

HELL:
The Place of Everlasting Punishment!

Message 3

Scripture: Revelation 9:1-12

INTRO: Before we get into our subject this morning, let me make mention of one matter I won't cover elsewhere. Mercy Aiken, in his paper on hell, said that the word 'sheol' has been erroneously translated hell in the KJV and that most new translations have eliminated the word 'hell' entirely. I have checked many versions, even The Message, which someone has aptly named The Mess, and I have not found Aiken's statement true. That is worth noting if you will discuss the matter of hell with those who deny this teaching.

Well, we have defined hell in message one. We said hell is necessary because man's soul is immortal, and man with sin cannot go to heaven, so man goes to the place prepared for the Devil and his angels, hell. Furthermore, the justice of God demands punishment that fits the crime, for sin, and nothing but hell will do for that. Then we saw there are two major errors man falls into when he denies hell. Those are annihilationism, after the judgment man is annihilated in hell fire and ceases to exist. The second error is universalism. In the end, all mankind will be saved. Both are equally false.

We gave considerable time to the Hebrew word 'sheol' translated as the grave or hell in the OT. We learned there that this word certainly means more than the grave or the intermediate state in numerous passages, and that it in fact does refer to hell in such cases.

This morning we want to look at hell as it is taught in the NT.

B. In The New Testament

1. The Teaching of Jesus

When Jesus Christ, the creator of the universe, came on the scene in human form and began His ministry He gave His first recorded major discourse in Matthew 5-7. It is called the sermon on the Mount. Let us turn there and read together Matthew 5:21-22, and 27-30 (read). In these

passages we have hell mentioned three times and once as hell fire. In all the Bible, the strongest proof for the existence of hell is the teaching of Jesus Christ, and there is no higher authority. Furthermore, the word for hell in these passages is not hades, the translation of the word sheol. It is the word Gehenna. Some explanation is necessary for an understanding of this word as used in the NT.

In the days of the wicked king Ahaz, who began to reign just before the captivity of Samaria, he began a practice of offering children as a sacrifice to the fire gods. We find the early history of this in 2 Chronicles 28:1-3 (read). 2 Kings 16:3 says he offered one of his own sons like this. Now the place where this was done was in the valley of the son of Hinnom.

When the godly king Josiah took the throne, he defiled this place so that these very ungodly sacrifices would cease. 2 Kings 23:10 says, "And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or daughter pass through the fire to Molech." Adam Clark writes, "St. Jerome says that Topheth was a fine and pleasant place, well watered with fountains, and adorned with gardens."

Now the name 'Tophet' comes from the word 'toph' likely meaning drum. Of this name, John Gill writes, "A place so called, as is generally thought, from the beating of drums or timbrels in it, that the shrieks of the infants sacrificed here to Molech might not be heard by their parents, and they repent of delivering them to him, and take them away. So the Indians in India now, at the burning of wives with their deceased husbands, attend them with drums and trumpets; and at such time as the fire is put to the wood, the drums and trumpets make a terrible noise for fear their cries should be heard..."

And how did king Josiah defile this place? He turned this beautiful place of water and gardens into a garbage dump, where the fire would now be used to burn garbage, not babies. This made the

valley of the son of Hinnom a most undesirable place, and the sacrifices ceased. From that time onward, the valley of the son of Hinnom, known as gay Hinnom, meaning valley of Hinnom, became more and more referred to as that which was formerly referred to as sheol, or hell where the wicked go at death. In other words, it became known as that place we call hell.

So common was the expression of *gehenna* for hell, that when Jesus came on the scene He never refers to hell as hades, but as *gehenna*. William Shedd in his classic on hell says, "'Gehenna,' at the time of the Advent, had become a technical term for endless torment..." And so common was the understanding of this meaning that He needs make no explanation as to what He is talking about. The Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord Jesus, the One who also made hell, mentions this place three times in the first major discourse in the verses we just read. In verse 22, Jesus says that someone who calls his brother 'Raca', meaning something like 'you empty head' is in danger of hell fire. This is *gehenna* fire, the fire of the valley of Hinnom.

Let us now go to Mark 9 (read 42-48). The Lord Jesus here quotes from Isaiah 66:24. Nowhere will you get a stronger message on hell than this, and that by the One who made hell! In verse 43, going into life is contrasted with going into hell. Those are the two alternatives. We would not argue that 'the going into life' is but for a very short time, neither can we argue that the going into hell is only until one is burned up, as the annihilationists would have us believe. As a matter of fact, here is a reference to *gehenna*, not hades. No doubt, the picture drawn here is from the garbage dump at the valley of Hinnom where the worm continuously ate and the fire burned continually, to that everlasting place that burns endlessly which we call hell.

Twice Jesus refers to hell here as the fire that is not quenched, and three times He repeats these words, "where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched." Certainly the most

powerful message ever preached on hell in all the Bible is by the One who created all things, the One who became the living Word of God.

2. The Teaching of the Apostles

Aiken, in his treatise against hell says, "If Hell is real, why is it that the only time Paul even mentioned 'Hell' in any of his epistles, was to declare the triumph of Christ over it? (1 Corinthians 15:55). The word 'Grave' in the passage is the Greek word 'Hades.'" "

To that I would answer first that after the Gospels, and the teaching of the Creator of the universe, the Lord Jesus, there is not much need to stress hell again. And second, William Shedd, in his classic, "The Doctrine of Endless Punishment" says that whenever spiritual death or future judgment is spoken of, hell is also in view. This is verified by Jesus in Matthew 5:22, and 29-30. Neither is necessary if there is no existence after judgment. So the concept of hell is not foreign to the writings of Paul.

However, James, the half brother of Jesus mentions hell in James 3:6 (read). The word he uses for hell is again 'gehenna'. We note the connection here of hell with fire. James seems to take for granted that there is a hell, a hell which is made up of fire.

The apostle Peter speaks of hell in 2 Peter 2:4. Now the word translated 'hell' here is 'tartarus'. The pagan Greek teaching of existence after death was that hades had two compartments. One was tartarus, the bad side of hades, and the other was Elysium, the good side (Shedd, 42). Tartarus is the Greek word corresponding to the Hebrew gehenna. In the mind of the Greeks, tartarus was the compartment of hades where people suffered and from which there is no escape. So Peter speaks of hell in such a way as to indicate he understood the concept and fully accepted it.

The book of Revelation contains neither the word gehenna or hades or tartarus, and yet teaches the doctrine of hell the strongest of all the NT books besides the Synoptic Gospels. There is a phrase which occurs 7 times that describes hell in such a profound way, as to be among the scariest descriptions of hell to be found anywhere. That phrase is the phrase 'bottomless pit'. We will look at these later but let us just read these now to get the picture (9:1, 2, 11; 11:17; 17:8; 20:1, 3).

Furthermore, this book describes hell in 19:3 (read). Again in 20:12-15, hell is referred to without mentioning gehenna or hades or tartarus (read). It is with that understanding that we want to consider the descriptions of hell as given in the Bible.

VI. THE DESCRIPTIONS OF HELL

A. As To It's Place

Our question now is this: Where is hell? In that first reference in the OT that I said the term 'sheol' referred to more than just the grave, Deuteronomy 32:22, we have some interesting information that remains consistent in Scripture. First, it speaks of the 'lowest hell'. When we speak of comparisons for height, we speak of heaven. When we speak of comparisons for hell, we speak, not of height, but of depth. That is 'down'. With regard to direction, 'down' is the common description for hell, as 'up' is for heaven. Six times the Bible uses this phrase, "Down to hell". Hell is down. So where is it?

Well, let us go to another description of hell by a phrase that occurs seven times in the same book. Let me read three of these seven passages for us:

Revelation 9:1 and 2 and 11: "9:1 Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. 9:2 And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. 9:11 And they had as king

over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon."

So, this place that is down, is also called a 'bottomless pit'. The word 'bottomless' is abussos. Bussos means deep. A-bussos, is deep negated. It is without depth, that is deep without measure. That is simply 'bottemless'. Now I ask you, where is there such a place? Well, ask the scientists. There is no place that matches this description like the center of gravity, in the heart of the earth! There are stories of those who have drilled deep into the earth, including stories of the Russians, who heard such horrendous sounds coming from down deep that they were in total shock. Though I place little value on such stories to prove Scripture, maybe there is something to them. I have a brother-in-law who works around oil wells. He is not a believer as far as I know and he has told me of hearing such stories.

I have no doubt that hell is in the heart of the earth. There, in the midst of hot molten rock, is hell. Turn with me to Matthew 22:13 (read). Here hell is described as 'outer darkness'. The Greek here is 'exoteros skotos'. No doubt we get our word exterior from this. It is exterior darkness. There is no light, just blackness. Now what is it like in the center of gravity? Outer darkness! You get sucked to the middle by gravity, and the exterior is dark!

Maybe you say, just a minute, it is described as hell fire. Fire is light. Let me ask you, when rock is molten with heat, and there is no oxygen, is it light or dark? It only gives light when it is squeezed out the top and hits oxygen. While it is in the heart of the earth it is darkness.

Furthermore, this place of fire and darkness and at the center of gravity is a place of destruction. Now this word translated *destruction* is *abaddon*. I want to take you back now to the OT and Job 26:6 (read). Now this is one of the passages I used to show that *hades* means more than the grave. This is a passage that gives Hebrew poetry in synonymous parallelism. It says that hell is naked before God. Hell is a covered place for man, in his temporal state, but it

is clearly open before God. So for God, this place of hell is a place of destruction with no covering. It is clearly visible to Him. This word for destruction occurs 6 times in the OT: Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Ps. 88:11; Pr. 27:20. In these passages this word 'abaddon' goes together with either death, fire, or sheol in every case.

But we have a most informative connection to 'abaddon' in the Greek NT. Let us turn to Revelation 9 (read 1-11). Now there is a horrifying passage! Verse 11 says of these creatures, "And they had a king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon." Both Abaddon and Apollyon mean 'destruction'! So we note that the king of hell is the angel of the bottomless pit, and his name is Abaddone, the same word we had in Job 26:6.

So hell is a place of destruction. Now let me make a brief note here. The annihilationists, who believe that unbelievers will be burned up and then the person ceases to exist entirely, are also sometimes called destructionists, because they believe these will be destroyed, and thus annihilated. So, our question is that when people are destroyed in hell, do they cease to exist? We have seen in an earlier message that when something is destroyed it does not cease to exist, but it is no longer useful for that for which it was created. So it is with man, when he is cast into hell. Hell is a place where man is forever destroyed from that which God intended.

You talk about progressive revelation giving more and more light to earlier concepts! Here, in the last book in the Bible is an amazing revelation regarding this place of 'destruction', abaddon! This place of destruction has a king. And the name of this king of demons is "Destruction", or "Abaddon", or in English "The Destroyer." And this king of demons is the king over a place called the 'bottomless pit'! And what is the bottomless pit, but the place we know as hell. All of this information does not bode well for those who hold that sheol is the grave only and that sinners are annihilated!

B. As To Its Duration

So, let us consider the duration of hell. That hell is forever, is what people find unacceptable. For those familiar with Christian writers, you will be surprised to hear that John Stott cannot accept that hell is forever. Let me quote him briefly, "Well emotinally I find the concept (i.e., the historice view of an endless hell] intolerable and do not understand how people can live with it without either cauterizing their feelings or cracking under the strain...We need to survey the biblical material afresh and to open our minds (not just our hearts) to the possibility that Scripture points in the direction of annihilationism, and that 'eternal conscious torment' is a tradition which has to yield to the supreme authority of Scripture" (Bill Wiese, on Hell pg. 257-258).

I am not interested in spending much time here, but let us read Mark 9:44, 46, 48 (read). Now turn with me to Revelation 19:3 (read).

VII. THE JOURNEY OF THE UNSAVED

I want to yet set out very briefly what happens when an unsaved person dies. In Luke 16, the story of the rich man and Lazarus, it says in verse 22 that the rich man died and was buried. There is a vast contrast between the rich man's death and that of the beggar. When the beggar died, the angels came and ushered him into the place called 'Abraham's bosom' or as we know it, heaven. But the rich man died, and it simply says he was buried.

Go now with me to a very interesting passage that sheds further light on what happens when the sinner dies (read Luke 12:16-20). What is of interest is that in the original it says, "This night THEY will require your soul of you..." It is not the Lord that is requiring the soul of the unsaved because it is God speaking and He says, "They" will require your soul of you. I have no question the 'they' refers to demons. The time has come when this man has given them the final right to his soul because he has waited too long. So I think we could conclude that as the angels of God come to take the righteous home, so the demons of Satan come and usher the lost into hell.

Now it is sometimes speculated that those who die receive an intermediate body. I always said that there was too much speculation in that view. But, in studying Luke 16, there may just be some ground for that. In verse 23 it says, '...he lifted up his eyes...' In verse 24 he speaks of his 'tongue'. These are members of the body. So there may be some ground for supposing that there is an intermediate body.

So, upon death, the unsaved are taken to hell. Here they enter the intermediate state. No unsaved persons are ever resurrected from creation until just before the new heavens and the new earth. Let us go to Revelation 20 (read 11-15). What happens at this point is that the resurrected body of the unsaved is reunited with soul and spirit, to be cast into the lake of fire. Thus the unsaved enter the unending state everlasting death, a state in which the person is fully conscious and in which the body is tormented forever.

CONCL: So, we bring this very brief treatise of hell to a conclusion. Our conclusion is that there is such a place as hell fire and that it is a place the unsaved suffer without end once they enter this place. Annihilation of soul and spirit is not possible, for they are immortal. After the resurrection the body becomes immortal. Universalism, that all will some day be saved also is not possible, if the Bible is indeed the Word of God, and it is. If it were not, we would not need to be concerned at all about this subject at all.

We saw that the argument that sheol, in the OT means more than just the grave or the intermediate state in numerous references. I think if a person is objective with Scripture, this is undeniable. Furthermore, Isaiah speaks of this place as a place where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.

When we come to the NT, we find the Lord Jesus Christ one of the strongest advocates of the doctrine of a literal hell! He referred to it as 'gehenna' and the place where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. This place, we concluded is in the heart of the earth, a place of black fire; a place at the heart of gravity, a bottomless pit, in which all else is outer darkness!

Furthermore, it is a place of destruction! An angel called 'Abaddon' or 'Destruction' presides over this loathsome and foul dungeon until death and hades too, are cast into this place. Then the devil and his angels will be tormented forever, along with all those who have sold themselves to the devil by sin and have not been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb! These hang over the pit of hell by a slender thread while the Scriptures in the concluding verses of the Bible extend the most gracious offer ever to fall on man's ears: And the Spirit and the Bride (i.e. the Holy Spirit and the redeemed or Christians) say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely!"