

HELL:
The Place of Everlasting Punishment!

Message 1

Scripture: Genesis 2:7-17

INTRO: In these messages we will be dealing with two very important subjects, and they are the two unending destinies of man and angels. There is an innate knowledge in man that cannot accept the idea that when man dies, that is the end. God has made us so that innately we know that we do not cease to exist at death. But what happens after death? Where does man go? And how can he continue to exist after the body is dead? It is these questions the Bible answers.

Now the fact that there is a heaven and a good destiny, this man does not find unacceptable. But that there is a hell, a destiny or horror beyond description and that the majority of mankind will go there, that man finds unacceptable. Rebellion against this fact is revealed by such universalists as the writer of the book, "The Shack". Rebellion against this fact is revealed by the cults. And so they have fabricated ways to explain away the clear teaching of Scripture with arguments that have swept many away from the truth of God's Word.

Some years ago I was given an article taken from the internet written by Mercy Aiken. He too is a universalist and he writes, "Many non-Christians have rejected the concept of Hell, but it may come as a surprise to learn that there is a growing number of Bible-believing Christians who also reject the notion – not in spite of Scripture but because of it!" What he is saying is that many Christians are rejecting the doctrine of hell, because in fact, the Bible teaches no such thing.

In that first major discourse which is recorded in the teachings of the Creator of the universe, the Lord Jesus Christ, the sermon of the mount, as recorded in Matthew 7:13-14, He said, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way that leads to life, and there are few who find it." That 'destruction' of the end of the wide road Jesus describes in chapter 5 as hell, or hell fire.

William Shedd, writing in the 1800's says, and I quote, "Every doctrine has its day to be attacked, and defended. Just now, that of Eternal Retribution is strenuously combated, not only outside the church, but to some extent within it" (The Doctrine of Endless Punishment, preface.) Though this is not the primary doctrine under attack today, it is still under attack, and that from many different groups. The doctrine of hell is one of those doctrines that has been under attack from the time of Christ until now. This concept is repugnant to man, and that is so because our understanding of the infinite, righteous and holy God is so puny. We have failed to recognize God!

Now let me put in place for you, as related to doctrine, or as we call it 'theology', what the name for our subject matter is. When we study hell and heaven, it is the doctrine of eschatology, the teaching of end time matters. There are two important aspects to eschatology to understand. First there is general eschatology. It has to do with the events that will transpire here on earth, such as the tribulation, millennium and final rebellion of Satan. Then there is personal eschatology. Heaven and hell have to do, not with general eschatology, but personal eschatology. Personal eschatology has to do with where people go after death.

I. DEFINITION OF HELL

Let me begin by defining what I will mean when I use the term hell. In this definition is my understanding of the term 'hell' when I put the whole biblical picture together. Here it is: "Hell is the English term used to name that place spoken of in Scripture of never ending separation from God (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:11-15) and that place of retribution for sin (Rev. 20:13; Matt. 25:41-46) by degree of pain according to the extent of sin committed while alive in the body (Lk. 12:45-48); the place God made for the Devil and fallen angels (Matt. 25:41), and which unredeemed man's soul and spirit enter at death for the duration of the intermediate state (Lk. 16:19-31), or at the sheep and goat judgment (Matt. 25:41-46); and it is the place he enters for the unending state, with his body reunited to the soul and spirit at the great white throne judgment of the unsaved (Rev. 20:11-15)."

For the sake of the purpose of these messages, let me briefly explain one part of that definition, the part I find most misunderstood by so many in our community. It is this, that it is the place of retribution for sin "by degree of pain according to the extent of sin committed".

Now many seem to think that sin is sin and hell is hell. It is all the same. Let me state in no uncertain words that, though sin is sin, sin comes in all kinds of sizes, and will be punished accordingly. Do you think Hitler will suffer exactly the same as someone who died young and never killed anybody? If that is the case, God is not just. So let us turn to a passage that talks about this (Luke 12:45-48).

Let me, with that, seek to erase another wrong picture many of our people carry about hell because of old pictures they have seen. It is this picture of the Devil with a pitch fork torturing people in hell. That, I believe, is unbiblical, and let me wipe that away with a Scripture as well (Rev. 20:10). He will be torturing no one for he himself will be tortured according to the extent of his sin. Now the man who wrote the book "23 Minutes in Hell" disagrees with that, I know, and gives Scripture for his position, but I think his arguments are inconclusive.

II. WHAT NECESSITATES HELL

A. The Immortality of the Soul

So we ask, what makes hell a necessity? Well, first, it is the immortality of the soul and sin. Now my purpose here is not to prove the immortality of the soul, but to give brief time to it in order to see that there needs to be a place for those who are not fit for heaven or paradise.

Immortality is perpetual conscious existence after something has begun. What makes abortion murder is that at conception, an entire human being comes into existence including the soul. It is beyond my purpose to make evidence for that except to say I believe the Bible teaches that. So, when God created Adam and Eve, they could never cease to exist.

Now in dealing with the immortality of the soul, we need to understand what death is and the three deaths of Scripture. The basic idea behind the word 'death' is separation, not cessation of existence. When God said to Adam that he would die the day he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was spiritual death God was talking about, for certainly they did not die physically the day they ate from the forbidden tree. Spiritual death is when man is separated from God's fellowship. It is what Paul calls 'dead in trespasses and sins' in Ephesians 2:1. That is the state of all unbelievers, a state entered by sin, just like Adam and Eve.

Then there is physical death. That is what we are most familiar with. It is not the cessation of existence either. It is the separation of the body from soul and spirit (James 2:26). The body does not cease to exist, it returns to dust (Gen. 3:19). The soul and spirit enter one of two places after death. The body does not continue on in a conscious state, but soul and spirit do. This is very plainly taught by none other than the Lord Jesus in the account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 15. That account, teaches clearly, the immortality of the soul.

There is a third kind of death and we find it described in the last book in the Bible in almost the last chapter. For this we turn to Revelation 20:11-15 (read). It is called here in verse 14, the second death. These people had died once, and now they died the second time. It is nothing but eternal separation from God!

God created Adam and Eve, they were in the Garden of Eden, Paradise! This is what God made man for and He wanted him to live like that forever. Everything was good beyond what we can now comprehend now. Then came the serpents hiss and man's fall into sin. God is a God of such supreme holiness that He cannot have sin in His presence, nor can man live in the state of Paradise as a sinner. Therefore, another place, a place of retribution needed to be created for such beings as were sinful.

The first beings to sin were the angels and it was for them that God brought hell into existence (Matt.

25:41). However, when man falls for the snares of Satan and sins, he becomes subject to the condemnation of the devil (Matt. 25:41-46). So, sin and the immortality of the soul make hell a necessity.

B. Justice for Wrongdoing

Now we might further ask, not only what makes hell necessary, but what makes it necessary for hell to be such a very horrible place. Well, in brief, it is that the justice of God demands that every sin must receive just punishment. To do justice is to meet out that which is right. And how bad must the punishment be that is just or right for sin? (Must fit the crime.)

For those of you who have heard the following illustration more than once, my apologies to you. This is the best way I know how to answer the question we have just raised. Let us say you came home after church and you found your house burned to the ground. Just smoke is all that is left. Your neighbor's boy has torched your house. There is no good reason for what he has done. When the boy goes to trial the judge says that he came from a very bad home and he is not to be blamed and you will have to pay for the damages yourself.

Then the boy's rich uncle hears about this and he comes to you and offers to rebuild your home in a very short time and for the inconvenience of not having a place to live he will give you an extra \$100,000.00. You can choose your own blueprint and he will pay for everything. As for the boy, he will see to it that he works it off in time to come. Well, most of us would be very satisfied with such a generous offer. Everything will be taken care of and we will be much better off than before.

But let us say now that the boy has come to your home at night while your family is sleeping and you are away. They are all burned with the house. What price could rich uncle now pay that would satisfy you? I have posed this question many times in many places and the answer is always the same: There is no price! Nothing would ever satisfy such an injustice. And

that is the way it is with sin before God. Therefore, the punishment must be of the most severe there is, and it can never stop, because it will never satisfy the injustice.

When the devil got Adam and Eve to sin, he thought he had man in such a deadlock that man could never come free. He also thought that He would be able to take over from there. But, marvel of all marvels, God did find a price for sin, but it would be a most horrific price, that of His own Son. It was this price that satisfied His justice, but in order for man to benefit from that price, he would have to repent of his sins and receive God's Son as his Savior. But where sin is not forgiven, the justice of God demands nothing less than hell.

III. ERRONEOUS TEACHINGS ABOUT HELL

A. Annihilationism

So, we ask, are there not alternative teachings to this very terrifying doctrine? Is hell the only explanation for where the unsaved go after death? The doctrine of hell has seemed so extreme to many, that they have sought alternative teachings. One of those is annihilationism. Annihilationism says that in the end, the wicked will be annihilated and thus cease to exist forever. For this teaching they go to the word destruction for support and so are sometimes called 'destructionists'.

Again, it is not my purpose here to refute this teaching. Any casual reading of Scriptures such as Luke 15 will do that. But to give an example, in Matthew 10:28 Jesus said, "And do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to 'destroy' both soul and body in hell."

In a very brief refutation let me simply take you to one reference that uses this word and you can check many others using this same word for yourself. Turn to Matthew 9:17 (read). Now, very simply, these bottles do not cease to exist. They are not annihilated. What has happened is that they have been

rendered useless for the purpose for which they were made.

B. Universalism

The second teaching that was generated to get around the terror of hell is what has been labeled 'universalism'. Universalism basically teaches that when all is said and done, all people will be saved. Universalism gained a much stronger foothold in the Church than did annihilationism. Even some early branches of the Mennonites apparently fell for this teaching. I do not think it necessary to spend time refuting this teaching.

By the way, the writer of the book 'The Shack' is a universalist. Certainly as a universalist you can think that you can with impunity picture God as a Black woman, the Holy Spirit as a little Asian woman, and their Son as a clumsy human being. The God of the universalist might find that funny or accommodating. The God of the Bible finds that blasphemous to the greatest extent.

We conclude then with regard to the alternative views to hell, that if one is truly a Bible believer, there are no good explanations that there is no such place of everlasting punishment. If anything should motivate the Bible believer to evangelism, this doctrine should.

IV. THE EXPLANATION OF PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

Now in this first message I want to explain to you an important teaching that theologians have held to over many years and it is that of progressive revelation. The reason it is important to understand this issue is because it is here that wrong teachings about hell may creep in if this is not understood.

So let me read another argument by Mercy Aiken against hell so you will understand this. He writes: "*Think about it.....If Hell is real, why didn't God make that warning plain right at the beginning of the Bible? God said the penalty for eating of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was death--not "eternal life" in fire and brimstone. If Hell is real, why*

wasn't Cain warned about it, or Sodom and Gomorrah, or any of those who committed the earliest recorded "sins?" If Hell is real why didn't Moses warn about this fate in the Ten Commandments or the Mosaic Covenant consisting of over 600 laws, ordinances, and warnings? The Mosaic Law simply stated blessings and cursings in this lifetime."

What Aiken is saying is if there is a real hell, a hell where all those go who do not belong to God and it is torment of the very worst kind for eternity, it is not fair to let millions of people go there without telling them about it. Surely if the teaching of hell was real, God would have told them right there in the Garden of Eden. It is not right to send millions of people to hell and then give the warning. And I agree with him.

Again, he writes, "If a doctrine does not appear as seed form in the books of the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms, it cannot fairly be taught as a major biblical doctrine, if indeed it can be taught as biblical at all!" What he is saying is how can you have 4000 years of people passing away without warning them about hell. If hell was a biblical doctrine, surely God should have warned them right there in the Garden of Eden, and I agree.

When he says that a doctrine to be biblical needs to be found at least in seed form in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, he was very liberal. That is a very broad statement and I would quite agree with him. I might go so far as to say that most if not all of the most important doctrines are contained in seed form in the first three chapters of the Bible and so, I think, is the doctrine of hell.

Now let me say something about doctrine 'in seed form in the OT'. There is a view held by good theologians over the centuries called 'progressive revelation'. What that means is that revelation did not come about like the big bang theory says the universe came into existence. Progressive revelation says that God added more to revelation as time went along. We did not have the final complete revelation until Revelation 22:21 had been penned, and that was some 4000 years after creation. And up until that last verse of the

book of Revelation, new things were being added to the revelation of God.

So, with that explanation, let me say that I find the doctrine of hell in seed form in Genesis 2:16-17 (read). God said to Adam that the day he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would die. Now it must have been abundantly clear to Adam that God did not mean physical death, for he did not die physically the day he ate. What did happen is that he died spiritually, that is, the relationship between him and God was severed. That man does not cease to exist at death is an innate knowledge all men have. Nowhere, no matter how much the annihilationists argue, does the Bible teach that man ceases to exist at some point in time. Adam must have much pondered these words as he began to observe the phenomena of physical death.

Now listen carefully, just because we do not find everything clearly taught in these early chapters in Genesis does not mean God did not instruct them in it. Are you with me? We must admit that Adam was taught things that were not recorded. For example, Cain and Able both brought offerings to God. Where did they get the instruction for that? And how did Cain and Abel know what should be brought? How could God be displeased with Cain's sacrifice if Cain had not been instructed in it. So, God has surely instructed Adam in more than what is recorded. I think that is an evident and indisputable fact.

And, any study of physical death and future judgment in the OT will clearly reveal the close connection between death and hell, the place of punishment. As for the teaching of the concept of hell, we will see much more later to prove that it was there in the OT.

Well, we could conclude this point by saying, not only is the doctrine of hell found in seed form in the law and the prophets and the Psalms, it is found in seed form in the first 3 chapters of the Bible! We find it in the warning to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We have seen already that the death God warned about was not simply physical death, but spiritual death. There is the doctrine of hell in seed form! We will see later that Job,

possibly the oldest book in the Bible, was well familiar with the concept of hell.

CONCL: So, let us conclude this first message on the doctrine of hell. What is hell? "Hell is the English term used to name that place spoken of in Scripture of never ending separation from God and that place of retribution for sin by degree of pain according to the extent of sin committed while alive in the body; the place God made for the Devil and fallen angels, and which unredeemed man's soul and spirit enter at death for the duration of the intermediate state, or at the sheep and goat judgment; and it is the place he enters for the unending state, with his body reunited to the soul and spirit at the great white throne judgment of the unsaved."

Why is hell necessary? First, man can never cease to exist. He was made to live with God forever. But when man sinned, he could not live with God but must go to the only other alternative, the place God created for the Devil. Furthermore, hell must be so very terrible, because for God to remain just, the punishment must fit the crime. This is the only punishment that fits the crime.

What are the alternative teachings to hell? Universalism and annihilationism and both do not deserve much time for the Bible never teaches either of those doctrines.

And last, if there is a place so terrible as hell, if people who are lost are to suffer for all eternity, why did God not warn man in the OT? Answer, He warned man, not only somewhere in the OT but right there in the early chapters of creation. Death is the punishment of sin! The Bible could simply not be clearer than that. We will see in the next message that hell is very clearly an OT doctrine.