

## Hell, What and Where?

Text: Matt 25:46a

1) Hell is a place of punishment

Suggested Hymns:

2) Where Is This Place Called Hell?

123, 543, 347, 304, 492

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 25:46a, <sup>46</sup> *And these will go away into everlasting punishment.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today is the 3rd last Sunday of the Church Year. It is the time we study the last times, the judgement and eternity. The Gospel lesson<sup>1</sup> calls us to be awake for *false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.* Therefore pray for a discerning spirit. Do not be deceived by the masses. Beware of Chrislam!

We should all be familiar with the Judgement passage Matthew 25:31–46, <sup>31</sup> *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.*

<sup>32</sup> *All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.* <sup>33</sup> *And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.*

<sup>34</sup> *Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: <sup>35</sup> for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’*

<sup>37</sup> *“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? <sup>39</sup> Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’*

<sup>40</sup> *And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’*

<sup>41</sup> *“Then He 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: <sup>42</sup> for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’*

<sup>44</sup> *“Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ <sup>45</sup> Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’*

<sup>46</sup> *And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

There are two classes of people who will rise on the Last Day: the unbelievers and the believers, the lost and the blessed.

Today we shall confine ourselves to the first and larger group and to the place to which they will be consigned by the Son of Man. We shall frankly speak of hell.

Lutheran pastors are not to be weak-kneed, soft-spined preachers like the one who told his hearers that, if they are not saved, they would go to the place which one does not mention in a polite society.

There is a hell. Annihilationists claim that there is no life beyond the grave and that people simply cease to exist. They will get a rude awakening for we read in Mark 12:26–27, *have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? <sup>27</sup> He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.* What this is teaching us is that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are alive in heaven.

Universalists, in name or in belief, “feel” that somehow every one will finally get into heaven.

But the Bible clearly teaches the existence of hell, and according to the Bible we shall speak of *Hell, What and Where?* May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Hell Is A Place Of Punishment**

Our Saviour's words are very plain: <sup>46</sup> *And these will go away into everlasting punishment.*

Punishment can be expressed as suffering in the negative sense.

There will be no more earthly joys.<sup>2</sup> Heavenly bliss cannot be enjoyed. Luke 14:24, <sup>24</sup> *For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.*

In hell they are forsaken by God. Remember what Christ suffered as we read in Matthew 27:46, <sup>46</sup> *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*

In Hell there is separation from God. On earth, even the unbeliever comes under God's providence. For example we read in Matthew 5:45, that **GOD makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.** But in hell there is complete separation from God's grace and kindness. They are banished from the blissful presence of God.

In hell they are also separated from saints and angels. We read in Luke 16:26, <sup>26</sup> *And besides all this, 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.'*

Punishment can also be expressed as suffering in the positive sense.

Firstly, in their soul. They will acknowledge God as the just Judge. They will acknowledge their sin. Their conscience and the devil will continually accuse<sup>3</sup> them.

We read in Isaiah 66:24, <sup>24</sup> *"And they shall go forth and look Upon the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, And their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.*

Yet the damned will be filled with a continual hatred toward God. Daniel 12:2, <sup>2</sup> *And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.*

Their anguish of soul is increased by the fact that they are conscious of the bliss of others in heaven, and is intensified in those who during their lives on earth also had an opportunity to be saved. Remember how the rich man wanted to warn his brothers.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, in their body. <sup>46</sup> *And these will go away into everlasting punishment.* It is called “*Punishment*” in our text.

“*Fire,*” <sup>41</sup> *“Then He 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.* It is a real, but supernatural fire. Remember the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man cried out, *‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’*<sup>45</sup> The fire was not originally not prepared for man, but “*for the devil and his angels.*” That man will go to a place not intended for him is horrific.

In hell it is an everlasting punishment as our text says. It is an “*Everlasting fire.*” All hope is abandoned for those who enter hell. Remember that eternity is not a thousand or even a million years, but without end.

Recall the parables of the Lord: “*The door is shut.*” Matthew 25:10, <sup>10</sup> *And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.*

“*A great gulf fixed.*” Luke 16:26, <sup>26</sup> *And besides all this, 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.’*

There is no escape from hell. No transfer from it to heaven.

Let us consider some other Bible references. On the Old Testament we read in Isaiah 34:8–10, <sup>8</sup> *For it is the day of the LORD’s vengeance, The year of recompense for the cause of Zion. <sup>9</sup> Its streams shall be turned into pitch, And its dust into brimstone; Its land shall become burning pitch.*

*<sup>10</sup> It shall not be quenched night or day; Its smoke shall ascend forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; No one shall pass through it forever and ever.*

In the New Testament we read in Matthew 3:12, <sup>12</sup> *His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*

Revelation 14:11, <sup>11</sup> *And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.*

Have you been in a fire or watch something burn out of control? It spreads, burns and consumes, it is hot, and often uncontrollable. In hell, add the words unquenchable and forever.

Unbelievers are not annihilated or simply cease to exist, but continue to live in torment and pain forever and ever in hell.

The hymnist writes,<sup>6</sup>

Delay not, delay not! The Spirit of grace,  
Long grieved and resisted, may take His sad flight,  
And leave thee in darkness to finish thy race,  
To sink in the gloom of eternity's night.

In hymn 492 we sing,

‘Depart from Me, accursed,  
To everlasting flame,  
For rebel angels first prepared,  
Where mercy never came’?

Another hymn<sup>7</sup> correctly expresses hell as “*Fires undying.*”

“*Everlasting punishment,*” these are terrible words! but it is a just punishment.

Human reason says, “*How can God, who is Love, punish people so terribly?*” Therefore many so-called Christians no longer accept this teaching of Scripture. Can we still believe it?

We must take our reason captive. Ours is not to reason why and how. We are simply to believe the Scriptures.

We may rest assured that the treatment which God deals out to the damned in eternity will not and cannot be unjust. God would cease to be God if He did anything contrary to His divine justice.

It may seem unjust to our human minds, especially in the case of those who did not hear the Gospel in their lifetime.

There is however some explanation for this, since Scripture teaches that there are degrees of damnation.

For example we read about the servant who did not know in Luke 12:47–48. ***47 And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few.***

Another example is given in Luke 10:12, ***12 But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city.***

Matthew 23:14, ***14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.***

John 19:11, ***11 Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."***

Hebrews 10:29 describes a worse punishment for those who once believed but later have fallen away by rejecting Christ.

Let us recap,<sup>8</sup> Hell is a place of unquenchable fire.<sup>9</sup> It is a place of memory and remorse.<sup>10</sup> It is a place of thirst.<sup>11</sup> It is a place of misery and pain.<sup>12</sup> It is a place of frustration and anger.<sup>13</sup> It is a place of separation.<sup>14</sup> It is a place of undiluted divine wrath.<sup>15</sup> It was originally prepared for Satan and his hosts.<sup>16</sup> It is a place created for all eternity.<sup>17</sup>

Hell is the final destiny of unbelievers and is variously described by the figures of a furnace of fire, eternal fire, eternal punishment;<sup>18</sup> outer darkness, the place of weeping and torment;<sup>19</sup> eternal sin;<sup>20</sup> the wrath of God;<sup>21</sup> everlasting separation from the Lord, never to see the glory of His power;<sup>22</sup> the bottomless

pit;<sup>23</sup> continuous torment;<sup>24</sup> the lake of fire, the second death;<sup>25</sup> a place for the devil and his demons.<sup>26</sup> The foregoing designations clearly show that the state of those in hell is one of eternal duration.

In summary, Hell is a place of eternal, but just punishment for the damned.

## 2. Where Is This Place Called Hell?

Frankly, we do not know. And let us pray God that we may never know from experience.

Scripture does speak of hell as being “below.” The rich man in hell lifted up his eyes to heaven.

Some have thought that hell is in the centre of the earth. Yet we are told in 2 Peter 3:10 that *both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

True, “*Jesus descended first into the lower parts of the earth,*”<sup>27</sup> but this means that in His greatest humiliation He went into death and the grave.

Let us not dwell too much over the place where hell is to be found. It is sufficient for us to know that it is a dreadful place which lasts for all eternity.

Here are some concluding thoughts. Our text says <sup>46</sup> *And these will go away into everlasting punishment.* Who are they? They are unbelievers, hypocrites, and temporary Christians.

The teaching of Scripture concerning hell should cause us to fear God’s wrath as a child fears to do wrong when a parent or teacher threatens punishment. Matthew 10:28, <sup>28</sup> *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him [i.e. God] who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

This should make us flee from the wrath to come by clinging to Jesus Christ, who descended into hell and showed Himself as the Victor over Satan and hell.

Matthew 7:13–14, <sup>13</sup> *“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. <sup>14</sup> Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

Let us note, that after death there is no opportunity for improving one's condition. ***“Now is the day of salvation.”***<sup>28</sup> Before we die, we must by faith in Christ make sure that we escape the torments of hell.

May we be found among those few, among “the righteous,” among those who have put on Jesus' blood and righteousness and are arrayed in these, with joy shall lift up their head when the Son of Man comes in His glory.

For “those” of whom we spoke today ***“shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”*** Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt 24:15-28

<sup>2</sup> 1 John 2:17

<sup>3</sup> Revelation 12:10

<sup>4</sup> Luke 16:27-28

<sup>5</sup> Luke 16:24

<sup>6</sup> Hymn 304 v3

<sup>7</sup> 570 v 7 ALHB

<sup>8</sup> Willmington, H. (1987). *Willmington's book of Bible lists*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. 3:12; 13:41-42; Mark 9:43

<sup>10</sup> Luke 16:19-31

<sup>11</sup> Luke 16:24

<sup>12</sup> Rev. 14:10, 11

<sup>13</sup> Matt. 13:42; 24:51

<sup>14</sup> Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 15

<sup>15</sup> Hab. 3:2; Rev. 14:10

<sup>16</sup> Matt. 25:41

<sup>17</sup> Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:46; Jude 7

<sup>18</sup> Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House. Mt 13:42, 50; 25:41, 46

<sup>19</sup> Mt 8:12

<sup>20</sup> Mk 3:29

<sup>21</sup> Rom 2:5

<sup>22</sup> 2 Thes 1:9

<sup>23</sup> Rev 9:1, 11

<sup>24</sup> Rev 14:10, 11

<sup>25</sup> Rev 21:8

<sup>26</sup> Mt 25:41

<sup>27</sup> Ephesians 4:9

<sup>28</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:2