

## **Is Hell A Real Place?** **Matthew 11-13**

### **Introduction:**

Many people try to avoid any conversation of an afterlife, especially concerning hell. Some laugh, some mock, and some ridicule those who dare to believe in and teach about the reality of a place called hell. Oftentimes, church leaders will avoid the subject altogether. Still, there are many who have questions concerning it. People frequently use it as a cuss word, but know little to nothing about it. Again, as we stated last week, this subject is closely connected to the very character and integrity of Jesus. During His earthly ministry, He spoke of it in a very real sense. If hell doesn't exist, then Jesus was a liar, and nothing else He said should be trusted. However, the Bible informs us that it is as real as the earth we walk upon. So, what did Jesus teach regarding this place called hell?

### **The Focus:**

- **Every believer must understand what Jesus taught about hell. What did He teach?**
  - **Hell is a literal place.**
  - **Hell was created for the devil.**
  - **Hell is a place of punishment.**
  - **Hell is eternal.**

There are some people who think hell is a figurative and an imaginative place. People flippantly use the term to describe situations or circumstances they are in – “I had a meeting with my boss and it was hell.” However, Jesus never spoke of it in that regard. He spoke of it like it was a literal place (Matthew 11:23; 13:49-50; 23:15). Some talk of it or teach it as just the grave, but that isn't what Jesus taught (Matthew 10:28). I mean, after all, why fear anyone who can throw you into a grave after you die (Luke 12:4-5)?

Another thing that Jesus taught was that hell was created for the devil and for the angels that followed him in his rebellion against God (Matthew 25:41). The angelic host that chose to follow the devil was charged with wrong-doing (Job 4:18). Satan, formerly known as Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12), was the lead angel that covered God's throne (Ezekiel 28:14, 16). It was God's throne, His position of authority, that he coveted (Isaiah 14:13-14). In pride, Lucifer sinned (Ezekiel 28:15-18).

After that, he sought to bring down mankind. If they fell, they too would be destined for destruction that would last for all of eternity (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

He succeeded (Genesis 3:1-7), and therefore, death and corruption entered the world because of sin (Romans 5:12). Making the choice to follow Satan rather than God, and following his plan of evil continues to lead people to his eventual, future destination. God in His righteousness and holiness prepared a place to judge those who would live contrary to His moral standard. Hell is that place. It is a place where God's wrath and indignation are displayed toward sin. However, this is why Christ died on the cross. He bore our wrath and judgment so that we wouldn't have to end up in a place God never intended us to go. Understanding God's perspective on sin, it enhances one's view of God's grace. Because of God's righteousness, Hell must be a reality, but God made a way of escape. God came to earth (John 1:14) to do something we couldn't do (live without sin) – (2 Corinthians 5:21), to make a provision and payment for sin by dying on the cross (Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10).

Next, Jesus taught that hell was a place of punishment. Remember, it was created to serve as a deterrent to those who would follow Satan's destructive plan of evil and rebellion against God. This is why Jesus was very straightforward and honest about hell. He doesn't want anybody to go there. He described it as a place of torment and fire (Matthew 13:41-42; Mark 9:43-44; Luke 16:23). If we as humans innately think in terms of right or wrong, where does that originate from? If the governments of earth uphold justice, why wouldn't God enforce justice on those that disobey His righteous standards? You see, people are really quick to write off the truth of those things which convict them (sin which leads to the reality of hell), but they are not so quick or inclined to boldly state that Jesus was a liar and a lunatic. But to disregard the reality of hell is to make such an implication.

The last point was that Jesus taught that hell is eternal. Jesus said that hell was an "*...everlasting fire*" (Matthew 25:41); "*...everlasting punishment*" (Matthew 25:46); and "*...eternal damnation*" (Mark 3:29). In 2 Thessalonians 1:9, Paul called it, "*...everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.*" This means forever, ongoing. Just like heaven is eternal and is a place for those who decided to follow the true God, hell is eternal and is a place for those who chose to follow Satan's plan of evil. If a person chooses to follow Satan's path of rebellion and spurn God's offer of eternal life through Christ, they will wind up in the same place as Satan. But God loved us enough to tell us exactly where we will end up if we choose to go against Him. As well, He made a way back to Him so that we can be

with Him forever, rather than being separated from Him (John 14:6-7). There's a choice to be made, and Christ's character is connected to what one believes.

### **Response to the Sermon:**

If hell is not real, then Jesus was a phony and a liar, and nothing He said or did really matters. Therefore, the truthfulness of Jesus is at stake. Our response as believers is to pray and engage in conversation with people when this topic arises. We can't avoid it. We don't need to spout off words of condemnation, but rather, we must tell them the story found in God's Word. We need to be intentional about explaining hell's origin, the reality of its existence, the purpose of its creation, why it is a potential reality and destination for people, and what God did to provide a way so that no one has to go there. We need to be able to tell the story of God's Word to help them understand God's holiness and righteousness, but also God's love displayed through Jesus. We must approach people like Jesus – we must warn them in love. Who will you tell?

### **Bible Study Thoughts & Questions:**

Paul uses the word "*wrath*" over 15 times, and the majority of the times it is used it speaks of God's wrath – His judgment and punishment for sin. Paul teaches the church to warn more against God's wrath than he does hell. In fact, you won't find the mention of hell one time in any of his writings, but it is mentioned 15 times throughout Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. A very general and obvious question one must ask after understanding this distinction between what Jesus spoke about and what Paul mentioned is, "Why does Jesus mention hell and Paul does not?" The reason why "*hell*" is mentioned in connection to Jesus is because it will play an intricate role in enforcing justice upon the earth during His reign on the earth at His second coming (Isaiah 14:9-17; Ezekiel 31:15-18; 32:21, 27). This gives us better insight as to why Jesus mentioned hell in connection to His kingdom.

1. Look at Matthew 5:29-30 and Matthew 18:8-9 in connection to Revelation 14:9-11. What is Jesus informing these people to do in order to have life eternal in His kingdom?

2. What did Paul teach about mankind regarding our nature when we are born physically into this world (Ephesians 2:3; Colossians 3:6)? How does this apply to our explaining the gospel?
  
3. What did Paul teach about God's wrath in Romans 1:18-32? How does that apply to today?
  
4. What did Paul teach in Romans 2:4-5 regarding God's wrath? How does that apply to today? How do we relay this when telling the gospel?
  
5. What does Paul teach in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 regarding what happens to those who don't believe in the good news of Jesus? How should this motivate us in our witness?
  
6. What does Paul teach is the way to avoid God's wrath (Romans 5:9)? What is God's desire regarding the manifesting of His wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9)?

### **Application Questions:**

If hell is a literal place of eternal punishment, but God has made a way for all to avoid entering it, then every believer has a huge responsibility as Christ's ambassadors to share the truth and love of God that was displayed in the person of Jesus Christ. Satan, as God's primary adversary, desires nothing more than the destruction and ruin of others. He, like a lion, actively hunts and pursues people to

destroy (1 Peter 5:8). As ambassadors, we are tasked with engaging others with the truth of the gospel. It is the gospel which transforms and reconciles, and it is that message which we have been entrusted to tell others (Romans 1:16; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

1. From our study of heaven and now hell, what is the argument that Pastor Dan has used concerning the reality of those places? Why is this an important point for people to understand? (Remember the character and integrity of Christ.)
2. Why is it a foolish and illogical argument to state that hell is only a reference to the grave (Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:4-5)?
3. Why is it an important point to teach people about the origin of hell and its purpose (Matthew 25:41; Jude 1:6; 2 Peter 2:4)?
4. How can you apply the justice of human governments as a logical, straightforward argument for the reality of hell as a place of punishment (Matthew 13:41-42; Mark 9:43-44; Luke 16:23; Romans 13:4)?
5. Why is it important to note the time one will spend in hell (Matthew 25:41; 25:46; Mark 3:29; 2 Thessalonians 1:9)? How should this prompt us in our witness as we engage in conversation with a non-believer?

**Prayer:**

- Pray for people to see the importance of what Jesus said regarding hell (Matthew 25:41; 25:46; Mark 3:29).
- Pray for people to trust in Jesus and to believe the words He spoke (Matthew 11:23; 13:49-50; 23:15).
- Pray that people would trust Jesus, seeing the reality of the wrath that they will face if they reject Him (Romans 2:5).
- Pray that they would recognize and understand that who they follow determines their destination (Revelation 7:14-17; 14:9-11).