

REVELATION – SERMON 83

DOOMSDAY

Revelation 20:12-15

INTRODUCTION

- The word “doom” is derived from the Old English “dom” which means “judgment” generally
- Over time it gained negative connotations, and eventually “doomsday” came to refer to the final day of judgment when God will condemn the wicked to hell
- Among the multitudes of people in the world who reject the true God and the bible, there remain many who have an expectation of a day of judgment when people will either be rewarded or punished according to their works in this present life
- Almost every major religion teaches some form of punishment after death for sins committed in this life
 - ✓ Islam’s hell is similar to purgatory where infidels will be tortured for a period of time before being released
 - ✓ Buddhism has seven hot hells, as well as numerous cold hells
 - ✓ In Taoism the god of walls and moats sends the wicked to one of several hells where they are punished for a fixed period of time
 - ✓ Hinduism teaches there are twenty-one hells, each customised to the sinner’s crimes where bad karma is burned away
 - ✓ Jainism, an offshoot of Hinduism, has 8,400,000 hells
- These perversions of the truth show that even unregenerate man still has a God-given conscience, a sense of right and wrong, and a feeling that there should be justice

- The truth of a final day of judgment is found throughout the bible (Psalm 96:13; Ecclesiastes 3:17; 12:14)
- The Lord Jesus designated that day as “the last day” (John 12:48)
- Biblical Christianity has always held to and preached the reality of a literal fiery, eternal hell
- Some have found the doctrine of eternal judgment so distasteful that they have tried to deny the doctrine altogether
- These false teachers err in this doctrine because they lack:
 - ✓ A high view of God
 - ✓ A clear view of sin
 - ✓ An honest view of Scripture
- Some joke about hell, others misrepresent it as a desirable place
- “Go to heaven for the climate, hell for the company.” (Mark Twain)
- But hell is no joke, and is infinitely more horrific than our mortal minds are capable of comprehending
- We understand that God is working out his *redemptive* plan and purpose for his elect people which will reach its certain consummation when his people are fully and eternally reconciled to God in the New Jerusalem
- But what is less recognised is that God is also working out his *retributive* plan and purpose for the wicked, which will reach its certain consummation when unbelievers are fully and eternally separated from God in the lake of fire (Job 21:30; Proverbs 16:4; Romans 9:22; 2 Peter 2:9)
- Previously, we considered the solemn and terrifying description of the Lord Jesus seated upon his great white throne, as the earth and heaven melt away before him

- The wicked dead, small and great are summoned from hell, reunited with their bodies, to stand before the dreadful majesty of the Lord, and to be judged for their works
- God has mercifully revealed to us the awful reality of what will take place on that day, and the means by which we may escape it

I. THE DISCLOSURE OF THE UNERRING BOOKS

- A. There are numerous “books” in scripture that are said to be kept by God
 1. The book of the living (Exodus 32:32; Psalm 69:28)
 2. The book of births (Psalm 139:16)
 3. The book of tears (Psalms 56:8)
 4. The book of remembrance (Malachi 3:16)
- B. The books used in this judgment
 1. The word of God
 - a. The law (John 5:45; Romans 2:12)
 - b. Christ's words (John 12:48)
 - c. The gospel (Romans 2:16)
 2. The book of men's works (Ecclesiastes 12:14)
 3. The book of nature (Romans 1:18-21)
 4. The book of conscience (Romans 2:15)
 5. The book of providence (Romans 2:4-5)
- C. The book of life

1. This book is singled out as distinct from the others and of particular importance
2. It records the names of all believers (Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Hebrews 12:23)
3. God, in His foreknowledge of his elect, has written the names of all those who will be justified “from the foundation of the world”
 - a. God “hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4)
 - b. Unbelievers’ names “are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (13:8; 17:8)
4. The overcomer (that is every believer – 1 John 5:5) has his name in the book of life, which can never be blotted out (3:5)

II. THE DECISION AS TO UNBELIEVERS’ BLAME

A. The dead will be summoned to judgment

1. The sea will give up the dead in it
 - a. The Greeks and Romans abhorred death or burial at sea, viewing land burial as the only legitimate disposal of the body
 - b. God will raise up bodily every person, regardless of how long they have been dead or how their corpse decomposed
 - c. This will include all those untold multitudes who perished in the flood (Luke 17:27)
2. Death and hell will deliver up their dead
 - a. The Lord Jesus has the keys of hell and death (1:18)

- b. “Death” relates to the body, while “hell” (*hades*) relates to the soul
 - i. At death, unbelievers’ souls pass immediately into hell to suffer conscious torment (Luke 16:23) until judgment day
 - ii. On the day of judgment, their souls and bodies will be raised and united to receive their doom
3. This is the “second resurrection”, the resurrection of damnation, and resurrection of the unjust – it does not involve believers (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Acts 24:15)

B. Judged according to their works

1. The books contain biographies of every person who has ever lived
 - a. Every act (Ecclesiastes 11:9; 12:14)
 - b. Every word (Matthew 12:36-37)
 - c. Every thought (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Romans 2:16; 1 Corinthians 4:5)
 - d. Both sins of *commission* and sins of *omission* (James 4:17)
 - e. It is folly to think that anything can be hidden from God’s sight (Psalm 10:11; Hebrews 4:12-13)
2. Man’s works will be judged according to God’s standards
 - a. For a person to pass this judgment, their lives would have to be completely obedient to God’s law (Matthew 19:16-17)
 - b. There are many in this world who foolishly think their lives will pass this judgment (Matthew 7:22; 19:20)
 - c. None will pass this comparison, even the best of men (Romans 3:20; James 2:10)

3. The righteous will rise up as witnesses against the impenitence of the wicked in that day (Matthew 12:41-42)

III. THEIR DAMNATION TO UNENDING BURNING

A. Death and hell cast into the lake of fire

1. As God cleanses and purges the universe in preparation for the new heaven and earth, the lake of fire becomes the sole dump site into which all sin and its effects are cast, including Satan, the fallen angels, the beast, the false prophet, unbelieving sinners, the curse, death and hell (1 Corinthians 15:26)
2. "Gehenna" (translated as "hell") was named after the Valley of Hinnom outside of Jerusalem which was a perpetually burning rubbish dump
3. There are three types of death
 - a. Spiritual death – separated from God by reason of sin (Ephesians 2:1)
 - b. Physical death (the first death) – separation of body and soul (James 2:26)
 - c. Eternal death (the second death) – separation from God forever in hell (20:15)

C. The literal and eternal reality of the lake of fire

1. The damned will not be annihilated as some falsely teach, but will consciously suffer torment forever
 - a. It is everlasting fire (Matthew 18:8; 25:41)
 - b. It is eternal fire (Jude 7)
 - c. It is everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:46)
 - d. It is everlasting destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:9)

- e. It is eternal damnation (Mark 3:29)
- 2. The fire is not symbolic, but literal
 - a. There is smoke (14:11)
 - b. There is burning (19:20; 21:8)
 - c. There are flames (Luke 16:24)
- D. There are degrees of condemnation
 - 1. It will be “more tolerable” for some than others (Matthew 10:14-15; 11:20-24)
 - 2. The severity of the sentence will be according to the magnitude of the sin (Luke 12:47-48; John 19:11)
- E. The book of life finally and irreversibly condemns unbelievers
 - 1. The lost are doubly condemned
 - a. They are worthy of hell because of their sins, as proven by the books of works
 - b. They are much more worthy of hell because they rejected God’s gracious gift of salvation in Jesus Christ, as proven by the book of life
 - 2. There will be no escape for those who neglect so great salvation (Hebrews 2:3)
 - 3. People will go to the lake of fire because they *choose* to go there by wilfully rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 13:46)
 - 4. No one in hell will be able to say to God, “You put me here,”; and no one in heaven will be able to say, “I put myself here.”
 - 5. “So then, let ‘Deserved’ be written on the floor of hell, but on the door of heaven and life, ‘The Free Gift’” (Richard Baxter)

CONCLUSION

1. Many have asked the question, "Where is hell?"
2. The simple answer is: "At the end of a Christless life"
3. Felix rightly trembled when Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" (Acts 24:25)
4. The psalmist asked, "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Psalm 130:3)
5. Each one of us has a book in heaven with all our sins recorded
6. But for the sinner who has put his trust in the blood of Jesus Christ, those sins have been replaced with the righteousness of Christ
7. Hence for the believer, there is no more condemnation or fear of the judgment (John 5:24; Romans 8:33-34)
8. God says to his redeemed, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17)
9. *"I have taken all my good deeds and all my bad deeds, and cast them through each other in a heap before the Lord, and fled from both, and betaken myself to the Lord Jesus Christ, and in him I have sweet peace."* (David Dickson's dying words, December 1662)