

More About Hell?

Did Jesus really say more about hell than He did about heaven?

It has been claimed again and again that Jesus had more to say about hell than he did about heaven. It has been repeated so oft that the assertion has become an unquestioned maxim. Many preachers have made the statement, not because they knew it to be true, or had actually counted the references, but because they heard it said and assumed it so. But is it?

Carl G. Johnson writes, "Some have said that Jesus was the greatest 'Hell-fire Preacher' Who ever lived. He spoke more about Hell than He did about Heaven." Are you sure about that, Brother Carl?

David Cloud is sure: "The Lord Jesus Christ spoke more about Hell than about Heaven, and He always described Hell in terms of fire and physical torment. This is not a matter that is up for debate." No debate, Brother David? How about a little substantiation?

"Why does anyone believe in hell in these enlightened days?" Leon Morris inquires. "Because Jesus plainly taught its existence. He spoke more often about hell than he did about heaven. We cannot get around this fact." Did Mr. Morris document his assertion? Of course not, but Robert Peterson has no difficulty in taking his word for it: "...as Morris reminds us (reminds – as in, *we already knew this*), Jesus spoke more often about hell than about heaven." Are you sure it's a fact- a fact "we cannot get around," Brother Leon? And are you sure Brother Leon is right, Brother Robert?

Dolphus Price elaborates on the theme: "Jesus preached more about Hell than He did about Heaven; more about Hell than He did about life; more about Hell than he did about death; more about Hell than He did about anything that He preached in this world." Are you certain, Brother Dolphus? More about hell than anything?

Hyman Appelman, without bothering to offer any evidence, affirms, "Most Christians know that the Bible says more about Hell than about Heaven. For every statement in the Bible about the land of bliss, there are at least ten concerning the pit of torment." Brother Hyman, do you know that Christians know that? 10 to 1? Really?

Without footnoting each one, here are some others who repeat the maxim, as found on an internet search of "more about hell":

- John MacArthur, Jr. - Jesus talked more about hell than He did about heaven in order to warn men of its reality. jcs.org
- Jerry Falwell - Jesus said more about Hell than Heaven. sermons.trbc.org

- Rick Warren - I believe in hell because Jesus talked about it. In fact, Jesus talked more about hell than He did heaven. secretsofsuccess.com
- Lorne Silverstein - Jesus mentioned the topic of hell and eternal punishment much more frequently in Scripture than He did heaven. christianity.ca
- Dave Armstrong - It has often been noted that Jesus Himself spoke more about hell than He did about heaven. biblicalcatholic.com
- Ralph Dettwiler - Jesus spoke more about Hell and punishment than He did about heaven. behindthebadge.net
- Dale A. Robbins - It may surprise many people to learn that in the New Testament, Jesus actually taught more about Hell than Heaven. victorious.org
- Roger Schoenhals - Jesus didn't mince words. He talked more about hell than about heaven. brfwitness.org
- Staff Writer- And even with just a quick reading of the New Testament it quickly becomes evident that Jesus talks more about hell than He does heaven. gotquestions.org

So supposedly this maxim of Jesus speaking more about hell than heaven (“much more frequently” said one) is not up for debate, but is a fact we can’t get around, one that most Christians know to be true, and is quickly evident with a quick reading of the New Testament. Is that so? Being one who’s not willing to take someone else’s word for it, I decided to see if it’s true. Or could it be another squawk of lazy parrots? Something false does not become true by saying it over and over. And men behind a pulpit bear a great responsibility to verify their statements. So, DID JESUS PREACH MORE ABOUT HELL THAN HE DID ABOUT HEAVEN? DOES THE BIBLE SAY MORE ABOUT HELL THAN HEAVEN? You be the judge.

The word count in the gospels is as follows: HEAVEN – 130; HELL – 15. Though that is a significant disparity, it does not actually prove anything as to the question at hand. So let’s narrow the search. We’ll take out the references that include the word “Father” as in “Father in heaven.” That means 130 – 28 = 102. So now we’re down to HEAVEN: 102; HELL – 15. That’s still greatly disproportionate; so let’s remove the references that include the word “kingdom,” thus 102 – 32 = 70.

Yet all 70 are not the words of Christ, or a reference to heaven as other than sky or space. Now if we take out all references to heaven as sky or space, and only include the words in red, we are down to 31, so it’s now 31 – 15. This is more than fair, especially considering that we are leaving out “Father in heaven” and “kingdom of heaven.” But now of the 31 – 15, how many are duplicates of each (i.e., are quoted by more than one gospel)? That would leave us with HEAVEN – 21; HELL – 10.

Now if we add other references to heaven or hell that do not quote the words (or that have “Father” in it but give other details about heaven), we have eight more apiece, thus HEAVEN – 29; HELL – 18. Christ speaks of heaven (not the atmosphere and not “Father in” or “kingdom of”) 29 times, while He speaks of hell 18. This would be generous to hell being that some of the verses included, such as Matthew 3:12 which says “burn up” or 13:40 which says “as tares are burned” would not even be claimed by many as speaking of hell. And even if you included any mention of wailing and gnashing of teeth at the judgment (7 times), the count would still be in favor of heaven.

Consider how much we learn about heaven from Christ. Heaven is where the Father is, and His will is done there. Heaven is the throne of God. Heaven is called the “Father’s house” and the Father is the Lord of heaven. Satan fell from heaven, and angels dwell in heaven. The angels of children behold the face of the Father in heaven. Heaven is a place to lay up treasure, have your name written, and receive rewards. Heaven is a place of no decay, not affected by moths, or rust. It is a safe place, not bothered by thieves. Heaven is a place where there is joy over one sinner that repenteth. There are no marriages in heaven. Those who attain heaven in the resurrection will be like the angels. Heaven is up, and a place of exaltation. Christ came from heaven, and has power in heaven. One can sin against heaven, and fire and brimstone has fallen from heaven. It is a prepared place with many mansions. All of this we learn without including any references to “the kingdom of heaven” or to “eternal life” and “everlasting life.”

Hyman Appelman’s claim that “for every statement in the Bible about the land of bliss, there are at least ten concerning the pit of torment” is patently false. In fact, the ratio is 10 to 1 in favor of heaven over hell (551 to 54; OT: 313 to 31; NT: 238 to 23). To be fair, heaven does not always refer to “the land of bliss,” but try to find a reference to hell as “the pit of torment.” The closest you could come is Luke 16 (“in hell... being in torments”), which is silent on the final judgment or the duration of the torments; or Revelation 14, which does not use the word hell, and speaks of torments that take place “in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.” If this is hell, then hell is in heaven.

Where did Brother Appelman get his information? Did he make any effort to verify his statement? Did anyone who heard it even question its veracity? If “most Christians know that the Bible says more about hell than about heaven,” it is because they know the unsubstantiated, thought oft repeated, assertions of lazy parrots- not because they know their Bibles!

Brother Price claimed that Jesus also “preached more about Hell than He did about life.” This is a very remarkable contention, considering that the gospels record Jesus using the word life 71 times (39 in the gospel of John alone). Christ spoke of “eternal life” 10 times and “everlasting life” 11 times. Again, keep in mind that though many equate or associate these phrases with heaven, we are not including them in the overall count for heaven. Also not included are the times

Christ says “I go to the Father,” or any mentions of “the kingdom” in a final, future sense that most would associate with heaven. LIFE: 71 to HELL: 18.

More than death, Brother Dolphus? In some form or fashion, Christ spoke of death and dying, especially His own, and the resurrection from the dead, over 50 times. The Gospels record Christ also using the word perish 14 times. DEATH (and perish): 64+ to HELL: 18.

The most outlandish statement of Brother Price is that Jesus preached “more about Hell than He did about anything that He preached in this world.” I do not believe that Dolphus Price was a dishonest man. He most likely genuinely believed what he said. Or rather, he genuinely believed what he repeated, because I doubt the assertion was original to him. But he didn’t verify the truth of the statement. The case has been made to show that this is not true concerning heaven, life, or death. It also would be easy enough to show that Christ preached more about love (30+ times in the gospel of John alone) and about His Father (“My Father” is found in 83 verses in the gospels) than He did about hell.

But there is one subject that He so obviously and absolutely preached more about “than He did anything” else that it is a wonder that the editors who included Price’s sermon in The Baptist Vision periodical, and in the book Great Preaching on Hell, would not have readily realized that this was an utterly false statement. Even a casual reading of the gospels should make this apparent (“even with just a quick reading of the New Testament it quickly becomes evident”- see above). Perhaps Christ said so much about this subject that many miss the obvious.

What is it? “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the KINGDOM of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the KINGDOM” (Matthew 4:23). “And he said unto them, I must preach the KINGDOM of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent” (Luke 4:43). Our Lord commissioned the apostles, “Preach, saying, the KINGDOM of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 10:7). “Kingdom” is included 9 times in the Sermon on the Mount, including twice in the “Beatitudes” and twice in the “Lord’s Prayer.” Seven “kingdom parables” are recorded in Matthew chapter 13 alone, where the word is found 12 times. Many other times Christ would say “the kingdom of heaven is like...” (Matthew 18:23; 20:1; 22:2; 25:1, 14).

Remember these classic statements? “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14). “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:23). Christ taught His followers, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33), to pray “Thy kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10); and that “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21). From His conversation with Nicodemus (“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” – John 3:3) to

His Olivet Discourse (“this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world” – Matthew 24:14), Christ preached more about the kingdom than He did anything else. Peruse the listing under kingdom in a concordance. Look down through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It will be evident.

Why does this matter? It matters because it reveals a serious problem with many folks understanding of endless torment. Instead of finding out what the Scriptures actually say, they are content to repeat what they have heard without making a Berean search to see whether those things are so (Acts 17:11). They haven’t bothered to investigate how Scripture consistently uses the word perish. They haven’t searched the Scripture concerning whether the soul is immortal, or if it can and will die. They haven’t made the effort to study the comprehensive coherency of what all of the relevant texts consistently teach.

But they don’t mind glibly repeating that Christ taught more on hell than he did on heaven, even though it’s not true. For you that have been so persevering to read this to its conclusion, I must ask you: What else is not true about what you’ve always heard about hell, judgment, and endless torment? Will you continue to repeat, or will you endeavor to verify?

Currently hosted at <http://occupy-till-I-come.webs.com/deathandhell.htm>

Originally posted at <http://brotherbird.homestead.com/MoreaboutHell.html>