

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

- A. Introduction: We're discussing the fact that we live in a time of increasing deception regarding Who Jesus is and why He came. Even amongst so-called "Christians", the Gospel of Jesus Christ is being redefined.
1. Jesus predicted that just prior to His return there would be much religious deception, including false prophets and messiahs. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 23-24
 - a. Since the Bible is our protection against deception, we are taking time to look at what it says about Jesus—Who He is, why He came, and what He preached (the gospel or good news). For the past few weeks we've been focusing on the fact that we can't fully appreciate the good news (the gospel) unless we first know the bad news.
 1. All human beings are guilty of sin before a holy God and consequently deserve God's wrath against them for their sin.
 2. God's wrath or punishment is eternal separation from Him. Jesus is the only way of escape from our guilt and this impending destruction. Rom 3:23; Rom 1:18; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; etc.
 - b. It is becoming increasingly common to hear so called "Christians" challenge the idea of eternal punishment, declaring that all people are saved no matter what they believe. And, a loving God would never send anyone to Hell for eternity.
 1. Those who hold to what the Bible says about sin, wrath, judgment, punishment and Hell are increasingly being labeled as intolerant haters, judges, and bigots.
 2. The pressure is on genuine Christians to back up from the truths of God's Word. If ever there was a time to know what you believe and why, it is now.
 - c. In this lesson we're going to continue to talk about the wrath of God and how critical knowledge of the "bad news" is to appreciating and understanding the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 2. This world is not as it should be. Neither mankind nor the earth is as God intended. Both have been damaged by sin and infused with a curse of corruption and death. That's bad news.
 - a. Jesus came into this world to deal with and root out the core problem—sin which has resulted in death. That's good news. Heb 9:26; II Tim 1:9-10
 1. The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). Death is more than physical death. Death is separation from God who is life—separation in this life and in the life to come (Isa 59:2).
 2. God made human beings for relationship. He created us with the intention that we would become His sons and daughters through faith in Christ (Eph 1:4-5). But sin has disqualified us from our created purpose.
 - A. God, Who is holy (separate from all evil), righteous (right), and just (does what is right), has wrath against sin. His wrath is an expression of justice, or an administering of justice.
 - B. It is right and just to punish wrong doing. To be true to Himself and His nature, God can't ignore or overlook sin. His wrath must be expressed and sin must be punished. He can't let guilty men off the hook for sin. Ex 23:7; Prov 17:15; Prov 24:24; Nahum 1:3
 - b. Since God did not make men to sin or for His, His goal since the fall of man has not been to punish sin, but rather to remove it so that His creation can be restored to what He planned from the beginning—a family of holy, righteous sons and daughters.
 1. Almighty God devised a plan to express His wrath toward sin, be true to His righteous, just nature, and remove sin without us being destroyed or eternally separated from Him.
 2. Jesus took on flesh, was born into this world and went to the Cross for us as us to be punished for our sin. The just and righteous wrath that should have gone to us for our sin went to Jesus our Substitute. Isa 53:4-6; II Cor 5:21; etc.
 - c. God's righteous wrath toward sin has been expressed, but you must receive that expression in order for His wrath to be removed from you. You receive it by acknowledging Jesus as Savior and

bowing you knee to Him as Lord. John 3:16-18

1. John 3:36—If a person has not received Christ and His sacrifice, then God’s wrath abides or remains on them. This doesn’t mean that God now deals with such people in wrath. He deals with them in mercy and gives them a lifetime to repent as He shows them kindness and gives them a witness of Himself. II Pet 3:9; Luke 6:35; Matt 5:45; Acts 14:16-17; Rom 1:20; etc.
 2. If they do not respond to His witness, when they leave this earth they will face the wrath of God—His just expression and righteous response to their sin. They will never have life. They will experience eternal death or eternal separation from Him. That is the wrath of God.
 3. It is increasingly common today to hear people say that there are many paths to God, and as long as you are sincere, it doesn’t really matter what you believe. That’s not true. Jesus Himself said: I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father but by (through) Me. John 14:6
 - a. When you understand what Jesus did through the Cross—satisfied divine justice against us for our sin—then His statement makes perfect sense. No one can be released from the just and righteous penalty for their sin (eternal separation from God) without the shedding of blood. Heb 9:22
 - b. As the God-man, Jesus is the only one qualified to make that that sacrifice. He has made it, but you must accept it. There is no other way out of eternal death into eternal life but through Jesus.
- B. As we said above, it is becoming more and more common to hear people (even professing “Christians”) say that they don’t believe in Hell because they feel certain that a loving God would never punish someone like that. But what does the Bible say about the fate of those who face the wrath of God when they die? We could do several lessons on this topic, but for now, consider these points.
1. All human beings have an inward portion (spirit and soul) and an outward portion (physical body). At death the inward and outward portions separate. The body returns to dust and the inward man passes into another dimension—either Heaven or Hell, depending on their response to Jesus in this life.
 - a. Matt 8:12; Luke 16:24—In the New Testament, Hell is described as a place of fiery torment, darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth. Note that some of the descriptions of Hell seem contradictory. It is described as a place of darkness, yet there is fire which provides light.
 1. The descriptions of Hell are meant to emphasize the point that the conditions are the result of being cut off from God, from all life and light, from all peace and joy.
 2. They are meant to emphasize the permanence and the unendingness of Hell. That’s the point.
 - b. Luke 16—Jesus gave an account of two men who died at about the same time. One man went to Hell. Note that the man in Hell called it a place of torment. v23; 24; 25; 28
 1. Two Greek words are used for torment. One means torture; the other means to grieve: v23, 28—This place of suffering (Knox), of pain (Basic), of misery (Norlie); v24,25— I am suffering agony (20th Cent); in anguish (ASB).
 2. What is the torment and suffering of hell? People get into trouble when they take verses that describe Hell too far and try to paint a vivid picture of what it is like (demons tormenting men).
 - A. Jesus came to seek and save the lost and died so that men would not perish (Luke 19:10; John 3:16). Perish and lost are the same Greek word. It means to destroy or to ruin.
 - B. There is no greater ruin than to be forever lost to, cut off from your created purpose—sonship and relationship with Almighty God—and you know it. That is Hell.
 2. Both Heaven and Hell are temporary dwelling places. God never intended for humans to live as disembodied spirits in an immaterial realm. In connection with the second coming of Jesus:
 - a. All those in Heaven will return to earth and be reunited with their bodies through resurrection of the dead, to live on earth again, this time forever. God will renovate the earth and remove all trace of corruption and death. Heaven and earth will be together. I Cor 15:20-21; 52-53; Rev 21:1; etc.
 - b. All those who went to Hell will be removed from Hell and confined to what the Bible calls the lake

of fire or the second death. Rev 20:12-15

1. Jesus gave several facts about this second death in Matt 25:41; 46. It is separation from God. It is everlasting. It was made for the devil and his angels. It is a place of punishment.
2. Punishment comes from a word that means penal infliction. The words punish, punished, punishment are used nine times in the New Testament.
 - A. It refers to God punishing people four times. Matt 25:46; II Thess 1:9; Heb 10:29; II Pet 2:9
 - B. All four verses refer to punishing people who have rejected Jesus Christ and His sacrifice and three of them directly connect it with the second coming of Jesus.
 - C. The ultimate expression of God's wrath toward sinful humanity is eternal separation from Him and exclusion from His kingdom in the second death. Rev 2:11; Rev 20:6; Rev 21:8
3. There is coming a Day of Judgment and wrath, not a 24 hour day, but a time of administering justice or judgment in connection with the Second Coming of Jesus. (lots of lessons for another time)
 - a. Consider what will ultimately happen to all who throughout human history have refused the Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation He provided through His death, burial, and resurrection.
 1. II Thess 1: 7-9—When the Lord Jesus appears from heaven, He will come with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who refuse to obey the Good News (gospel) of the Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power (NLT).
 2. The Greek word translated bringing judgment (vengeance in the KJV) means to execute justice or the execution of a sentence. Punished comes from a word meaning to pay a price or penalty.
 - b. People who do refuse the sacrifice of Christ for their sins never see life in this life or the life to come. They live this life separated from God and they will continue in their separation from God eternally. That is what Hell and the second death is all about.
 1. II Thess 1:9 calls their sentence is destruction. That doesn't mean they are destroyed. The idea is that they are ruined. It's the same Greek word used in John 3:16 and Luke 19:10.
 2. Men made in the image of God, created for sonship and relationship with God, because of their willful rejection of Jesus, will experience eternal ruin; their destiny unfulfilled and they know it.
4. People struggle with the idea of Hell and the second death because we think, "That's not fair!" But consider these points. Hell is about justice.
 - a. Hell is about justice. We understand justice when a horrific crime is committed. If Charles Manson was "let off the hook" for his crimes, we would be outraged because "that's not fair!", unless Manson is a relative (our brother or son). Then we'd look at it emotionally and search for mitigating circumstances.
 1. We live in a culture that increasingly gets its information about reality from what people feel. Absolute, objective truth is being replaced by subjective, relative feelings—even in the church. We must be on guard against this tendency because it will take us into error and deception.
 2. The issue is not: How do you feel about it? The issue is: What does the Bible say? What does Almighty God say about it? Justice is blind. That means it is meted out according to law and not according to emotion.
 - b. Hell is about removing from God's creation everything that hurts, harms, and destroys. All the pain and suffering in this world is due either directly or indirectly to man's sin and rebellion. The only way to bring permanent peace and happiness to this world is to remove the root problem.
 1. Rebellious men and women can either voluntarily submit to the rulership of the rightful King of the earth and be cleansed and transformed by His power from sinners into sons—or they can be forever removed from contact with God and His family.
 2. In Matt 13 Jesus told a parable about wheat (children of the kingdom) and tares (children of the wicked one).

- A. v40-43—When His disciples asked for an explanation He told them that it was a picture of what will happen at His second coming. God’s angels will remove all things that offend. The word offend means a trap, to entice to sin. They will remove those who do iniquity. The word means lawbreakers, workers of iniquity.
- B. Why will this happen? Number one, it is just. Number two, it will produce and insure peace and righteousness in God’s eternal kingdom on this earth. Rev 11:18
- C. We say: How could a loving God created Hell and put people there? But we have it backwards: How could He not remove from His family all that hurts and harms?
- c. Yes, but what about natives in the jungle or Muslims or Buddhists who have never heard of Jesus? How can a loving God send them to Hell when they have never even heard of Jesus?
 - 1. God doesn’t “send anyone to Hell”. Peoples’ sins send them to Hell. Their rejection of Jesus sends them to Hell. II Pet 2:1
 - 2. We could do entire lessons on this point. God cares about those people more than you or I do. He knew each one of them in Adam and in their mother’s womb. He knows all their names and He knows how many hairs they have on their heads. He is perfectly present with each one of them and has been throughout their lifetime. Acts 17:27
 - A. God has given them a witness of Himself through His creation to which they can respond He gives them the witness of conscience. Every known culture has a standard of right and wrong. It’s part of the image of God that men still bear even in our fallen condition. Rom 1:20; Rom 2:14-15
 - B. Titus 2:11 says that the grace of God has appeared to all men. John 1:9 tells us Jesus lights every man who comes into the world. No one leaves this earth without enough light to respond to the grace of God through Jesus.
- d. Jesus does not, think that Hell is unfair. In fact, as we’ve seen, when He returns, He will administer the wrath of God, the final judicial response of God, to wicked men.
 - 1. Future punishment for the wicked is mentioned by every New Testament author in some way. Jesus spoke more about Hell than those men.
 - A. Two Greek words are translated Hell in the New Testament: *hades* and *gehenna*. In the years before Jesus was born, *gehenna* came to be used as a picture of the final judgment on or the final destination of the wicked.
 - 1. The name *gehenna* comes from the Valley of Hinnom, an actual valley located just south of Jerusalem. It was known for its pagan rituals, especially child sacrifices to the god Molech. I Kings 11:7; II Kings 23:10
 - 2. King Josiah converted it to a place of abomination where dead bodies were thrown and burned. In New Testament times trash was burned there. II Kings 23:10
 - B. All but one reference to *gehenna* (James 3:6) came from Jesus (Matt 5:22; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15;33; Mark 9:43;45;47; Luke 12:5; 16:23).
 - 2. If ever there was a time to get to know Jesus as He is revealed in the New Testament, it’s now.
 - A. Not only does the Bible help us to understand why eternal punishment is just and righteous, but it shows us the character of God. God never has and never will do wrong to any man.
 - B. We can’t let what we don’t yet know about God’s plan for humanity undermine what we do know. Deut 29:29
- C. Conclusion: We have more to say, but consider one thought as we close. No one has to be punished or eternally separated from God. The price for sin has been paid. A way of escape has been made. For all who bow their knee to Jesus as Savior and Lord, there is no more wrath for our sin. The Righteous judge is also our Savior and we can face Him with confidence. Rom 5:9; I Thess 1:10; I Thess 5:9; I John 4:17