

## What the Bible Really Says About Hell

## The Different Views

- **The *mortality* of the soul**
  - There is no life after death...probably.
- **Universalism**
  - Everyone will ultimately go to heaven.
- **Second Probation**
  - There will be a second chance to believe in Christ after death.
- **Annihilationism**
  - Unbelievers are ultimately destroyed.

## Annihilationism

- Either...
  - 1) immediately upon their death,
  - 2) or after they have endured the penalty of God's wrath from their death until the time of the final judgment,
- God will completely destroy them in the sense that they will cease to exist.
- 7th Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses.

## John Stott

- "Emotionally I find the concept [of the historic view of an endless hell] intolerable and do not understand how people can live with it without either cauterizing their feelings or cracking under the strain.... We need to survey the biblical material afresh and to open our minds (not just our hearts) to the possibility that Scripture points in the direction of annihilationism, and that 'eternal conscious torment' is a tradition which has to yield to the supreme authority of Scripture."
- Cf. Philip Hughes; Clark Pinnock

## Brian McLaren

- "This is one of the huge problems, is the traditional understanding of hell. Because if the cross is in line with Jesus' teaching then—I won't say, the only, and I certainly won't say even the primary—but a primary meaning of the cross is that the kingdom of God doesn't come like the kingdoms of the this world, by inflicting violence and coercing people. But that the kingdom of God comes through suffering and willing, voluntary sacrifice.

## Brian McLaren

- "But in an ironic way, the doctrine of hell basically says, no, that that's not really true. That in the end, God gets His way through coercion and violence and intimidation and domination, just like every other kingdom does. The cross isn't the center then. The cross is almost a distraction and false advertising for God."

## The Arguments for Annihilationism

- 1) The Bible speaks of the destruction of the wicked—which must imply they cease to exist.
  - Phil. 3:19; 1 Th. 5:3; 2 Th. 1:9; 2 Pet. 3:7
- 2) Eternal punishment is inconsistent with the love and goodness of God.
- 3) God would be unjust to punish temporal sins for eternity.
- 4) If unbelievers continue to exist, it will mar the perfection of eternity.

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- **Eternal Punishment**

## A Brief History of the Doctrine

- **OT**
  - Is. 66:24 – "Then they will go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched; and they will be an abhorrence to all mankind."
  - Dan. 12:2 – "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt."

## A Brief History of the Doctrine

- **NT**
  - **Gehenna**
    - Aramaic of the Hebrew Ben-Hinnom
    - Means "valley or canyon of Hinnom" (also called Topheth)
    - 2 Kings 23:10; Is. 30:33; Jer. 7:31-32; 19:6
    - Southwest of Jerusalem, outside the city walls.
    - OT – children were offered in the fire there to false gods (Jer. 19:2-6).
    - By Jesus' day, it was the garbage dump for the city of Jerusalem.
    - Jesus uses the word *gehenna* often to describe hell (Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5).

## Early Church Fathers

- Tertullian (155-230): "If, therefore, any one shall violently suppose that the destruction of the soul and the flesh in hell amounts to a final annihilation of the two substances, and not to their penal treatment (as if they were to be consumed, not punished), let him recollect that the fire of hell is eternal—expressly announced as an everlasting penalty."

## Early Church Fathers

- Augustine (354-430): "The phrases 'eternal punishment' and 'eternal life' are parallel and it would be absurd to use them in one and the same sentence to mean: 'Eternal life will be infinite, while eternal punishment will have an end.' Hence, because the eternal life of the saints will be endless, the eternal punishment also, for those condemned to it, will assuredly have no end."

## Early Church Fathers

- Arnobius (304-310):
  - 1st record of annihilationism in church history.
  - “They are cast in, and being annihilated, pass away vainly in everlasting destruction....This is man’s real death, this which leaves nothing behind. For that which is seen by the eyes is [only] a separation of soul from body, not the last end—annihilation: this, I say, is man’s real death, when souls which know not God shall be consumed in long-protracted torment with raging fire....”

## Medieval

- Thomas Aquinas (1224-74): “We set aside the error of those who say that the punishments of the wicked are to be ended at some time.”

## Reformation on...

- Martin Luther (1483-1546): “The fiery oven is ignited merely by the unbearable appearance of God and endures eternally. For the Day of Judgment will not last for a moment only but will stand throughout eternity and will thereafter never come to an end. Constantly the damned will be judged, constantly they will suffer pain, and constantly they will be a fiery oven, that is, they will be tortured within by supreme distress and tribulation.”

## Reformation on...

- John Calvin (1509-1564): “The phrase which he adds in apposition [‘eternal destruction from the face of the Lord’] explains the nature of the punishment which he had mentioned—it is eternal punishment and death which has no end.”

## Reformation on...

- Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): “The Scripture is very express and abundant in this matter that the eternal punishment is sensible misery and torment and not annihilation.”

## Reformation on...

- John Wesley (1703-1791): “I believe God forgives all the sins of them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel; and that, at the last day, all men shall arise again, everyone with his own body. I believe that, as the unjust shall after their resurrection be tormented in hell forever, so the just shall enjoy inconceivable happiness in the presence of God to all eternity.”

## Fire

- More than 20x in the NT
- Matt. 18:8-9 – "If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. "If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.
- Matt. 13:49-50 – "So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

## Fire

- Matt. 25:41— "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;
- Rev. 20:10 – And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

## Darkness

- Matt. 8:12 – but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
- Matt. 22:13— "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'
- Cf. Matt. 25:30; Jude 13

## Weeping & Gnashing of Teeth

- Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28.
- *Weeping* - a deep sorrow.
- *Gnashing of teeth* - extreme suffering and remorse.

## The Primary Attributes

- **A Real Place**
  - "the fire" (Matt. 3:10; 7:19)
  - "unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:12)
  - "the fiery hell" (Matt. 5:22)
  - "the furnace of fire" (Matt. 13:42, 50)
  - "the eternal fire" (Matt. 18:8; 25:41)
  - "the fiery hell" (Matt. 18:9)
  - "the outer darkness" where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 22:13; 25:30; cf. Matt. 13:42)
  - "eternal punishment" (Matt. 25:46)
  - "the unquenchable fire" (Mark 9:43; cf. Mark 9:48)
  - "eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2 Th. 1:9)
  - "eternal judgment" (Heb. 6:2)
  - "the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries" (Heb. 10:27)
  - "the black darkness" (2 Pet. 2:17; Jude 13)
  - "the punishment of eternal fire" (Jude 7)
  - "the lake of fire which burns with brimstone" (Rev. 19:20)
  - "the lake of fire and brimstone" (Rev. 20:10)
  - "the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15)
  - "the lake that burns with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8)

## Eternal

- 1) It is called eternal.
  - Matt. 18:8-9 – "If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. "If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.
  - 2 Th. 1:9 – "everlasting destruction"
  - Jude 7 – the punishment of eternal fire
  - Jude 13 – wandering stars for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever
  - Rev. 14:10-11 – "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

## Eternal

- 2) Images are used which picture endless duration.
  - Mark 9:44, 48 – *where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.*
- 3) Jesus also equates the duration of heaven with the duration of hell.
  - Matt. 25:46 – "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

## Eternal

- 4) The apostle John gives us an example of hell's duration.
  - Rev. 20:10 – And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

## Conscious

- Matt. 8:12 – but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
- Luke 16:23-24 – "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'
  - Sensations of suffering
  - Awareness of circumstances (23-24)
  - Memory of the past (27-28)
  - Rational thought (30)
  - Communication with other spirits

## Suffering

- Physical suffering, as well as mental anguish:
  - Dan. 12:2 – "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt.
  - Matt. 10:28 – "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
  - Rev. 20:11ff – the second resurrection

## Suffering

- Degrees of suffering
  - Matt. 11:21-24
  - Luke 12:47-48 – "And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, but the one who did not know *it*, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.
  - The intensity of hell will be based upon knowledge of God's will.

## Source of Suffering?

- The loss of all earthly good
- Exclusion from the presence and favor of God
- Utter reprobation—that is the full and final withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from them
- The consequent unrestrained dominion of sin and sinful passions
  - Cf. Rev. 22:11 – "Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy.
- The operation of conscience
- Despair
- Their evil associates
- Their external circumstances
- Its perpetuity

## The Main Lessons

- The sinfulness of sin
- The fear of God
- The grace of God
- The importance of evangelism