

Different view of the Afterlife

Introduction:

- A. Many of our views of the afterlife are influenced by factors of which we are unaware.
- B. Factors include extra-Biblical teachings and Greek mythology.

I. Limbus patrum.

- A. In English – the limbo of the fathers.
- B. Couldn't go to heaven before the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- C. Also called Paradise or Abraham's Bosom (from the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. (Lk. 16:19-31) .

II. Limbus infantum.

- A. In English – the limbo of infants (and mentally deficient).
- B. Had not been baptized and too young or feeble minded to understand sin and salvation.
- C. Expanded to include the righteous who had died unbaptized.
- D. Three thoughts.
 - 1. A place of joy but not heaven.
 - 2. A place of comfort but with a sense of loss since it was not heaven.
 - 3. A place in hell but only light punishment (Dante's *Inferno*).
- E. Solves the problem of what happens to those who die without ever having heard of Jesus.

III. Common Christian view.

- A. Accepts the belief in the limbus patrum.
- B. While Jesus was in the tomb, he went to hell and showed those in Paradise their salvation (1 Pe.3:19-20).
- C. At his resurrection, he freed those in Paradise and led them to heaven (Ep. 4:8 KJV – he led captivity captive).
- D. Hell enlarged its mouth to receive even more sinners after the emptying of Paradise. (Is. 5: 14a).

E. Death and hell will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Re. 20:11-15).

IV. Inaccuracies of the common view.

A. Scripture twisting.

1. Pearl stringing.

2. Out of context.

B. Three very important facets of hermeneutics (interpreting text, esp. Scripture).

1. Context – literary (cf. Is. 55:12).

a. Type of literature.

b. The surrounding verses and chapters.

2. Context – historical and geographical.

3. Context – cultural (1 Co. 11:2-16).

C. The passages interpreted.

1. 1 Peter 3.

a. The preaching was by Noah to the unbelievers of his day (cf. Ep. 2:17 for Christ preaching through someone else).

b. Wouldn't fit the Limbus Patrum because limited to those of Noah's day.

c. In part, based on faulty understanding of Apostles Creed (descended into hell).

2. Isaiah 5.

a. Speaks of the judgment of God's people by Assyria and Babylon.

b. It means simply that many will die.

3. Ephesians 4.

a. Doesn't quote OT but is informed by it.

b. Context of Psalm 68:18, Numbers 8, Numbers 18.

c. God took the Levites unto himself (his captives) and then gave them as gifts to Israel for ministry.

- d. God took apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers, and then gave them as gifts to the Church.

D. Other elements.

1. Abraham's bosom.

- a. Is a parable – a story to illustrate a point.
- b. Even the resurrection will not convince anyone who does not accept the teachings of Moses and the prophets.

2. Paradise.

- a. Paradise is heaven.
- b. Thief on the cross (Lk. 23:43)
- c. Paul ascended to the third heaven, the Paradise of God (2 Co.12:1-4).

3. Heavy influence of Greek mythology on early Christianity – the Elysian Fields (Elysium).

- a. Those chosen by the gods, the righteous, the heroic.
- b. On the western edge of the earth.
 - i. The islands of the blessed (cf. *The Return of the King*).
 - ii. The Avenue Champs-Elysee in Paris.

V. Conclusion.

- A. The passages quoted are not relevant to the afterlife.
- B. Limbo is an invention of the early church.
- C. We reject the syncretism of Greek mythology with Christian doctrine.

VI. Biblical view.

- A. The believer who dies, whether OT or NT, goes directly to heaven (2 Co.5:8; Enoch and Elijah).
- B. The lost go to the place of the dead (Hades, Sheol) to await the judgment.
 1. Death and hell will be cast into the Lake of Fire.
 2. All not written in the Book of Life will be cast into the Lake of Fire.
 3. In the Bible, hell does not mean the Lake of Fire; we call it that.

VII. Application.

A. As Christians, we need to know what we believe and why we believe it.

B. We need to be ready at all times to give an answer to those who inquire of our hope (1 Pe.3:15).