

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

An Introduction to Hell

Selected Passages

Keywords: Hell, Judgment, Annihilationism, Immortality

PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: In recent days a new controversy popped up regarding the nature of hell. Does God consign an unbeliever to an eternity of suffering or does He do this for an ordained amount of time and then the person is simply destroyed in totality? Many opinions are happening online and yet not a lot of helpful teaching. This is the beginning of a short series to remedy this.

I. Introduction.

- A. The value of learning theology:
 1. Everyone is a theologian. But that doesn't mean everyone understands what theology is.
 2. Theology is the study of God as revealed in the Bible and how we relate to Him and He relates to all things.
 3. These two things are upon which we will focus our attention for the next few weeks. Specifically the nature and reality of hell.
- B. Today is really going to be a long introduction that is designed to "set the table" for an examination of the biblical teaching on hell.
- C. Key terms to help you:
 1. **Annihilationism** is a theological belief in Christianity that teaches the final fate of the unrepentant is complete destruction rather than eternal suffering.
 2. **Universalism** is the belief that everyone will be saved in the end.
 3. **ECT (Eternal Conscious Torment)** is the belief that hell exists and it lasts for eternity with no reduction or end. The person is aware of his situation.
- D. In 2011 an up and coming pastor, Rob Bell, published a book entitled, *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived.*

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- E. George McDonald, a Scottish poet and pastor was a major influence in many people, including CS Lewis.
- F. CS Lewis was a major influence in Rob Bell's development of his understanding of hell.
- G. John Stott.
- H. N T Wright.

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I. Kirk Cameron.

1. In the recent days, he shared on his podcast that he is more in line with what is called "annihilationism" (also called conditional immortality).
2. His key point is simply whether the person is eternally in a state of suffering or if they suffer for a specific time and then they are destroyed.

J. A spectrum regarding Hell:

No hell, all saved → No hell, death annihilates → Some hell, sort of, but then saved → Some hell, but self-inflicted → Some hell, but can get out → Some hell, after final judgment, poof → Some hell, until punishment is done, then poof → Hell, eternal punishment

K. Two key things become evident in this short overview:

1. When a person begins to question the reality of an eternal hell, they are often basing their questions from the starting point of God's love and goodness or from man's free will.
2. In addition, there is almost always some level of reducing that effects of sin in the soul and life of a person. This can involve actual sin that a person commits or the doctrine of "original sin."
3. Good theology is never simple but it is never overly complex either. Good theology brings clarity to the bible but it is developed out from the bible itself.

L. When you do a rigorous study on this doctrine, you find that there is a lot of tradition that affects what you think. And because of our ignorance on the

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development of doctrines/teachings we tend to only look back a 100 years ago or so.

1. But tradition is not authoritative.
2. Tradition has value.

M. To get a good understanding of hell means we need to understand certain other things first. They form the foundation out of which the biblical teaching of hell develops.

1. The nature of the soul.
 - a. Is the soul immortal and is there a difference between immortal and eternal?
 - b. Is eternal life = being immortal?
 - c. When did your soul come into existence?
 - (1) Some have argued that the soul has always existed with God. Origen, said that God had made a certain number of souls that existed before anything else was created. Over time their love for God was reduced because they became basically bored. As this happened God then gave them bodies that fit with the level of their boredom.
 - (a) Slight fall → angelic bodies.
 - (b) Moderate fall → human bodies.
 - (c) Severe fall → demonic bodies.
 - (d) He also used this to explain why some people are born in better or worse conditions. It was all due to what that soul did before it received its body.
 - (2) Some argue that the soul happens at the first breath of the baby.
 - (a) “*Then Yahweh God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and so the man became a living being.*”
(Genesis 2:7)
 - (b) The idea here is that up until the body of Adam had the breath of God, it was not actually alive. But when God breathed on him, he became a living “soul.” “*Nephesh*”

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- (3) The third view is that the soul and the body come into existence at conception.
 - (a) First reason for this is that the bible said that God ceased His creative work after the 6th day of creation.
 - (b) Second, the bible does NOT separate out the parts of a person. It makes distinctions, but not separation. It looks at the person as a whole being.
- (4) Fourth, idea is that the human parents create the human body of a person but God creates the spirit or soul of that child.
 - (a) *“. . . then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it”* (Ecclesiastes 12:7).
 - (b) *“. . . Thus declares Yahweh who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him”* (Zechariah 12:1).
- (5) **However**, the bigger issue in this whole process is that it tends to create in our minds the separation of the “parts” that make up a human.
 - (a) In other words, does human create one part of a person and God the other? Or are we as humans merely recreating humans without God?
 - (b) The best way to see this is that God is superintending/overseeing the entire creative process of each person: body and soul.

2. The temptation to separate rather than distinguish the aspects of man.

- a. What makes you a person, a human being?
- b. Is a dead body a human being? Or is it something less? Is the soul of a person a human being if it is not attached to the body?
- c. Is it having a soul that makes you human? What makes you a human and a gorilla be a gorilla? It has a soul in the sense that it is a living creature (*nephesh* Genesis 1:21).
- d. When you talk about humans you should try to use the term “aspects.” An example would be the viewing of a statue from

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various aspects, or positions to get a fuller sense of what it is and looks like.

3. The soul, as part of the make up of a person, is also part of the image of God.
 - a. What separates us from all other living things is that we alone carry the image of God, the *imago dei*. And it is not found only in the heart or soul, but in the body as well.
 - b. We bear the very mark of God upon each of us, making us precious beyond our comprehension. But it also makes our rebellion all the more horribly vile.
4. The soul is subject to the presence of sin.
 - a. This brings up the reality of sin affecting all things created. There are always those who will argue that the soul/spirit/heart of a person is good. But the bible does not support that.
 - b. Romans 5:12.
 - (1) Sin came through our father, Adam. Everything you and I
 - (2) This is part of what is meant by “original sin.” We often mistake this to refer to Adam’s first sin, but that is wrong. Rather, (listen carefully) it is that stain and presence and tendency or pull to sin with which we are all born.
 - (3) It is original in two ways: it finds its roots in Adam’s sin AND it is present in us from the moment we are conceived. We are not born innocent, we are born under the power and presence of sin.
 - (4) And the reality of death is through sin. And this death is not merely in one part of the person, the body. Nor is it in the spiritual, as in spiritual death.
 - (5) The bible speaks of a “second death” in the book of Revelation.
 - (a) This is what is meant by “hell.”
 - (b) It is not reserved for merely your soul, but it will be opened after all are resurrected at the end of this age and all judged guilty shall be cast into it, body and soul.

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II. Conclusion.

- A. And this is where the gospel comes into play. The good news of what Jesus has done for those who believe.
 - 1. When I talk about salvation, it is not a vague term.
 - 2. It is salvation from our sins for they bring you into this judgment of eternal death.
 - 3. It is salvation from God wrath, which is described as hell or the second death.
 - 4. It is salvation from a kingdom that is destined to fail and into the kingdom of God Himself.
- B. This is what Jesus came to do. In His life He lived it in perfection, unlike you and I. In death, He took on our sin and died the death that was ours to suffer. And in His resurrection on the third day, He destroys death itself.

Benediction

May the God who gave us the Word sanctify us in it so that we might find ourselves strengthened in the truth, humble of heart, able to encourage one another toward love and good deeds, especially as we see the day of our Lord's return drawing nearer. Amen.