

Doctrine of Hell

Eternal Punishment

1. At the end of time, the Bible teaches there will be a final judgment as individuals stand before Christ for a final evaluation.
 - *2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*
2. For those who have rejected Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, the verdict will be one of final punishment.
3. What form that final punishment takes has consumed the minds of many in the church for centuries, without a universal consensus.
4. What the Church does agree on is that the Last Judgment will be administered by a Judge who is perfectly just, and perfectly righteous.
5. The judgment itself will be just. There will be nothing arbitrary in the judgment. There will be nothing unfair about it.
6. A judgment according to righteousness should send terror into the heart of every human. If a person who is demonstrably unholy has to face God, who is perfect holiness, there is no hope if the Lord should mark the iniquity.
 - *Psalms 130:3 If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?*
7. The only hope for a sinner is the mercy of God.
 - *Psalm 130:4 But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*
8. Every person will face the judgment of God based on their good works, or the mercy of God, based upon the work of Christ at Calvary.
9. An individual might dismiss Christ, and say to a Christian, “If Christ is meaningful to you, that is fine, but I want nothing to do with Him, or Christianity.”
10. However, such a person is foolish, for if that individual has committed one sin, they desperately need a Saviour.
11. The person who is blessed of God, is the one to whom the Lord does not impute the guilt that he has.

- *Psalms 32:2 Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

12. Since the Last Judgment will be just, it will be rendered according to the light a person has.

- *Matthew 11:21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. 23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for thee.*
- *Luke 12:48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*

13. The innocent person in Africa, South America, North America, Europe, or Asia has nothing to fear about the Last Judgment. But the guilty person in these areas do have something to fear.

14. Are there any innocent people in Africa, or anywhere else? The answer is, “No”.

- *Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*
- *Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*

15. People are not innocent, in Africa, or India, or elsewhere, because they refuse to honor God, having known God through natural revelation.

- *Romans 1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things.*

16. A person who has never heard about Jesus Christ, will not be judged for not knowing Him.

17. However, a person will be judged for rejecting the Father, whom they do know. To believe in God the Father is to be saved. To reject God the Father, is to be condemned.

- *John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*
- 18.** The destiny to which each soul is subjected at the last judgment is unalterable. There is no hope for a second chance after death. There is no hope for a purgatory.
- *Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*
- 19.** The most trembling doctrine in Christianity is the doctrine of hell.
- 20.** The question arises whether or not people in heaven can be happy there when friends and loved ones are in hell.
- 21.** Dr. John Gerstner (November 22, 1914 – March 24, 1996), a Professor of Church History at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, believed that people in heaven, in their sanctified bodies, will be delighted that souls are in hell. They will rejoice in the justice of God.
- 22.** Dr. Gerstner understood that while we have our affections rooted in this world, the time will come when we care more about God being vindicated in His righteousness and holiness.
- 23.** Contrast the gap between Jesus Christ and Adolf Hitler. Where would we put the most righteous person on earth? Would that individual be placed next to Jesus? Would that person be placed closer to Hitler? Would that person be placed somewhere in between the two?
- 24.** The honest heart would put the person next to Adolf Hitler, because the righteousness of Christ is so infinitely greater than the most righteous person on earth. There is no blemish on the Lamb. Jesus was impeccable. We can understand Hitler, but we do not understand the righteousness of Jesus.
- 25.** It is hard for humans to think that God would send anyone to hell. The concept would not be believed at all if not for the teachings of Jesus Christ.
- 26.** Even when the teaching of Christ is studied, it is hard to consider hell as a place of fire, utter darkness, and endless punishment.
- Hell is a place of darkness. *Matthew 8:12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*
 - Hell is a place of liquid fire. *Revelation 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*
 - Hell is a place of endless punishment. *Matthew 25:46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.*

Special Note.

Augustine put it simply more than 1,500 years ago: “To say that life eternal shall be endless, [but that] punishment eternal shall come to an end is the height of absurdity.”

27. If hell is not a Lake of Fire, and it may not be a literal Lake of Fire, then that is all the more terrifying, because a symbol in Scripture is always exceeded in intensity to the reality to which it points. Those in hell might wish they were in a Lake of Fire.
28. The heart protests, and accuses God of immortalizing evil. The heart rebels, and rejects the doctrine of a conscious, eternal torment. The heart rails against the idea of a merciless God, for only a God without mercy would put individuals in a place to be tormented day and night forever.
29. The doctrine of hell is a terrifying doctrine. It is meant to be in order to sober individuals up to the reality of eternity.
30. There is no comfort that the language of hell in the New Testament is symbolic. If it is, then the reality of hell must be far worse.
31. What else is hell?
 - Hell is separation from God in a certain sense, but not an absolute sense. *Luke 16:26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.*

Special Note.

There is nothing worse than to be totally separated from God, for such a separation isolates a person from every good gift and benefit that comes from Him.

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Hell is separation from the love of God, the grace of God, and the benevolence of God. The biggest problem a person has in hell is not sulphur and Satan, but God who actively punishes the wicked.

- Hell is a place where there are degrees of punishment, for God’s retributive justice will be perfect. As there are degrees of rewards, there are degrees of punishment.

Matthew 25:14-30 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. 15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. 16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. 17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. 18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. 19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. 21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. 26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: 27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. 28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. 29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. 30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

While every person's cup of blessing will be full in heaven, not everyone will have the same size cup.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Because there are degrees of rewards and punishment, the gospel tells people not to store up damnation, or judgment.

Romans 2:5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

Jesus tells us to store up treasures in heaven.

Matthew 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

32. Hell is a symbol that is used in hyperboles. However, note what hell is not.

- Hell is not war.
- Hell is not life.
- Hell is not pain or suffering due to disease or injury.

- 33.** Salvation means to be saved from God and His fierce wrath. The greatest calamity is to fall into disfavor with God, and be exposed to His wrath.
- *Hebrews 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*
- 34.** Those who are salved are spared His judgement. The gospel exhortation is to flee from the wrath to come.
- *Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*
- 35.** Dr. R. C. Sproul laments the revival of the doctrine of annihilationism, which has primarily been viewed as heretical in Christendom.
- 36.** The argument is that at the Last Judgment the wicked are annihilated. That is their punishment. Loss of life is eternal. They are not conscious again. Their punishment, in that sense, is eternal.
- 37.** Those in hell want nothing more than to pass out of existence. The heart of a Christian might long for the doctrine of annihilation to be true. I personally hope they are right. However, the plain language of Scripture is that a finite person has made an infinite assault on God.
- 38.** If Jesus is to be taken seriously, then hell must be taken seriously, for in doing that, the heart is changed in how it lives and evangelizes.