

THE AFTERLIFE

Handout for Lesson 14 of *Thought Provoking Questions*

AFTER DEATH, DOES THE CHRISTIAN GO TO HEAVEN OR TO AN INTERMEDIATE PLACE OF WAITING?

There are two views.

- » The “traditional” view, which is the majority view held by many Christians, holds that the disembodied soul of a saint goes to an intermediate state where it awaits the resurrection and the reuniting of the soul and resurrected body.
- » The second view, which is the one that I believe is supported by Scripture, is that following the resurrection of Christ that disembodied soul of a saint goes directly to be in the presence of Christ.

The basis of the majority view is largely based on Luke 16:16-31, supported further by Luke 23:43, John 20:17, Acts 2:29-35, and 2 Peter 2:4. This position for what happens after death appears to be consistent with all the information we have prior to the ascension of Christ, but in light of what is revealed in the Scriptures after Jesus’ ascension into heaven, the majority view may need some revision in regard to what now happens to the spirits of the righteous between death and the resurrection.

The position of the minority view:

- » First, everything about the traditional view remains the same for the period prior to Jesus’ ascension, but after Jesus’ ascension the “intermediate estate” of the righteous is different.
- » If the intermediate state of the righteous changed, why did it change? The majority view was true prior to the ascension of Christ, but it now fails to adequately explain many statements made in Scripture after Christ’s ascension.

HOW CAN A GOD OF LOVE SEND HUMAN BEINGS TO AN ETERNAL HELL?

The question simply put – how can a God of love inflict an infinite penalty on finite creatures? How can a good, benevolent, loving God allow his creatures to be forever miserable?

Basic principles:

(a) Principles related to God and His nature.

- » It is just as impossible for God to do a little wrong as a great one.
- » God expresses his own reluctance to allow men to enter hell.

(b) Principles related to man and his ignorance.

- » Man is an incompetent judge of the penalty that sin deserves.
- » If it is inconsistent with the justice of God that men should perish for their sins, then redemption is not a matter of grace or undeserved mercy.

(c) Biblical doctrine of sin: In view of this, it is but natural that God should visit sin with punishment, with both natural and positive penalties.

(d) The Bible says Hell is:

- » A place.
- » A place of torment. Luke 16:28; Matthew 8:12; Revelation 14:11.
- » A place of everlasting fire. Matthew 25:41; Mark 9:44; Revelation 21:8; Luke 3:17; Matthew 13:42.
- » Attested by the words of Christ.
- » A place of darkness. Revelation 9:2 (bottomless pit); Jude 1:13 (blackness of darkness).

(e) Man’s reaction to the Biblical doctrine of Hell:

- » Uninstructed minds revolt at the doctrine of eternal perdition, and the more sympathetic they are by nature the more they revolt; however, the doctrine does not originate with human reason nor is it influenced by human sympathy.

- » The second reaction of the sincere human mind – after acknowledging the indisputable truth that Hell is an actual place of suffering, is to entertain the hope that this distress of the lost is not eternal or everlasting.

Theories relating to a future state:

- » Cessation of existence – animalism, atheism.
- » Transmigration (reincarnation) of the soul.
- » Conditional immortality.

Terminology relating to a future state.

- » Annihilationism.
- » Pure mortalism.
- » Conditional immortality.
- » Annihilationism proper.
- » Universalism.
- » Restitutionism or Reconciliationism.
- » Purgatory.
- » Nirvana.

CONCLUSION

1. God, because of His holiness, cannot save the lost unless his holy demands are met for the sinner, as they are met in Jesus Christ.
2. To be unsaved, or outside the grace of God as it is in Christ, is to be destined to eternal punishment or retribution.
3. God can do no more than provide a perfect salvation purchased at infinite cost.
4. When love will pay such a price that a sinner may be saved and holiness remain untarnished, it ill becomes finite men to tamper with these immutable realities.
5. Those who resent the doctrine of eternal retribution are in fact resenting divine holiness.