

Pastor Robert Rutta

Hell

Luke 16:19-31

Hell is the eternal home of sinners who die without the Saviour. It was created for Satan and the rebellious angels (Matt.25:41). Unsaved men will also go there (Mt. 25:41-46).

Matthew 25:41

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

This is a topic that we never like to talk about – but it is a topic that we must talk about. As we look at the preaching of Jesus we see that He preached more about hell than He did on Heaven.

Sadly, there is much false teaching about this subject. We have people like Billy Graham that deny the fire of hell.

Graham said:

“I think that hell essentially is separation from God forever. And that is the worst hell that I can think of. But I think people have a hard time believing God is going to allow people to burn in literal fire forever. I think the fire that is mentioned in the Bible is a burning thirst for God that can never be quenched” (Graham, Orlando Sentinel, Orlando, Florida, April 10, 1983).

“Jesus used three words to describe hell. ... The third word that He used is ‘fire.’ Jesus used this symbol over and over. This could be literal fire, as many believe. Or it could be symbolic. God does have fires that do not burn. And also there is the figurative use of fire in the Bible. ... I’ve often thought that this fire could possibly be a burning thirst for God that is never quenched. What a terrible fire that would be never to find satisfaction, joy, or fulfillment!” (Billy Graham, A Biblical Standard for Evangelists, A commentary on the 15 Affirmations made by participants at the International Conference for Itinerant Evangelists in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, July, 1983, pp. 4547).

“The only thing I could say for sure is that hell means separation from God. We are separated from his light, from his fellowship. That is going to be hell. When it comes to a literal fire, I don’t preach it because I’m not sure about it. When the Scripture uses fire concerning hell, that is possibly an illustration of how terrible it’s going to be not fire but something worse, a thirst for God that cannot be quenched” (Billy Graham, interview with Richard Ostling, Time magazine, Nov. 15, 1993).

Many have accepted his teaching, BUT our beliefs must come from the Bible, not from a man.

I want us to look at this subject from several angles.

I. What Hell is Not

1) Hell is Not Soul Sleep or Annihilation

There are some who teach a false doctrine that the final state of the sinner is that their existence ceases or at least goes to sleep.

Soul sleep is the teaching that when a person dies that his soul "sleeps" until the time of the future resurrection.

In this condition, the person is not aware or conscious.

The Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh-day Adventists hold to this doctrine.

The Jehovah's Witnesses teach "soul annihilation." This refers to the belief that when we die, the soul ceases to exist. At the future resurrection, Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the souls of the redeemed will be recreated.

Seventh-day Adventists teach true "soul sleep," meaning after death believers are not conscious of anything and their souls become completely inert until the time of the final resurrection of the dead.

The story of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16 destroys this teaching, among other verses.

Luke 16:23 "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."

Each soul will spend all of eternity conscious somewhere - heaven or hell.

2) Hell is Not the Punishment Stage on the Way to Ultimate Restoration

There are some who, while believing that men must pay for their sin, propose that a loving God would never leave anyone in hell permanently.

In other words, they believe that once a human being has suffered sufficiently in hell that his sin is purged then he can enter finally 'so as by fire' into eternal life.

- a. The only way sin is purged is by the shed blood of Christ

Heb 1:3 "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;"

- b. While there may be second chances in this life there are no more chances after death

Illus - Judas Iscariot

Mat 26:24 "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born."

If he were to suffer long enough so as to be restored then he would finally arrive at a place where it was good for him to have been born.

This Scripture rejects that.

3) Hell is Not the Grave

The Jehovah's Witnesses love to go back to the word 'sheol' in the Old Testament, and point out that it is also translated 'grave' just as many times as it is 'hell' (31 times) in the KJV Old Testament.

...but they don't like to talk about the New Testament 'gehenna', 'hades', or 'tartarus' which signify a place of fire under the earth where souls go to be burned.

So why does the KJV translate 'sheol' sometimes 'grave' and sometimes 'hell'?...context, context, context!

Deut 32:22 "For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains."

Job 14:13 O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!

The Jehovah's Witnesses like to say that the Jewish 'gehenna' or 'tophet' were physical places where animals bodies or even human sacrifices were burned, and that it simply meant a fiery death and end to existence.

No, the end of the wicked man is not simply the grave.

There are too many passages that speak of his eternal, conscious torment for it to be simply the grave.

Nor can some of the angels who rebelled against God and are being kept in hell waiting their final sentencing be said to be simply dead/in the grave.

II Pet 2.4 “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;”

No, the wicked are not resting peacefully waiting for judgment.

Rev 14:11 “And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”

II. What Hell Is:

1) Hell is Torment

a. Physically

- Fire

Luke 16:24 “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.”

- Darkness

Matt 25:30 “And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Jude 13 “Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.”

The hotter a fire gets it goes from orange/red to blue to white...until at the absolute hottest it emits ultraviolet rays (colorless)

ill -nuclear explosion at the center

- Worms

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.”

- Screaming

Mat 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.

b. Emotionally

Hell is the ultimate separation

...from saved loved ones

...from the comforting presence of God

It is the ultimate solitary confinement, lasting forever, with nothing to occupy you but torment, no thoughts in your head but memories of your own sins and missed opportunities to trust Christ, and no sound in your ears but the wailing of the damned.

I am convinced that people in hell will constantly remember how close they were to heaven (encounters with soul winners/tracts/sermons/etc.) and how foolish they were to throw it away.

I am convinced they will likewise be haunted by the thought of loved ones they misled, sending them into hell likewise.

It will be great emotional as well as physical torment.

2) Hell is Forever

Matthew 25:46 “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

Mark 9:43 “...fire that never shall be quenched”

Isaiah 33:14 “The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”

II Thess 1:9 “Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;”

Matt 25:41 “...everlasting fire”

Revelation 14:11 “And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”

Rev 20:10 “...tormented day and night for ever”

Are there different levels of hell?

Some people are more wicked than others.

Some had more opportunities for salvation than others – refusing them every time.

They should then be held more accountable.

In Rev 20:12,13 we are told that the unsaved dead will be judged according to their works.

Revelation 20:12-13

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.

Everyone who goes to hell will deserve to be there because they rejected the Saviour.

Some will have a worse hell, because they deserve a worse hell.

This teaching that Hell will be more bearable for some than for others is found elsewhere in the Bible also.

Jesus said that Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon would find it more tolerable in the judgement than Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum,

or other cities that rejected the gospel after much enlightenment (Lk. 10:10-15).

The greater the enlightenment and opportunity which a sinner has, the greater his punishment will be if he rejects it:

Luke 12:47-48

47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”

A Lost Man's Timeline

- 1) He dies without Christ and his soul goes immediately to hell
ill - rich man in Lk 16 '...and in hell he lift up his eyes'
ill - being put in jail after being arrested but before being convicted/sentenced
- 2) At the Great White Throne judgment, all the unsaved (living and dead) are assembled before God to hear their sentence pronounced

Revelation 20:7-13

7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

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.

3) After that sentence is pronounced they are cast into the lake of fire forever

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.

This is also called 'the second death.'

How does one get to hell?

John 3:18

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Because of sin, we are born condemned – but we don't have to remain condemned.

Hell is for those who refuse to believe that Jesus is the Saviour.

John 3:36

36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.