

THE LAKE OF FIRE

by Henry M. Morris*

The subject of hell is seldom taught or preached these days, even in fundamentalist churches. Most people believe that hell is only for monsters of wickedness such as Adolph Hitler, not for themselves. A recent authoritative poll found that:

“Majorities of about two-thirds of all adults believe in hell and the devil, but hardly anybody expects that they will go to hell themselves.”¹

But they are wrong! Most people will go to hell. Jesus Christ said so!

I don't like to say such a thing, and would not dare to except for the fact that Jesus Christ said it, and people desperately need to know how *not* to go to hell. After all, it was He who said that a place of “*everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*” would also be the place of the “*everlasting punishment*” of multitudes of people (Matthew 25:41,46) in an age to come.

This place of everlasting fire is also called “*the lake of fire.*” Wherever and whatever it is, hell will not be located on (or in) the earth. This present earth is to be destroyed by fire (II Peter 3:10) and to have “*fled away*” (Revelation 20:11) before God creates the new heavens and the new earth. Since the “*beast*” and the “*false prophet*” are said to be cast into the lake of fire *before* this earth's destruction, whereas Satan is said to be thrown

into it *after* that destruction (Revelation 19:20; 20:10), the fiery lake must be located away from the earth. One suggestion is that it could be somewhere on a star (after all, stars are actually vast lakes of fire) far, far away from the earth.

More important than its location will be its occupants. The “*devil and his angels*” will be there, Jesus said, but also all those men and women whose names are “*not found written in the book of life*” (Revelation 20:15).

And who are these? “*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death*” (Revelation 21:8).

Probably most “good people” would agree that “*murderers, and whore-mongers*” deserve hell,—but “*the fearful, and unbelieving, . . . and all liars*”? Would that not include just about everyone?

In the antediluvian world, we are told that “*all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth*” (Genesis 6:12). During the period of God's greatest blessings in Israel, that wisest of men, Solomon, had to acknowledge that “*there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not*” (Ecclesiastes 7:20). The apostle Paul agreed that “*there is none*

*Dr. Henry Morris is Founder and President Emeritus of ICR.

that doeth good, no, not one” (Romans 3:12). And even Christ Himself said that “there is none good but one, that is, God” (Mark 10:18). “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil” (Habakkuk 1:13), and so cannot allow even one unforgiven sin into heaven. It begins to look as if the lake of fire will have many, many occupants after all!

There is a way to escape hell, of course, but not many people are willing to go that way. None other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself said that “narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14). At the same time, He said also that “broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat” (Matthew 7:13).

Please note that the man who said these things was not only the God who created all of us, but also the one who has provided the way out of escape from hell, and who will be our final Judge—and He has said that most people will stay on the broad road leading to the lake of fire! Most of these undoubtedly will be men and women who assume they are “good” and are not expecting to go to hell when they die. But consider several specific categories of people who are in such danger.

(1) First there are those who don’t believe in hell, or any religion at all?

“According to recent surveys, 39 percent of Americans—111 million of us—belong to no church, synagogue, mosque, or other religious institution . . . an unprecedented 14 percent of Americans tell pollsters that they are atheists, agnostics, secular humanists, or simply disinterested in religion. That’s about 40 million Americans. . . .”²

That’s in America! In Europe, the percentages of those who don’t believe would be greater. These people are all

headed for hell, because Jesus said: “if ye believe not that I am He, [that is, God], ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psalm 14:1, 53:1; also note Romans 1:22).

(2) Then, there are the billions of people who believe in false religions. Many are “good” people. Nevertheless they are all lost and bound for hell. They all reject Christ and “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Remember that Jesus Himself said: “I am the way, . . . no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Most of them know His claims and have either rejected or ignored them. Those who follow the Koran, for example, know that, even though Mohammed accepted Christ as a prophet, he denied repeatedly that He was the unique Son of God, that He died for our sins, and that He rose from the dead. Jesus said: “. . . he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). Mohammed therefore is a lost sinner, and so are all those who believe him rather than God in Christ.

(3) There are also many who profess to be Christians but will eventually be sent to the lake of fire. “And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy [that is, not only from the final book of the Bible, but in context, the words of Scripture as a whole], God shall take away his part out of the book of life . . .” (Revelation 22:19). In addition to these sober words of warning to those who would tamper with the inspired words of the Bible, it was also Jesus who said: “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? . . . and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew

you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22–23).

We might well ask as did the disciples when Jesus said that it was “*easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. . . . Who then can be saved?*” (Matthew 19:24–25). The fact is, however, as Jesus said: “*With God all things are possible*” (Matthew 19:26).

God has made our salvation possible and easily available through the incarnation, substitutionary sacrifice for our sins, and glorious victory over death in the bodily resurrection, of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. What we could never earn by good works, He has provided as a free gift! “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 3:23–24).

“*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*” (Acts 16:31). Paul calls this magnificent offer “*the glorious gospel of the blessed God*” (I Timothy 1:11), so how could anyone refuse such a gift of divine love?

But aren’t there other ways to be saved? What about Buddhism and Islam and other philosophical systems that seem to make good sense? No: “*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*” (Proverbs 14:12).


As Paul pointed out long ago to the intellectuals at Athens, all such questions should have been settled by the bodily resurrection of Christ. “*God . . . now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead*” (Acts 17:30–31).

Only Jesus Christ, of all men who ever lived, has shown that He has the power to defeat our greatest enemy, death. Therefore, He is God, and we will do well to believe both His warnings and His promises. Would anyone dare call Him a liar by insisting on some other way? There could be no greater sin, and those who commit this sin will undoubtedly remember it forever there in their fiery prison.

But what about those who have never heard about the Savior and His great gift of love? The fact is *everyone* knows enough to be saved, if he will act on the light he has. Jesus Christ, the Creator is “*the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*” For those who will act on whatever light they have—whether in the evidence of creation or the witness of conscience or whatever remnants of truth may have been preserved in their particular religion—then God will presumably send whatever additional light is needed to enable belief unto salvation. The Scriptures provide the experience of Cornelius as a case in point (Acts 10). Most men, however, fail to act on whatever light they may have, and God says they are “*without excuse*” (Romans 1:20).

No doubt some receive more light than others and the Bible teaches that there will be degrees of reward in heaven and degrees of punishment in hell (note, for example, Luke 12:42–48), but the one great divide between heaven and hell is one’s response to Christ’s great sacrifice and gift of love. “*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*” (John 3:36).

Endnotes

1. “Harris Poll,” The Religious and Other Beliefs of Americans 2003, *Skeptical Inquirer* (vol. 27. July/August 2003), p. 5.
2. Promotional Brochure for the Council for Secular Humanism. 

DO THE DOCTRINES OF CREATION AND RESURRECTION REINFORCE EACH OTHER?

by John D. Morris, Ph.D.

Without a doubt the two greatest “miracles” of all time are the Creation of all things in six days and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

That creation occurred by the hand of the Creator is so “clearly seen,” the Bible tells us, one is “without excuse” if he rejects it (Romans 1:20). Meanwhile, testimony to the resurrection was given by a multitude of witnesses and “many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3). Presentation of the evidence for both, forms the backbone of any apologetic effort. It stands to reason that they would be interrelated, attributed to the same source, and require the same great power.


Consider, first of all, the creation of life—plant, animal, and man. Life possesses unfathomable complexity, on every scale, at every level. This design extends to every part and the combination of parts into the whole. Furthermore, the origin of every process that life performs exceeds the reach of purely natural sources. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the process of reproduction, where a new living entity emerges. Surely a *living*, supernatural Creator stands behind them all.

The apex of God’s creation was reached when “God created man in His own image” (Genesis 1:27). Initially, “the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground,” of the same chemicals from which He had made the plants and animals, but then He “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). Animals also possess breath, but, man’s “breath” and “soul” came directly from his Creator as life was imparted.

We rightly acknowledge God as Creator of all, but it behooves us to remember that while all three persons of the Godhead were involved, it was Jesus Christ, God’s “dear Son: In whom we have redemption through His blood” (Colossians 1:13–14) actually doing the work, for “all things were created by Him, and for Him” (v. 16).

On the cross, Jesus Christ willingly dismissed His spirit once His work was “finished” (John 19:30). Furthermore, after three days in the grave, He chose to take His life back again. As He told His disciples, “I have power to lay [my life] down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:18)—an empty claim from the lips of any but the Creator. As the Creator and giver of life, He has the authority to do as He chooses.

Some think it of no value to give evidences for either creation or the resurrection, claiming evidence would do away with the need for faith. But Christ taught otherwise. After He had returned from the dead, He appeared to His disciples. Thomas, who was not present said, “Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails [i.e., the evidence] . . . I will not believe” (John 20:25). Eight days later Jesus again appeared to them, including Thomas, to whom He said, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands [i.e., ‘come see the evidence’] . . . be not faithless, but believing” (v. 27).

Evidence for creation and the resurrection is persuasive and real. It is not a substitute for faith, but rather shows the doubter the reasonableness of faith, and becomes an impetus for the believer to grow ever stronger in his faith. 



© 2004 by ICR • All Rights Reserved

Single copies 10¢ • Order from: **INSTITUTE FOR CREATION RESEARCH**

P.O. Box 2667, El Cajon, CA 92021 • Available for download on our website (www.icr.org).