

A Comfortable Religion

by Tony Melton

Members of a local religious group told me that if I would follow their teaching, I could one day live in a paradise here on earth. I asked them what would be the result if refused, and they told me that I would just die. They further explained that after I died, I would cease to exist.

Now, such a doctrine is most comforting and probably very appealing to those who desire to continue living in sin. Most sinners would cherish the idea of dying like the proverbial dog Rover, not having to face the eternal wrath of God (Romans 2:5, 8; 5:9). Unfortunately, for such people, this doctrine is false from its surface to its center. Can you imagine Paul as he stood before the sin-hardened Roman procurator, Felix, saying, "Now Felix if you don't clean up your ungodly life God will annihilate you"? Felix would have had a good chuckle, and then Paul would have been thrown out. The Bible teaches no such idea. It says that when Paul "reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid." Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines the Greek word translated "afraid" as "*thrown into fear, terrified, affrighted.*" The King James Version says, "He trembled." What frightened this man so much? It wasn't the thought of physical death, but rather at the thought of eternal banishment in the fires of hell (compare Matthew 13:50; 25:46; Mark 9:43-46; John 15:6; 2 Peter 2:4-9; Jude 7,23; Revelation 14:10; 20:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10).

Many folks are religiously relaxed and ignorantly at ease, seemingly unaware of the awful fate that awaits them. They have no fear of the Lord, because false teachers have convinced them that they will never face anything in the future but physical death.