

## **“Jesus Taught about Hell”**

**March 19, 2023**

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Before I get into the heart of this sermon, I have to say three things. One, I started this sermon series, “Who Is Jesus?”, about three months ago because I wanted to discuss who Jesus is and what he has done. After all, Jesus is at the heart of the Christian faith. If we understand who Jesus is, we’ll understand Christianity, the Bible, and, most importantly, God. As I planned this series, I wanted to cover the most important aspects of Jesus’ life and ministry. I won’t cover everything that Jesus did or said, but my hope is to cover the most important things about Jesus.

As a pastor, I feel compelled to present what God has revealed to us about himself in an honest way. So, my desire is to preach through all of the Bible. Of course, I want to present this material in a thoughtful and persuasive way, but I must remain faithful to the message that God has given us. I’m simply a messenger. My job is to preach the word (2 Tim. 4:2), the Bible. I don’t preach stories about my life or what appears in a magazine or newspaper this week. Yes, sometimes I will use those things to supplement what we find in the Bible, but my primary goal is to communicate what God’s written word, the Bible, says.

That means I have to preach things that aren’t popular. Sometimes I have to preach things that are controversial. I even have to preach things we’d rather not think about.

One of those things is hell. One of the things that Jesus talked about was a final judgment. Some people will live with God forever in paradise, a new creation where there is no sin or anything evil. And some will be in hell, a place of anguish and torment and pain. Orthodox Christian faith has always taught that those who are not united to Jesus will experience that fate.

The second thing I have to say is that I realize talking about hell isn’t popular. I once came across these words from a professor of biblical studies at a Christian college: “In public life, references to hell stigmatize one as an intellectual troglodyte. Hell has become not simply something archaic; it has become an embarrassment. . . . The only time I can recall hearing hell used publicly in both a real and approved sense is when the families of several women killed by a serial killer told the killer they hoped ‘he would rot in hell for eternity.’”<sup>1</sup> I’m not surprised by this. But what surprised me was that this same author, the professor at a Christian college, also

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<sup>1</sup> James R. Edwards, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 146–7.

wrote this: “I have attended church for fifty years and have never heard a sermon on hell, or an entire sermon on sin.”<sup>2</sup> If you attend a church for that long and don’t hear a sermon on in or hell, then that church, or those churches, have failed. I don’t expect to preach only about hell every week or month, and perhaps not every year, though I do mention the reality of hell as part of the package of the grand story of the Bible. But if I didn’t preach about hell or sin in fifty years, I wouldn’t be doing my job.

The third thing I have to say is that I don’t really want to talk about hell or think about it. And, in my experience, I don’t know any Christian who does. I think there’s a stereotype of Christians who relish the thought of their enemies going to hell, who love to preach about fire and brimstone. In my experience, that’s not true. Yet Christians are people who realize that what matters is not what we want to be true, what we’d like to be true, but what is actually true. In other words, Christians realize that there are certain realities that exist, whether we want them to or not. If hell is real, and if Jesus talked about it, we need to talk about it. I think you’ll find that this church is one committed to truth. You may not like what I have to say, but I’ll tell the truth.

I also realize that people have objections to hell, and if I don’t address those objections, some of you might not listen to anything I say. It’s best to hear objections from those who hold them. So, here’s Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), a British philosopher and an atheist. This is what Russell wrote about Jesus and hell: “There is one very serious defect to my mind in Christ’s moral character, and that is that He believed in hell. I do not myself feel that any person who is really profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment. Christ certainly as depicted in the Gospels did believe in everlasting punishment.”<sup>3</sup> Then, he writes, “I must say that I think all this doctrine, that hell-fire is a punishment for sin, is a doctrine of cruelty. It is a doctrine that put cruelty into the world and gave the world generations of cruel torture; and the Christ of the Gospels, if you could take Him as His chroniclers represent Him, would certainly have to be considered partly responsible for that.”<sup>4</sup> The idea here seems to be that if hell exists, God is cruel, and if God is cruel, Christians are necessarily cruel.

I won’t spend time much with that second objection this morning. But I’ll point out that it’s God’s job to condemn and send people to hell; it’s not our job. Also, God has commanded

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>3</sup> Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957), 17.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 18.

his people to love everyone, including enemies. The whole concept of charity arose out of Christianity, and Christians were responsible for creating things like orphanages because of Christian beliefs. If Christians are cruel, it is against their beliefs.

Let me address that first objection: is *God* cruel for sending people to hell? I think this is the more serious objection. But this objection is problematic for two reasons. The first reason this objection is problematic is that it has a wrong view of hell in mind. This view pictures hell as an underground torture chamber where God punishes people who are trapped in against their will. But that's a wrong view of hell. To show why that's wrong, I'll have to back up and tell the whole story of Christianity in some quick, broad strokes.

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”<sup>5</sup> That's the first verse of the Bible (Gen. 1:1). In the beginning, God made the heavens and the earth to be together. God even dwelled with his people (Gen. 3:8).

But evil entered into the world. There is certainly some mystery here, because we don't know exactly where evil came from. But we do know that Satan tempted Adam and Eve and they sinned. God did not create a world that was evil, but evil entered into that world, and that evil is found within us. We can't blame God or anything else for the wrong desires that are in us. As the Russian author Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008) once observed, ‘If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?’<sup>6</sup> To root all evil out of the world, God would need to destroy us all, for evil is deeply rooted in us.

God made the world for himself, and he made humans to worship him. But we have all failed in many ways to worship God. Though God would have been justified in destroying all humans and even the whole creation, he is merciful. He didn't destroy his creation. Instead, he punished it in part. Because of sin's presence in the world, life is difficult and people die (Gen. 3:16–19). Because of sin, there is a division between heaven and earth. Heaven is the dwelling place of God and the earth is the dwelling place of man. Psalm 115:16 shows us this:

The heavens are the LORD's heavens,  
but the earth he has given to the children of man.

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<sup>5</sup> All Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2007), 75.

Evil, what we call sin, places a separation between God and his creation.<sup>7</sup>

But that's not the end of the story, of course. At the right time, God sent his Son, Jesus, into the world. Jesus is the only person who has ever lived that is not evil (Rom. 3:9–18, 23; cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:22). And he died on the cross, bearing the penalty for our evil. When I say “our evil,” I mean the evil of those who come to trust Jesus, who are united to him by faith, who have a relationship with him, who love and follow him. Jesus takes our evil upon himself on the cross, and in return we receive his righteousness. And he also gives us the Holy Spirit, who starts to heal our evil from the inside out.

And yes, one day, there will be a final judgment, dividing those who belong to Jesus from those who do not. The people who belong to Jesus will enter into a renewed creation where there is no evil or sin. But the evil must go somewhere. And that somewhere is hell.

Hell is where all evil goes when it is removed from God's creation. When heaven and earth are joined back together in the new creation, there can be no evil in it. God must remove it. It must go somewhere. So, part of the reason for hell is God's protection of his renewed creation from evil.

Hell is also God giving people over to their own desires. Those who reject the one, true, living, triune God don't want to be with him forever. They want to be their own gods, or worship false gods. They want to do life on their own terms, not God's. So, God lets them pursue their desires for eternity. Hell is full of people who refuse to let God heal them of their evil.

Hell is also the punishment of evil. And I think we want that. If there is no hell, there is no final justice. If there's no hell, Hitler won. He did all kinds of evil and then checked out on his own terms, by committing suicide. If, as atheists believe, this life is all there is, and at death we simply cease to exist, then there is no justice for the ones whose lives Hitler destroyed. Of course, Hitler is an extreme case. But how many other people do evil things without being punished in this life? How many people steal, commit rape, and abuse others without getting caught in this life? Don't we want justice?

There's a second reason why the objection to hell that says God is cruel is problematic. Who are we to judge God? By what standard do we judge God? How is that even possible? The reason God is judge, and we're not, is because God is morally perfect and all-knowing. We are biased in many ways and we are certainly not all-knowing. We don't know all the evidence, and

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<sup>7</sup> See Isa. 59:2.

even if we did, we're not all wise. So only God is qualified to judge. And because God is the Creator and Sustainer of all, it is his right to judge. The universe is his.

Now, with all that said, let's take a look at some of what Jesus said about hell.

First, Jesus shows us that hell isn't just for "really bad people." If we're honest, we all deserve hell. In Matthew 5, in part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that anger towards others and lust are enough to earn a ticket to hell. Jesus says, "I say to you that 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 hell of fire" (Matt. 5:22). If we hate others in our hearts, it's as if we wished they were dead. This dishonors God's creation. It's the power of hell at work in us and if we continue hating, we're following the path to hell. All murders begin with hellish desires within us.

Notice also that lust qualifies us for hell. Jesus says that desiring another woman or another man is like committing adultery. After all, having sex with others starts with a desire. The reason evils such as prostitution and pornography and sex trafficking exist is because there's a demand for these things. The demand starts with evil desires within us. Jesus says we are to cut out anything from our lives that lead to these desires and actions. He says, "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 hell. 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 hell" (Matt. 5:29–30). Of course, Jesus isn't being literal here. You could gouge out your eyes and chop off parts of your body and you could still have lustful desires in your heart. But he means we should remove from our lives anything that feeds the power of hell within us.

Not only is hell not for the "really bad people," but hell could be filled with all kinds of very religious people. We see this in Matthew 23. In that chapter, Jesus pronounces seven "woes" on the Pharisees, the Jewish religious leaders. He curses them because they are hypocrites. They "have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness" (Matt. 23:23). At one point, he says this (Matt. 23:13, 15):

<sup>13</sup> "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.

<sup>15</sup>“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 hell as yourselves.”

The Pharisees do not enter the kingdom of God. Even worse, they multiply. They make converts who are twice as much the “sons of hell” as they are. In verse 33, Jesus says, “You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?” Jesus has already called the Pharisees “children of hell,” and now he is calling them “sons of Satan,” the true snake. In John 8:44, Jesus makes that abundantly clear. And Jesus says they are hell-bound. The only way to escape being condemned would be to repent of their sins and put their trust in Jesus, but they reject him.

So, hell isn’t just for the Hitlers of this world. It’s for those who hate and lust and act as if they are religious when they’re not godly at all. That’s enough to condemn us all. But Jesus is that way of escape.

And while we’re looking at Matthew 23, note that after Jesus says all these harsh words to the Pharisees, he laments over Jerusalem. Look at verse 37: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” Jesus took no joy in telling the Pharisees about hell. He had to warn them of the path they were taking, but they were not willing to listen.

Speaking of woes, look at Matthew 18. We see here the idea that hell is protection. This is the second point I want to make about Jesus’ teaching regarding hell. The first is that it’s not just for “really bad people.” The second point is that hell is the removal of all evil from the world. It is for the protection of God’s people and the new creation that he will make one day. We see this in Matthew 18:1–9:

<sup>1</sup> At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” <sup>2</sup> And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them <sup>3</sup> and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>5</sup> “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, <sup>6</sup> but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

<sup>7</sup>“Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! <sup>8</sup> And 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. <sup>9</sup> 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 hell of fire.

Jesus’ disciples want to know who will be greatest in his kingdom, and Jesus says that all who come to him with a childlike faith enter the kingdom of God. Jesus is commending a child’s ability to trust. He’s not commending childishness, or immaturity, or ignorance. The one who humbles himself or herself like a child will be great in God’s kingdom.

But then Jesus says this, in verse 6: if anyone causes children who believe in Jesus to sin, they will face something worse than drowning in the sea. Those who tempt such children face eternal punishment, as do all who lead others into sin, which is implied in the next few verses. In fact, it’s likely that “these little ones” doesn’t mean children per se, but children of God, regardless of age. Those who would cause God’s people to sin will be removed from his creation if they do not put their trust in Jesus and repent.

In verses 8 and 9, we see the same language that we saw in Matthew 5: it’s better to cut off a part of your body than to go into “the eternal fire” of hell. In Mark 9, we find a parallel passage, and Mark adds, in verse 48, that hell is “where ‘their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’” (This is a quotation of Isaiah 66:24). The picture is a grim one. The point seems to be that anything that leads us into temptation should be removed, and the people who lead others into temptation are removed from earth and cast into the eternal fire.

I think this shows us that hell is not necessarily a place where God tortures people. It’s better to think of hell as the place where all evil will go. One day, God will remove all the evil from the earth. That will include all of our sin. But it will also include removing all the people who reject Jesus. If God is going to dwell with his people in an evil-free, sin-free world, he must remove all the evil. It has to be taken out.

At this point, it’s worth talking about the word “hell.” In these passages, when we see the English word “hell,” it’s a translation of the Greek word *γέεννα*, or *Gehenna*. This Greek word is itself a translation of a Hebrew phrase: the “valley of Hinnom.” This was an actual place. It was just south of Jerusalem, outside the city walls. In the Old Testament, it’s called “the Valley of the Son of Hinnom” (Josh. 15:8; 18:16). It was known as the place where some of the

wicked Israelites worshiped idols. As part of this worship, they even sacrificed their children. In Jeremiah 32:35, God says of the people of Judah: “They built the high places of Baal in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.” Manasseh, one of the most wicked kings of Judah, did the same, sacrificing his own sons. We read this in 2 Chronicles 33:6: “And he burned his sons as an offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and used fortune-telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.”

This place was also known as a place of judgment, where God would judge the unfaithful people of Judah. One of the good kings, Josiah, tore down the idols that were there (2 Kgs. 23:10). God promised future judgment in Jeremiah 7:31–32 and 19:1–9. And surely this was a place of slaughter when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 587/586 B.C. It was probably a place of slaughter when the Romans destroyed the city in A.D. 70, something I talked about last week.

So, Jesus’ audience would know what “hell” was. In their minds, it was associated with idolatry, wicked practices, and judgment. Some people say it was also a place where people burned their garbage.

We should remember this because the city of God, the new Jerusalem, which is the same thing as the new creation, is going to be a place where there are no idols, no false gods, and no atrocities like sacrificing children. All those things will have to be taken out of the city and judged. (See Revelation 21–22.) Idols need to be removed because they are against God, who alone deserves worship, and they are bad for us, because they take us away from God. The best thing for us is the true God, and any god substitute, whether it’s money or entertainment or power or anything else, is bad for us. So it must be removed. And it is placed in *Gehenna* to be burned. Again, the removal of evil from God’s place is to protect the place and the people in it. At the same time, hell is a place of judgment for those who have rejected God.

There’s a third point that I want to make about Jesus’ teachings on hell. There are no repentant people in hell. Those who are in hell go there because they don’t want God. God therefore gives them over to their desires. And once in hell, those desires don’t change.

We see this in Luke in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, found in Luke 16:19–31:



<sup>19</sup> “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. <sup>20</sup> And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, <sup>21</sup> who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. <sup>22</sup> The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried, <sup>23</sup> and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. <sup>24</sup> 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 in anguish in this flame.’ <sup>25</sup> 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 here, and you are in anguish. <sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’ <sup>27</sup> And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house— <sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ <sup>29</sup> But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ <sup>30</sup> And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ <sup>31</sup> He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’ ”

There’s a lot in that passage, so I don’t have time to unpack everything there. But keep in mind that this is a parable, a story. We can’t press the details of the story. For example, people who are in hell can’t talk to people who are in heaven. But the main point is that there was a rich man who ignored a beggar named Lazarus. The rich man didn’t love his neighbor, and we can assume he didn’t love God. So when he died, he went to Hades, the realm of the dead.<sup>8</sup> Lazarus, the beggar, goes to be with Abraham, one of the great believers in the Old Testament. And what does the rich man do? Does he say, “God, I’m sorry, please forgive me!”? No. He asks Abraham to send Lazarus to him to give him some water. He’s not sorry for the way he treated Lazarus. Instead, he continues to see Lazarus as someone less than him, a mere servant. So the rich man never really changes. We also see that there is a chasm between heaven and hell. After death, there is no second chance.<sup>9</sup> There is no way to go from hell to heaven. We also see that the place of judgment, where the rich man is, is a place of torment. And finally, we see that Scripture is

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<sup>8</sup> The Greek word here is not *γέεννα* (*Gehenna*) but *ᾗδης* (*Hades*). The Hebrew equivalent is *Sheol*. Roughly, this is the grave, the place where all dead people go. But through the Old Testament, *Sheol* took on the notion of the place of damned. The point is that this is not the final hell, the lake of fire. Hades is the intermediate state, the state between death and the final judgment for all those who have rejected God.

<sup>9</sup> See also Heb. 9:27.

enough to warn people about the dangers of this reality. God has revealed in the Bible that people need to repent and put their faith in Jesus.

This passage shows that no one in hell is repentant. C. S. Lewis captured this truth very well, as he often does. In his book, *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis writes,

I willingly believe that the damned are, in one sense, successful, rebels to the end; that the doors of hell are locked on the *inside*. I do not mean that the ghosts may not *wish* to come out of hell, in the vague fashion wherein an envious man ‘wishes’ to be happy: but they certainly do not will even the first preliminary stages of that self-abandonment through which alone the soul can reach any good. They enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have demanded, and are therefore self-enslaved just as the blessed, forever submitting to obedience, become through all eternity more and more free.<sup>10</sup>

Since people don’t want to walk down the narrow path of self-abandonment, or selflessness, they don’t want to repent. Those who refuse to repent now stay on that selfish path forever. God gives them over to their desires. As Lewis writes in *The Great Divorce*, “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock it is opened.”<sup>11</sup> The trajectory to hell begins in this life, and it keeps going beyond it.<sup>12</sup>

I wanted to add a couple of other thoughts on hell before I continue. One is very much related to what I just said. A pastor and author named Joshua Ryan Butler writes about this in an interesting book called *The Skeletons in God’s Closet*.<sup>13</sup> He notes that one of the metaphors for God’s people used in the Bible is God’s bride. (Other metaphors include things like children, the body of Christ, sheep/flock, and the temple.) Then, he has us imagine various options that God could take with respect to judgment. One is to allow evil and sin in the new creation. He says, “To bring sin into God’s city is to bring our old lovers [our idols] into God’s honeymoon suite. And our old lovers want to tear that suite apart. . . . Our world is redeemed *from* sin and *to* God.

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<sup>10</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 114.

<sup>11</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 72.

<sup>12</sup> This can be seen in John 3:16–21, 36.

<sup>13</sup> Joshua Ryan Butler, *The Mercy of Hell, the Surprise of Judgment, the Hope of Holy War* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2014).

For God to ignore unrepentant sin in the new creation would be to make a farce of redemption; it would say implicitly that creation hadn't truly been redeemed."<sup>14</sup>

Another option that God has is to bring his people into the new creation, where they will live forever, but annihilate the condemned. This position is called annihilationism. Butler says about this, "At its core, it is like God saying, 'Marry me or I'll kill you.' If you knew a guy who asked the love of his life to marry him, you would hope he would have the maturity if she rejected the proposal to simply move on and let her go her own way. If he killed her for turning him down, we would think him small, vindictive, and cruel. And we would lock him up as a criminal."<sup>15</sup>

Third, some people think that, in the end, all will be redeemed. Some people believe, or at least suggest, that God will eventually win everyone over. The hope here is that God will give everyone a second chance after death to accept his free offer of forgiveness. Butler finds this idea problematic: "It is like God saying, 'Marry me or I'll lock you in the basement until you learn to love me.' We know from common courtesy and everyday experience that the most mature response to a rejected marriage proposal is not to abduct the unrequited lover and lock her in your basement, but simply to let her go her own way."<sup>16</sup>

The traditional view of hell is actually the best option. "God lets the marriage-rejecters go their own way, and contains the destructive power of their sin 'outside the city' to prevent them from crashing the wedding."<sup>17</sup> God will protect his bride from evil, and he will keep all the wedding crashers out of his eternal wedding feast.

The other thought I want to add is that some people are very bothered by the idea of hell as fire. It's obvious that the Bible at times depicts hell as an unending fire. And that's frightening. But sometimes the Bible depicts hell as "outer darkness," a place of torment and probably isolation (Matt. 8:12; 25:30). Both images can't be literally true, which means that they must be metaphors for something far worse than we can imagine.

Hell is a matter of justice. Because God is a perfect judge, he must punish all evil. And all evil will be punished ultimately and finally in one of two ways. One of those ways is the final judgment of all those who reject God. All evil will be removed from the world, starting with

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<sup>14</sup> Butler, *The Skeletons in God's Closet*, 63.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

Satan and ending with every person who hasn't repented. But for those who are in Christ, their evil has already been punished. When Jesus died on the cross, the sin, the evil, the rebellion of all those who will ever trust in Jesus was punished, once and for all. We cannot claim that God is unjust. We cannot claim that he is distant. God knows evil; he entered into it; he suffered it on the cross. He has provided a way for us to be forgiven. He has given us an opportunity to stop our self-destructive ways.

If you are here today and you don't know Jesus, I plead with you to run to him. You can trust Jesus. He went through hell on the cross so that you don't have to go to hell forever.

If you are a Christian, let God continue to remove the hell out of your own heart. Let God drive out all the sin within you. Pray that he would do this. Take steps to remove the things that cause you to sin.

And if you are a Christian, you would do well to be like Jesus. Jesus warned others about the reality of hell. It is real and it awaits many. Be like Jesus and tell people to flee the wrath to come. But make sure you do that like Jesus, telling people to repent while lamenting. Do it with tears in your eyes. Tell people there is but one way to rest in peace.

I'll close with a quote from the great British preacher, Charles Spurgeon, who said these words to his congregation at the end of 1860:

Oh, my brothers and sisters in Christ, if sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies; and if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay, and not madly to destroy themselves. If hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, "The Wailing of Risca," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 7 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1861), 11.