

Levels of Man's Damnation (Hell)

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When the Scriptures refer to human being placed into hell they speak of it in two ways; one as placing a person under a general deplorable condition shared by all unbelievers and, secondly, as it being effected by the deeds of sinners upon the earth, and, thus, being varied in its experience in a just way, reflecting the particular sins particular sinners indulged in during their earthly lives. Though anyone damned to hell shares in a common experience of being forsaken by their Creator and Redeemer, as they, *en masse*, also forsook Him in their lives, yet each, having sinned against God in peculiar, unique ways and by various means, their particular eternity will reflect the things done in this life. We see this illustrated in various ways in Scripture.

I. The General Despair of the Lost in Hell

A. The despair of being in a strange place:

Rev. 20. 10ff: The devil, who deceived them, was cast into **the lake of fire and brimstone** where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. **And there was found no place for them.** ¹²And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and **Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.** ¹⁴**Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.** ¹⁵**And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.**

What's it like for a human being to be cast into a place designed for disobedient spirits (devils)? How does this match with Jesus' Words in Matthew 25?

B. The despair of being identified as enemies of God:

Matthew 25. 41ff: "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, **into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:** ⁴²for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

⁴⁴"Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'⁴⁶And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

How do works impact the judgment of the damned? Whom does Christ call "these my brothers?" What relationship does this connote between the saved and the damned? Cf. John 16.2-4; Matthew 10.24-26. Consider what 'eternal fire' connotes in the Lazarus account below.

II. The Suffering for One's own Particular Sins in hell.

Consider Christ's account of the Rich Man and Lazarus:

Luke 16.19f "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. ²⁰But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, ²¹desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

²⁴“Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ ²⁵But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. ²⁶And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.’

²⁷“Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, ²⁸for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ ²⁹Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ ³⁰And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ ³¹But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’ ”

Can you see any aspects of the rich man’s torments that are unique to him, or that some other people could not possibly suffer? What particular sins is he confronted with that others might not have occasioned as he did? What means of salvation had both he and his brothers despised that led to their damnation? How will their hell compare to the Gentiles’?

Consider this verse from Luke 12....

Then Peter said to Him, “Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?”

⁴²And the Lord said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food [h]in due season? ⁴³Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. ⁴⁵But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, ⁴⁶the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. ⁴⁸But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. **For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.**

⁴⁹“I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! ⁵⁰But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! ⁵¹Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. ⁵²For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. ⁵³Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”

Will an unbeliever who has heard the Gospel suffer a worse hell than one who never has heard the Gospel? What is more important, family unity (unity under the first birth) or unity with Christ (unity under the second birth)?

Consider also this:

Matthew 11.20f. Then He (Jesus) began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: ²¹“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²²But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. ²³And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. ²⁴But I say to you that **it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.**”

What will the hell of one raised in the church be compared to one raised and living whole lives in heathen darkness? How should this perception effect our attitudes towards teaching and further discipling children of the church? What does this portend for our children that were raised in the church and are hardened against returning?

Passages relating to levels of punishment in hell:

1. Matthew 23:14 "How terrible it will be for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You devour widows' houses and say long prayers to cover it up. Therefore, you will receive greater condemnation!"
2. Luke 12:47-48 That servant who knew what his master wanted but didn't prepare himself or do what was wanted will receive a severe beating. But the servant who did things that deserved a beating without knowing it will receive a light beating. Much will be required from everyone to whom much has been given. But even more will be demanded from the one to whom much has been entrusted."
3. Matthew 10:14-15 If anyone doesn't welcome you or listen to what you say, leave that house or city, and shake its dust off your feet. I can guarantee this truth: Judgment day will be better for Sodom and Gomorrah than for that city.
4. Luke 10:14-15 But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.
5. James 3:1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more severely than others.
6. 2 Peter 2:20-22 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."
7. John 19:11 Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."
8. Matthew 7:21-23 Not everyone who keeps saying to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will get into the kingdom from heaven, but only the person who keeps doing the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name, drove out demons in your name, and performed many miracles in your name, didn't we?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who practice evil!'
9. 2 Thessalonians 1:8 "in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus."
10. Revelation 20:12-15 I saw the dead, both important and unimportant people, standing in front of the throne. Books were opened, including the Book of Life. The dead were judged on the basis of what they had done, as recorded in the books. The sea gave up its dead. Death and hell gave up their dead. People were judged based on what they had done. Death and hell were thrown into the fiery lake. (The fiery lake is the second death.) Those whose names were not found in the Book of Life were thrown into the fiery lake.