

Week 25 – Hell & Glory

Hell and Glory

Although the doctrine of hell is anathema to the humanistic mind, we must not deny the truth of it, nor should we be silent on a matter where God has made Himself very clear. In one of the sermons that historians claim was responsible for the Second Great Awakening, a powerful 18th-century revival in America, Jonathan Edwards made the following comments about the judgment of God on sinners:

“God sees fit that he who appeared in such a low estate among mankind, without form or comeliness, having His divine glory veiled, should appear amongst men a second time in His own proper majesty and glory without a veil, to the end that those who saw Him the first time as a poor, frail man subject to hardship and affliction, may see Him the second time in power and great glory. He who once tabernacled among them, was despised and rejected by them, may have the honor of arraigning all men before His throne and judging them with respect to their eternal state. God sees fit that He who was once arraigned before the judgment seat of men and was there most vilely treated, being mocked, spit upon and condemned, and who was at last crucified, should be rewarded by having those very persons brought to His tribunal, that they may see His glory and be confounded, and that He may dispose of them for all eternity.” (Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God)

A more recent scholar, R. J. Rushdoony, has this to say about hell:

“First of all, hell is the place of wasted lives; it is the dump-heap of the universe, a place therefore fittingly described as an area of corruption and burning. Hell is thus both a condition and a place. Hell is a negation of meaning and relationship. In hell, all is chaos, waste, and ruin; all things are unrelated and beyond communication. There is no community in hell. Nothing has any true relationship to anything else. Man, having declared himself to be his own god, lives in hell in terms of the total self-sufficiency his claim asserts. The insanity of sin is this isolation into the self which reaches its total stage in hell, where no life has any meaningful relationship to anyone or anything else, and where man lives in the eternal fire and corruption of self-exaltation and self-pity.” (Politics of Guilt and Pity)

Biblical Descriptions of Hell

“Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels...’” (Matthew 25:41)

“Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:14)

“In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out.” (Luke 13:28)

“Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man’s table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom, and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you, there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.’” (Luke 16:19-26)

It’s interesting to see the lack of love and relationship in hell. The rich man lost his name, his identity, his soul and remained bossy and arrogant. The poor man was comforted.

Additional Scriptures for Study: Matthew 10:28, 25:41; Luke 13:28, 16:19-26; Revelation 20:14

Judgment of Saints

God’s people face an entirely different judgment. The Jesus who became our Savior and Lord automatically acts as our propitiation (1 John 2:2) and delivers us from the wrath of God (1 Thessalonians 1:10). To propitiate means “to gain or regain the favor or good will of: appease; conciliate” (Miriam-Webster Dictionary, 2004). The Greek word for propitiation, hilasmos, refers specifically to the atoning blood of the sacrificial system, and to the “mercy seat” where this blood was offered to God. Jesus is our propitiation; He protects us from the wrath of God, and we should never fear condemnation or God’s justice. Instead, we who believe have become recipients of His grace and mercy: “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). In light of the judgment of God’s wrath that falls upon the unrighteous, it is truly a blessing that the children of God receive His grace and mercy.

Our resurrection will be glorious. We will be given a glorified body, perfect and eternal. The resurrection gives God’s children great comfort and hope. Jesus has paved the way for us: “I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades” (Revelation 1:17-18).

“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

His rewards will be given to His children for faithfulness and overcoming suffering and tribulation (Revelation 22:12, 2 Corinthians 5:10)

Review

1. Will everything you are and strive for, end on the trash heap of the universe?
2. Can God’s mercy be received apart from the atoning blood of Christ?
3. What does God owe to those who spurn His ultimate gift?
4. How does the judgment of the saints differ from the judgment of sinners?