



**Jeremiah 7:27-8:3**  
**The Highway to Hell**

**27 " Therefore you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. You shall also call to them, but they will not answer you.**

**28 "So you shall say to them, 'This is a nation that does not obey the voice of the LORD their God nor receive correction. Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth.**

**29 'Cut off your hair and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on the desolate heights; for the LORD has rejected and forsaken the generation of His wrath.'**

**30 "For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight," says the LORD. "They have set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to pollute it.**

**31 "And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart.**

**32 " Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "when it will no more be called Tophet, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter; for they will bury in Tophet until there is no room.**

**33 "The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. And no one will frighten them away.**

**34 "Then I will cause to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. For the land shall be desolate.**

**NKJ Jeremiah 8:1 "At that time," says the LORD, "they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of its princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves.**

**2 "They shall spread them before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, which they have loved and which they have served and after which they have walked, which they have sought and which they have worshiped. They shall not be gathered nor buried; they shall be like refuse on the face of the earth.**

**3 "Then death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of those who remain of this evil family, who remain in all the places where I have driven them," says the LORD of hosts.**

[These are hard truths, but we are at a point of profound change in the culture, the old age is going away, and a new age is coming]

Here the prophet reaches the crescendo of his warnings in the temple sermon, painting a hellish picture of the valley of slaughter. A picture that had a future literal earthly fulfillment when the Babylonians

sacked the city of Jerusalem, but also was a spiritual picture of the final judgment that would come upon the unbelieving in Hell.

Hell is a deeply unpopular subject today, and I don't just mean amongst the unbelieving, I mean amongst Christians. We have been recently reminded of that when popular Emergent Church pastor Rob Bell published his book "Love Wins" in which he essentially dismissed the biblical concept of hell, and held out the possibility that all men will eventually be saved. Christians who have criticized Bell for his universalism have been viciously attacked and condemned as hateful. Have you noticed how hateful people can be when they are in the process of calling you hateful or how intolerant they are of people who aren't tolerant? What it has indicated is that amongst those claiming to be evangelical there is little tolerance left for the doctrine of hell and eternal punishment. The wider society is ok with heaven, but despises all mention of hell, and as a result evangelicals who want to be considered acceptable in wider society are, as they did in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century, turning against it once again.

Why is that a bad thing though? I mean no one likes all that talk of hellfire and punishment and brimstone. So why not just quietly dump it? Well the problem is, hell is biblical. Warnings about it come up A LOT. In fact do you know who mentioned Hell more than any other person in the bible? JESUS did. So if we claim to believe what Jesus taught, then we will believe in Hell. And he taught things like this about it:

**Matthew 25:46 "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."**

**,Matthew 22:13 "Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."**

**Luke 16:23 "And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.**

**24 "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'**

Now the Lord spoke of hell to warn men to avoid going into it:

**Matt. 7:13 " Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.**

**14 "Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.**

He said the majority of men go down that broad way of unbelief that leads to hell, therefore you must strive to enter into the narrow way that leads to heaven, and it is only by believing in Jesus that we do that. He is the strait gate, the narrow door that leads to heaven. But how few will accept that, the Lord warned Jeremiah, that his hearers in Jerusalem would NOT accept that message:

The greatest of prophets have often been ignored by their hearers. This includes Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Paul, and of course Jesus Christ. Too often the Lord's covenant people refused to hear their words. But we must remember that even in their refusal to hear the Lord's purposes were being fulfilled. For instance, it was because of the their refusal to repent and believe His message that the

way was opened for the crucifixion of Christ and the salvation of his sheep. Because of their refusal to head the message of the gospel, the way was opened for the wide evangelization of the Gentiles, as Paul confessed:

*Acts 13:46 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.*

*47 "For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.' "*

*48 Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.*

*49 And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.*

Even when the word of the Lord is rejected, His plans are still being fulfilled:

*Isaiah 55:11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*

It is often the remembrance of that, that has kept me from despairing in times when it seemed like everyone had rejected the word of the Lord. As Derek Kidner wisely counseled: *"It is something to bear in mind when we are tempted to assess the fruits of preaching by what we can immediately observe"*

The Lord wanted them to hear from the prophet the signs that they were on the BROAD PATH that leads to destruction:

The truth had perished from their midst, and the Lord says the proper response should have been spiritual mourning. They should cut off their hair. We have a reference there to the idea of the Nazirite, who like Samson, would grow his hair and not drink wine as a sign that he was particularly consecrated to God. But they were told cut your hair off, you aren't holy, just as earlier they had been told to not waste their time with burnt sacrifices. Their worship was not based upon faith and obedience, but had become a faithless mixture of things they liked and things practiced by the surrounding nations. And without Faith, Love, and Obedience, worship is worthless. But in their practices they had become very post modern very pluralist. In fact they had imported false worship into what should have been the most Holy place in Judah – the temple. They had even set up pagan images and pagan altars there:

Worse yet, they sacrificed their covenant children on the high places. The burning of children was the highest sacrifice in Molech worship, and something the Lord explicitly mentioned as one of the reasons that the Canaanites were judged and dispossessed by the Jews. Now it is important to note that they considered this to be the highest form of piety that they could render, and yet the Lord specifically says that this was an act that *"I did not command, nor did it come into My heart."* It is hard for us to accept, but often the greatest acts of worship that we dream up and which most impress us, can in fact be abominations in the eyes of God. As Calvin confessed in his own day, **"I know how difficult it is to persuade the world that God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by his word."** "On the Necessity of Reforming the Church"

But the Lord warns that as a result of their spiritual adultery the valley of Topheth would become a place not of profane worship but where the bodies of the defenders of Jerusalem would be discarded as a result of the terrible siege. In fact, the valley of the son of hinnom, or Ge Ben-Hinnom, would afterwards become a place so defiled that it would only be considered suitable for the burning of garbage. A place so vile that its shortened name “Gehenna” would become the Jewish word for HELL.

The Lord had warned over a hundred years previously through the prophet Isaiah about this place of Judgment, saying that after the final judgment *Is. 66:24 "And they shall go forth and look Upon the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, And their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."*

Jesus used this imagery for hell as well: **Mark 9:47 "And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire --**

**48 "where 'Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.'**

Some Applications:

**First** we have to avoid these compromisers false prophets who seem to have the light, but lead men away from the Lord. We live in an age that says “any light is worthy of being followed” but if the light is the truth of God’s word then these people are like the lights set up by the Cornish Breakers – false lights to guide the people to their destruction

**Second** we need to remember, that when it comes to apostasy, its never one big step but incremental baby steps. We are filling the house of the Lord with Abominations, importing the sins of the surrounding peoples. “Love wins” abortion, fornication, syncretism

It’s never one big step, it’s always little incremental baby steps

At seminary I watched as there was a gradual shift

**Third** and this is most important we need to remember what Paul told us: **2 Tim 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**

Brothers and sisters, you must not follow evangelicalism where it is currently going, I don’t normally read quotes this long, it is too long. But it discusses a very important shift that we are going to have to deal with:

*“The most pressing challenge from the wider culture is the ethical matter of homosexuality. Cultural attitudes have changed quickly on homosexuality. I remember saying at a Bible study just fifteen years ago that the gay rights movement had reached its high-water mark; for most people, I opined, homosexuality was so obviously immoral that general consensus could not be overcome. I now list that statement as among the most boneheaded and shortsighted I have ever made—and the competition in that sphere is more than a little fierce. I had not reckoned with the power of gay-friendly media presentations, nor with the way the rising generation’s lack of moral foundations could be easily exploited. A Pew Forum survey in 2009 found that the vast majority of Americans under age thirty no longer view gay marriage as an issue at all.1*

*A few years after my Bible study misstatement, as the sobering pace of the gay-rights agenda's advancement began to dawn on me, I told a senior colleague and respected evangelical biblical scholar at Aberdeen University that evangelicals were likely to start equivocating on homosexuality. Nonsense, he declared; that could never happen. I believe he was as naïve then as I had been several years earlier.*

*Those pastors who have remained strong in upholding a biblical position against homosexual behavior increasingly face consequences. ...*

*The impact of this wider cultural shift on evangelical institutions and organizations will be dramatic. Those who aspire to an elusive "place at the cultural table" will find themselves between a rock and hard place. A college will not, for example, be able to oppose homosexuality and still be regarded as the evangelical Harvard. A speaker will not be able to criticize gay culture and still be treated by mainstream media as an intelligent commentator on the wider world. Scholars can forget offering papers at academic conferences in which they argue, with any degree of sympathy, that the Bible condemns homosexual practice—this will be classified as "hate speech" and typically be rejected at scholarly gatherings.*

...

*Indeed, while there are complexities and nuances in the homosexual debate, it is doubtful that the wider world will grant any space for such. Those driving hard for complete and total acceptance of homosexuality are not in the mood for negotiating compromises. Why should they be? The cultural tide is flowing irresistibly in their favor. Attempts by social conservatives at nuance (from the typical "hate the sin, love the sinner" language to fine parsing of where exactly someone who feels same-sex attraction crosses the line into sin) will be seen as duplicitous. Do evangelical leaders and institutions grant the legitimacy of homosexuality or not? Yes or no? Only a one-word answer will suffice. All Christians, evangelical and otherwise, will face the question, and their answer to it will determine whether they have credibility in the wider culture." [From "The Real Scandal of the Evangelical Mind", by Carl R. Trueman]*

*Finally* and most importantly remember why! The Broad path leads to destruction, not heaven. Oh brothers its not a matter of being intolerant, it's a matter of being true to God and staying on that narrow path that leads to heaven. Christ's preaching was not popular or widely accepted, you remember that time that Jesus preached on the incredibly unpopular subject of predestination and the majority of disciples left him?

*John 6:65 And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."*

*66 From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.*

*67 Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?"*

*68 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*

*69 "Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*