

Do You Believe in Hell?

Jonah

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A couple years ago, Susan and I went to see a movie. At the time, I was really wrestling with Scripture and church and the Presbytery. The movie was about Hell. At the climax of the movie, there's a really intense scene, and a discussion about Hell, and it raises the question "Do you believe in Hell?" It's a good question. After the movie, I sat in a restaurant and couldn't stop weeping.

I couldn't stop weeping because I think the Spirit was speaking to my heart, and it mattered. And I just need to tell you... I'm scared to talk about this, because it seems to get me in trouble and because I don't want you to think this is what The Sanctuary is all about. And yet, in a way, this is what church is all about. Jesus said "The Gates of Hell will not prevail against my church." The church is all about storming the gates of Hell with the Power of "Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, Father... this is what I ask: that you would be glorified in Christ Jesus your son, that you would be glorified in your Word, and that we could preach it. Lord God, you know that this topic has been a pain for me. And so I just pray that this would not be about me, but about you. Because, Father, you are so good, and we don't see you. In Jesus name, I pray, Amen.

This picture is part of a wall panel from the Palace of the King of Assyria. It was taken out of the ruins of the city of Nineveh. Nineveh is just across the Tigris River from modern day Mosul, Iraq. Assyria was a bitter enemy to Israel, not totally unlike the situation today. It was Assyria that conquered and dispersed the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. This panel depicts the conquest of a town called Lachish in Judea (the Southern kingdom) in 701 B.C.



The soldiers in this panel are pictured skinning their prisoners alive. Nineveh was infamous for her cruelty. And Nineveh was infamous for the worship of the Pagan goddess Ishtar. Ishtar was also known as Nina – the river goddess – whose emblem was a fish. The ideogram for the city means "place of fish." "Nūna" is Aramaic for fish. Well, Nineveh was like fish city. This panel is currently housed at the British Museum.



This is a picture of Susan and I at the British Museum. We saw all of the incredible artifacts from Nineveh and Assyria. In one room, Susan walked past an ancient stone idol and she heard a voice say “mine mine mine mine!” When she told me about it, I wanted to go take a picture, but she wouldn’t tell me which statue it was. She wanted me to leave it alone. Paul said that when pagans served idols, they really served demons. In other words, “The Assyrians were imprisoned to the idols they served. Their cruelty was not simply their own, it was demonic.” They had been consumed by “Nina,” the iniquities and powers of this present darkness. If you’ve ever seen a demon manifest in another person, you begin to realize that we have far less control than we think and we are far less able to judge others than we know. Well Nineveh was undoubtedly a wretched place, infested with human sacrifice, ritual prostitution, unspeakable cruelties and the dark oppression of demonic principalities.

If you’ve ever been to Auschwitz...

If you’ve ever walked through the bones in the killing fields...

If you’ve ever been ritually abused or journeyed with those who have...

... you’ve tasted Nineveh and realities that we can only describe as Hell.

Well, Assyria was Israel’s greatest enemy. And the prophets, priests and kings viewed themselves as watchmen or border guards, keeping the darkness at bay.

Now our text:

Jonah 1:1-2

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.”

“Go to Nineveh” says “The **Word** of the Lord”

Jeremiah 23:29

*“Is not my **word** like fire?” declares the Lord, “and like a hammer that breaks the rocks in pieces?”*

When the Jews thought of the **Word of God** they thought of fire. Like Elijah said “Our God is the God who answers by fire”. On the mountain God spoke to the Israelites out of the fire. Over and over Scripture says “Our God is a consuming fire.” The breath – spirit – the Word of Yahweh is fire.

Now, I want you to remember this idea: The fire, the light, our God and His Word. Think of it over here (stage right).

→FIRE
LIGHT
GOD
WORD

Isaiah 30:30

“The Lord will cause men to hear his majestic voice... with raging anger and consuming fire... the voice of the Lord will shatter Assyria.”

The fire is the Presence of Yahweh, the Word of the Lord – the revelation of our God.

Next verse: Jonah 1:3

But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

Isn't that strange? You would think that Jonah would be thinking: “Go God! This is it. We'll go to Nineveh and fry their tails with the Word of God. Some real fire and brimstone kinda stuff!”

But Jonah flees. How come?

- a.) Well, maybe there's some darkness in Jonah.
- b.) And maybe this fire is a bit different than we would imagine.

Scripture says God is a fire and Scripture says God is Holy. He is a Holy fire – that means a strange fire. A fire that doesn't behave simply like regular fire... Holy fire.

“The Word of the Lord” -- “The Word of God”

Who is the Word of God?

Jesus!

Yeah, do you remember when He sent his Spirit on Pentecost? It came as what? Fire – and it did fill the temple and it did consume the sacrifice, but it was HOLY FIRE. It may be burning in your heart right now. You are to be a Living Sacrifice.

Well, Jonah wants some burning, kick Ass-yrrian fire! Yet he's been around long enough to know God's fire, God's Word, is strange... it's Holy.

So he flees and where does he go? The Sea. “Tarshish” may be a place name, but its basic meaning is “open sea.” For the Hebrews, the sea was a picture of the void, chaos... the home of

Leviathon and the demonic. That's why the Legion of demons ran the swine into the sea. That's why it's such a huge thing when Jesus calms the sea and walks on the sea. It's a picture of the Abyss, the deep, the dark "Sheol." I want you to think of that idea over here (stage left).

→Sheol

Hades

Hell

"Sheol" is a Hebrew word. "Hades" is the Greek word that translates it. In the King James and other translations "Hades" and "Sheol" are usually translated "Hell." But I want you to see something hugely important: this (the Fire) and this (Sheol), are not the same thing. In fact, this (Sheol) is where you run to get away from this (the Fire). Job talks about hiding from God's anger in Sheol. But Amos says "Even if you hide in Sheol, God's hand will take you." Deuteronomy says "The Fire burns even to the lowest Sheol – the lowest Hell."

To run from God is to hide in Hell, and that's what Jonah gets: Hell.

Well, as you know, out on the sea, a great storm arises, but Jonah is fast asleep. The sailors finally wake him in a panic. Jonah convinces them that he is the problem and as a last resort, they throw Jonah into the deep. They sacrifice him and he descends into Sheol. And when they do, the sea ceases it's raging.

Jonah 1:17

And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Jonah sinks into the Abyss and he's swallowed by a great fish. In Aramaic, Nūna prowling the deep, like Nina the fish goddess. So running from God's call to go to the great Nineveh, he's swallowed by the great Nūna that looks like the great Nina. Now listen, Nina just wants to consume him for dinner. Just like Satan wants to consume you. And yet, Nūna and Nina, like Leviathon and Satan, are ultimately under the Lord's command. The Lord sent the fish.

Well, on the third day having descended into the Abyss, Jonah prays.

Jonah 2:1-2

Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish saying "I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and he answered me out of the belly of Sheol."

The King James Version says: "Out of the Belly of Hell I cried and you heard my voice."

The King James also translates the word Sheol as grave or pit. Many modern translations just translate the word as grave because it doesn't match well with popular notions of Hell. Yet it doesn't match real well with "grave" and there are other words for grave. In fact, in most new translations, you can't find the word Hell in the Old Testament. The New Testament refers to "Sheol" with the Greek word "Hades."

This is actually a picture that I took, of what was known of as the “Gates of Hades” in Jesus’ day. That’s Sharon Hersh running from the gates of Hell, or maybe running from a photo. Yet Jesus said the gates of Hades would not prevail against His church. He said it here in Ceasarea Philipi.

Scripture describes “Sheol” or “Hades” as under the earth or the depths of the sea. It describes layers in Sheol or Hades. Job says that we can’t come up from Sheol – we don’t have the ability. (Job 7:9) The psalmist describes it



as a place where none can remember God and none can give him praise. (Psalm 6:5) Solomon says “There is no work, thought, knowledge or wisdom in Sheol” (Ecc. 9:10).

I think that means there is no faith in Sheol. In other words, no one believes in Hell, for there is no belief in Hell. A person in Hell is trapped within themselves. Belief is what connects us to persons outside ourselves. A person in Hell is trapped in darkness, lies and unbelief.

And now check this out: According to Scripture, Sheol begins in this world, even if it continues into the grave and on to the next. In Psalm 18 David writes “the cords of Sheol entangled me.” For Jonah, Sheol began in Israel when he wouldn’t trust the word of the Lord. Jonah chose to run into Hell, but now he’s driven into hell. Next verse:

For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. Then I said, “I am driven away from your sight.”

He gets his wish - then he hates his wish. It’s our fallen nature to run from God and hide from God like Adam and Eve hid in the trees. And yet the snake is waiting in the trees. Maybe God lets him bite us so we won’t be at home in the darkness. When you hide your sin, shame and self from God, you literally become food for the evil one. And God allows it... not because He doesn’t love you, but because He does love you.

Remember what Paul says about the guy who was proud of his sexual sins in the church in Corinth? He tells the church to “deliver the man up to Satan.” Why? “For the destruction of the flesh.” (that is the sinful self – the self that believes only in the self – the self trapped in its self – its own Hell) “Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” (1 Cor 5:5 – NKJV)

God loves Jonah, so He delivers him to the belly of the Nūna. “The belly of ‘Sheol.’”

And now this is a shocker, but that word “belly” in verse 2, it’s normally translated “womb.” Wombs are for giving birth to new life.

Next verse:

Then I said, “I am driven away from your sight; Yet I shall again look upon your holy temple. The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped around my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever.”

Did you get that? “Forever.” We do not have a good understanding of the biblical concept of “ever” (also “not ever” – “never”). The word translated “ever” is the Hebrew word Olam. Olam is translated as aion in the Greek. Aion is where we get the English word eon. It means “age” or “long period of time”. It may even mean “all time” – all chronological time. Yet in Scripture, all chronological time comes to an end. Who is the end? Jesus. Jesus is the beginning and the end. It comes to an end on the day of the Lord Jesus, who is the Word of God --the manifestation, and presence, of the HOLY FIRE.

In Corinthians, Paul says that we are those who have come to “the end of the ages,” “the end of the eons.” “The end of the evers has come” upon us (1 Cor. 10:11).

Who is the end? Jesus – the Word of God – The Fire of God – the immortal, unquenchable, eternal Fire.

Now listen to Jonah

“I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever, yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God.

(You did it – I didn’t do it.)

When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.”

He remembered and he prayed. In Hell. How did he do that?

David writes “in death there is no remembrance of you, in sheol who will give you praise?” (Psalm 6:5) In the Old Testament, lots of folks go to “Hell” that is “Sheol” – Samuel, David, Solomon, the nobility of Jerusalem – indeed all are expected to go there. But no one praises God there – other than Jonah. But Jonah doesn’t do it by his own strength. Actually no one does it by their own strength in Hell or in Denver. David says it, Paul says it – “None is righteous, no one understands, no one seeks for God.” (Rom 3: 10-11) So how does Jonah?

Well, have you noticed that Jonah’s story is strangely familiar? He is asleep in a boat in a storm, he calms the storm, he’s sacrificed to save others. He descends into Hell for 3 days. And when he speaks there, his words are the Word of God. He sounds like Jesus and Jesus is the Word of God.

The New Testament tells us – like the Apostle’s Creed tells us: that Jesus descended into “the lowest parts of the earth”, to the “spirits in prison” into “Sheol” and that he “lead a host of captives free.” How else could David, Samuel, Jonah and Israel ever get out of there? When Jesus died, the tombs opened, the gates of Hades were broken. And when Jesus died He cried out “It is finished.” “It is done.” He is the end.

But before it was finished, Jesus cried “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” It’s the first line of Psalm 22 – I believe he started it on the surface of the earth, but finished it in Hell. The Psalm describes crucifixion, yet it is a prayer and the prayer sounds like Jonah’s prayers. It ends with these words:

“before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive. Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.”

It is finished.

Nobody believes in Hell, because Hell is not believing. Nobody except Jesus, who descends into our Hell and believes on our behalf. Jesus believes in Hell, our Hell.

We are saved by the belief, the faith and faithfulness, of Christ Jesus our Lord. The Word that descends into the Abyss of our hearts, and returns to the Father as words of confession and praise upon our tongues. What Jonah spoke in Hell is the Word of God (it’s even Scripture). Well, the Word of God is Jesus, and Jesus is the Way. He is the only Way. There is only one Way to God, but listen closely...

We - the American church, the religious establishment, the powers that be...

We DO NOT own the Way or control the Way or tell the Way where He can go. For lo and behold, the Way has already descended even into Hell.

- The Way has descended into the land with no way
- The Truth has descended into the land of lies
- The Life has descended into death
- The Light has descended into darkness – YOUR DARKNESS

That’s good news.

Next verse:

Those who pay regard to vain idols...

Literally “empty nothings”

...forsake their hope of steadfast love

“Hesed” – Mercy – Covenant Love

God is Love. God is Fire. God is Holy. God is Love. The fire is Holy Love – Mercy. THE FIRE is Love that ultimately consumes all that is not LOVE. God, who is Love, will fill all things and all that he does not fill is nothing.

So to believe in God's love, is to be saved. To deny God's love is to run into nowhere and nothing. Nothing, because God's LOVE is everything, for everything is created and sustained by LOVE through His Word. His Word, who became flesh, was wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a Manger. His name is Jesus.

All – everything – is created and sustained by Mercy, God's grace in Christ Jesus. And until you believe that, you're lost. And that "you" that is lost, must die. The "you" that tries to save you, redeem you, own you and create you, the independent arrogant hellish "you" must die. The "you" that runs from the fire of God's mercy must be sacrificed. Jonah says:

But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord.

This is his sacrifice, the vow Jesus helps him pay: He cries out "Salvation belongs to the Lord." In other words, "I can't save me, my good deeds can't save me, my knowledge doesn't save me, my nationality doesn't save me, my free will doesn't save me, my choice doesn't save me, THE LORD GOD, YAHWEH, SAVES ME."

We are saved 100% by grace, working through faith, and this not of ourselves "lest any should boast." Salvation belongs to Yahweh – the Lord.

In Hebrew, the word "Salvation" is "Yeshuah." Yeshuah is also a name. In English it's pronounced "Jesus." Jonah cries "Yeshuatah La Yahweh." Basically "Jesus is Lord." Next verse:

And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

The waters parted and he stood on dry land.

Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days journey in breadth.

Literally "a 3 day visit."

Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" And the people of Nineveh believed God.

Well, Jonah was three days in the belly of Nina and the Word came to him, and Jonah was three days in Nineveh and the Word came through him. Just like Jesus was three days in the heart of the earth and He is the Word. He rescued Jonah from Nina (that is from Hell). And now he uses Jonah to rescue the Ninevites from the very same thing. God is teaching Jonah compassion, making him trust mercy, who came to us as Yeshua.

Jesus said “Truly as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.”

When we ignore those on the other side of the border, we ignore Jesus.

When we’re content to leave others in Hell, we leave Jesus in Hell.

When we refuse love, when we sin, we nail Jesus to the tree and cast ourselves into Hell.

Yet even there, He is waiting for us.

So I sat in the Elephant Bar at Belmar and I couldn’t stop weeping. The movie we saw was the “Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada.” It’s based on a true story.

A young border guard named Michael Norton thinks a shepherd named Melquiades might have shot at him (even though Melquiades was shooting at a coyote). In his fear, he guns down Melquiades. And then in shame, he buries the body in a shallow grave. Melquiades is a Mexican and Norton is a border guard. He thinks he’s guarding the kingdom of America from the forces of darkness, but he’s really guarding the forces of darkness in his own soul from the light. Norton is unable to love. He’s into porn and rough sex with his new bride. He really only sees himself and does not believe in anyone else. At one point his wife says he’s “irredeemable.”

Well, coyotes dig up the body of Melquiades and Pete Perkins (Melquiades’ friend) discovers that it was Norton who shot him. The local authorities won’t prosecute and they bury Melquiades’ body a second time in a deeper grave, a deeper Sheol, in town. And Norton only becomes more mean, until one night, Pete Perkins (played by Tommy Lee Jones) kidnaps Norton. He makes Norton dig up Melquiades’ body. And then he forces Norton to take a journey with him through the wilderness, on a descent into Mexico to bury Melquiades’ body. On the way, he makes Norton put on Melquiades’ clothes and drink from his cup. He makes Norton understand.

Clip #1:

Perkins: “*Sit down at this table... in that chair.*

Melquiades lived here. That was his bed. Kept his clothes right over there.

That was his plate. And that was his cup.”

(Perkins pours a drink into the cup.)

“Drink it.”

Norton: “*No.*”

Perkins sets his gun on the table between them and says: “*Drink from that cup.*”

Norton, handcuffed, takes the cup in both hands, drinks from it and throws it to the table, glaring at Perkins.

On the journey, Norton is bit by a serpent and Pete Perkins allows it. They cross the river into the far country. There, the very people he brutalized and hated, end up saving his life. Finally Perkins finds Melquiades' little stone house in Mexico and makes Norton rebuild the house. Then he has Norton dig the grave, the third grave, his third journey into Sheol, and then this happens:

Clip #2:

Norton fills in a grave with his bare hands.

Perkins forces Norton to kneel in front of a tree with his hands behind his head, and he places a picture of Melquiades and his family on the tree.

He says: "*Ask Melquiades for forgiveness.*" (in Spanish)

Norton: "*What?*"

Perkins: "*Ask for forgiveness. Ask for forgiveness right now, or go to hell right now.*"

Norton: "*I don't believe in hell.*"

Perkins fires shots at the tree and at the ground all around Norton until he weeps and screams:

"I'm sorry! I swear to God, I'm sorry..."

I swear to God... I swear to God, I did not mean to kill him. It was a mistake."

Perkins walks away as Norton continues weeping, and looks up at the picture on the tree.

Norton: "*I didn't want it to happen!*"

Clutching his heart, Norton continues to cry: "*That hurt me. I regret it, every single day. Forgive me! Forgive me, Melquiades... for taking your life... forgive me. Forgive me.*"

The next morning, Perkins wakes Norton. "*You can go now.*"

Norton: "*Where?*"

Perkins: "*To your wife. Where ever.*"

Norton: "*I always ... I always thought that you'd end up killing me.*"

Perkins: "*You can keep the horse... son.*"

Do you understand why I couldn't stop weeping?

Norton doesn't believe in Hell, but he's kneeling in front of a tree in Hell. On the tree is a picture of Melquiades. Norton put Melquiades on that tree with his sin against Melquiades and there in the pit of Hell, in front of the one he nailed to the tree, Mike Norton's hellish heart finally cracks... and then, for

the first time in the movie, he falls into a sound sleep. In the morning, Pete Perkins says “You’re free,” and then calls him “son.” In the last line of the movie, Norton calls out to Perkins. Riding away, he calls out “You gonna be alright?” It’s the first time he expresses concern for anyone other than himself.

Do you understand why I couldn’t stop weeping?

First I wept at the goodness and beauty of our Lord, who is love. He descends into our Hell, in order to storm the gates of our Hell and help us believe. Even Sheol is a function of His mercy. So you see, my Father in Heaven is not interested in torturing a group of people for all eternity without end. Satan is, but my Father is not. My Father is not into torture, He is into creating sons. That is “making people in His image,” and He is mercy.

I wept at how deep God’s love is, and how much we hate it (that is, hate Him). And that’s because we think salvation belongs to us. That is, we’re addicted to Hell. I’ve discovered that there is no topic more offensive to what we call “the church” (which includes me). No topic more scandalous and offensive than God’s mercy. In other words, “Jesus Christ and Him crucified is the offense of the world,” and the church infected with the world.

Jesus said “the sons of the kingdom will be cast into outer darkness.” It certainly appears that these who are in most danger of being cast into Hell are those that don’t care whether or not others are there... or maybe even delight in the thought that they are. In other words, religious people like Jonah, people like the Pharisees, and sometimes people like me.

Well, I think you know the rest of the story. Jonah preaches; the people repent. Ironically, the fire came in the form of the word Jonah preached, and the city was over-turned in the form of repentance.¹ And yet Jonah is furious. He’s angry and he finally confesses as to why he’s angry and why he fled.

Jonah 4:2

“O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”

Hesed – mercy, love, kindness...

The story ends with Jonah resentful and sitting outside the city. Just like the story of the prodigal son ends with the older brother resentful and standing out in the field. We don’t know if he’s gonna join the party of grace or sink once again into Hell.

Now I should tell you, Nineveh sank once again into her Hellish ways. Yet her Hell did not go on endlessly. In 607, Nineveh was destroyed and consumed with fire. In 586 Jerusalem was destroyed and consumed with fire. The prophets tell us the whole world will be destroyed and consumed with fire.

Revelation 20:13

And the sea gave up the dead who were in it; Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in

¹ Ironically, God’s prophetic word was realized, but in a form Jonah didn’t like. The city was overturned... by the fire of grace.

them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:1, 4

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

“Sheol” is thrown, in the end, into the Lake of Fire. If anyone is thrown in with it, perhaps they are consumed and cease to exist. Perhaps they are consumed and then made new, for Jesus says “Behold I make all things new.” But get this: Jesus is the judgment, His blood is consuming fire and He is unquenchable love.

There’s one more word that gets translated as Hell in the New Testament. It’s the word “Gehenna”. This is an actual picture of Gehenna:



I was there last year. This is a barbecue in Hell. I think they’re having chicken. Gehenna is the valley that surrounds two sides of Jerusalem. It’s where the Jews would burn their refuse and sometimes worship demons. So I don’t mean to make light of it, for God tells us that He will be a wall of fire around

Jerusalem – the valley has deep meaning. You see, before we enter the New Jerusalem, we must pass through that fire, judgment – the eternal fire. The door, the Way, the Word that makes us clean – the Fire.

Surrender to the fire and He fills you with His life. Resist the fire and it burns.

I believe that this is that fire (Peter points to the Cross). This is the judgment of this world. This is where the burning hot fire of God's love meets our death and our Hell and consumes it. On this tree.

Jesus said it:

"Now is the judgment of this world."

"Now shall the ruler of this world be cast out."

"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth will draw all men to myself."

And so on that night, He took bread, and He broke it, saying "This is my body given for you. Take, eat, and do this in remembrance of me." This is how we remember, even in Hell. Do some of you feel like you're in Hell? You can talk to Him. "Do this in remembrance of me."

And in the same way, after supper, He took the cup, and He said, "This is the cup of the new covenant, in my blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you. Do it in remembrance of me."

If you come to the table, you surrender your Hell to His love. And if you come to this table and hang on to your Hell, His love will burn. His love is the kingdom of Heaven. And so He wants you to come to the table -- Believe in His love, surrender to His love, and allow Him to fill you, His temple, His people, His bride, His body. Let Him descend into you, and return to the Father, as voices of praise and confession upon your tongue, to the glory of the Father, in Jesus Christ our Lord. The cup is mercy, fire, life -- the blood of Jesus. Amen.

And now, before you go. Let me say that the sermon was long, and I also got intense at parts, because I've been thinking about this for a long time. And I'm not normally this intense, if you're new, ok? Well, maybe sometimes... but if you were to have lunch with me, I wouldn't be like this at all. I mostly mumble and am insecure, and don't have anything cogent to say.

And I'm saying this because, for some people, out of certain church traditions, this is like "oh yeah, of course." For some people, out of other church traditions, this is a paradigm shift. And the closer we get to God, the more our paradigm shifts all the time. There may be a lot of questions that you have. And that's great. You don't have to agree with everything I say. What I want you to believe is that God loves you. But if you have questions about some of the other stuff, you can read a paper I re-edited recently called "All Things New and a Place We Call Hell."

This is what I am trying to say: I think it is philosophically, categorically impossible for us to underestimate the love of God. In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel.