

Articles of Faith Essentials—Hell (Article #XX)

We believe that hell is a place of outer darkness and deepest sorrow, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched; a place prepared for the devil and his angels, where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, a place of grief and eternal regret on the part of them who have rejected the mercy, love and tenderness of the crucified Savior, choosing death rather than life; and that there into a lake that burns with fire and brimstone shall be cast the unbelieving, the abominable, the murderers, sorcerers, idolaters, all liars, and they who have rejected and spurned the love and sacrifice of a bleeding Redeemer, passing the cross to their doom, in spite of every entreaty and warning of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 13:41,42, Rev. 20:10,15; 14:10,11; Mark 9:43,44; Ezek. 33:11).

1. CORE—*we believe that hell is an eternal place where God, in His perfect judgement, will cast the unbelieving along with the devil and his angels (Matt 13:41-42; Rev 20:10, 15).*

2. BROADER ESSENTIALS—

- An understanding of hell includes understanding Sheol, Hades, Gehenna, and the lake of fire.
- The Bible is clear on the existence of hell; it is less clear on the precise nature of hell.
- Throughout Church history there have been varying understandings of the eternality of one's existence in hell, with Western churches largely focusing on eternal punishment after Augustine. This is Foursquare's historic position.
- The Bible does not attempt to harmonize Scriptures that seemingly present "contrary" understandings of the eternality of one's existence in hell (see Matt 10:28; Rom 5:18; 1 Cor 3:10-15).
- There are four widely accepted understandings of one's punishment in hell—the traditional view (espoused in Article XX); the annihilation view; the ultimate reconciliation view; the Protestant purgatory view.¹
- It is exegetically difficult to know how literally to interpret the descriptions of the underworld; it is perhaps best to interpret them metaphorically.
- Hell is characterized by a total absence of God's favor. He is not there (Ps 88:3-5).
- In addition to a place, hell in the Bible is a dynamic that impinges on life now with everything that is contrary to God's nature and attributes.

3. ELEMENTS FOR DISCUSSION—

- Though requiring Foursquare ministers to believe in the existence of hell, is the Traditional interpretation required? Can a licensed Foursquare minister embrace one of the other three commonly held views within the Church (mentioned above) despite the clarity of Article XX?

¹ See Sprinkle, Preston, *Four Views on Hell* (Grand Rapids: MI: Zondervan, 2016). These are the book's designations of the four categories.

- How do the annihilation view, the ultimate reconciliation view and the Protestant purgatory view affect the urgency of evangelism and Foursquare's understanding of God's holiness, especially in light of Foursquare's mission?
- Though hell is to be embraced as a real place, does Foursquare allow for both a literal and metaphorical interpretation of hell's biblical descriptors?