

The 'Discipleship Check List' Transcript

A GV247.TV Programme presented by Stewart Menelaws

DCL No13: What is Hell? – Life and Death

This series is for any Christian believer who is either at the very beginning of their journey with Jesus Christ or has been a believer for some years but lacks a sound understanding of the Christian faith. It should also prove to be a helpful aid which interlinks with all our resources for Shepherds, Overseers and Believers reaching out to others.

What is Hell?

Mention the word Hell to most people, and it will either conjure an image of fiery torment, personal anguish or will be brushed off as trivial nonsense. Yet the Bible, and notably the New Testament, is prolific in regard to this fiery location. So what is it? Where is it? And when we consider that God is love (1 John 4:8), why does it exist at all?

There are those who put forward the view that no such place literally exists and that Jesus must have meant something else, however it's not difficult to investigate and understand. What it really comes down to is – do we believe what's written – or do we choose not to...?

As always, we need to take The Lord Almighty at His Word. Do not add to it – do not subtract from it (Deut 4:2 – Rev 22:18-19). We may not have been given a full explanation of the dimensional realms that are alluded to in scripture because we are not required to know such detail, and we would probably not be able to understand anyway. But what we do need to understand about God, and His Salvation has been made clear. To begin, we need to understand the way the word 'hell' alongside the words 'grave, depths of the earth, paradise or third heaven, dungeon, prison, abyss and lake of fire' has been interpreted or used throughout the bible.

What is Hell throughout the Bible?

The common view of what is an Anglo-Saxon word 'Heil or Hell' is generally used to describe the location in regard to the final judgement of the wicked at the end of time.

The Grave:

The Hebrew word (Sheol) and the Greek word (Hades) translate in English as the Grave - which appears to depict a specific place of waiting for departed spirits (Isa 14:9). We'll be looking into this later and in the next programme – the resurrection.

Paradise:

Paradise or also known as the Third Heaven – appears to be the place of waiting for the departed spirits who have put their trust in Jesus Christ (Luke 23:43) and Paul says he knew a man that was caught-up in a vision to the Third Heaven, that is - Paradise (2 Cor 12:2-5). We also note that in Revelation 2:7 that the Tree of Life is in Paradise. We must take heed. Anyone who seeks to alter God's Word – He will take away an individual's share in the Tree of Life which is in Paradise. (Rev 22:18-19).

Dungeon / Prison / Abyss:

Another dimensional realm mentioned is where we come across the word Tartarus (a Greek word) or Tartaroo which is used to depict the incarceration of fallen angels in a dungeon (2 Pet 2:4 and Jude 6) and some scholars align this with the Abyss in Revelation 9:1 and 20:1. There are different views on these dimensional realms but as I have mentioned previously, the multi-dimensional world that is out-with our space and time is not something we as finite beings can dogmatically assert.

Speaking of the Abyss, we read that, at the return of Christ to Earth, the Devil who is the Dragon will be locked away in this location for 1000 years (Revelation 20:1-3) After his release to fulfil God's plan on Earth, he is finally sent to The Lake of Fire (Rev 20:10).

The valley of Hinnom: (Matthew 5:29)

We have the word - Gehinnom (Hebrew word) or Gehenna (Greek word) – which Jesus spoke of as a fiery place of destruction.

The valley of Hinnom is actually a literal place in Jerusalem. It's a deep narrow valley that joins with the Kidron, where refuse was disposed of, and where the ancient kings of Judah sacrificed their children to the fire. The stench of dead animals and burning rubbish would have been most unpleasant and its smoke rose up day and night as the locals would continually add to it.

While it's important to read the context where Jesus speaks of Gehinnom, it's important to realise that these illustrations serve to point towards the ultimate everlasting consequences should a person reject God's salvation and instruction.

The Lake of fire – Second death:

The Lake of Fire, also known as The Second Death - the first death is of the flesh/body and the 2nd death is spiritual death of the soul/spirit. This is found in the book of revelation and is described as the final judgement and incarceration of the wicked where even Death and Hades are also cast. (Rev 20:14)

Within the book of revelation we are told that The Beast, that is the lawless one mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 will, at the end of the age and along with the False prophet who represents and speaks for the Beast (Rev 13:11-18), are possibly the first of humankind to be cast into The Lake of Fire 1000 years ahead of every other entity to be assigned there (Revelation 19:20).

Why did God make this place?

It's imperative to understand that The Lake of Fire was prepared for the devil - that great Dragon - and the angels who left their rightful abode and rebelled against God Almighty (Matthew 25:41 & Jude 6).

The good news of the gospel is that humans were not created to end up in The Lake of Fire, for The Lord desires all to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:3-4) and the apostle Peter explains that The Lord is patient, not wanting anyone to perish (2 Pet 3:9). However, we also must understand that because God is Love, people have been given choice.

Wide is the path that leads to destruction and narrow the path that leads to life. Matthew 7:13 and Luke 13:24 illustrates the souls of humans who will end up separated from God and a loving environment for eternity - by their own doing. He who denies Christ before men will be rejected before God (Matt 10:33).

Is anyone in the Lake of Fire at present?

At this time we can understand from the scriptures that there is nothing in The Lake of Fire – be it man or angel, let alone Satan/The Devil...

At present the Devil is the prince of this world (John 14:30) he is in control of this world (1 John 5:19) and is seeking to devour souls. 1 Peter 5:8 and Revelation 2:13 even tells us his throne is in Pergamum which is in Turkey.

Revelation continues to explain that he will empower a human male referred to as The Beast (Rev 13:8) to deceive the world (2 Thess 2:1-12 and Rev 13:14) prior to the return of Jesus Christ (Rev 19:11-21). Ephesians chapter 6:10-18 instructs the disciple of Christ on the spiritual protection that comes with being a child of God.

False viewpoints:

There are those who propose that the souls of unbelievers die or fall asleep. This has no basis within the full council of scripture. Scriptures show that the spirit/soul cannot be vanquished thereby explaining the need for such a final location specifically created to incarcerate rebellious entities which in turn protects the new Heaven and Earth where rebellion will no longer be a threat. This is an absolute requirement for the new order of things to come (Rev 21:1-8).

The resurrection of the dead:

In regard to the final destination of those who wilfully reject God's free gift of eternal salvation, the Bible explains that there will be a resurrection of all souls/spirits to face judgement called the Great White Throne Judgement (Rev 20:11).

Souls facing this judgement stand condemned, where the books are opened (Rev 20:12) indicating that they are not presently listed in the Book of Life (Rev 3:5) and that their rebellion and rejection of God's gift of life is recorded whereby they have been condemned by their own words. (Matt 12:37)

In the book of Daniel 12:2 we read:-

“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt”

In Johns Gospel 5:28-29 we read:-

“Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment”

So we see why it's important to be 'an approved workman' (2 Tim 2:15), bringing the wonderful news of the Saviour Jesus Christ to those who will listen, and to instruct on the full counsel of God's Word that the Way is made clear in regard to working out our salvation with great care (Phil 2:12)

Next week (DCL No14) we look at:

Our great and wonderful hope - The resurrection / rapture.

The 'Discipleship Check List' series has been produced with the sole aim of encouraging the hearer / reader to study the Holy Bible so that faith in Jesus Christ will be built on Him alone. Every human work is fallible and whilst every effort has been made to represent the truths of God Almighty's Holy Words, this series is but an aid to help encourage study so that the Christian disciple of Jesus Christ will go onto maturity in the most Holy faith.

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