

HELL IS A REAL PLACE OF FIERY TORMENT

THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE in the church today who have rejected the traditional idea of Hell. Some people now claim that it is just a place where you are separated from God. Others say that the supposed flames are just mythical or symbolic. There are some preachers who teach that Hell is temporary – that people are only there for a time, but in the end everyone goes to Heaven. Some have taken this teaching a step further and said that there isn't a Hell at all because everyone goes to Heaven. Few people still believe that Hell is a real place of fiery torment, or that those who are damned will be damned *forever*.

Fortunately, the Bible is very clear about this doctrine. It doesn't leave us in any doubt about the reality of Hell or the fate of those who reject Christ. In fact, Jesus actually spoke far more about Hell than He did about Heaven.

First of all, Jesus said that Hell is a real place. He warned men that they ought to fear God because God has the power to cast men into Hell:

Matthew 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Jesus was not shy when it came to telling us what Hell was like. He said that it was a fiery place of torment, where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched:

Mark 9:43: “And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

Jesus said this not once but *three times* in Mark 9:43-48. He also said it was a place of great anguish and wailing:

Matthew 13:41: “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

Jesus repeated this idea of “wailing and gnashing of teeth” in Matthew 8:12, 13:50, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30, and Luke 13:28.

As if all that were not enough, Jesus even provided an eyewitness account of Hell. He told of a rich man who died and went to Hell, and what happened to him when he got there:

Luke 16:22: “And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”

This man was wealthy during his life, but when he died all of his wealth was lost and he found himself in a place of fiery torment. He was in agony and desperately wanted a single drop of water – but it would forever be denied him. There would be no comfort or release. Instead he would face nothing but fiery torment for the rest of eternity.

Jesus Himself repeatedly warned us that Hell is a real place of fiery torment. Just in case we missed it, He even gave us a graphic example of what life in Hell is like. There is absolutely no reason to reject what He taught and say “Well, it’s not really like that.” How many times does Jesus have to repeat Himself before we will take Him seriously?

MANY GO TO HELL, AND FEW REACH HEAVEN

Another common heresy is the idea that God would never send anyone to Hell. Some people say that God is a loving God who loves everyone. He would never send anyone to Hell because He is just too nice. Everyone will eventually reach Heaven no matter what they have done.

This heresy may be popular, but it’s not Biblical. Jesus Himself made it clear that *many* people would go to Hell and *few* people would reach Heaven:

Matthew 7:13: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that

leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

How many people did Jesus say would find the way that leads to life? *Few*. How many people would instead walk down the road to Hell? *Many*. Not only did Jesus *not* say “Everyone goes to Heaven”, but He even went so far as to say that most people would go to Hell!

Do you remember what Jesus said He would do when He returns? He was pretty clear about it:

Matthew 13:40: “As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

For those of you who are keeping track, this event takes when Jesus returns at the end of the Tribulation. Jesus is going to take “all things that offend, and them which do iniquity” and cast them into *a furnace of fire*. It does *not* say that they will experience “separation from God”. In fact, the very idea that Hell is just “separation from God” is completely unbiblical. Hell is *not* a place where you are separated from God:

Psalm 139:8: “If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.”

Hell is a place where people experience the eternal, unending wrath of God. *It is not a place where God is absent.* In fact, the truth is actually even more graphic. Isaiah 66 tells us that during the Millennial Kingdom all of mankind will gather to worship God. Take a look at what it says:

Isaiah 66:23: “And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.

24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.”

Does the phrase “worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched” sound familiar? It ought to; Jesus used that very same phrase *when talking about Hell*. In other words, the day will come when all of mankind will gather together to worship God *and look upon the tormented souls in Hell*. Hell is not some kind of divine “time-out” room where God puts you and then walks away. Instead it is a place where you are tormented by fire *in front of the entire world*.

IS HELL REALLY FOREVER?

Some people argue that those who are cast into Hell are only there for a limited time. Others claim that those who are cast into Hell are destroyed or “annihilated”. They deny that Hell is eternal, conscious torment.

First of all, it's true that no one will be in Hell for all of

eternity – but that's only because God is going to transfer them from one place of fiery torment to another. After the Millennial Kingdom is over, the Great White Throne Judgment will take place. At that time God will remove everyone from Hell and judge them for their deeds. He will then cast them into a place the Bible calls the Lake of Fire:

Revelation 20:12: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

As you can see, the dead will be removed from Hell, judged for their sins, and then cast into the Lake of Fire. In case you were wondering, the Lake of Fire is not a happy place. Revelation has this to say about it:

Revelation 21:8: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

The reason it is called the Lake of Fire is because *it is a*

lake of fire. This lake burns forever with brimstone and with a fire that never goes out. It is a really bad place – but it is *not* separation from God. Those who are tormented in that horrible place are actually being tormented *in God's presence*:

Revelation 14:10: “The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:”

Will the people be tormented forever? Well, that's what Jesus said:

Matthew 25:45: "Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

The word “everlasting” in “everlasting punishment” is actually the *exact same Greek word* as the word “eternal” in “life eternal” (Strong's #166). What Jesus is saying is that just as the righteous will be given everlasting life, the wicked would be given *everlasting punishment*. God does *not* say “They'll be punished for a while and then let go.” The punishment is *everlasting*.

This directly contradicts the idea that at some point the wicked will be “annihilated” and will no longer exist. After all, if they no longer exist then how can they be tormented for all of eternity in the presence of the Lamb? *You can't torment something that doesn't exist anymore!* The truth that Jesus preached is every bit as horrific as it sounds: the wicked will be

cast into a place of fiery torment, where they will be tormented for all of eternity in the presence of God. They will be tormented *forever*, without any hope of rescue or relief.

Stop and think about how long *forever* is. A million years won't even put a dent in it. Billions of years will come and go and there will *still* be endless torment awaiting them. The torment will never, *ever* stop. They will scream and cry out in agony for all the ages of eternity, and no one will ever lift a finger to help them.

In Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon "Sinners In The Hands Of An Angry God" he warned sinners about the great danger they were in:

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment. . . .

Consider this, you that are here present, that yet remain in an unregenerate state. That God will execute the fierceness of his anger, implies, that he will inflict wrath without any pity. When God beholds the ineffable extremity of your case, and sees your torment to be so vastly

disproportioned to your strength, and sees how your poor soul is crushed, and sinks down, as it were, into an infinite gloom; he will have no compassion upon you, he will not forbear the executions of his wrath, or in the least lighten his hand; there shall be no moderation or mercy, nor will God then at all stay his rough wind; he will have no regard to your welfare, nor be at all careful lest you should suffer too much in any other sense, than only that you shall not suffer beyond what strict justice requires. Nothing shall be withheld, because it is so hard for you to bear. "Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet I will not hear them" (Ezek. 8:18). Now God stands ready to pity you; this is a day of mercy; you may cry now with some encouragement of obtaining mercy. But when once the day of mercy is past, your most lamentable and dolorous cries and shrieks will be in vain; you will be wholly lost and thrown away of God, as to any regard to your welfare. God will have no other use to put you to, but to suffer misery; you shall be continued in being to no other end; for you will be a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; and there will be no other use of this vessel, but to be filled full of wrath. God will be so far from pitying you when you cry to him, that it is said he will only "laugh and mock" (Prov. 1:25, 26, etc.).

How awful are those words which are the words of the great God. "I will tread them in mine anger, and will trample them in my fury, and

their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment" (Is. 63:3). It is perhaps impossible to conceive of words that carry in them greater manifestations of these three things, viz. contempt, and hatred, and fierceness of indignation. If you cry to God to pity you, he will be so far from pitying you in your doleful case, or showing you the least regard or favour, that instead of that, he will only tread you under foot. And though he will know that you cannot bear the weight of omnipotence treading upon you, yet he will not regard that, but he will crush you under his feet without mercy; he will crush out your blood, and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on his garments, so as to stain all his raiment. He will not only hate you, but he will have you, in the utmost contempt: no place shall be thought fit for you, but under his feet to be trodden down as the mire of the streets. . . .

If this doesn't sound like something God would do then I can only say that you haven't been reading your Bible.

BUT THAT'S NOT FAIR!

Many people today claim that "Punishing a few sins with eternal damnation is just not fair". They say that a truly just and loving God would never do such a thing. However, that only shows that people don't take their sin very seriously. They fail to understand that they have committed grave offenses against an infinite God, and their sin warrants an infinite punishment. This is how the Puritans put it:

Let me never forget that I have an eternal duty
to love, honor, and obey thee,
that thou art infinitely worthy of such;
that if I fail to glorify thee I am guilty of infinite
evil that merits infinite punishment,
for sin is the violation of an infinite obligation.

You can sit there all day long and say “That’s just not fair!”, but guess what: *Jesus is coming*. One day He will return with the armies of Heaven, and He will round up all of those who have rejected Him and cast them into Hell. You may reject Jesus and refuse to obey Him, but what are you going to do when He comes for your soul? What are you going to do when you stand before Him and are condemned? Do you have infinite power? Can you resist Him? Can you escape Him?

You see, the King is coming:

Luke 14:31: “Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.”

If you are going to shake your fist at God, call Him “unfair”, and reject His terms of peace, then *you had better be able to defeat God*. Otherwise you are going to be in a great deal of trouble. Rejecting God only works if you are stronger than Him – but since you’re not, you had better make peace with Him while there is still time. To quote Jonathan Edwards once more:

“And now you have an extraordinary

opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands in calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners; a day wherein many are flocking to him, and pressing into the kingdom of God. Many are daily coming from the east, west, north and south; many that were very lately in the same miserable condition that you are in, are now in a happy state, with their hearts filled with love to him who has loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. How awful is it to be left behind at such a day! To see so many others feasting, while you are pining and perishing! To see so many rejoicing and singing for joy of heart, while you have cause to mourn for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit! How can you rest one moment in such a condition?"

As he pointed out, since you are alive you still have time to repent and be saved. The way of salvation is simple:

Romans 10:9: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

So how do you become saved? By:

- **Repenting of your sins:** This means that you ask God to forgive your sins, and you seek to turn from your sins and live a life that pleases God. It means that you are giving

up your sins in exchange for a life of holiness. You *cannot* be saved by saying “God, I like my sins and I'm going to keep living however I want. Just make sure I go to Heaven when I die. Thanks.” If you refuse to turn from your sins then you cannot be saved. *Repentance is not optional.* Although you are not saved by your works, you *cannot* expect God to save you if you refuse to let go of your sins. Jesus Himself commanded repentance as a requirement for being saved in Matthew 4:17, 9:13, 11:20, Mark 1:15, 2:17, Luke 5:32, 13:3, 13:5, and 15:7 – to name just a few!

- **Placing yourself under the authority of Christ:** This goes right along with the previous point. All Christians must submit to the will of Jesus. He is our Lord; He lays down the commands and we follow them. You cannot be saved by saying “God, don't you dare tell me what to do. I'll do whatever I please, whenever I please. Just keep me from going to Hell. Thanks.” *If you refuse to make Jesus your Lord and Master then He will not be your Savior either.*
- **Believing what the Bible teaches about Jesus:** In order to be saved it is not enough to believe in some random Jesus; *you have to believe in the Biblical Jesus.* You have to believe that Jesus is the Son of God – fully man, yet fully God and a part of the Trinity. You have to believe that He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins, and then rose back to life on the third day. You have to believe the biblical account of Jesus. If you reject that account and make up your own Jesus then you are not saved. You cannot take a rock out of your backyard, call it Jesus, and then say “I have faith in Jesus so I'm good to go.”

A good example of this can be found at the scene of Christ's crucifixion. Jesus did not die alone that day; two other

men were crucified with him. Of those two men, one of them repented and was saved:

Luke 23:39: “And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

The first criminal mocked the idea that Jesus was the Messiah. He did not believe that Jesus was the Lamb of God, who came into the world to suffer and die for the sins of men and to take upon Himself the punishment that they deserved. This criminal spent the last few moments of his life mocking Jesus.

The second criminal, however, was different. He clearly repented of his sins – in verse 41 he said “we received the due reward for our deeds”. He acknowledged his sins and admitted that he was guilty. On top of that, he accepted what Jesus testified about Himself. He believed that Jesus was sinless and acknowledged Jesus as his Lord. He even believed that Jesus would rise again, because he asked Jesus to remember him when Jesus came into His kingdom. Even though Jesus was dying on the cross, he believed that Jesus would still get His kingdom and even had the power to raise the dying criminal back to life again.

Jesus accepted his words and told him that “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” The dying criminal's faith was rewarded with everlasting life.

The question you are faced with is simple: will *you* be with Jesus in paradise? You see, *Hell is for real*. It is not imaginary or mythical. It is a very serious thing – and we ought to take it seriously and believe what Jesus told us about it. You can escape Hell – but there is only one way, and that is through Jesus. He is the only way by which men can be saved.

