BIBLE TRUTH OR PAGAN SCARE?



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Admitting that dead bodies are placed in graves, some people will contend that the wicked have souls that go to a place of fiery torment. If true, then man has an immortal, nondestructible something, called a soul, that is separate and distinct from his body. But the Bible does not say that at all. It does not say in Genesis 2:7, or any other place, that God *gave* man a soul. Rather, it says that God *made* man a soul. Man therefore *is* a soul; he does not *have* a soul separate and distinct from his body. Now the Bible is very definite and positive in saying that the soul can die. It is not immortal. Twice in Ezekiel (18:4, 20) it says, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Adam was made a soul; Adam sinned; Adam died. We are souls; we sin; we die. Why, even a perfect soul dies.

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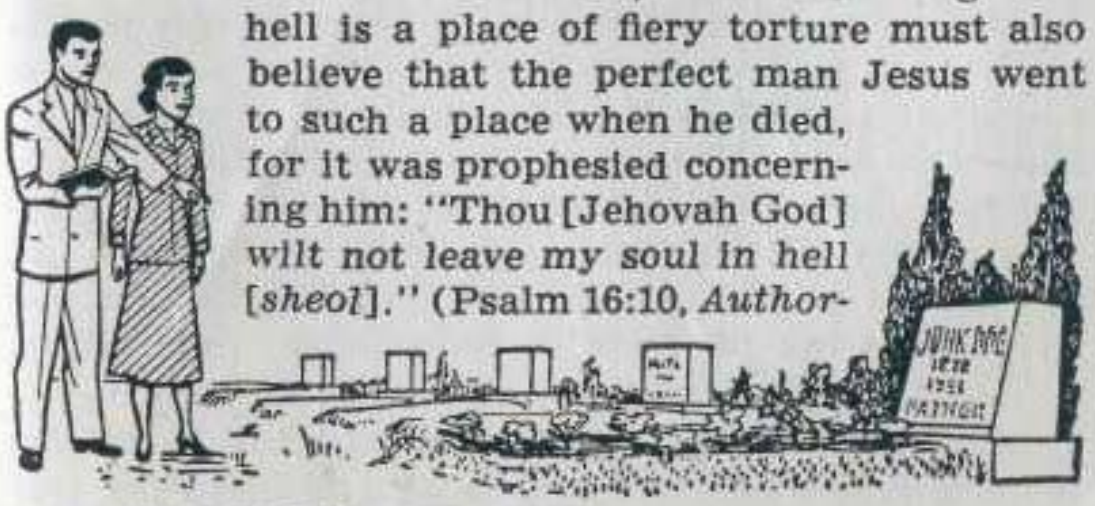
No one would be so foolish as to think that beasts of the field have immortal souls that go to hell or purgatory when they die. The Bible shows that they, like men, are living souls that just cease to live, just perish, at the time of death. This is sinful man's destiny too, as it is written: "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; and man hath no pre*eminence above the beasts: for all is vanity. All go* unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."—Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20; see also Genesis 1:30, *margin;* Numbers 31:28.

To be consistent, those believing that hell is a place of fiery torture must also believe that the perfect man Jesus went to such a place when he died, for it was prophesied concerning him: "Thou [Jehovah God] wilt not leave my soul in hell [*sheol*]." (Psalm 16:10, *Author-*



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Everlasting Punishment for Wicked

Human courts of justice impose the death penalty, not torture, for the worst of crimes. God's justice is no less than man's. He is no fiend or sadist. He too decrees the death penalty, not torture, for the incorrigibly wicked, "everlasting cutting-off" from life, with no possibility of a resurrection. (Matthew 25:46) A fitting symbol, therefore, of such eternal destruction was the garbage dump in the deep valley outside Jerusalem, called *Gehenna*. In no sense was that place a symbol of torture, for no living animal or criminal was put in there; only material destined for complete annihilation. Consequently, when God tells the wicked they are in danger of going to *Gehenna* instead of *sheol* or *hades* (the common grave), it is the strongest warning that such are doomed to complete, everlasting and total destruction, a cutting off from all hope of a resurrection.



VALLEY OF HINNOM (GEHENNA)

In Bible times jailers were called "tormenters". Hence, when the Scriptures say that the Devil and his crowd will be tormented "day and night for ever and ever", it means they will be bound and re-

strained in the perpetual captivity of death. (Matthew 18:34; Revelation 14:10, 11; 20:10) Such symbolic language does not mean conscious suffering at all, for the "lake of fire", into which they are hurled, is defined in the same chapter thus: "This means the second death, the lake of fire." The faithless and filthy, the murderers, fornicators, idolaters and all liars have the same destiny, and "their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur. This means the second death".—Revelation 20:14, 15; 21:8.

And so by laying aside preconceived ideas and traditions of men and letting God's Word be our teacher, we are able to learn the truth about this very important subject.

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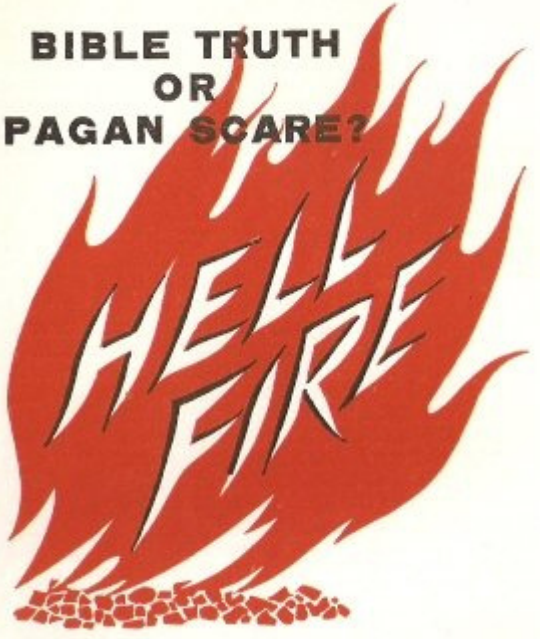

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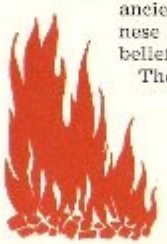

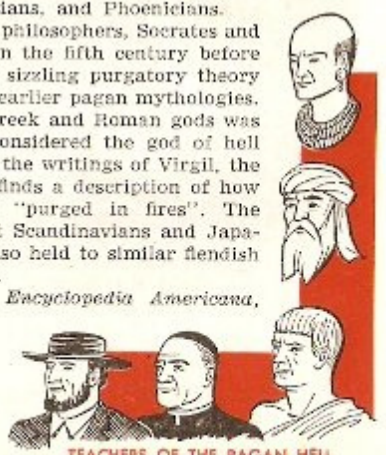

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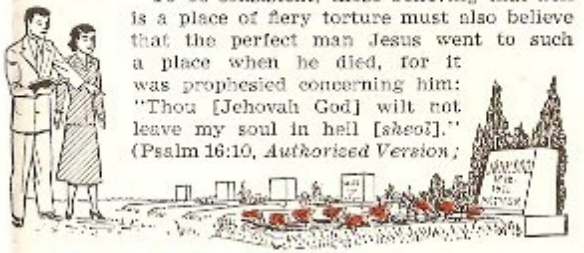

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