

Module 05 – 28 Responsibility - New vs. Old – Hell 2

Session 28

God is always the same, faithful and full of lovingkindness and He has never changed

When we engage God intimately He will reveal Himself in continually new, surprising and sometimes even shocking ways

Eph 3:16-18 I desire for you to become intimately acquainted with the love of Christ on the deepest possible level; far beyond the reach of a mere academic, intellectual grasp. So that you may be filled with all the fullness of God! Awaken to the consciousness of his closeness! Separation is an illusion! Oneness was God's idea all along!

2 Cor 10:5 ... The dynamic of our strategy is revealed in God's ability to disengage mindsets and perceptions that have held people captive in pseudo fortresses for centuries! 6 Every lofty idea and argument positioned against the knowledge of God is cast down and exposed to be a mere invention of our own imagination.

**For next few weeks we are going to look at the thorny subject of “hell”
A concept that is readily excepted in most if not all religions and in society generally**

We will find that the traditional view of “hell” is the product of a false concept of an angry and vengeful God

Excellent free resources on the topic of “hell”:

Raising Hell <http://www.raisinghellbook.com/>

Brazen Church “Hell in a hand basket” <http://brazenchurch.com/hell-in-the-bible/>

A New Day Dawning blog - Chuck Crisco

www.anewdaydawning.com/blog-1/?category=Hell%3F

Tentmaker website

<http://www.tentmaker.org/articles/ifthellisreal.htm>

<http://www.tentmaker.org/ScholarsCorner.html>

The doctrines of hell as eternal torment were not a widely held view for the first five centuries after Christ,

The early Eastern Church, the Church of the early apostles and Church fathers such as Paul, Clement of Alexandria, St. Gregory of Nyssa, Origen, and others

did not believe in eternal torment in “hell”

- The pagan myths about the afterlife have been repackaged as “hell” a place eternal fiery punishment
- This idea originated in the Western (Catholic) Church, promoted by Latin theologians and Church leaders from Rome who were influence by Hellenistic Greek philosophy

- Hell became a politically expedient concept used by the church and state as a means to control people through fear
- Later fictional literature like Dante's *Inferno* and paintings by Hieronymus Bosch popularised this view of hell
- "hell" as punishment fired the inquisitions and kept church coffers full

The first person to write about "eternal hell" was the Latin (West) North African **Tertullian** (160–220 A.D.), who is considered the Father of the Latin Church. He was not a very nice man and thought "hell" was for anyone he did not like

Tertullian fantasized that not only the wicked would be in hell but also every philosopher and theologian who ever argued with him! He envisioned a time when he would look down from heaven at those people in hell and laugh with glee

The main person responsible for making hell eternal torment in the Western Church was **St. Augustine** Bishop of Hippo (Algeria) (354–430 CE). His lack of understanding of Greek cemented the concept of eternal punishment in hell in the Western Church.

Augustine not only said that hell was eternal for the wicked, but also for anyone who wasn't a Christian. His concept of God's exclusion of non-Christians meant he considered un-baptized babies as damned.

Augustine, maintained that the whole human race was "one damned batch and mass of perdition," out of which a few are elected to salvation, while all the remainder are deservingly lost for ever

The other strong influence on today's hell theology in modern Bible translations came from Jerome's Latin Vulgate bible version. Jerome translated his version of the Scriptures from very inferior Latin texts in the late 4th century.

For over a thousand years (c. AD 400–1530), the Vulgate was the definitive edition of the most influential text in Western European society.

For most Western Christians, it was the only version of the Bible ever encountered but most could not read Latin anyway so it was only the clergy who had access to it

- ➔ **The Vulgate's influence throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance into the Early Modern Period is even greater than that of the King James English Version**
- ➔ **It contributed to many of the ideologies that were used as foundations for the King James translation and other modern bible versions**

The problem with Jerome's Bible was it was heavily influenced by theologians like Tertullian and Augustine.

The early English bible versions were therefore heavily influenced by the same distorted concepts of God

- Many of the English words translated from the Vulgate are misrepresentations of the original Greek
- Eternal, everlasting, forever, redemption, justification, sanctification, sacrament, perdition, punish, torment, damnation etc.
- These words in Latin were coined by Tertullian and others and came to be associated with concepts foreign to the original Greek.

So most of the beliefs about hell came from early Catholicism not from the Bible.

- ➔ Had our old English Bibles been translated directly out of the Greek instead of Latin, it's very probable that the doctrine of eternal torment would never have found its way into our modern Bibles and theology at all

When you realise that the doctrine of hell was adopted by the Church only after 5th century the orthodox position of "hell" begins to crumble and fall

Then all the other associated doctrines begin to tumble like dominos

It was several hundred years after Jesus and the apostles that men began formulating the Church doctrines and creeds, many of which are still a part of Evangelical Christian orthodoxy today

- Why did they need to do that?
- Fear of error and heresy and a loss of intimacy in relationship with God
- The further from relationship people got the more systematic and safe the boundaries people needed to ensure they did not get into error
- This was just a repeat of the rabbinical traditions of the Pharisees etc. who surrounding the law with layers of men's traditions

So many of the systematic theologies we have today were meant to make the truth known but instead placed layers of tradition on the church to keep it safe from error but all it has done is obscure what God I really like relationally

If God is not angry and does not need appeasement then why is there so much about "hell" in the bible?

➔ **Actually there isn't!**

If God does not punish then what would be the purpose of "hell"?

What is "hell" where is "hell" and who goes there?

Most of the confusion around Hell starts with translation error. 4 different words into one English word "hell"

- Sheol (Hebrew)
- Hades (Greek)
- Tartarus (Greek)

- Gehenna (Greek)

1. Sheol (H7585) she'ôl From H7592; hades or the world of the dead (as if a subterranean retreat), including its accessories and inmates: – grave, pit, hell
Sheol 65 OT occurrences

➔ Mostly relating to the grave or the place that dead souls depart to

2. Hades (G86) hadēs

From G1 and G1492; properly unseen, that is, “Hades” or

➔ the place (state) of departed souls: – grave, hell.

Surprisingly Hades only has 11 NT occurrences

Hades was used 4 times by Jesus, none relating to punishment

2 uses of hades in Acts quoting OT references Sheol relating to Jesus' death

1 use in 1 Cor 15 referring to breaking the power of death

4 uses in Revelation

1 Corinthians 15:55 where, O Death, thy sting? Where, O Hades, thy victory?

Luke 10:15 And you, Capernaum, which unto the heaven was exalted, unto hades you shall be brought down

Revelation 1:18 and he who is living, and I did become dead, and, lo, I am living to the ages of the ages. Amen! And I have the keys of the hades and of the death.

Revelation 20:14 and the death and the hades were cast to the lake of the fire -- this [is] the second death;

Matthew 16:18 And I also say to you, that you are a rock, and upon this rock I will build my assembly, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it

- **None of these references is relating to "hell" or punishment**

Tartarus (G5020) tartaroō

From Tartaroōs (the deepest abyss of Hades);

➔ Greek mythology the place where the Titans were incarcerated

To incarcerate in eternal torment: – cast down to hell this addition to the definition was a totally made up

Tartarus 1 mention

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into (“hell”) Tartarus and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;

No “hellish” punishment

Gehenna (G1067) of Hebrew origin ([H1516] and [H2011]);

➔ valley of (the son of) Hinnom; gehenna (or Ge-Hinnom), a valley of Jerusalem
Gehenna is the word still translated “hell” 12 of 13 times left in modern bible versions like the NASB, AMP etc.

Gehenna comprises 100% of Jesus' alleged references to “Hell”.

So what is Gehenna? Greek word for the Valley of Hinnom

➔ It is a literal physical valley with a geographic location outside the gates of Jerusalem



What are the scriptures that refer to Gehenna as “hell”?

What do those scriptures actually refer to?

What do they symbolise?

Are we prepared for the Spirit to reveal the truth about them to us and not get stuck in tradition?

- “Gehenna” was well known throughout Israel as an evil and dark place, used for a variety of evil acts throughout Israel’s history.

In the time of Hosea, the rebellious Israelites committed child sacrifice there to honour the pagan god Molech (Molek)

2 Chron 28:3 Moreover, he burned incense in the valley of Ben-hinnom and burned his sons in fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had driven out before the sons of Israel.

- In Israel’s history Gehenna was literally a place of perpetual fire. A rubbish dump filled with so many bodies that the worms would never die from lack of food.
The valley contained so much trash, thrown out from the besieged city’s walls that the bodies would burn perpetually
- That is the image but is not “hell” eternal nor punishment



Jer 19:6 therefore, behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather the valley of Slaughter.

Prophetic statement referring to the destruction of the temple, Jerusalem and the Old Covenant system in AD70

- Dead bodies were literally thrown into this dump during the time of Isaiah and would be again just 40 years after Jesus spoke these words, when the Romans besieged and destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD.
- Rather than eternal “hell” this was a physical place for dead bodies

Jesus uses the word Gehenna 11 times but only in 4 different ways mostly to describe beliefs that are opposite to life in the Kingdom

➔ **None of Jesus’ uses were referring eternal torment or punishment after death**

Using the NASB, we see 13 NT references only for Hell and 12 are Gehenna:

1 Matthew 5:29 – Gehenna

2 Matthew 5:30 – Gehenna

3 Matthew 18:9 – Gehenna

4 Mark 9:43 – Gehenna

5 Mark 9:45 – Gehenna

6 Mark 9:47 – Gehenna

1-6 uses are the same concept

7 Matthew 10:28 – Gehenna

8 Luke 12:5 – Gehenna

9 Matthew 5:22 – Gehenna

10 Matthew 23:15 – Gehenna

11 Matthew 23:33 – Gehenna

12 James 3:6 – Gehenna

13 2 Peter 2:4 – Tartarus

Only 4 different usages of Gehenna by Jesus

Let's look at some of the individual meanings Jesus used when talking about Gehenna

At all times Jesus is talking about kingdom life not about going to heaven or ending up in "hell"

On most occasions Jesus was talking to the religious leaders

Mark 9:43 If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into (hell) Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire, 44 [where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.]

One foot or one eye in verses 45-47

6 occurrences are about effects of sin

- Rather than discussing the afterlife, Jesus is using a well-known local landmark to illustrate how significant and pervasive the destruction caused by sin is to our lives and relationships
- Jesus is literally saying that cutting off your hand will be less damaging to your life than a lifestyle of sin motivated by a lack of identity as sons.

Some streams of Jewish thought view sin as self-inflicted judgment. When you sin, you inflict judgment upon yourself.

This belief is so sincere, that even today, many orthodox Jews believe the Holocaust was their own fault – that it was their deserved judgment for the sins of Israel and the failure of the Jews to bring the world into the knowledge of Yahweh.

As extreme as that sounds, it gives us insight into the perspective of the Jews that were hearing Jesus' words.

It is better to lose your eye than to let your eye result in your total self-destruction via sin.

Sin isn't meaningless; it's literally inviting "hell" pain and misery into our lives

- Jesus is using the most disgusting location in Jerusalem to illustrate how destructive sin is and to encourage people to overcome it
- This freedom was a present invitation not a future hope so they could freely enjoy abundant life now instead of following the DIY path into self-destructive patterns.

James 3:6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell (Gehenna).

This same concept is seen in the only non-Gospel use of Gehenna

Evil from one body part corrupts the whole body as Paul affirmed this in 1 Cor 12:26

The Pharisees were a religious sect that were all about perceived righteousness.

They obsessively followed every directive of the Law and made a continuous presentation of their cleanliness and piety.

They were self-righteous – DIY'ers

8 and 9th use of Gehenna

Matt 23:15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of Gehenna as yourselves. 33 You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of Gehenna?"

- **Jesus was literally calling them children of the sewer**
- **He was telling them that their own "righteousness" won't be enough to save them from being thrown out onto the dung heap.**
- **They were going to end up outside the covenant with all the other dead at AD70**

Some of those listening could have actually had their dead bodies dumped over the city walls and into Gehenna during the Roman siege to come at AD70
They were proud of being children of Abraham and now they were being called children of the refuse

10th and 11th Gehenna reference

In Matthew 10:28 and Luke 12:5, is where Jesus says:

Matthew 10:28 "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna."

Who was Jesus talking about here?

One interpretation is:

Those who can kill body – religious leaders who did kill many

Fear him (God or someone else) – Rome Caesar who would eventually destroy Jerusalem along with all their hopes and dreams of kingdom

Even if Jesus was talking about God and using Gehenna to mean "hell" there is no concept of eternal torment.

Jesus is saying that they should be more concerned about someone who can permanently destroy their body and soul not punish it there.

The key is destroy not punish and there is no indication, even if it was talking about God, that He would do that, only that He could

Destroy (G622) apollumi

From G575 and the base of G3639; to destroy fully (reflexively to perish, or lose

The word "destroy" is used in Mark 4:38 to describe the threat of perishing, i.e. physically dying in the storm.

Matthew 18:11 The word destroy is also used to describe the mission of Jesus to seek and save that which was LOST.

It is not a word of perpetual torment and there is no concept of eternal or everlasting

The entire idea of perpetual fire comes from the imagery of Gehenna.

Even if we interpret Jesus to be figuratively referencing "hell" there is still no eternal suffering of all unbelieving humans.

It is much more likely that Jesus is referring to the AD70 destruction of Jerusalem

Last reference often used to derive a doctrine of eternal torture

Matthew 5:22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery Gehenna.

This passage again shows the idea of a literal Gehenna without suggesting "hell" and eternal torture.

- Jesus is raising the standard of what constitutes an offense to thoughts and emotions to emphasise how powerful our thoughts and words are
- Whoever heard of going to court or "hell" for being angry?

- Jesus is demonstrating how little it takes for sin to negatively affect us.
- Just a bit of unresolved anger like leaven pollutes our lives,
- If you are at the point of actually despising your brother then the destruction is already upon you in the torture of unforgiveness – Matt 18

➔ **Religion uses the fear of an angry God and the fear of hell to keep us in order**

➔ **Fear induces and produces guilt, shame and condemnation to make us feel bad**

➔ **God calls us to simply love Him, ourselves and each other**

Condemnation: the expression of very strong disapproval; censure, damnation, vilification, the action of condemning someone to a punishment; sentencing.

Shame a painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behaviour.

Guilty culpable of or responsible for a specified wrongdoing - not forgiven

What do we feel guilty about?

What do we feel ashamed of?

What do we feel condemned about?

How does this make us feel?

Useless, dirty, unclean, rubbish, inadequate, a failure, powerless, less than

If God does not count sin or transgression against us then who does?

Rom 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit; 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

1 Cor 15:22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

Colossians 1:19-20: Through Christ "God was pleased ... to reconcile to himself ALL things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

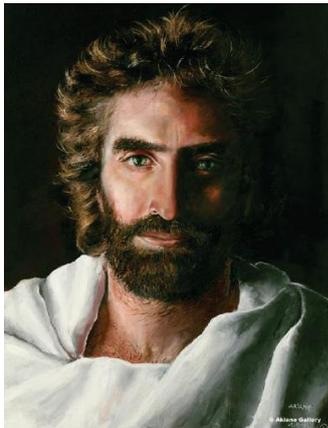
- If you walk in the DIY path of your own understanding you will feel guilty, ashamed and condemned

- ➔ Do you know by experience that you are included in Christ and forgiven?
- ➔ “Only love that cannot be changed by our behaviour has the power to change our behaviour”

God does not stop loving us even if we don't love Him
 Rev 1:18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.
 Love has won the decisive victory over sin death and hell and therefore love wins

Col 2:2 The mandate of my ministry is for everyone's heart to be awakened to their true identity, intertwined in love's tapestry. This will launch you into a life of knowing the wealth of every conclusion and joint witness hidden within the mystery of God who fathered us and co-revealed us in Christ

- Let's not hide from God in our own version of bushes covering up or self-medicating Let's run to Him
- Let's engage God and let Him reveal any areas where we are still in bondage to guilt, shame or condemnation
- God wants to free you from the lies of the enemy that keep you less than so you can be free to be you



Close your eyes and begin to think of Jesus or Father being in front of you ask Him to reveal any areas in your life where you still feel guilty, ashamed or condemned
 Hand everything over to Him

Let the love of God cleanse your conscience
 Let Jesus' forgiveness wash over you
 Let all the shame be destroyed by the intense fire of God's love for you

