

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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### Annihilation

Some believe that all retribution for sin is in this life; others that the wicked may be punished after death for a while, but hell eventually will be emptied; others hold that the wicked cease to exist at death and this is their punishment. These false doctrines stem from a misunderstanding of some terms in the New Testament. The New Testament does not teach the "destruction for sin means non-existence." When the word *destroy* is used the meaning is not annihilation, though some people insist on giving it this meaning. A study of some passages will clear up the misconception.

The word most frequently used is translated by the following: destruction, waste, perdition, perish, die, damnable, pernicious ways, and damnation. Jesus speaks of "the broad way that leads to destruction" (Matthew 7:13). "Destructive heresies" is the label Peter uses to refer to the teachings of false prophets (2 Peter 2:1). The ointment used on Jesus was said to be a "waste" (Matthew 26:8; Mark 14:4). Judas is referred to as the "son of perdition" (John 17:12). There are lusts which "drown men in perdition" (1 Timothy 6:9). The unbelieving "shrink back to perdition" (Hebrews 10:39). The following passages can be read with profit with reference to the meaning of destroy: Romans 9:22; Philippians 3:19; 2 Peter 3:16; 1:28; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; 2 Peter 3:7; 2:2-3; Revelation 17:8, 11; Acts 8:30; 25:16. You should read these passages, keeping in mind the words which translate the Greek term meaning destroy.

There are four other Greek words that are also translated destroy. They occur in passages that shed light on the controversy under view. When people are least expecting it, then will swift destruction come (1 Thessalonians 5:3). At the final judgment, the wicked face the "punishment of eternal destruction" and exclusion from the presence of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 1:9). "For the destruction of the flesh," a wayward member of the church is delivered to Satan (1 Corinthians 5:5). A Christian's weapons are not worldly, but are powerful to the "casting down (destroying) strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4). The same word destroy or casting down occurs in 2 Corinthians 10:8. There Paul says that the gospel preached by him was for edification and not "destruction." He also said his authority from the Lord was for building up and

not for "tearing down (destroying)" (2 Corinthians 13:10). Wine skins are said "to perish" when burst (Matthew 9:17).

On the other hand, Jesus was sent to the "lost (destroyed) sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). The prodigal son was "lost (destroyed) but was found" (Luke 15:24-25). These uses of the word destroy show that one is not justified in saying that the word means "annihilation." When dealing with the meaning of any word, one must be careful not to assign a meaning to it exclusive of other meanings it can and does have. The principal meaning is "ruin or loss of well being." We would be far from the truth to say that when a thing is destroyed it ceases to exist.

### Life and Death

Life and death are terms which have opposite meanings. There can be as many deaths as there are lives. If there is animal life, there is animal death. If there is vegetable life, there is vegetable death. If there is spirit life, there is spirit death. It is possible to be both dead and alive (John 5:25). The dead were to bury the dead (Matthew 8:22; Luke 9:60). One can pass from death to life (1 John 3:14). The mind of the flesh is death and the mind of the spirit is life (Romans 8:6). The end of sin is death (Romans 6:21). Some widows can be dead while living (1 Timothy 5:6). The animal death of a person does not mean he ceases to be. It is erroneous to conclude that eternal death and eternal life mean eternal non-being and eternal being respectively. The eternal prefixed to either death or life does not indicate their nature, but their continuance. The succeeding paragraphs will show this in more detail. Man possesses animal life, and when he is severed from animal life, he experiences animal death. A corpse is not a man nor is wood a tree. There is vegetable life; likewise, there is vegetable death. Since there is spirit life, there is also spirit death.

### Minds

It is possible to be both dead and alive. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but has passed out of death unto life" (John 5:24). When a person passes from death into life, he still lives physically. But before he was made alive he was dead. But while dead he was physically alive. Life and death then do not refer only to animal existence and animal non-existence respectively. When so defined life and death, he finds himself in contradictions from which he cannot extricate himself.

Jesus admonished some people to let the dead bury the dead (Matthew 8:22; Luke 9:60). This demonstrates that death and life are used in more than one sense in the

Bible. Paul says that the mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the spirit is life and peace (Romans 8:6). Concerning their former life, Paul put this question to the Romans: "What fruit then had ye at that time in the things whereof ye are now ashamed?" The apostle then declared, "For the end of these things is death" (Romans 6:21). There is a death then which does not refer to severance from animal life.

Widows who leave their pledge and wax wanton against Christ are dead while living (1 Timothy 5:6). Adam and Eve died when they ate of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:17).

### Eternal Life and Eternal Death

The expression eternal life occurs forty-four times in the New Testament. Eternal prefixed to life or death indicates duration and not nature. The second death is said by some to be non-existence. This is absurd. These people tell us that the first death is to cease to be. They say, "we are not." But if death is a cessation of being, then the second death would be a second non-existence. What absurdity! Jesus contrasts the two deaths. How could this be if destroy simply means ceasing to exist?

Eternal life is not simply existence. Paul gives this picture of it in Romans 2:7 — "to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life." Eternal death will be wrath, indignation, tribulation, and anguish (Romans 2:8-9).

That it is possible for two spirit beings to be in different states is clearly shown by the fallen angels. The angels that sinned were cast out of heaven and have been committed to pits of darkness (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). Michael and his angels were righteous; the devil and his angels are wicked. They both exist but in totally different states which are regarded on the basis of their conduct. This shows that it will be possible for the spirits of men to exist in different states. The righteous in glory and the wicked in torment. Jesus called the states eternal life and eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46).

"There is a punishment sorer than death," physical (Hebrews 10:29). A man who set at naught Moses' law died when convicted, but those who reject Christ will suffer worse punishment. It could not be simply animal death for that would be no worse than the punishment under the law of Moses. The eternal punishment is hell (Matthew 10:28).

- Clinton D. Hamilton, via Truth Magazine, June, 2009

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# Buy the Truth

"Buy truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding." (Proverbs 23:23)

God's book of wisdom directs a man to obtain truth, wisdom, instruction and understanding. Here he is told to buy truth. The idea is to pay any price in order to obtain it; no price is too high! When one comes to a correct understanding of the preciousness, the superior value of truth, he will gladly sacrifice in order to get it. Not only that, but he will retain superior regard for it such that under no circumstances will he sell it. There does not exist a high enough offer to induce him to depart with it.

The four treasures mentioned, truth, wisdom, instruction and understanding, form the foundation of every righteous life. Solomon's book certainly depicts the precious parents as diligent instructors, cultivating the heart's fertile ground for the most ideal reception. The son must never forget the great value of truth, exchanging it for things of drastically lesser value. He must not be enticed away from wisdom's standard into the thoughts and practices of immoral sinners that he will contact in society.

Generally, the purchaser works and sacrifices to meet the purchase price. This is illustrated by the "merchant seeking fine pearls," who, "upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it." (Matthew 13:45-46). However, in a great oxymoron of Scripture, the precious blessing can only be bought without price (Isaiah 55:1). Notice: "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost." This prophetic announcement gave Israel hope for restoration. The figure stretches all the way through Scripture as the call of the gospel of Christ has been heralded by a gracious God: "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost." (Revelation 22:17).

Certainly, the offer of highest blessing for man comes from his gracious Creator. Yes, salvation is free, paid for by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:7; Romans 5:9). But at the same time, man is admonished to buy it, to "come" and "take the water of life". This invitation is from "God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

- Gary Smalley

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- \* "Get out of WordPerfect and get into God's perfect Word!"
  - \* "Give all to Christ, He gave all for you!"
  - \* "Give others a piece of your heart, not a piece of your mind!"
  - \* "God comforts the disturbed and disturbs the comfortable!"
  - \* "Have no fear in tomorrow. Jesus is already there!"
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# ***What Must I Do To Be Saved?***

## **HEAR THE GOSPEL**

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

## **BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST**

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

## **REPENT OF PAST SINS**

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

## **CONFESS CHRIST**

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

## **BE BAPTIZED**

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

## **LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE**

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)