

Hell in Time Past and Hell Today

Introduction:

1. We have learned that hell was originally created for the devil and the angels that followed him in his rebellion against God. Hell was created to halt the angelic rebellion that was taking place and that Satan was leading.
2. We learned last week that hell is a literal place with a literal geographic location. Hell is not simply a mystical idea, nor is it a figurative word for the grave, nor is it the figment of somebody's imagination.
3. It is an undeniable reality with a definite geographic location. Hell is always referred to as being “down” because it is located in the heart of the earth. Hell is located in the center of the earth.
4. But, as we have learned before, the apostle Paul gave us a three-fold timeline in Ephesians 2 that helps us to place Scripture in its proper context, and understand different subjects and how they have changed over the course of history.
 - **“Time Past”** – This is when God dealt with the world through the nation of Israel, and on the basis of His prophetic program with Israel. There was a middle wall of partition between Israel and the Gentiles, with Israel enjoying a favored status.
 - **“But Now”** - Today, Israel's prophetic program has been temporarily suspended, and God is forming something altogether new - the church, the body of Christ. We are not living under Israel's prophetic program, but in the mystery program revealed through Paul. There is no distinction between Jew and Gentile.
 - **“Ages to Come”** - This deals with the events that will happen after this present dispensation of grace ends, and God resumes His prophetic program with Israel, and brings it to its ultimate fulfillment.
5. In this lesson, we want to consider hell in time past, and how it is changed today.

Hell in the “Time Past” Time Period

1. We mentioned last week that Jonah and Jesus are said to have gone to the place called hell.
 - Jonah's soul went there during his three-day stay at the “Big Fish Hotel.”
Jonah 2:1, 6
 - Jesus' soul went there during His three-day stay in Joseph's tomb.
Matthew 12:40; cf. Acts 2:25-27, 31
2. But, doesn't this seem odd? Jonah was a prophet of God, and Jesus was the Son of God. How could their souls go to hell?
3. It is important to understand that there is one Greek word for hell (hades), but it was comprised of two separate compartments in time past. There was a torment side, and a paradise side (a place of blessing and comfort).
4. There was a great gulf that separated the two so that nobody from one side could travel to the other side.

5. In time past, if you were a saved person, your body would go into the grave, but your soul would go to hell - to the paradise side.
 - David said in Psalm 16:10, "*For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell...*"
 - Jesus told the thief on the cross, "*Today thou shalt be with me in paradise.*" Luke 23:43; cf. Ephesians 4:9-10
6. If you were lost in time past, your soul would go to the torment side of hell.
7. A description of this is given to us by the lips of Jesus in Luke 16:19-26. Lazarus went to the paradise side of hell, and the rich man to the torment side of hell.
8. Why didn't the souls of the saints go straight to the third heaven? It was because the way had not been made yet. The sin issue had not been completely and totally dealt with. There had not yet been a fully satisfying sacrifice for "time past" sins. Romans 3:24-25
 - Did you notice the word "*forbearance?*" It carries the idea of the extension of time for the payment of a debt.
 - God's forbearance had a system of animal sacrifices that brought temporary forgiveness (not through the animal blood, but on the basis of God's forbearance). Under the Old Testament economy, sins were temporarily covered, but could not be washed or taken away. Hebrews 10:1, 3-4, 11-14
 - God extended the payment of debt because He knew the cross was coming and would take care of it all. Hebrews 9:15, 26
 - God would temporarily cover sin, but the books could not be cleared until the payment was made on that sin debt through the cross of Christ.
9. Therefore, the saints in time past could not go to the throne room of God's third heaven, because the issue of their sin had not been settled yet by the cross work of Christ. God held them in hell (paradise side) until the way was cleared by Christ.

Hell in the "But Now" (Present Day) Time Period

1. Jesus settled the sin issue forever on the cross. He made a full and complete payment for sin. He left nothing undone.
2. After Jesus died, His soul went to paradise in the heart of the earth. Three days later, He arose bodily from the tomb. Then, 40 days later, Christ ascended into the third heaven.
3. At some point after this, the saints in hell (paradise) were relocated to the third heaven. How do we know this? Let's look at 2 Corinthians 12:1-4.
 - Paul is caught up to the third heaven (vs. 2). He calls this place "paradise." vs. 4
 - Paradise has now been relocated into the third heaven. Somewhere between the resurrection and this passage, a relocation of paradise has taken place.
 - If paradise was relocated, and the saints in time past were in paradise, we are safe to assume that the saints were relocated also.
4. Hebrews 12:22-23 talks about the "*spirits of just men made perfect,*" and this is referring to Old Testament saints that are in the third heaven. God took these Old

Testament saints, justified them completely because of the cross, and now they are completely clear. God took them and transferred them to heaven.

- Now all that is left in hades is the torment side. The other side is empty.
5. So, if a lost man dies today, he goes straight to hell just as in time past. But if a saint dies today, he goes straight to the third heaven. 2 Corinthians 5:7-8
- Notice the words “*to be*” - a state of being. You don't cease to exist when you die. You shed this outer, earthly tabernacle and lay it down, and your soul lives on.
6. But, what about hell in the ages to come, out there in the future? Next week we will examine this subject.