

Hell: The Silent Doctrine?

by Wayne Goff

Some years ago the Kansas City Star did a survey of both religious and non-religious readers concerning the subject of hell. Predictably, the more liberal readers denied the existence of hell, or said that it was one's earthly suffering, while the more conservative readers believed hell was real, burning and hot!

One denominational preacher observed: "It has become kind of a silent doctrine in the church. This has been done to make the church more palatable and acceptable to the baby boomers and Generation X, which I think is tragic." Undoubtedly, he was exactly correct. The doctrine of hell has gone into the closet along with many of the denominational affiliations, and for the same reason.

Everyone would like to believe that hell is not real because the prospect of spending an eternity in a place of fire and brimstone, while being eaten with worms, and hearing the screams of the eternally tormented, is not just a "nightmare," it is **unthinkable!** But that doesn't make it go away.

However, the greatest argument **for** the existence of hell is the death of Jesus Christ on the cross! John 3:16.

"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk. 16:16). "Condemned" or the KJV "damned" is the Greek word **katakrino** which means "eternal condemnation." If hell were only a "state of mind," or "here on earth," or the "grave," then God would not have sent His only begotten Son into the world to save it from a suffering-less death. So when you throw out hell, then you throw out salvation in Jesus Christ!

Naturally, you will always have those who blame the idea of hell on church leaders "as a means to control others through threats." But that is to me, akin to "whistling past the grave yard." Every church leader I know will be in the same line on **Judgment Day** as everyone else! Jesus Himself warned that "the hour is coming" when all the dead will hear His voice and be resurrected to either eternal life or eternal death! Jn. 5:28-29. I believe in this with all my heart.

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