

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 19 July 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 Eternal Death of Hell

For the last four weeks, I've been preaching about the reality of Hell. However, the purpose of these messages is not to scare people. In every single message, I've shown how a person can *escape* the judgment of Hell, and spend eternity with the Lord in Heaven instead. To warn sinners of the judgment to come is the most loving thing that I, as a pastor, and as a Christian, could do. Now, of course, the world doesn't see it this way. Most people in our society consider it "emotionally harmful," and even "criminal," to disturb people by preaching on Hell. They don't have any problem with using "hell" as a swear word, or with telling their enemies to "go to hell"; yet, to speak of an *actual*, burning Hell, where all unredeemed sinners will spend eternity in torment, is considered "impolite" to the highest degree. Even many Christians have bought into the idea that it is impolite to speak of "Hell"; and, unfortunately, this is no new sentiment. In the late 1800's, Pastor Charles Spurgeon made this observation:

"There are some ministers who never mention anything about Hell. I heard of a minister who once said to his congregation, 'If you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be sent to the place which it is not polite to mention.' He ought not to have been allowed to preach again, I am sure, if he could not use plain words. Now, if I saw that house on fire over there, do you think I would stand and say, 'I believe the operation of combustion is proceeding yonder'? No; I would call out, 'Fire! Fire!'"¹

Billions of souls in our world are, at this very moment, labouring under the illusion that their existence will end at the moment of death, and that there is nothing to worry about beyond the grave. They glibly say things such as "Hell is here on earth," or, "I've already been through Hell with the things I've been through." They have absolutely no idea what they are saying, nor of the dire danger that they are in! However, God, in His mercy, is in the business of opening people's eyes to their true spiritual condition, so that they might be saved; and on rare occasions, He does so by allowing people to witness a lost person who just came back from the very precipice of death.

Back in 1977, a cardiologist named Dr. Maurice Rawlings, at the University of Tennessee College of Medicine, was resuscitating a man who had just clinically died from a heart attack; and he was successful in restoring him. However, as the patient's heartbeat and respiration were coming back, he let out the most blood-curdling scream that Rawlings had ever heard. In utter agony, the man screamed, "I am in hell!"² Dr. Rawlings later testified that the patient was "Terrified, and pleaded with me to help him. I was scared to death... Then I noticed a genuinely alarmed look on his face. He had a terrified look worse than the expression seen in death! This patient had a grotesque grimace expressing sheer horror! His pupils were dilated, and he was perspiring and trembling—he looked as if his hair was on end."³

Now, up to this point in his life, Dr. Rawlings had been a proud, diehard atheist. He considered the Bible to be "hocus pocus"; and "to him, death was nothing more than a painless extinction."⁴ But that day in the A & E changed everything. He was shaken to the core by what he had seen; and he launched into a serious, professional research on near-death experiences. He found that at least 50% of people who have some kind of "near death experience" report that they saw "lakes of fire, devil-like figures, and other

sights reflecting the darkness of hell.”⁵ He himself said, “Just listening to these patients has changed my whole life... There *is* life after death; and if I don’t know where I’m going, it’s not safe to die.”⁶ He began to read the Bible for answers about Heaven, Hell, and salvation; and he became a Christian.

Now, we don’t need testimonies such as this one to confirm the Bible. When the Lord says that “***The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God,***” we’d better take heed. Physical death is part of the curse, and it comes to all; but *eternal death*—an eternity in Hell—is only for those who refuse to believe God’s Word, and repent. The title of this message is ***The Eternal Death of Hell.***

Read Revelation 20:11-15.

I. Death is separation.

In our first message in this Hell series, we read **Revelation 20:11-15**; and in that passage, we saw what the Bible’s definition of “death” is. I am returning to this passage yet again this morning, because its importance cannot be overstated. Why is this passage so important? Because in this passage, God describes the inhabitants of Hell as “***the dead.***” It behoves us to know exactly who “the dead” are, and what “death” means.

With this in mind, please look again at **Revelation 20:12**. In this verse, the Apostle John says that “***the dead***” will one day stand before God to be judged. Let those words sink in. How can “***the dead***” stand before God to be judged, if “death” mean “blissful non-existence?” In what possible sense could someone who doesn’t exist stand before God? John didn’t say that these condemned souls will *become* “dead” after they are cast into some figurative (or even literal) “Lake of Fire”: rather, they will *already* be dead *before* they stand before God at His judgment bar!

Clearly, death, according to Scripture, is *not* “ceasing to exist”: rather, it is “separation” from God. Those who stand before God will still be “***dead in trespasses and sins,***” just as they were separated from Him during their lifetimes on earth; and because they were never “***quickened***” (made alive to God by receiving His free gift of eternal life), they will remain dead to God throughout eternity.

Read Ephesians 2:1-9.

In the opening verses of the **Gospel of John**, the Apostle John made several incredibly important statements about the Lord Jesus Christ. First, John called Christ “the Word,” and stated that in the beginning, the Word was “***with***” God, and “***was***” God. He then stated that Christ is the Creator of all things. But then, he made this statement: “***In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.***” This statement reveals what Christ’s original relationship with mankind was like. Not only was Christ the source of man’s **physical life**: He was also the Source of man’s **spiritual and eternal life**.

Now, what *is* “spiritual and eternal life”? It is a *personal relationship* with God, which lasts for all eternity. On the night of His arrest, when Christ and the disciples were on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus stopped to pray to His Father; and as He was praying, He said: ***“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”*** Now, what does this statement reveal about us and God? It reveals that we do *not* automatically “know” God when we enter this world. It reveals that in order to “know” God, a divine intervention and transformation must take place.

Now, in the beginning, this was not the case. When God created Adam and Eve, they possessed the gift of spiritual, eternal life. From the first moment of their existence, they had an unbroken relationship with God. Their spirits had perfect fellowship with Him. They *knew* God in a personal way; and it was a beautiful relationship! God walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day, every day. The light of God’s presence was continually with them.

But then something tragic happened. Adam and Eve rebelled against God, and ate of the forbidden fruit. God had given them only one test of obedience and love; and they failed the test. The moment they ate the forbidden fruit and sinned against God, they died.

Read Genesis 2:15-17.

God told Adam, ***“In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”*** Adam and Eve didn’t die physically on the day they sinned; but they did die *spiritually*. The beautiful relationship they had had with God was cut off, and they were separated from Him. (And it took only one sin for this to happen.) They went from spiritual life to spiritual death. Not only that, but their sinful, rebellious nature (and the separation from God that came with it) was passed down to all Adam’s descendants. **Romans 5:12** says, ***“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”***

Before Adam sinned, he was *not* in spiritual darkness at all: he knew only the Light and Life of God. However, after Adam sinned, we were all, as a race, plunged into spiritual darkness, and spiritual death. No longer does mankind dwell in the light of God’s presence. In his natural condition, man now dwells in spiritual death—the ***“land of the shadow of death,”*** as Isaiah put it. This means that the only one who can rescue us from death is God Himself—the One who is the Source of life. Since it was God’s desire for man to be reconciled to Him, He took it upon Himself to provide restored spiritual and eternal life to our spiritually dead race. The Godhead planned, from eternity past, to do this. **The Father** sent His Son into the world to be the ransom for sinners, on the cross; **the Son** (in His humanity) willingly laid down His life in our place, and died our eternal death; and the **Holy Spirit** imparts this life in the hearts of all who repent and believe on the Son.

If you are struggling to understand what eternal life” and “eternal death” are, please listen to the Apostle John’s simple words in **1 John 5:12**. John said, ***“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”*** Either you “have” the Son of God, and have eternal life (which means a relationship with God that will never end); or you *don’t* have the Son of God, and *don’t* have eternal life, because you have not placed your faith in the Son. If you have never received Christ, you are spiritually dead to God; and if you pass out of this life without having received Christ, and His gift of eternal life, you will be eternally “dead” to God, in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

II. Death is *not* “soul-sleep.”

The message that I’m preaching to you this morning is not a popular one. Our secular, atheistic modern world condemns the doctrine of “conscious, eternal torment” as barbaric, medieval, and outdated. However, atheists aren’t the only ones who shout down the Bible’s teaching on Hell. Many professing “Christian” cults have, for about the last 150 years, used carefully-selected Scriptures to convince people that there is no place of eternal, conscious torment. They say that God would never send people to a real, burning Hell, because He is a God of love; and one of their favourite proof texts is **Ecclesiastes 9:5**.

Read Ecclesiastes 9:5.

The verse we’ve just read is a darling proof-text for those who believe in “soul sleep.” “What is soul-sleep,” you say? Soul-sleep is the idea that when a person dies, his “life force” goes out of him, and he no longer exists. Now, in case you’re wondering what a “life force” is, it is the cults’ re-defined word for “spirit.” You see, the Bible teaches that the “spirit” is the invisible, immaterial part of our being that is able to commune with God. The human spirit is *not* an impersonal “force,” such as electricity, that energises the body: the spirit is a *personal* entity, with a *personal* mind and will. (That is why Mary said, ***“My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”***) However, to cults such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Seventh-Day Adventists, the “spirit” is nothing more than an impersonal “force” that energises the body; and when you die, the spirit (which was nothing more than “energy”) simply ceases to exist.

Now, if you wanted to convince someone of “soul-sleep” from Scripture, this is about the best verse you could use—*provided*, of course, that you separate it from its context. You see, you can use out-of-context Scriptures to “prove” just about anything you want. You could even try to use Scripture to prove that there is no God, if you wished! You could quote the second clause of **Psalms 14:1**, and say, “See? The Bible says, ***‘There is no God.’***” Of course, to do this, you’d have to leave out the clause just before it—***“The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.”*** I don’t know that anyone has ever actually tried to prove that there is no God by

using **Psalm 14:1**; but I do know that cultists use **Ecclesiastes 9:5** every day to “prove” that there is no existence after death.

Now, how do cultists get the idea of “soul-sleep” from this verse? Well, to them, the statement **“the dead know not anything”** is their “proof of the pudding.” They say, “See? The dead don’t know anything. This means that they aren’t conscious, because they don’t exist.” However, they fail to interpret the verse in its context. In the very next verse, King Solomon goes on to say, **“Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.”** Folks, that phrase **“under the sun”** is very important. It is used 27 times in the book of **Ecclesiastes**; and it is the key to understanding this passage. Solomon is saying that those who have passed out of this world are no longer conscious of what is happening **“under the sun”**—in other words, *on this earth*. They no longer have any portion in *this* world, because they have departed from this physical realm. Their love, hatred, and envy have now perished (literally, “vanished”), because they are no longer here in this world to express these emotions to anyone.

Now, for even clearer perspective, consider King Solomon’s words in **Ecclesiastes 3**.

Read Ecclesiastes 3:18-22.

What is Solomon saying in these passages? Is he saying that when you die, you die like a dog, and cease to exist? Obviously not! For one thing, you’ll notice that in **verse 21**, Solomon said that upon death, the spirit of **“man”** goes **“upward”** (meaning, upward to God, to be judged); but in contrast, the spirit of *the beast* goes downward to the earth. Animals do have a spirit, or immaterial part of their being, which works together with their bodies, and makes them “living creatures.” However, an animal’s spirit is not designed to commune with God, as man’s spirit can do; and upon death, their spirit and body both go to the ground, and cease to exist. But with *man*, this is not so. Man’s spirit *does* have the ability to commune with God, and *does* continue to exist after death. “But, Pastor, why does Solomon say that man’s death is no different from an animal’s death? And why does he say that ‘The dead know not anything’? Doesn’t that mean that we are no longer conscious after we die?” No, it doesn’t!

You see, you must remember that the book of **Ecclesiastes** is a record of Solomon’s journey from the borderland of apostasy back to faith in the true and living God. Though **Ecclesiastes** was written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it is, nonetheless, a divine record of *Solomon’s* erring thoughts, in the latter years of his life. Solomon had lost the love for God that he had once had, and had begun to participate in apostasy, by allowing his heathen wives to build temples to their false gods. He had also fallen in love with the wealth and earthly things that God had allowed him to have; and he had an insatiable desire for more stuff. At this point in his life, Solomon was no longer looking at things from a heavenly, godly perspective, but from an earthly, carnal perspective. He was—as he repeatedly stated throughout the book—looking

at life from the perspective of a man living “*under the sun*”—as a worldly man. And how does a worldly man view death? Practically speaking, a worldly man sees death as the end of existence (even though he may *profess* to believe in an afterlife). Everything that he has worked for in this life *is* gone when he dies. All his thoughts, and plans, and ambitions in *this* world, *do* perish: and all the “rewards” of *this* life do pass away; and it *appears* that there is nothing beyond death. This is how lost people see life; and that is how Solomon, in his carnality and apostasy at this point in his life, saw things (even though he was a saved man). He had gotten his eyes off the Lord, and was looking at things in the same hopeless way that lost people do. That’s why he said, 38 times, “*Hevel hevelim; hacal hevel*” (“*Vanity of vanities; all is vanity*”)! However, when Solomon’s faith in God was restored, he said this.

Read Ecclesiastes 11:9-10 / 12:13-14.

Obviously, Solomon believed that there *is* existence and consciousness after death. Otherwise, why would he have said that God will review people’s lives, and bring their every deed into judgment? If you don’t exist, how can you be judged, or be aware that you’re being judged? And why would you have any reason to prepare to meet God? You wouldn’t. Solomon clearly did *not* believe in soul-sleep, or “annihilationism”; and neither should we! Soul-sleep is a damnable lie, which is speeding countless millions of people (both religious and non-religious) to Hell, with the false confidence that “When I die, I’ll rest in peace, because I won’t exist anymore.” Nothing could be further from the truth! If you die without having received God’s gift of salvation, you will *never* have rest or peace again—only an eternity of spiritual death (separation from God), and torment.

III. Death is sure; but eternal life is secure!

Don’t be deceived: judgment is coming for all of us. **Hebrews 9:27-28** says, “*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*” Those who do not repent of their sin (turn to Christ from sin) and place their faith in Jesus will, after they pass out of this life, remain in the realm of spiritual death. Throughout the endless ages of eternity, they will suffer the “*second death*”—eternal separation from the Lord, in a place of fiery torment. Do not let this be *your* fate! Christ wants to give you eternal life—a relationship with Him that lasts for all eternity.

Read John 5:24-26.

In **verse 24**, Jesus promised that all who believe on Him have “*everlasting life*.” And why? Because they “*passed from death unto life*” at the moment when they believed on Jesus. And what is “*everlasting life*”? Is Christ talking about living forever *physically*, without ever

dying physically? Obviously not! We *all* die physically, and our bodies are put into the grave. What, then, is “**everlasting life**”? Everlasting life means *being alive to God in your spirit—having a relationship with Him, which lasts forever*.

Now, let’s break this down. Look again at what Jesus said in **verse 24**. He said that the person who believes on Him “***hath*** (has) **everlasting life**.” The present tense of the word “***has***” shows that “**everlasting life**” is something that the believer has *right now, in this lifetime*. Jesus didn’t say, “He that believes will *eventually* have everlasting life.” No, He said, “He that believes *has* everlasting life.” He didn’t say, “He that believes will *eventually* pass from death unto life.” No, He said, “He that believes *has* passed from death unto life.” Obviously, Jesus isn’t talking about *physical* death and *physical* life here. He’s talking about *spiritual* death and *spiritual* life. He’s talking about moving from spiritual “death” (*separation* from God) to spiritual “life” (a relationship with God). This spiritual transformation is absolutely necessary—because the only alternative to eternal life is eternal death. Jesus plainly says here in **verse 24** that until a person possesses eternal life, *he is dead!*

Now, we know that Jesus has the power to raise people’s bodies *physically* from the dead. (Jesus makes this claim in **verses 28 and 29**.) However, physical resurrection isn’t the kind of resurrection that Jesus is talking about in **verse 25**. How do I know? Because Jesus said that the hour “***now is***” when the dead will hear His voice, and live. Scripture doesn’t record that Jesus raised anyone *physically* from the dead in the hour when He made this statement: so He’s obviously talking about another kind of resurrection. He’s talking about a *spiritual* resurrection to life. Apparently, in the *very hour* that Jesus said these words, there were people who “***passed from death unto life***.” In other words, they believed on Jesus, and were saved.

Folks, until you receive the gift of everlasting life, you will remain in the condition in which you were born—*spiritually dead, and separated from God!* There is no “in between.” You can’t be “half alive,” or “half dead.” Physically, either you’re alive, or you’re dead. Likewise, spiritually, you’re either alive, or you’re dead. Jesus stated this same truth over and over again. Let’s take a look at what Jesus said shortly before He raised Lazarus from the dead.

Read John 11:25-26.

In these verses, Jesus is talking about two kinds of resurrection. First of all, in **verse 25**, Jesus is talking about the resurrection of the physical body. He is promising that all who believe on Him, and who die physically, will one day be raised again bodily, in an immortal, glorified body. However, in His next statement (in **verse 26**), He is *not* talking about physical death. If Jesus were saying that those who believe on Him will *never die physically*, He would have been telling an enormous lie. We *all* die physically! And remember: Jesus said these words at a funeral! When Jesus made this claim that “Whoever believes on me will never die, Lazarus had been dead for four days; and his body was rotting! If Jesus had been saying that those

who believe in Him will never die *physically*, the people would have thought He was nuts—and rightly so! There was Lazarus—a man who had believed on Jesus with his whole heart—lying dead in His tomb; and Jesus says that whoever will believe on Him shall “never die”!

Clearly, when Jesus said that ***“he that believes on me shall never die,”*** He was talking about **not dying spiritually—not being cut off from God!** Jesus is promising that those who believe on Him will never again be dead to God (cut off from a relationship with God), as they were before they were saved. Those who believe on Jesus will never be separated from Him again in this life; nor will they spend an eternity of separation from God in Hell!

So, the big question is, “*How* do you pass from spiritual death to spiritual life? *How* does this spiritual transformation take place? Well, let’s look again at what Jesus said. Jesus said, ***“He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life.”*** When Jesus talks about “hearing,” He’s not talking about the sound passing through your ear drum, and registering in your brain. He’s talking about **heeding** His words, and embracing them as the truth. In other words, He’s talking about *believing* his words. Believing on Christ (putting your trust on Him) is the one and only condition for receiving eternal life!

Jesus said that those who hear His word and believe on Him *shall be saved!* They immediately *pass* from death unto life. Jesus didn’t say, “As long as you believe in *something* sincerely, you’ll be O.K. As long as you’re a good person, you’ll make it.” No, complete trust in *Jesus Christ alone* is the only condition on which you may receive the gift of eternal life!

However, Jesus does not force eternal life upon anyone. You and I must humbly receive it as a gift from God. **Ephesians 2:9** says that salvation is the ***“gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.”*** If you are trying to work your way to God by doing good works, or by participating in religious rituals, you are still dead to God, and on your way to Hell. If you have merely *added* Jesus onto your life, as though He were a “good luck charm” to get you things you want in this world, you are not saved either. You can’t just “add” Jesus to your life, and continue to live your life the way *you* want to live it: you must *submit* your life to Him. God will not accept “*addition*” of Jesus to your life: He will only accept *submission of your heart and life to Him*. When you trust in Jesus, and repent (turn to Christ from sin, and surrender your life to Him), your spiritual death will end; and you will enter into eternal life.

Read Romans 5:12, 15-18.

Conclusion: At this very hour, all around the world, many souls are passing “from death unto life” by repenting of their sin, and placing their complete trust in Jesus. If you are not sure that *you* have passed from death unto life, I urge you to get it settled today! We are about to have a time of invitation, in which *you* are invited to come forward and talk with me, or with another member of our church, about salvation. Come and surrender your life to Jesus today! If you already know Christ as Saviour, please take this time to pray for those who are not saved, that they will believe on Jesus, and pass from death unto life!

¹ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Sermons*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983, p. 309; cited from Robert J. Morgan, *Preacher's Sourcebook of Creative Sermon Illustrations* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007), pp. 430-431.

² Maurice Rawlings, *Beyond Death's Door* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979), p. 3; cited from Robert J. Morgan, *Preacher's Sourcebook of Creative Sermon Illustrations* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007), pp. 432-433.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*