

DID JESUS BELIEVE IN HELL?

By Dub McClish

Introduction

Hell has fallen on hard times. The most frequent reference to it nowadays is as a term of cursing, swearing, or intensification of expression. Others use it in a weak attempt at levity: "I want to go to Hell; after all, that's where all my friends will be." Many moderns have tried to take the murky-gray road of claiming—simultaneously—to believe in the existence of Hell, but professing to know of no one who does anything sufficiently evil to go there. Increasing numbers who profess their belief in Christ are openly denying its existence. The outright denial of Hell to any great degree, and its companion, loss of belief in Hell, are phenomena of relatively recent times.¹

A Brief History of the Deconstruction of Hell

For sixteen centuries the doctrine of eternal punishment of the wicked at the hands of a just God was a matter of certain conviction almost universally throughout Christendom. In fact, this was the prevailing view even in the intertestamental period which preceded Christ and His doctrine: "Everlasting punishment of the wicked was and always will be the orthodox theory. It was held by the Jews at the time of Christ, with the exception of the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection" (Schaff, 2:606-07). The only significant voice among the ancients who dissented from the orthodox view of Hell was Origen (A.D. third century), later condemned (rightly, in this case) by two ecumenical councils for his heresy. However, with the arrival of the Renaissance, man's emphasis shifted from theo-centric to anthro-centric. Humanism, with man at its center as the be-all, do-all, and end-all, began to displace God. The farther man moved himself up, the farther he pushed God down. Man became so valuable and so precious, even to the "theistic" humanist, that he could not abide the thought of eternal punishment or retribution, or of a sin serious enough to warrant it.

From the sixteenth century on, God's judgment was a constant target for attack by humanists both within and outside the church. Hell and humanism didn't mix; they can't mix and never will mix. It just won't do to have highly exalted man experiencing the torments of hell eternally. First, it is presumed that the precious creature couldn't possibly do anything bad enough to warrant such punishment. And even more significantly, the humanists are convinced

that God could not bear the eternal loss of even one of these marvelous man-creatures (Braun, 35–36).

Certain radical infidel theologians have become outspoken deniers of Hell and have influenced many other clerics. A good example of such blasphemy is from the pen of the late John A.T. Robinson, a Bishop of the Church of England. As long ago as 1949 he wrote:

Christ, in Origen's old words, remains on the Cross as long as one sinner remains in hell. That is not speculation; it is a statement grounded in the very necessity of God's nature. In a universe of love, there can be no heaven which tolerates a chamber of horrors, no hell for any which does not at the same time make it hell for God. He cannot endure that—for that would be the final mockery of His nature—and He will not ("Universalism...", 155).

Eighteen years later he wrote as though the destruction of Hell was a *fait accompli*: "There are still a few who would like to bring back hell, as some want to bring back birching and hanging. They are usually the same types who wish to purge Britain of horror comics, sex, and violence" (*But That...*, p. 69).

Another of Robinson's ilk was Emil Brunner, a Swiss theologian, who averred in 1954 that

...the revealed will of God and the plan for the world which He discloses, a plan of universal salvation, of gathering all things into Christ. We hear not one word in the Bible of a dual plan, a plan of salvation and its polar opposite. The will of God has but one point, it is unambiguous and positive. It has one aim, not two (182).

Obviously, Brunner read the Sacred Text through liberal corrupted spectacles. Aside from the insistent Biblical theme of judgment against and eternal punishment for impenitent transgressors of God's will, the very existence of a **plan of salvation** necessarily implies "its polar opposite"—**damnation**. The will of God is "unambiguous and positive" all right, but about the **existence** (rather than non-existence) of a final Judgment and of eternal retribution for sin in a place called "Hell."

As often occurs, those once considered radicals have gradually become almost mainstream, and the abnormal has increasingly become "normal." Denominational theological seminaries have for a century or more been filled with professors who are rank liberals and modernists, most of whom have no stomach for (among other things) anything unpleasant, "negative," or foreboding regarding religion, their handling of the Bible, and their concept of God and His Son. The Bible to them is an antique plaything, a mere curiosity to be treated with no more respect than the works of Shakespeare. This posture, their default position, all but categorically ignores Divine Justice and its necessary implication—Divinely administered eternal punishment for unforgiven sin.

These schools have turned out tens of thousands of unbelieving ecclesiastics who have spewed out their message of unbelief week after week in denominational pulpits across the land (why should we wonder that so few of our fellow-citizens now respect the Bible as the Word of God and that general morality continues to plummet?). At the heart of their theology is an over- (and pseudo-) emphasis on the love, grace, mercy, kindness, and longsuffering of God. Their lopsided, perverted message drastically **de**-emphasizes (when it mentions them at all) the balancing traits of God's justice, law, wrath against sin, and the corollary implication of these verities—Hell as retribution for impenitent sinners. Seminaries—and the pulpits they have staffed—have so watered down the general Biblical “orthodoxy” of centuries that even so-called “evangelical” churches (including the big “community” churches) nowadays are freely accepting such things as divorce and remarriage for any cause, recreational sex, social drinking, and even homosexual behavior as compatible with a “Christian lifestyle” and the hope of Heaven.

Such Modernism was bad enough, but it inevitably led to the even deadlier philosophy of Postmodernism, which eschews facts and evidence, allowing each man's feelings/opinions to determine “truth” (at least for him). In turn, even more recently, Postmodernism has spawned the “Emerging Church” ideology, which, while still claiming to be a “Christian” movement, is hardly more than a new version of Universalism, holding out hope to Hindus, Muslims, and you name it. (Informed readers understand that, by definition, Universalism demands the denial of eternal punishment for sinful men in its advocacy of their universal salvation.) While the Emerging Church approach is the growing rage in current theology, few schemes could be more anti-Biblical or anti-Christian.

The Humanism produced by the Renaissance has spawned at least five distinct schools of Hell-denial:

1. **Universalism**—Hell could not exist as an eternal state because God is too loving and benevolent to allow anyone to suffer forever in such a place. Therefore, all will be saved regardless of belief or behavior.
2. **Annihilationism/Extinctionism**—The wicked cease to exist at death (or soon following the Judgment, after a brief period of torment).
3. **Atheistic Humanism**—Mankind is the ultimate form of life. Since God does not exist, moral absolutes, accountability, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell do not exist.
4. **Liberalism/Modernism**—While Hell may exist, no sin is bad enough nor sinner wicked enough to deserve it (a “lite” version of Universalism).

5. **New Ageism**—Lack of or low self-esteem is the root of all human problems. The Biblical worldview is responsible for this failure. To the New Ager, “acknowledging oneself as a sinner destroys a human being. His solution to this is simply to define sin out of existence and declare man sinless” (Michaelsen, 289). This tactic, of course, also defines Hell out of existence. One can see some common threads between Postmodernism, Emerging Churchism, and New Ageism.

No-Hell Advocates “Among Us”

Among those still claiming membership in the church of Christ, I am aware of only one who has gone on record in modern times as a full-fledged Universalist: Richard Beck, Professor and Psychology Department Chairman at Abilene Christian University, blatantly lays out his convictions on his blog (*Experimental Theology*). (Are any still in denial about the utter apostasy of this institution?)

However, a few (but apparently growing number) have imbibed its first cousin—the annihilation/extinction dogma—in recent years. The “pioneer” in this respect is Edward Fudge, an elder in the historically apostate Bering Drive Church of Christ in Houston, Texas. In a 1982 “ten-pound” tome, *The Fire that Consumes*, he argues that God will punish the wicked only temporarily following the Judgment, after which they will be subject to “total, everlasting extinction” (425, 435–36). John Clayton, who has circulated widely among the Lord’s people, lecturing on apologetics for more than three decades (in spite of his being repeatedly exposed as a “theistic evolutionist”), has excitedly endorsed Fudge’s book (20). Al Pickering, who gained moderate notoriety among brethren in the 1970s with his “Sharpening the Sword” Seminars, is an ardent advocate of the Fudge contention (Jackson, “Changing Attitudes,” 66). He has since made total shipwreck of the faith and works among various denominations, but principally Independent Christian Churches, in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas, area.

F. LaGard Smith (at one time a “Scholar in Residence” at Lipscomb University, but currently a “Visiting Professor” at Faulkner University’s Jones School of Law) first voiced his denial of eternal punishment at the 1988 Pepperdine University Lectures (Jackson, “Eternal Punishment”). In 2003, he (as did Fudge) devoted a book to the subject (*After Life*). The late Homer Hailey, longtime teacher at Florida College, advocated his extinction views in a booklet published in 2003 after his death in 2000 (*God’s Judgements...[sic]*).

Jimmy Allen, long-time Bible teacher/professor at Harding University, is perhaps best remembered by thousands of brethren for his sermon, “What Is Hell Like?” and for the tract by the same title. His message on the subject was powerful and Biblical throughout. However, he

could/would not preach that message today and has admitted that he has not preached on this subject at all for twenty-five years. He published his autobiography in 2004, in which he includes a chapter on “Changing Views.” In it, he wrote,

There are some things I have said in the past that I can no longer repeat. It is the question of whether punishment is endless or not that plagues me. I am not a Universalist. Nor do I believe an unprepared person is annihilated at death or in the resurrection (220–21).

A few others, not so well known, have also joined the “no-Hell” chorus, led by those just mentioned in.

Moreover, the number of brethren is already many and is ever increasing, who, in their loose and latitudinarian approach to grace, baptism, the identity of the church, fellowship, worship, the nature of God, and Biblical authority in general are de facto—if not de jure—Universalists and annihilationists. By this I mean that these brethren will hardly identify any doctrine as heresy or any practice as sinful (e.g., allowing that at the Judgment God will make “exceptions” to His plan of salvation to save unbaptized “believers”). These folk will not oppose or expose any teacher or preacher as false or his/her doctrine as damnable, regardless of how foreign or contrary to Gospel Truth it may be. Furthermore, they do not want anyone else to oppose or expose them. They wittingly embrace in their fellowship those who are not in fellowship with God and shun those of us who dare call them to account. They have found ways of contorting the Scriptures and redefining ordinary words so as to grant approval to adulterers and drunkards and to heretics of every stripe and hue.

Shall we surrender the existence of Hell to the infidels, the skeptics, and the liberals? Without question, the denial or at least the mitigation of Hell is very appealing. If we are guided by human lust and selfish indulgence alone, who could not be attracted to the doctrine that eliminates consequential sin, ultimate accountability for behavior, a code of conduct imposed by a Supreme Being/Creator, and final, inescapable, horrible retribution for rebellion against the Creator’s law? Undeniably, multiplied millions, in one way or another, have dismissed the reality of Hell.

What Did Jesus Say About Hell?

Did Jesus believe in the existence of an eternal, punitive Hell without denying Christ Himself. Thus, the crucial issue concerning belief in Hell? If He did, the crucial issue concerning belief in Hell becomes the even larger issue—**belief in the Christ Himself!**

In the face of all of the denials of Hell, there still remains the stubborn, nagging, undeniable fact that Jesus had much to say about Hell and eternal punishment. In fact, He said much more about Hell than he did about Heaven. When correctly perceived, every warning

about the Judgment, every condemnation of evil, every encouragement to righteousness, and every declaration about sin has the concept of eternal damnation behind it and embedded in it. Otherwise, they are meaningless, empty words. Moreover, Jesus' earthly sojourn and the purpose of His coming were unnecessary apart from the fact that "all have sinned" and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Indeed, setting aside the plain teaching of Jesus about Hell for the moment, the coming of the Christ from Heaven to earth and the sacrifice of Himself upon the cross for our sins are the ultimate arguments for the reality of Hell. Now, let us survey the teaching of Jesus about Hell.

Man Has an Ever-Living Soul

For Hell to exist for human beings they must survive physical death; in other words, they must have/be a soul that does not perish at death. Jesus taught unequivocally that man is more than flesh and blood: "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" (Mat. 10:28; cf. 16:26).

There Is a Realm in the World of Spirits Called "Hell"

Jesus clearly referred to Hell in Matthew 10:28, quoted above, in such a way as to declare its reality. He threatened "the hell of fire" for those who pronounce, *thou fool*, upon their fellows (Mat. 5:22). He referred to Hell as a real entity, a place into which bodies would be "cast down" as retribution for sin (vv. 29–30). One who causes another to sin will be cast into "the hell of fire" (18:9). The Lord referred to Hell as the final abode of the wicked no fewer than eleven times.

What is Hell, as referred to by Jesus? What did He mean by the term and what is its origin? Note first that the King James Version often reads *Hell* when, in fact, *Hades* is the correct term (transliterated from the Grk., *hades*, meaning "unseen," referring to the unseen realm of the dead, i.e., departed spirits; e.g., Mat. 16:18; Acts 2:27; et al.). Our English word, *Hell*, correctly translates *gehenna*, which appears twelve times in the Greek New Testament (as earlier mentioned, eleven of which the Lord employed, James using the remaining one).

Gehenna derived from the Hebrew term, *Ge-Hinnom*, literally, the Valley of Hinnom (also referred to as "the valley of the Sons of Hinnom"), a valley Jerusalem overlooks to its south, first mentioned in Nehemiah 11:30. Historically, it was the site where idolatrous Jews burned their children in homage to the pagan god Molech (2 Chr. 28:3; 33:6). Josiah, the righteous restorer king of Judah, five centuries before Christ, abolished this atrocity, and the valley thenceforth became a place of abomination and abhorrence—indeed the dump ground for the city where

fire perpetually smoldered. As early as the second century B.C., uninspired Jewish literature used *gehenna* as a figure to refer to final, eternal punishment of sinners. The Son of God applied this word in the very same way, using the name of the literal valley to refer to the place of ultimate and eternal abomination and abhorrence beyond the Judgment.

Hell Is Awful and Dreadful Beyond Imagination

1. Jesus attached the original imagery of the fires of Molech worship in Gehenna to eternal Hell as a place of fire. He twice called it “the hell of fire” (Mat. 5:22; 18:9). He twice referred to it as “the furnace of fire” into which the evil will be cast after the Judgment (13:42, 50). He twice called it a place of “unquenchable fire” (Mark 9:43, 47–48). We correctly identify the Hell the Lord thus describes with “the lake of fire and brimstone” and “the lake of fire” into which the devil, the beast, the false prophet, and all those persons not named in the book of life were cast for eternal torment (Rev. 20:10, 15; 21:8). John appropriately called it a “baptism” (dipping, plunging, overwhelming) in unquenchable fire (Mat. 3:11–12).
2. Additionally, the Lord intensified His description by labeling it as a place “where their worm dieth not” (Mark. 9:47–48). The depiction is one of maggots eating living flesh. Though obviously figurative language (neither flesh or literal maggots will be in the realm of spirits), the figure graphically portrays terrible agony and pain.
3. Jesus described Hell as a place where those cast would be “destroyed” (Mat. 10:28). The annihilationists/extinctionists all but camp on this passage, asserting that it supports their contention that *destroyed* equals *annihilated*. However, even the simplest Greek word study proves otherwise. *Destroyed* translates *apollumi*, found in numerous passages in which *annihilation* cannot possibly be its meaning. For example, it is rendered “burst” (Mat. 9:17), “lost” (Luke 15:4–9), and “perish” (v. 17). Neither these nor numerous other such passages can bear the idea of annihilation or non-existence as the meaning of *apollumi*. Joseph Henry Thayer, the renowned Greek authority, was a Unitarian who did not believe in eternal punishment, yet his knowledge of the meaning of *apollumi* (and his honesty) forced him to define this word as “to be delivered up to eternal misery” (36). Robert Morey, in his book, *Death and the Afterlife*, concluded:

In every instance where the word *apollumi* is found in the New Testament, something other than annihilation is being described. Indeed, there isn't a single instance in the New Testament where *apollumi* means annihilation in the strict meaning of the word (90).

The idea of being “destroyed” in Hell is that one will suffer utter, irreclaimable loss, and he will do so forever. Jesus also used the noun form of this word in reference to Hell (i.e., *destruction*, Mat. 7:13).

4. Jesus referred to Hell as a place of “eternal punishment” (Mat. 25:46). The word rendered “punishment” (kolasis) means torment, torture, suffering, chastisement (cf. Luke 16:23, 28; Rev. 14:10–11). Jesus repeatedly described the severity of the suffering of those in Hell as productive of “the weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mat. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).
5. The Hell which Jesus believed in and described is a place of separation from God, Christ, and the redeemed—banishment from the presence of God and from Heaven, His abode. The lost are “cast into hell” (Mat. 5:29). Jesus will say, “Depart from me” to the lost at the Judgment (7:23). Hell is a place of “**outer** darkness” (8:12, et al.). At the Judgment He will say to impenitent sinners, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire . . .” (25:41). The wicked will be “cast forth without” relative to the eternal kingdom of God (Luke 13:28). Similarly, Paul wrote that the lost will be banished eternally “from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might” (2 The. 1:9). Just as evil men are those now “having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12), if they do not repent they will find themselves hopeless and without God in the eternal realm (Rev. 22:15).
6. The Lord teaches that Hell is a place where one will be inescapably confined with Satan and all of the evil men and women of all time. While the fire of Hell was “prepared for the devil and his angels,” at the Judgment, the lost will be consigned to the same place (Mat. 25:41). John echoed this same doctrine (Rev. 20:10, 15; 21:8). Imagine being imprisoned forever with the most evil men and women of all time with no relief or hope of escape!

Hell Is Everlasting, Eternal, Forever

Jesus not only teaches the **reality** of Hell, but the **eternality** of it. However long Heaven lasts, so long lasts Hell. To conclude His description of the Final Judgment, He said, “and these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life” (Mat. 25:46, ASV).

The *no-Hell* heresy made a much earlier appearance among the Lord’s people than in recent years, as noted above. In 1846, Jesse B. Ferguson, a brilliant, eloquent, and influential young preacher, moved to Nashville, Tennessee. Some six years thereafter, he began teaching various errors that led to his complete abandonment of the faith. Among these errors was his denial that the wicked will be punished after death and the Judgment (West, 264). Various godly men withstood this grievous error and reclaimed as many as possible who fell prey to it. Among brethren, Ben Franklin was one of the most widely known and respected preachers and writers of that era, and the following statement from him exemplifies the vigor with which faithful men withstood Ferguson’s error and its influence. Note his comments on the Lord’s words in Matthew 25:46, directly addressing Ferguson’s heresy:

Everlasting and *eternal* [KJV] are from the same [word] in the original. “Everlasting punishment,” and not everlasting annihilation, nor everlasting extinction of being, nor everlasting non-existence, is what the Lord threatens.... At the same time the righteous enter into “life eternal,” the wicked “go away into everlasting punishment.”... The same word used by the Lord, in the same sentence to express the duration of the life of the saints is used to express the duration of the punishment of the wicked. It is as likely that the life of the saints shall terminate, as that the punishment of the wicked shall cease. There is no word in any language that more certainly expresses unlimited duration than this word, *aionion*. It is used to express the duration of the life of the saints, the praises of God, and even the existence of God...(279).

As Franklin did in the nineteenth century, so must we forcefully expose, oppose, and refute this damnable doctrine in the twenty-first century.

The fire of Hell is “unquenchable” fire (Mat. 3:12; Mark 9:43, 48). The “eternal fire” Jesus mentioned in Matthew 18:8, he identifies as the “hell of fire” in verse 9. Paul continued this thought by describing the damnation of those who “know not God, and . . . obey not the gospel” as “eternal destruction” (2 The. 1:8–9). John wrote that the lake of fire and brimstone is characterized by torment “day and night for ever and ever” (Rev. 20:10). No one can believe the words of Jesus and believe in the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory or any other concept of **temporary**, much less of non-existent punishment in the realm of spirits! One who claims to believe in Jesus’ doctrine concerning Heaven, while denying His doctrine concerning Hell is not only inconsistent. He is intellectually dishonest.

Jesus Tells Us the Populace of Hell

1. Self-righteous, pride-filled, egotistic persons who deprecate others as lower and less worthy than themselves: “But I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire” (Mat. 5:22).
2. Those who are unwilling to sacrifice whatever causes them to sin or keeps them from serving God (vv. 27–30).
3. Those who confess Christ, but will not obey God, even though they claim to work by the authority of Christ:

Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (7:21–23).

4. Those who reject the messengers, and the message, of Christ (10:14–15).

5. Those who persist in unbelief in the face of overwhelming evidence of the authenticity of the Christ (11:20–24).
6. False teachers and their followers (15:13–14).
7. Those who are hypocrites, who profess one thing and practice another (23:13–36).
8. The wicked, careless, neglectful, wasteful, murmuring, blaspheming, lazy persons, as depicted in various parables (Mat. 24:45–25:30; Luke 19:12–27).
9. Those who are selfish, stingy, cold, unkind, uncompassionate, and unsympathetic (Mat. 25:41–46).

Other inspired writers also define the populace of Hell: Paul listed the full gamut of wickedness, evil, immorality, worldliness, and unrighteousness, which constitute the gratifications of the “lusts of the flesh,” and said that those who thus behave (whether Christians or alien sinners) are Hell-bound (Rom 1:18–32; 1 Cor. 6:9–11; Gal. 5:19–21). He also mentioned as future residents of Hell the “lawless one,” those who receive not the love of the Truth, those who make “shipwreck concerning the faith,” those who succumb to the deceitfulness of riches, and those who are heretics or factious (2 The. 2:4–12; 1 Tim. 1:19–20; 6:9–10; Tit. 3:10–11).

Peter identified **brethren** who are false teachers, who themselves are overtaken by evil and who entice others to follow their wicked doctrines and practices, as those who will be lost in Hell (2 Pet. 2:1–22).

John consigned not only Satan, the beast, and the false prophet to Hell, but also all men who had followed them in wickedness, evil, and immorality of all sorts and whose names are therefore not written in the book of life (Rev. 19:20; 20:10, 15; 21:8; 22:15).

Jude averred that God’s Divine Judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah was typical of the “punishment of eternal fire” that the impenitent and ungodly will suffer at the final Judgment (v.7). Surely, he who says his pleasure in fleshly lusts in this earthly life is worth being confined to eternal Hell knows not what he says!

Conclusion

There you have it, straight from the mouth of the Only Begotten of the Father, Jesus the Christ, and from His inspired men. After quoting several passages in which the Lord set forth the doctrine of Hell as a place of eternal punishment for the ungodly, Jon Braun queried and observed:

Does any question remain as to whether or not Jesus declared the eternal punishment of the wicked? All the authority of the almighty God is present in the Words He spoke about hell. Jesus had more to say about hell than any other speaker or writer in the Bible. If He was mistaken in what He said, then the almighty, eternal, and everlasting God was mistaken. And that is not the case. Indeed, if it comes to a disagreement: "Let God be true and every man a liar." . . . What more could Jesus have said? There is absolutely no way the clear impact of His words can be brushed aside, and the assertion made that there is no eternal doom for the ungodly, unless of course, we join the critics who arbitrarily determine that Jesus didn't really say these things at all. . . . Those who maintain Jesus did not utter these severe sayings about hell are like gamblers playing a game they will surely lose. . . . Jesus, the One who is coming again to judge the living and the dead, expressed Himself clearly and without room for doubt about it. The rest of the New Testament writers followed His lead to the letter. Retribution for the ungodly is eternal, without end (146, 163).

Men must make their choice between the annihilationists, the liberal theologians, the Humanists, the Universalists, the New Agers, the Emergers, and all other "no-Hell" advocates on the one hand and the Son of God on the other. **None can be taken seriously, therefore, who question and/or deny that He taught the reality of Hell as a place of eternal punishment for the wicked.** Those who reject His teaching also thereby reject Him as the Son of God and the Savior of mankind (John 12:48).

Johanna Michaelsen, after quoting from various New Agers and their totally subjective denials of the existence of the devil, sin, and Hell, drew the following incisive conclusion:

If hell is **not** a literal reality then Jesus was indeed a fool for going to the cross: The whole reason He did so was in order to save us from that place of eternal torment and separation from God. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24) (299).

Heaven and Hell stand or fall together—in reality and in duration. If Heaven is real and eternal, so is Hell. If Hell is denied, so must Heaven be. They are both as real as the God Who made us and Who gave us the inspired revelation concerning Himself, His Son, and their marvelous plan of salvation. In His great mercy this same God has warned us of Satan, sin, the Judgment, and Hell. God sent His Son into our world in the flesh that we might have a road through otherwise impassable territory to Heaven and to God (John 1:1–2, 14; 3:16; Phi. 2:5–8).

Jesus, the Christ of God, is Himself that road and the only road that leads to God and Heaven (John 14:6). If we walk on that narrow, admittedly difficult way, it leads to life (Mat. 7:14). If we reject the Christ and His way, we have chosen the road (which actually includes countless other roads of human innovation and invention) that leads ultimately to Hell (v. 13). Jesus' own simple summary of entering that road to Heaven is as follows: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

The picture of Hell in the words of Jesus is so frighteningly, horribly, terribly unimaginable that He boldly challenges all men to make whatever sacrifice is necessary to escape its horrors (Mat. 5:29–30; 6:19–25, 33; 8:18–22; 10:28, 37–38; 13:44–45; 16:24–26; 19:21–22; et al). Surely, this is the course of wisdom!

God's faithful people must be ever vigilant against those who seek to fasten the *no-Hell* doctrinal innovation upon the church.

Endnote

¹ For this chapter I borrowed heavily from a MS I wrote in 1992, "What Jesus Says About Hell." Said MS appeared as a chapter in *Whatever Happened to Heaven and Hell?* Ed. Terry M. Hightower (San Antonio, TX: Shenandoah Church of Christ, 1993). This book is no longer in print.

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