

Sunday, May 16, 2010—Clear and Present Danger: The Halls of Heresy

Introduction

- Over the past five weeks we have studied at length the issue of eternal punishment. I hope this has been an enlightening, sobering, and motivating series of studies.
- This week in our 6th and final study in this series entitled *The Halls of Heresy*, I want to look some of the heresies that have emerged from improperly understanding the issue of eternal judgment.
- Many of these heresies steam from an improper understanding of what happens to you when you die.
- I Thessalonians 5:23—man is a tricotomy possessing a body, soul, and spirit.
- Genesis 35:18—we have already seen that the Bible defines death as your soul leaving your body.
- James 2:26—a comparison of the verses teach that death it the Bible is when your soul and spirit leave your body.

Observations from Luke 16

- Luke 16:19-22—when the rich man dies his body is buried in the grave.
- Luke 16:23—yields three critical observations
 - The soul of the rich man continues to exit and is tormented in Hell.
 - Despite his soul having departed his body the rich man still possess eyes that see Lazarus afar off in Abraham's bosom.
 - Lazarus still looked like Lazarus or how else would the rich man have recognized him or Abraham for that matter.
- Luke 16:24-25—these verse tell us that the rich man could see, feel, thirst, talk, and remember thereby proving he possessed his senses and had not lost his personality.
- First, this passage proves that your soul in its outward form and appearance conforms to your earthly body. If this were not so how else would the Rich Man have recognized Lazarus in the underworld.
- By the way I believe this is what is lost in the second death, one's personal identity.
- Second, this passage proves that there were only two places where those who die in this life go, Hell or Paradise. There is no such thing as purgatory.
- Third, the souls of the departed do not sleep or lay dormant in the body/grave until resurrection as those who advocate Soul Sleep teach.

- Fourth, upon physical death the soul does not cease to exist or is not snuffed out like Annihilationists teach.
- Five, everyone is not going to be saved like those who promote Universalism teach.

What About Purgatory?

- Roman Catholics, many Anglicans, and some Eastern Orthodox believe in a third place after death, called purgatory, while Protestants reject the existence of any such place.
- Purgatory is an essential doctrine of the Catholic faith, as the Council of Trent declared “infallibly.”
 - Read quote from page 362.
- Catholic theologian Ludwig Ott said, “The souls of the just which, in the moment of death, are burdened with venial sins or temporal punishment due to sins, enter Purgatory.”
 - Purgatory in Catholic tradition is a period of temporal punishment for sins after death and before heaven.
- The purpose of purgatory is to provide cleansing for venial sins; unrepented moral sins send a person to Hell. Purgatory is for the remission of venial sins which are not yet remitted.
- Four Biblical passages are used by Catholics to support their belief in Purgatory:
 - II Maccabees 12:42-46
 - Matthew 5:6
 - Matthew 12:32
 - I Corinthians 3:15
- Ott states, “The main proof for the existence of the cleansing fire lies in the testimony of the Fathers.” Purgatory has no direct or positive proof from Scripture; the entire doctrine is based on extrabiblical tradition and human speculation.
- Purgatory is based on the Unbiblical teaching of “The Treasury of Merit”
 - Read quote from page 371.
- Protestants reject purgatory primarily because it effectively denies the all-sufficiency of Christ’s atoning death and implies that works play a part in salvation.
 - Hebrews 1:3, 10:14
 - Ephesians 1
 - Colossians 1:14—based on the work Christ all our sins have been forgiven

What About Soul Sleep?

- According to this view, when a person dies he loses conscious and has no knowledge of time or of intervening events between death and resurrection. During this time the soul is said to sleep in the body. At the resurrection the souls of the saved will be given immortality and the souls of the unsaved will be annihilated.
- In the Scripture the word “sleep” is used in both a literal and figurative sense.
- Sometimes it is used to depict the human experience of sleep.
 - Genesis 28:16
 - Psalm 121:4
 - Daniel 8:18
- The word “sleep” is also used metaphorically of Spiritual dullness, sloth, or lack of watchfulness.
 - Proverbs 6:9-11, 19:15
 - Ephesians 5:14
 - I Thessalonians 5:6-9
- “Sleep” is also used metaphorically of death.
 - Job 7:21
 - Psalms 13:3
 - Jeremiah 51:57
 - Daniel 12:2
 - Thirty five times in the Old Testament the phrase “he slept with his father” is used to depict death.
 - I Corinthians 15:6, 18, 20
 - I Thessalonians 4:13, 15
- II Corinthians 5:8--Lewis Sperry Chafer says that sleep is the softened term for the believer’s death. “Some have confused the fact that the body sleeps with a notion that the soul sleeps. No ground is found in the Word of God for the supposed sleep of the soul.”

What About Annihilationism?

- Annihilationism is the doctrine that the wicked will not suffer everlasting conscious torment. It holds that only believers will live forever, that immortality is a gift bestowed only on the condition of belief (Conditional Immortality).
 - John 3:16
 - II Thessalonians 1:9
- Annihilationism holds that unbelievers who, will not have received God’s gift of salvation, will be snuffed out of existence after the final judgment.
- Some Annihilationists teach that the lost have already been snuffed out.

- Conditional Immortality is based on the following three premises:
 - Only God is said to be immortal
 - Eternal life is described as a gift from God imparted only to the believing person
 - The wicked are said to “perish” or be “destroyed”
 - Therefore, the nonredeemed will be reduced into nonexistence
- Conditional Immortality is guilty of the following mistakes:
 - While God alone has inherent immortality, he chooses to impart immortality to certain of his creatures.
 - Immortality is continued existence, while eternal life speaks of a special kind of continued existence in the fellowship and blessing of the triune God.
 - The destruction of the wicked cannot arbitrarily be assumed to mean their nonresistance.
 - Furthermore, the doctrine of the resurrection of the wicked to condemnation argues against conditional immortality (Revelation 20:6).
- Luke 16:24-26
- Revelation 19:2, 20:2

What About Universalism?

- Universalism is the doctrine that all men will eventually be reconciled to God. A universalist believes that the efficiency of the Atonement is not limited and therefore extends to all.
- Universalists maintain some combination of the following six points:
 - The character of God is incompatible with the idea of the eternal suffering of anyone, therefore his grace extends to all eventually.
 - The Power of God is sufficient to restore lost humanity (some believe that fallen angels and Satan himself will be saved).
 - God’s sovereign will and purpose will be fulfilled when all are finally saved.
 - Perfected souls in heaven could never experience eternal bliss knowing that souls were suffering forever.
- Acts 3:21
- Romans 5:18-19—in the context Paul is speaking about being justified by faith not automatically by what Christ did for us. These verse teach that all men are potentially saveable because of the removal of judicial guilt inherited from Adam.
- II Corinthians 5:19—the sense in which the whole world is reconciled to God is potential, not actual. That is Christ’s death made them reconcilable to God otherwise, Paul would not be calling on them to be reconciled to God.
- Ephesians 1:10

- Philippians 2:10-11
- Universalism is contrary to the image of God—which includes the freedom to chose. In order to guarantee that everyone will be saved, those who refuse to love God would be forced to love him against their will, which is not freedom.
- Universalism is contrary to God' Love—Force love is not only contrary to freedom, it isn't love at all, but hate. No one who is truly loving forces him or herself on an other.
- Universalism is contrary to God's Justice—God is absolutely holy, and as such He must punish sin. Therefore as long as people are living in sin and rebellion against God, He must punish them.
- Universalism is contrary to the Biblical teaching on Eternal Punishment—once again the Scriptures teach that that not only is there a place of eternal flames prepared for the devil and his angels, but, tragically there will be people in it as well.