

Questions About Hell

By David Feddes

We are going to answer some questions about hell. Here are the questions we are going to be talking about.

- Who goes to hell?
- What happens between death and Jesus' return?
- What is hell like?
- Are there different levels of punishment?
- Is hell really endless?
- Whose fault is hell?

Who goes to hell?

Jesus speaks of "eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). So Satan and the fallen angels who followed Satan are among those who go to hell.

Revelation says the devil, the beast, and the false prophet (evil world leaders near the end of time working with the devil), are thrown into the lake of fire, as well as "anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life" (Revelation 20:10, 15). So anyone who is not part of the saved group who are written in God's book of life go to hell.

Nahum 1 speaks of fire for "God's adversaries... his enemies... the guilty." People who are living as God's enemies and who are guilty of sin and have not been saved go to hell.

Isaiah speaks of destruction for "rebels and sinners... those who forsake the Lord (Isaiah 1:28, 31) the sinners... the godless" (Isaiah 33:14).

Jesus says his angels will seize all "lawbreakers and throw them into the fiery furnace" (Matthew 13:41-42). He speaks in Matthew 25 of a "worthless servant" being thrown into outer darkness, somebody who knows what he is supposed to do but then does not do it.

The apostle Paul says that "those who do not know God" and "do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus... will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction" (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). So people who have not come to a personal saving knowledge of God and do not respond to the gospel of our Lord Jesus with faith and obedience will go to hell.

The book of Hebrews speaks of those who "drift away," who "neglect such a great salvation" (Hebrews 2:1-3). They go to hell by neglect. Those who have "fallen away" will be burned (Hebrews 6:6-8). So there are people who neglect the way of salvation or fall away from the faith, and they land in hell. You could ask the question, what do you have to do to go to hell? Nothing! You already qualify if you are neglecting Christ. You are on the road to hell already if you are not walking with the Lord. Hebrews 10:26 says, "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth," we will face "a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries" (Hebrews 10:26-27). Here Hebrews is speaking of apostasy: knowing full well what the gospel truth is but then sinning deliberately by rejecting that truth

abandoning the faith and leaving the church. Those who neglect salvation, who reject salvation, who refuse Jesus, who after having come to know of Jesus, maybe even having been part of the church and tasted something of his blessings, have then abandoned the faith. All such people are destined for hell.

What happens between death and Jesus' return?

What happens to unsaved people between the time they die and the time Jesus comes back again? Unsaved souls go to a place of punishment and pain, an inescapable jail. They stay there until Jesus returns, raises their bodies to some form of existence, and then sentences them to the prison of eternal hell.

I compare it to a period of time in jail and then a permanent sentence in prison. In some legal systems, if you are charged with a crime or known to be guilty of a crime but you have not had your trial yet, you are held in jail. Then after the trial has occurred, you are sent off to the prison. We could describe hell in somewhat the same way. The souls of those who have died apart from Christ go to a jail, a temporary holding place. It is a place of misery, and they know what the eventual trial outcome is going to be. They know they are going to be sentenced to eternal hell. Even now they are experiencing something of hell in that holding cell, in the jail where they are awaiting the final judgment. Then when the resurrection of bodies occurs, their body will be joined together with their fallen soul and be judged and sent to eternal hell.

Second Peter 2:9 says, "The Lord knows how to... hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment while continuing their punishment" (2 Peter 2:9). The final day of judgment has not come, but they are already being held and punished.

Jesus tells a story of someone who has died, and he is in Hades in torment, and he calls out, "I am in anguish in this flame" (Luke 16:24). There are still people alive back on earth, but he is suffering in flames.

Hebrews 9:27 says, "Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). So after you die, you go straight to jail. There is no get out of jail free card. There is no escape from that jail, that first experience of hell that eventually leads to the eternal prison of hell in a body that has been given back to you.

When Jesus returns and raises dead bodies to life again, saved souls who have been in heaven will get splendid bodies to enjoy the new creation forever. For saved people, there is an intermediate state between death and the resurrection where they do not have their glorified body yet, but already in their soul they are in a place of the blessed in paradise, enjoying Jesus and his presence.

On the flip side, damned souls who have been held in jail will then get bodies suited for unending suffering and shame in eternal hell. "There will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15). Jesus says, "All who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29).

What happens between death and resurrection? For those who do not know Christ as Savior, they will already begin to suffer even though they do not yet have their body back. Then at the resurrection, they will receive that body back and go to the eternal prison of hell.

What is hell like?

The Bible uses a number of pictures to hint at what hell is like. One is **fire**. That picture of fire is a picture of agony, of torment, of pain at being burned. Also, fire is a picture of destruction, of things being wiped out. One of the most common pictures of hell in the Bible is a picture of fire.

Another picture of hell is **worms**. We associate worms or maggots with what is gross and ghastly and yucky, with rotting away and being devoured. There is something about hell where there is the torment of being eaten at and the torment of losing everything that is worthwhile about you.

Hell is pictured as **darkness**. That may seem not to fit with the picture of fire, but remember that the Bible is using images of something that goes beyond our imagination. It gives us these images to help us know at least something. So hell is fire in one sense, and in another sense it is darkness. What does darkness mean? Sometimes darkness means ignorance. You cannot see, there is no truth, you do not know anything. Sometimes darkness means despair. There is no joy, no love, no hope, just darkness, the outer darkness.

Another characteristic of hell is being **left alone**. Jesus will say, "Depart from me, you cursed" (Matthew 25:41). Scripture speaks of being "away from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thessalonians 1:9). For those of us who are believers and appreciate what it is to know the Lord and his presence, the worst thing that can be said about hell is that unbelievers are told "Depart from me" and are forever "away from his presence," abandoned to their sin.

Another aspect of hell is **shame**. The Bible speaks of "shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2). Hypocrites can hide sins for awhile, but eventually all evil deeds will be exposed. The damned will be despised and "will be loathsome to all mankind" (Isaiah 66:24). Those in hell will forever be ashamed of what they have become in their sin.

Loss is another fact about hell. It is missing out on eternal blessings. It is not just suffering horrible things, but missing out on eternal pleasures. We were made to enjoy God forever. We humans are designed to live forever in glory, to live in an environment where all of our work succeeds and flourishes, where we rule over the creation, where we partner with the angels. There is so much, and it is all so glorious, of what we were designed to be. Hell is missing out on it all. Missing out on God's smile. Missing out on who we could have been.

Related to that is **ruin**, becoming the garbage of the universe. Many of us, even who are unsaved, still have valuable things about us because God created us. We come from his hand. Even in our fallen condition, we have God-given intellect, the ability to think, various beauties, the kindnesses that we show to each other, the various things that God blesses us with in his grace, the strengths he gives us, and the virtue that he gives us. The Bible says that if we reject Christ and go to hell without him, then even what we have will be taken away. The beauty you once had will be gone. The intelligence you once had will be confused and foolish and silly. The

personality traits that once made you a lovable person will be gone and taken away, and you become an utter ruin, the garbage heap of the universe. That is one of the words that the Bible uses for hell: Gehenna. That was the dump outside Jerusalem where garbage was burned, a stinky, filthy place for getting rid of what nobody wanted anymore.

Those are terrible pictures: fire, worms, darkness, being left alone, shame, loss, ruin. The Bible is using pictures to make us aware of a reality worse than any pictures. Do not think hell is going to be any less horrible than the pictures. Hell may be even worse than the warnings, but the warnings are bad and the warnings are clear. That is what hell is like.

Are there different levels of punishment in hell?

Are there different levels of punishment in hell? The short answer is yes. A slightly longer answer is that there are various reasons in the Bible why some people will be punished more severely and others less severely. Here are three things to keep in mind.

First, the more serious the sins that have been committed, the worse the punishment. There are some sins that are worse or more numerous than others. Those who have sinned will be punished for their sins, and the worse the sins and the more numerous they were, the greater the degree of punishment they will deserve and receive in hell.

Second, the larger the abilities and advantages that you had but squandered, the worse the punishment. There are some people who have lived very wicked lives, but they were not given nearly the opportunities or abilities or advantages that others had. They will still be punished, but their punishment is not as severe because they did not have as much opportunity. There may be a person who grew up in a miserable family where the parents were cruel. They did not teach the children the way of the Lord. The children went to schools that taught them nonsense and wickedness. They lived in bad company and had few opportunities to really know wholesome, godly people who communicated the truth. Such a person may go to hell, but that person will not suffer nearly so much as someone who grew up in a wonderful setting, who grew up in a prosperous, well-taught environment, who had parents who were godly, were part of a church. They had many advantages. They were given intelligence. They were given the ability to do great things. They did not use those abilities to do great things for the Lord, but only to serve themselves. Their punishment will be worse.

Third, the greater the revelation that has been rejected, the worse the punishment. There are some people who have only the revelation of God in nature. Everybody has received enough signals from God just in the wonder of the universe, the splendor of the stars, the blessings of daily existence, to know that this did not come from nothing, that it comes from God's hand. We may make up stories about being atheists. We may make up stories about the universe just happening. But we know better: it comes from God. But that is not nearly the greatest revelation. Those who have the Bible, those who have heard the gospel preached by godly preachers of truth, those who had loving parents who instructed them day by day and then turned away from the Lord, oh, how terrible their punishment, because they had so much more revelation than some others did. Some people grew up in a very miserable, confused religion that did not give them an opportunity to

know much of God. They may go to hell, but their hell will not be nearly so severe as those who grew up in a godly, Bible-believing church and then spat on the Son of God.

Here are some Bible passages about this. Jesus says in Luke 10:13–14, “But whenever you enter a town, and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off against you. Nevertheless, know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.’ I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. Woe to you, Chorazin. Woe to you, Bethsaida. [These were towns in Judah that had encountered the ministry of Jesus and encountered the ministry of his apostles but had rejected it.] Woe to you, for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you” (Luke 10:10–14). You see Jesus’ point. There are some who have had exposure to Jesus himself, or to Jesus’ apostles bringing the message of Jesus, or nowadays to ambassadors of Christ and preachers of the gospel and godly Christian witnesses. It will be much harder for them than it will be for people who grew up in place similar to wicked Sodom or Sidon, where they never heard the name of Jesus, where they were never taught of Jesus as the Son of God and as the Savior. People who received less revelation may suffer, but they will suffer much less severely than those who had the clear and compelling revelation of Jesus.

Jesus says, "That servant who knows his master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. but the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Luke 12:47–48). You see the principle. You are given opportunities. You are given advantages. You are given clearer and greater knowledge. So a lot more is expected of you. If you should have done certain things but did not have clear instructions and opportunities, then you receive far fewer blows. We do not know exactly how that works out in hell, but these are the words of Jesus. Some in hell are not going to suffer nearly as much as some others do.

The book of Hebrews gives some stern warning to those who are believers and might be tempted to fall away. “Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will" (Hebrews 2:1-4). If you lived in an era and a time of great revival where the gifts and the powers and the miracles and the signs were displayed and the truth was taught, and then you still turned away, your punishment will be far worse than those who lived in an era where little was known and little was experienced.

Hebrews 6 gives a terrible warning: “For it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift and have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt” (Hebrews 6:4–6). You have been part of a Christian community. God's goodness is so close, you can taste it. You have been part of a body

of believers. You tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come. You saw the blessings of God in other lives and then fell away. To have Jesus and his Spirit brought near to you, and then say, "Not for me. I do not need him"--oh, what a terrible thing to do, and oh, how horrible the punishments of hell will be for those who do that.

Hebrews 10 picks up on the same theme. "For if we go on sinning deliberately [the sin of apostasy, of rejecting the faith, of deliberately living in wickedness without repenting after receiving the knowledge of the truth] there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins [If you reject Jesus' sacrifice, there is no other sacrifice that is going to save you] There no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries... How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:26-29). Those are terrible words, trampling Jesus underfoot, outraging the Spirit of God, despising the precious blood of Jesus by which we were set apart if we joined the church. How much worse punishment can there possibly be than for those who have done that?

So yes, there are different levels of punishment. The more serious the sins that were committed, the worse the punishment. The larger the abilities and advantages that you squandered, the worse the punishment. And the greater the revelation rejected, the worse the punishment.

Is hell really endless?

Is hell really endless, everlasting, eternal?

There are two different forms of denying endless hell that are fairly common. One form is **universalism**. Universalism is the belief that in the end all will be saved, even including Satan and his demons, as well as all humans who died unrepentant in their sins without Christ. All will eventually turn from their rebellion, accept God's love, and enjoy eternity with God. That is what universalism teaches, but it is false. The Bible makes it very clear that Satan and his demons will go to the eternal fire prepared for them and will never escape. So will those who died unrepentant and were in league with the devil. Let us not hold a false hope. There is a part of me that almost wishes universalism were true, but the Bible says otherwise. We must not lie to ourselves, and we certainly must not lie to others. There are pastors and teachers who write books and preach sermons saying that all will be saved and reconciled to God and that after this life there will be more opportunities to be saved. That is not what the Bible says. The Bible says, "It is appointed to man to die once and after that to face judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). There is no promise and no hint that unsaved people will receive more opportunities to be saved after death. The notion that all will be saved, universalism, is false.

Another denial of endless hell is **annihilationism**. This is the belief that eventually unrepentant sinners will be wiped out and simply become non-existent. They will not suffer forever, but God will cause them to become nothing. Perhaps this would happen after a period of suffering and conscious punishment, but then God would bring the punishment to an end and terminate their existence. This view has its following among certain people and teachers, but again it is not true to the Scriptures. People last forever. God has ordained that people last forever, whether in bliss

with God or apart from God. Their suffering in hell will last forever. We must not give false ideas to ourselves or to others about annihilation. People last forever, and their punishment apart from God will last forever. Therefore it remains urgent that people come to know God while there is still time. Both denials of endless hell, universalism and annihilationism, are false.

What does the Bible say? Hell is dreadful and everlasting. Universalism and annihilationism are wrong. Punishment never ends but goes on forever. Just look at the language of Scripture:

“eternal fire” (Matt 18:8, 25:41; Jude 1:7)

“unquenchable fire” (Matt 3:12; Mark 9:43)

“eternal punishment” (Matt 25:46)

“eternal destruction” (2 Thess 1:9)

“eternal judgment” (Heb 6:2)

“eternal chains under gloomy darkness” (Jude 1:6)

“worm does not die and fire is not quenched” (Isaiah 66:24, Mark 9:48)

The punishment is endless. There are scholars, people of great learning and sophisticated argument, who write long books and try to explain this away and tell you that eternal does not really mean eternal, that hell does not really last forever. The church throughout the ages has known better. There has been a teacher here and there who taught otherwise, but that teaching was disregarded or rejected by the church because the witness of the Scriptures and the voice of God are too clear. The punishment of hell is endless and everlasting.

Whose fault is hell?

A final question is this: Whose fault is hell? The doctrine of hell and of eternal punishment is so horrible that it becomes almost unimaginable. At times we may be tempted to think that God is horrible, that he is a tyrant, that he is mean and loves to torture people. Is God horrible for sending people to hell? No. God is just. God is good. Hell is not only what God does to you, it is also what you do to yourself. We do not realize it, but self-centered sin is horrible. When we choose our sinful self and reject Jesus, we become more and more hellish until hell is the only place we belong. As C. S. Lewis put it, either you tell God, “Your will be done,” or God tells you, “Your will be done.” You want to be your own person, on your own, doing your own thing with only your own resources. Have at it. That is hell, to be left to yourself.

Hell is not God’s fault. We may say, “God should do this and that and the other thing to make people happy forever.” But God is happiness, and apart from God, there is no happiness. In this life, all the happiness and all the good things we have and all the good things we are come from God. If we will not have God, we cannot have even the good things we enjoy now, because he is the source of them. Eventually, God will withdraw his gifts unless we seek the Giver of every

good and perfect gift. God cannot give you lasting happiness without giving you himself. You cannot find health, happiness, or joy anywhere but in God. If you are chasing it in the realms of sin, it is not to be found there. Hell is when you experience the fullness of sin and its consequences. God says, “Your will be done.”

Already in Romans 1 it says, “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18). How does God reveal that wrath? The Bible says God gives them over to their sin. He gives them over to their foolish unbelief, to the worship of idols, and to the worship of created things. He gives them over to all kinds of sexual perversions. He gives them over to the battling between parents and children, to strife on earth, to disrespect and cruelty. Sin left to itself becomes worse and worse. Some of us have already tasted certain elements of hell here on earth as sin becomes worse and worse. Sometimes entire societies become hellish and horrible, and that is because apart from God everything becomes hellish.

So whose fault is hell? It is the fault of sinners. God is simply letting sinners have their way and handing them over to their own sin and to its consequences: existence without him. Whose fault is it? God does not want to punish. God does not like punishing. It is not his favorite thing to do. But he is just and he will not be mocked. He would rather pardon. He would rather have you enjoy heaven with him forever than hell. God loves to save. It is only with reluctance that he punishes and casts people away from himself.

God revealed his character to Moses. Moses said, “Lord, show me your glory.” God said, “I will cause my goodness to pass before you.” As he did so, he spoke: “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished” (Exodus 34:6–7). That is who God is. His character is love, compassion, mercy, forgiveness. If the guilty insist on continuing in their guilt and will not turn to him, then he does not leave them unpunished.

“They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved” (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Whose fault is hell? It is the fault of those who refuse to love the truth and so be saved.

“God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). The truth about hell is that it is our fault, not God’s. God is simply doing what by his very character he must do in justice. He is just in punishing those who rebel against him.

Turn, and live!

But God sent his Son Jesus to take all of that hellish punishment to provide a way out. He showed the greatness of his love. He could have justly sent us all to hell. Instead, he sent us Jesus because he is compassionate, merciful, forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. But he will not leave the guilty unpunished.

If you are tempted to complain, “What kind of God would punish people with hell?” listen to the words of Ezekiel 18. God says, “Are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?”

Therefore, I will judge you, everyone, according to your ways” (Ezekiel 18:29–30). If you want to accuse God of injustice, God will judge you according to your ways, and that means hell. If you are judged only according to who you are and what you do, hell is the only outcome. You need to turn to Jesus and turn to God. Then you will be judged according to God’s ways of mercy and you will be delighted.

God says, "My ways are not unjust. Your ways that are unjust." He goes on to say, “Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit” (Ezekiel 18:31). God not only say, “Make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit,” but he says, “I will give you a new heart and a new spirit” (Ezekiel 36:26). The only way you make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit is by repenting of your sin and asking God to give you a new heart and a new spirit. Then God says, “Why will you die? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord. So turn and live” (Ezekiel 18:32).

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Who goes to hell?

- eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt 25:41)
- the devil ... the beast and the false prophet ... anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life (Rev 20:10,15)
- his adversaries ... his enemies... the guilty (Nahum 1:2-6)
- rebels and sinners ... those who forsake the Lord (Isaiah 1:28,31) the sinners... the godless (Isaiah 33:14)
- law-breakers (Matt 13:41-42)
- worthless servant (Matt 25:29-30)
- those who do not know God and ... do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus (2 Thess 1:8)
- drift away... neglect such a great salvation (Hebrews 2:1-3) fallen away (Hebrews 6:6) go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth (Heb 10:26)

Between death and Jesus' return

Unsaved souls go to a place of punishment and pain, an inescapable jail. They stay there until Jesus returns, raises their bodies, and sentences them to the prison of eternal hell.

- The Lord knows how to ... hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. (2 Peter 2:9)
- In Hades, being in torment ... he called out... "I am in anguish in the flame." (Luke 16:23-24)
- Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment. (Hebrews 9:27)

Raised to life or judgment

When Jesus returns and raises dead bodies, saved souls who have been in heaven will get splendid bodies to enjoy the new creation forever. Damned souls will get bodies suited to unending suffering and shame in eternal hell.

- There will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. (Acts 24:15)
- All who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. (John 5:28-29)

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What is hell like?

- **Fire:** agony, destruction
- **Worms:** gross, ghastly, rotting
- **Darkness:** no truth, joy, love, or hope
- **Left alone:** "Depart from me." "away from the presence of the Lord"
- **Shame:** exposed, despised, loathsome
- **Loss:** missing out on eternal blessings
- **Ruin:** becoming worthless garbage

Are there different levels of punishment?

- The more serious the sins committed, the worse the punishment.
- The larger the abilities and advantages squandered, the worse the punishment.
- The greater the revelation rejected, the worse the punishment.

Levels of punishment

But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in

you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. (Luke 10:13-14)

That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. (Luke 12:47-48)

Neglect such great salvation?

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. (Hebrews 2:1-4)

Crucify Christ again?

For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. (Hebrews 6:4-6)

Much worse punishment

For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries... How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:26-29)

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Two denials of endless hell

Universalism: belief that in the end all will be saved, including Satan and his demons, as well as humans who died unrepentant. All will eventually turn from their rebellion, accept God's love, and enjoy eternity with God.

Annihilationism: belief that unrepentant sinners will be wiped out and become non-existent. They will not suffer forever but God will cause them to become nothing, perhaps after a period of suffering and punishment.

Endless Punishment

Hell is dreadful and everlasting. Universalism and annihilationism are wrong. Punishment never ends but goes on forever.

“eternal fire” (Matt 18:8, 25:41; Jude 1:7)

“unquenchable fire” (Matt 3:12; Mark 9:43)

“eternal punishment” (Matt 25:46)

“eternal destruction” (2 Thess 1:9)

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“eternal chains under gloomy darkness” (Jude 1:6)

“worm does not die and fire is not quenched” (Isaiah 66:24, Mark 9:48)

Whose fault is hell?

- Is God horrible for sending people to hell? No, God is just and good. Hell isn't only what God does to you. It's also what you do to yourself.

- Self-centered sin is horrible. When we choose our sinful self and reject Jesus, we become more and more hellish until hell is the only place we belong.
- Either you tell God, “Your will be done,” or God tells you, “Your will be done.”
- God would rather pardon than punish.

God is gracious and just

The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished (Exodus 34:6-7)

They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. (2 Thess 2:10)

He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

Turn, and live!

“Are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? Therefore I will judge you... every one according to his ways... Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die...? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live.” (Ezekiel 18:29-32)