

The Doctrine Nobody likes

It is likely that as many as a third of you who here this sermon today will not believe the content.

A few years ago, US News and World Report surveyed Americans and discovered that 78% believed in Heaven and believed they were going there, while 60% believed in Hell, but only 4% believed they were going there.

Another Survey found that 35% Baptists; 54% of Presbyterians; 58% of Methodists, and 60% of Episcopalians do not believe in a literal place called hell!

- Christian Science founder, Mary Baker Eddy teaches that there is no death. They believe that Heaven and Hell are both a state of thought and not places. People experience their own Heaven or Hell right here on earth.

- New Age cult leader Sun Myung Moon of the Unification Church believes that God will not desert any person eternally. By some means they will be restored.

- Bertrand Russell, an eloquent atheist, said that anyone who preaches Hell is inhumane including Jesus Christ.

- Robert Ingersoll who devoted himself to opposing Christianity in the 1800's said, "The idea of hell was born of revenge and brutality on one side, and cowardice on the other....I have no respect for any human being who believes in it. I dislike the doctrine, I hate it, I despise it, I defy this doctrine....this doctrine is infamous beyond all power to express."

- Right about now you may be asking why does Pastor Jimmy feel the need to talk about this? There are 3 reasons:
 1. Jesus spoke about Hell being a literal place and felt it important to warn people to avoid going there.

2. The Bible is clear that there is a place outside of the loving presence of God that will be the eternal home of those God judges, so I must be faithful to Scripture and teach it.

3. Knowing that people will actually go to Hell, ought to be a powerful motivator for us to share the Good News that there is a Heaven!!!

- So, lets try to answer some important questions: Does the Bible actually teach that a place exists where people will be eternally separated from God?

1. Yes it does. Jesus did not dance around the subject or candy coat it. Matthew 25:41 says, "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."

Revelation 14:9-12

2. 2Peter 3:7 says, " By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men."
3. The New Testament teaches the conscious punishment of those who reject God and it does so forcefully, with clarity, and in many passages. If anything, rejecting a literal Hell requires some serious misuse of the Bibles texts.
4. Systematic Theology wrote, in 1994 "If we can think of Hell and the idea of someone living completely apart from God and Good in torment forever with casual disregard, something is seriously wrong with our character and personality." When Paul thought about people being in hell, he wrote that it felt like "great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart."
5. God's heart isn't filled with joy over the destruction of those who reject Him! 2 Peter 3:9 says, "He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

- So what is Hell like?

1. There are three words:

1. Eternal: Matthew 25:46 “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” The fact is that the end state of those who refuse God’s will is a place of conscious existence that persists. We gladly accept that about Heaven. We must also accept it about Hell.

2. Fire: Jesus referred to Hell with the term, “Gehenna” several times. Easton’s Bible Dictionary tells us that Gehenna was a deep, narrow ravine just outside of Jerusalem. It had been the place where the idolatrous Jews burned their children alive to the idols Moloch and Baal. After Exile, in order to show their abhorrence of the locality, the residents of Jerusalem made this valley the garbage dump for the city. Fires constantly burned there fed by the garbage. The Jew look at this place as filth and corruption.

3. Darkness: Several times Jesus talked about the wicked being cast into outer darkness and where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth. I always wondered what that meant. Then I read about a Jewish protocol on how to handle a Jew who had too much to drink and was causing trouble at a banquet: Tell the story:

- Here’s the BIG question, who will be in Hell?

That question I can’t answer! Nor should you! It’s none of our business. I have enough trouble trying to discern between good and bad in my own heart, never mind trying to judge the saved and lost. BUT I know that I am going to Heaven!!!!!!! Our business as believers is to show as many people as possible the way to Christ!! It’s a privilege.

John 3:16-18 For God so loved the world that He gave is one and only Son, that whosoever believed on Him would not die but have ever lasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of Gods one and only Son.”

That's both full of hope and a careful warning! God who is Good, loving, kind, patient, and always willing to forgive, full of mercy, is also just, infinitely holy, and perfectly righteous.

Did you know Hell is a self-imposed torment? We speak of God sending someone to Hell when in reality a person chooses to be there long before his death and judgment.

In closing, may the ugly vision that I tried to convey to you today about Hell cause us to focus on those things that matter. May the alarm go off in your spirit that the hour is short and telling those about Christ is more urgent than ever before. The massive urgency to "GO" given to us by Jesus has never been stronger. Use your life to compel the lost to listen.

Use your life because the Bible says "Our lives are but a vapor, here one minute and gone the next." Have NO REGRETS, Go and make Him know.