

## Burn Notice

We hear references to hell a lot these days, although most of the time, it is an unnecessary expletive to enhance some personal expression. It might surprise you that Jesus taught more about hell than He did about heaven in the Scriptures. Jesus issues a burn notice in today's Templates of Truth.

Jesus stressed to His disciples the importance of people not allowing anything to keep them from a committed relationship with God. As dramatic as it sounded, Jesus told them that a person would be better off to go through life without a hand, a foot or an eye (if one of these kept them from committing their life to God) than *to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched* (Mark 9:43-44). Jesus spared no graphic terms in describing the reality of a place called hell.

The Greek word Jesus used for *unquenchable* in this passage is ASBESTOS. It is the word from which we get our modern term for the cancer-causing substance found in some early construction materials before most usage was federally banned by the EPA in 1989. If you ever used an old Bunsen burner in high school lab, you might remember the white mesh material made from asbestos that covered the flame. It would turn bright orange as the flame burned through it, yet never be consumed by it. In Jesus' day, an asbestos cloth was used to wipe hands and mouth during a meal, then be thrown into the fire which would burn off the residue but leave an unscathed clean cloth for the next meal. This is precisely the effect of the flames of hell. One needs only to remember the burning bush experience of Moses (that the bush burned without ever being consumed) to understand the supernatural nature of this unquenchable fire (Exodus 3:2).

It is without question that Jesus used terms in this passage that emphasize the eternal element of the torment and punishment of hell. We often talk about eternal life but many think only of an eternity in heaven. Every person will experience eternal life; the question is WHERE will you live eternally? Those who have surrendered their life to Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior will spend eternity with God in heaven. Those who reject God's offer of salvation will spend eternity separated from God in hell. On that, the Bible is unmistakably clear. Paul declared that Jesus will one day, *in flaming fire, deal out retribution to those who do not know God...and these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord* (II Thessalonians 1:7-9). John was able to catch a glimpse of the future "Lake of Fire" (hell) in the Revelation vision, where he observed that *the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night* (Revelation 14:11). Jesus referenced the *worms* in Mark's passage. Worms invade a decaying body to feed on the rotten flesh. Here, Jesus maintains that the *worm does not die*, meaning that death will be desired by those in hell in order to free them from the torment, but death will never be their relief. The torture is forever!

Fire in Scripture is often associated with God's judgment. Mark quotes Jesus as saying, *For*

*everyone will be salted with fire* (Mark 9:49). One of the key teachings in this verse is that all of us, whether saved or lost, will be touched by the fiery judgment of God. Soon after believers have been raptured into heaven, we will face the Judgment Seat of Christ, where *each man's work will...be revealed with fire; and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work...remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire* (I Corinthians 3:13-15). Here we learn that all which is not acceptable to God must be purged from our life so that we are holy and blameless, suitable for God's holy and righteous heaven.

While many today refuse to accept it and many others don't want to believe it, hell is a real place. Others simply believe that God is too loving, gracious and compassionate to ever send anyone to such an awful place like hell. But, Jesus declared that one day He will say to those who reject Him: *Depart from Me, accursed ones, into eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matthew 25: 41). Jesus has sent forth the burn notice!

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.