

Matt 25:41, 46: Then He will say to those on His left, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil & his angels . . .”⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Intro: We have been studying Jesus’ last Words that He teaches His disciples right before He dies. Last week: King Jesus will return in glory & separate the righteous from the wicked, so pursue God’s blessedness through love. Jesus last Words were about heaven & hell. Hell is real; Hell is God’s Hell & God’s punishment; Hell is unimaginable suffering; Hell lasts forever (it’s everlasting); & Jesus alone saves from Hell. Flee to Christ!

Nick Batzig: If we are to faithfully herald the love of Christ which passes knowledge, we must faithfully and compassionately herald the wrath of God which passes comprehension. [May the shadow of the cross cover us!]

1. Hell Is Real

Jesus Christ spoke of Hell more than everyone else in the Bible combined! The term for Hell is used 14 times in the New Testament, 12 of those times, Jesus is speaking!

- **Herman Bavinck:** And no one in Scripture speaks of [eternal punishment in hell] more often and at greater length than our Lord Jesus Christ, whose depth of human feeling and compassion no one can deny and who was the meekest and most humble of human beings. It is the greatest love that threatens the most severe punishments.

- **Denny Burk:** Hell is a place of eternal, conscious torment for everyone who does not trust in Jesus Christ. Hell involves final separation from God’s mercy & from God’s people, unending experience of divine judgment, & just retribution for sin. The term rendered as “hell” (sometimes transliterated as Gehenna) is the Greek term *geenna*, which derives from the Hebrew *gê hinnôm*, which means “Valley of Hinnom.” . . . Among first century Jews, Hinnom was best known as the site of child sacrifices to the idol Molech during the era of the kings (2Kgs. 16:3; 21:6) & where God’s judgment would eventually fall on his enemies. Child sacrifice so provoked the Lord to anger that Jeremiah prophesied God would destroy these idolaters in the Valley of Hinnom & would leave their corpses to rot. There would be so many corpses that there would be no room to bury them all & that the valley would be renamed “Valley of Slaughter” (Jer. 7:31-34). This valley’s association with fire & judgment is the background for the term’s appearance in the Gospels, where Jesus refers to Gehenna as the place of final judgment (Jeremias).

- **Matthew 5:22:** But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

- **Matthew 5:29-30:** If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

- **Matthew 10:28:** And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

- **Matthew 23:33:** You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? [Jesus saves!]

2. Hell Is God’s Hell And God’s Punishment

a. Hell is God’s Hell: Sometimes I hear people talk about Hell as if it is the devil’s realm & the devil runs Hell & the devil is punishing people in Hell. This is all totally wrong!

- **Matthew 25:** Then He will say to those on His left, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil & his angels.”

- **Revelation 20:10:** and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

b. God is the one doing the punishing in Hell: R. C. Sproul: We ultimately need to be saved from God!

Ed Donnelly: One scholar did a study on the 33 times in the Bible God is said to hate sin or the sinner. 12 times: God hates the sin. 21 times: God hates the sinner. **GOSPEL!**

- **John 3:36:** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

- **2 Thess 1:7-9:** when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God & on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might

- **Revelation 19:11-16:** Then I saw heaven opened, & behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful & True, & in righteousness he judges & makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, & on his head are many diadems, & he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, & the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white & pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, & he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe & on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings & Lord of lords.

Charles Spurgeon: It is the iron crown of hell, for Christ reigneth there supreme. Not only in the dazzling brightness of heaven, but in the black impenetrable darkness of hell is his omnipotence felt, and his sovereignty acknowledged; the chains which bind damned spirits are the chains of his strength; the fires which burn are the fires of his vengeance; the burning rays that scorch through their eyeballs, and melt their very heart, are flashed from his vindictive eye. There is no power in hell besides his. The very devils know his might. He chaineth the great dragon. If he give him a temporary liberty, yet is the chain in his hand, and he can draw him back lest he go beyond his limit. Hell trembles at him. The very howlings of lost spirits are but deep bass notes of his praise. While in heaven the glorious notes shout forth his goodness; in hell the deep growlings resound his justice, and his certain victory over all his foes. Thus his empire is higher than the highest heaven, and deeper than the lowest hell.

c. There are degrees of punishment in Hell: Romans 2:5: But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

- **Matthew 11:23-24:** And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. ²⁴ But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.

- **Luke 12:47-48:** that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know, & did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating

God will give perfect justice in Hell! Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

3. Hell Is Unimaginable Suffering

Hell is described as darkness. God is light. Hell is the total absence of God in His love, mercy, & grace! But it's the total presence of God in His hatred, wrath, anger, & fury! And God is right to be angry! It's a just, righteous anger!

Fiery furnace; outer darkness; weeping & gnashing of teeth; torment; anguish; unquenchable fire; death; perishing; destruction; pain; suffering; loneliness; total separation from God in all of His love, mercy, & grace!

- **Mark 9:47-48:** And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ 'where their worm does not die & the fire is not quenched.'

- **Rev 14:9-11:** another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast & its image & receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, & he will be tormented with **fire & sulfur** in the presence of the holy angels & in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment goes up **forever & ever, & they have no rest, day or night,** these worshipers of the beast & its image, & whoever receives the mark of its name."

Think about the pain & suffering you have experienced in this life. Jesus saves! Jesus saves!

4. Hell Lasts Forever (It Is Everlasting)

Matthew 25:41, 46: Then He will say to those on His left, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil & his angels . . .”⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

a. Answering annihilationism or conditional immortality: Recently, the doctrine of Hell as eternal conscious torment has been questioned (John Stott, John Wenham, Edward Fudge). They believe in annihilationism or conditional immortality (Human beings becoming immortal is based on meeting the conditions of the Gospel).

Robert Peterson: 1) First is an argument based on the Bible's use of fire imagery to describe hell: We are told that fire consumes what is thrown into it, & so it will be for the lake of fire (Rev 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8) – it will burn up the wicked so that they no longer exist. [Luke 16; Burning bush–there’s a burning that doesn’t annihilate!]

2) Second is an argument based on texts that speak of the lost perishing or being destroyed: Examples include unbelievers perishing (John 3:16) and suffering "the punishment of eternal destruction" (2 Thess. 1:8).

D. A. Carson: The [“destruction” & “destroy”] word-group has a range of meanings, depending on the context. It can refer to the “lost” coin or son of Luke 15, & to the “ruined” wineskin of Matt 9:17: in neither case is cessation of existence in view. Similarly, the ointment lavishly poured out on Jesus is in the mind of his disciples a “waste” (Matt 26:8): the same noun is deployed, with no suggestion that the ointment goes out of existence. Moreover, when “life” & “destruction” are contrasted (as in John 3:16, etc.), one might reasonably infer that “destruction” refers to cessation of existence only if “life” means no more than mere existence. But is Christ doing no more than contrasting mere survival & extinction? “Rather, Christ is contrasting two qualitatively different types of existence, one involving a loving community with God & another lacking it (a state of ‘ruin’).” [Ruin, waste, lost!]

Author: A deathless death, an endless end, a ceaseless cessation, since death lives, the end always begins, & cessation knows not how to cease.

Herman Bavinck: The state of the lost is described as destruction (Matt 7:13), corruption (Gal 6:8), ruin (2 Thess 1:9), & death (Rev 2:11; etc.), which agrees with the fact that, according to the Old & New Testaments, the wicked will be destroyed, eradicated, ruined, put away, cast out, cut off, burned as chaff, & so on. All these expressions are understood by the proponents of conditional immortality in terms of complete annihilation. But this view is totally unfounded. Life, in Scripture, is never mere existence, & death is never the same as annihilation. Conditionalists cannot deny this fact with respect to the temporal physical death of humans. Like the Socinians they usually assume that the wicked will continue to exist also after death, either to be annihilated by God after the resurrection & the final judgment, or gradually to wither away & finally to perish physically as well. The latter idea is impossible, both philosophically & scripturally. For sin is not a substance, no material thing, but a form that presupposes existence; sin does not destroy the existent but steers it in a wrong direction, a direction away from God. And physical death is not merely a natural consequence, but a positive – divinely threatened & executed – punishment of sin. In the event of that death, God does not annihilate human beings but temporarily separates soul & body in order to maintain both & to reunite them at the resurrection. Scripture clearly & irrefutably teaches human immortality. When conditionalism views the destruction that is the punishment of sin as an annihilation of the human substance, it is confusing the ethical with the physical. And just as God does not annihilate human beings in the first death, so neither does he annihilate them in the second. For in Scripture the latter, too, is described as punishment (Matt 25:46), weeping & gnashing of teeth (8:12), anguish & distress (Rom 2:9), never-ending fire (Matt 18:8), the undying worm (Mark 9:44), & so on, expressions that all assume the existence of the lost. Still their state can be called destruction, corruption, ruin, & death because in a moral & spiritual sense they have become total wrecks, & in an absolute sense they lack the fullness of life granted by Christ to believers. Thus the prodigal son is called "dead" & "lost" (Luke 15:24, 32); the Ephesians in their earlier state are described as "dead" through their trespasses & sins (Eph 2:1; 4:18), & the people of the church of Sardis are called "dead" (Rev 3:1; etc.), but no one ever thinks of these three parties as being nonexistent.

3) Third is an argument based on the meaning of the word eternal: In hell passages, it is claimed, eternal means only pertaining to "the age to come" and not "everlasting."

Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, John's letters, Revelation): 39 times

33 times: eternal life – this is never ending life!

1 time: eternal Gospel – the Gospel & its effects are never ending!

1 time: eternal sin – this is cannot be forgiven in this age or in the age to come! It has never ending consequences!

1 time: eternal dwellings – dwellings that never end – that last forever!

1 time: eternal punishment – punishment that never ends!

2 times: eternal fire – fire that burns & never ends!

Other parts of the New Testament: God's eternal glory, the eternal God, our eternal glory, eternal salvation, the eternal Spirit, our eternal inheritance, the blood of the eternal covenant

D. A. Carson: Matthew uses the adjective "aionios" only for what is eternal.

Matthew 25:46: And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Objection: Eternal punishment in the sense that they exist no more forever – eternally non-existent?

Matthew 25:41: Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil & his angels.

Revelation 20:10: and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire & sulfur where the beast & the false prophet were, & they will be tormented day & night forever & ever.

Jesus Alone Saves From Hell: Dane Ortlund: No one spoke about hell more than Jesus . . . because he, more than anyone, saw the true frightfulness of it . . . Jesus endured hell in the place of all those who wind up in heaven.

Jesus was cast into outer darkness where there was much weeping & crying in pain!

Jesus had both His body & His soul destroyed by the fires of God's wrath!

Jesus was cast into the fiery furnace of God's anger!

Jesus was forsaken & separated from His Father!

Jesus endured much anguish & torment & was shown no mercy!

Jesus endured the unquenchable fire where the worm does not die & the flames are never extinguished!

Jesus perished & died & lost His life!

Jesus was condemned!

Jesus endured more than eternal punishment for all those who would ever turn & trust in Him!

Jesus had God's vengeance inflicted on Him!

Jesus suffered the punishment of eternal fire!

Jesus died the second death!

Jesus was thrown into the blazing furnace!

Jesus was cursed & cast into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil & his angels!

Jesus was locked in the chains of darkness & judged by Almighty God!

Jesus suffered the punishment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord & from the glory of His might!

Jesus faced more than eternal conscious torment because He fully satisfied God's justice while He was on that cross!

The wrath of God remained on Jesus!

Jesus was thrown into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur forever & ever!

The smoke of Jesus' torment went up longer than forever and ever, & He had no rest day or night!

Christ Jesus Is The King Of Hell
He'll Punish All Who There Shall Dwell
Where Unimaginable Sufferings Swell
In Darkest Fires Will Sinners Yell
And Scream In Pain Unparallel
It Never Ends, All Hopes Expel
Eternal Conscious Torments Tell
The Justice Of The Holy Well
Oh Please! Oh Please! I Must Compel
Please Turn From Sin And Don't Rebel
But Trust In Christ Who Took Our Hell
For On That Cross He'd Scream And Yell
And Bore God's Wrath Unparallel
Though In Perfection He'd Excel
God Raised Him From All Death And Hell
So Flee To Christ And With Him Dwell
Where Joys Forevermore Shall Swell
And All Your Friends Go Warn And Tell
Of Christ Alone Who Saves From Hell!

John MacArthur: Punishment in hell is defined by the word aionios, which is the word eternal or everlasting. There are people who would like to redefine that word aionios and say, "Well, it doesn't really mean forever." But if you do that with hell, you've just done it with heaven, because the same word is used to describe both. If there is not an everlasting hell, then there is not an everlasting heaven. And I'll go one beyond that. The same word is used to describe God. And so if there is not an everlasting hell, then there is not an everlasting heaven, nor is there an everlasting God. It is clear that God is eternal; and, therefore, that heaven is eternal, and so is hell.

Hamann: The net result of the elimination of the teaching of eternal punishment from the Bible would be the loss of the Gospel. Not too many people would be overly upset at the alternatives of eternal life & annihilation. . . . So to eliminate eternal punishment is to extract the teeth of the Law & its presentation of a holy God. The blessing of the Gospel can be retained only if the Law is seen as the completely serious will of the holy God, to whom sin is grievous rebellion, requiring his punishment if it is not forgiven.

Genesis 17:7: And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

Genesis 21:33 Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.

Isaiah 26:4 Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.

Isaiah 40:28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

Daniel 7:14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Exodus 3:15: God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

Isaiah 45:17 But Israel is saved by the LORD with everlasting salvation; you shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity.

Isaiah 55:3 Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

Jeremiah 31:3: the LORD appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

Jeremiah 32:40: I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.