

# WHAT'S AFTER ATX

EXEGETICAL NOTES:

## WHAT ABOUT HELL?

### A. *Matthew 10:28*

The context of this passage is about martyrdom, and the possibility of death at the hands of persecutors. Matthew 10:28 focuses on post-death experience—there is a reality that is to be feared more than one's persecutors.<sup>1</sup>

Matthew 10:28 says one should not fear the one who can kill the body, but fear the one who can kill the soul, which demonstrates that there is more to a person than just their body.<sup>2</sup> Conscious life does not end with the destruction of the body.

### B. *2 Peter 2:4*

In 2 Peter 2:4, Peter is responding to an argument that says that God has never judged the world, either in the past or present, therefore God will not judge in the future.<sup>3</sup> In response, Peter provides some example of how God has indeed judged in the past to ready his audience for his overall argument: That God judges the wicked, and will do so when Jesus returns.

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1. John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), 436.

2. Ibid.

3. Gene L. Greene, *Jude & 2 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 248.

The angels mentioned in verse 4 begins Peter’s argument. Peter’s story comes from Jude 6, and refers to the fall of the angels at creation.<sup>4</sup> Speculation on the fall of the angels was popular in Judaism, and some of those ideas can be found in the apocryphal book of 1 Enoch 6-12. The point to Peter’s writings is that the angels apostatized, and just as the angels were judged by God, there heretics who are bothering Peter’s church will also be judged.

Peter says that these angels are kept in chains, which accords with popular Jewish imagination about the underworld. It’s debatable whether Peter takes this image as literally true; his point is to make contact with the understanding of his audience. Just as God is able to keep angels in chains, God knows how to make just action toward the false teachers of the church. Peter is using popular Jewish imagination to illustrate his truth about the certainty of God’s judgment.<sup>5</sup>

### **C. Romans 3:23**

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” This verse points to the reality of universal sin. *Everyone* has sinned and will sin, without qualification. Paul’s point recalls his earlier argument in Romans 1:18-3:20.<sup>6</sup> The point is that all need God’s salvation because all stand under God’s judgment. Falling short of the glory of God means to fall short “of God’s nature and character,” which includes the loss of divine life.<sup>7</sup>

### **D. Romans 6:23**

Tom Schreiner wrote that “wages” contrasts with “grace,” showing that death is a merited wage, while eternal life is an undeserved gift.<sup>8</sup> The idea of wage created a word picture for the original audience. The image is of a soldier who receives payment; sin is like a ruler who pays out wages to those who work for him.<sup>9</sup>

The main point of Paul’s section in which vv. 23 is found is that grace does not encourage us to sin. Sin is slavery, and its slavery leads to death.

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4. Ibid., 249.

5. Ibid., 251.

6. Tom Schreiner, *Romans*, Second Edition, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 194.

7. Ibid., 195.

8. Ibid., 339.

9. Ibid., 339.

## E. Isaiah 59:2

Isaiah 59:2 should be read in light of chapter 58. From Israel's perspective, the people have done everything to get God's blessing, yet it does not seem to do them any good; "yet they seek me daily...as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God" (Isa. 58:2). Isaiah responds to Israel in 59:1, "God's hand is not too short to save"—it's not as if God can't bless them. What is God's deal? It's not God's deal, says Isaiah. The fundamental issue is that Israel's "iniquities" and "sin" have separated them from God.<sup>10</sup>

According to John Oswalt, this passage "is one of the more poignant statements of human sinfulness and fallibility in the entire bible."<sup>11</sup>

## F. Habakkuk 1:13

According to Habakkuk, God's purity cannot stand evil. What's the context of this verse? Habakkuk wonders how it is that God could use the perverse Chaldeans as instruments of judgment against his own people. Habakkuk knows that "God's holiness cannot abide iniquity" which makes Israel's judgment all the more puzzling.<sup>12</sup> How could God, who is holy, use evil to bring about justice?

## G. Revelation 20:12-15, 21:27

It's hard to say if all of vv. 12-14 refer to the saved or the unsaved, is whether vv. 12 is the saved while vv. 14 is the unsaved.<sup>13</sup> In favor of the view that vv. 12 is the saved is that they are "standing before the throne," just like the victorious saints are depicted doing in Rev. 7:9. That those in vv. 12 are saved would also be supported by the fact that this passage appears to be an allusion to Dan. 12:1-2 in which Daniel wrote that "everyone whose name shall be found written in the book" were raised to eternal life. In summary, vv. 12 would be the saved, and 13 would denote the unsaved.

Against this view, however, would be that the whole collection are the saints where were brought back to life in vv. 20:4. Vv. 20:5 says that the rest of the dead did not come back to life till after the 1,000 years, so vv. 12 speak of all those who were raised for the 1,000 years. Yet, it is still possible that vv. 12 denotes those raised at the 1,000 years, and 15 denotes those raised afterwards.<sup>14</sup>

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10. John Oswalt, *Isaiah*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003) 629.

11. *Ibid.*

12. O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, The New International Critical Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 159.

13. Grant Osborne, *Revelation* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 721.

14. *Ibid.*

Regardless of how you interpret this passage, however, the point is that God judges those based upon “books” kept in heaven. Only those written in the Lamb’s book of life are granted eternal life.

This main point occurs again in Rev. 21:27. John wrote that nothing unclean will enter the city, and no one who is detestable or false will enter. That which is detestable or false probably refers to idols, or false images. The main idea here is that entry into the New Jerusalem depends on Jesus alone.<sup>15</sup>

## H. John 5:28-29

In this passage, Jesus affirms Daniel’s vision in Daniel 12:1-2 that there will be a general resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. D. A. Carson wrote that Jesus makes a close connection between those who experience Jesus’ life now and those who will rise on the last day (Jn. 6:40, 54).<sup>16</sup> This means that those who experience Jesus’ power now are only tasting the first part of eternal life.

## I. 2 Thessalonians 1:9

According to Gordon Fee, by “eternal destruction away from (or “shut out”) from the presence of the Lord” reflects a manner of speech in Hebrew, which denotes the nature of this judgment itself; being “cut off,” “shut out,” or being” away from” God’s presence is the *ultimate result* of God’s judgment.<sup>17</sup> This verse comes directly from the Septuagint (Isa. 2:10). In the Isaiah passage, Isaiah envisions that Israel will be cut off from God’s presence, and for Paul, “the Lord” is taken to be Christ himself.<sup>18</sup>

This text teaches that the unsaved will experience total loss of God’s presence. Because the unsaved did not obey the Gospel, the unsaved will forever miss out on the glory of God both now, and forever.<sup>19</sup>

Fee emphasizes that Paul here has no interest in “hell” as such. According to Fee, Paul is more interested in the eternal glory that awaits believers—the glory of being before the Father and the risen Jesus; “the eternal judgment of the wicked is the absolute loss of such glory.”<sup>20</sup> While hell is a place, Paul focuses more on the personal dimension of the afterlife—on the reality of Christ’s presence with believers, and the dreadful consequences of missing out on his presence.

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15. Leon Morris, *Revelation*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 242.

16. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel of John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 258.

17. Gordon Fee, *The First and Second Letter to the Thessalonians*, The New International Critical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 258-59.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, 260.

## J. Luke 16:19-31

You asked: *What is Jesus teaching in this parable, and how does it jibe with NDEs?*

I consulted three commentaries on this question, (as well as the other questions you asked). The parable of the rich man and Lazarus is a tricky parable, and many interpretive questions arise when studying this passage in depth.

The parable of Lazarus and the Rich man is positioned after the parable of the dishonest manager as an example of someone (the rich man) who was a lover of money and who made foolish decisions with his possessions. This parable furthermore makes a point of the continued relevancy of the Law and Prophets (vv. 29-31).<sup>21</sup>

It has been observed that this parable is strange in that it is the only parable in which a character is named (Lazarus), which would suggest this is a historical account, not a fictional narrative (e.g., the parable of the good Samaritan). According to Stein, however, Luke clearly meant this passage to be a parable, not a historical account because of the “there was a certain rich man,” in vv. 19. Peter Gurry agrees:

it’s hard to miss the fact that Luke introduces the story the same way he does the four parables that precede it, including the famed prodigal son. All are introduced with the generalizing formula “a certain (wo)man . . .” (Luke 15:3, 15:8, 15:11; 16:1).<sup>22</sup>

Further, wrote Gurry, “there’s a good reason why the poor man is named and why it’s Lazarus.” He continues:

The name “Lazarus” is probably the Hellenized version of an abbreviated form of Eliezer, which means “God helps” (cf. Gen. 15:2). The point is that Lazarus’s deep physical need made him much more sensitive to his deeper spiritual need. Meanwhile, the rich man unwittingly condemns himself to Hades by using Lazarus’s personal name (Luke 16:24). If [the rich man] knows him now, he must have known him then.

The meaning of the parable is pretty clear. Luke has an overarching purpose in his Gospel to show how God’s kingdom reverses the structures of the world—the exalted are humbled, the humbled are exalted; the rich are poor, the poor are rich. The parable of the Lazarus and the rich man illustrates how the poor man is ultimately blessed, and the rich man is ultimately impoverished. Furthermore, the parable also demonstrates that unbelief and the refusal to repent are due to a hard heart, not a lack of evidence.<sup>23</sup>

In summary, there does not seem to be much in this parable that will provide solid info for NDEs. Since it is a parable, its hard to press this story for literal details.

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21. Robert Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 421.

22. Peter Gurry, “Is the Rich Man and Lazarus a Parable?” <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/is-rich-man-and-lazarus-a-parable/> (accessed 8/12/19).

23. Stein, 422.