

Monday, September 6, 2011 – The Reality of Hell

Sunday, September 11, will mark the 10th anniversary of the worst terrorist attack on American soil in our history. Our televisions are inundated with specials recalling the events of that day, interviews with people who were there (and survived) and various others whose lives were altered by those events. Most news accounts tell us that religious attendance climbed over 50% in this country in the weeks following that tragedy. How sad it is that it took a disaster, claiming over 3,000 lives, to get humans to think about their relationship with God.

The fact that human beings were made in the very image and likeness of God (**Gen. 1:26-27**) should suggest, to those who consider issues seriously, that we are more than mere earthly creatures passing through time toward oblivion. The concept of an eternal future which involves punishment, for those who choose not to serve God, is one that should strike a note of terror in the heart. Given the arrogant nature of mankind in general, the idea of “eternal punishment” has met with considerable resistance, even though it is plainly taught in the Scriptures.

According to a 2001 Gallup poll, an incredible 71 percent of the public says they believe in hell. If this is truly correct, then why is it not causing significant changes in people's behavior? Where is the public outcry and hunger for Truth? Where are the reformed lives? Or do people just think they will obey God later, on their terms, when it is convenient? Paul warns those at Corinth, “**Behold, the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation**” (**2 Cor. 6:2**). Though the percentage remains relatively high, without any emphasis from pulpits across the land, how long will it take for that number to fall significantly? With people preferring entertainment to the Scriptures, ignorance will soon prevail, which always proves fatal (**Hosea 4:6**)?

It is understandable that most religious denominations are trying to appeal to people for membership; but Jesus did not design His church to see how many people He could entice into it. He stated plainly that the majority of people are going to be lost (**Matt. 7:13-14**). If people are not motivated by love to obey Him and by fear of hell to despise Satan, presenting 15-minute messages full of “positive” rah rah’s, followed by a drama group and a rock band, is not going to inspire anybody to take up his cross and follow Him (**Matt. 16:24; Luke 24:27**). The appeal of Jesus is the salvation from hell that is available in Him. The Lord did not invite people to variety shows!

Many preachers won’t “touch” the subject of Hell because they fear it is “too negative.” If the mere concept of hell is too negative, what will it be like being sent there? How will God view those who, on the Day of Judgment, whine, “You can't send us to hell: it's too negative there.” How preposterous! Truth does not change simply because people dislike it. I once heard of a preacher being asked by a young boy: “Sir” he said, “You sure do talk about hell a lot, have you been there?” He replied, “Son I don’t believe I talk about hell enough, otherwise people would be doing right! And no Son, I have not been there nor do I plan to ever go there!”

One positive step we can take toward motivation for righteousness, and abstaining from sin is to consider what the Bible teaches about eternal punishment. Everyone needs to know that the suffering in hell will be intensified by the kind of people who will be there

What is Hell

1. The final and eternal abode of those who die apart from God. The word meaning eternal hell, Gehenna, is found twelve times in the Greek New Testament. In eleven of these instances, it is Jesus Christ himself who employs the term. The fact is the Lord spoke of “hell” more frequently than he did of that state called “heaven.”

2. The original application of Gehenna related to the fire that was used in sacrificing children to the pagan God Molech in **2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6**
3. Jesus spoke of Gehenna several times in his “Sermon on the Mount.” For instance, the Lord condemns the explosive use of derogatory insult for the sake of venting one’s personal rage when he warns that whoever addresses another: “You fool!” shall be in danger of the “hell of fire” (**Matt. 5:22**).
4. Christ stressed that it would be better to proceed through life with great loss (e.g. deprived of an eye or a limb), rather than having Gehenna as a final destiny (**Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9; Mk. 9:43-47**).
5. On another occasion, the Lord said: “**And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell**” (**Matt. 10:28; cf. Lk. 12:5**).
6. In his blistering rebuke of the Jewish leaders who were on the brink of crucifying their own Messiah, Jesus charged:
 - 6.1. “**Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is become so, you make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves**” (**Matt. 23:5**).
 - 6.2. Then in the same discourse: “**You serpents, you offspring of vipers, how shall you escape the judgment of hell?**” (**33**)
7. Gehenna involves a state of awareness. It is very important that this point be made, because there are those who allege that hell will consist in the wicked being annihilated.
 - 7.1. First, when the Lord affirmed that God will “destroy” both body and soul in Gehenna (**Matt. 10:28**), he employed the word *ap-ol'-loo-mee* (used about 92 times in the New Testament). It is translated by such terms as “destroy,” “perish,” “loss,” and “lost.” The term does not suggest the sense of annihilation.
 - 7.2. Second, the Bible employs a number of expressions to describe the emotional state of Gehenna, which can only imply the concept of conscious agony. It is depicted as a place of “unquenchable fire” (**Mk. 9:44**) – fire being a metaphor for “the extreme punishing torments which the wicked are to undergo after their life on earth”
 - 7.3. The Lord describes Gehenna as a place of “eternal punishment.”
 - 7.3.1. Punishment implies consciousness. It would be absurd to describe those who no longer exist as being “punished.” The wicked will be “tormented” with the fire of Gehenna (cf. **Rev. 14:10-11**). Torment certainly implies awareness (**Rev. 9:5; 11:10**)
 - 7.4. Consider the example of Lazarus and the rich man
 - 7.4.1. **Luke 16:19-31** - **Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day: and a certain beggar named Lazarus was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the [crumbs] that fell from the rich man's table; yea, even the dogs come and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom: and the rich man also died, and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 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 in anguish in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things: but now here he is comforted and thou art in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that they that would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from thence to us. And he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. But Abraham saith, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one go to them from the dead, they**

will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead

7.4.2. Hell is a place of pain

7.4.2.1. **Matthew 25:30 - And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth**

7.4.3. Hell is a place of darkness

7.4.3.1. Both **2 Pet. 2:4** and **Matt. 25:30** state this. Why is it darkness?

7.4.3.1.1. **1 John 1:5 - And this is the message which we have heard from him and announce unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.**

7.4.3.1.2. God and sin CAN'T co-exist. Hell is full of sinners!

7.4.4. There is No rest in hell

7.4.4.1. **Rev. 14:11 - ...And they have no rest day and night**

7.4.4.2. **Rev. 20:10 - And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever**

7.4.5. No relief in hell – **Luke 16:26**

7.4.5.1. You can stay out of hell, but once in it is for eternity

7.5. The biblical description of Hell is God's way of telling us that hell is far worse than anything we've ever considered or experienced in this life.

Hell is Eternal

1. There is NO HOPE in hell. It is eternal. What is eternity?

1.1. The punishment of those in Gehenna is unending. The fire is "unquenchable" (**Mt. 3:12**). The Greek word for "unquenchable" is *asbestos*, a term which denotes that which cannot be extinguished. The worm (gnawing anguish) "dies not" – which means: "... their punishment after death will never cease..." (Thayer, 580). The punishment, or destruction, is "eternal" (**Mt. 25:46**; **2 Thes. 1:9**).

1.2. Many religionists who deny the biblical teaching of the eternal, conscious torment of hell do so strictly on emotional grounds. They reject everlasting punishment – not because they have carefully studied the scriptural evidence, and have arrived at their convictions on an intellectual basis – but because, in their view, eternal punishment just "doesn't seem fair." How could a just God punish forever someone who has only rebelled a brief period on earth?

1.2.1. There are several things to be said in response to this

1.2.1.1. First, how could a just God eternally reward someone who has only served him the limited span of an earthly existence? No one seems to have a problem with that.

1.2.1.2. Second, the Bible makes it abundantly clear that our loving God has never been of the disposition to delight in the possibility of a single soul ending in hell

1.2.1.2.1. **2 Pet. 3:9 - The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance**

1.2.1.3. Third, eternal separation from God is a matter of human determination. Paul defends the justice of God in imposing destruction upon rebellious men in his letter to the Romans

1.2.1.3.1. **Rom. 9:22 - What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction"**

1.2.1.3.2. The apostle describes the inmates of hell as "vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction." "Fitted" suggests that these subjects of divine wrath are those "whose characters are such as to deserve destruction."

1.2.1.3.3. Notice in the story of the rich man, he never expresses a word of repentance for his disobedience.

Who will Populate Hell?

1. Hell is populated with those who have rejected God
 - 1.1. Men are not separated from God by birth; they are separated from him by personally committed sins.
 - 1.2. Humanity is not separated from God by the sins of Adam and Eve in Eden; the human family is separated from him by the personal sins of each sinner
 - 1.3. Men are not separated from God by sickness or disease of a physical nature; they are separated by their own personal transgressions.
 - 1.4. John tells us how we become sinners:
 - 1.4.1. **1 John 3:4** - **Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness**
2. Hell's roll call
 - 2.1. **Rev. 21:8** - **But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part [shall be] in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death**
 - 2.2. **Gal. 5:19-21** - **Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are [these]: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God**
 - 2.3. **1 Cor. 6:9-10** - **Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God**
 - 2.4. **Matt. 25:41** - **"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 'for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 'I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' "Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."**
 - 2.5. **2 Pet. 2:4-22** - **For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) -- then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and**

destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

2.6. The parable of the talents in **Matthew 25** reflects the sad end of those who are in the kingdom but refuse to serve God to the full measure of their ability and will be cast out. To live beneath our privileges is a grievous blunder.

2.7. Those who sin willfully

2.7.1. **Hebrews 10:26-27** - For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries

2.7.2. Those, once saved, who return to the world, have a very bleak future indeed. Read **2 Peter 2:20-22** and **Revelation 3:1-5**. Our names, once entered into the Lamb's Book of Life, can be removed due to impurity and indifference. What an overwhelming thought

2.8. Those who persist in a life of sin cannot go where Jesus is (**John 8:21**). To sin unto death (**1 John 5:16**) is to die in an unpardonable state. When we harden our hearts (**Hebrews 3:13-15; Zechariah 7:11-14**) we become past feeling (**Ephesians 4:19**) and face a dreadful eternity.

2.9. Those who call upon the name of the Lord in vain (**James 1:26**) by a hypocrisy that boasts but will not obey (**Luke 6:46**).

3. In hell, there is no God.

3.1. Why is hell a place of darkness? Because God is light and in him is no darkness (**1 John 1:5**)

3.1.1. God is not in hell

3.1.2. God is not in Gehenna

3.1.3. God is not in the place of everlasting destruction

3.1.4. Wherever God is not, has to be what the bible calls HELL

Avoid Hell at ALL costs! IF we believe there is a Hell, as I believe most of us do, have you ever stopped to consider why we take so many chances in doing wrong when we know full well that it could mean eternal damnation for MY SOUL? "Oh just this one time will never hurt" is so often heard when someone wants to do something that is against God's will.

Please consider the following passages:

James 4:17 - Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Sin is sin and brings forth the same judgment - DEATH.

2 Timothy 2:15 - Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth

We disregard our soul's destiny when we refuse to do all that God commands us. We disregard our soul's destiny when we are reckless with the time that we have to serve God. We have such a short time to know what He would have us to know and what He would have us to be.

2 John 1:6&9 - This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it... {9} Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son

We disregard our soul's destiny when we refuse to obey the Gospel of Christ

2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 - Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power

If we were allowed to take just a short glimpse at the anguish, the torment, the gnashing of teeth and the pain and sorrow that is in Hell, I'm sure that we would come to that same conclusion that the preacher came to: "I never intend to ever go there!"

The greatest and deepest tragedy of hell is banishment from the presence of God, and the eternal relationship with the Son.

If you died today, where would you spend eternity?