

# The Grace of God



"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us..." (Titus 2:11-12).

Oct. 14, 2007 (Vol. 7)

## FIRST PRINCIPLES: ETERNAL JUDGMENT

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Concluding our study of "the rudiments of first principles of the oracles of God" (Heb. 5:12-13), we now look at the topic of eternal judgment.

There are those in this world who do not believe in eternal judgment, only in eternal reward. They cannot imagine a God who is so "cruel" and "unloving" that He would torment any of His creation for all eternity. They cannot fathom why we would care to believe in such a Deity that would be so vicious and mean.

Let us ask a question: How do they reach their conclusions about God? They pass over what is plainly revealed in the word of God and follow after their own imaginations and opinions. They do not have faith in what God says about eternal judgment, but follow after what appeals to their own wisdom. Let us turn from the fanciful dreams of the erring to what God has spoken on this subject.

Jesus gave a parable, which illustrated the final judgment in Matt. 25:1-46. In this, He speaks of how the nations will be separated one from another based upon their conduct. Those that were good He rewarded with "eternal life" (v. 46). Those that were evil He condemned to "eternal punishment" (v. 46); which He describes as "eternal fire" (v. 41).

The question we need to focus on is: "How long will **eternal** life last?" When that is answered, then you will know how long "eternal punishment" and "eternal fire" will last. For the same word "eternal" is used to describe both the reward and the punishment. One will last just as long as the other.

I make this point because some try to play with what the word "punishment" means. They say that punishment is annihilation or "ceasing to be". They teach that the state of not existing anymore will be an "eternal punishment". But consider again what punishment is. Punishment means that one will experience "**eternal fire**" (v. 41). If the unfaithful cease to be, then they will cease to be punished - they will in fact experience no fire at all (if this perspective were true). Surely we can see that the Lord is describing eternal suffering; which demands eternal existence.

Please note that this eternal existence in punishment is never described as "life". It is the opposite of eternal life, for it is eternal death. Eternal life is a life of unending joy in the presence of God, without sorrow, tears or suffering (Rev. 21:3-4). Eternal death is the **unending separation** "from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might" (2 Thess. 1:8-9). If the unfaithful cease to be, then they are not away "**from** the face of the Lord" because they are no where! To be away **from** anything, you have to be somewhere!

Again, Jesus warned of the danger of committing sin and being condemned when He spoke of those who face "**unquenchable** fire" where "the worm dieth not and the fire is **not quenched**" (Mark 9:44, 48). Does that sound like a cessation of existence? No. Instead it is where nothing may quench the fire that burns (not water, not time, not cessation of existence). And nothing ends the process of

decay and corruption (the worm). **What a horrible place to go to!**

In another scripture it is described as "the lake of fire and brimstone" (Rev. 20:10). It is a place where those who are not written in the book of life were cast (20:15). Note also "they shall be **tormented** day and night for ever and ever" (20:10). Does that sound like a cessation of existence? If you cease to be, how can you be tormented?

Friends, we may wish there were no Hell, but God tells us there is. We may not understand how a loving God could create such a place, but then we are not God. This only shows that we do not understand God. The Bible tells us that God is loving, but also HOLY (1 Pet. 1:16; Heb. 10:31; Rom. 11:22). The Bible gives examples of how **His holiness requires reverence and demands respect** (Lev. 10:1-3; 1 Chron. 13:9-10; 15:12-15).

Indeed, if there is no Hell, then what does that say about God's holiness? And, if there is no Hell, then Christ's death is lessened in value. For wicked men can bear with ceasing to be... it is literally "no sweat" off their back. But if there is a place of eternal sorrow, then God's holiness demands our attention. **And Christ's death is seen to be the single most urgent and loving call to the lost of all ages!** Friend, take it seriously when God says that Hell exists. For, believe

it or not, you will one day face its reality. Do not wait until it is too late to avoid it (2 Cor. 5:10-11a)!

**PEOPLE TO REMEMBER & PRAY FOR**

**Sawyer Sims, Johanna Fletcher, Othena Kinnard** (Bone marrow transplant soon), **Wesley Geer, Mag Bumbalough, Thelma Cunningham** (Address on the board), **Mary Cox, Monie Petty, Dave Poteet & Marilyn Poteet-Langford** (NHC 230), **Robert & Betty England, Joe Smith, Thelma Klein, Nathan Hill, DeLeesa Price, Lydia Poe, Larry Bumbalough, Jake Hale, Joshua & Misty Poteet, Ed & Carolyn Williams, Kenley Streeval, Matthew Taylor** (leukemia), **Joyce Simmons Wagner.**

**THINGS TO REMEMBER**

- **Radio Program** - Every Sun. 2pm, AM 1050 WSMT
- **Home Bible Study** - Sat. Oct. 27<sup>th</sup>.
- **Ladies Class** - 2nd & Last Sunday Each Month.
- **Business Meeting** - Sun. Oct. 28<sup>th</sup>.
- **GM** - Raymond Castillo, Oct.14-19, 2007.
- **GM** - Ron Daly, April 2008.
- **GM** - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

*We Invite You To All Our Services!*

Sunday @ 9am, 10am & 6pm  
Wednesday @ 7pm

<http://frontiernet.net/~nscoc>  
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*Remember Our Meeting!*

This week!  
Make time!  
Bring friends!

***North Sparta church of Christ***

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