

## HELL AND LOSTNESS: TEACHING NOTES

*As churches become more concerned about being less threatening places for non-believers and their image in their own cultures, Christians have become careful in how they use "harsh sounding" words like lost, sin and repentance... It is awkward for many Christians to come to terms with the stark reality that people could be forever lost. I'm afraid many Christians just don't believe that those who have not heard or do not know Christ are lost." David Mays ACMC*

### 8 Current Beliefs

1. **Materialism** Life after death is unlikely Bertrand Russell  
Scientifically unprovable Psychologically abhorrent and aberrant
2. **Skepticism** Certainty is arrogance; the gospel is about *now* for postmoderns  
We cannot really know for sure what the Bible means, and the discussion gets in the way of the conversation in this culture, serving only to give a skewed view of who God is when interpreted in postmodern language, so it should not enter into our discussion of Jesus and the gospel.  
In fact, people experience enough *hell* in this life to encourage them to join God's journey, and don't need the extra fear as motivation. In fact, in following Jesus, they can join in his current judgment of evil by attacking the rich capitalists and environment wasters, etc. In other words, the gospel is about now, not about eternity.
3. **Universalism** Everyone goes to heaven John Hick  
God is a God of love and mercy. If human compassion rejects the notion of hell, of how much greater compassion must God be. Hell may be real, but is not permanent, but rather a purging and instructive experience to bring us to Christ eventually.
4. **Inclusivism** People saved by Christ without knowing Him, based on available light  
Lostness is based on rejection of available light. If one has not understood the gospel, then God will accept people based on what light they do have. It is only through Christ that one is saved, but Christ can save people based on His work and His mercy in this life without their knowing Him personally.
5. **Postmortem Encounter** Unbelievers get a chance after death Clark Pinnock  
Those who die unsaved are given another opportunity after death to trust in Christ. Another version of the *fairness* argument against eternal lostness
6. **Ameliorationism** Unbelievers suffer some negative consequence for some time  
Language is symbolic argument; human authors used human terms to describe the different but indescribable. The *fire* is regret, disappointment, guilt, emotional torment, not physical.
7. **Annihilationism** Unbelievers are ultimately annihilated John Stott  
*Destruction* is the word they key into. The fire may be eternal, but the person and the suffering are not.
8. **Literalism** Unbelievers suffer eternal, conscious torment in lake of fire  
Simple, literal interpretation. This is universal understanding of the church for the first 1800 years of her existence.

## 6 Arguments posed against Hell

1. Good God versus sadistic God . hell is abhorrent and offensive
2. All things will eventually and ultimately be restored in Christ . Universalism
3. Eternal punishment for temporal disobedience . unfair
4. Consuming Fire . annihilation; fire and smoke are eternal, not the soul
5. Sheol = grave Old Testament Doctrine without New Testament Revelation
6. Symbolic Language . serious, but symbolic not actual; authors used human terms to describe the different but indescribable

## Four Foundational Considerations

1. Is biblical revelation without error in all its statements and facts?
2. Were the writers of scripture so influenced by the beliefs of their age so that they simply recounted a prevailing view rather than writing absolute truth?
3. Is prophecy to be interpreted literally when describing events or things?
4. Can definite theological conclusions be made when based on accurate exegesis of scripture in which all pertinent facts are considered carefully?

*Does human opinion change a situation? (Either) there is, or is not a future of eternal punishment. Whether we agree with it or not has very little bearing on the issue. The vote against it could be unanimous, and still hell might be a reality. God did not consult us when planning His righteous judgment of the sinful human race. The ultimate question is whether the bible, which is our only source of information about what happens after death, teaches a doctrine of eternal, conscious punishment.* % John Walvoord (Four views of Hell Pg 167)

## Old Testament Witness of Judgment

- Flood Sodom Egypt Plagues & Red Sea Korah; Nadab & Abihu Captivities

## Old Testament Passages on Eternal Punishment

- Isaiah 66:22-24
- Daniel 12:1-2

## Jesus on Hell Gospel of Matthew Only

- **Hell is Real**

5:21-22 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. +

10:27-30 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. "And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

23:15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

23:33 "Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?"

- **Hell is Ruled by God**

10:28 "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

25:41 "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

25:46 "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

- **Hell Involves Rejection (isolation)** Matt 7:23; 8:11-12; 22:13; 25:30
- **Hell Involves Pain** Matt 13:30, 40-43, 49-50; 18:6-9

## Jesus on Hell – Mark, Luke, John

- Hell and Demons Mark 1:24; 3:11; 5:7
- Hell and Eternity Mark 9:42-48
- Hell and Scripture Luke 16:19-31
- Hell and the Present John 3:16-21; 3:36
- Hell and the Future John 5:28-29; 8:21, 24

## Paul

- Romans 2:5
- 2 Thess 1:5-10

## Other Passages

- Hebrews 6:1-3
- Jude 7, 13
- Revelation 14:9-11
- Revelation 20:10-15
- Revelation 21:8, 15

*“The awkward fact is that the church, for nineteen hundred years, has believed in the uniqueness of Christ, the truth of His word, and the necessity of God’s judgment of the impenitent: and we have to ask why...some or all of these beliefs now seem to have become so unbelievable. Is it that new exegetical discoveries now cast doubt upon what the church has always believed? Has the church misread the bible consistently over so long a period of time? ...It is not new light from the bible but because of new darkness from the culture...”*

## David Wells

*“We are so unrighteous and sin is so normal that the very notion of absolute justice punishing sinners in eternal fire offends us. Our concept of holiness and justice is so warped by our own ungodiness that sin does not offend us but the punishment of it does! We are not offended by sin, we are offended by holiness and labor to excuse or eliminate its reality lest other sinners like ourselves take issue with it.*

*The heart of gospel compassion demands that we spread not only the reality of eternal life but also the universal invitation to escape certain judgment and find righteousness, peace and forgiveness in the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not be ashamed of the gospel. Do not be ashamed of the necessity of it, the subject of it or the offer of it. Teach the doctrine of hell with tears.”* **RSB**