



Jesus
Atonement
Salvation

Jesus, Atonement & Salvation Part 4

Hi guys!

Welcome back to our companion for the podcast!

Let's remind ourselves of the 4 things we're looking at, which are:

- How Jesus saved us
- What Jesus saved us *from*
- What Jesus saved us *for*
- Why Jesus saved us

In last week's episode we looked at the idea of being saved from Satan, sin & death, and really focused in on Satan and spiritual warfare.

In today's episode we finished our look at what Jesus saved us *from*, before moving into our look at what Jesus saved us *for*.

When we were looking at Satan last week, we were considering a lot of things that revolved around Hell and felt that it warranted a look at the actual doctrine of Hell, as uncomfortable as that can be.

It might feel unnecessary to do this, but some of the most influential people in the world of Christian thought and teaching have often said this should not be overlooked! Here's a few:

- Mark Driscoll had a great little rant once, where he said *"I'm frankly sick of all the books and movies trying to predict when Jesus will return and we'll get to start our eternal vacation at his all-inclusive resort called heaven. I'm also sick of the nerd parade of books and conferences that approach the Bible like scholars whose mission is to get their Masters rather than soldiers who are on mission with their Master. We've got work to do. There are lost people to reach, churches to plant, and nations to evangelize. Hell is hot, forever is a long time, and it's our turn to stop making a dent and start making a difference"* and has compounded this another time by saying *"If you're not a Christian, you're going to hell. It's not unloving to say that. it's unloving not to say that."*

- Matt Chandler has been equally vociferous in the past, saying *“This avoidance of the difficult things of Scripture — of sinfulness and hell and God’s notable severity — is idolatrous and cowardly. If a man or a woman who teaches the Scriptures is afraid to explain to you the severity of God, they have betrayed you, and they love their ego more than they love you.”*
- John Piper has said *“When the heart no longer feels the truth of hell, the gospel passes from good news to simply news”*
- Charles Spurgeon once said *“Think lightly of hell, and you will think lightly of the cross. Think little of the sufferings of lost souls, and you will soon think little of the Savior who delivers them”*
- R.C. Sproul has said *“It’s because Jesus spoke so frequently about hell that the church should take the concept seriously”*
- Even Rob Bell, not usually one I would personally have on my rolodex of go-to teachers, has weighed-in on the discussion, saying *“What we believe about heaven and hell is incredibly important because it exposes what we believe about who God is and what God is like”*

So, whether we like it or not, there’s a *huge* impetus put on the idea of Hell. To avoid it, in the words of Matt Chandler, makes us cowardly.

Firstly, do we even have to believe that there is such a thing as Hell?

I identified in the first week that some form of punishment for sin, far from being antithetical to God’s goodness, is actually a manifestation of God’s goodness and justice. There *has* to be a punishment for evil-doing beyond this life, that’s just integral to the logical outplay of God’s attributes.

We talked about this in a recent(ish) Thursday bible study! Without God, there is no goodness. Without God, there is no justice. Whilst, on the other side in Heaven, justice might not seem relevant anymore, it’s the actions *down here* that matter. We don’t meet God’s moral standard, and as the perfect and righteous judge God alone has the authority to ensure justice is done. I believe I said it would be evil for God to ignore sin and let someone who had routinely done evil or wrong things to enter into Heaven – evil because there would be no justice for that person’s evil, but also because it would be unjust on the person who hadn’t committed the evil acts, or had been covered by Jesus’ blood, to share eternity with that person.

Additionally, it’s just something the Bible teaches. Here’s the list of places the Bible mentions Hell, or judgement, or some form of punishment that I shared in the episode:

- In Matthew 10:28 Jesus says *“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell”*
- Again in Matthew, this time 25:46, Jesus says *“And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life”*
- 2 Peter 2 deals hugely with the idea of punishment for sin, including things like Noah’s flood and Sodom and Gomorrah, and how this is paralleled in how we are dealt with after death.
- Matthew 25:41 again has Jesus say *““Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”*
- Mark 9:43-48 says *“And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if*

your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'"

This is just a few of the scripture I could find, so there is a good amount of relevant data to show us that Hell is a part of not only Christian teaching, but also Jesus'. We know we should listen to these two sources, so I'm pretty confident in saying we should disregard the option 'there is no Hell' as it doesn't fit with Jesus' or the Bible's teaching.

Again, you're free to believe what you like, but I have to strongly recommend that whatever you believe has to fit with the Bible and Jesus.

As I expressed in the episode, the idea of Hell, in my mind, is a closed-handed issue, we can't relinquish it and still call ourselves Christians.

Let me give you a visual example of closed-handed and open-handed issues:



The actual *format of Hell*, however, is an open-handed issue! Like what type of worship should we play, that's up to interpretation and personal preference. The same goes for what exactly Hell is.

A discussion of Hell should be what I call an in-house discussion. We're all just Christians trying to work out what the Bible tells us.

Saved From

Medieval

As we discussed last week, a lot of people have this idea that Hell is like the medieval paintings in which you see torture racks, with capering demons running the place and putting dead humans into torturous situations for eternity, all at the behest of the Devil who's running the show.



Like this guy, holy moly.

This is reinforced in popular culture, in the podcast I recall an episode of the Simpsons in which Homer exhausts the Devil in trying to think of novel punishments for his demons to subject Homer to.

In my opinion, this is sort of a lingering idea from the Greeks and Romans in the area at the time of Judeo-Christianity and it's early outbreak, who believed in the classical idea of Hades.

I also think the visuals given in Revelation 20:10, talking about being thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, doesn't help.

The issues with this view of Hell, as I see it, is that there's very little scriptural data to rely on to view Hell in this way.

We know in Revelation we have the idea of the lake of fire and sulfur, and Jesus at one point talks about Hell in sort of this way when he says *"throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (that's Matthew, again, 13:50).

That frames Hell as fire and lake of sulfur, ace, but there's nothing there at all about the devil running it, demons capering, and torture racks for people. If anything, in context, all

the Revelation verses refer to this as the place the devil will be sent to and himself punished, rather than where he does the punishing.

I think this also moves us closer to an idea that God doesn't simply seek justice for the sins of our lives, but rather revenge. Perhaps that's just the way I look at it, you're free to take that on or completely disregard it.

So, that's one option!

Annihilationism

Let's think about another option, something called annihilationism. This is the idea that, rather than when we die, we land in Hell with the devil as commander-in-chief; instead, we are just completely annihilated. Our souls, once shed from our body, are just destroyed by God as punishment for our sinful life. This can come either immediately or after a short period of time of torment that corresponds to our sins.

There are some plus-points to this view, in my opinion! Firstly, this gets rid of the uncomfortable idea of an all-loving God who would send people to a literal eternal torment of being tortured by demons in Hell.

People who ascribe to this view might also say that this seems a commensurate punishment to fit the crime, so this is justice rather than revenge.

They may also say it fits with the teaching in the Bible, which we'll look at in a moment, and it has nice poetic element to eternal death being the literal opposite of the eternal life we inherit through Christ.

The down-side, however, is that there isn't a huge amount of Biblical data that fits with this view! Any data we can find kind of has to be looked at through this lens in order to make it fit, which is a poor way of doing Biblical exegesis.

So, what texts are there that help with this?

- If we look back at Matthew 10:28 we see Jesus says *"fear him who can destroy both soul and body"* referring to God. This could be read as annihilationism.
- We can also reconsider John 10:10, when Jesus juxtaposes eternal life with eternal death, through this lens. Then it seems like Jesus is saying the opposite of eternal life is to be annihilated.
- Psalm 145:20 says *"The Lord preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy"*.
- 2 Thessalonians 1:9 says *"They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might"* which could present an idea of being destroyed, but the first half is hard to justify with the second.

So, there's another option! Again, if you like the sound of this, you can believe this and still be a Bible-believing Christian!

It's not the easiest thing to believe, however, due to the shaky scriptural ground on which it stands. Let's review our final option.

Separation

Our last option is something I call separation theory, as I call it.

This is the idea that, rather than the medieval idea of Hell being torment in the form of torture racks and iron maidens and what not, this idea of torment is very different. The

torment the Bible talks about, on this view, is the eternal separation of us from God. So, we are taught regularly that we have a God-shaped hole in us, that we yearn for communion with the one true God, we're made to worship. That's our God-ordained disposition.

We fill that hole, fulfil that desire, and achieve eternal peace and joy, when we fill ourselves with the Holy Spirit, and have our connection to God restored through Jesus Christ.

This idea is that the truly just way to deal with people who turn from God in this life is to let them have their way eternally. They have an eternal life of being completely shut off from God.

To my mind, this makes sense – given that the ultimate reward for our choice to follow God in this life is an eternal life with Him, then it makes perfect sense for our ultimate punishment of choosing not to follow Him results in an eternal life without Him. Right? That takes away the greatest conceivable good for that person, through their own choice. It's also not without a foundation in scripture:

- Psalm 9:17 says *"The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God"*, which reads to me as a place in which God is not present.
- In Matthew 8:12 Jesus says *"While the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"* and the outer darkness is an interesting potential use of the poetic 'darkness' the Bible uses to juxtapose living in sin without God's 'light'.
- Jude 1:13, speaking of those who live without God, says *"Wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever"*, again doing the same sort of poetic reference as Matthew.
- 2 Thessalonians 1:9 says *"They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might"* which could present an idea of being eternally distant from God.

The only downside here, as I can see it, is that it's really hard to square off the scriptures about eternal fire and sulfur, unless the separation from God somehow leads to a reality in which the world gets set on fire? Tough one.

Anyway, there's a few ideas of what Hell might be!

In the episode, I quickly go through the ideas of Heaven and let you go away and think on them. Here's the info!



Saved For

Firstly, as I've said before, Revelation tells us *"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*

We are present in the glory of God forever (John 10:28) and have our riches stored for us there by the good works we do for God down here (Luke 12:33-34).

Now we can consider the onset of Heaven to either come immediately after death, where people are sort of drip-fed into Heaven; a mass 'awakening' in which we all enter at the same time, despite having died at different times, which takes some time-bending to understand; or we all awaken to a new heaven and new earth, which we took a quick look at.

In Revelation 21:1-5 we read *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true"*.

I said in the podcast that we know, at this point, the earth and its people are completely off the track of God's plan. This might require a clarification – I don't mean that we surprised God by choosing to sin, or Adam & Eve did, but rather God made the earth perfect, and then we sinned and changed things. This is all within God's expectation and ultimate plan, but it wasn't necessarily God's desire.

We also know that this universe is destined to an eventual heat death as the energy in the system is exposed to entropy and is no longer able to run the place.

With that in mind, God's ultimate way to solve this is to institute a new Heaven and new Earth, with a new Holy City of Jerusalem, in which we will all dwell with no fear of this other stuff.

It'll be a city made of Gold (Revelation 21), various precious stones and jewels (also Revelation 21) and there will be no need of a sun or a light as God's glory will be the light by which we all live and see (Revelation 22).

This all sounds fantastical and crazy, but this is what John saw in his visions in Revelation, so that is what we can look forward to as Christians. A life in which we follow Christ where we can find joy and peace even in trials, find meaning in our lives, and live for a greater purpose. Then awakening on the other side to Jesus saying *"well done, my good and faithful*

servant” (Matthew 25:21) where all our troubles are removed and our tears wiped away. This is good news!

If you would like to hear more about this, and spiritual warfare in general, this is sermon 8 of 8 from a series by Mark Driscoll called Win Your War. It’s all about Heaven and Hell, Jesus and Satan, Life and Death.

I would recommend them all, but here’s the one that deals most specifically with Heaven and Hell.



This week’s scripture is up to you! I want you guys to review the scripture regarding the different ideas of Hell and come to your own decision on which it is! This is also your question of the week – which idea of Hell do you find most compelling, and why?

As always guys, don’t be afraid to get into the youth whatsapp chat and let us know how you are, what you’re up to and what you’re thinking. Get your prayer requests ready for Thursday and get involved in our Bible study! And you can grab us on Instagram @chawnyouth.

Speak to you next week!