

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 21 June 2026. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Reality of the Judgment of Hell

Many of you have heard the story of the day when I believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and became a member of God's family. However, for those who haven't heard the story, I will tell it again. (I never get tired of telling it!) On the day when Jesus saved me, I was only six weeks short of my seventh birthday; and in the seven years of my life, I had acquired a good amount of Bible knowledge. From the day I was born, I had heard the Bible read every single day, at family devotion time; and the Bible was naturally woven into our family's conversations all day long. From the time I began Senior Infants, I heard the Bible read to me every single day, in my Christian school; and by First Class, I was reading and memorising Scripture every week, as part of my school assignments. I also heard and read the Bible every single time I went to church. In Sunday School, Sunday Worship Hour, Sunday evening service, and Wednesday evening kids' class, the Bible was taught, read, and memorised. By the time I was seven years old, I had scores of Scripture verses tucked away in my head. I knew the Gospel message; and I knew how to be saved. However, there was just one problem: *I wasn't* saved! The knowledge of Jesus was in my head; but I didn't know Him in my heart. I had never *personally* trusted in Christ as my Saviour, *personally* repented of my sin, and *personally* surrendered my life to Him.

But then, the day came when everything I had been taught about Heaven, Hell, sin, and salvation suddenly became *very* real to me. While my family was at an Amish farm one Saturday afternoon to buy milk, I went out into the field to play with the Amish children. I was running around, and not watching where I was going, when suddenly, my head was pounded by the crossbeam of a swing set glider, as it was on the upswing. (If you know anything about the Amish, you know that they build things hard, heavy, and solid!) The crossbeam hit me on the cheekbone and jaw, and knocked me out cold for about ten minutes. When I awoke, blood was running out of my mouth and nose; and for the first time in my life, I was very, very scared. I knew that I was a rebellious, cheeky little sinner; and I knew that if that blow had killed me, I would have been in Hell forever! The guilt of my sin, combined with the thought of Hell, gripped my heart with unspeakable fear. I *trembled* with fear! My parents stopped at an ice cream stand on the way home, so that I could put something cold in my mouth, to numb the pain and slow down the bleeding of my gums; but I couldn't be comforted. All I could think about was *Hell*, and about the fact that I might have come within a hair's breadth of going there that afternoon. I begged my parents to show me how to be saved; and that day, I personally asked Christ to forgive me of my sins, and save me. From that day forward, my life began to change dramatically, because *Christ* was now living in my heart, and making me into a new person. I never forgot about the reality of Hell, though. I never forgot where I *could* have been if I had died that day. Oftentimes in the winter months, the fire in my parents' wood-burning stove would get so hot, that I couldn't even stand within four or five feet from hearth; and whenever I felt that pain from the intense heat of the fire, I couldn't help but think about how hot *Hell* must be. Whenever I felt that heat, I often prayed in my mind, and thanked God for saving me!

Folks, we live in a world in which people who believe in Hell, and who warn others about Hell, are increasingly viewed as dangerous social misfits, who are causing mental distress and harm to people.

There may even come a day when Christians will go to prison for the “crime” of warning people about Hell. However, should that day come, I will preach to my prison mates that they *must repent* and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, if they want to miss Hell. Earthly prisons are only for this lifetime; but *Hell* is an eternal, fiery prison; *and it is real!* The Lord Jesus, when He was on earth, constantly warned about the “*furnace of fire*” called Hell, and commanded people to “*repent,*” lest they “*perish.*”

It is wonderful to talk about the glories of *Heaven*, as we have done in the past seven weeks; but in the coming weeks, I will now be preaching about Hell. Folks, this is not a pleasant thing to preach about; and I do not relish it. However, if I be a real preacher of the Gospel, and if I truly care about people’s souls, I *must* warn those who aren’t saved not to end up in Hell; and I must exhort Christians to *warn* their friends and loved ones about Hell. The title of this message is ***The Reality and the Judgment of Hell.***

Read Revelation 20:11-15.

I. The rightness of God’s justice

In the first message that I preached about Heaven, I mentioned that in my conversations with people through the years, I have seen a consistent trend. While most people (perhaps 70%) profess to believe that there is a real and beautiful place called “Heaven,” only a small minority of these same folks also believe that there is a real place called Hell. Now, why is this so? The same Bible that tells us of a heavenly city called “The New Jerusalem” also solemnly warns about a place of fiery torment, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, called “Hell,” or “the Lake of Fire.” Why, then, is there a much greater willingness to believe in Heaven, yet a nearly universal *unwillingness* to believe in “Hell”? It’s simple: people don’t want to believe what the Bible says about Hell, because they are afraid that they might be going there; and they don’t want to deal with that reality. They would rather push the thought of Hell away, and pretend as though it didn’t exist, than to consider that they might be in serious trouble with God.

Folks, if there be a real place called “Hell” (and the Bible makes it clear that there is), then repudiating it, mocking it, being offended by it, or simply choosing not to think about it, will not change its reality. If God have told us that there is a real “Hell” (and He plainly has), then calling the bearers of this message “mean-spirited,” “bigoted,” “unloving,” “irrational,” “unscientific,” “alarmist,” “extremist,” or “mentally unstable” will not change its reality. If there be a real Hell (as the Bible undeniably teaches that there is), then spiritualising it, allegorising it away, saying that Hell simply means “annihilation,” or saying that “Hell is only a state of mind,” or that “Hell is here on earth,” will not change its literal reality.

During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus constantly affirmed the reality of Hell, and commanded people to repent, so that they would not end up in that awful place. Are we, then, *above* our Master? Are we too sophisticated to talk with people about such an unpleasant topic as “Hell”? Or are we bound, by love and obedience, to do as our Master did, and warn people? Obviously, it is the latter! Jesus said, “***Remember the word that I said unto you, The***

servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.” Christian, you may be assured that you *will* be grossly misjudged, maligned, and portrayed as “evil,” if you warn people about Hell; yet, you *must* warn them. Like **Ezekiel**, you are a “watchman on the wall,” whom God will hold to account for how faithfully (or unfaithfully) you warned the wicked of their wicked way. The most *loving* thing you can do is to warn people *not* to go to Hell: and conversely, the most *unloving* thing you could do is *not* to warn people about Hell! *Not* warning others about Hell because you are “too busy” is like walking past a neighbour’s house at night, and seeing that a fire has just sprung up in his sitting room, yet walking right on by, *not* phoning 999, *not* phoning that neighbour, and *not* pounding on his door to warn him to get out of his house immediately—and all because you are too tired. Not warning people about Hell for fear of troubling them is like a doctor’s not telling a patient that he has malignant cancer (which *could* be cured, if treated immediately), for fear that the news will be too “troubling” to him, or that the patient might think that he is unkind and unloving.

By the way, lest you think that the cancer analogy is a bit extreme, think again. It’s actually not extreme enough. Cancer treatments may fail; but the blood of Jesus never fails. The blood that Jesus shed for our sins *is* the infallible remedy for all sin; and Christians who relate this wonderful message to others *are* like doctors informing people of that remedy. Yet, most people look at Christians as “unkind” and “unloving” for daring to tell them that they have a deadly sin problem, which only Jesus can heal. In fact, they view *God* as unloving. The reason that many people deny the existence of Hell is that they refuse to believe that a loving God would create such a terrible place as Hell in the first place. “Why would a loving God create a place of torment for people?” they say. Those who make this argument fail to recognise two vitally important truths. First, they fail to recognise the **awesome justice of God**; and secondly, they fail to recognise the **awesome criminality of our sin**. Because they do not see their sin as the infinite crime that it is, they think that an eternal punishment for sin would be “unjust,” and “unequal to the crime” (*if* they view their sin as criminal to any extent—which most people don’t). But make no mistake about it, friends: though God *is* love, he is also a just God, who will ***“will not at all acquit the wicked.”*** As the eternal, infinite God, He cannot simply “acquit” sin, and sweep it under the rug, just because He is loving and merciful. Sin is an *eternal* affront to God’s just and holy character: therefore, the only way that He, as the righteous judge, can deal with sin, is to punish it *eternally*. Let’s see what Scripture says about God’s justice.

Read Deuteronomy 32:4.

Read Nahum 1:1-3.

Folks, did you catch what Nahum said in the first part of **verse 3**? He said that God is “*slow to anger*.” In other words, God does *not want* to pour out His anger on sinners. He wants them to repent, so that He might *save* them! The people of Nineveh had experienced God’s incredible mercy a couple generations earlier, when God *spared their entire metropolis* from destruction, because the people *humbled themselves and repented* when Jonah preached to them. Yet, within a generation, the descendants of those who repented went right back to idolatry, immorality, sorcery, witchcraft, and great cruelty; and for another 100 years, God seemingly was silent about it. However, the fact that judgment hadn’t fallen on them *yet* didn’t mean that the God of Israel was *weak*: it simply meant that He is “*slow to anger*.” Though God is “*of great power*,” and could instantly throw sinners *alive* into the Lake of Fire, He is often willing to give them a long time to repent. God had shown great longsuffering and mercy to Nineveh; but now He wanted them to know that He would *not* acquit them of their sin. Just because He is longsuffering and merciful doesn’t mean that He can sweep sin under the rug and say, “I don’t want to destroy you, so I’ll let you off the hook.” No, He *must* judge sin!

This brings us back to the **Revelation 20** passage that we read at the beginning of this message. In that passage, John said that men who rejected the Lord will stand before Him to be “*judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works*.” Most people these days despise the word “judge” and “judgment”; but despising the word “judgment” does not change its reality. As the holy Judge of all the earth, God not only cannot allow sin into His holy habitation: He *must punish it*. Our sin is an eternal affront to an eternal God; and it must be punished eternally. **Revelation 21:8** says, “*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death*.” Christ *took* the eternal judgment for our sin on the cross, in three horrible hours of earth time, in order to purchase our salvation; but those who refuse to receive that wonderful gift must pay the eternal penalty that their sin has incurred: and that penalty is eternity in the Lake of Fire!

II. The real meaning of “death”

There is a term that has become popular in recent years; and it is called CET (“conscious eternal torment”). Professing Christians who believe that there is a real Heaven, yet who refuse to believe that there is a real Hell, use this term a lot; and they say that Hell is *not* “CET.” They say that Hell is merely a figurative expression, and not a literal place of fire. The flames, they say, represent “annihilation”—simply ceasing to exist. In their thinking, cessation of existence is sufficient punishment for one’s sin against God. But is it? Not according to God’s Word! Let’s see what the Lord said about this in **Revelation 14**.

Read Revelation 14:9-11.

In **Revelation 14**, we read about some amazing proclamations that God will give to the inhabitants of earth during the future Tribulation period, through the agency of angels. God will use 144,000 Jewish men to preach the Gospel during the Tribulation; yet, God, in His mercy, will go even farther, and will send *angels* to fly throughout the heavens, and warn sinners to repent. In these verses, we are told what message that the *third* angel will proclaim. In a loud voice, he will warn the inhabitants of earth that those who take the “mark” of the Beast (the Antichrist) in their right hand or forehead will ***“drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.”*** Not only that, but he says that ***“the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”*** This is anything but a description of “annihilation,” folks! If you no longer exist, then in what sense can you be ***“tormented with fire and brimstone,”*** and ***“have no rest day nor night”***? In order to be “tormented,” you must be conscious! Likewise, how can ***“the dead”*** stand before God to be judged, if “death” mean “cessation of existence”? What kind of punishment would it be for people who *no longer exist* to have their deeds reviewed and judged? It would be as ridiculous as the trial that Pope Stephen VI conducted against a prior pope, Formosus, in the year 897. Formosus had been dead for nine months; but his enemy, Pope Stephen, ordered for his bones to be dug up, and for papal robes to be put on him, and for him to be put on trial for crimes of perjury. Formosus was found guilty; his papacy was declared null; he was dressed in layman’s clothes, and buried in a grave for foreigners; and then he was dug up again, shackled with weights, and thrown into the Tiber River! (*That really taught him a lesson, right?*) Obviously, Pope Stephen had some screws loose. You can’t “judge” a lifeless corpse, and inflict torment and punishment on it. Why, then, would *God* say that sinners will be “tormented” in the Lake of Fire, if the Lake of Fire be just an expression for “annihilation” and non-existence? How can souls be “tormented” if they no longer exist, and have no consciousness?

The sobering truth, folks, is that “death” does *not* mean “cessation of existence.” When God warned Adam that in the day he ate of the forbidden fruit he would “surely die,” He didn’t mean that Adam would cease to exist. Though Adam’s body began the downward process of decay after he disobeyed God, he didn’t physically die until he was 930. However, Adam *did* die spiritually at the instant he sinned—just as God had warned. When Adam and Eve sinned, their spirits were cut off from fellowship with God. They were now under God’s condemnation; and, tragically, they were not alone in their condemnation. All of us have inherited Adam’s sin nature; and with that sin nature has come the curse of death—both physically and spiritually. Because of our sin, every one of us is ***“dead in trespasses and sins”***; and unless you repent of your sin, believe on Jesus Christ, and receive God’s gift of salvation, you will remain “dead”—separated from God—throughout eternity. We know that the lost souls who stand before God at the Great White Throne Judgment will have resurrected

bodies by that point, because the Bible says so in **Revelation 20:5**; yet, they will still be called **“the dead.”** They will be *alive*, physically; but spiritually, they will still be **“dead in trespasses and sins.”** They will be judged; the final sentence will be passed: and “death and hell” (all the inhabitants of Hell, who had been in their fiery waiting cell for centuries) will be cast into the eternal prison cell called “the Lake of Fire.”

Brethren, this is an awful and bitter truth—but truth nonetheless. That is why we who know Christ as Saviour are compelled, by His love, to be ambassadors for Him, and to tell as many people as we can that they must be reconciled to God while they still may!

III. The real meaning of “punishment”

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9.

Playing word games in order to allegorise Hell away will not change the reality of God’s eternal wrath and judgment upon sin. In the passage we’ve just read, Paul warns that those who **“obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”** will be **“punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”** Many modern cults teach that Hell is merely annihilation; but **2 Thessalonians 1:9** teaches quite differently. Paul says that the lost will be **“punished”** with everlasting destruction. The word **“punished”** comes from the verb *tino*, which means “to pay a penalty, or price.” As for the word **“destruction”** (*olesthros*), it means “ruin, death, or punishment.” It does *not* mean “annihilation,” or “ceasing to exist.” How can a person be “destroyed” everlastingly, unless he continue to *exist* everlastingly? Blissful non-existence is not “punishment”!

Read Matthew 25:41-46.

In this passage Jesus says that those who rejected Him **“shall go away into everlasting punishment.”** The word for **“punishment”** is *kolasis*; and it clearly refers to punishment in the afterlife. Of course, those who deny that Hell is a literal place claim that sinners will be “punished” by ceasing to exist; but the Greek word *kolasis* is not used in this way. It is actually used only twice in Scripture; and the one other place where it is used is **1 John 4:18**, where John says, **“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment.”** When John says **“torment,”** he is talking about torment here on *earth*, while a person is still living. Clearly, then, the word “punishment” does not mean “ceasing to exist.” It refers to physical or emotional “torment”—which can be inflicted only upon a person who exists, and who is self-aware.

IV. The real meaning of “perishing”

Read John 3:16.

John 3:16 is the simplest verse on salvation in the entire Bible. Its message is so clear! Yet, today, there are many cults and apostate groups who give a completely false meaning to the word “*perish*.” “The word ‘perish’ doesn’t refer to conscious eternal torment in a literal Lake of Fire,” they say. “It simply means “non-existence.” But is that *really* what it means? No, it isn’t! The Greek word for “*perish*” (*appolumi*) does *not* mean “to cease to exist”: it means “to destroy, mar, or ruin.” Take, for example, Jesus’ parable about the “bottles.”

Read Luke 5:36-39.

In this passage, Jesus is illustrating the fact that an entirely *new* dispensation had begun; and the New Covenant that He had come to establish with His blood could not simply be “tacked on” to the Old Covenant. If you try to pour the promises of the New Covenant into the “skin” of the Old Covenant, it won’t work. It’s like trying to put new wine into Old, thinning wineskins. It won’t work! You need completely new skins, or else the old ones will burst.

Now, think about that analogy. When Jesus said that the wine bottles would “*perish*,” did He mean that these wine bottles would cease to exist? Obviously not! The bottles would still be there; but because they were now torn, they wouldn’t be of use anymore. They would be marred, and ruined. Well, that is what Jesus means when He says that those who reject Him will “perish.” They will not *cease to exist*; rather, their souls will be “marred” and “ruined.” This “ruin” will consist of receiving an inglorious, sin-stained body, fit for eternal shame, torment, and destruction. The existence that the lost will have in the Lake of Fire can hardly be called “life”: rather, it will be a living death! That is why it is called “*the second death*.” And the worst thing part about this “everlasting destruction” is that it will be “*from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*.” Unbelievers will be eternally separated from God, and unable to stand in His presence in Heaven. They will be cast into “*the furnace of fire*,” where there will be “*wailing and gnashing of teeth*.” As **Isaiah** said, and as **Christ** said, Hell is a place where “*their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*.”

Read Matthew 13:47-50.

V. The rightness of God’s mercy

As we move through this series of messages in coming weeks, we will be digging deep into what the Bible says about Hell. Now, if you are not sure that you are saved, please don't allow the fear of Hell to drive you away! Let the Holy Spirit convict your heart, and move you to repentance. God knows everything about you, anyway; so why try to hide from Him?

This reminds me of a few incidents that happened at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, in the 1800's. Every now and then, Pastor Charles Spurgeon would suddenly stop in the middle of his message, point to a specific person in the huge audience, and name a sin that he had committed, that no one could have known about. Once he pointed at a young man and said, "*Young man, those gloves you are wearing have not been paid for: you have stolen them from your employer.*"¹ As it turned out, the man *had* stolen the gloves; and he came up afterward and confessed to Spurgeon, and begged him not to expose him, for fear that it would break his mother's heart. I don't know if that man was ever saved; but there *was* another man who *was* saved in a similar incident. Spurgeon pointed to the man and said, "*There is a man sitting there, who is a shoemaker; he keeps his shop open on Sundays, it was open last Sabbath morning, he took ninepence, and there was fourpence profit out of it; his soul is sold to Satan for fourpence!*"² As it turned out, the man *was* a shoemaker; and he *had* had his shop opened on Sundays, and *had* made ninepence, with a fourpence profit, the previous Sunday! The man was frightened, and almost didn't go back to Spurgeon's church; yet, the Holy Spirit moved him to return: and soon, he believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and was saved.³

Now, what's the point of this story? The point is this: if people tremble at the thought of being exposed by a preacher who has been shown something by the Holy Spirit, how much more should they tremble at the thought that *all* things are "***naked and open***" in God's eyes? The Lord has never given me a revelation about anyone during my preaching; but there have been times when someone has asked me if I somehow knew about a particular sin in his life, and was preaching specifically at *him*. I didn't know anything; but God did! The Holy Spirit of God uses His Word to convict us of our sin, and shows us that we need to repent!

Folks, God is a God of justice, who cannot acquit sinners. Yet, He is also a God who delights in mercy. Now, how can both these things be true? If God cannot acquit sinners, how can He show them mercy, and save them from sin, death, and Hell? *Through the sacrifice of His Son*. God the Father took His wrath against our sin, and poured it on His own beloved Son Jesus, as He hung on the cross. The Father's justice against sin was carried out on His own beloved Son, instead of on *us*. This means that God can now show *mercy* to whoever will simply believe on the Son, and embrace the sacrifice that He has already made for us. You and I do not *have* to go to the Lake of Fire—if we take God up on His offer. **Second Peter 1:18** says, "***Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.***"

Conclusion: As we close, I would say this: if you think it unfair that God would send sinners to Hell, please stop to consider how “unfair” it was that Christ, the sinless Son of God, should come down into our sin-cursed world, and pay the price *we* deserve! On the cross, He paid an eternal price for the sins of every soul who would ever live. He didn’t have to take that awful curse on Himself; but He did, because He loves us. If you have never received the gift of salvation, I urge you to do so today! In simple faith, believe that Christ’s one-time sacrifice on the cross is all you need; and in repentance of heart, turn to Christ from sin. If you are saved, I urge you to take another look at Calvary today. Remember the awful penalty of Hell, from which you have been saved; and serve Him with all your heart! Warn others that judgment is coming, and that they must place their faith in the blood of the Lamb of God if they would miss Hell, and enter the gates of Light!

¹ <https://bethelcornerstone.org/2019/02/12/charles-spurgeon-had-the-gift-of-prophecy/>

² <https://bethelcornerstone.org/2019/02/12/charles-spurgeon-had-the-gift-of-prophecy/>

³ <https://bethelcornerstone.org/2019/02/12/charles-spurgeon-had-the-gift-of-prophecy/>