zealous for the truth of God's Word and for His character, and willing to destroy their grim creed-Idols. Ah no! they still bow before their admitted falsities; they still pledge themselves to their defense, and spend time and money for their support, though at heart ashamed of them, and privately denying them.

The general influence of all this is to cause the honest-hearted of the world to despise Christianity and the Bible; and to make hypocrites and semi-infidels of nominal Christians. Because the nominal church clings to this old blasphemy, and falsely presents its own error as the teaching of the Bible, the Word of God, though still nominally revered, is being practically repudiated. Thus the Bible, the great anchor of truth and liberty, is being cut loose from by the very ones who, if not deceived regarding its teachings, would be held and blessed by it.

The general effect, not far distant, will be, first open infidelity, then anarchy. For much, very much of this, lukewarm Christians, both in pulpits and pews, who know better, are responsible. Many such are willing to compromise the truth, to slander God's character, and to stultify and deceive themselves, for the sake of peace, or ease, or present earthly advantage. And any minister, who, by uttering a word for an unpopular truth, will risk the loss of his stipend and his reputation for being "established" in the bog of error, is considered a bold man, even though he honorably withdrew his name from his published projects.

If professed Christians would be honest with themselves and true to God, they would soon learn that "their fear toward God is taught by the precepts of men" (Isaiah xxix, 13). If all would decide to let God be true, though it should prove every man a liar (Romans iii, 4), and show all human creeds to be imperfect and misleading, there would be a great cleansing work done very shortly. Then the Bible would be studied and appreciated as never before; and its testimony that the wages of sin is death (extinction), would be recognized as a "just recompense of reward."

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