

ETERNAL JUDGEMENT

“For we must all appear before the Judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” 2 Corinthians 5:10

Mount Vesuvius and Pompeii

When the Apostle Paul was being transported as a prisoner to Rome, his ship docked to the south of Rome in the port city of Puteoli. Puteoli was a fashionable holiday resort with hot sulphur springs and many villas. Puteoli lay in the shadow of the great Vesuvius mountain. This rugged mountain was actually a volcano, but as it hadn't erupted in a thousand years, it was considered dormant.

Shortly after the Apostle Paul passed by, Mount Vesuvius exploded. For forty hours Vesuvius erupted and, while Puteoli was spared, nearby Pompeii was destroyed. The 20,000 people of Pompeii were killed by the gasses and ash, and then preserved by the molten lava which rolled over them and hermetically sealed them in their gigantic tomb.

Pompeii remained buried under 20 feet of hardened lava and when archaeologists finally excavated it, they found the best example of a perfectly preserved Roman city, frozen in time.

Venus and Mercury

Pompeii was a thriving city, with a neat grid pattern of shop-lined streets surrounded by a secure wall. It was vibrant with industry, and Pompeii was world famous for its wine. The people of Pompeii worshipped two gods: Venus and Mercury. Venus was the goddess of love, and Mercury, the god of wealth. The population of Pompeii worshipped prosperity and pleasure.

Like Sodom and Gomorrah

The statues and sculptures of Pompeii, excavated by archaeologists, were hidden for many years in the off-limits areas of Italian museums because they were so obscene. It was evident to the archaeologists, that, like Sodom and Gomorrah, Pompeii perished by fire. Judgment came swiftly, without warning, and there was no escape.

Paganism and Perversion

We know that Pompeii, like Puteoli, heard the Gospel preached by Christian evangelists. However, while Puteoli responded positively to the Gospel proclamation, and soon had several congregations meeting there, there is no evidence of any Christian congregation being established in Pompeii. The archaeological excavations of this doomed city unearthed much evidence of paganism, prostitution and perversion, but no Christian symbols.

The Day of the Lord

The Apostle Peter wrote: *“But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the Day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?”* 2 Peter 3:10-12

Unpopular and Misunderstood

There is no doubt that the doctrine of Eternal Judgment is the most unpopular subject in the world. Whatever we say on the subject is bound to be misunderstood and misconstrued, as is illustrated by the following conversation which was heard between an old farmer in the country and a new pastor:

“Do you belong to the Christian family?” asked the minister.

“No, they live two farms down,” replied the farmer.

“No, no, I mean are you lost?”

“Lost? Why, I’ve lived here thirty years.”

“I mean are you ready for the Judgment Day?”

“When is it?” asked the farmer.

“Well it could be today, or tomorrow”

“Well” said the farmer, *“when you find out for sure when it is, please let me know. My wife will probably want to go both days!”*

How Can a Loving God Send Anyone To Hell?

When I was in the army, a foul-mouthed pagan challenged me: *“How can a loving God send anyone to hell?”*

I looked with amazement at this blasphemer and drunkard, who, by his own admission, was a deceiver and utterly selfish. He boasted of all the girls he had two-timed and deceived, used and ditched.

I responded to him: *“You are living proof why there has to be a hell! Because God is love and light, He will ensure that justice is done for all those girls you’ve deceived, disrespected, abused and abandoned. You’re living proof why there has to be a hell!”*

From the Lips of Christ Our Lord

Most of what we know about hell comes from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus Christ preached more on hell than He even did on heaven.

The Lord Jesus Christ warned that those who treat their brothers with contempt *“shall be in danger of hell fire.”* Matthew 5:22

Jesus warned: *“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”* Matthew 10:28

Jesus taught: *“Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”* Matthew 13:40-42

“So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Matthew 13:49-50

In his devastating condemnation of the scribes and pharisees, the Lord Jesus exclaimed: *“Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of Hell!”* Matthew 23:33

In Matthew 25:41 the Lord Jesus teaches that, on the Day of Judgment, He as the Son of Man: *“will also say to those on the left hand, depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels...”*

The Lord described Hell as *“outer darkness”* Matthew 8:12; and *“where the worm does not die, and the fire isn’t quenched.”* Mark 9:44

A Glimpse of Hell

In Luke 16:19-31 the Lord Jesus relates the story of the rich man and Lazarus. This is plainly not a parable, as it specifically names names: Lazarus and Abraham. The Lord presents this as a historic event. In this teaching, the Lord makes clear that Hell is an actual place of eternal torment. The rich man who died and was buried, lifted up his eyes in Hell, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus with him. He cried to Father Abraham to send Lazarus with some water to cool his tongue, *“for I am tormented in this flame.”*

Abraham responds: ***“Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.”***

The rich man begged Abraham to send Lazarus to his father’s house to warn his five brothers ***“lest they also come to this place of torment.”***

Abraham responded that they have the Scriptures. The rich man pleaded that if someone rose from the dead, they would repent. Abraham declared: ***“If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.”*** Luke 16:31

Here the Lord Jesus pulls back the curtain to give us a glimpse of what lies beyond the grave.

An Appointment None of Us Will Miss

“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the Judgment.” Hebrews 9:27

There is no mention of a delay in punishment. There are no interim states such as the Roman Catholic concepts of limbo, or purgatory, mentioned. Nowhere in the Bible are such places mentioned. The Lord Jesus never even hinted at the possibility that a person who died unsaved could have another chance.

Fully Conscious

This man that the Lord Jesus referred to was fully conscious both of his own physical torments, and the implications for his five brothers. He recognizes Lazarus, and knows who Abraham is. He remembers his brothers. He knows that they have not repented. He longs for a drop of water to cool his tongue. He hears the voice of Abraham answering his requests from Heaven. He remembers that he never helped that poor man Lazarus at his gate.

Unrepentant

There is no indication that this rich man in hell had changed his nature. While he regretted the consequences of his actions, there is no indication that he is repentant for his sins against God. Nor is there any indication that he wanted to do restitution towards those that he had harmed. His concern is still for his own personal bodily desires, and for his own family’s welfare. However, there is no indication that he now loves God, or is even truly repentant.

A Day is Coming

The Lord Jesus taught: ***“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”*** John 5:28-29

Everlasting Life or Everlasting Shame

The prophet Daniel wrote of the great Day of Judgment when everyone will be judged according to what ***“is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.”*** Daniel 12:1-2

The Day of Judgment

The Apostle John wrote: ***“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life and the dead were judged according to their works, by the things that were written in the books. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then death and Hades were cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire.”*** Revelation 20:11-15

The fact of eternal judgment is stressed throughout the Scriptures. The Creator is the Eternal Judge. The day will come when all the dead shall rise and stand before Almighty God. Each one of us will be judged in accordance with what has been recorded, according to what each one of us have done. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

People who refuse to believe in Hell, or who think that denying its existence will make it go away, are deceiving themselves. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, more than any other person in Scripture, warned of the awful reality of eternal judgment in Hell.

Eternal Consequences

Moses warned: *“Be sure your sin will find you out.”* Numbers 32:23

The Apostle Paul warned: *“The wages of sin is death.”* Romans 6:23

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” Galatians 6:7

God Doesn't Believe in Atheists

It is hardly charitable to encourage the unrepentant to suppose that there is any chance that God does not mean what He says. Refusing to believe in Hell makes about as much sense as somebody denying the reality of the law of Gravity. The reality will not change no matter how many people say it isn't so. God, and His Word, and His world, are not affected by whether people believe in Him or not. There are millions of people in Hell today, who, while on earth, closed their minds to its reality.

Diabolical Deceptions

From the Garden of Eden, and to this day, the devil has been busy inciting men and women to rebel against God. The best argument that the devil can bring to entice people to sin is to suggest that God does not punish sin. *“You shall not surely die...”*

It serves the purposes of Satan to persuade people that there will be no eternal consequences for their sins. If people can be made to believe that there is no Hell, or that Hell is only figurative, not a literal place, or that they may have another chance to be saved after death, or that, after all, God is too good to condemn unrepentant sinners to an eternity in Hell, then the devil can accomplish his purpose. People can continue to revel in sin, to rebel against God, to refuse to repent, and ultimately to roast in Hell for all Eternity.

Refusing to Face the Facts

The refusal to face up to reality of Hell, is all part of that movement that denies that people are inherently wicked. Those who deny the Deity of Christ, the Blood Atonement and the inspiration of the Bible, those who believe that mankind is a product of evolutionary chance and getting better all the time, will naturally refuse to believe in eternal consequences for violating God's holy character and Laws.

God's Mercy or God's Justice

Matthew Henry noted: *“Those that love darkness rather than light shall have their doom accordingly...those who will not deliver themselves into the hand of God's mercy cannot be delivered out of the hand of His justice.”*

Francis Brerkitt taught: *“Those whose hearts are not pierced by the sword of God's justice shall certainly be cut down and be destroyed by the ax of His judgments.”*

Thomas Watson wrote: *“The Lord has a golden sceptre and an iron rod. Those who will not bow to the One shall be broken by the other.”*

Time is Limited

Charles Spurgeon declared: *“Time shall be no more when judgment comes, and when time is no more change is impossible.”*

A.W. Tozer wrote: *“The vague and tenuous hope that God is too kind to punish the ungodly has become a deadly opiate for the consciences of millions. It hushes their fears and allows them to practice all pleasant forms of iniquity while death draws every day nearer and the command to Repent goes unheeded.”*

J.I. Packer wrote: *“The entire New Testament is overshadowed by the certainty of a coming Day of universal Judgment, and by the problem thence arising: how may we sinners get right with God while there is yet time?”*

How a Sermon on Hell Sparked a Revival

America’s greatest theologian, Jonathan Edwards, preached one of the most famous sermons in history: *“Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.”* It was Sunday 8 July, 1741. A group of women had spent the previous night praying for Revival. When Jonathan Edwards stood up to speak as a guest speaker in the tiny Enfield congregation in Connecticut, he announced as his text Deuteronomy 32:35 *“...their foot shall slide in due time.”*

Edwards warned the unconverted that they were dangling over Hell like a spider over a fire. *“O sinner! Consider the fearful danger. The unconverted are now walking over the pit of Hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that it will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen....let everyone that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over a great part of this congregation. Let everyone fly out of Sodom.”*

All accounts agree that God mercifully used this sermon on the reality of Eternal Judgment in Hell to spark the Great Evangelical Awakening which swept across North America and the British Isles bringing countless hundreds of thousands of people to Christ.

Gehenna – God’s Rubbish Dump

One of the terms our Lord Jesus chose to describe Hell was Gehenna. This referred to the huge rubbish heap outside the walls of Jerusalem which was continually burning.

“And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worshipped the beast and his image, and whoever received the mark of his name.” Revelation 14:11

It is a sobering thought that most of the valued and coveted, even expensive items which so consume so much of our societies today will end up on the rubbish heap. All the toys, the magazines, CDs, DVDs, cell phones, computers, cars, and most of the buildings are going to end up on the rubbish dump within the next hundred years. Very few will ever make it to a museum. So much of what people covet, envy, strive for, steal, fight over, prize and idolize is transient. It’s going to end up broken and abandoned on some garbage dump.

In some ways, Hell is God’s rubbish dump. Those who have no place for God, those who hate God, those who despise His Word and steadfastly refuse to repent will suffer the eternal consequences of their lifelong choices. Those who reject and turn their back on the Eternal Creator will find themselves in Gehenna – God’s rubbish dump.

“And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire.” Revelations 20:15

The Fruit of Sin

On earth, we see the principle that what we sow is what we reap. Sin regularly puts people into hospitals with diseased bodies. Alcoholism and drunkenness causes innumerable car accidents, drownings, violence and murders. Immorality has led millions to contract AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Crimes frequently result in individuals being locked away in jail. Sin breaks homes, brings disease, death and destruction. Throughout history, and in everyday life, we see the principle that whatever a man sows that shall he also reap.

Just as the fruits of sin are seen in trouble and tragedy, heartache, death and destruction, we may be sure that in the next world, God's Laws about sin will not have changed. The torments of Hell are the fruits of sin.

To Whom Much is Given Much is Required

The Lord Jesus warned that the Day of Judgment will be worse for some than for others. Indeed, the Lord Jesus said that Sodom, Tyre and Sidon would find it more tolerable at the Day of Judgment than Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida and other cities that had rejected the Gospel from the lips of Christ Himself. Evidently, the greater the privilege and opportunity, the greater the punishment will be - if one rejects God's grace.

Obviously, some people are more wicked than others, and some have greater opportunities than others. Each one of us will be fully accountable.

"For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much is been committed, of him they will ask the more." Luke 12:48

Censoring the Gospel

General Booth of the Salvation Army warned over a hundred years ago that a time would come when there would be those who would preach Christ without a cross, salvation without repentance, Christianity without holiness, and Heaven without Hell!

Rescue the Perishing

We need a vision of Hell to energise us to *"rescue the perishing, care for the dying, snatch them in pity from sin and the grave; weep over the erring one, lift up the fallen, tell them of Jesus the Mighty to save."*

The Broadway to Hell

Jesus warned us to: *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few that find it."* Matthew 7:13-14

Two Ways

Jesus taught that there are two ways: The broad way and the narrow way. There are two gates: The wide gate and the narrow gate (Matthew 7:13-14).

There are two types of people: The wise and the foolish. They build two types of houses, on two different foundations. And the house that is built upon the rock of God's Word will stand - even amidst the floods and the storms. However, the house that is built upon the sand of human effort will crumble and be swept away when the rain falls, when the floods rise, and when the winds blow and when the storm rages (Matthew 7:24-27).

There are two types of trees, the good and the bad tree. One can tell what type of tree one has by its fruit. The fruit of the flesh are obvious: envy, malice, covetousness, greed, lust, pride and selfishness. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Two Destinations

The Lord Jesus made it clear that there are two ultimate eternal destinations: Heaven, or Hell.

In the Light of Eternity

"Only one life, it will soon be passed, only what's done for Christ will last."

We need to re-evaluate our relationships, our habits and our lifestyle in the light of Eternity.

Jesus said: *"I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."* Luke 13:3

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’, shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your Name, cast out demons in Your Name, and done many wonders in Your Name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practiced lawlessness!’” Matthew 7:21-23

“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” Mark 9:36

The Lamb of God

The first time the Lord Jesus came to this earth He came as the Lamb of God, the Saviour of sinners, the Redeemer to pay the price for our sins.

The Lion of the Tribe of Judah

The next time Jesus Christ comes to this earth it will be, not as a Lamb, but as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. As the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the Eternal Judge.

Every Knee Shall Bow

The question is not: will you bow to Christ?; but: when will you? For the day will come that *“at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”* Philippians 2:10-11

We can bow before the Lord Jesus and submit to Him today in the Day of Grace when forgiveness is freely offered and receive Salvation at the merciful hand of our Redeemer.

Saviour or Judge?

However, if we refuse to repent in the Day of Grace, the day will come when we will be compelled to bow down to Jesus Christ, not as our Redeemer, but as our Eternal Judge. On that day it will be too late for forgiveness and mercy. However, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. When will you submit to Christ? Today in the Day of Grace? Or on the Day of Judgment?

The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom

Jesus Christ taught that we should not fear man who can only kill the body, and after that can do nothing else. Rather we should fear God, who is able to destroy both body and soul in Hell, forever.

Turn or Burn

The simple choice is before us: turn or burn.

Boycott Hell: Repent!

*“Only one life – it will soon be past.
Only what’s done for Christ – will last.”*

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