

#231 "The Justice of God- A Forgotten Truth"

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With the continued attacks on the doctrine of hell and on God as eternal Judge [1], it is worth reminding ourselves of the justice of God and His power to cast into hell. As Luke 12:5 says, "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!" Many want to void the doctrine of hell or give people an eternity of chances to get it right. But, although God is love as proven by Him sending Christ to the cross, He is also just. If He wasn't just, the cross wouldn't have been necessary, but there was no other way. The sin of man, having started with Adam's fall, must be punished. In Jeremiah 17:4, we learn that the sins of Israel, and, in turn, all other people who refuse to repent, have "have kindled a fire in My anger Which will burn forever." This fire stems from the fact that God is holy, and His holiness cannot be in the presence of evil. He must punish it and cast evildoers from His presence forever. This will include Satan and his demons as well as all unbelievers. Revelation 20:10, 15 say, "And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." Luke 16:22-24 indicates that hell is a place of fire that cannot be quenched, that it is constant agony, that it is a state of constant thirst, and that it is a state of permanence with no hope. It is so horrific, in fact, that the wicked individual in the story wanted to warn his brothers so that they would not meet the same fate. Too bad this urgency wasn't present before he died. But it is indeed the fact that the reality of hell makes gospel proclamation highly urgent. The coming judgment should be given emergency status, and we who know the truth should be "all hands on deck" ready to tell the world the answer. But in order to get to the good news, we have to start with the bad. This recognition of God's justice and wrath against sin is what many people cannot accept. In so doing, they also reject the work of Christ, the ultimate demonstration of God's love to the world (Isaiah 53:11).

God is not a God Who enjoys seeing people go to hell, for He wants them all to repent (2 Peter 3:9). Sadly, many do not, and justice requires that sin must be punished. The absence of justice just doesn't make any sense. Consider the following example. Suppose there is a judge in a distant fictional land presiding over a case in which a man has murdered his neighbor. The man is clearly guilty as the evidence is everywhere, and many witnesses can attest to his guilt. In fact, he himself readily admits to his actions. The judge issues the verdict of guilty, and, well, there is one small problem. In this distant fictional land, there are no consequences for murder. In times past, people had spoken of laws and punishment, but this nation had since abandoned rules in favor of "love" and tolerance. So the man walked free despite his obvious guilt. He went on to murder countless more people, and there was nothing the judge could do about it to stop him. There was no law, no authority, and no fear of punishment. Thus, there was absolute freedom to do whatever a person wanted to do. There were no consequences, no death penalty, and no possible jail time. Extrapolating from this example, we recognize that a judge without the power and fairness to execute justice by punishing criminals is not an authority figure at all. In fact, he is irrelevant and unnecessary. To take away God's authority to punish

sin would make Him powerless and irrelevant in terms of how we conduct ourselves on this earth. This is why sinners are so eager to cast God aside. They don't want to deal with His justice. But a universe without eternal justice is a figment of the imagination, for God's justice will be served.

In Luke 7:28-30, Jesus says, "I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, **they acknowledged God's justice**, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John" (emphasis added). How can salvation come to a people unless they recognize the justice of God? They must see their wickedness in light of God's holiness and realize that that is a major problem. Proverbs 28:5 says, "Evil men do not understand justice, But those who seek the LORD understand all things." Even though the world rejects the idea of God's justice, God remains the Judge. He will reward the faithful and punish the unrighteous. "For the LORD loves justice And does not forsake His godly ones; They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked will be cut off" (Psalm 37:28). The key is to be on the right side of His justice.

Hell is not the devil's playground but his eternal sentence. God alone has the authority to sentence to hell, and He is the final Judge. Hell exists because of the evil of man, not because of the desire of God. But it does exist because evil exists, and, like it or leave it, hell is just as real as heaven. Please choose the latter before it is too late.

[1] <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2065080,00.html>