

Notes, Questions & Prayer Requests

Horizontal lines for notes, questions, and prayer requests.

In fact, this teaching has made more infidels than any other teaching the devil has devised. Robert Ingersoll, after leaving a tent meeting where he heard a preacher expound on the fiery tortures of the damned in hell, looked up into the starry heavens, shook his fist, and said, "God, if there is a God, I hate you!" and went on to become a renowned infidel. Therefore, make your presentation positive in order that the people in your seminar can see the love of God even in the destruction of the wicked.

There are three main points that you will need to emphasize in this lesson:

- 1. Hell is not going on now. It takes place at the end of the 1000 years.
2. Hell fire occurs right here on the earth, not in some subterranean pit in the middle of the earth.
3. Hell will not last throughout all eternity. Avoid using such terms as "hell will not last forever," because someone is apt to quote you Revelation 20:10 before you have had a chance to explain the meaning of "forever" in the Bible. Instead, use such statements as "Hell will not last throughout all eternity."

This third point is the major point to get across. By this time most of your people will have no problem with Points 1 and 2; it is Point 3 that may raise some question. Make certain that you make a very clear Biblical presentation on these points.

Question 2

Even in the book of Daniel the evidence points to the fact that the wicked will be destroyed. Make it clear that Daniel uses strong words—"consume" and "destroy"—to indicate the punishment of the wicked.

Questions 3 to 5

Question 3-5 can be dealt with very quickly. Remember that you are here

vindicating the character of God, showing His love, mercy and justice. God's character is at stake in the charges that have been raised against Him in the teaching of an eternally burning hell. Make certain to emphasize how unjust it would be if God punished some people longer because they were born earlier. The texts in the lesson make it clear that hell takes place at the end of the 1000 years.

Questions 6-8

This section also can be covered very quickly. Just give strong emphasis to the fact that hell happens right here on the earth.

How Long Are the Wicked Punished? Take some time at the beginning of this section to dwell on some of the pictures that have been painted about God. Help them to see the terrible effect of this false teaching about the character of God. People need to see that this is a major distortion of truth. Terrible, heinous things, worse than Hitler's acts, have been charged against God in the name of hell.

The lesson mentions that there are 182 texts in Scripture that speak of hell as annihilation. This is an abundance of evidence. If you would like a list of these texts for your students or for your own information, they are available as part of a little booklet entitled "The Rich Man and Lazarus" available from the North American Division Evangelism Institute, 1120 64th Street, La Grange, Illinois 60525.

Before moving into Question 9 and dealing with several of the positive texts, you will need to undermine the texts that have been used to support the teaching of an eternally burning hell. Exhibit 1 gives a brief explanation of each of those texts.

Two often-used texts should receive extended treatment in your presentation: Revelation 20:10, which speaks of "forever and ever;" and Luke 16:1 9~30, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. If you have used the above-mentioned booklet, "The Rich Man and Lazarus," or something similar, you will not need to spend a lot of time explaining that parable. Instead, refer them to the book. However, you should take time to explain "forever and ever."

LESSON 18

THE FINAL PHASE OF THE JUDGMENT

Answer Key

1. Shame, contempt
2. Consume, destroy
3. Day, judgment
4. End
5. 1000
6. Earth, devoured
7. a. earth, fire b. elements c. burned
8. Heaven, earth
9. Perish
10. a. off b. not c. place
11. a. perish b. fat, lambs c. smoke, consume
12. Burn, up
13. Root, branch
14. Ashes
15. Sodom, Gomorrah
16. Destroy
17. Lake of fire
18. Death
19. Fire, devour, ashes
20. More
21. Death
22. Life, life
23. Died
24. Son

Question 22

This question will continue to give a Christ-centered emphasis to your presentation by showing that the cross of Calvary is the strongest argument there is against the doctrine of an eternally-burning hell. If you have some time left in this seminar, tell in your own words the story of the origin of the pagan doctrine of eternal torment.

Many of your students will already have read that history in Exhibit 2, but some will not have read it. Therefore it is important to go over the material with them so at least they have a brief understanding of how these doctrines came into the church.

You will want to end your seminar by emphasizing the total vindication of the character of God. Head the quotation from **The Great Controversy**. Your appeal should not be to serve God for fear of the fire, but to thank God that while in justice He must destroy sin. He does what only a just and merciful God could do. Yet even here can be seen the love of God. Make certain to end this lesson on the high note of God's love for man and that God gave His Son that we might not perish, but have everlasting life.

Response Questions:

1. If you are thankful that God will not torture people throughout all eternity, but will totally destroy the wicked in the fires of hell, put a check in Box #1.
2. If it is your desire to serve God not out of fear, but because you love Him for what He did on the cross for you, put a check in Box #2.

In addition to the information in the exhibit, you will want to note other texts that use the term “forever” in a relative sense: Exodus 21:6 and Jonah 2:6. In addition, the context of Revelation 20:10 should be pointed out. In Verse 10 the wicked are thrown into the lake of fire forever and ever. Verses 11-15 reiterates what Verse 10 has said, with a little further explanation. In Verse 15 it is again stated that they are thrown into the lake of fire where they burn forever and ever. However, the next verse, Chapter 21:1, indicates that God then creates a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and earth, where the wicked were being punished forever and ever, has passed away. The very context of Revelation 20:10 certainly indicates that it cannot last throughout all eternity.

A modern day illustration may help your students to see clearly the relative usage of the word “forever.” You might use a statement such as: “I went downtown last week to do some shopping. I got caught in a traffic jam and it took me forever to get there.” Obviously you don't mean that you are still going there. That will help your hearers to definitely understand the relative usage of the word “forever.”

After having plainly dealt with each of the objectionable texts, you will want to spend the rest of your time with these unmistakable texts of scripture that indicate the ultimate punishment of the wicked.

Question 9

John 3:16 is the heart of the gospel message. You can point out to your students that right here in this most essential gospel text the teaching of hell is clear.

Question 11

Look up Psalm 37:20. The words are very strong. Give heavy emphasis to this text.

Questions 12 and 14

This is a major text that you will want to look up and emphasize with your students.

Question 15

This is the only Biblical example that we have been given of what hell is like. Clearly, hell is not a place that continues throughout eternity, even as Sodom and Gomorrah did not continue to burn throughout eternity.

Question 16

If there are people in your seminar who have been involved with Herbert Armstrong's teachings, some of them will be in agreement with you on the destruction of the wicked. You should be aware that Armstrong believes that the wicked will be burned up and cease to exist; however, he claims that Satan is a spirit being whom God cannot destroy. Therefore, this section of the lesson needs heavy emphasis if people with an Armstrong background are present. If not, your emphasis in this section of the lesson should be on the ultimate victory of God. Stress that God is going to win the great controversy battle and that God will forever destroy Satan.

Question 18

Point out that the fires of hell result in death. You have already defined death as a state in which people know nothing. Therefore, if hell results in death, the wicked will know nothing.

Question 19

The entire chapter of Ezekiel 28 is addressed to the king of Tyre. Obviously, it is not merely the king of Tyre that is inferred here, but the king of Tyre is given as a symbol of Satan. While you will not have to spend a lot of time on this point unless you are questioned, you should at least be aware that some people may think it is referring only to the king of Tyre and not to Satan.

The point is that the text clearly indicates that a person greater than the literal king of Tyre is involved here. Verse 13 indicates that he was in Eden, the garden of God. Unmistakably the king of Tyre was not there. He is called the covering cherub in Verse 14, which would indicate that he is an angel.

Verse 14 states that he was also in the holy mountain of God. All of these points make it clear that this is not merely referring to the king of Tyre, but that this is symbolism referring to the arch rebel, Satan.

Question 20

You will want to express real enthusiasm on this point. It is exceedingly good news to the righteous that the wicked will no longer be. This question should be given strong emphasis. You will want to look up the text and even read the note. The students need to see that the punishment for sin is not hell fire, but death. If the fire does not result in death, then it is not the punishment for sin.

Question 21

You also need to give strong emphasis to this text. Look up 1 John 5:11, 12 with your students. Help them to see clearly that life eternal is available only in Christ. Giving strong emphasis here will make your presentation of hell very Christ-centered.