

Sermon Notes

The Difficult Doctrine of Hell

Revelation 20:11-15 Matthew 13:41-43 Matthew 13:47-51

How could a loving God send people to hell?

- 1 Timothy 2:4 Ezekiel 33:11 Lamentations 3:33 Philippians 2:5-8 2 Peter 3:9
- Hell can exist precisely because God is love. Because God is love, the comic ending is assured, but because he is love, hell is also possible...love is a choice; love emerges from freedom. The establishment of freedom therefore establishes free choice about love. If God is love, God is freedom; if God is freedom, free choice is part of the world God has made. That is, some may choose not to love God, not to love Jesus, not to be with God forever. - Scot McKnight
- John 3:19
- "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, in the end, "Thy will be done." All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice, there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. Those who knock it is opened." — C.S. Lewis, The Great Divorce
- The doors of Hell are locked from the inside – C.S. Lewis

Three Christian Views on Hell

Christian Universalism (universal restoration, universal redemption or evangelical universalism)

Definition: God continues to invite repentance after one dies physically and eventually all will willingly repent and come to Christ. God will never stop trying to save his creation until they have all come home to him and been perfected. Hell is a place where peoples sin and evil is consumed.

Universalism vs Christian Universalism (universal redemption):

John 12:32 Romans 5:18, 1 Corinthians 15:22 Colossians 1:20 Acts 3:21 Psalm 22:27 Philippians 2:10 Ephesians 1:10

Eternal punishment?

Matthew 25:41, 46 Eternal – about location not duration

Salvation after death?

1 Peter 3:19-20 1 Peter 4:6

Common objections:

1. Not widely accepted throughout church history

2. Universalism removes the gift of free will.
3. The many passages about eternal and lasting consequences.
 - Mark 3:29 Matthew 12:32 Luke 16:26

Traditional view (Eternal Conscious Torment)

Definition: The human soul is immortal and cannot die therefore hell will be one of eternal conscious torment.

Daniel 12:2 Matthew 25:41, 46 Revelation 20:10 Mark 9:47- 48 Revelation 14:11

Common objections:

1. Eternal conscious torment makes God out to be cruel and unjust
 - Psalm 30:5 Revelation 16:7
2. How can heaven be heaven if there are people suffering in hell for all eternity?
Colossians 1:19-20 Philippians 2:10 Ephesians 1:10
3. Are all humans actually immortal? Is that actually scriptural?
4. Words used to describe hell in the Bible like 'death', 'second death' and 'destroyed', are taken figuratively rather than literally.

Conditionalism (conditional immortality or annihilationism)

Definition: The human soul is not immortal. Immortality or eternal life is a gift from God. Those who refuse to receive the gift of immortality will justly pay for their sins in hell and then cease to exist.

We need to survey the biblical material afresh. I do plead for frank dialogue among evangelicals on the basis of scripture. I also believe that the ultimate annihilation of the wicked should at least be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment. – Dr. John Stott

Immortality is a gift from God

Galatians 6:15-16 Romans 2:7 John 3:16 Proverbs 12:28 John 3:16 Matthew 20:10

Death means death

Romans 6:23 John 10:28 Revelation 2:11 Psalm 37:1-2,9-10, 20

Destroy and Destruction mean destroy and destruction

James 4:12, Matthew 7:13-14

“My mind fails to conceive a grosser misinterpretation of language than when the five or six strongest words which the Greek tongue possesses, signifying ‘destroy,’ or ‘destruction,’ are explained to mean maintaining an everlasting but wretched existence. To translate black as white is nothing to this.” – Dr. R.F Weymouth (Greek scholar)

What about eternal destruction/punishment passages?

“Eternal” literally can be about duration or it can be about result/consequence.

Eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:6)
Eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:1)
Guilty of an Eternal sin (Mark 3:29)

Eternal destruction (2 Thess. 1:9)
Eternal judgement (Heb. 6:2)
Eternal punishment (matt. 25:46)

Eternal in duration or eternal in result/consequence?

What about smoke rising forever?

Revelation 14:10-11 Isaiah 34:9-10

All things will eventually be kingdom

Colossians 1:19-20 Philippians 2:10 Common Objections

Common Objections

1. Not been the dominate view throughout most of Church history
2. Undermines the fear of hell
3. Revelation 20:10

Conclusion:

Psalm 16:11

For further discussion/study:

- Documentary: Hell bound
- <http://www.tentmaker.org/universalism.htm>
- You Tube: eternal conscious torment
- You Tube: Lecture - Edward Fudge - The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of Hell
- You Tube: Rethinking hell
- Book: Four Views on Hell