

Remnant Life Church

March 24, 2019

Absolute Truth: Heaven and Hell

Part 2

Luke 16:19-31

Week 1 - Absolute truth: The Word of God

Week 2 - Absolute truth: Jesus Christ

Week 3 – Absolute truth: Heaven

- A great number of preachers around the world, in every kind of church you can imagine, will often talk about heaven
 1. Why? – because it makes people feel good
 2. A vast majority of people when asked, whether they believe in spiritual things or not, will say they believe in heaven
- In contrast to heaven, there are not nearly as many sermons preached on hell
 - Why? For the very same reason so much is preached on heaven, because of how it makes us feel.
 - The same people who believe in heaven will tell you there is no such place as hell
- What is at the foundation of our belief in heaven and hell?
 1. The Bible says they are real places
 2. So does Jesus

Two primary words for hell -

- Sheol (Hebrew-OT)/Hades (Greek-NT)
 1. This is the place where those who reject God in the person of Jesus Christ go after they die but before the final judgment
 2. Those who die in the Lord are immediately in His presence
 3. Those who die without Christ go to Hades where there is torment (**Luke 16**)
 4. Then, when the day of final judgment comes, they are sent into the Lake of Fire (**Rev 20**)
- Gehenna
 1. This name is a physical place on earth; a valley to the southwest of the Old City of Jerusalem
 2. Called in the Bible the Valley of Ben Hinnom
 - Near where this valley joins the Kidron Valley was Topeth, the site of early Baal worship
 - Mentioned in 11 verses in the OT; 12 in the NT with all but one being in the Gospels (the other in James)
 - In two primary ways
 - In Joshua as a tribal boundary marker
 - The place (Topeth) where the evil kings of Judah sacrificed children to the demonic god Moloch

- Specifically, Kings Ahaz and Manasseh who sacrificed their sons (2 Chron 28; 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6)
 - The bodies of the sacrificed were thrown into the valley and burned
 - Of course, the prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah warned the people that judgment from God was coming because of this great sin
 - Because of these on-going threats, the valley came to be known as a symbol or representation for eternal judgment associated with the fire that consumed the dead
- 3. Sheol or Hades is the intermediate state of the unrepentant dead while Gehenna is the eternal hell

READ – Luke 16:19-31

- There are many who identify this as another parable given by Jesus meaning not an actual event
 1. I don't believe that is true
 2. The Bible does not call it a parable
 3. Certain phrases or forms of all the other parables are not present here
 4. Abraham lived; the name Lazarus was common in that day; Jesus did not name the rich man perhaps because those listening would have known the man
 5. I believe Jesus was sharing what happened through a supernatural means of His understanding
- Jesus is speaking to and addressing the Pharisees who, as we read in verse 14, “loved money”
 1. Wealth is not a sin it is a heart that craves having it above all else
 2. *1 Tim 16:10 - For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*
- Jesus' words are not condemning wealth but the pursuit of it beyond everything else and the mistaken belief that what you achieve in this life will gain you entrance into heaven
- The Pharisees in Jesus time believed, as did the majority of Jews in that day, that the more wealth you had and the more prosperous you were the more you were blessed by God
- In other words, the Pharisees had the contorted belief that loving and pursuing money was equivalent to or the same as loving God and pursuing His blessing.
 1. We still see this message being promoted today
 2. By some of the most popular and well-known preachers in our culture
 3. It is often called the prosperity gospel but it is a false teaching that only leads people away from the truth of God's word
 4. Jesus said to His disciples in **Matt 16:26**, *What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?*
- In the thinking of the Pharisees, there was absolutely no way a rich person would not go to heaven
- In verse 19, Jesus' first sentence, “*There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day.*” the Pharisees immediately saw themselves and He had their attention

- Imagine their shock when the rich man ends up in hell

What do we learn through this story?

- Those in hell are fully conscious of their surroundings
- This destiny is eternal and unchanging
- Those in hell know why they are there
- The torment is also knowing that others you care about will be joining you

There are teachings many embrace that helps them deal with the reality and unpleasantness of hell

- Sadly, many churches have embraced these in order to not turn people away
 1. Universalism – a belief that everyone will eventually be saved regardless of what they believe or how they live
 2. Annihilationism – states that while the righteous or repentant will go to heaven, the wicked will simply cease to exist – no hell, just into nothingness
 3. Purgatory – a belief embraced by millions of Catholics around the world that states when you die you go to an intermediary place of neither heaven nor hell where you may be able to earn your way out and into heaven
- NONE of these beliefs has a shred of evidence presented in the Bible
- They all reject the power and purpose of Jesus' death on the cross

HOW CAN A LOVING GOD SEND PEOPLE TO HELL?

1. God is both a God of love but He is also a God of righteousness
 - a. Hell exists for 2 purposes
 - i. First, for God to deal righteously with satan
 1. **Matt 25:41** - *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*
 2. **Rev 20:10** - *And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*
 3. Do not believe that satan will go unpunished for his rebellion against God
 - a. His first punishment was to be banished from paradise, heaven
 - b. His second, final punishment will be the lake of fire and eternal torment
 - ii. Second, for God to deal righteously with unbelievers
 1. **2 Thess 1:8-9** - *He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might*

2. BUT...God does not want anyone to go to Hell
 - a. **2 Peter 3:9** - *...the Lord is patient with you not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance*
 - b. **Ezek 33:11** - *Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?'*
 - c. **John 3:16** -*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*
 - i. Within this one verse is the key to it all – believe in Him!
 - ii. The only way to enter heaven and stay out of hell is through Jesus Christ

What if there is no hell?

- Then Jesus was a misguided soul
 1. We said last week that Jesus, without sin, spoke absolute truth
 2. Since He spoke of heaven then we know it is true
 3. He also spoke of hell as a very real place that whoever is there experiences the agony of their choice
- Then the Bible is nothing more than a book of stories and no different than any other popular work of fiction
 1. We know that the Word of God is the absolute truth of God
 2. The Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit
 3. If there is no hell then the writers were nothing more than gifted writers
- Then the concept of right and wrong, the stain of sin is nothing but a cruel joke
 1. The Bible talks of sin over 1300 times
 2. **Matt 6:14-15** - *For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*
- Then every disciple except John and millions of Christians martyred down through the centuries died meaningless deaths
- Then the cross has no meaning or significance
 1. **Gal 6:14** - *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...*
 2. **1 Peter 2:24** - *"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed."*