

“How Can Ye Escape the Damnation of Hell?”

➡ Matthew 23:33

Matthew 23 is one of the least preached passages in the New Testament. It would be classified as “hate literature” by the media today.

This was the last public sermon Jesus preached before He was arrested and delivered up to be crucified. The setting is the Temple in Jerusalem (21:23 cf. 24:1).

This scathing sermon is filled with warnings of judgment, woes upon hypocrisy, and dripping with sarcasm. Nothing like this would ever be preached in Joel Osteen’s church. READ MATTHEW 23.

It is no wonder that after Jesus finishes this sermon, the Pharisees plot to kill Him (26:1-4).

It is fitting that the last message Jesus preached on earth would be climaxed with an admonition about hell (v. 33). Strong language similar to the preaching of John the Baptist (Mt. 3:7).

I. The PREACHING on hell. Not much preaching on hell today.

A. The PREACHER—Most of what we know about hell, we learn from the teaching of Jesus. He preached more about hell than He did heaven! Jesus was a “hell-fire and damnation” preacher.

- Mt. 5:22—...*in danger of hell fire.* (from Sermon on the Mount)
- Mt. 5:29—...*thy whole body should be cast into hell...*
- Mt. 16:18—...*the gates of hell...*
- Mt. 23:15—...*the child of hell...*
- Mt. 23:33—...*how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*
- Mk. 9:43—...*go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:*
- Luke 10:15—...*shalt be thrust down to hell.*

B. The PLAINNESS — Jesus was a straight talker. He didn’t mince words or beat-around-the-bush when it came to preaching the truth—He told it like it is! Modernistic churches try to make Christianity palatable by presenting Jesus as a softy, namby-pamby, wishy-washy, and effeminate.

II. The PLACE of hell.

- A. The FACT of it's existence. There is a literal burning hell. Jesus would not warn people to escape from a place that did not exist.
1. Hell is not the grave. There are degrees of damnation in hell (v. 14). But there are no degrees of death or the grave.
 2. Hell is not annihilation. The word "*damnation*" speaks of hell being a place of great punishment for evil.

The word translated "*damnation*" is the Greek word "krisis." Our English word "crisis" comes from this same word. A person who goes to hell, will find themselves in the most terrifying crisis ever—A crisis of eternal torment.

- B. The FIRE that is literal.
- Matt 13:49-50—*...the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire...*
 - Matthew 25:41, "*Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*"
 - Revelation 20:15— *...whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*
 - Revelation 14:10-11— *The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone... And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and every...*
 - Luke 16:19-31

III. The PEOPLE bound for Hell.

- A. Jesus is speaking to the religious elite of His day. More people are going to hell from a church pew than a bar stool.
- ➡ Jesus called these religious leaders for what they really were!
- Hypocrites (7 times—vs. 13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29)
 - Children of hell (v. 15)
 - Fools (vs. 17, 19)

- Blind (vs. 16, 17, 19, 24, 26)
 - Whitened sepulchers (v. 27)
 - Serpents — a generation of vipers (v. 33)
- B. These religionists spoke the Word of God, but they were the offsprings of the devil.
- “*Serpents*” (Cf. Gen. 3:1; Rev. 12:9).
 - “*Vipers*” venomous snakes. Poisoning people with the false doctrine. Jesus had little patience with people who were leading souls to hell by their teachings.
- C. There are only two spiritual families today— Children of the devil and Children of God.

IV. The **POSSIBILITY** of missing hell.

- A. GOOD NEWS! No one has to go to hell! There is an escape! Jesus would not have not said, “*How shall ye escape...*” if there was no way to escape the damnation of hell.
1. Jesus did NOT say, “How shall ye escape from hell?” There is NO ESCAPE once a person is in hell (Luke 16:23-26). But there is an escape from “*the damnation of hell.*” That is, is a way to avoid being damned to hell. HOW?
 2. “**HOW** can ye escape the damnation of hell?” This is a question every person should want to know the answer to.
- B. BAD NEWS! Notice how Jesus sets up this question by what He says leading up to it. He states all the things that will NOT help you escape going to hell.
1. You cannot escape by the **Regulations** of the Law (vs. 2-5). The law was not given to save a person, but to expose their sinfulness.
 2. You cannot escape by **Religious** designations (vs. 6-10).
 3. You cannot escape by **Righteous** activities (v. 14– praying; v. 15—making converts, v. 23—Tithing; v. 28– Moral living)

- After explaining the things that will not provide a way of escape, Jesus brings His sermon to it's climax by asking, "**HOW CAN YE ESCAPE THE DAMNATION OF HELL?**"
- Jesus is the only way to escape the damnation of hell (v. 37 cf. Mt. 11:28; John 14:6). Only Jesus can save you from going to hell (Acts 4:12).

SUMMATION: A few years ago I attended a seminar on fire safety.

1. First, the instructor talked about **the MISCONCEPTIONS about fire safety**. The #1 misconception is—"It won't happen to me." Most people believe fires only happen to other people. Likewise, most people believe they will never go to hell. They think hell is only for "wicked-bad" sinners.
2. Misconception #2 was many people have **no "fire escape plan."** In the same manner, many think they are safe from hell because they are a good person, they attend church, they've been baptized, etc. God has only ONE "fire-escape" and that is through trusting Jesus Christ alone to save you from hell.
3. The third misconception was—"I have plenty of time to prepare for a fire." Homeowners procrastinate the maintenance of their smoke detectors, purchasing fire extinguishers, developing an escape plan, etc. Likewise, many people think they have plenty of time to prepare for eternity. They "put off" trusting Christ for salvation. The fire safety instructor made this statement: "You can only prepare for a fire BEFORE the fire starts! If you wait until your house is on fire, it's too late!" Amen! You can only prepare to be saved from hell BEFORE you die. There are no second chances after death!

What must a person do to go to hell? NOTHING (tract). Heb. 2:3—*How shall we ESCAPE, if we NEGLECT so great salvation?*

Trust Jesus today and be saved! "*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, NOW is the day of salvation*" (2 Cor. 6:2).