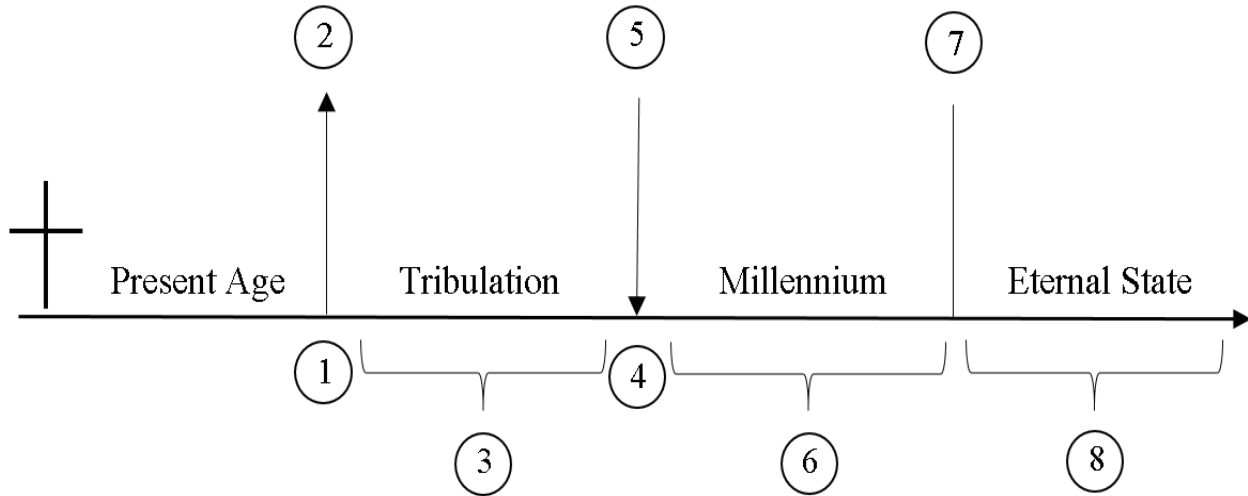


Entrust Systematic Theology: Eschatology The final Judgement of Unbelievers
1/09/20

Eschatology timeline



1. The Imminent Rapture of the Church
2. The Judgment Seat of Christ
3. The Seventieth Week of Daniel
4. The Divine Restoration of Israel
5. The Second Coming of Christ
6. The Millennial Reign of Christ
7. **The Final Judgment of Unbelievers**
8. The Final State of Eternity

THE FINAL JUDGMENT OF UNBELIEVERS

I. Introduction

KEY PASSAGE: Revelation 20:11-15

¹¹ And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books according to their deeds. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were

judged, every one of them according to their deeds. ¹⁴ And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

- A. The Inescapable Judge (v. 11)

- B. The Incontestable Trial (vv. 12-13)

- C. The Irreversible Sentence (vv. 14-15)

II. **The Biblical Teaching on Hell**

A. **The Undeniable Reality of Hell**

Throughout the New Testament, Jesus and the biblical writers continually refer to an eternal judgment of the wicked that will be characterized by fire and divine punishment. Although some deny the existence of this final judgment, the reality of hell is undeniable.

1. **BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO HELL**

Although most references to the final judgment of the wicked are found in the descriptions of that judgment (rather than in the use of a single term), the word translated “hell” (gehena) is used 12 times in the New Testament, 11 of them by Jesus Himself:

- Matthew 5:22

But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough *to go into the fiery hell.*

- Matthew 5:29-30

²⁹ If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, *than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.* ³⁰ If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, *than for your whole body to go into hell.*

- Matthew 10:28

Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able *to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

- Matthew 18:9

If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and *be cast into the fiery hell.*

- Matthew 23:15

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him *twice as much a son of hell* as yourselves.”

- Matthew 23:33

You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape *the sentence of hell?*

- Mark 9:43-48

⁴³ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, *to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire,* ⁴⁴ *where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.* ⁴⁵ If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, *to be cast into hell,* ⁴⁶ *where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.* ⁴⁷ If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, *to be cast into hell,* ⁴⁸ *where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.*

- Luke 12:5

But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority *to cast into hell*; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

- James 3:6

And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is *set on fire by hell*.

2. BIBLICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF HELL

- “the fire” (Matt 3:10; 7:19)
- “unquenchable fire” (Matt 3:12)
- “the furnace of fire” (Matt 13:42, 50)
- “the eternal fire” (Matt 18:8; 25:41)
- “the outer darkness” where there will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 22:13; 25:30; cf. Matt 13:42)
- “eternal punishment” (Matt 25:46)
- “the unquenchable fire” (Mark 9:43; cf. Mark 9:48)
- “eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess 1:9)
- “eternal judgment” (Heb 6:2)
- “the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries” (Heb 10:27)
- “the black darkness” (2 Pet 2:17; Jude 13)
- “the punishment of eternal fire” (Jude 7)
- “the lake of fire which burns with brimstone” (Rev 19:20)
- “the lake of fire and brimstone” (Rev 20:10)
- “the lake of fire” (Rev 20:15)
- “the lake that burns with fire and brimstone” (Rev 21:8)

B. THE RETRIBUTIVE NATURE OF HELL

The punishment of hell is presented in Scripture as divine retribution in which God repays the wicked for their sins as an expression of His perfect justice.

- “judged...according to their deeds” (Rev 20:12-13)
- “it is only just for God to repay with affliction” (2 Thess 1:6)

C. THE ULTIMATE DESTINY OF HELL

The Bible presents the following sequence of events from the death of the unbeliever to his ultimate destiny in the Lake of Fire.

I. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS:

- The Death of the Unbeliever (Heb 9:26)
- The Intermediate State of Torment (Luke 16:19-31)
- The Resurrection of the Unbeliever (Rev 20:13)
 - a resurrection unto “disgrace and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:2)
 - “a resurrection of judgment” (John 5:29b)
 - “a resurrection of...the wicked” (Acts 24:15)
- The Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11-14)
- The Consignment to the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:15)

D. THE EVERLASTING DURATION OF HELL

The Bible teaches that the punishment of the wicked in hell will be everlasting, but two specific views have challenged this teaching:

TWO PRIMARY CHALLENGES:

- Universalism: Everyone will ultimately be saved
- Annihilationism: The torment of hell is only temporary.

E. THE QUESTION OF LITERAL FIRE

The Symbolic View: *Hell will be a place of unspeakable torment, but it will not include literal, physical fire.*

The Literal View *The lake of fire contains literal, physical fire that will inflict punishment upon the wicked for all eternity.*

1. The Case for the Symbolic Interpretation

- The Incompatibility of Fire and Darkness (Matt 22:13; 2 Pet 2:17; Jude 13)
- The Incompatibility of Fire and Eternal Punishment (Matt 18:8; 25:41)
- The Relationship between Fire and Spirit Beings (Matt 25:41; Rev 20:10)
- The Imagery of the “Lake” of Fire (Rev 19:20; 20:10, 15; 21:8)

2. THE CASE FOR THE LITERAL INTERPRETATION

- The Consistency of the Description
- The Resurrection of the Unbelievers’ Bodies
- The Lack of Compelling Evidence for the Symbolic View

F. The Question of Degrees of Punishment

One commonly asked question about hell concerns the degree of punishment that will be experienced there. Put simply, will everyone suffer equally in hell, or are there varying degrees of punishment? And based on what? The following biblical principles help answer this question:

1. Greater _____ Brings Greater _____

- Matthew 10:14-15:
14 “And whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake off the dust of your feet. 15 Truly I say to you, *it will be more tolerable* for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah *in the day of judgment*, than for that city.”
- Matthew 11:20-24:

²⁰ Then He began to reproach the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. ²¹ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² Nevertheless I say to you, *it shall be more tolerable* for Tyre and Sidon *in the day of judgment*, than for you. ²³ And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴ Nevertheless I say to you that *it shall be more tolerable* for the land of Sodom *in the day of judgment*, than for you.”

- Luke 12:47-48:

⁴⁷ “And that slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, *shall receive many lashes*, ⁴⁸ but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, *will receive but few*. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.”

- Luke 20:46-47:

⁴⁶ “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues, and places of honor at banquets, ⁴⁷ who devour widows’ houses, and for appearance’s sake offer long prayers; these *will receive greater condemnation*.”

- 2 Peter 2:20-21:

²⁰ For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse than the first. ²¹ For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them.

2. Greater _____ Brings Greater _____

- Matthew 23:23-24:

²³ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. ²⁴ You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!”

- Romans 2:5-6:

⁵ “But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶ who will render to every man according to his deeds.”

- Hebrews 10:29:

How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

- Revelation 20:12:

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

BOTTOM LINE: *God is perfectly just and will punish the wicked exactly as they deserve.*

III. THE CHALLENGE OF UNIVERSALISM

A. Universalism Defined

UNIVERSALISM: *The view that every human being will eventually come to enjoy everlasting spiritual salvation*

B. Three Forms of Universalism:

1. Pluralistic Salvation

- All paths lead to God.
- Every religion leads to salvation.
- One does not need to believe in Christ.
- Everyone will be saved in his own way.

2. Postmortem Salvation

- Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ.
- After death, God will continue to evangelize the lost until they repent and believe in Christ.
- Through this process, everyone will ultimately believe and be saved.

3. Purgatorial Salvation

- Some people will die and go to hell for a period of time.
- During this time, the individual is purged of his sin, conformed to the divine likeness, and made ready for heaven.
- At this point, the individual is welcomed into heaven.
- Others believe that unbelievers spend this time in hell being exposed to postmortem evangelism.
- Either way, hell does exist and will be temporarily occupied by some, but it will eventually be empty, since all will be saved in the end.

C. UNIVERSALISM DEFENDED

1. The Theological Argument

- The Love of God
- The Problem of Evil

2. The Biblical Argument

- God promises the salvation of all people.
(1 Tim 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9)
- All people eventually be saved.
(John 12:32; Acts 3:21; Rom 5:18; 11:32; 1 Cor 15:22-28; 2 Cor 5:19; Eph 1:10; Phil 2:9-11; Titus 2:11; Heb 2:9; 1 John 2:2)
- Some will be saved after death(1 Pet 3:18-20).

D. Universalism Refuted

1. The Lack of Biblical Support

2. The Exclusivity of Jesus Christ

- Only One Way (John 14:6)

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

- Only One Name (Acts 4:12)

“There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”

- Only One Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5-6)

⁵ For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave Himself as a ransom for all.

- Only One Gospel (Galatians 1:6-9)

⁶ I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; ⁷ which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! ⁹ As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

3. THE NEED FOR PRE-MORTEM EVANGELISM (ROM 10:14-15A)

¹⁴ How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ How will they preach unless they are sent?

4. THE CERTAINTY OF DIVINE JUDGMENT (HEB 9:27)

- Hebrews 9:27

It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.

- Revelation 20:11-15

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

5. THE PERMANENCE OF DIVINE PUNISHMENT

- The Impassability of the Chasm (Luke 16:26)

“And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.”

- The Endlessness of the Punishment (Matt 25:41, 46)

41 “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.... 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’”

- The Final Abode of the Wicked (Rev 21:7-8)

7 “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. 8 But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”