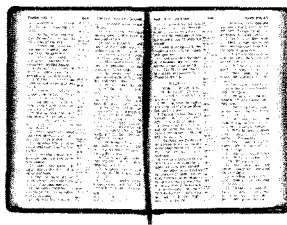


THE INSTRUCTOR



"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16)

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HAVE YOU CLOSED YOUR EYES, STOPPED YOUR EARS AND HARDENED YOUR HEART?

It is obvious that God has given us eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts to understand. Although this is true, many do not see, nor hear nor understand *God's Will* for their lives. Why is this true?

In Mt. 13:14-15 Jesus explained why he spake unto the multitudes in parables. He said: "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross (have grown dull-NKJV) and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them ('and their sins be forgiven them' — Mark 4:12). See Mark 8:14-21; 4:11-12; Acts 28:24-28.

Although many people have closed their eyes and cannot see, Jesus said unto His disciples: "But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear." (Mt. 13:16). Paul desired that "*the eyes*" of the "*understanding*" of the saints be "*enlightened*" that they might know some spiritual things. (Eph. 1:18).

Are you able to *see* and read God's Word? Are you doing so as you should? (See Eph. 3:4; Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27; Rev. 1:3). Are you thankful that you have eyes with which you can see and read the Word of God? Have your eyes been closed to any thing that the Word of God teaches?

Although in times past God told the people to hear His Words, many refused to hear. The Lord said "*They have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not...*" (Ezekiel 12:2).

In Mark 4:9 Jesus said: "*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*" Jesus said to the seven churches in Asia: "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*" (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; Rev. 3:6, 13, 22). In Mark 4:24 Jesus said: "*Take heed what you hear...*" and in Luke 8:18 He said: "*Take heed therefore how ye hear...*"

To have saving *faith* we must *hear* the Word of God. (See Rom. 10:17). We cannot have faith unless we *understand* what God's Word teaches. Inspired men of God wrote it down so *we can read and understand it*. (See Eph. 3:2-6; 2 Tim. 2:7; Proverbs 2:6; Nehemiah 8:7-8).

Our faith must cause us to *obey* the Word. We must *repent* of our sins, *confess* our faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and be *baptized for the remission of sins* so we can be washed in the blood of Christ and become children of God. (See Acts 17:30-31; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:26-27). As God's children we must continue to live and walk by faith! (2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 1:17). We must *worship* and *serve* God according to His Word.

We must never *close our eyes, stop our ears* or *harden our hearts* to anything that God's Word says on any subject. Have *you* closed your eyes or stopped your ears or heartened your heart to any thing God's Word says? (CRS)

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Editorial...

HELL! IS THERE A PLACE OF ETERNAL TORMENT FOR THE WICKED? (No. 33)

In previous studies of Hell, we have been exposing the false teaching that there is no hell of eternal torment for the wicked and those who teach it.

Most, if not all, who teach that there will be no eternal punishing of the wicked, but annihilation (or a ceasing to exist), also deny that man has or possesses a soul. They contend that man is wholly mortal and does not have an eternal soul (or spirit) within the physical body.

Let us resume our consideration of some additional arguments that are made *against* the doctrine of eternal torment of the wicked as taught in the Scriptures.

ARGUMENT XV. "THE CITIES OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH ARE SET FORTH IN THE SCRIPTURES 'AS AN EXAMPLE OF FINAL CONDEMNATION AND THE END OF THE WICKED'. THEY WERE ANNIHILATED. THIS PROVES THAT THE WICKED WILL BE ANNIHILATED AND THUS CEASE TO EXIST."

(A) "...The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven...involved a total destruction with sinners exterminated and their sinful way of life annihilated

forever... The sinners of Sodom are 'set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.' This passage *defines* 'eternal fire.' It is a fire from God which destroys sinners totally and forever." (The Fire That Consumes, pages 282, 287 by William Edward Fudge)

(B) Curtis Dickinson says: "The fire which consumed Sodom and Gomorrah is said to be an 'an eternal fire'. (Jude 7) Yet it is not still burning. It was eternal in the effect, and this, Jude says, is set forth as an example..." (What The Bible Teaches About Immortality And Future Punishment, page 29).

(C) "...the destruction was not only complete but it was 'the vengeance of eternal fire' (Jude 7). This could not mean fire that would be eternally burning, for the cities are not burning today. Rather, this fire would be eternal in its *results*." (Seventh-day Adventists Answers Questions on Doctrine, pages 538, 539).

(D) Homer Hailey (referring to Sodom and Gomorrah) says: "If they serve as an example, what do they teach except that those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire are to exist no more?" (God's Judgements & Punishments, page 142).

(E) Others such as F. LaGard Smith in "After Life...", William West in "The Resurrection and Immortality" and E.E. Franke in ACTS, a publication of the Church of God, 7th Day, March, 1996, also make basically the same argument.

REPLY:

(1) The quotations given above show that "ARGUMENT XV." is often made. Assuming and asserting or simply repeating a thing *does not prove* it to be the truth. We must be careful that we do not go beyond what is written. We must not place a meaning on a passage (or a word) that would pervert the message that God has given us in the Scriptures. It is imperative that we give diligence as we read and consider what the Word of God says. (Cf. 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Corinthians 4:6; Galatians 1:6-9; 1 Peter 4:11; 2 Corinthians 4:2; 2 Corinthians 2:17; Luke 4:4; John 8:31-32; 17:17; 2 John 9-11; 1 John 4:1; Revelation 2:2; 2 Timothy 2:7, etc.).

(2) In our studies of the Scriptures we should always keep in mind that a word may have different meanings as used in different contexts.

(3) It seems that all of the writers whose material I have read on the subject appeal to the account of Sodom and Gomorrah in an effort to

prove the annihilation of the wicked in judgment. As we shall soon see, it is only a claim. Proof is lacking.

(4) Genesis 19:12-29 gives an Old Testament account of the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Please turn to it and read it.

2 Peter 2:6, 9 says: "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly... The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

Jude 7 says: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

NOTE: Since the Scriptures do not tell us that the wicked inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were annihilated, obviously it is wishful thinking on the part of those who make such a claim. Obviously most (if not all) of them have read the writings of men who assume and assert that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were annihilated without any *Scriptural proof* and they began repeating it like a "parrot".

(5) Please read carefully and observantly the above passages and you will see that neither of them nor any other passage in either the Old or New Testament say one word about the *annihilation of the wicked* with "brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven" that "the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah". (See Genesis 19:24).

(6) The above passages (and others that could be cited) do say that "*God destroyed*" (or *overthrew*) the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The word "*overthrew* (*overthrown* or *destroyed*)" does not mean *annihilated*! NOTE: When the Lord "*overthrew*" the Egyptians in the midst of the sea they were "*drown-*

ed" As a result of the "*overthrowing*", "...*Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.*" It is simple. They had died! (See Exodus 14:27; 15:4; Hebrews 11:29; Exodus 14:30). *They were not annihilated!* Similarly, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were "*destroyed*" or "*overthrown*" by the "*brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven.*" (Genesis 19:24; Luke 17:29). *They died!* *They were not annihilated!*

(7) Fudge and Hailey assume that Jude 7 teaches that "*eternal fire*" as mentioned in this verse "... *is a fire from God which destroys sinners totally and forever*" and "*those who suffer the eternal fire are to exist no more.*" NOTE: No proof given! Assumptions and assertions pure and simple!

Neither Fudge nor Hailey *proves* that the "*brimstone and fire*" that overthrew or destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with the inhabitants, etc. was the "*eternal fire*" that Jude 7 mentions. NOTE: The "*brimstone and fire*" that the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah turned them into ashes and condemned them with an overthrow. (See Genesis 19:24-29; Luke 17:29; 2 Peter 2:6). Was that the "*eternal fire*" of Jude 7? Is there a possibility that it is not? Could those cities have been *overthrown, destroyed* and *turned into ashes* by ordinary, temporary fire? Why would "*eternal fire*" have been used?

The only things that were *turned into ashes* were *physical* (or *material*) things. That would include the *physical* bodies, but not the *spirits* (or *souls*) of the wicked inhabitants of Sodom, etc. NOTE: To see that a man consists of a *body* and a *soul* please read and believe the followings passages: Matthew 10:28; Genesis 16:22; 27:16; 35:18; Revelation 6:9; 20:4; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; etc.

(8) Dickinson and Seventh-day Adventists contend (although they do not prove it) that the "*eternal fire*" that *destroyed* (or *overthrew*) Sodom and Gomorrah was *eternal* in its *results* (or in the effect) since it is not still burning. Is there a possibility that that was not

the "eternal fire" of which Jude speaks?

(9) Although the above argument is given to prove that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were *annihilated* when the cities were "*over-thrown*" (*destroyed, turned into ashes*), it is obvious from reading Scriptural texts that such is not the case. Let us consider the following facts.

(A) In the context of Sodom and Gomorrah being destroyed and Lot being delivered, the apostle Peter declares that: "**The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.**" (2 Peter 2:9)

NOTE: The unjust (including those of Sodom and Gomorrah) have been reserved unto the day of judgment to be punished. *They are still in existence!* 2 Peter 2:9 – (ASV) says: "**...and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment.**" Since they are *under punishment* they have not been annihilated! According to Jude 7 they *are* "**...suffering the vengeance of eternal**

fire". This is further evidence that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah that were destroyed by the brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven are still in *existence!* Their bodies were *turned into ashes* and their *souls (or spirits)* are reserved unto the day of judgment. This could not be so if they did not exist. *They are in existence! They were not annihilated!*

(B) Jude 7 (ASV) says: "**...suffering the punishment of eternal fire.**" NOTE: The word "*suffering*" is a *present active participle* and therefore, it refers to something that is now occurring. This proves they were *not annihilated* because *they are still in existence! They are suffering! Believe it!*

(10) Since the unjust including the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah will appear in the day of judgment, *they were not annihilated* when the physical things were *turned into ashes!* (See Matthew 10:15; 11:24; Mark 6:11). (CRS)

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SENTENCE SERMONS

We should let a little sunshine out as well as let it in.

* * * * *

Please remember that blunt words have sharp edges. Watch your speech.

* * * * *

To go to heaven one must carefully study the road map (Scriptures) and follow its directions.

* * * * *

Be careful about how many promises you make, but be careful to keep every one you make.

* * * * *

Christians should be honest, helpful, hopeful and happy. Are you truly a Christian?

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