

Title: It Will Be Hot As Hell
Date: Aug. 15, 2010
Text: Matt. 18:9
Place: Decatur Church of God
Theme: Hot Topics

In the last two weeks we have talked about sin and about a Devil or Satan who seeks to draw us into sinful activity and disobedience to God.

It is still a matter of choice, however, to sin or to give in to Satan.

Jobs are scarce, money is tight, and there is so much around us that grabs our attention. We desire what we see. Is there some way to juggle the dollars to buy? Can I write a check, even though there is no money in the account?

Or if I can't get the item I want, can I soothe my disappointment and developing depression in my drug of choice? Will I allow drugs and alcohol to become my bridge to sanity or is that insanity?

We make the choices.

Now, where does that take us?

* Remember "Home Alone 2". Kevin was making his way through the Chicago Airport, distracted by changing batteries in his recording device, and then followed someone that he thought was his dad onto the wrong airplane. Instead of going to Florida he ended up in New York City.

Unfortunately, once you get on the flight and it takes off you end up at its determined destination. What's your destination? Where is your life taking you?

Matthew 18:9

And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

I. What do we mean by hell?

A. Scripture gives us a number of pictures of hell.

- a. Sheol in the Old Testament was the unseen state.
- b. Hades in the New Testament was the unseen world.
- c. Gehenna in the New Testament signified a place of torment.

Matthew 5:22b

... But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Matthew 10:28

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Matthew 23:33

"You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"

Mark 9:43b

... It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out.

Luke 12:5

But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.

- d. Tartarus signified the infernal region.

2 Peter 2:4

... God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment;

B. We are talking about the future abode of the wicked.

Proverbs 9:17-18

Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.

Isaiah 33:14

The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

Matthew 3:12b

... he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Matthew 7:13

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: ...

Matthew 8:12

But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

*In *Bridge to Terabithia*, 10-year-old Jesse (Josh Hutcherson) is befriended by Leslie (AnnaSophia Robb), the new girl in town. Together they create an imaginary world they call Terabithia.

In this scene, Jesse has invited Leslie to attend church with his family, provided she wears a dress. Along with the congregation they sing "The Old Rugged Cross." During the hymn, Leslie gazes at the light streaming through a stained glass window and pretends to capture the rays in her purse. She smiles at Jesse.

The church bells ring as people file out of the church. Leslie looks up at the steeple and says to Jesse, "That's what we need—bells—in Terabithia."

On the way home, Leslie, Jesse, and his younger sister May Belle (Bailee Madison) ride in the back of the family's pickup truck.

Leslie says, "I'm really glad I came. That whole Jesus thing—it's really interesting, isn't it?"

"It's not interesting," responds May Belle. "It's scary. It's nailing holes through your hands. It's 'cause we're all vile sinners God made Jesus die."

"You really think that's true?" asks Leslie with a somber look on her face.

"It's in the Bible, Leslie," Jesse says.

"You have to believe it, and you hate it," Leslie replies. "I don't have to believe it, and I think it's beautiful."

May Belle says, "You've gotta believe the Bible, Leslie." "Why?"

"Cause if you don't believe in the Bible, God will damn you to hell when you die."

"Wow, May Belle," Leslie says in a dismissive tone.

"Where'd you hear that?"

"That's right isn't it, Jess? God damns you to hell if you don't believe in the Bible."

"I think so."

"Well I don't think so," Leslie says assuredly. "I seriously do not think God goes around damning people to hell." Then spreading her arms wide and looking at the scenery around them, she says, "He's too busy running all this."

Content: Rated PG for some peril and mild language

Elapsed time: 00:54:56 to 00:56:46; DVD scene 9

The subject of the final destiny of those who persist in sin or in a life of wickedness has not been left to the opinions of mankind. God has made it very clear through the revelation of scripture that justice will be meted out to those who have chosen a live separated from God.

II. They will be punished.

* Will Willimon told this story: Early in my ministry, I served a little church in rural Georgia. One Saturday we went to a funeral in a little country church not of my denomination. I grew up in a big downtown church. I had never been to a funeral like this one. The casket was open, and the funeral consisted of a sermon by their preacher.

The preacher pounded on the pulpit and looked over at the casket. He said, "It's too late for Joe. He might have wanted to get his life together. He might have wanted to spend more time with his family. He might have wanted to do that, but he's dead now. It is too late for him, but it is not too late for you. There is still time for you. You still can decide. You are still alive. It is not too late for you. Today is the day of decision."

Then the preacher told how a Greyhound bus had run into a funeral procession once on the way to the cemetery, and that that could happen today. He said, "You should decide today. Today is the day to get your life together. Too late for old Joe, but it's not too late for you."

I was so angry at that preacher. On the way home, I told my wife, "Have you ever seen anything as manipulative and insensitive to that poor family? I found it disgusting."

She said, "I've never heard anything like that. It was manipulative. It was disgusting. It was insensitive. Worst of all, it was also true."

Will Willimon, in his sermon "The Writing on the Wall," PreachingToday.c

- A. People have become so hardened through the deceitfulness of sin that they believe God is indifferent to the actions of humankind.
- i. Indifferent to good and evil.
 - ii. They get so far from the truth that evil doesn't look that bad and righteousness doesn't look that good.

B. The argument that God is too good to punish people does not alter the matter.

- i. God is good, but his goodness is harmonious with his justice.
- ii. Justice demands the execution and severity of God

* Psalm 136 is filled with the phrase "his mercy is everlasting."

On examination you will discover that his mercy is directed towards his own people. In this Psalm while his mercy is directed toward his own people, God "slammed Egypt" overthrowing Pharaoh and his host.

* Paul says that in the day of judgment God will "render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom.2:6)

C. We are not talking about annihilation.

- i. It is not that the sinners are just blotted out of existence.
- ii. In fact scripture says that at the day of judgment, the wicked will be rewarded according to their works.

Malachi 4:1

"Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them."

D. Future punishment will be in Hell.

- i. Represented as in fire but also as in outer darkness.
- ii. Is it fire like we know fire? It is a fire that does not consume but will bring distress, pain and eternal suffering.
- iii. Thus it is not only a condition but also a place.
- iv. A place prepared for the devil and his angels.

E. Everlasting punishment is so horrendous that it cannot fully be pictured. The pictures we are given fall short in description.

- i. Punishment...everlasting.
- ii. Death...spiritual separation from God.
- iii. Darkness...forever without the light of God.
- iv. Damnation...the highest form of condemnation.
- v. Destruction...This everlasting destruction is not the end of conscious existence, as the context shows, but final and eternal separation and banishment from the presence of the Lord.
- vi. Fire...a furnace or lake of fire that will torment to the degree of wailing and gnashing of teeth.

* There is no way under heaven to evade the force of this multitude of scriptures describing the fearful fate of the ungodly. The punishment they depict is terrible.

1. A state of everlasting punishment
2. Conscious pain
3. Suffering
4. Torment

* Kevin Miller helps us understand delayed punishment:

In April of 2008, I had to drive to Fort Wayne, Indiana, for work, so I went to Enterprise to rent a car. They gave me a big, brand-new, comfy Chrysler 300 to drive—and I loved it! In fact, I enjoyed feeling large and in charge so much that I blew right past the first tollbooth. You see, I'm not used to stopping for tollbooths, because I have an I-PASS in my own car—a little device that signals I've already prepaid my tolls.

After passing the first tollbooth, I thought about it: *Oh! This car doesn't have an I-PASS!* But just as I started to worry about it, I thought, *This car belongs to the rental-car company—not me. So they're probably responsible for any tolls. That must be what your rental money goes toward covering.*

When I got on 294, I drove past another toll, thinking, *Even if I am responsible for the tolls, there's only a few tolls between here and Indiana—maybe \$4 round trip. I'm sure there's some*

threshold where they don't even bother sending you a bill for the tolls. I mean, it wouldn't be worth their time to send me a bill for only \$4. Nothing's going to happen!

After I returned home from my business trip, a month or two went by. Nothing happened—and I knew nothing ever would. But then, in October, I received a piece of mail that read: "Notice of Toll Violation."

I was right, to a degree. The Tollway Authority wouldn't bother sending me a bill for my measly \$3.90 in tolls. But when you add in a \$20 fine for every one of the 5 tollbooths I drove past, they *did* bother sending me a bill for \$103.90!

I about had a heart attack. They had me dead to rights. They had a photo of my rental-car's license plate. They even knew the exact lane number I was in. The fact that months had gone by and nothing had happened didn't mean that nothing was ever going to happen.

Peter says: Get a clue, people! Just because the Lord hasn't come back yet, don't think for a minute that he won't! The Lord isn't being slow about his promise, as some people think. No—he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent."

Kevin Miller, executive vice president, Christianity Today International