



Renewed Purpose: Hell is for Real

[Revelation 20:11-15](#)

Second in a 4-part series titled: *Renewed*

Pastor Matt Friend – February 25 & 28, 2021

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– OUTLINE –

Today's Big Idea:

Heaven cannot be heaven if there is no hell.

Today's Scripture Text:

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. (Revelation 20:11)

See also: [John 5:26-27](#); [Acts 10:42](#); [2 Timothy 4:1](#)

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. (Revelation 20:12)

See also: [Ecclesiastes 12:14](#); [Matthew 12:36](#); [25:31-46](#); [Luke 12:2-3](#); [Acts 17:30-31](#); [Romans 2:5](#); [3:19](#); [1 Corinthians 4:5](#); [Hebrews 9:27](#); [2 Peter 2](#); [Jude 6](#)

The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. (Revelation 20:13)

See also: [Matthew 11:20-24](#); [Luke 12:47-48](#); [20:45-47](#)

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:14-15)

See also: [Daniel 12:2](#); [Matthew 10:28](#); [13:41-42](#); [23:33](#); [25:41](#); [John 3:36](#)

Today's Takeaway

Let's do everything possible to prevent people from going to hell. ([2 Timothy 2:10](#))

Resource Recommendation:



[Erasing Hell: What God Said about Eternity and the Things We've Made Up](#)

By Francis Chan & Preston Sprinkle



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– NOTES –

Today's Big Idea:

Heaven cannot be heaven if there is no hell.

The fact that [Revelation 20:11-15](#) appears before the glories of the new heaven and new earth ([Revelation 21-22](#)) is another indicator that God separates unbelievers from believers prior to the eternal state.

In other words, if what God says about heaven and the new creation is true, then God must remove everything that worships itself. This includes the removal of all evil and creatures who refused to let God redeem them from such evil. There must be *exclusion* before there can be *embrace*. Evil must be identified, named, and dealt with before there can be reconciliation.

“God is utterly committed to set the world right in the end. But that right setting must involve the elimination of all that distorts God’s good and lovely creation and in particular of all that defaces His image-bearing human creatures.”

–N. T. Wright

“I find it quite impossible, reading the New Testament on one hand and the newspaper on the other, to suppose that there will be no ultimate condemnation, no final loss, no human beings to whom, as C. S. Lewis put it, God will eventually say, ‘*Thy will be done.*’ I wish it were otherwise, but one cannot forever whistle ‘There’s a wideness in God’s mercy’ in the darkness of Hiroshima, of Auschwitz, of the murder of children, and the careless greed that enslaves millions with debts not their own. Humankind cannot, alas, bear the massive denial of reality by the cheap and cheerful universalism of Western liberalism which has a lot to answer for.” –N. T. Wright

Today's Scripture Text:

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. (Revelation 20:11)

Who is this? It’s Jesus! ([John 5:26-27](#); [Acts 10:42](#); [2 Timothy 4:1](#))

Why would God host this time of final judgment? Louis Berkhof wisely points out that the final judgment is not for the purpose of letting God find out the condition of our hearts or the pattern of conduct of our lives, for he already knows that in every detail. Berkhof rather says of the final judgment, “It will serve the purpose rather of displaying before all rational creatures the declarative glory of God in a formal, forensic act, which magnifies on the one hand His holiness and righteousness, and on the other hand, His grace and mercy. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the judgment at the last day will differ from that at the death of each individual in more than one respect. It will not be secret, but public; it will not pertain to the soul only, but also to the body; it will not have reference to a single individual, but to all men.”

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. (Revelation 20:12)

There’s much in the book of Revelation that’s unclear, but it is clear that there will be a final judgment for everyone ([Ecclesiastes 12:14](#); [Matthew 12:36](#); [25:31-46](#); [Luke 12:2-3](#); [Acts 17:30-31](#); [Romans 2:5](#); [3:19](#); [1 Corinthians 4:5](#); [Hebrews 9:27](#); [2 Peter 2](#); [Jude 6](#)).

The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. (Revelation 20:13)

God is warning us that not only will the judgment be based on what we’ve done with Jesus, but the sentencing and degree of punishment will be to varying degrees based on the wickedness of the person being judged ([Matthew 11:20-24](#); [Luke 12:47-48](#); [20:45-47](#)). This will be the universe’s first impartial, perfectly justified court judgment ([Romans 2:11](#); [Colossians 3:25](#); [1 Peter 1:17](#)).

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:14-15)

Let’s be clear: There’s a lot about hell that we don’t understand, and hopefully none of us ever get close enough to study it firsthand. But, whatever it’s like, it’s a horrifying place. God’s intention is to stir a fear in us that forces us to take hell seriously and to avoid it at all costs. ([Daniel 12:2](#); [Matthew 10:28](#); [13:41-42](#); [23:33](#); [25:41](#); [John 3:36](#))

In our new [Member Statement of Faith](#), the Elder Board has chosen to state it this way: “Unbelievers enter into the everlasting destruction of hell and, ultimately, into the Lake of Fire (along with Satan and his demons).”

The most common questions I hear about hell are, “Will God give people a second chance? Will God let someone out if they want out?” The problem with these questions is that they assume someone will want a second chance; that someone will want out.

In the parable that Jesus told in [Luke 16:19-31](#) (about the rich man who went to hell), the condemned man never asked to get out and go to heaven. Instead, he begged for relief—but not for Jesus or heaven.

The cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.
(Revelation 21:8)

Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy. (Revelation 22:11)

Everyone who goes to heaven will want to stay there, and (in a way we can't fully understand), everyone who goes to hell will want to stay there. There will be no barbed wire in the new heavens and new earth.

As for some speculation about hell, I also commend to you N. T. Wright's classic, [Surprised By Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church](#), in which he states...

When human beings give their heartfelt allegiance to and worship that which is not God, they progressively cease to reflect the image of God. One of the primary laws of human life is that you become like what you worship; what's more, you reflect what you worship not only back to the object itself but also outward to the world around. Those who worship money increasingly define themselves in terms of it and increasingly treat other people as creditors, debtors, partners, or customers rather than human beings. Those who worship sex define themselves in terms of it (their preferences, their practices, their past histories) and increasingly treat other people as actual or potential sexual objects. Those who worship power define themselves in terms of it and treat other people as either collaborators, competitors, or pawns...

My suggestion is that it is possible for human beings so to continue down this road, so to refuse all whisperings of good news, all glimmers of the true light, all promptings to turn and go the other way, all signposts to the love of God, that after death they become at last, by their own effective choice, beings that once were human but now are not, creatures that have ceased to bear the divine image at all. With the death of that body in which they inhabited God's good world, in which the flickering flame of goodness had not been completely snuffed out, they pass simultaneously not only beyond hope but also beyond pity. There is no concentration camp in the beautiful countryside, no torture chamber in the palace of delight. Those creatures that still exist in an ex-human state, no longer reflecting their maker in any meaningful sense, can no longer excite in themselves or others the nature sympathy some feel even for the hardened criminal...

I am well aware that I have now wandered into the territory of opinion and speculation. The last thing I want is for anyone to suppose that I (or anyone else)

know very much about this. Nor do I want anyone to suppose I enjoy speculating in this matter. But I find myself driven, by the New Testament and the sober realities of this world, to this kind of resolution to one of the darkest theological mysteries.

Is hell (the lake of fire) eternal?

Let us consider how the various words for “eternal” are used in the Bible: God is eternal ([Romans 16:26](#)), as well as salvation itself ([Hebrews 5:9](#)). The following are also eternal: redemption ([Hebrews 9:12](#)), eternal life ([John 3:16](#); [6:51](#); [10:28](#)), the coming glory ([1 Peter 5:10](#)), Jesus Christ ([John 12:34](#)) Jesus’ Melchizedekian priesthood ([Hebrews 5:6](#)), the Word of God ([1 Peter 1:23](#)), the throne of God ([Hebrews 1:8](#)), and the reign of the saved in the eternal kingdom ([Revelation 22:5](#)).

Those same words are used of the final abode of the wicked: eternal fire ([Matthew 18:8](#); [25:41](#)), eternal punishment ([Matthew 25:41](#)), eternal destruction ([2 Thessalonians 1:9](#)), and eternal torment ([Revelation 14:11](#)). The words of [Matthew 25:46](#) are clear that the destiny of the finally impenitent is eternal.

Once the door to the lake of fire is shut, it will be shut forever. ([Matthew 25:46](#); [Mark 9:43-48](#); [Revelation 14:11](#))

Moses Stuart wrote nearly a century ago, “It does most plainly and indubitably follow, that, if the Scriptures have not asserted the ENDLESS punishment of the wicked, neither have they asserted the ENDLESS happiness of the righteous, nor the ENDLESS glory and existence of the Godhead. The one is equally certain with the other. Both are laid in the same balance. They must be tried by the same tests. The whole stand or fall together. There can, from the very nature of the antithesis, be no room for rational doubt here, in what manner we should interpret the declarations of the sacred writers. We must either admit the ENDLESS misery of hell, or give up the ENDLESS happiness of heaven.”

Today’s Takeaway

Let’s do everything possible to prevent people from going to hell.

I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. ([2 Timothy 2:10](#))

Is that the spirit of determination we find within ourselves today?

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “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 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.”

In order to reach people no one is reaching, we’ll have to do things no one else is doing. It will take a *redemptive* mindset more than a *combative* mindset. We’ll

have to love and want to save our community more than we want to condemn our community. We'll have to be more concerned about saving people from hell than we are about defining it properly. God doesn't call us to know everything about hell, but He has called us to save people from it. At the end of the day, our mission of making disciples is God's way of filling heaven and preventing more from going to hell.