

Title: What is Hell?

Author: Dr. Randall T. Hahn

Scripture: Matthew 13:41-42

The fact is the average Christian today can probably go to church for years and never hear a single sermon on hell. It is just easier to not talk about hell, but is it helpful? Is it ever helpful to ignore the truth?

Purgatory is a place that can have a hell-like punishment, but from which one can be redeemed. One goes there to work out what was left undone on earth and has a chance of still making it to heaven.

Purgatory is not biblical for two reasons:

1. Purgatory is all about the work of man to get himself into heaven and the Bible has clearly said our work does not get us into heaven (See Rom.3:23-27; Eph.2:8-9).
2. There is nothing like a purgatory taught anywhere in Scripture.

Words for the unsaved in the afterlife:

- Hades (Matt.16:18; Rev.1:18, 6:8, 20:13,14) – It is translated twice as “in the depths,” once as “hell,” and twice as “the grave.” It is the equivalent of the Old Testament word, Sheol. It is a temporary place of the unsaved, and is not used in relationship to the lake of fire or eternal punishment. This is where the unsaved go now when they die until they are resurrected to the Great White Throne judgment.
- Gehenna (Matt.5:22, 29, 30; 10:28, 18:9, 23:15, 33; Mk.9:43, 45, 47; Lk.12:5; James 3:6) It is consistently translated as “hell” or “hellfire” and refers to eternal punishment.
- Tartaros – (2 Pet.2:4). It is the equivalent of gehenna.

What Jesus Says About Hell

1. People do go to an eternal punishment, Matthew 25:46
2. Hell is a blazing furnace where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, Matthew 13:41-42.
3. It is a place where not a single moment of rest from the agony is afforded, Luke 16:24-25
4. It is the lake of fire for Satan, the Antichrist, the false prophet, and the unsaved. It is torment forever and ever (Revelation 19:20, 20:10, 11-15).

Questions About Hell:

1. Can a loving God really send people to hell?
2. What about people who genuinely and sincerely tried to follow God in the religion of their culture? They were ignorant, picked the wrong one, but still they tried.
3. What about people who to no fault of their own never really heard the gospel?
4. Can hell really be forever?

These questions are really about two things:

1. Is God really just and loving? In His justice He provides a place for those who rebel against the law. That is the just and right thing to do. In His love, He not only provides a way to escape what justice demands, but He pays the price of what justice demands. Hell is not a statement about God's love, but rather it is statement about man's rejection of God's love and justice.
2. The other questions, and perhaps to some degree all of the questions assume that man, or at least the great majority of us, are basically pretty good.

Man is NOT basically good

1. We would be if given the right environment. No, God gave us the Garden of Eden and the Millennium, and we rebelled.
2. We would be if given the truth. No, God has always given us the truth and we have always rejected it and sinned anyway.
3. The Bible says we are all are sinners and fall short of God's glory, Romans 3:23
4. The Bible says none are good before God, Psalm 14:1-3 (We measure goodness against each other, not the holiness of God. We never fully grasp our arrogance in God's face in our sin. Even the act of doing something good and then going before God as if He owes us something because we did a good work, as defined by ourselves, is arrogance.)

Hell is a real and physical place. It is a place that people will spend all of eternity. It is a place that is always described in the worst of terms: torment, darkness, and fire. It never shows a single moment of comfort or peace. It is the reality of our rejection of God and exaltation of self.

I am THE WAY, THE TRUTH, and THE LIFE. No one comes to the Father except through me. – John 14:6