

When God Sends Humanity A Taste of Hell by Releasing the Locust Demons from the Pit

Revelation 9:3-6

One of the more difficult and misunderstood topics of the Bible is the doctrine God's Word teaches us about Hell. As we open to Matthew 25, consider the Biblical Doctrine of Hell.

There are many opinions, many disputes, and many misunderstandings. As with almost all disputes about the Bible, each can be answered by a look at the actual passages, and not merely by talking about them.

So this morning, we open to the greatest living authority on Hell, who spoke more about it than all the other writers of the Bible combined: His name is Jesus; and if you doubt that there will be an endless, conscious, horribly painful torment of un-forgiven sinners in a literal Hell, then understand that you're protesting the clear, plain and simple teaching of Jesus Christ, and no one else.

Jesus is the Author of Hell, the Preacher of Hell, and the One who threatens humans with endless hell fire's torments.

The conclusion that anyone who reads the New Testament Gospels can only be: Jesus believed there was a literal Hell, Jesus warned of a literal Hell, and Jesus threatened humans with eternal conscious torment in a furnace of fiery wrath from an Almighty and Holy God. Bottom line:

Jesus Authenticates Hell's Horrors

Jesus speaks more of Hell than anyone else in the Bible, and more than all the Scripture writers combined. He also describes Hell's horrors, and does so in more terrifying terms than all the Old Testament Prophets & Judges, and the New Testament Apostles combined.

The Hell Jesus repeatedly and vividly describes was not some earthly condition of great pain or suffering to be endured; nor was it some temporary place of purging sins.

Jesus boldly warned of a place of "unquenchable fire" (Mk. 9:43), where humans would be tormented in the next life (Luke 16:28), and where they would wail and gnash their teeth forever as they endured "eternal punishment" (Mt. 25:30, 46).

Jesus threatened people with Hell from start to finish in His ministry. If He had not, it probably would have been easy for us throughout the centuries to think the Apostles & Prophets may have gotten it wrong. Eternal, conscious, endless torment is impossible to think about clearly. It revulses our sense of reasoning, overpowers our mental processing, deadens our sense of understanding, and then overloads us.

Hell is real, horrible, and very much a topic for Christ's ministry. Before we launch into the vivid lessons in Revelation about Hell, we will travel through the best source on the topic. Jesus Christ is the supreme authority on Hell. He is also the clearest and most profuse teacher on the topic. No other writer of Scripture speaks as often, or as deeply on the doctrines of Hell that our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Explains Hell's Duration

Open with me to Matthew 25:41, 46 (NKJV), for perhaps the single most clarifying verses in the Bible on this subject. It is Almighty God the Son speaking here. Listen to what He so clearly teaches as we stand for the reading of God's Word:

“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: ⁴⁶ And these will go away into **everlasting** punishment, but the righteous into **eternal** life.’”

The first thing to notice is that the very same word is used by Jesus three times, to describe both eternal life and eternal punishment. Jesus told us already in the Sermon on the Mount that not even one word of His Scripture will fail to be fulfilled. So He carefully chooses His words. What does this mean then about Heaven and Hell?

Briefly this: The suffering and punishment for the lost sinners is just as unending as the joy and delights of the saved sinners.

The word eternal clarifies that those who are consigned to Hell neither cease to exist (an error called annihilationism) nor are they excused from punishment and given a second chance (an error called universalism).

Jesus Repeatedly Warns of Hell's Reality

What Jesus teaches here is completely consistent with what His Word has already taught about eternal punishment that involves “everlasting fire”. Back up to Matthew 7 and look at the previous passages He already has given.

Matthew 7:23 (NKJV) And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; **depart from Me**, you who practice lawlessness!'

Matthew 8:12 (NKJV) But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into **outer darkness**. There will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**."

Matthew 13:30, 40, 42, 50 (NKJV) Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "**First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them**, but gather the wheat into my barn."

40 Therefore as the tares are **gathered and burned in the fire**, so it will be at the end of this age. 41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and **those who practice lawlessness**, 42 and **will cast them into the furnace of fire**. There will be **wailing and gnashing of teeth**. 49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, 50 and **cast them into the furnace of fire**. There will be **wailing and gnashing of teeth**."

Matthew 18:8-9 (NKJV) "If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be **cast into the everlasting fire**. 9 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be **cast into hell fire**."

Look at Mark 3:29 (NKJV) but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is **subject to eternal condemnation**” —

Mark 9:43-46 (NKJV) If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to **go to hell**, into the **fire that shall never be quenched**— ⁴⁴ where “Their worm does not die and **the fire is not quenched.**” ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be **cast into hell**, into the **fire that shall never be quenched**— ⁴⁶ where “**Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.**”

Note that of all the 13 uses of Hell (*gehenna*) in God's Word Jesus uses 12, and His earthly brother James uses the only other one. Jesus was not hesitant to speak of Hell, He is bold in His warnings.

Revelation Illustrates what Jesus Taught

Now, as we return to Revelation this morning, turn to Rev. 14:10-11. Here we see Jesus telling John to explain that both the fire and the punishment never end. It is not just an ever-burning Lake of Fire, it is also an ever-punishing place for all the un-forgiven, un-justified, un-saved sinners that will be cast there.

Revelation 14:10-11 (NKJV) he himself shall also drink of the wine of the **wrath of God**, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be **tormented with fire and brimstone** in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the **smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever**; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

One final note on this comes in chapter 20. Look at v. 10. Those who die in their sins are faced forever with the wrath of God against them who refused His offering of taking their place.

Revelation 20:10-15 (NKJV) 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.** 11 Then 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. 12 And 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. 13 The 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.**

Now the Taste of Hell God Gives Humanity

This morning in Rev. 9:3-12, we get an unusual, and very disturbing glimpse of the unspeakable horrors that are to come, for each person who dies with their sin unjustified. Rev. 9 is what may be seen as a glimpse into, or even a taste of Hell.

Note first, the reminders of the horrors of unabated sufferings with me:

LESSONS FROM THE DEMONS' LAUNCH: HELL IS ENDLESS TORMENT

(Revelation 9:3-6, NKJV) Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their **torment was like the torment** of a scorpion when it strikes a man. 6 In those days men will **seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.**

God first points us the launch of these monsters from the pit. Through this launch we learn four great spiritual truths.

Picture what the world would be like if we were to open the doors of all the penitentiaries of earth and set free the world's most vicious and violent criminals, giving them full reign to practice their infamies upon mankind. Something worse than that lies in store for the world. Satan, cast out of heaven, is now permitted to summon to his aid the most diabolical fiends in the abyss to act as his agents in bringing mankind to the footstool of the Beast. (John Phillips, Exploring Revelation, rev. ed. [Chicago: Moody, 1987; reprint, Neptune, N. J.: Loizeaux, 1991], 125)

First, in v. 3: **God shows us** Supernatural locusts with power to torment that remind us of the torments coming in Hell. The locusts are strikingly similar to what Joel prophesies about in his prophecy about the Day of the Lord in Joel 1:4; 2:1-6 (NKJV):

What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten;
What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten;
And what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten.

2:1-6 Blow the trumpet in Zion,
And sound an alarm in My holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble;
For the day of the LORD is coming,
For it is at hand:
²A day of darkness and gloominess,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,
Like the morning *clouds* spread over the mountains.
A people *come*, great and strong,
The like of whom has never been;
Nor will there ever be any *such* after them,
Even for many successive generations.
³A fire devours before them,
And behind them a flame burns;
The land *is* like the Garden of Eden before them,
And behind them a desolate wilderness;
Surely nothing shall escape them.
⁴Their appearance is like the appearance of horses;
And like swift steeds, so they run.
⁵With a noise like chariots
Over mountaintops they leap,
Like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble,
Like a strong people set in battle array.
⁶Before them the people writhe in pain;
All faces are drained of color.

Second, in v. 4: **God reminds us** that Supernatural protection is available from God

God has already shown us that He protects His own people during times of special judgments. In Egypt God preserved His people through the plagues as in Exodus 8:22; 9:4; 10:23. In the Tribulation God seals and protects the 144,000 (Rev. 7:3-4; 14:1). We see this also clearly recorded in Ezekiel 9:4-6 where God protected His people in the midst of judgment. God sent an angel who went through Jerusalem and marked the redeemed. Any who did not have that mark died when the city fell to the Babylonians.

Ezek. 9:4-6 (NKJV) and the Lord said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it." ⁵To the others He said in my hearing, "Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. ⁶Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were before the temple.

Each of us are sealed by the Spirit of God at salvation (Eph. 1:13), and as we saw last time in Acts 19, demons can see who the true believers are because we are sealed by the Spirit of God.

Third, in v. 5: **God notes for us** that the demons can inflict inescapable torment, that lasts five months. One ominous note is that if you study the symptoms of a sting from one of the deadly species of scorpions, those symptoms include severe convulsions and paralysis. Those scorpion sting symptoms also resemble the symptoms of demon-possessed individuals (note Mark 1:23–27; 9:20, 26).

Mark 1:25-26 (NKJV) But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” 26 And when the unclean spirit had **convulsed him** and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him.

Mark 9:20, 26 (NKJV) Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit **convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.** 26 Then the spirit cried out, **convulsed him greatly**, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, “He is dead.”

The combination of the description of these monsters as both locusts and scorpions underscores the deadliness of this horrific demon invasion.

Finally, in v. 6: **God warns the world** that, like Hell to come, during the Tribulation, death won't end their torment.

Each part of this locust scene in chapter 9 is a description of how the awesome power of the unseen demon world is finally portrayed by God, and seen by John and written down for us. The lesson clearly reminds us that Satan and his demons are destroyers of people

When we hear that God allows all of humanity (except those sealed by the Spirit) to be horribly tormented by the creatures from the abyss prepared for the devil and his angels, which we know as Hell. Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels, not humans.

A Taste of Hell

So now just from the big picture we can see what God is doing. God gives unsaved people a sampler of Hell. He opens the bottomless pit.

Because some people don't believe in Hell, God let's them see and smell the smoke of this place of torment. Then God lets out some of the horrifying creatures that will forever

dwell in that Bottomless Pit. Humans get to see and feel what eternal Hell will be like, but just for five months.

Think of this: God wants to deliver the ultimate warning. To maximize the warning God graciously limits the length of Hell's horrors to just enough for lost humans to get a taste.

He allows the present incarcerated fiends, who are the occupants of the pit: out for five months of "Hell on Earth".

Why does God give mankind so many chances to repent? Why does God allow life to go on, people to survive, and individuals given another day to think and act? To illustrate the:

Marvelous Grace of Our Loving God

Makes me think of a great old hymn: marvelous Grace of our Loving Lord. We who have repented are the thankful recipients of God's amazing mercy and grace.

Please grab your hymnbook and turn with me to # 201