

HELL

Matthew 25:41, 46

I. Introduction:

- A. Man, by nature, rejects the idea of judgment and punishment. He rather likes and prefers to think about blessings and rewards from God, but not in His punishment. That's why man has invented many plans to escape the reality that man will suffer for the sins not forgiven.
- B. Many think that hell is just the pain that man feels for a guilty conscience, when he does wrong.
- C. Others believe that all the hell that we will receive is here on earth. That man makes his own hell here on earth by the kind of life he lives.
 - 1. They say, "Just look at the kind of wife that I have" or, "just look at the kind of husband that I have. I am living a real hell!" - But they really don't know what hell is all about.
- D. A majority of people accept Heaven but reject Hell. But the same Scriptures that talk about Heaven speak also about Hell. If we do not receive our Heaven here on this earth, neither we will receive Hell here on this earth.

II. WHAT IS HELL?

- A. In the Bible we find 4 words that are translated hell:
 - 1. **Sheol** – (Vine's expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words).
 - a. In the Old Testament we find this word translated hell. This is a Hebrew word to designate "The place of the dead" (Gen. 37:35; Ps. 9:17, 16:10)
 - b. Sometimes this word means punishment but really it refers to "the abode of the dead".
 - 2. **Hades** – (Vine's expository Dictionary of New Testament Words).
 - a. In the New Testament, we find the word "Hades" from the Greek. This word is synonymous of Sheol, and it literally means "the unseen", "the abode of the dead" (Acts 2:31, Lk. 16:23)
 - 3. **Tartarus** – (Robertson's New Testament Word pictures)
 - a. This is a pagan word. And this word is found once in the New Testament (2 Pet. 2:4)
 - b. It is believed that this refers to the section of "Hades" where the sinners are.
 - 4. **Gehenna** – (Strong's Dictionary and Thayer's Greek Lexicon).
 - a. This is a combination of two Aramic words;
 - i. "ge" which means: Valley
 - ii. "Hinom" which was the name of somebody.
 - iii. So it means: "Valley of Hinom".
 - b. Our Lord uses this word 11 times in the New Testament. James, the brother of our Lord, uses this word one time. In total, 12 times in the

New Testament. And in all of these scriptures the word hell refers to the future punishment of the wicked.

- c. Now, why, did the Lord use the name of a valley in Palestine as a place of punishment for the wicked? We need to understand the story of the Valley of Hinom.
 - i. According to the Bible, Solomon introduced the idolatry in Jerusalem when he built a high place, or an altar to worship the god Molech and the god Chemosh in the Mount of Olives. He did this in order to please his foreign or strange wives (1 Kgs. 11:7-8)
 - ii. After this, under the reign of the wicked kings Ahaz, Manasseh and Amon, this valley of Hinom was converted in the scenario of cruel and obscene rituals of pagan worship (2 Chr. 28:1-3; 33:1-9, 21-25)
 - iii. The Jews at this time would worship all of these pagan gods and would burn their sons in sacrifice. This cruel and monstrous worship was an abomination to God.
 - iv. When Josiah was king of Judah, he killed all the idolatrous priests and destroyed all the pagan altars (2 Chr. 34:4-5)
 - v. After this, this valley, according to scholars, was converted in the place of horror for the Jews, and they say that it was the place for the bones, dead animals and criminals, trash and all kind of wasted materials, which was always burning.
 - vi. When Jesus taught his disciples about hell, he pointed to the valley of Hinom and said: Hell will be like this. It was a very good and clear illustration.
 - vii. That's why the word Gehenna is translated hell and it refers to the future punishment of the wicked.

III. THE NATURE OF HELL.

- A. How is it described this place? 11 times our Lord talks about the nature of hell. He talks about...
 1. "everlasting fire" and "hell of fire" or Gehenna of fire (Mt. 18:8-9)
 2. It calls it "the fire that shall never be quenched" (Mk. 9:43)
 3. "and the fire is not quenched" (Mk. 9:48)
 4. He calls hell the "everlasting punishment" (Mt. 25:46)
 5. It will be a place of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 8:12)
 6. Finally the Lord describes hell as a place "of outer darkness" (Mt. 25:30)
- B. Other descriptions of hell in the New Testament are found:
 1. "The blackness of darkness for ever" (2 Pet. 2:17)
 2. "The lake which burns with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8)
 3. "as indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil" (Rom. 2:8-9)
- C. When the Bible speaks about heaven, it uses the most beautiful human words to describe it, like "streets of gold", "pearly gates". God uses all means to encourage us to want to go there.

- D. And when the Bible speaks about hell, it uses the most terrible words to describe it, so that we do our best to escape it. When describing hell, God uses two things that the majority of men fear the most and these are: Fire and darkness.
1. Fire: When we get too close to fire by accident, we immediately do our best to get away, knowing of the harm and pain that it may cause us. We tremble or shudder just to think that we may die on a fire, burning our body.
 2. Darkness: There is certain fear and dread to complete darkness. Sometimes we fear darkness, but we have not yet known complete darkness. (Visit to the caverns) I read of a preacher who went with some people to some caverns in Texas. He says that while they were somewhere below into the deepest of the caverns, the guide turn off the lights, and after a few seconds you could hear the expressions of fear out of the people present, and when the guide finally turn the light on, everybody was happy to see the lights. This preacher said that he thought for a minute, what if the guide does not turn the lights on? Just imagine being in complete darkness for all eternity. You lose the sense of time and space!
- E. Now somebody says, but how can be darkness and fire in hell? We reason this way, if there is fire there should be some kind of light. Well, I just don't know how that can be, but one thing I know for sure, that God has the power to make fire and darkness at the same time, and that it will not be a great consolation to have light if I am burning in the flames of fire. But God is using this description so that we understand how terrible that place will be and to do our best to escape it, by obeying the Lord.

IV. THE EVIDENCE OF HELL

- A. The evidence of hell is abundant in the Holy Scriptures. The Lord himself, as well as his apostles, testifies about this place. There is much of hell that we do not know, but the fact that this is a real place, is very clear in the Bible. Even though there are many who reject the idea of a future place of punishment for the wicked.
- B. Several years ago, a Professor from the University of Chicago, Dr. Herbert Betts, did a survey or poll among 200 students of Theology, people who were being prepared for the ministry. One of the questions was: Do you believe in hell as a real place? 76% answer no, 13% that they were not sure, and only 11% believed in hell. Can you imagine, people who were being prepared for the ministry and do not believe in the existence of hell. In other words they are not preaching about it. Others like Joel Oesten, the famous preacher in Houston, have said that he will not preach on sin, hell or judgment. He just wants to have large crowds of people. He just preaches what people want to hear!
- C. And, I am afraid that many times we, as Church of Christ preachers, do not preach enough on hell. We do not want to scare people, we do not want to be

negative, but this is a Bible subject, and we need to preach the whole counsel of God!

D. There are three evidences for the existence of hell

1. Reason demands a place like hell. Even if the Scriptures would not talk about a place like hell, reason and common sense would tell us of the necessity of a place like hell. We could not have a place like heaven if there were not a hell. If heaven is the place where there is peace and justice, then there is a need for a place for the wicked. If all the criminals were put in heaven, pretty soon it would be a hell. If there is a clean city, there should be of necessity a place for the garbage.
2. Justice requires a place like hell. God has given a written law in the Bible and men trespass this law and sin, causing a lot of suffering and wickedness in the world. The reasonable conclusion is that there should be punishment for the wicked. And the Bible declares that there is a punishment for the un-repentant sinner, and that is hell. Moreover, many crimes committed in this world are not punished in this life. There was an article in the paper that said that out of 5133 crimes that were committed, only half of them were resolved. And the other half? Will they be without punishment? No! God will punish them in hell.
3. Revelation confirms a place like hell. We have already mentioned many scriptures that talk about the reality of hell. 11 times Jesus Christ speaks about the Gehenna. For us who believe that the Bible is the word of God, there is not a shadow of a doubt of the existence of a place called hell.

V. THE DURATION OR LENGTH OF HELL

- A. Through centuries man has tried, by all means, to eliminate hell, or at least to reduce it.
1. Hillel, a Jewish Rabbi taught that gentiles would be punished for 12 months in hell and then consumed. He didn't believe that the Jews could go to hell.
 2. The Catholic Church teaches that there is a place called "purgatory", in which sinners are for a period of time purging their sins and then they will be admitted in heaven.
 3. The Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in a place called hell.
- B. But Brethren, the Bible doesn't say anything of this abbreviated punishment. Jesus, our Lord, tells us that the lost will be sent to hell for eternity (Mt. 25:41-46)
1. Here in these passages, the Lord uses a Greek word "aionios" which means "eternal", "everlasting".
 2. The duration of the punishment in hell for the lost, is the same as the duration of joy and happiness of the saved in heaven. Jesus also said in Mark 9:48 "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched".
 3. The second death for the wicked will be the eternal and final separation from the presence of the Lord (Rev. 20:14-15, 2 Thess. 1:9)

VI. THE INHABITANTS OF HELL

- A. Hell is a place prepared for the devil and his angels. Hell was not prepared for man. If man goes to hell is because he has followed Satan to his home, instead of following Christ to his Father's house (Mt. 25:41)
- B. The Bible tells us that there will be a terrible and wicked population in hell (Rev. 21:8, Gal. 5:19-21)
- C. The worst of this world, of all centuries, will be there. Also those who rejected Christ, as their Savior and did not obey Him will be there. Also the unfaithful Christians will be there. The devil will be there, the demons will be there. It is going to be a terrible place!

VII. HELL IS NOT THE PLACE FOR CHRISTIANS

- A. It doesn't matter how terrible that place may be, we can be sure that hell is not for the Christian (Php. 3:20)
- B. Here in this passage conversation means community of citizenship. So, our citizenship is in heaven. Our Lord and Savior came and died for our sins and delivered us from hell (2 Tim. 1:10, Rev. 20:6)
- C. If we become Christians by obeying the Gospel plan of salvation, we will be saved, (Mk. 16:15-16, Acts 2:38)
- D. And if we continue faithful till the end of our lives or till the coming of our Lord, we will receive a crown of righteousness and the crown of life and we will be in heaven eternally, forever and ever (2 Pet. 1:11, Rev. 2:10)
- E. The Christian should not be afraid of hell, because Christ has delivered him from this place.