

The Lake of Fire and the Love of God

Intro: Hell is why Jesus reveals His coming judgments on man. It is why Revelation is a plea for repentance. It is the reality of what Jesus wants to rescue you from.

C. S. Lewis wrote, "There is no doctrine I would more willingly remove from Christianity than [hell], if it lay in my power..."

Bertrand Russell,: "There is one very serious defect to my mind in Christ's moral character, and it is that He believed in Hell. I do not myself feel that any person who is really profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment. . . . I must say that I think all this doctrine, that hell-fire is a punishment for sin, is a doctrine of cruelty."

- 1. The Reality of Hell**
- 2. The Reason for Hell**
- 3. The Response to Hell**

The reality of Hell

1. **When?** After the Millennium. Rev. 20:1-10
2. **Where?** Outside the present universe. 20:11
 - a. Heaven and earth fled away
3. **Who?**
 - a. God alone. 20:11
 - b. All outside of Christ. 20:12
 - i. Not part of the first resurrection. 20:5-6
 - ii. Not in the lamb's book of life. Rev. 21:27
4. **What?**
 - A. **It is a real place.** The Lake of fire.

- a. Jesus warned of it more than all others in scripture combined. Matthew 5:22,29,30; 8:12-13,; 10:28; 13:50; 18:9; 23:15; 25:41; Luke 16:19-31
- b. created by God for Satan and his angels. Matt 25:41; Revelation 20:2-9
- c. denied by Satanic deception. Gen. 3:1-5; Revelation 20:10
- d. evidenced by God's infinite sacrifice to keep people from it.

B. Hell is the place of separation from God. *The second death.*

- a. **Eph. 5:9-13** *walk as children of Light* ⁹ (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth). . . , ¹¹ *Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even* ^[e] *expose them; .* ¹³ *But all things become visible when they are* ^[h] *exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.*
- b. **Matt. 25:30** *“Depart from ME”* Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- c. **Matthew 7;23** Depart from Me.
- d. **2 Thess. 1:9** *These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,*
- e. **CS Lewis.** *“Sin is telling God ‘go away’. Hell is God’s answer, “you may have as you wish.”*

C. Hell is a place of unimaginable misery. The lake of fire is symbolic of the indescribable misery of complete separation from God. Hell is elsewhere described as a great Abyss or bottomless pit (Rev. 20:3); “outer darkness” (Matt. 25:30). indicating it can’t be literal fire; It is described as a place of vast differences of degrees of punishment (Matt. 11:20-24)

- a. **Fire, burning, smoke of burning.** Matthew 8:12; 13:42; Revelation 14:9-11; Luke 16:19-31
- b. **Gnashing of teeth.** Matthew 13:50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30

- c. **Outer darkness.** Matthew 25:30. Complete separation from God's goodness and life. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10; Matthew 7:23; Ephesians 5:11-14
- d. **Disgrace and shame.** No status, not prestige, power or stature, regardless of how powerful they were on earth. Daniel 12:2; Ezekiel 32:26-31; Luke 16:19-31

D. It is inescapable. I saw the dead standing before the throne. Rev. 20:14-15; Hebrews 10:27,31; 12:25 Matt. 7:21-23

E. It is personal and conscious. All the dead, great and small.

- a. People have full awareness of who they are and where they are. Luke 16:15-31; Ezekiel 32:2,11,26-31

F. It is irreversible. Cast into the Lake of Fire.

- a. **Hebrews 9:27** "It is appointed once to die and after this the judgment". No purgatory. No rehab.

G. It is eternal. Rev. The second death

- a. It is unending.
 - i. **Matthew 25:46;** *These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*

The Reason for Hell

1. Hell is necessary because of the magnitude of man's sins. 20:12

- a. Punishment fitting the crime. Repeat offender get longer sentence
- b. **The books were opened – all their deeds.**

Gen. 18:25: Abraham said, "*Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"*

Psalms 9:8 - David says of God in the Psalms, "*and He judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness"*

c. Our judgement of ourselves is not accurate.

i. Proverbs 21:2 says, “Every man’s way is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts.”

ii. Man thinks God will not judge him

Psalms 10:4-6, 11-14; The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek *Him*. All his ^[e]thoughts are, “There is no God.” . . .⁶ He says to himself, “I will not be moved;. . . He says to himself, “God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it.”¹³ Why has the wicked spurned God? He has said to himself, “You will not require *it*.”

Ps 94:6-9 They have said, “^[b]The Lord does not see, Nor does the God of Jacob pay heed.” Pay heed, you senseless among the people; And when will you understand, stupid ones? ⁹He who created the ear, ^[c]does He not hear? He who formed the eye, ^[d]does He not see?

iii. Man thinks God is impressed with his outward religion.

Matt. 7:21-23

iv. God will judge with perfect knowledge.

1. Every deed. **Romans 1:18**

2. Things we have forgotten.

3. Things we have Hidden. **Rom. 12:16** “ on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.”

4. Things we have secretly said. **Matthew 12:36** “But I tell you that every ^[a]careless word that people ^[b]speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment”

5. Things we knew to do to help and refused to. **James 4:17** Therefore, to one who knows *the* ^[k]right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

6. Our secret evil motives, and heart. 1 Cor. 4:5

Therefore do not go on passing judgment before [b]the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

7. God's accurate judgment is evident but no appeals from those condemned. Luke 16:19-31;

2. Hell is necessary because of the infinite holiness of God.

- a. sin is a crime of infinite magnitude sin against God because He is infinitely worthy of obedience and worship. **Revelation 15:2-4**
Illustration: If someone spit in my face it would be a great offense to me, but not much consequence to them. If they spit in the face of King, in whose country they were living they would be imprisoned or killed.
- b. **Illustration:** If what was precious to us was stolen, beaten, abused or killed and the judges verdict was probation we would be outraged! Why? It dishonors and demeans what is precious to us and regards it as of so little value.
- c. If God, the perfect, loving Judge pronounces eternal judgment, then the sins MUST be infinitely wrong.

3. Hell is just because God's judgment of those in hell varies greatly according to His perfect understanding of the degree of each persons sin and works. Jesus says in Matthew 10:15 and 11:22,24 God's judgment and punishment would be far more tolerable for some than others. The degree of punishment in hell perfectly and exactly corresponds to the works of each person. Revelation 20:10-14

4. It is just because it is a decision man makes, not God. Man chooses to rebel against God and worship and serve idols. Romans 1:18-24.

5. **It is just because those in hell eternally continue to sin and refuse to repent. Luke 16:19-31** The rich mans death did not change who he was.
6. **It is just because those in hell do not want God and therefore do not want heaven.**

CS Lewis: *“Sin is man’s way of saying ‘Go away and leave me alone’. Hell is God’s answer, ‘You may have as you wish’”*

Quote: Hell is locked on the inside.

Our problem isn’t that God is cold-hearted, but that we are hard-hearted.

God’s judgment aligns with our rebellion. God does not lock the bolt against our repentant will, but rather through our unrepentant will. When we reject God, preferring the darkness of our self-enclosed existence to the expansive and liberating light of his, we become the skeletons in God’s closet.

Response to Hell –

1. God’s response

- a. Illustration: Is a righteous judge unloving to condemn a war criminal to death?
- b. He came and died to keep us from there. **Matt. 1:21; John 19:30 “It is finished!”**
- c. **He pleads for repentance.** John 8:24; Luke 24:47
- d. **He prays for the roman soldier “Father forgive them . . .”** Luke 23:24
- e. **He sends warning** of the wrath to come in Revelation. 9:20-21; 16:9 “ So they blasphemed the name of God who had the power over these plagues and they did not repent and give him glory.”
- f. **He wept over the lost.** Luke 19:42-45. **2 Pet 3:9**
 “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

2. The Christian’s response.

- a. Weep. Get burdened not bothered. Not vengeance but Luke 19:41-44; Romans 10:1-3

- b. Pray. Romans 10:1
- c. Portray Christ's love. 1 Peter 3:15-16; John 13:34-35
- d. Proclaim Christ's gospel personally. Those in hell are evangelistic!
Luke 16:25-31
 - i. Illustration Acts 4:25-31. When threatened with prison they prayed for boldness!

Illustration: Penn Jillete (of Penn and Teller) quote on why Christians should evangelize:

The man complimented Jillette on the show, then said, "I brought this for you." The man held up a small book. It was a New Testament with the Psalms, something that could fit in a person's pocket.

"I wrote in the front of it," the man said, "and I wanted you to have this." The man explained he was a businessman and not crazy.

Jillette, moved by the man's gesture, recalled: "He was kind, and nice, and sane, and looked me in the eyes, and talked to me, and then gave me this Bible."

"I've always said," Jillette explained, "I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect that at all. If you believe there is a heaven and hell, and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life or whatever, and you think it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward.

"How much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate someone to believe everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?"

Jillette then offered this example to illustrate his point: "If I believed, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that a truck was coming at you, and you didn't believe it, that that truck was bearing down on you, there's a certain point that I tackle you, and this is more important than that."

"This guy was a really good guy. He was polite, honest, and sane, and he cared enough about me to proselytize and give me a Bible."

“But I’ll tell you, he was a very, very, very good man. And that’s really important. And with that kind of goodness, it’s okay to have that deep of a disagreement.

Why we must not deny the reality of Hell

Kevin DeYoung :

hell is not incidental to this vessel we call the church. It’s our ballast, and we throw it overboard at great peril to ourselves and to everyone drowning far out at sea. ballast refers to weights, usually put underneath in the middle of the boat, which are used to keep the ship stable in the water. Without ballast, the boat will not sit properly. It will veer off course more easily or be tossed from side to side. Ballast keeps the boat balanced.

The doctrine of hell is like that for the church. Divine wrath may not be the decorative masthead or the flag we raise up every flagpole. The doctrine may be underneath other doctrines. It may not always be seen. But its absence will always be felt.

Since hell is real, we must prepare our people to die well far more than we strive to help them live comfortably. Since hell is real, we must never think alleviating earthly suffering is the most loving thing we can do. Since hell is real, evangelism and discipleship must not be marginalized as important tasks that are on par with painting a school or producing a movie.

If we lose the doctrine of hell, either becoming too embarrassed to mention it or too culturally-sensitive to affirm it, we can count on this: the boat will drift. The cross will be stripped of propitiation, our preaching will be devoid of urgency and power, and our work in the world will no longer center on calling people to faith and repentance and building them to maturity in Christ. Lose the ballast of divine judgment and our message, our ministry, and our mission will all eventually change

3. The non-Christian's response.

Flee from the wrath to come by receiving Christ. Rom. 1:18; John 3:36;

Heb. 10:31 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God. . . , and has insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." ³¹ It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

- a. **The only escape from God's wrath is to be rescued from your sin. Jesus warned "Unless you believe in me you will die in your sins" John 8:24**

Jesus is the only escape from the wrath to come.

1 Thess. 1:10 wait for His Son from ^[h]heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

Only HE is our righteousness.

Phil. 3:8-9 More than that, I count all things to be loss ^[c]in view of the surpassing value of ^[d]knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, ^[e]for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith.

Repent. Illustration (Rob Rainey). A condemned criminal is given a last meal of anything he wants. What he really needs is not a last meal but a pardon!