

- I. The great tribulation (Satan's little season, the man of sin)
- II. Christ's return/descent from heaven to the earth
  - > With all the holy angels
  - > With the souls of the departed saints following
  - > Accompanied by great cosmic disturbances and upheaval
  - > The great shout & the last trumpet
- III. The general resurrection of the dead - both the just and unjust
  - > The bodies of the righteous dead are raised/glorified and reunited with their souls as they descend with Christ.
  - > The bodies/souls of the righteous living are translated/glorified and "caught up" to be with the Lord in the air as He descends.
  - > The bodies of the unjust dead are raised unto dishonor and reunited with their souls to stand on earth and behold Christ descending.
  - > The bodies/souls of the unjust living are transformed unto dishonor as they stand on earth and behold Christ descending.
- IV. The General Judgment: The Righteous Judged (Matthew 25:31-46, 2 Corinthians 5:10)
  - A. Who will be our Judge?
    1. The judge on the Last Day will be none other than Jesus Christ
    2. This will greatly intensify the terror and undoing of those outside of Christ.
    3. But how different this will be for the believer...
  - B. What will be judged?
    1. There has not been universal agreement on this question. Some say...
      - a. Believers will not be judged at all (i.e. John 5:24).
      - b. Only the good works of believers will be judged (i.e. Matt. 25:35-40).
    2. The vast majority argue (and I agree) that every thought, word and deed will be judged (i.e. 2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 12:36-37; 1 Cor. 4:5; Eccl. 12:14).
    3. A public manifestation and examination of what? 4 things...
      - a. A disclosure of your dependence upon Christ alone.
      - b. A diary of your life.
      - c. A display of your sins and failings (revealed as forgiven in Christ).
      - d. A delight in your good works proceeding from faith, done according to God's word, and unto the glory of Christ.
    4. Your true character will be revealed on that day (in the sight of God, self, and all).
  - C. Why will we be judged?
    1. A public acquittal
    2. A magnification of God's grace and mercy
    3. A public vindication
    4. A demonstration that God's decision is right
    5. A distribution of rewards
  - D. What good is it for us to know this?
    1. Though all will be revealed on the Last Day, the believer in Christ has nothing to fear.
    2. Because all will be revealed on the Last Day by our Savior, it should be our goal and aim to be found well pleasing to Him.
    3. As you will not miss your appointment on the Last Day, your preparation for that day should be obvious now.
- V. The General Judgment: The Unrighteous Judged
  - A. The believer assisting in the judging of the unrighteous (1 Cor. 6:1-3)
  - B. The fallen angels judged and sentenced to everlasting miseries in hell (Jude 6, Rev. 20:10)
  - C. The unbeliever judged (Matthew 25:31-33, 41-46; Rev. 20:11-15)
    1. Their end shall be shame - placed at Christ's left hand
    2. Their end shall be substantiated (lives publicly examined according to every thought, word, and deed)
      - a. A declaration of their lack of dependence upon Christ
      - b. A diary of their life manifested
      - c. A disclosure of their sins (as unpaid for)
    3. Their sentence shall be just (deeds recompensed according to the "light" which they had)
      - a. Pagans judged according to the light of nature/creation
      - b. OT unbelievers judged according to the light of nature and revelation of law
      - c. NT unbelievers judged according to the light of nature, the revelation of law, and the revelation of the gospel
      - d. Hence there will be different degrees of punishment in hell (Luke 12:45^8, Matthew 11:21-24, 23:14). But this will be no comfort to any, it will only serve to exalt the justice of the judge. The sentence will be based upon clear evidence that will convince all, even those receiving the sentence.
    4. Their everlasting punishment will commence in hell - the lake of fire (Revelation 20)
      - a. A punishment of loss - a dreadful separation from all that is good
      - b. A punishment of pain — an unspeakable suffering of all that is bad

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## D. Is Hell Really Eternal?

1. Some in Our Day Claim that it Is Not.
  - a. The cults: Jehovah Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, World Wide Church of God (Armstrongism), and Family Radio (Harold Camping)
    - (1) *Annihilationism*: Physical death is the end of the wicked.
    - (2) *Conditional Immortality*: One's ongoing existence is conditioned on his/her relationship to Jesus Christ. Those who use this language usually allow for a resurrection of the unjust unto death, destruction, and annihilation.

b. A growing number of so-called evangelicals (John Stott, Phillip E. Hughes, John Wenhem, dark Pinnock, and Edward W. Fudge). What are the arguments?

- (1) The wicked are ultimately destroyed, not preserved indefinitely in punishment.
- (2) The biblical imagery suggests complete cessation of existence (i.e. fire).
- (3) The word "eternal" does not have to speak of duration, but of unending result.
- (4) It is incompatible with God's love (God calls us to love our enemies).
- (5) It is incompatible with God's justice (the punishment outweighs the crime).
- (6) Hell would mar the blessedness of the eternal state.

## 2. But What Does God's Word Say?

Matthew 18:8; 18:32-35; 25:46

Mark 9:47-48

Luke 12:4-5

Romans 2:6-9

Hebrews 6:2

Jude 12-13

Revelation 14:9-11

Revelation 20:10

## 3. What Is at Stake?

- a. The doctrine of sin (man-centered vs. God-centered)
- b. The nature of God (man-centered vs. God-centered)
- c. The nature of Christ's atonement (If God spared not His only begotten Son, He will not spare you if you reject His provision.)

Quote from Rev. Ed Donnelly, "Let us be quite clear. If we lose hell, we will eventually lose the cross, for if there is no hell, there is no real point in the cross. Jesus did not need to come and be made a curse for sin. He did not need to enter the horror of forsakenness. The cross and hell stand or fall together. Hell is extreme, but that is because sin is extreme and because extreme measures were taken for our salvation. We cannot survey the wondrous cross, meditate on what the Saviour suffered and assert that hell is an inappropriate punishment for sin" (*Heaven and Hell*, p. 27).

## 4. Excellent Resources on This Topic

Edward Donnelly, *Biblical Teaching on the Doctrines of Heaven and Hell*, Banner of Truth, 2001.

Robert Peterson, *Hell on Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment*, P & R pub., 1995.

John Blanchard, *Whatever Happened to Hell?* Evangelical Press, 1993.

W.G.T. Shedd, *The Doctrine of Endless Punishment*, Banner of Truth, 1885 (1998 reprint).

## E. How shall we respond?

1. Herein is a warning to us. The issue is not whether it is pleasant, the issue is whether it is true. Will we then flee from the wrath to come and find safety?
2. Herein we see our sin for what it truly is.
3. Herein we value Christ, the extent of His sufferings, and the extent of His love.
4. Herein we are renewed in our zeal for the lost.