

Bell's Inferno

Scripture: Hebrews 10:29; Jude 22–23

Code: B110421

If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that religion is a means of gain (1 Timothy 6:3-5).



No one in all the Scriptures had more to say about hell than Jesus. No stern messenger of doom from the era of the Judges, no fiery Old Testament prophet, no writer of imprecatory psalms, and no impassioned apostle (including the Boanerges brothers)—*not even all of them combined*—mentioned hell more frequently or described it in more terrifying terms than Jesus.

And the hell Jesus spoke of was not merely some earthly ordeal, some sour state of mind, or some temporary purgatorial prison. Jesus described hell as a “place of torment” in the afterlife (Luke 16:28)—a place of “unquenchable fire” (Mark 9:43), “where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48). It is a “place [where] there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 25:30)—a place of ***eternal*** punishment” (Matthew 25:46).

Rob Bell is clearly unhappy with Jesus’ teaching about hell. He finds the very idea of hell morally repugnant and believes it is one of the main reasons [“why lots of people want nothing to do with the Christian faith.”](#) He scoffs at the idea that divine justice requires endless punishment for unrepentant sinners. In direct opposition to what Jesus Himself taught in Matthew 25:46, Bell insinuates that it would be a gross, cosmic atrocity if the doom of the reprobate is *everlasting* in the same sense that heaven’s blessings for the redeemed are *everlasting*.

Bell’s notion of *sin* seems to be that its main evil consists in the hurt it causes to the sinner rather than the offense it causes to a righteous and almighty God. His concept of “*justice*” makes the punishment of sin wholly optional. His idea of *mercy* falsely holds forth a false promise of automatic leniency and a second chance after death to people already inclined to take divine clemency for granted anyway.

Rob Bell’s god is clearly no one to be feared.

That all stands in direct and deliberate contradiction to everything Jesus ever taught about sin, righteousness, and judgment.

By thus pitting his own ideas against Jesus' message, Bell makes it inescapably clear that he "advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. 1 Timothy 6:3). He is wrong—seriously wrong—*heretically* wrong—to question the justice of God and to hold out false hope to unbelievers. He is, as we have seen from the start of this series, a textbook example of the false teacher who secretly introduces destructive heresies (2 Peter 2:1).

That *must* be said plainly and emphatically.

Just how serious is Rob Bell's heresy? It is not merely that he rejects what Jesus taught about hell; *Bell rejects the God of Scripture*. He deplores the idea of divine vengeance against sin (Romans 12:9). He cannot stand the plain meaning of texts like Hebrews 12:29: "Our God is a consuming fire." He has no place in his thinking for the biblical description of Christ's fiery return with armies of angels: "dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8). Bell's whole message is a flat contradiction of Jesus' words in Luke 12:5: "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!"

Bell will have none of that. He therefore tries to eliminate the authority and clarity of Scripture so that he can reinvent a god who is more to his liking. It is the sin of all sins; the sin of the serpent. Like Eve's tempter, Bell is subtly but undeniably fomenting rebellion against the true God. He suggests that he is *better*—nicer, more kindly, more tolerant, more lenient—than the God who has revealed Himself in Scripture. He therefore sets aside God's revealed Word and makes his own musings the inviolable standard.

In effect he wants to assume the role of God for himself. That is not a minor evil; it is epic. It is the original sin of Lucifer.

As [already shown](#), Rob Bell has been sowing doubt, confusion, and error in the church for years. His theological trajectory has been clear for at least a decade. The stance he takes in *Love Wins* is the predictable fruit of many other compromises and concessions to worldly opinion that were already well established in Bell's teaching.

In fact, the most surprising thing about *Love Wins* is not the position Rob Bell takes, but the fact that so many people seem genuinely caught off guard and unaccountably confused by it. The record of Bell's own words makes it clear that this latest book of his is little more than a distillation of things he has been saying all along. He abandoned Jesus' teaching years ago in favor of a different religion—one more in keeping with his personal preferences. He is pointing people toward the broad way that leads to destruction.

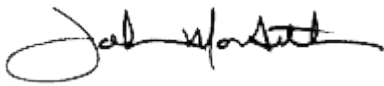
The sad reality is that if Rob Bell does not confess the truth in this life, one day he *will* realize how wrong his understanding of hell really is. His view of hell will be painfully altered forever when he receives the more severe punishment reserved for those who with a Bible in their hands mock God and trample the blood of Christ underfoot (Hebrews 10:29; cf. 2 Peter 2:21).

My earnest prayer is for Rob Bell's repentance. But I am even more deeply and urgently concerned for the many untaught and undiscerning people who are being led astray by his toxic teaching (Jude 22-23). It is time for faithful shepherds to speak up and warn the flock of the deadly peril posed by false teaching such as this.

It is also time for the people of God to proclaim the gospel more clearly and more carefully than ever, including the difficult parts of the message. For too long evangelicals have been prone to omit the full truth about sin, righteousness, and judgment—falling back instead on dumbed-down, dampened, defanged versions of the message. In all candor, that is one of the main reasons there is so much confusion over Rob Bell's book among evangelicals today.

We have a sacred duty to preach what Jesus preached in the manner He preached it—without toning it down or adjusting it to make it more suitable to secular culture. Those who trim or alter the message to avoid the parts that are offensive are not faithful ambassadors of Christ. Whatever their motives and despite their best intentions, their tamed-and-toned-down versions of the gospel do not represent authentic Christianity. More often than not, the result is a different religion altogether.

We need to weigh that fact carefully, and seek God's grace to remain faithful—to proclaim the true, unabridged, unadulterated gospel more clearly and more boldly than ever in a world that is growing less tolerant of the offense of the cross, more anesthetized against the fear of God, and increasingly hostile to Christ.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John MacArthur". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

John MacArthur
Pastor-Teacher

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2024 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).