

Whatever Happened to Hell?

Dub McClish

Hell is not a popular or pleasant subject. The “don’t-offend-anyone” crowd doesn’t want to hear about it. Few preachers consider preaching on it, and more and more of them deny its existence. Some just don’t believe anyone is going there.

Contrariwise, one can’t read the New Testament without facing the stubborn fact of what and how much it says about Hell – the inspired writers obviously counted it greatly significant. Some have rejected what the Bible says about this and other subjects (e.g., homosexual behavior, same sex “marriage,” etc.), but they can’t deny the clear import of what it says. Jesus said much more about Hell than He said about Heaven. His coming to our world was unnecessary apart from the reality of eternal damnation as a consequence of sin.

Every prohibition of evil, encouragement to righteousness, declaration about sin, and warning about the Judgment innately contains the concept of eternal damnation in a place the Bible identifies as “Hell.” What does the New Testament specifically teach about it?

- **Men have immortal spirits** (Jam. 2:26). Thus we are not to fear the loss of physical life so much as the loss of immortal existence in Hell (Mat. 10:28; 16:26).
- **Hell is in the spiritual (as opposed to material) realm.** Jesus specifically mentioned it as the after-death destiny of certain sinners (Mat. 5:22, 29–30; 18:9). Of the eleven times Hell (i.e., gehenna) appears in the New Testament, Jesus spoke ten of them.
- **Hell’s characteristics include:**
 - **Fire** (Mat. 5:22; 13:42, 50; 18:9; Mark 9:43, 48; Rev. 20:10, 15; 21:8; et al.).
 - **Destruction** (not annihilation, but irreclaimable, utter loss (Mat. 10:28; 2 The. 1:9; cf. Luke 19:10).
 - **Punishment** (Mat. 25:46; Luke 16:23, 28; Rev. 14:10–11; et al.).
 - **Separation, banishment from God/Heaven** (Mat. 5:29; 7:23; 8:12; 25:41; Luke 13:28; 2 The. 1:9; Rev. 22:15; et al.).
 - **No escape from Satan/evil – “second death”** (Mat. 25:41; Rev. 20:10, 15; 21:8; et al.).
- **Hell’s duration is eternal** with no “purgatory,” second chance, or temporary residents (Mat. 3:12; 18:8–9; 25:46; 2 The. 1:9; Rev. 20:10; et al.).
- **Hell’s populace includes:**
 - **The Disobedient** who never obey the Gospel (Mat. 7:21–23; 2 The. 1:8; et al.).
 - **The Obedient who apostatize and do not repent** (2 Pet. 2:20–22; et al.).
 - **The Wicked, immoral** (Rom. 1:18–32; 1 Cor. 6:9–11; Gal. 5:18–21; Rev. 21:8; et al.).
 - **False teachers** (Mat. 15:13–14; 2 Pet. 2:1; et al.).

Nothing has “happened” to Hell, except man’s denial of it.

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