

HELL...A REAL PLACE

Luke 16:19-31

There are plenty of people today who don't believe in the Bible's teaching on **hell** and God's *everlasting and eternal punishment*. Even those who do, tend to find it an *unreal* and a *remote concept*.

As you listen to popular views about **hell**, you can test what you hear with a few biblically-discerning questions:

- *Does this view of hell diminish the threat of God's justness and judgment?*
- *Does this teaching soften the urgency of repentance?*
- *Does this teaching offer the sinner any hope of salvation beyond this life?*
- *Does this teaching offer the sinner any hope of salvation other than through Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone?*

Modern views of **hell** typically don't survive the *test of biblical fidelity*. They allow the sinner to *feel more comfortable* and *complacent* by *redefining* God...making Him appear *less severe* in His judgment. Challenges to the **doctrine of hell** start out by questioning what the Bible clearly says, but they don't end there.

Wayne Grudem recognized the trend to make **hell** appear more bearable, and he noticed a tragic pattern:

The doctrine of eternal conscious punishment...tends to be one of the first doctrines given up by people who are moving away from a commitment to the Bible as absolutely truthful... Among liberal theologians who do not accept the absolute truthfulness of the Bible, there is probably no one today who believes in the doctrine of eternal conscious punishment...a literal and real hell. (Wayne Grudem, [Systematic Theology](#))

Two of the more prominent campaigns against **hell** are attacks against its *eternality* and its *severity*. Nevertheless, it is a very important part of the Christian faith, for several reasons.

I. JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT HELL:

Jesus spoke about the reality of **hell** just as He did the **resurrection**.

“Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those

who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”

~John 5:28-29

Numerous research has shown that the majority of people today don't believe the Bible's teaching on **hell**...God's *everlasting/eternal punishment*. In 2015 the [Barna Research Group](#) discovered that **89%** of Americans *believe in heaven* while **72%** expect to go to heaven when they die. Only **32%** *see hell as an actual place of torment and suffering* where people's souls go after death. And **less than 1%** think they might *go to hell*.

Jesus refers to **hell** and taught more about it than all the other Biblical authors combined.

He spoke of **hell** as *a place of eternal, conscious punishment for the wicked...an eternal fire and punishment*.

Scripture teaches in several passages that **hell** is a real place.

“...in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

~Matthew 25:30

“These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

~Matthew 25:46

In the **Book of Revelation**, the description of this *eternal punishment* is very explicit.

“...he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night ...”

~Revelation 14:10-11a

There are several names that are used in Scripture that are synonymous with **hell**...**Hades, Sheol, Abyss, Gehenna, the Lake of Fire**.

If Jesus, the *Lord of love* and the *Author of grace*, spoke about **hell** more often, and in more blood-curdling manner than anyone else, it must be a crucial truth.

“Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

~Matthew 10:28

The New Testament describes **hell** as a place of *consciousness* and of *unimaginable torment*. Biblical writers help us picture scenes of *unspeakable horror*, and most of the time they’re merely quoting what Jesus said about **hell**. Jesus constantly depicted **hell** as:

- *Weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Matthew 8:12)
- *Spiritual and bodily destruction* (Matthew 10:28)
- *The fire of hell* (Matthew 5:22; Matthew 18:8-9)
- *Fiery furnace* (Matthew 13:42, 50)
- *Outer darkness* (Matthew 22:13; Matthew 25:30; Jude 6-7, 13)
- *Unquenchable fire* (Mark 9:43, 48-49)
- *Endless torment* (Luke 16:23-24)

II. HELL UNVEILS THE SERIOUS DANGER OF LIVING LIFE FOR YOURSELF: (Luke 12:15-20)

In **Romans 1-2**, Paul explains that God, in His wrath against those who reject Him, *gives them up* to the sinful passions of their hearts.

If the thing you want most is *to be your own person...your own master*...then the *holiness of God* will become a *burden* and *agony* ...and the *presence of God* a *terror* you will seek to flee forever.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools...For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen...And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to

do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”

~Romans 1:18-22, 25, 28-32

III. THERE WILL BE A FINAL JUDGMENT:

Yes, there will be *a judgment for believers* and there will be *a judgment for angels*. And *believers will even help in the work of the final judgment*. But as we see **hell** as a **real place**, we need to focus on *two crucial aspects* of the *final judgment*.

• Jesus Christ Will Be The Judge:

Paul speaks of Jesus Christ as being the one who is *to judge the living and the dead* (II Timothy 4:1). Peter says that Jesus Christ *“is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead”* (Acts 10:42).

“He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

~Acts 17:31

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.”

~Matthew 25:31-33

This right to act as judge over the whole universe is something the Father has given to the Son.

“For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.”

~John 5:26-27

- **Unbelievers Will Be Judged:**

It is clear that **all unbelievers** will stand before Christ for judgment, and this judgment will include everyone who has *refused to repent* and has *rejected Jesus Christ as Savior*...regardless of their *prominence, position, or status* here on earth.

“And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.”

~Revelation 20:12

“Because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each person according to his deeds.”

~Romans 2:5-6

This **judgment of unbelievers** will include every wrong deed done. They will be remembered and taken into account when the punishment that is meted out on that day. Every word ever spoken, every deed done will be brought to light and receive judgment.

“But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.”

~Matthew 12:36

“For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.”

~Ecclesiastes 12:14

The secrets of people's hearts will be revealed and made public.

“On the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.”

~Romans 2:16

“For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light.”

~Luke 8:17

“But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops.”

~Luke 12:2-3

What are we to think about **hell**. It's hard...and it should be hard for us to think about the *eternity* of one being in **hell**. If our hearts are never moved with deep sorrow when we contemplate about **hell**, then there is a serious deficiency in our *spiritual* and *emotional* sensibilities.

When **Paul** thought about the lostness of his kinsmen the **Jews**, he said...

“...I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.”

~Romans 9:2

This is consistent with what God tells us of His own sorrow at the death of the wicked.

“‘As I live!’ declares the Lord God, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’”

~Ezekiel 33:11

Even Jesus' agony is evident as He cried out...

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!”

~Matthew 23:37-38

“When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, ‘If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes’.”

~Luke 19:41-42

The reason it's so hard to think about an *eternity in hell* and that anyone would ever be there is because *God has put in our hearts a portion of His own love for people created in His image*...even His love for sinners who rebel against Him. As long as we are in this life, and as long as we see and think about others who need to hear the Gospel and trust in Christ for salvation, it should cause us *great distress* and *agony of spirit* to think about *eternal punishment*. Yet we must realize that whatever God in His wisdom has ordained and taught in Scripture is *righteous* and *just*...even *hell*, a *conscious* and *eternal punishment*. Because in God there is *no unrighteousness at all*.

If God were not to execute *eternal punishment*, then His *justice* would not be satisfied and His *glory* would not shine forth. We must believe that *eternal punishment is true and just* and therefore be faithful in sharing and proclaiming the Gospel to everyone so that they may come to faith in Christ and thus escape *eternal condemnation*.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **Hell is ETERNAL.** *Knowing the truth about hell is crucial...* because without it we can't understand our *complete* and *utter dependence* on God.
- **Hell is REAL.** It's because of the *coming judgment* and the fact that *hell is real* that makes Jesus' proclamations of *grace* and *love*...and His *offer of the free gift of eternal life*...so astonishing.
If you want a glimpse of the agonies of **hell**...look at Jesus in **Gethsemane** as He anticipated the cross. See the *bloody drops of sweat* falling from His body as He faced the reality of *absorbing the fullness of His Father's eternal wrath*.
- **Hell is for the WICKED.** *It's not how we see ourselves...it's how God sees us.* He either see us in our *sin...wicked* and *unrepentant*...or He sees the *atoning blood* of His Son, Jesus Christ. The One who became sin on our behalf... and defeated sin by His righteousness.

I've often said that if we were able to actually get a glimpse of **hell**, it would change our *evangelism*. It would drastically change our *willingness* and *sense of urgency* to share the **Gospel** with the *lost*...especially *lost family members*. **Hell is real** and *eternal*...but **never underestimate the power of the Gospel**.