

# SEED & BREAD

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BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

## THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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### WHAT DOES "DESTRUCTION" MEAN?

In Philippians 3:19 we come face to face with the positive assertion of Paul concerning certain men, whom he describes as "**the enemies of the cross of Christ,**" saying that their "**end is destruction.**" This is such a positive declaration concerning the nature of future punishment that it at once forces the truth seeker to ask the question that forms the title of this study: "What Does Destruction Mean?"

If the Bible is searched in its entirety in order to find all that it discloses concerning future punishment, the searcher will find that again and again he will come upon such words as "destroy," "destruction," and "perish." If he checks these words out in the Greek he will find that they are translations of the word **apollumi** (Strong's word No. 622, and EGC page 74), or a word derived from this, **Apoleia** (Strong's word No. 684, EGC page 79). *Apollumi* is found 92 times in the New Testament where it is translated "perish" 33 times, "destroy" 26, "lose" 22, "be lost" 5, "lost" 4, "be marred" 1, "dies" 1. *Apoleia* is found 20 times and is translated "perdition" 8 times, "destruction" 5, "waste" 2, and "damnable," "damnation," "to die," "perish," "pernicious way," one time each.

This variety of meanings reveals the indecision of the translators as to the meaning of these closely related words. And while it is true that these words may have more than one meaning, depending on the context, the student will soon realize that "**destroy**" and "**perish**" represent their strongest possible meaning, and the word "lost" represents its weakest possible usage. Investigation of writings outside of the Bible will reveal that certain expositors have determined that the weakest meaning of this word is its true meaning, that it means to be lost, a condition from which men can be saved.

It will also be found that those who insist on this weakest possible meaning are advocates of some doctrine of universal salvation, restoration, or reconciliation. Since *apollumi* is translated by some form of "lose" about 31 times in the New Testament, they insist that all it signifies is a lost condition. They fail to see that this meaning cannot be given to its many much stronger occurrences in the Greek scriptures.

When one comes upon a plethora of translations of a single word such as *apollumi*, the student will sense the ambivalence of the translators, and this causes him to hope that there is in Scripture some clear-cut usage of this word that will give him clear direction as to its meaning, especially when applied to men. Having made the search, I know that there is in Scripture a usage of *apo/lumi* that provides clear information concerning the strongest meaning and usage of this word.

In 1 Corinthians 15: 18, where *apollumi* is translated "**are perished**" we find an occurrence where we can drive down a stake and begin to take measurements from this point. The subject of this portion in both text and context is the resurrection of the dead, and the importance of resurrection is emphasized by Paul's declaration that if the dead do not rise, "then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." Thus, from God's Word we learn that apart from resurrection the state of the dead is not one of heavenly bliss, it is one of destruction. Therefore, *apollumi* is the word used by the Spirit of God to describe the state of death when no resurrection is in view.

It is therefore logical to conclude that the Hebrew word *sheol* and the Greek word *hades* are used to indicate the state of death when resurrection is in view, since all who are in the state of death will be made alive (1 Cor. 15:22), and *apo/lumi* signifies the state of death when no resurrection is in view. This is the state even of those who have "fallen asleep in Christ," if there is no resurrection. Thus from 1 Cor. 15: 18 we get one clear meaning of the word *apollumi*, which must not be ignored. And while this word may have lesser meanings in other contexts, its strong meaning here cannot be denied.

There are some who insist that *apollumi* sets forth a condition from which men can be saved, and they point to its usage in Luke 15:3-32, where it is used of a "lost sheep," a "lost coin" and a "lost boy." All these are figurative

or metaphorical uses of this word, as will be seen in Luke 15:24, where the father of the prodigal is quoted as saying: **"For this my son was dead and is alive and again; he was lost and is found."** Furthermore, that sheep which was described as being "lost" (*apollumi*) was in a condition and situation where it could be found (and it was), that coin was in a condition where it could be found (and it was), and that boy was in a condition where all he needed to do was make up his mind and walk out of it (which he did).

However, when one reads in the Bible such words as, **"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy (*apollumi*) both soul and body in gehenna,"** would any want to say that the warning here is to fear lest you be brought into the same state as the prodigal son found himself after he had abandoned his father's house. Yet, this is what some are doing when they use the prodigal's condition to define the meaning of ***apollumi***.

Furthermore, when we come to Paul's declaration in Phil. 3: 19 that "the end" of certain men "is destruction," we face up to the strongest possible use of this term. This describes the finish of these men. It is their end. It is not a parenthetical state for destruction IS their lot. They are not to be destroyed for a time and then be raised from this state. to something better. This is their final state, their end.

There are three short passages in the Old Testament where the word *sheol* is linked with destruction, and these are important to our study. in Job 26:6 we read that: **"Hell (*sheol*) is naked before Him, and destruction hath no covering."** In Proverbs 15: 11 we are told: **"Hell (*sheol*) and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men."** Again we have the words of Solomon in Proverbs 27:20 who tells us: **"Hell (*sheol*) and destruction are never full, so the eyes of man are never satisfied."**

These three passages show us that *sheol* (the state of death), and destruction (utter extinction), have a very definite relationship, and in order to find this we will need to be more definite in our understanding of that state which we have been calling "the state of death." We must answer the question, what is death?

No matter how many have completely missed it there is no teaching that is more emphatically or simply set forth in Scripture than that **death is**

**RETURN.** From the record of the Bible we know that Adam had no existence before he was created. True, the dust (soil) of which he was made was in existence, but the soil was not the man Adam. In the record of his creation we are told that God made him from the soil (dust) of the earth, then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. This is the record of man's creation, and if you reverse the order you will have man's death. If the **spirit (the breath of life) returns to** God who gave it, if the **soil returns to the earth as it was**, you have the death of a man. Even as Elihu said in his discourse with Job: **"If He set His heart upon man, if He gather unto Himself His spirit and His breath; all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust."** Job 34:14-15.

To this we can add the words of Solomon, who following his majestic description of an aged man declared that: **"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."** Eccle. 12:7.

At death, no part of man or the man as a whole enters into any new or unknown condition. The man was in the soil before his creation and at death he returns to the soil; the spirit (breath of life) which was with God before it was given to man, returns to God Who gave it. This is the condition of all men in death, it is the state of death. But since man goes into the state of death with resurrection in view, and this is clearly stated in Scripture (Acts 24:15, 1 Cor. 15:22), we are able to enlarge Our definition of **sheol** and **hades** so that each time we come upon these words they mean "the state of death with resurrection in view". If the fact of resurrection is in some way erased by God from the prospect of man's future then *sheol* becomes destruction.

Thus it is when God says that the END of some is destruction, He has eliminated all prospect of resurrection from their future. This is also true when God says of those cast into gehenna, **"their fire shall not be quenched and their worm shall not die."** There will never be any reversal of the judgment that brought them into the state of destruction.

Since the death of the first man to die (Abel) God has been taking the spirit (life) of every living being back to Himself. The man which was formed out of the dust returns to the dust from whence he was taken, and the spirit (breath of life) which made the man a living soul returns to God who gave it.

This is not the end of man, for he has simply gone into the state of death where resurrection is in view. Resurrection does not depend upon redemption, forgiveness, or salvation. With Paul, we believe in a resurrection both of the just and the unjust. If it were not for resurrection, death would be the end of man.

Resurrection is not re-incarnation, the idea that something called the soul reappears in another form or body after death. Resurrection is re-creation in which man is again taken from the soil and is given once more the breath of life so that he again becomes a living soul.

Man has a beginning and he can come to a complete end and be as though he had never been. But this does not happen at death. It takes place after resurrection. This is destruction. It is the end of the wicked.

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