

Revelation 20:7-15 – The Great and Final Judgment

This moment that we're looking at – It's like this mighty swell that's been out in the open seas, and then it comes.

And maybe you have heard about this place called Teahupoo.

It's in the Tahitian Islands where these massive waves from the depth of the ocean hit this shallow reef.

It goes from deep, deep water to shallow reef. And it just pitches up. And it's like the whole ocean throws out.

And these things that we're looking at –

They don't just happen.

They're coming from some place.

In chapter **19** we saw Jesus revealed in his 2nd coming as the conquering King.

In his 1st coming Jesus came in utter humility – born in a stable, grew up in what was essentially the ghetto of Galilee.

In our vernacular we'd say that in his 1st coming Jesus took a beating.

And it's not because he was like that kid that maybe you knew growing up in school, the kind that maybe some of you teenagers are familiar with, that kid in your class that just by who he was, kind of scrawny, and kind of had a big target on him that said, '*Hit me*', you know, the wimpy kid that was just the object of every bully's glee growing up.

That's not Jesus.

Jesus didn't take a beating because he was the wimp of the universe.

Jesus was willingly wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities.

Everybody has heard the question in some version – Why do bad things happen to good people?

If somebody ever asks you that question you can say,

"Do you know what? That only ever happened once. And he volunteered."

And if you're asking that question about yourself,

"Why is this bad thing happening to me. I'm not a real bad person."

Well, you're not the good one either. You're the reason Jesus volunteered. I'm the reason Jesus volunteered.

But we need to know this – Jesus will never take a beating again.

And some people have a real hard time with the Jesus that we looked at in **Revelation 19**. And they think,

'Well, I'm not sure if I can love this Jesus.'

*The Jesus of **Revelation 19** is so violent and brutal.*

He reminds me of the God of the Old Testament.'

There are a lot of Christians who treat the God of Old Testament as though he's not involved in the New Testament.

They treat him like that weird cousin.

They hardly ever want to let him into the public.

And that's so wrong.

In **Revelation 19**, as Jesus returns and conquers the armies of the world that are gathered together in Armageddon, he's dealing with the worst rapists, murderers, liars, idolaters, those who have abused the marginalized, the helpless, the poor. There is coming a day, according to **Revelation 19**, when Jesus is going to say, "*Enough!*" And he's going to put an end to it. **Revelation 19** is that day. And this is so important for us to understand, as we're going to be walking through what is really the end of history of this planet, God is counting down human history, not by a calendar, but by a moral time clock. And there is coming a day when God will say, "*Time's up!*" And I'm so glad that the King of the kingdom is going to put an end to this mess and usher in a new kingdom.

At the close of chapter **19** John said, "**19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.**"

People have this idea of this Jesus that's been pictured in paintings - kind of the very meek and mild Jesus; and they think of him as this pacifist.

The world is filled with men and women who are against Jesus. And if you're a Christian you used to be one of them. There are nations that are against Jesus, right? We read about them all the time. People are getting their heads cut off in those nations for being Christians. There are rulers in this world that are against Jesus. There are religions that are against Jesus.

The trajectory of everything that we see that stands in opposition today on this planet is **Revelation 19**. And in the end, when Jesus returns, those people want to fight Jesus. They're not surrendering to him when he shows up. They want to fight him. And they're going to lose. And it's going to be their fault because they have declared war on him.

And when Jesus comes to this planet a second time – He's not going to come in humility. He will come as King of kings. And he will put an end to all other kings and all other kingdoms that are opposed to him.

Now some take the liberty to insist that Jesus should not do that. They think that Jesus should bring peace. Well, he does bring peace by crushing those that have set up their unrighteous kingdoms over and against his.

People forget how imperative it was to crush Hitler for the world to have peace, right? Nobody was saying, "*Why don't we just bring peace to Hitler.*" No, he is not going to have peace. So the good guys had to stand up.

In **Revelation 20** we see Jesus revealed to us as the ruling King, as the reigning King, ruling and reigning on the earth for a thousand years. And in our last study we saw that phrase thousand years is found six times in the first 7 verses of the **20th** chapter. The period of history is known as the millennium.

The word millennium comes from those Latin words – '*mille annum*', thousand years.

And then we looked at those three theological positions on the millennium –

1. Post-Millennialism,
2. A-Millennialism,
3. Pre-Millennialism.

Here in **Revelation 20** we see the world experiencing for the first time since **Genesis 3** perfect and righteous government because Jesus Christ is reigning in absolute righteousness and in absolute power over the entire earth. Every nation will be under his gracious, his righteous, his powerful influence.

And remember we said at the front of our study in this book of **Revelation** that the Bible hangs on two hooks –

1. The hook of **Genesis**
2. And the hook of **Revelation**.

Revelation is the answer to the book of **Genesis**, the book of beginnings.

In the book of **Genesis** we're told how sin and death crashed into God's perfect creation.

And ever since that moment – the world, that in the beginning was so perfect, the humanity, that in the beginning was so perfect, has been filled with pain and pathos, brokenness and death.

From **Genesis 3** forward all of Scripture moves toward God redeeming everything that was lost by sin. And here in **Revelation 20** we see the original purpose of God in placing man in charge of the Garden of Eden. And we see its ultimate fulfillment in the Lord Jesus, who is the Last Adam, as he rules over the earth for a thousand years, and then ultimately ushers in a new heaven and a new earth.

“⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹ And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them,”

As **Revelation 20** closes Jesus is revealed as the Great Judge, passing final judgment on –
Satan,
death,
and the unjust.

Any other judicial verdict in the history of the world pales in nature and scope in comparison –
to the verdicts rendered in this scene.
Any judgment that has seemed final up to this point in history is open-ended by comparison –
to the finality of the decisions rendered in this scene.

This is closure as mankind has never known as we come to the end of the kingdom age. As Jesus concludes his 1,000 reign upon the throne of David Satan is loosed upon the earth one last time. Almost inconceivably Satan rallies men and women to rebel one last time against the one who had ruled the world in righteousness for 1,000 years.

They come against the very seat of Christ's rule.
They come against the city of Jerusalem.

And it's interesting – it's just simple in the account –
Jesus arises;
And they are consumed.
And then the heavens and the earth are rolled back;
And all that's left is a great white throne.

Now the question – Why is Satan loosed from the bottomless pit at all at the end of these 1,000 years. I believe there are essentially 3 key reasons as to why Satan must be loosed at the end of the 1,000 years.

First – Satan is loosed at the end of the millennium to prove once & for all that the problem with man is man.

From **Genesis 3** forward man has actually wanted and actually believed he can have heaven on earth without God. We frequently talk about the lie of lies. And the lie of lies is that man can have life apart from God. And since **Genesis 3** man has been convinced that, given enough time, money and education –
He can transform this broken world into a perfect utopian existence.

Here's the truth – And you need to process the people around you, the world around you, the news on TV, the news that you read on the internet – you need to process it through this lens – The world that longs for in the deepest part of their being is never going to be established by mankind. History has proven that at every turn man is incapable of governing himself, and as a result incapable of governing others.

The truth is that the world that mankind so deeply longs for –
a world that's marked by peace and love,
a world that's marked by justice and mercy,
a world that's marked by kindness and compassion,
is a world ruled by God, not by man.

The truth is that our only hope for such a world must be anchored in the fact that God is willing and able to literally – change the world that we live in, and usher in that world that everyone longs for.

The hope of the Christian is not conservative politics. I'm glad there is someone out there talking about conservative viewpoints. I'm glad there's some news outlet that talks about it. But sometimes when I watch Fox News I just want to pick up a gun, because the world that everyone longs for, the hope of that world is the kingdom of God.

Christian, that has got to be your hope.

And yet in the face of man's inability to govern himself, and, as a result, his inability to govern others – Fallen culture still embraces the hope of a perfect world without God, because it embraces the idea – that man is basically good, that man is inherently good, and that it's only bad environment that makes man bad.

The Bible tells us that man has used that excuse from the very beginning. Upon committing the very first sin man shifted blame for his behaviour. God showed up, and said, "*Adam, what have you done?*" And man replied, "*It's the woman you gave me.*"

Revelation 20 proves that –

Man's problem never was and never has been the woman that God gave him;
It never was and never has been the neighbour God gave him;
It never was and never has been the boss, the teacher, the coach, the you fill in the blanks that God has given;
Man's problem never was and never has been his environment.

And God proves it here. The proof is that for 1,000 years every environmental influence that man has historically used to explain away and justify sinful behaviour is gone. There is no more Satan. He's chained up in the *abusos*. There is no more corrupt rulers, no more corrupt governments, no more ghettos, no more gangs, no more poverty, no more drugs, no more abuse. Yet after 1,000 years in that perfect environment unregenerate man has the will and the capacity to rebel against God. Satan is able to muster millions of followers who gladly join him in a last desperate effort to strike at God.

Now how can that be? Well, please remember that those surviving the tribulation will enter the millennium in their natural bodies. They'll marry. They'll have children. Every one of those children will outwardly conform to the Lord's righteous rule. But not all of them will inwardly love and reverence Jesus. Children born during the tribulation still need to trust Jesus as Saviour.

In his commentary on the book of **Revelation John Walvoord** quotes a man named **William Hoste** from a book called '**Visions of John the Divine**'. **Hoste** says – "*The golden age of the kingdom will last a thousand years, during which righteousness will reign, and peace, prosperity, and the knowledge of God be universally enjoyed. But this will not entail universal conversion. Will not a thousand years under the beneficent sway of Christ and the manifested glory of God suffice to render men immune to his [Satan's] temptations, will they not have radically changed for the better, and become by the altered conditions of life and the absence of Satanic temptations, children of God and lovers of His will? Alas! It will be proved once more that man whatever his advantages and environment, apart from the grace of God and the new birth, remains at heart only evil and at enmity with God.*"

That should trouble us.
That should shock us.

Because that's what we are apart from the grace of God. God could give us a perfect world to live in; and he could be present with us, the knowledge of the Lord filling the earth, righteousness enforced. And yet apart from the grace of God and being regenerate, being born again, we could join Satan and rebel against God. That's how bad man is.

So Satan is loosed at the end of the millennium to prove once and for all that the problem with man is man – “Because the carnal (the unregenerate) mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be” – is what God says in Romans 8:7.

Second – Satan is loosed at the end of the millennium to prove the incurable wickedness of Satan.

After a thousand years in the abusos Satan never repents.

After being crushed, even after being imprisoned for a thousand years, he never repents.

Number One and Number 2 demonstrate the righteousness of eternal punishment.

And we'll get into that in some detail in a bit.

This so important –

Satan is merely a tool under God's control.

When God wants he can chain him.

When God wants he can release him for a short time, and then incarcerate him forever.

Satan serves the purposes of God.

Satan is the agent whereby man must choose to align himself with God or against God.

There is no free choice without a choice.

So Satan has been on death row (if you would) for a thousand years.

And he's let loose to face his execution.

And, by the way, Satan hates the book of **Revelation** because it reminds him of his future. He wars hard to keep men and women out of this great book of the Bible because in it God says this is the end of your adversary the devil. It's been said,

“When Satan reminds you of your past, remind him of his future.”

“¹⁰ and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

Now the Bible teaches that there is going to be conscious eternal torment –

for the devil and his angels,

and for those who follow him in his rebellion and do not repent and receive Jesus Christ.

Now God has seen fit to reveal this to us clearly in his Word.

But despite God revealing to us the reality of Hell and eternal punishment man has a very hard time with it.

Man will be absolutely irrational in regards to the truth of the Bible because he doesn't want to come to grips with the ultimate reality of having to stand before God and give an account for his sins.

And if you are a Christian –

Please never forget that you lived in that state of irrationality before meeting Jesus.

And Jesus saved you from the insanity of life without God.

So when you look around and say, *“The world is mad. The world is insane. It doesn't believe what God has to say.*

It doesn't believe that Jesus is the Son of God who died to save us from eternal punishment. The world is crazy.” –

Please remember they're not crazier than you were before you became a Christian.

And they need Jesus like you needed Jesus.

Now what does that insanity look like? Well –

Evolution – no Creator, no purpose, no afterlife;

Hinduism – karma;

Buddhism – nothingness;

New Age – near death experiences where you see this warm light ...

You don't have to be concerned about a near death experience.

Near death is not the problem because you're not getting near death; you're getting dead – every one of us.

It's not a near death experience that plagues us.

It's death that plagues the human race and the great accounting that follows it.

“¹¹ I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.”

Check out how John sees this moment.

The magnitude, the purity, the holiness of this scene is utterly overwhelming.

And all that he can see, all that he can describe for us, is **“a great white throne”**.

He gives us no mention, no description of a Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth –

no description, no mention of angelic beings,

no description, no mention of an innumerable company of redeemed,

no description, no mention of heavenly worship

There is only **“a great white throne”** for those who have rejected God.

And there is no conceivable description of the one on the throne.

But whatever his face looks like John says that –

“from his face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.”

The heaven and the earth ceased to exist. They disintegrated.

2 Peter 3:“¹⁰ The heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.”

There will be nothing familiar left.

There is no ground. Forget about earthquakes. There is no ground to quake - no stars.

All will be gone except –

this **“great white throne”**,

and the billions of those who chose to harden their hearts against God from **Genesis 3** forward.

From Cain on down –

the small and the great,

from the kings and the rulers, the CEOs who mocked Jesus,

to the poor man who has turned his back on God,

and everyone in between.

“¹² And I saw the dead, 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.”

There are people who will say, *“That can't be. That's absurd. How can that guy be standing before the throne? A shark ate that guy. And then a fish ate that shark...”* God is able to take the fish that ate the fish that ate the fish that ate the fish that ate the shark that ate the guy, and get all of the molecules of that guy and put them back together for that moment.

And if you're an unbeliever the question of how can that happen, that's not your problem.

If you're an unbeliever the problem is the fact that unless you repent and believe the gospel you're going to be standing there when heaven and earth are fled away.

If you're an unbeliever don't get hung up on your limited perception of what God can or can't do.

This is staggering – There are going to be billions of people standing there to be judged.

Now some people wonder, ‘*How do we know this judgment thing is going to be fair?*’
Well, we have the answer given to us.

And we must not miss this.

Those who did not want to avail themselves to the mercy that God makes available to us in Jesus –

Those who did not want to trust in what Jesus did –

by way of his death on the cross in our place for our sins,

and by his work in conquering death by way of his resurrection –

They will stand before God on the basis of their own works and their own righteousness.

They are going to be judged on the basis of their own works.

I am no less of a sinner than anyone who is going to stand before the great white throne to be judged.

And everyone who stands before that throne – it’s not what will the verdict be? – it’s just passing judgment.

And the only reason I’m not going to be before the great white throne is because I’ve trusted a great Saviour who saved me by what he did in dying for my sins.

I just read this quote today from **Tim Keller** – I love it.

“Yesterday we didn’t measure up. Today we won’t measure up.

That’s why Jesus measured up on our behalf so we’d have grace and not judgment.”

That’s why I’m not going to be before the great white throne. I have never measured up.

But Jesus did. He lived a sinless life. And then he died in my place for all my sins.

I’m a forgiven sinner. While the man or woman who ends up before the great white throne is unforgiven.

Sin alone is not going to send you to Hell. It’s being a sinner – which all of us are – and rejecting Jesus, the only one who can forgive your sin. That’s what will send you to Hell.

Write **John 3:17, 18** in the margin of your Bible there in **Revelation 20**.

John 3: “¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

Also write **John 5:24-29**.

John 5: “²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. ²⁵ Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at this, for 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.”

Jesus, the conquering King –

Jesus, the ruling and reigning King during the millennium –

Jesus, the Judge, who is seated on the great white throne.

We aren’t even mentioned as being there. I believe that’s because those who are redeemed are in absolute silence. I believe personally that the condemned, the billions who will stand there before the great white throne, will see untold millions of redeemed men and women in the distance as they stand there before the great white throne, and they hear the voice of the one upon it, a voice that they had heard speaking to their hearts during their lifetime. I believe that the one on the throne will speak to them in the way that he did when somebody shared Christ with them, and they rejected him. And in that instant, those who will stand before him and be judged, they will know his voice.

And I believe that we'll be silent because we'll be so overwhelmed at the fact that we're standing on the side of redemption, not in front of that great white throne, knowing that we ourselves are no better than those standing before the great white throne, knowing that we deserve what they're facing; but we trusted in our great redeemer who loved us and washed us from our sins with his blood.

It says, "**Mary, therefore, took a pound of precious ointment.**"

What she did with that ointment was in response to who Jesus is and what he had done –
done for her,
done for her sister,
done for Simon the leper,
done for her brother Lazarus.

Are we overwhelmed by that reality, that we're not going to be standing before that great white throne?
But for those who refuse Christ and refuse his forgiveness will stand in abject terror and horror –
We cannot even begin to imagine it.
If the face of the one sitting on that throne is what caused heaven and earth to flee and no longer exist –
What will be their horror?

There are a lot of people who say, "*When I die I'm going to give God a piece of my mind.*"
That is not going to happen.
There is no questioning the one on the throne.
There are no unjust charges.
There is no appeal to a higher court.
There are no technicalities to get your case tossed out.
There are no plea bargains to be made.
There are no reductions of sentences.

Every single one of those before the great white throne will be judged.
And they will be rightly judged – because it says, "¹² **...and books were opened...**"
You see, God keeps records.

Psalm 56:8 from the **New Living Translation** –
**"You keep track of all my sorrows.
You have collected all my tears in your bottle.
You have recorded each one in your book."**

Malachi 3:16

**"Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another.
The LORD paid attention and heard them,
and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name."**

God stoops down to listen –
when we gather,
when we speak of him,
when we sing of him.

This meeting is on record with God – August 5, 2014. And if you have not accepted Christ as your Saviour you better take note of that reality if you're thinking of leaving without accepting Christ. And he knows that there are right here right now men and women who have heard the gospel, heard about the salvation that can be found in his son.

Right now –
you are either rejecting Jesus,
or you are accepting Jesus.
No one will claim innocence because the books will be opened.

This is what the Bible says – Outside of Jesus you will give an account for – every intention, every motive of heart, every lustful thought, every bit of anger – all of it.

But the Bible also declares that if you've committed your life to Christ that – every intention, every motive, every lustful thought, every bit of anger – is blotted out.

If you're a Christian I pray that you are so overwhelmed with gratitude because your sins have been blotted out. I'm glad this past week has been blotted out. I'm glad the last bit of bad traffic was blotted out.

“¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.”

There's an old saying – *“If you're born once you'll die twice. But if you're born twice you'll only die once.”*

“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.”

First of all we need to spend some time on the subject of Hell.

Wayne Grudem said this in his systematic theology – *“Hell is a place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked.”* And then he says this – *“Because the doctrine of eternal conscious punishment is so foreign to the thought patterns of our culture, and on a deeper level to the distinct and God-given sense of love and desire for redemption for every human being created in God's image, this doctrine is emotionally one of the most difficult doctrines for Christians to affirm today. It also tends to be one of the first doctrines given up to people who are moving away from a commitment to the Bible as absolutely truthful in all that it affirms.”*

I think we need to come to grips with the fact that – Jesus said more about Hell than Daniel, Isaiah, Paul, John and Peter put together.

Here are some of the things that Jesus had to say about Hell –

Jesus speaks of eternal fire and punishment as the final abode of Satan and the angels that followed him in his rebellion and humans who have rejected God. That's in **Matthew 25:41, 46**.

Jesus spoke of being in danger of the fire of Hell – **Matthew 5:22, Matthew 18:8, 9**.

The word that Jesus uses for Hell is the word '*Gehenna*'. Gehenna was a valley on the south west side of Jerusalem. It was infamous for human sacrifice, in particular, burning babies alive in the worship of the pagan god Molech. Eventually Gehenna became the city dump. And along with the piles of garbage that were burned there every day there would be human faeces and the corpses of those who had no family to bury them.

In **Mark 9:48** Jesus speaks of a person going to Hell (going to Gehenna) '**where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.**' Jesus is making a reference to the maggots that lived on the corpses in the garbage heap. And in the biological world when all the flesh is consumed the maggots die. Jesus is saying, however, that the decomposition of Hell never ends. And that's why their worm does not die.

Even as the Christian will have a body that will never grow old, never get sick, never die,
that is perfectly suited for life in a new heaven and a new earth;
The non-Christian will have a body that will never grow old, never die,
so that they can endure an eternity of punishment.

There in the day of Jesus those living above the Valley of Gehenna could look out and see the smouldering flames.
And when the winds would shift they would smell the stench of Gehenna.

Jesus, the ultimate truth-teller says that Hell is a real place –
where all people who do not love and serve God, all people who are not repentant of sin will go.
Jesus, the ultimate teacher, the ultimate communicator says that Hell is like Gehenna, only infinitely worse –
where there is a forever-burning, a stench that is forever.

Again I'm going to quote **Timothy Keller** – *"If Jesus, the Lord of love and author of grace spoke about Hell more often and in more vivid blood-curdling manner than anyone else it must be a crucial truth."*

Here's the deal –
If you say, *"God could never, God would never judge someone and condemn them to eternal torment in Hell";*
You are actually saying to Jesus, the pre-eminent teacher of love and grace, you are saying to Jesus,
"I'm less barbaric than you. And I'm more compassionate; and I'm wiser than you."

Again from **Timothy Keller** – *"Indeed upon reflection it's because of the doctrine of judgment in Hell that Jesus' proclamations of grace and love are so astounding."*

What's so magnificent, what's so amazing about Him, what's so amazing about grace if there is no Hell?
Again, at the end of the millennium Jesus is going to let Satan loose on planet Earth –
to prove that Satan is beyond reforming and that unrepentant man is beyond reforming,
proving that Jesus is not unjust in sending Satan and all who follow him into the lake of fire.
Those who don't love Jesus will be in Hell forever, even as those who do love Jesus will be in Heaven forever.

**"¹⁴ Then 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."**

The sense here is that there will be the sense of continually falling into outer darkness.
In other words, there is no security, there is nothing that holds you in eternity in Hell.
By contrast the New Jerusalem, which we're going to see in the next chapter, in the Bible it speaks of it as –

"a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

In Hell there will be continual perpetual darkness;
While in New Jerusalem there is no longer a need for the sun or the moon because the Lamb is the light of that place.

In Hell there will be utter aloneness;
While Heaven is filled with fellowship in the presence of God.

In Hell there will be endless torment and agony;
While in the New Jerusalem there is a river of life.

This is the most hopeless scene imaginable – Hell – because after they're damned they'll be –
forever falling through darkness, forever dying, forever in agony, with no way out.
And after they have been screaming for millions of years they have no way out.
And after millions of years they are not one second closer to the end of eternity.
Hell is going to be terrible beyond anything we can imagine.

And there are those who think – as **Grudem** was just mentioning – they have a problem with that. These people say, *“Well, I’d like to take this book, the Bible, and embrace it as ultimate truth. But this think about Hell, I just have too much of a hard time with that. So I’m going to tear that bit out.”* There are those who say, *“I can’t believe I’m hearing this. This is 2014. This is the age of tolerance.”* And there are a lot of Christians who are radically impacted by the tolerance of this present day.

Here’s how a man named **H. Richard Niebuhr** summarized liberal theology –

*“A God without wrath
brought men without sin
into a kingdom without judgment
through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.”*

Hell is real. Judgment is real. Sin is real.

Sin is essentially the de-Goding of God – That’s how **D. A. Carson** put it.

Hell is the place where those who have de-Goded God will experience God in his unending and active wrath.

Hell is the place where those who have de-Goded God will not only be put out of his favourable presence, they’ll experience the reality & presence of God by way of his active unending perfect righteous judgment for all of eternity.

And though Hell is the most hopeless scene imaginable; It’s also the most avoidable one.

I can’t guarantee that you’ll never get sick, that you’ll never get cancer, that you’ll never lose your job. But –

I can guarantee that if you commit your life to Christ, your sins will be forgiven & you’ll receive the gift of eternal life.

There are plenty of objections to the doctrine of Hell and eternal punishment.

The top of the list is – If God sends people to Hell that makes him cruel.

No – The truth is God’s not cruel; God’s not mean.

How do I know that God’s not cruel and God’s not mean? Look at the cross of Jesus.

The truth is that God sent his only begotten Son to suffer and die for mean people.

And Jesus suffered and died at the hands of the meanest of people.

The God who became man and suffered and died for mean people is not mean.

His death on the cross proves that he is perfectly loving, proves that he is perfectly just.

To be condemned by a God of perfect love and perfect justice shows us how damnable sin really is.

Man does not end up in Hell because God is mean.

Here’s a quote by **Keller**, and then one by **Chesterton**, and then one by **C. S. Lewis** –

Timothy Keller – *“In short hell is simply one’s freely chosen identity apart from God on a trajectory into infinity.”*

If you say, *“My life, my identity is not wrapped up in God; I choose to find my identity in creation, not the Creator”* – That trajectory – un-repenting of – is Hell.

Chesterton – *“Hell is the greatest compliment God has ever paid to the dignity of human freedom.”*

C. S. Lewis – This is a little longer –

“The damned are, in some sense, successful, rebels to the end; that the doors of hell are locked on the inside.

And in the long run the answer to all those who object to the doctrine of hell, is itself a question:

‘What are you asking God to do?’

To wipe out past sins and, at a cost, give people a fresh start? He did – at Calvary.

To forgive them? But they’re not asking for forgiveness.

To leave them alone? Well, that’s what hell is.

There are only two kinds of people:

those who say to God, “Thy will be done”, or those to whom God in the end says, “Thy will be done.”

All that are in hell choose it.”

If God is a God of love, this requires justice and righteousness and wrath.
And the object of wrath, unfortunately, but necessarily, is mankind;
Because we've embraced the very thing that he's absolutely opposed to.

Another argument against eternal punishment and Hell – If God is loving, how can he be full of wrath?

Well, here's the truth –
How many of us are dads? How many of us are married?
If somebody you loved was getting raped, would you be angry?
How many dads would be angry if their daughter was being raped, your wife was being raped?
You have to be. You are indifferent if you're not angry.

And yet that's what people want God to be.
They want God to be indifferent to rape and murder.
I don't find that a God I can worship.

The argument is not – Is he a God of love or a God of wrath?
The truth is that God's wrath is because of his love.
It's because you love someone that you can be full of genuine wrath.
If God is good and God is love, and if he loves all that's right –
Then it must mean that he hates everything that is in opposition to all of that.

Again –
It's not wrath or love;
It's wrath and love.

Wrath by itself would lead to fear and dread.
But God is both a God of love and wrath at the same time.
He's a God of wrath because of his love.
He's a God of wrath because of his love, not in spite of his love.

Another argument against Hell & eternal punishment – If God is a God of love everyone should go to Heaven

Hence **Rob Bell's** book – **Love Wins**.

Here's the truth – For God to let everyone into Heaven is neither loving nor kind.

If you were to create a graph –
And on one side of that graph would be the worst, the most Godless –
the most immoral, the most amoral human beings that have ever lived – violent, greedy, murders – think of the worst;
And on the other side of that graph is the most Godly, Jesus-loving people who ever lived.

Universalism – everybody gets to go to Heaven – says that all those people are in Heaven together.

And you think people who spent their whole life hostile to God and his authority want to submit to him for eternity?

If people who hate God are sent to Heaven –
It's not Heaven for them;
It's Hell for them.

And if God sends rapists, murders, thieves & liars to Heaven what does that do to Heaven for people who love Jesus?
I don't know about you, but I don't want unrepentant liars, paedophiles and serial killers in Heaven.
If they were in Heaven it would mean that we would still lock our doors at night in Heaven.

For someone to end up in Hell –

They have to reject the God who shows them his goodness, and, out of love for all, gives to all mankind life and breath and every good thing. God rains on the just and the unjust.

For someone to end up in Hell –

They have to reject the Holy Spirit who convicts the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment.

For someone to end up in Hell –

They have to reject the crucified Son of God who said, *“When I’m lifted up from earth I will draw all people to myself.”*

You have to climb over all of that to get into Hell.

There is no sin that Jesus cannot forgive except the sin of rejecting the only one who can forgive you of sin.

Hell is one of the simplest of situations to avoid.

“¹⁵ And whoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

You are either written in the book of life, or you’re not.

It seems that in the book of life is everyone who has ever lived.

In the other books there are records of whatever anyone who has ever lived has done.

When you turn to Christ all of your sins in the other books are blotted out;

And your name remains in the book of life.

But if you reject Christ your name is blotted out of the book of life;

While the record of your sins remains in the other books.

And God will open those books when you stand before him at the great white throne.

It’s that simple.

The decision is yours.

Where the blotter falls is your decision.

I want to give you an opportunity to make that decision.

I can’t wait to get to chapters **21** and **22** because I’m going to have a share in everything that’s written there.

I would encourage you, if you are a Christian, read chapters **21** and **22**.

If you’re not a Christian I pray you’re going to be one before you leave.

Read chapters **21** and **22**, because if you’re a Christian you have a share of everything that’s there.

It’s great to read those chapters because that’s going to be our life for eternity.

The Bible says this life is but a vapour – right here, right now – it’s but a vapour.

It says in **2 Corinthians 4**:

“¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.

For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

If you’re a Christian you’re headed for chapters **21** and **22**.

If you don’t know Jesus you never get out of chapter **20**.

And that’s your choice.

You’re either blotted out of the book of life; and you’ll spend eternity in the lake of fire;

Or your sins right here, right now can be blotted out; and your eternity is going to be found in chapters **21** and **22**.