

## **Behold Our God**

### ***Love Won***

**August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

**Text - Various**

### **Scripture Reading - Love Wins Promo**

Rob Bell's new book *Love Wins* is stirring up a lot of controversy in Christian circles.

- USA Today (Monday) - *Should believers fear Hell - and God?*
- Countless over interviews, blogs, etc.
- Go to... [\*The Resurgence - A Chronology of Rob Bell on Hell\*](#)

There's nothing wrong with the questions Bell is asking.

- Are people like Ghandi (who did a lot of good but didn't trust in Jesus) really in hell?
- Will only a few make it to heaven?
- How do you make it heaven?
- What is God like?
- Is the primary message of the Bible, God is going to send you to hell unless you believe in Jesus?
- Does Jesus rescue us from God?
- If the answer to the above questions are yes, how can that God be good, how can that God be trusted, how can that be good news?

The problem isn't Bell's questions, it's his answers.

- In His zeal to make God more palatable so that others will follow Him, he's twisted what the Bible has to say. Instead of leaning on what can be known for sure about God because the Bible clearly teaches it, he's leaning on speculation and wishful thinking instead. As a result, he's leading thousands of people astray by painting an inaccurate and dangerous picture of who God is.

It's very tempting to go down the same road as Bell.

- "That's why so many people want nothing to do with Christianity. They see it as an endless of absurdities and inconsistencies."

Francis Chan confessed being tempted this way.

- o Q&A: *Francis Chan on Rob Bell and Hell* (Christianity Today)
- o Erasing Hell: What God Said About Eternity, and the Things We've Made Up

The Bible warns us of this temptation.

- **2 Timothy 4:1-4 (ESV)**  
<sup>1</sup>I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup>preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup>For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup>and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.
- **Isaiah 30:8-11 (ESV)**  
<sup>8</sup>And now, go, write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever. <sup>9</sup>For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord; <sup>10</sup>who say to the seers, "Do not see," and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, <sup>11</sup>leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel."

So what does the Bible have to say? What can we know for sure? What is the truth about the hard questions Rob Bell is asking?

- God IS love
  - o 1 John 4:8 says just that
  - o **Exodus 34:6-7 (ESV)**  
<sup>6</sup>The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup>keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, ...
- God HATES sin and will punish it accordingly
  - o **Exodus 34:7 (ESV)**  
<sup>7</sup>...but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the

children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

We see God's hatred of sin and promise to punish it throughout the Bible.

- Though the doctrine of hell is not clearly articulated in the OT, God's severe hatred and judgment of sin certainly is. We see this clearly throughout Isaiah.
  - o **Isaiah 13:1-22 (ESV) - Babylon**

<sup>1</sup>The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw...<sup>3</sup>I myself have commanded my consecrated ones, and have summoned my mighty men to execute my anger,(the Medes v. 17)...<sup>6</sup>Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come! <sup>7</sup>Therefore all hands will be feeble, and every human heart will melt. <sup>8</sup>They will be dismayed: pangs and agony will seize them; they will be in anguish like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at one another; their faces will be aflame. <sup>9</sup>Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. <sup>10</sup>For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light. <sup>11</sup>I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless. <sup>12</sup>I will make people more rare than fine gold, and mankind than the gold of Ophir. <sup>13</sup>Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the Lord of hosts in the day of his fierce anger. <sup>14</sup>And like a hunted gazelle, or like sheep with none to gather them, each will turn to his own people, and each will flee to his own land. <sup>15</sup>Whoever is found will be thrust through, and whoever is caught will fall by the sword. <sup>16</sup>Their infants will be dashed in pieces before their eyes; their houses will be plundered and their wives ravished.
  - o **Isaiah 34:1-10 (ESV) - Nations**

<sup>1</sup>Draw near, O nations, to hear, and give attention, O peoples! Let the earth hear, and all that fills it; the

world, and all that comes from it. <sup>2</sup> For the Lord is enraged against all the nations, and furious against all their host; he has devoted them to destruction, has given them over for slaughter. <sup>3</sup> Their slain shall be cast out, and the stench of their corpses shall rise; the mountains shall flow with their blood. <sup>4</sup> All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree. <sup>5</sup> For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have devoted to destruction...<sup>8</sup> For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. <sup>9</sup> And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil into sulfur; her land shall become burning pitch. <sup>10</sup> Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever.

o **Isaiah 30:9-17 (ESV) - God's People**

<sup>9</sup> For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord; <sup>10</sup> who say to the seers, "Do not see," and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, <sup>11</sup> leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel." <sup>12</sup> *Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel,* "Because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them, <sup>13</sup> therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out, and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant; <sup>14</sup> and its breaking is like that of a potter's vessel that is smashed so ruthlessly that among its fragments not a shard is found with which to take fire from the hearth, or to dip up water out of the cistern." <sup>15</sup> For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength." But you were unwilling, <sup>16</sup> and you said, "No! We will flee upon horses"; therefore you shall flee away; and, "We will ride upon swift steeds"; therefore your pursuers shall be swift. <sup>17</sup> A thousand shall flee at the threat of one; at the threat

of five you shall flee, till you are left like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain, like a signal on a hill.

- In the NT, the doctrine of hell, which I believe to be eternal conscious torment, is clearly articulated, especially by Jesus.
  - **Matthew 25:31-46 (ESV)**
    - <sup>31</sup> “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.
    - <sup>32</sup> Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. <sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ <sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? <sup>38</sup> And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ <sup>40</sup> And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ <sup>41</sup> *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ <sup>44</sup> Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ <sup>45</sup> Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ <sup>46</sup> *And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”**

So how do a loving God and hell fit together?

- God is more than just love
- We are way worse than we think
  - Hell is not a reflection of an unloving or an unjust God, it is a reflection the seriousness of our sin
  - Two thoughts that might help you grasp this
    - Our prideful rejection and lack of love for God is our greatest sin
    - The seriousness of sin is directly related to the greatness of the being sinned against
      - Pull limbs off - Fly, butterfly, bird, puppy, baby
      - Disobey - Nasty neighbor, your child, your boss, your parent
- God sent Jesus to save us from hell
  - **1 John 4:8-10 (ESV)**
    - <sup>8</sup> Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

**LOVE WON!!! - Take a hold of it**