

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT HELL

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment." Matt. 25:46

The subject of hell is one of the most awful subjects that anyone can contemplate. Sin is the only subject that is more awful. Sin itself is worse than the suffering and misery which it causes. One of the greatest achievements Satan has ever made was when he induced certain people, and preachers among them, to believe that God did not really mean just what He had said about future punishment. Satan has led many to believe and loudly proclaim from the pulpit of various churches the devilish doctrine that there is no hell. I am going to preach to you what God says on this subject rather than any cunningly devised speculations of human ingenuity or man-made theories which are spun out of man's own brain like the web of a spider out of his own body. You may say you don't think there is a hell. Well, it doesn't make any difference what you think. Man's opinions are all right in their way, but they don't weigh very much when you put them in the balances over against the written declaration of Almighty God.

Your aesthetic taste may be offended by the doctrines I preach tonight, but that doesn't alter the facts any. I would far rather believe and preach an unpleasant truth than to believe and preach a pleasant error. I would rather be called narrow and have my teaching agree with Christ than to be called broad and have my teaching conform with that of the Devil. I believe that it is the kindest thing that I can do to tell you the whole truth, to declare the whole counsel of God, no matter how unpleasant that may be to the natural heart. It is kindness in the superlative degree to point out to men the full measure of their danger.

I have no sympathy with, no respect for, and no confidence in, those men who try to cultivate for themselves a reputation for kindness of heart and breadth of thought by concealing from men unpleasant truths. The kindest man that ever lived in this world was Jesus Christ, and He is the One who has said the plainest things and the most appalling things about Hell. Man's speculations, whether yours, mine or those of anyone else, on this subject are absolutely valueless. All we know about our existence after death is what God has told us in His Book. All else is worthless speculation. God knows all about it and one ounce of His revelation is worth tone of man's speculation. I often hear people say, "I think so and so about hell." What difference does it make what you think or what I think? Who cares what we think? The question is not what we think but what does God say? The Bible has given us much clear teaching on this subject. There are 264 chapters in the New Testament. In 234 places in these chapters God says that there is such a place as hell for eternal punishment of the unsaved. Let us then go to this Book and discover what God says in it about hell, and when we find what God says let us believe it, whether we like it or not. And then let us act upon it. In this message we will consider what the Bible teaches about Hell under the following outline:--

- I. THE CERTAINTY OF HELL
- II. THE CHARACTER OF HELL
- III. THE CONSTITUENCY OF HELL
- IV. THE CONTINUANCE OF HELL

While this outline will not allow a complete study of the subject, yet it will permit as comprehensive a study as the limits of this hour will allow.

I. THE CERTAINTY OF HELL

It is absolutely certain that there is a hell. The reasons why I maintain that there is a hell are as follows:--

1. Hell is the natural and inevitable consequence of sin

Punishment must follow sin just as naturally and certainly as pain follows the inflicting of a wound upon your body. Sin damns just as sure as water drowns and fire burns. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." You can sneer at God and trample under feet His law but when you are finished you will find that your sins have been on your track like the bloodhounds of hell. You can go on in your sin, and sneer at the judgment of God but all the time your sin is gathering above you like the threatening storm and one day it will strike you with the lightning of its own revenge.

2. God owes it to the righteous who have quit sin and obeyed the Gospel of Jesus Christ to separate the wicked from them.

You do not invite some men and women in this community into your homes because you don't consider them fit associates for your virtuous wife and lovely daughter. For God to suffer the vile and unholy, the murderer, the adulterer, the liar, the reprobate, and men who have derided God and mocked decency to enter into heaven and dwell eternally in the society of the pure and Christ-loving children of God would be a sin against justice and an insult to honor.

3. God owes it to His government to see that the wicked are separated and punished for their crimes.

If the doors of our penal institutions such as jails and penitentiaries were flung open and the motley gang of the vile and vicious allowed to run loose in society, the very people who object to punishment in the world to come would be the first to condemn such a wholesale amnesty here. A law-breaker isn't entitled to the same liberty as a law-abiding individual. The same is true of the one who ignores God and His laws. Common sense ought to teach us that.

4. Hell is needed to restrain men from sin

You take away all fear of punishment and this already sin-cursed earth would be turned into a hotbed of crime, and a cesspool of iniquity. Although it is not much of a compliment to human nature yet it is true that the only reason some men are half decent is because they have to be. But you take away the penalty for wrong doing and you will lift the flood gates of iniquity. Take away the fear of the rope and electric chair and the life of no one in Kentucky would be safe. Let a man commit rape without fear of punishment, and your daughter and your wife would not be safe on the streets or highways. The same thing is true of theft and everything else in the category of crime. Since fear of punishment has a restraining influence on people in this life isn't it reasonable to believe that it will work the same effect for the life to come.

5. God's Word declares that there is a hell

This is the biggest reason why it is certain.

God says---"For a fire is kindled in mine anger and shall burn to the lowest hell." Deut. 32:22

Isaiah-----"Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming. Isa. 14:9

Proverbs---"He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." 29:1

Psalms-----"The wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God." Ps. 9:17

Daniel-----"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Dan. 12:2

Jesus-----"Then shall He say also unto them on His left hand, depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angles." Matt. 25:41

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment." Matt.

Paul-----"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power."
II Thess. 1:7-9

Peter-----"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." II Peter 2:9

John-----"Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Rev. 20:15
"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." Rev. 21:8

Now this is just a small portion of the great amount of teaching on this subject given us in the Bible. If any backsliders in the church have given up their belief in the existence of hell they have done so to get their consent to live as they please and not because of anything they ever found in the Word of God. If any preachers have given up their belief in it it is not because of what they find in the Bible but because they value the benediction of God less than they do the applause and favor of some clique or crowd in the pews, who control the church and don't want the truth of God preached into them. However, I agree with A. C. Dixon who said, "If we had more preaching of hell in the pulpit we might have less hell in the community." Anyway we have the Word of God for it and it is more certain that there is a hell than that when you lie down to sleep tonight you will awaken again tomorrow morning.

II. THE CHARACTER OF HELL

By this I mean the nature of hell or what sort of a place it is.

1. Hell is a place of the most intense bodily suffering or anguish.

"The unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." Of course your body in hell will not be like the one you have now. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven", and they cannot inherit the kingdom of hell either, but do not get the idea that the sinner in hell is to be a disembodied spirit. One in hell will have a body just the same as the saint will have a body in heaven. It will be the body of the resurrection and so changed as to make it fit for the unholy soul. Whatever its nature may be, the body of the damned is going to suffer all the retribution which the wicked and unholy deeds of life have justly brought upon it. You may say to me, "Well, do you believe that hell is a place of literal fire and brimstone or don't you think the words fire and brimstone are figurative?" I reply, that I do not know how the punishment of hell will be applied. No other man knows whether this language is literal or figurative. Even if it is figurative language that does not at all rob them of their reality or take away their terror for if the language is figurative and the figure is just a shadow of the real thing, oh my, what is the real thing?

2. Hell is a place of memory and remorse

"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: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Mk.9:43
Does this mean that some horrid, firey-eyed, centipede-like worm will strike its fangs into the naked flesh of the writhing sinner? No. It means the scorpion sting of memory and the biting remorse of a guilty conscience. If you go to hell you will take your memory with you and

that will strike thousands of scorpion stings into your soul. There is no torment known to men like the torment of an accusing memory. The drunkard will remember the wretched home, the pale-faced agonizing wife and the starving child. The gambler will recall the ruined victims of his vice; the murderer the ghastly face and oozing blood; the seducer, the innocent spoil of his ungodly passion; the blasphemer, the dishonore use of God's holy name; some women, the lives that they have squandered in frivolity, fashion and foolishness when they might have been living for God. Those of you who reject Christ and despise His salvation will remember the fresh red of the bloody sacrifice and all this memory will strike its remorseless sting so deep in the soul that hissing flames would be a boon could they but bring forgetfulness.

3. Hell is a place of consuming and ungratified desires and passions.

All who go to hell will carry with them the appetites and desires which have existed and they have developed into ruling power in this life. In hell passion and desires exist in their highest potency but there is absolutely no gratification for them. Miserable indeed will be the life in a place throughout eternity where there is no gratification whatever for the appetites and desires.

4. Hell is a place of unutterable shame and everlasting contempt.

"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

The awful, heart-breaking agony of shame dishonor and contempt is what often drives men and women to suicide. So many of social position or great capabilities have indulged in secret sins until their sins have been divulged and then they have tried to cover their disgrace by suicide. Hell is a world where every inhabitant is dishonored, a world of "Everlasting shame and contempt."

5. Hell is a world without hope

One can endure many things if there is any hope of a better day; but in hell there is no hope of a better day. Its sorrows, agony and despair are endless. There will be no opportunity in hell for any to repent and be saved according to the Bible. God's Word does not hold out one single ray of hope for any man or woman who dies without Christ. Any man who dares hold out such a hope, dares to do what God has not done.

III. THE CONSTITUENCY OF HELL

Hell will be inhabited by those who reject Jesus Christ as their Savior. Everyone who does not repent of sin, place his faith in Christ, accept Him as a personal Saviour and surrender to Him as Lord and Master is going to hell. Hell is the place where all the moral off-scourings of the earth will be. In Revelation 21:8 we have a clear statement as to the constituency of hell. It is as follows: "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." That is an active and vivid picture of the constituency of hell. How would you like to spend eternity in society like that? The fact that the companionships of hell will be the vilest and most degrading should cause every one who is rejecting Christ, but who at the same time shirks from all that is low and vile and contaminating in your companionships, to pause and really think as to whether or not you want to spend eternity with a crowd like that. Personally, if there was no suffering, remorse, shame, and lack of hope in hell the very fact of the crowd who are going to be there would make me do whatever was needful just to avoid being in company of that gang. I can find no pleasure in their fellowship here in this world for a few minutes much less in another world forever.

IV. THE CONTINUANCE OF HELL

It should be quite clear from the Scriptures used in this message that the existence in hell of those who go there will last forever. We believe its continuance is eternal because-----

1. That is the logical end of a life of continual sin

We all know the longer a man goes on in sin the deeper down he goes. Like the man who said when he took the life of his first victim he couldn't eat, he couldn't sleep, it so troubled him. By night and by day he saw the ghastly face and oozing blood; but now, he says, I can murder and laugh at my victim's agony while I do it. You can go on in sin expecting some day to repent and quit, but the day will come when you won't have the power to quit if you wanted to. Remember the longer you go on sin the deeper down you go; and if you go on in sin until your disposition to repent is gone what is there left for you but an everlasting hell?

2. Jesus said so.

He said, "The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment and the righteous into everlasting life." That looks like hell is going to last forever, doesn't it? If any of you go to hell it will not be because you are rich or poor, good or bad, wise or otherwise but simply because you hold on to your miserable old sins and in doing so reject Christ as your Saviour. There is but one way in which anyone can escape hell and that is by the personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. God has done and is doing everything in His power to bring men to repentance and to keep them from going to hell. The greatest obstacle that He has placed in the way to get men to turn out of the way that is leading them to hell is the cross of Christ. Christ with His outstretched arms is begging for you to come to Him that He might save and keep you out of hell. May God help every one of you to see the certainty, character, constituency, and continuance of hell and that the reason why you are going there is because you will not give up your sins and take Christ. May He help you to turn away from your sins right now and trust the Lord Jesus as your Saviour. Will you come to Him now?