

Don't Go to Hell

This is part of the series – it's important that we behold both the kindness and the severity of God – better to go to a place of mourning than a place of celebration – the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Mark 8:35-37 NIV; Mark 9:42-48 NIV; Mark 16:16 NIV *When people say in their rage, "Go to hell!", only one of two things can be true. Either they don't really believe in hell, or they don't understand that hell is a place you wouldn't want your worst enemy to go to.

I. What is hell?

- a. It is the final place of judgment created for Satan and his angels. Matt. 25:41 NIV "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"
- b. The lake of fire, or the eternal fire, is a synonym for hell.
- c. Hell is distinct from Hades. Revelation 20:13b-14 NIV "...death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. ¹⁴Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death."
 - i. Hades (sheol in the Old Testament) will one day be thrown into the lake of fire.
 - ii. Hades holds souls, death holds bodies. Hell is a synonym of the lake of fire: Matthew 10:28 NIV "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."
 - iii. Hades torments but never consumes – it holds people until the day of final judgment. (Luke 16 tells the story of the rich man in Hades who is suffering while waiting for final judgment.)
- d. It is a place of regret and torment. Some interpretations suggest the "worm" refers to an individual's own conscience, forever gnawing at them with the memory of missed opportunities to repent and follow God, as the verse notes "their worm".
- e. It is the final place of those who have rejected God's love and forgiveness offered in Christ. "Eternal punishment," and "eternal judgment." There is no second chance.

II. Why is there a hell?

- a. Hell is a place of justice.
 - i. Most recognize that this world is not fair and people seem to get away with unspeakable abuses and oppressions. How can there be a God who allows such things?
 - ii. There will be a day when God brings His justice. Romans 2:4-5 NIV "Or do you show contempt for the riches of his

kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed." That which is allowed now, will be punished then.

- b. Justice for our sins against humanity will be conscious torment.
 - i. The little ones who stopped believing in God and His goodness because of what you did to them.
 - ii. Hands – theft, abuse, violence; feet – all the places we have gone to feed on darkness – today would include the internet; eyes – lust, covetousness, pride. *Think of the ripple effect of your sin and how it effects people around you and people who follow you, and then how their bad choices affect others.
- c. The punishment varies based on the crime and our exposure to the light.
 - i. Luke 12:47-48 NIV "The servant who knows the master's will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. ⁴⁸But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."
 - ii. Matthew 11:23-23 NIV "And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades.²³ For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you." *We are responsible for the light we receive, not for the light we haven't received.

III. What happens to those who reject the salvation God offers us?

- a. My journey – Raising Hell. The Bible teaches eternal judgment and eternal punishment which is why universalism is a heresy – God's final punishment is irreversible so it's affects last forever – there is no second chance; but does eternal punishment mean eternal conscious torment? Is this a doctrine of God or a doctrine of man? *The story
- b. Permission to consider it. Both the 1988 and 1995 gave ultimate annihilation a non-essential that Bible believing people have come to even though it is a minority position. *John Stott was the defender of this position.
- c. Are those who reject Christ ultimately annihilated in hell or are they consciously tormented forever?

- IV. The center of my position is the nature of man.
- a. Conditional immortality.
 - i. I originally believed that being in the image of God meant souls were eternal like God.
 - ii. I no longer believe that. Genesis 3:22 NIV “And the LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.”; Jews that believed in eternal torment at the time of Christ “loved Greek philosophy” according to Josephus. Tertullian and Augustine quoted Plato, not the Old Testament, when they said our souls were eternal.
 - iii. I believe we were created for eternal life, not with eternal life.
 - b. Confirmation bias – when you presuppose that people are eternal, you read it into the text. Here’s what the Bible says will ultimately happen to those who reject Christ.
 - i. They will be destroyed. Matt. 10:28 NIV “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”
 - ii. They will perish. John 3:16 NIV “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”
 - iii. They will be consumed, or in Mark, eaten. Hebrews 10:27 “...but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.”
 - iv. They will be burned up. Matthew 3:12 NIV “His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”
 - v. They will die a second time. *The lake of fire is the second death – you died once in your body while your soul was held in Hades, waiting for final judgment. The second death is where both body and soul die forever.
 - vi. But if people are eternal, destroy can’t mean destroy, perish can’t mean perish, consume can’t mean consume, burned up can’t mean burned up, and die can’t mean die.
 - c. The eternal conscious torment case rests on one verse; Revelation 14:18 NIV “And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.”
 - i. Quoting God’s judgment on Edom. (Isaiah 34:10) Yet there’s no smoke over there today.
 - ii. God’s eternal perspective verses our human perspective.

- V. Writing a book.
 - a. Two reasons not to:
 - i. Suspicion that will never go away and I'm already charismatic!
 - ii. Why introduce division when God wants unity?
 - b. Two reasons to do it:
 - i. It changes the gospel and the motivation for sharing it for me. The gospel doesn't rescue us from the bad news. (Accept Jesus or you will be eternally tormented) It offers the good news – the God who alone possesses immortality, loves us and wants to share His eternal life with rebellious, transient, human beings.
 - ii. It makes hell way more real and I am called to warn people which I'm doing today! A hell that contradicts our minds and consciences is hard to preach about with conviction.
 - c. There's another tree of life – those who eat from it will live forever – the cross!