

Study 51 – Hell

Background:

We considered in Study # 15 the reality of spiritual death. This study goes further to consider what the Bible tells us about hell and damnation. Much of what we know about Hell came directly from the lips of Jesus. We therefore need to take His teaching and His warnings seriously.

Key Facts About Eternity

- (1) Everyone will exist eternally either in heaven or hell (Daniel **12:2-3**; Matthew **25:46**; John **5:28**; Revelation **20:14-15**).
- (2) Everyone has only one life in which to determine their destiny (Hebrews **9:27**).
- (3) Our eternal destiny is determined by whether a person believes (puts their trust) in Messiah Jesus alone to save them (John **3:16, 36**, etc.).

Key Passages About Hell

- (1) Hell was designed originally for Satan and his demons (Matthew **25:41**; Revelation **20:10**).
- (2) Hell will also punish the sin of those who reject Christ (Matthew **13:41,50**; Revelation **20:11-15**; **21:8**).
- (3) Hell is conscious torment.
 - Matthew **13:50** “furnace of fire...weeping and gnashing of teeth”
 - Mark **9:48** “where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched”
 - Revelation **14:10** “he will be tormented with fire and brimstone”
- (4) Hell is eternal and irreversible.
 - Revelation **14:11** “the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever and they have no rest day and night”
 - Revelation **20:14** “This is the second death, the lake of fire”
 - Revelation **20:15** “If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire”

Erroneous Views of Hell

(1) *The second chance view* – After death there is still a way to escape hell.

Answer: “It is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment” (Hebrews **9:27**).

(2) **Universalism** – All are eternally saved.

Answer: It denies the truth of salvation through Christ which means that a person decides to either trust in Christ or else he/she rejects Christ and goes to hell (John **3:16**; **3:36**).

(3) **Annihilationism** – Hell means a person dies like an animal – ceases to exist.

Answer: It denies the resurrection of the unsaved (John **5:28**, etc. – see above). It denies conscious torment (see above).

Objections to the Biblical View of Hell

(1) *A loving God would not send people to a horrible hell.*

Response: God is just (Romans **2:11**).

- God has provided the way of salvation to all (John **3:16**, **17**; 2 Corinthians **5:14-15**; 1 Timothy **2:6**; **4:10**; Titus **2:11**; 2 Peter **3:9**).
- Even those who haven’t heard of Christ are accountable for God’s revelation in nature (Romans **1:20**). God will seek those who seek Him (Matthew **7:7**; Luke **19:10**).
- Therefore God doesn’t send people to hell, they choose it (Romans **1:18,21,25**).

(2) *Hell is too severe a punishment for man’s sin.*

Response: God is holy-perfect (1 Peter **1:14-15**).

- Sin is willful opposition to God our creator (Romans **1:18-32**).
- Our sin does merit hell (Romans **1:32**; **2:2,5,6**).
- What is unfair and amazing is that Christ died for our sin and freely offers salvation to all (Romans **2:4**; **3:22-24**; **4:7-8**; **5:8-9**).

Biblical Terms Describing Where the Dead Are

- Sheol - a Hebrew term simply describing “the grave” or “death” – Does not refer to “hell” specifically
- Hades - A Greek term that usually refers to hell – a place of torment

- (Luke **10:15**; **16:23**, etc.)
- Gehenna - A Greek term (borrowed from a literal burning dump near Jerusalem) that always refers to hell – a place of torment (Matthew **5:30**; **23:33**)
 - “Lake of fire”- the final abode of unbelievers after they are resurrected (Revelation **20:14-15**)
 - “Abraham’s bosom” - (Luke **16:22**) a place of eternal comfort
 - “Paradise” - (Luke **23:43**) a place of eternal comfort
 - “With the Lord” - a key phrase describes where church age believers are after death (Philippians **1:23**; 1 Thessalonians **4:17**; 2 Corinthians **5:8**)
 - “New heavens and earth” – where believers will be after they are resurrected (Revelation **20:4-6**; **21:1-4**)

Conclusion

Hell is a terrible reality. It is not ‘loving’ to underplay this awful reality. A philosophical point: if there is no eternal punishment then, metaphorically, people can shake their fist in the face of a holy God and say (in effect) “you can’t get me”. That, in turn, means that sin does not really matter and that the death of Jesus on the cross was just a ‘symbol’ of God’s activity. If God cannot punish then in a sense He is less than “god” as He has no ability to punish evil and those who are evil are ultimately vindicated – by getting away with their sins.

That there should be confusion about hell is not a big surprise. The devil does not want to go there alone. There is no obvious biblical evidence that the devil has any ‘power’ in Hell – the devil will be punished as will all those who have chosen to go there.

Our curiosity about the abode of the dead is not completely satisfied by biblical terms or verses. What we do know is that either eternal torment in hell or eternal joy in heaven awaits all people after death, based on whether they trust in Christ’s payment for sin or reject Christ.

Sin is telling God to leave me. In Hell this wish comes true.