

## Hell in the News

### Commentary for November 16, 2012 — Newsflash: Hell still doesn't exist

Best-selling author Frank Schaeffer and author-pastor Mark Driscoll debated the idea of hell in an online September 22, 2012 CNN Belief Blog. Both were wrong. The article is titled "[Different Takes: Should we abandon idea of hell?](#)" Schaeffer presented first about hell:

**"First, the theological question about whether a land of eternal suffering exists as God's 'great plan' for most of humanity.**

**Second, the question of the political implications of having a huge chunk of humanity believe in damnation for those who disagree with their theology, politics and culture, as if somehow simply killing one's enemies is not enough."**

While I agree with Schaeffer's first view that an eternal hell is **NOT** part of God's "great plan" he does not base that statement on the Bible. And I do not know what he is saying with his second view. People kill to eliminate opposition or oppression, not to send people to hell.

Schaeffer goes on: **"there's another thread running through both Christianity and Islam that is far more merciful than the fundamentalists' take on salvation, judgment and damnation."** Such is the extent of theological sophistication that rejects biblical information on the state of the dead and the judgment of man by God. God help us. What ignorance. He depends on religion: **"It's time for the alternative of empathetic merciful religion to be understood."**

The statements of these two men are not biblically based. Schaeffer mentions theology, not the Bible, as part of his argument against hell. Theology is not at issue at all. God is not so much in the redemption business as the creation business. God is creating children in the image and likeness of Himself of which Christ is the last Adam, the true type for all humanity. God's purpose will be fulfilled (compare 1 Timothy 2:4–6, 4:10; and Ephesians 1:9–11) by Christ, the captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10).

Mark Driscoll believes his common understanding of hell is a biblical doctrine, a teaching confirmed when Jesus was on earth, apparently ignoring John 3:16–17 where Jesus is called the Savior of the world. He apparently believes Jesus was referring to salvation in a qualitative sense and not in an all-encompassing totally inclusive sense. There is no condemnation, only salvation in that passage. Nevertheless, Driscoll writes:

**"When controversies over biblical doctrines arise, it's a humbling opportunity to answer questions about what the Bible teaches without getting into name-calling and mudslinging. Near the very top of the controversial doctrines is hell."**

He goes on to say, **"death is not normal or natural — it's an enemy and the consequence of sin."** This statement is interesting because it mixes truth with falsehood. Death is normal and normative for every human being, including Adam and Jesus. Death is universal as the penalty for sin. Fulfilling the law of God in some parts does not prevent death and nowhere comes near to providing the righteousness that God requires to satisfy His giving immortality.

Christ also died, but not for His own sin. He died as a sacrifice for sin of mankind — all mankind. He died for your sin and for my sin and for everyone else's sin.

Driscoll quotes John 3:16 where he mistranslates **"life eonian"** as "life eternal," a common if not purposeful mistake. He should know better, but evangelical pressure would never allow him to translate it otherwise, even if he were to acknowledge what the Greek says. (This is true even though several translations render it correctly, consistent with all ancient Greek usage to the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.) Then Driscoll seems to tell us what Jesus and the Bible say about hell, misapplying the Hebrew and Greek terms for eternity (*aion/aions* and the adjective *aiionios*), hell (*hades*), and judgment. He must imagine the evidence is overwhelming.

Driscoll cites Hebrews 9:27: **"It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment."** His mistaken unbiblical and theological assumption is that Christ's redemptive work **CANNOT POSSIBLY** go beyond the judgment. Remember, all judgment is Christ's:

**"For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son:**  
[with the result:] **that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. ...**

**Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my word, and believes on him that sent me, has everlasting life [eonian life], and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.**

**Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead** [all those who did not hear His word] **shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live** [live to judgment and learn about Christ's salvation].

**... all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation** [judging, not damnation]."

• **John 5:22–29**

So all judgment was given by the Father to Christ (see also John 3:35, 17:2; Romans 14:10; and Revelation 20:4–5, 11–12). How long does that judging last? Jesus tells us: **"And these shall go away into everlasting** [eonian] **punishment: but the righteous into life eternal** [eonian]" (Matthew 25:46). In Hebrews 6:2 are listed some basic teachings: **"Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal** [eonian] **judgment."**

That judgment will begin after the resurrection to physical life for the great mass of humanity, a resurrection to judging. It will be fearful (2 Corinthians 5:10–11), but not "eternal" being limited to within the eons. God the Father will be the Savior of all men (1 Timothy 4:9–11) delegating to Christ the mediation to accomplish the Father's will (1 Timothy 2:3–6) which Paul taught. After the judgment God becomes all and in all (1 Corinthians 15:23–28).

God's judgments through Christ are effective and instructional (Psalm 9:8, 96:13, 98:9) so that all will pay attention to His Word. Through Christ all creation will be reconciled to God (Colossians 1:20, Philippians 2:10) according to the counsel of God's will (Ephesians 1:11).

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