

Orthodoxy - Hell and Love

New City Catechism Question #28: What happens after death to those not united to Christ by faith?

Answer: At the day of judgment they will receive the fearful but just sentence of condemnation pronounced against them. They will be cast out from the favorable presence of God, into hell, to be justly and grievously punished, forever.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. . . . Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. - John 3:16-18, 36

When God reveals salvation he also reveals judgment. When God reveals mercy he also reveals justice. When God reveals Heaven he also reveals Hell. We cannot have one without the other.

In the beginning of time God spoke to his first creatures about life and death and hell (Genesis 2:15-16). But when the deceiver, the devil appeared, he deceived God's creatures by offering them a life that denied any kind of death and hell (Genesis 3:4). So, in the beginning of the coming of God's kingdom inaugurated by the incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus Christ - the second Adam, he spoke about life and death and hell. Therefore, we're deceived when we try to talk about life while denying a real Hell. Hell is as real as a real Heaven.

Yet to talk about Hell is one of the most difficult things to do. As comfortable as it may be to talk about God's love and mercy, God's love and mercy do not mean anything unless there is also God's justice, judgment, and hell. God is love. And the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the most loving expression of true humanity, warned his hearers about hell over and over. So it seems to be a loving human necessitates we talk about Hell.

We do talk about Hell but not well. We say things like, "That must have been hell." Or, "That felt like hell." Or, "I went through hell in that situation." We talk about Hell as a human experience that is difficult. Yet there is no human experience of suffering that compares to Hell. Hell is described by Jesus as huge piles of garbage where fires burn constantly and continually. He describes it as utter darkness. He describes it as a place where the worm never dies. It is in Jesus' words a place of unending miserable conscious suffering. Jesus uses many images and symbols to stir our imaginations to know Hell as a higher and more intense reality than the symbols themselves.

When we do talk about Hell we should talk about it as a place with the real presence of God as a consuming fire. When we talk about sin we talk about how it separates us from God. Though a person living in sin and rebellion is glad to be separated from God. A person who lives and dies in sin without repentance and faith in Christ will not die eternally separated from the presence of God. The wrath of God is being revealed from God presently against all who persist in unrighteousness and rejection of the Savior Jesus Christ. And that living hell, even if it seems to be a happy existence at present because we're not isolated from God's common grace, will be met by the fury of God's present and eternal wrath where people will be completely cut off from any degree of grace. There will be nothing to shield rebellious sinners from the torments of hell where God is present in the fullness of his just and holy wrath. In hell God will do what is right. He will not be cruel. No innocent person will suffer eternally in hell.

If this is unsettling for us to think or talk about hell then we must question if we really understand God and his love for us. If we cannot believe or think or talk about hell then we will never know how high, deep, wide, and long God's love is for us in Jesus Christ. God's holy and just wrath is his controlled anger against that which is destroying what he loves. Sin is destructive in God's creatures' lives and relationships. Therefore, God is angry with sin everyday. This is how we can understand the demonstration of God's love for us on the cross of Jesus Christ. God's love is acted out toward us when Jesus went to the cross and suffered his wrath, suffering the pangs of hell. When we try to make more of God's love by diminishing his wrath in denying hell, then we are denying God's love. Jesus paid the price of hell to give you God's love. Without knowing this reality through the cross we cannot live in the fullness of God.

Believing in a real and literal hell will free you to believe and know how much God loves and values you in Jesus Christ. In the dark hours on the cross where Jesus thirsted and cried "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?", he took the hell we deserve in our place. When John speaks above about God loving the world of children, women, and men, he can only do so because he speaks in the context of the reality of death, judgment, and hell. And the way God saved the world of men, women, and children, is by experiencing hell in our place. You want to know the love of God? You must know hell is a reality, and a reality that Jesus experienced for you.

Ministry Together - Global Missions - Missions Sunday & Praying Together

Sunday March 29th is Missions Sunday. Join your church family in worship together as we welcome Scott Andes of Reformed University Fellowship International as our guest speaker. Rev. Andes ministers the gospel to international students on the campus of USC. Prior to his service at USC he and his wife served as career missionaries in Eastern Europe.

Please participate in our ministry together as we pray together for the missionaries sent out into the world from Christ Covenant Church.

Chuck and Alisha are linguistic consultants in the Caucasus Region, which is in Central Asia.

They serve in a very mountainous area with different people groups and 50 indigenous languages with mainly oral learners. They have spent 15 years training locals in the production of audio, video, websites, apps and oral Bible stories in ten local languages. They were part of a recently published New Testament in a Caucasus language. They are now in a different part of the Caucasus region relearning Russian. Their three children are in the states attending college. Please pray for the following:

- ❖ A good language tutor – hopefully the lady we met with yesterday
- ❖ That we would have fervent, bold prayer for this place and its peoples
- ❖ Getting to know our team – we will have a team retreat this month
- ❖ Eyes to see where God is working. We've already briefly met many people on busses, in restaurants, in our neighborhood, etc. With whom does God want us to take another step beyond a conversation?
- ❖ Intentionality and faithfulness in language study
- ❖ Working out good times to connect regularly with our kids
- ❖ Continued safety and good health

Life Together - Student Ministry at CCC

At Christ Covenant we desire to see and steward a movement of the gospel where we see personal conversions and personal renewal that forms community. The Student Ministry Team is helping us pursue this vision with our middle and high school students. Chance and Misty Taylor are committed to leading the team for the next two years. They will be joined by an able staff: Rebekah Ashworth, Sarah Williamson, Peter Wilkerson, Henry Bolin, Gracie Taylor, Mamie Wilkerson, and Bryson Campbell.

The first goal they are taking on is a weekly group meeting for students. They will begin on Sunday March 15th 5:30 - 7:00 meeting in Petersen Hall on Covenant Road. The students will gather and be lead in music, teaching, small groups discussions, light snacks and activities to help them grow in their worship & life together. If you have any questions or would like to participate with this team in anyway please contact Chance and / or Misty Taylor.