

Hell Involves Conscious Eternal Punishment

Pastor Hammond

The Bible repeatedly teaches that Hell is a real place (Matthew 18:18, 25:46; Luke 16; 2 Thes. 1:8-9; Rev. 20:10). Moreover, according to the Bible, those who refuse to receive Christ as Savior will spend eternity in Hell enduring conscious torment as punishment for sin.

Some argue that the Bible teaches *annihilationism* – the idea that the LORD will end the conscious awareness of unbelievers in Hell – rather than allowing them to experience eternal suffering. They point to Matthew 10:28, where the Bible says, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." However, the conclusion that Matthew 10:28 teaches that the LORD will end the conscious existence of unbelievers is simply not supported by a more careful analysis of the Bible.

In order to gain a Biblically correct understanding of the true nature of hell, we should (1) compare scripture with scripture and (2) examine the literal meaning of the Greek words from which our New Testament is translated.

1. What may we learn by comparing Matthew 10:28 with other Scripture?

- When we compare Matthew 10:28 with other very clear scripture, we see that the Bible consistently portrays hell and the punishment in hell as everlasting:
 - Mat 18:8 - Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into **everlasting fire**.
 - Matt 25:46 - And these shall go away into **everlasting punishment**: but the righteous into life eternal.
 - 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be **punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord**, and from the glory of his power;

- Revelation 20:10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

2. What may we learn by exploring the precise meaning of the underlying Greek words?

- The Greek word translated "destroy" in Matt 10:28 is *apollymi*
- The same Greek word is appears 92 times in the *Textus Receptus* Greek text which underlies our King James Bible. The word is variably translated as follows:
 - perish 33x, destroy 26x, lose 22x, be lost 5x, lost 4x, misc 2x
 - 31 times, *apollymi* is translated as "lose," "be lost" or "lost"
 - Note that 5 times, *apollymi* is translated as "lost" - including in Mat 10:6 "But go rather to the **lost** (*apollymi*) sheep of the house of Israel." This is key to understanding Mat 10:28, i.e. *apollymi* doesn't refer to a literal end of one's conscious existence. *Rather, it refers to a state of loss.*
 - Vine's defines *apollymi* as follows: "a strengthened form of *ollumi*, signifies "to destroy utterly;" in Middle Voice, "to perish." *The idea is not extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of well-being.* This is clear from its use, as, e.g., of the marring of wine skins, Luke 5:37; of lost sheep, i.e., lost to the shepherd, metaphorical of spiritual destitution, Luke 15:4, 6, etc.; the lost son, Luke 15:24; of the perishing of food, John 6:27; of gold, 1 Peter 1:7. So of persons, Mathew 2:13, "destroy;" Matthew 8:25, "perish;" Matthew 22:7; 27:20; of the loss of well-being in the case of the unsaved hereafter, Matthew 10:28; Luke 13:3, 5; John 3:16 (ver. 15 in some mss.); 10:28; 17:12; Romans 2:12; 1 Corinthians 15:18; 2 Corinthians 2:15, "are perishing;" 2 Corinthians 4:3; 2 Timothy 2:10; James 4:12; 2 Peter 3:9..."

Conclusion: Both our comparison of scripture and our examination of the literal meaning of *apollymi* (translated "destroy" in Matt 10:28), direct us to conclude that annihilationism is inconsistent with scripture. Hell and the subsequent lake of fire involve a conscious eternal state of punishment. Importantly, however, anyone who desires to avoid hell may simply turn away from sin and receive Christ as Savior.
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Anyone who desires to avoid Hell simply needs to repent of sin and receive Christ as Savior.

In 1 Cor 15:1-4 Paul succinctly describes the gospel message: "... I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you ... By which also ye are saved For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures..." (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

According to the Bible, without the gospel message, our only hope is hell. The Bible says that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," (Rom. 3:23). The Bible also describes the consequences of our sin: "... the wages of sin is death..." (Rom 3:9).

The Bible says in Rom. 5:8 that salvation is possible only because "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," (Rom. 5:8).

However, salvation remains only a possibility until we repent and place our faith in Christ alone. In John 3:7 Jesus said, "Ye must be born again," (John 3:7).

If you have never made a decision to both turn away from sin and to receive Jesus Christ as your savior, I urge you to do so today. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," (Rom.10:13).

About Long Hill Baptist Church

Long Hill Baptist Church is a Bible-believing, independent Baptist church that has been privileged to serve Christ in Trumbull for more than 50 years. Visit us at 100 Middlebrooks Ave., Trumbull, CT 06611, (203) 208-3450. Visit our web site at LHBaptist.com. Attend services Sunday at 11:00 AM and 6:00 PM and Wednesday at 7:00 PM.