

HELL

“Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

- Revelation 20:14-15

1. Hell is a difficult doctrine.

- a. There is much about hell we don’t know.
- b. Some biblical passages related to hell are hard to understand.
- c. Difficult questions include:
 - (1) Does the sin of unbelief deserve eternal punishment?
 - (2) If the Father has reconciled all things to himself, how can hell exist eternally?
 - (a) **1 Co 15:24** 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.
 - (b) **Col 1:19-20** 19 ...In [the Son] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.
 - (3) If hell is a physical place, where is it?

2. The biblical doctrine of hell is a belief blocker for many Kiwis.

- a. According to the 2018 Wilberforce Foundation study:
 - (1) The main blockers to Kiwis engaging with Christianity are:
 - (a) The church’s teaching on homosexuality (47%).
 - (b) The idea a loving God would allow people to go to hell (45%).
 - (c) The idea God would allow so much evil and pain (39%).
 - (2) How a loving God could allow people to go to hell is the biggest belief blocker for Builders (53%) and Baby Boomers (49%). It is also an important issue for Generation X (45%).
 - (3) For Kiwis identifying with Christianity who never attend church, the greatest belief blocker is how a loving God could allow people to go to hell (33%).

3. At death, the unbeliever’s soul is temporarily confined in *Sheol/Hades*.

- a. *Sheol* in the Old Testament is synonymous with *Hades* in the New Testament.
- b. *Sheol/Hades* is a place of temporary torment.
 - (1) **Dt 32:22** 22 ...A fire is kindled by my anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.
 - (2) **Ps 49:14** 14 Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol (גֵּיִהוֹן; ᾗδης). Death shall be their shepherd, and the upright shall rule over them in the morning. Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell.
 - (3) **Is 14:9-10** 9 Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come. It rouses the shades to greet you, all who were leaders of the earth. It raises from their thrones all who were kings of the nations. 10 All of them will answer and say to you: You too have become as weak as we! You have become like us!

- (4) **Is 50:11** 11 Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who equip yourselves with burning torches! Walk by the light of your fire, and by the torches that you have kindled! This you have from my hand: you shall lie down in torment.
- (5) **Lk 16:22-25** 22 The rich man also died and was buried, 23 and in Hades (ἐν τῷ ᾅδῃ), being in severe pain/punitive torture/torment (ὑπάρχων ἐν βασάνοις), he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. 24 And he called out, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment (ὀδυνάω, pres. pass.) in this flame (ἐν τῇ φλογὶ ταύτῃ). 25 But Abraham said, Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things. But now he is comforted (παρακαλέω, pres. pass.) here, and you are suffering torment.
- (6) **Lk 16:27-28** 27 ...[The rich man] said, Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— 28 for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of severe pain/punitive torture/torment (εἰς τὸν τόπον τοῦτον τῆς βασάνου).
- (7) **2 Pe 2:9** 9 ...The Lord knows how...to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment....
- c. A great chasm is fixed between Abraham's side and *Sheol/Hades*.
 - (1) **Lk 16:26** 26 ...Between us [Abraham and Lazarus] and you [the rich man] a great chasm (χάσμα μέγα) has been firmly fixed/set up/established (στηρίζω, perf. pass.), in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.
 - (a) This verse argues against the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory.
- d. *Sheol/Hades* will be emptied before final judgment and thrown into the lake of fire.
 - (1) **Re 20:13-14** 13 ...The sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. 14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.
- e. Similarly, some demons are temporarily confined in Tartarus/the abyss.
 - (1) **2 Pe 2:4** 4 ...If God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into Tartarus (ταρταρώω) and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment....
 - (2) **Jud 6** 6 ...The angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains (δεσμοῖς αἰδίοις) under gloomy darkness (ζόφος) until the judgment of the great day....
 - (3) **Re 9:1-11** 1 ...The fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the abyss (ἄβυσσος). 2 He opened the shaft of the abyss (ἄβυσσος), and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. 3 Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. ...11 They have as king over them the angel of the abyss (ἄβυσσος). His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.
- f. Satan will be temporarily confined in the abyss during the Millennium.

- (1) **Rev 20:1-3** 1 ...I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the abyss (ἄβυσσος) and a great chain. 2 And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, bound him for a thousand years, 3 threw him into the abyss (ἄβυσσος), shut it, and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

4. At final judgment, the unbelievers' body and soul are thrown permanently into the lake of fire.

- a. Both believers and unbelievers will be resurrected bodily.
 - (1) **Da 12:2** 2 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life (עוֹלָם חַיִּים), and some to shame and everlasting abhorrence¹ (עוֹלָם בְּזוּת וְעוֹלָם אֲבִירָה).
 - (2) **Mt 25:41-46** 41 ...[The King] will say to [the goats] on his left, Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire (τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον) prepared for the devil and his angels. ...46 And these will go away into eternal punishment (εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον), but the righteous into eternal life (εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον).
 - (3) **Jn 5:28-29** 28 ...An hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.
 - (4) Believers will be raised at the first resurrection.
 - (a) **Re 20:4-6** 4 [Believers who died in the Tribulation] came to life and reigned with Messiah for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Messiah, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.
 - (5) Unbelievers will be raised at the second resurrection.
 - (a) **Re 20:12** 12 ...I saw the dead [unbelievers], great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.
- b. At final judgment, unbelievers will be thrown into the lake of fire, the second death.
 - (1) **Re 20:14-15** 14 This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.
 - (2) **Re 21:8** 8 As for the cowardly, the unbelieving, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion (μέρος) [of inheritance] will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.
- c. Jesus' term for hell is *Gehenna*. Jesus spoke about hell more than any other person in the Bible.
 - (1) The term *Gehenna* derives from the valley of Hinnom, just south of Jerusalem at the boundary between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (Jos 15:8; 18:16). It was

¹ This word is used only in Is 66:24 and Da 12:2.

traditionally considered by Jews to be the place of final punishment. Here human sacrifices were offered to Molech, and the alters. were destroyed by Josiah (2 Ki 23:10). The valley was declared to be “the valley of slaughter” by Jeremiah (Jer 7:30-33) and was used as a burial place for criminals and for burning garbage.²

- (a) **2 Ki 23:10** 10 ...He defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no one might burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Molech.
 - (b) **Jer 7:31** 31 ...They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind.
 - (c) **Is 30:33** 33 ...A burning place/Topheth (תֹּפֶת) has long been prepared. Indeed, for the king it is made ready, its pyre made deep and wide, with fire and wood in abundance. The breath of Yahweh, like a stream of sulphur, kindles it.
 - (d) See *1 Enoch*, the House of Shammai, the House of Hillel, and Josephus on the subject of *Gehenna*.
- (2) Passages.
- (a) **Mt 5:22** 22 ...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 Gehenna of fire (εις την γέενναν του πυρός).
 - (b) **Mt 5:29-30** 29 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 Gehenna (εις γέενναν). 30 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 Gehenna (εις γέενναν).
 - (c) **Mt 10:28** 28 ...Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy (ἀπόλλυμι, aor.) both soul and body in Gehenna (γέεννα).
 - (d) **Mt 18:9** 9 ...If your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the Gehenna of fire (εις την γέενναν του πυρός).
 - (e) **Mt 23:15** 15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of Gehenna (γέεννα) as yourselves.
 - (f) **Mt 23:33** 33 You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape the condemnation of Gehenna (της κρίσεως της γέεννης)?
 - (g) **Mk 9:43-48** 43 ...If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to Gehenna (εις την γέενναν), to the inextinguishable fire (εις το πυρ το άσβεστον). 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into Gehenna (την γέενναν). 47 And if your eye causes you

² J. Walvoord, *Four Views on Hell*, 20.

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 Gehenna (εις τὴν γέενναν), 48 where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched [Is 66:24].

- (h) **Jas 3:6** 6 The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by Gehenna (τὴν γέενναν).
- d. What is the outer darkness? Is it synonymous with *Sheol/Hades* or the lake of fire?
- (1) **Mt 8:11-12** 11 I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12 while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness (εις τὸ σκοτός τὸ ἐξώτερον). In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- (2) **Mt 22:13** 13 Then the king said to the attendants, Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- (3) **Mt 25:30** 30 ...Cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

5. The lake of fire is specifically prepared for Satan and his demons.

- a. **Mt 25:41** 41 ...[The King] will say to [the goats] on his left, Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire (τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον) prepared for the devil and his angels.
- b. **Re 20:10** 10 ...The devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
- c. Satan and the demons will be joined by:
- (1) The Antimesiah and False Prophet.
- (a) **Re 19:20** 20 ...The beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur.
- (2) Unbelievers.
- (a) **Mt 25:41** 41 ...[The King] will say to [the goats] on his left, Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire (τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον) prepared for the devil and his angels.
- (b) **Re 14:9-11** 9 ...If anyone worships the beast and its image and 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, and he will be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.
- (c) **Re 20:13-15** 14 ...Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.
- (d) **Re 21:8** 8 As for the cowardly, the unbelieving, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their

portion (μέρος) [of inheritance] will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.

6. Sheol/Hades is a place of:

a. Fire.

- (1) **Dt 32:22** 22 ...A fire is kindled by my anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.
- (2) **Lk 16:24** 24 ...[The rich man] called out, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment (ὀδυνάω, pres. pass.) in this flame (ἐν τῇ φλογὶ ταύτῃ).

b. Conscious torment.

- (1) **Lk 16:23-25** 23 ...In Hades (ἐν τῷ ᾄδῃ), being in severe pain/punitive torture/torment (ὑπάρχων ἐν βασάνοις), [the rich man] lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. 24 And he called out, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment (ὀδυνάω, pres. pass.) in this flame (ἐν τῇ φλογὶ ταύτῃ). 25 But Abraham said, Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things. But now he is comforted (παρακαλέω, pres. pass.) here, and you are suffering torment.
- (2) **Lk 16:27-28** 27 ...[The rich man] said, Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— 28 for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of severe pain/punitive torture/torment (εἰς τὸν τόπον τοῦτον τῆς βασάνου).

7. The abyss/Tartarus is a place of:

a. Smoke.

- (1) **Rev 9:1-2** 1 ...The fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the abyss. 2 He opened the shaft of the abyss, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft.

b. Darkness.

- (1) **2 Pe 2:4** 4 ...If God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into Tartarus (ταρταρώω) and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment....
- (2) **Rev 9:2** 2 [The angel] opened the shaft of the abyss (ἄβυσσος), and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft.

8. The lake of fire is place of:

a. Unquenchable fire.

- (1) **Is 30:33** 33 ...A burning place/Topheth (תֹּפֶת) has long been prepared. Indeed, for the king it is made ready, its pyre made deep and wide, with fire and wood in abundance. The breath of Yahweh, like a stream of sulphur, kindles it.

- (2) **Is 32:12** 12 ... The peoples will be as if burned to lime, like thorns cut down, that are burned in the fire. 13 Hear, you who are far off, what I have done. And you who are near, acknowledge my might. 14 The sinners in Zion are afraid. Trembling has seized the godless. Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?
- (3) **Is 66:24** 24 ... They shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.
- (4) **Mt 3:12** 12 [Jesus'] winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.
- (5) **Mt 5:22** 22 ... 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 Gehenna of fire (εις την γέενναν του πυρός).
- (6) **Mt 13:39-42** 39 The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. 40 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers 42 and throw them into the fiery furnace (την κάμινον του πυρός). In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- (7) **Mt 13:48-50** 48 When it was full, men drew it ashore, sat down, and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. 49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace (εις την κάμινον του πυρός). In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- (8) **Mt 18:8-9** 8 ... If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire (εις το πῦρ το αιώνιον). 9 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the Gehenna of fire (εις την γέενναν του πυρός).
- (9) **Mt 25:41-46** 41 ... [The King] will say to [the goats] on his left, Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire (το πῦρ το αιώνιον) prepared for the devil and his angels. ... 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment (εις κόλασιν αιώνιον), but the righteous into eternal life (εις ζωην αιώνιον).
- (10) **Mk 9:43-48** 43 ... If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell (εις την γέενναν), to the inextinguishable fire (εις το πῦρ το ἄσβεστον). ... 47 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 (εις την γέενναν), 48 where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched [Is 66:24].
- (11) **Lk 3:17** 17 [Jesus'] winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with inextinguishable fire (πυρι ἄσβεστο).
- (12) **2 Th 1:6-7** 6 ... God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 ... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels 8

in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance (ἐκδίκησις) on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus [by believing it].

- (13) **Jud 7 7** ...Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire (πυρὸς αἰωνίου δίκην).
- (14) **Re 14:9-11 9** ...If anyone worships the beast and its image and 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, and he will be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.
- (15) **Re 19:20 20** ...The beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur.
- (16) **Re 20:10 10** ...The devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
- (17) **Re 20:13-15 14** ...Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.
- b. Shame and abhorrence.
- (1) **Is 66:24 24** ...They shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.
- (2) **Da 12:2 2** Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life (לְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם), and some to shame and everlasting abhorrence³ (לְדַרְדָּרָה וְעוֹלָם).
- c. Undying worms.
- (1) **Is 66:24 24** ...They shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.
- (2) **Mk 9:47-48 47** ...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 (εἰς τὴν γέενναν), 48 where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched [Is 66:24].
- d. Destruction.
- (1) **Mt 7:13 13** Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to the destruction (εἰς τὴν ἀπώλειαν), and those who enter by it are many.
- (2) **Mt 10:28 28** ...Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy (ἀπόλλυμι, aor.) both soul and body in Gehenna (γέεννα).

³ This word is used only in Is 66:24 and Da 12:2.

- (3) **Php 3:19** 19 Their end is destruction/waste/annihilation/ruin (ἀπόλεια), their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame....
 - (4) **2 Th 1:9-10** 9 They will experience/undergo (τίνω) the punishment/legal penalty (δίκη) of eternal destruction/ruin/death (ὄλεθρον αἰώνιον), away from the presence of the Lord (ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου) and from the glory of his might....
- e. Darkness.
- (1) **Mt 8:11-12** 11 I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12 while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness (εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον). In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
 - (2) **2 Pe 2:17** 17 These [false teachers] are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness (ὁ ζόφος τοῦ σκότους) has been reserved.
 - (3) **Jud 12-13** 12 These [false teachers] are ...13 wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame, wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness (ὁ ζόφος τοῦ σκότους) has been reserved forever (εἰς αἰῶνα).
 - (4) “If there is any truth in Scripture at all, this is true—that those who stubbornly refuse to submit to the Gospel, and to love and obey Jesus Christ incur at the Last Advent an infinite and irreparable loss. They pass into a night on which no morning dawns.”⁴
- f. Weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- (1) **Mt 8:11-12** 11 I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12 while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness (εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον). In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
 - (2) **Mt 13:41-42** 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, 42 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
 - (3) **Mt 13:48-50** So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
 - (4) **Lk 13:27-28** 27 ...[The master of the house] will say, I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil! 28 In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth....
- g. Punishment.
- (1) **Mt 25:46** 46 ...These will go away into eternal punishment (εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον), but the righteous into eternal life (εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον).
 - (2) **2 Th 1:6-10** 6 ...God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 ...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels 8 in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance (ἐκδίκησις) on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will experience/undergo (τίνω) the punishment/legal penalty (δίκη) of eternal

⁴ James Denney, in *Studies in Theology* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904), 255.

destruction/ruin/death (ὄλεθρον αἰώνιον), away from the presence of the Lord (ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου) and from the glory of his might....

- (3) Hell is punitive, not redemptive or rehabilitative.
- h. Conscious torment.
 - (1) **Re 14:9-11** 9 ...If anyone worships the beast and its image and 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, and he will be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.
 - (2) **Re 20:10** 10 ...The devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
 - (3) The torment includes physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual pain.
- i. Separation from Jesus' presence.
 - (1) **Mt 7:23** 23 ...Then will I declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of the lawlessness (τὴν ἀνομίαν).
 - (2) **2 Th 1:9-10** 9 They [unbelievers] will experience/undergo (τίνω) the punishment/legal penalty (δίκη) of eternal destruction/ruin/death (ὄλεθρον αἰώνιον), away from the presence of the Lord [Jesus] (ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου) and from the glory of his might.

9. Hell is eternal. In every NT instance, the Greek word *aionios* refers to eternity.⁵

- a. **Mt 18:8-9** 8 ...If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire (εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον).
- b. **Mt 25:41-46** 41 ...[The King] will say to [the goats] on his left, Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire (τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον) prepared for the devil and his angels. ...46 And these will go away into eternal punishment (εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον), but the righteous into eternal life (εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον).
- c. **2 Th 1:9-10** 9 They [unbelievers] will experience the punishment of eternal destruction/ruin/death (ὄλεθρον αἰώνιον), away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might....
- d. **Heb 6:1-2** 1 ...Let us leave the elementary doctrine of Messiah and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of a change of mind from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment (κρίματος αἰωνίου).
- e. **Jud 7** 7 ...Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire (πυρὸς αἰωνίου δίκην).
- f. **Jud 12-13** 12 These [false teachers] are ...13 wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame, wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness (ὁ ζόφος τοῦ σκότους) has been reserved forever (εἰς αἰῶνα).

⁵ W. R. Inge, *What Is Hell?* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930), 6; Buis, *Doctrine of Eternal Punishment*, 49.

- g. **Re 14:9-11** 9 ...If anyone worships the beast and its image and 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, and he will be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.
- h. **Re 20:10** 10 ...The devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
- i. "The damned shall live as long in hell as God Himself shall live in heaven."⁶
- j. "Thus it is in Hell; they would die, but they cannot. The wicked shall be always dying but never dead; the smoke of the furnace ascends for ever and ever. Oh! who can endure thus to be ever upon the rack? This word 'ever' breaks the heart. Wicked men now think the Sabbaths long, and think a prayer long; but oh! how long will it be to lie in hell for ever and ever?"⁷

10. Very likely, there are degrees of punishment in hell.

- a. **Mt 11:22** 22 ...It will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you [Chorazin and Bethsaida].
- b. **Mt 11:24** 24 ...It will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you [Capernaum].
- c. **Mk 12:40** 40 ...Who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They [the scribes] will receive the greater condemnation.
- d. **Re 20:12-13** 12 ...I saw the dead [unbelievers], great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. 13 And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ...15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

11. Hell accords with correct views about God, man, and sin.

- a. God is holy.
- b. God is just.
 - (1) **Ro 2:6-8** 6 [God] will render to each one according to his works: 7 to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality, he will give eternal life. 8 But for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury [both temporal and eternal].
 - (2) **2 Th 1:6-10** 6 ...God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 ...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels 8 in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance (ἐκδίκησις) on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus [by believing it].

⁶ T. Brooks, *Puritan Quotations*, 137, quoted in B. A. Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 30.

⁷ Thomas Watson, *Puritan Quotations*, 137.

- (3) Remember, God's character cannot be established *a priori* outside of divine revelation.
- (4) In eternity future, hell will be viewed by all moral creatures as totally just.
- c. Man has free will.
 - (1) "Hell is God's tribute to the freedom he gave each of us to choose whom we would serve; it is a recognition that our decisions have a significance that extends far down into the reaches of foreverness."⁸
 - (2) "The doors of hell are locked from the inside."
- d. The sin of unbelief is infinite in its significance.
 - (1) "The problem here is the obvious lack of understanding of the infinite nature of sin as contrasted to the infinite righteousness of God. If the slightest sin is infinite in its significance, then it also demands infinite punishment as a divine judgment."⁹

12. There are many erroneous beliefs about hell.

- a. Among non-Christians:
 - (1) "Hell is going to be one big party with my friends."
 - (2) "Hell is a relic of the dark ages."
 - (3) "Hell is a make-believe myth designed to control people."
 - (4) "Hell is nonsense."
- b. Among Christians or pseudo-Christians.
 - (1) Purgatory.
 - (a) In Roman Catholic theology, purgatory is the place where penitent Christians are purified (purged) of sins and prepared for heaven. Purgatory is only for Christians who died before they satisfied their earthly sins through acts of penance.
 - (b) Arguments against.
 - 1) There is no mention of purgatory in the Bible.
 - 2) We are justified through faith alone in Jesus alone, not through acts of penance.
 - 3) **Heb 9:27** 27 ...It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment....
 - (2) Annihilationism.
 - (a) Hell fire is not literal. It symbolises the ultimate annihilation of the wicked. Some Annihilationists believe there is a temporary period of suffering before annihilation. Others believe no suffering is involved.
 - (b) Proponents include the Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, John Stott, and Clark Pinnock.
 - 1) "I consider the concept of hell as endless torment in body and mind an outrageous doctrine, a theological and moral enormity, a bad doctrine of the tradition which needs to be changed. How can Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness whose ways include inflicting everlasting torture upon his creatures, however sinful they may

⁸ G. K. Chesterton, quoted in J. W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, Kindle Locations 400-402.

⁹ J. Walvoord, *Four Views on Hell*, 27.

have been? Surely a God who would do such a thing is more nearly like Satan than like God..., at least by any ordinary moral standards.... Surely the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is no fiend; torturing people without end is not what our Lord does.”¹⁰

(c) Arguments for:

- 1) Eze 18:20; Mt 10:28; Jn 3:16; 2 Th 1:9; Re 20:12; 21:8
- 2) The language of destruction implies annihilation.
- 3) The imagery of fire implies annihilation.
- 4) A finite penalty is a just judgment for finite sin.
- 5) Eternal punishment implies good-evil dualism.

(d) Arguments against:

- 1) Conscious punishment was a common view of Jews in the first century.
- 2) Eternal punishment was originally prepared for Satan and demons (Mt 25:41; Jud 6-7).
- 3) “Eternal life” and “eternal punishment” are parallel in Mt 25:41-46.
- 4) Jesus’ story of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31) and the eternal torment described in Re 14:9-11 and 20:10.
- 5) Scripture consigns the wicked to just degrees of suffering (Mt 18:6; Lk 11:37-52).
- 6) The *imago dei* in humanity carries with it eternal existence.
- 7) “Death” in the Bible does not mean annihilation, but separation from God’s blessing, grace, and life.
- 8) Annihilationists judge God’s goodness and justice by their own depraved moral standards.

(3) Conditional immortality.

(a) Human souls, like human bodies, are mortal, and there is no conscious existence beyond death. At the resurrection, only the souls and bodies of believers will return to existence.

(b) Arguments for:

- 1) Ge 3:19; Ec 9:5, 10

(4) Universalism.

(a) “The end of the world, then, and the final consummation, will take place when every one shall be subjected to punishment for his sins; a time which God alone knows, when He will bestow on each one what he deserves. We think, indeed, that the goodness of God, through His Christ, may recall all His creatures to one end, even His enemies being conquered and subdued.”¹¹

c. Objections to the traditional doctrine of hell are philosophical or theological, not biblical.

13. There is only way to avoid hell—justification by grace through faith in Jesus.

a. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God.

- (1) **Mt 10:28** 28 ...Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.

¹⁰ Clark Pinnock, “The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent,” *Criswell Theological Review* 4:2 (1990) 246-247.

¹¹ Origen, *First Principles* 1.6.1.

- (2) **Heb 10:31** 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.
- (3) “For vain pleasure of twenty-four years hath Faustus lost eternal joy and felicity. I writ them a bill with mine own blood: the date is expired; the time will come, and he will fetch me.”¹²
- (4) “Hell is a dreadful reality. To speak of it lightly proves that we do not grasp its horror. I know of no one who has overstated the terrors of hell. We can scarcely surpass the horrid images Jesus used. We are meant to shudder.”¹³
- b. One should do whatever it takes to avoid hell.
 - (1) **Mt 5:29-30** 29 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 Gehenna. 30 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 Gehenna.
 - (2) **Mt 18:8-9** 8 ...If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. 9 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the Gehenna of fire.
 - (3) **Lk 16:27-28** 27 ...[The rich man] said, Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house— 28 for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.
- c. Sadly, the majority of human beings will enter hell, not heaven.
 - (1) **Mt 7:13** 13 Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to the destruction (εἰς τὴν ἀπώλειαν), and those who enter by it are many.
 - (2) “[T]he safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.”¹⁴
- d. Given justification and eternal life in heaven is a free gift, why would anyone not accept it?
 - (1) **Ac 16:31** 31 ...Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.
 - (2) **Ro 8:1** 1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Jesus.

14. Application.

- a. Avoid hell by taking refuge in Jesus.
- b. Talk about hell when sharing the gospel.
 - (1) “If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees, imploring

¹² The character Faustus, in Christopher Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus*.

¹³ Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!*, 142.

¹⁴ C. S. Lewis [d. 1963], *Screwtape Letters* (1959).

them to stay. If Hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go unwarned and unprayed for.”¹⁵

- (2) “Snatch unbelievers as brands from the burning.
- c. Oppose any public policy that cuts short a human life, like euthanasia.
- d. Have a heart to heart about hell with loved ones on their death beds.

¹⁵ Charles Spurgeon.

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