

# Healing Hereafter: Quick-read Version

(For briefly examining nearly all the questions and conclusions found in Booklet 6.

Please explore the Full Version of this booklet for a more thorough discussion and extensive biblical and scholarly evidence validating the summaries below.)

## **Booklet 6: Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones, but Words Will Never Hurt Me**

### **Chapter 1**

Our exploration of human suffering transitions us to a focus on Hell, especially on the length of time a human would be there to experience it. We start with a list of the five main arguments used to propose a Hell that is not eternal. First we investigate whether or not everyone goes to Heaven, as that plays a critical role in how long people are in Hell. By understanding the original audience and literary context of many biblical passages that comment on the inhabitants of Heaven, we find that it is made available to all, but will only be inhabited by some—those who persistently demonstrate a desire for God's salvation through Jesus of eternal community with him before the day arrives when every human's eternal fate is realized.

### **Chapter 2**

The second argument is what the words "eternal" and "forever" literally mean in the New and Old Testaments. Derivatives of the Greek root word *aion* are the terms primarily translated as the span of time referring to eternity in the New Testament, and we objectively peruse several Greek dictionaries to examine all our options for valid definitions. The discrepancies between these and the definitions

offered by people who argue for a temporary Hell are recognized, and we realize how subjectively adding to, changing, or omitting expertly recognized meanings for *aion*—or any word—is dangerous and doesn't bestow any practical benefit anyway. From our unaltered dictionary options, we find that it is impossible for *aion* to be definitively temporary when describing Hell. To determine whether *aion*'s potential transience is plausible in these cases, we learn about another Greek word denoting a span of time that is definitively temporary and is used by Jesus specifically to highlight the difference between its finite nature and *aion*'s infinite nature. The biblical adoption of the definitions of *aion* consistent with endlessness is further confirmed by the intentional use of a uniquely repetitive representation of *aion* to describe Hell multiple times in the Bible. As this same particular representation of *aion* is used to describe both Heaven and God—but nothing else—we conclude that when *aion* is applied to Hell, the intended definition is clearly and consistently forever.

### **Chapter 3**

This leads us to explore whether that forever involves conscious individuals or people who inevitably cease to exist sometime after arriving there. We survey biblical descriptions of those in Hell and find that many of their situations only apply to those who continue to exist. We question the practicality of an eternal Hell that eventually contains no inhabitants, and then we explore arguments offered in support of the cessation of existence in Hell. The notions that the opposite of eternal life equals annihilation, that the destruction of individuals equals annihilation, and that the biblical phrase "second death" equals annihilation are evaluated. By assessing the expertly recognized definitions of these terms, exploring the logical consequences of these claims, and putting them within their literary context, we discover that none of these notions remain persuasive, instead

opposing several biblical passages definitively stating the contrary. But we also are assured that a conscious, eternal Hell is not the end of God's commentary on the topic, nor is it the end he desires for any individual.

## **Chapter 4**

We complete our linguistic study of forever by learning about *olam*, the primary Hebrew word translated to denote an indefinite span of time in the Old Testament. By reviewing its dictionary definitions we find that it is associated with a sense of uncertainty. This is reflected in the Old Testament's non-specific description of the afterlife, one we would expect without the historical context of Jesus to make sense of Hell or Heaven. This allows *olam* to be used to refer to different lengths of time, from only a few days to forever. However, it is never directly applied to the concept of Hell. Nonetheless, those who argue for a temporary Hell use this Old Testament term to claim that authors of both the Old and New Testaments never intended Hell to be forever. We verify that this is biblically and logically inconsistent, reaffirming *olam*'s inapplicability to the longevity of Hell. Alternatively, we discover another Hebrew term translated as forever that always means eternal and has no connotation of uncertainty, and we highlight the places it does refer to Hell in the Old Testament.

## **Chapter 5**

Then we address the third of the five main arguments for a temporary Hell: that people are only there until they overcome their arrogance or sin and repent, experiencing a conversion similar to what we are familiar with during physical life. We closely inspect the narrative told by Jesus on which this argument is based and unveil that the text has virtually nothing to say about either arrogance or conversion in Hell. In fact, it doesn't even take place in Hell, although it is a place

adequately comparable to Hell for the purposes of the discussion. We see how the argument for a temporary Hell in this story relies heavily on assuming several additional qualities about the characters that the text itself speaks against. It also requires omitting the inescapability of Hell clearly taught by the story and the unanimous agreement of the characters on this teaching. We conclude that the words and actions of people experiencing the predicament of those headed for Hell provides a very strong argument against a temporary Hell.

## **Chapter 6**

The word "Hell" itself is the topic of interest in the fourth of the five arguments for it being temporary. The claim is that those who heard Jesus speak about Hell—or Gehenna as it is called in Greek—would have understood it as a trash heap outside Jerusalem that symbolized an unpleasant transient experience, but not a final place of punishment. Assuming this is what Jesus' audience did think of Gehenna, the only way people would end up there is in the form of a corpse, which is anything but a transient transition. More importantly, upon examining the single source of evidence suggesting that Gehenna is a trash heap, we discover that under the most lenient circumstances, we can only conclude it was Jerusalem's landfill no earlier than 1200AD. And after consulting multiple experts on biblical literature, Jewish literature, Palestinian geography, and archeology, as well as a secular Jewish historian from the first century, we find no evidence that Gehenna was ever a trash heap at all, especially in Jesus' day. Instead, we learn that this argument relies on a subjectively inaccurate perception of the Bible's original audience, as it neither acknowledges nor accounts for Jesus' repeated warnings that Gehenna is an eternal place or the Old Testament's continual descriptions of Gehenna as a perpetual punishment of evil, both concepts that were clearly familiar to the ancient Jews. By objectively adopting literary, scientific, historical, and biblical information

about Gehenna, we end up with a more responsible and rational understanding of the original biblical audience's understanding of Hell and therefore of Hell itself.