

# Eye-Opener Studies



*Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. (Ps. 119:18)*

## 15: JUDGEMENT The necessary evil of Hell!

**‘It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgement.’  
(Heb. 9:27)**

**A**s you pass through life you meet all sorts of views about what happens after death. The atheist believes that it is nothing; we just cease to be and the world carries on mechanistically as if we never were. I had an aunt by marriage - my father's brother's wife, Edna - who believed in reincarnation and that she would return as a tree! When she died her funeral was conducted by a Humanist, who oddly enough gave her a very nice send off and had those gathered there reciting the Lord's



**My aunt Edna**

Prayer during the service. Afterwards I asked him why but I can't remember what he replied. Then there was a sister in Christ, who had been raised as a Roman Catholic, and who couldn't always reconcile her new faith from her old. She had Purgatory, Heaven and Hell all mixed up and thought that ultimately everybody, including the likes of Adolf Hitler, would get to Heaven once they were purged of their sins. Hitler would have a very long and uncomfortable wait but she could not envisage a loving God condemning a single soul and torturing it in Hell for ever. She had a very loving and forgiving nature, for she had had many trials in her life, but universalism is not taught in the Scriptures no matter how abhorrent we may find the concept of eternal damnation. If all were ultimately going to be

saved and dwell eternally with God in Heaven, why did He bother with the Cross and putting Jesus through its hell? There would have been no point, nor would there be any point in our preaching and trying to live good and holy lives. 'Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow doesn't matter one whit' should be our message, if we bother at all with one.

A cartoon appeared once in the now defunct magazine *Punch*. It was set in the Board Room of the headquarters of cricket and one faded old 'fossil' was saying to another: 'My idea of Heaven is batting for ever.' We all have our own ideas of Heaven and Hell but, if for one minute we could accept the old cricketer's Heaven, we could easily see that his 'Heaven' would be another's 'Hell', for someone would have to bowl at him for ever without the remote possibility of ever getting him out. Furthermore the batsman would soon tire of making good shots since no matter how sloppily he batted he could never fail. If you can't fail, there's no merit in succeeding. Besides which, cricket itself is a lot like Marmite; it sends out confusing signals and you either love it or hate it.



**Batting**  
(but not for ever!)

### Everybody wants to go to Heaven

In 1968 The Karlins, a girl pop group of triplets, made a very catchy, yet rather silly record 'Everybody wants to go to Heaven', noting 'but nobody wants to die'. Opinion polls do not show that everybody believes in Heaven, but of those who do the majority, namely 99.5%, believe they actually are going there. One is left wondering about the 0.5% who apparently don't! Belief in a Heaven runs at around 60% of the general public but only fewer than 25% believe in Hell. Please note that these statistics are not precise and vary from country to country in the Western world. They are drifting downwards in the main, and are higher in the USA than the UK. Whatever the accuracy of the figures, the balance between those who believe in an afterlife with Heaven as a reward for the 'good', and Hell as a punishment for the 'bad' is pretty representative. They want to believe in Heaven, the 'nice' place, and that they, because they are 'nice' people, will be there. They cannot come to terms with eternal punishment, except for the really nasty people like the aforementioned Hitler, and usually think most not heavenward bound will be annihilated and disappear rather than suffer for ever. This attitude of showing a reluctance to accept the concept of Hell is as common amongst seriously religious people as it is amongst the religiously lukewarm. We therefore need to ask the question, 'Why Hell?'.

### The problem stated

The concept of a biblical Hell in many people's minds runs directly counter to their concept of a God of love. Hell, however, is a biblical teaching and surprisingly for many it is mainly found on the lips of Jesus Himself, e.g. Luke 12:5, Mt. 25:1-46, etc., and is vividly portrayed in Revelation 20:7-15. Let us look at the latter passage, the earlier part of which we have encountered in our study on the Millennium (No. 13). *'And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the*



The Lake of Fire

*saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

*Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.'*

This is a frightening and graphic picture of the fate awaiting Satan and those who are his, so the plea comes out, 'How could a God of love condemn people to Hell for ever and ever? Wouldn't He finally forgive them or wouldn't He simply annihilate them?'

It is a fair question and it will seem a little unsatisfactory to point out that since Hell is a biblical teaching we must accept it, whether we like it or not, though this, of course, ultimately is true. There is an almost natural arrogance in us which suggests





The sort of picture we instinctively reject as a reality

that we mortals would be more merciful than Almighty God. *We* would not condemn even a Hitler or a Judas to *eternal* Hell. *We* might force them somehow to atone for their sins over a long period, or we might annihilate them, but we could never so mistreat anybody by torturing them for ever.

### The nature of the abstract

It is very natural to think of God, Heaven and Hell in concrete, physical terms. It helps us as humans but lets us down when we consider abstract concepts. God 'sits on a throne up in Heaven'. Heaven is 'up' and Hell is 'down', and both seem locatable in the universe. It is easy to forget that a British 'up' is a New Zealand 'down' and vice versa. Heaven and Hell are not physically directional places; they are states of eternal spiritual existence. Therefore as such they are abstract not physical concepts.

We recognize the reality of the abstract but struggle to define it save by contrast. We only understand 'wrong' by knowing 'right', 'good' by knowing 'evil', 'black' by knowing 'white' and 'love' by knowing 'hate'. Thus we can only understand 'Hell' by understanding 'Heaven'.

Hell is what Heaven is not. Both have a common quality, just as 'black' and 'white' are what we call colours, even though 'black' is defined as a total absence of colour and 'white' is all colour. Thus Heaven and Hell are both 'states of eternal spiritual existence'. If they were not states of eternal spiritual existence they would not be Heaven or Hell, they would be a something else.

Annihilation is not the opposite of Heaven through the understanding of which we can learn of Heaven. To annihilate is 'to destroy utterly', so the opposite of annihilation is creation *ex nihilo* (from nothing). Just as God created the worlds from nothing so He could, and one day will, annihilate them. But when God gave man a soul and spirit He gave them something He could not annihilate and remain consistent since these have in them the necessary property of immortality, as we will soon see. If they were mortal they would be a 'something else' and not soul and spirit. He either gave man an eternal nature or He did not. He could not logically do both.

### The nature of spirit

Hell, as we have said, is a state of the spirit and spirit has the necessary quality of being eternal. The Bible tells us that "*God is spirit,*" (John 4:24). If spirit were not eternal then God Himself would not be eternal. If spirit can be annihilated, God too can be annihilated, which is nonsense and a total contradiction of His nature.

Therefore God cannot logically give us a spirit and later annihilate it, since that would be to create a non-immortal spirit, which would mean it was not spirit at all but a something else! Spirit has to have the necessary attribute of immortality.

Thus whatever our spirit's ultimate destiny may be it is not going to be annihilated. It is going to exist for ever since once God gave us a spirit He cannot destroy it. Being made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) has many layers to its meaning, but realizing this tells us what an awesome thing it was for God to do when He made we human beings with this attribute. Angelic beings, including Satan, also have spirit in their make up, and their spirits too are immortal, but only humankind of His earthly creation received this gift.

### The nature of Creation

Jesus taught about counting the cost before making a commitment. "*For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate*

*whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?’’ (Lk 14:28-31). This was in connection with making the decision to follow Him, but the principle applies here. Before committing Himself to Creation God had to count the cost, part of which was to accept the Cross. He had to decide the sort of Creation He wanted. Were angels and men to have Free Will? Should men be given a spirit? If either or both used their Free Will to rebel, what would be the eternal consequences? Was this sort of Creation worth the risk?*

Once He decided to create a world of truly autonomous beings with genuine Free Will He knew He could not reverse the process. Creation was indeed an awesome event since the consequences of disobedience are truly horrendous. Nevertheless if God considered a genuine relationship of love, one free spirit to another, a wonderful thing and well worth it, He had to make plans for the probability that somebody would rebel and thus lead to evil. He counted the cost. We know because we read *‘of the Lamb (Jesus) slain from the foundation of the world’* (Rev. 13:8, AV), and that Jesus was *“‘delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God’”*. (Acts 2:23), and that *‘he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will’*. (Eph. 1:4-5). Yes, the Cross and the church were in place in God’s eternal plan to deal with evil before He created a single rock or blade of grass. He was not caught napping at any point!

Despite the awesomeness of the Creation and the consequences of all that was involved, God determined to do it, though it cost Him His Son on Calvary’s tree. This shows how precious we are to Him and just how high a value He places on our love. It also tells us how sad and angry He must be at those who refuse Him.



God made man in His image

Man, therefore, was created in the image of God and is a tripartite being of spirit, soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23). Though we most frequently misquote the order here by saying body, soul and spirit, the biblical order is spirit, soul and body. The body

is least important since it alone dies and rots. The spirit and soul are immortal. Jesus made this point very clearly: *“‘I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!’”* (Luke 12:4-5). The spirit and soul, the real

essence of the person, continue after the body is no more and we should fear the One who has the authority to cast them into Hell, and all the denying of the reality of Hell will not alter this one iota. They are immortal. The soul is the guarantee that the spirit retains its individuality and personality after death - and it could well end up in Hell; Jesus said so!

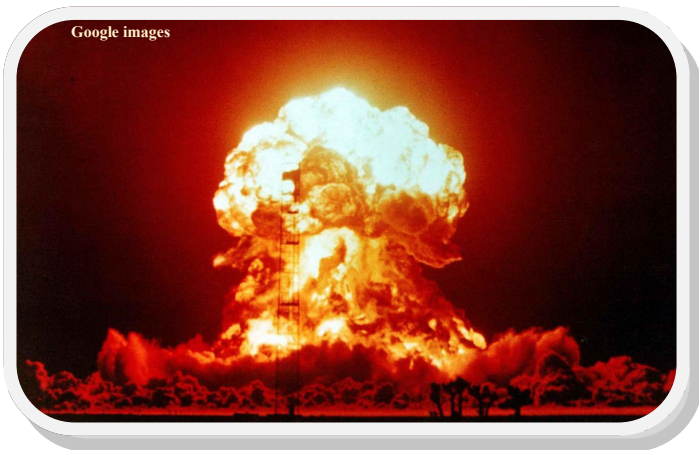
The spirit thus confers the quality of immortality to the human soul. This is God truly giving of Himself to His creatures. It does not, of course, confer any other qualities of God on to man but it means that just as God is spirit, and spirit is indestructible and eternal, so that part of man which is spirit is indestructible and eternal.

### The creation of Hell

Creation was indeed an awesome event because once begun certain things were irreversible. If God were truly to create, however, He had to create the potential for His creatures to use their Free Will to oppose Him. To create the potential is not to create fact or event. The splitting of the atom was morally neutral. It created the potential for good, e.g. nuclear power stations, atomic medicine, etc., or evil - THE BOMB. It did not create the bomb. The responsibility for that resides with those who took that potential and used it in this fashion.

God did not create Hell any more than He cre-





**A nuclear explosion**

ated sin and evil. Hell could not exist until sin occurred but once sin occurred Hell became an instant reality, and the responsibility for it is Satan's not God's. *Hell is simply the spiritual state where God is absent.* He will remove Himself from the damned at the end of time. Satan knows God face-to-face and cannot have faith in God's existence since he walks by sight. *'Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen'*, (Heb 11:1, emphasis ours). We do not need to have faith in the reality of things we can see, though we might place our faith in what it/he can do. Satan therefore cannot be saved by faith but God does not wish that any (humans) should perish (2 Pt. 3:9).

Hell arose because Satan chose to rebel by using his Free Will to oppose God. Hell, therefore, was prepared for him and his angels (Mt. 25:41). God is not responsible for Hell. Since God is the giver of life, and the life He gives is eternal, the death we are cursed with is not the destruction of the body and soul but the destruction of the body and the eternal damnation of the soul (Lk. 12:4-5. Mt. 10:28).

### **Hell is the measure of God's love**

Hell is not the measure of God's wrath but of His love! We could never begin to understand the love of God until we look at Hell and the meaning of the life and death of Jesus. Because of the reality of the horrors of Hell - separation from God - He could not find it in Himself to abandon us without hope so He did something about it Himself. Jesus came to give us the chance of avoiding being in the position where God turns His back on us. God's holiness demands that nothing tainted and corrupt will enter

Heaven. His justice demands that His enemies will pay, but His love paid the price or ransom for all who will freely choose to love Him.

### **HELL**

The message of Jesus is that Hell is real. That message is believed because of the resurrection (Study Number 1). So why was it necessary?

When God created man and gave him a spirit, soul and body, He gave him immortality. This meant that in giving man a truly independent spirit He created separate individuals who could not be destroyed. Since God cannot abide anything polluted to enter His presence, the spirits which defy Him cannot have a loving relationship with Him while they remain polluted. Therefore any who have not been made clean again, through faith in the blood of the Lamb, have to be dealt with.

Since God cannot annihilate them, He can only



**Approaching the throne of God**

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refuse to have fellowship with them. He will therefore blot them out of His mind and remember them no more. If we have any doubts about God's ability to do this, we are told that it is a reality where our sins are concerned. Hebrews 10 reminds us of this wonderful fact:

*'By a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.'*

*And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,*

*"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my*

laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,”

then he adds,  
“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”

Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.’ (Heb 10:14-18).

God had previously told us through the prophet Isaiah: “‘I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.’” (Isa 43:25). Yes, when God forgets sins it is as if they had never existed.

God will not be torturing those in this situation with malevolently Divine glee, He will simply put them out of His mind and they will not receive any of His blessings. At a first superficial glance this may seem like a much more preferable option than either roasting in a sulphurous lake of fire, or weeping, wailing and gnashing teeth in the fridity of outer darkness. Hell is where God is not. He can only forget the souls thus condemned. Christians have the joy of knowing that they are ‘justified by faith’ (Rom 5:1) and that means that God has not



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### Weeping, wailing and gnashing teeth

Once this occurs all the blessings which flow from Him will be absent. To catch a vision of what that will be like we need to look in Galatians 5 where the fruit of the Spirit is listed: ‘love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.’ (Gal 5:22-23). These are what come to us from God. Remove Him and they are absent. So, pause if you can and try to grasp what it must be like where there is no love, no joy, no peace, no patience, no kindness, no goodness, no faithfulness, no gentleness and no self-control. That is Hell, and traditionally its ‘gate’ tells all who enter to ‘Abandon Hope All Ye Who Enter Here’. Once in Hell all hope has definitely gone too! There will be no second chances since God will not be able to recall what He has chosen to forget. As humans we may not be able to choose to forget, no matter how hard we might want to, but God has, can, does and will and that works two ways: wonderfully in our favour for the faithful and desperately pitifully against the lost. Hell is a dreadful situation to be in. The damned will be beyond God’s recall so they will not be able to purge their sins no matter how hard they might want to.

### Conclusion

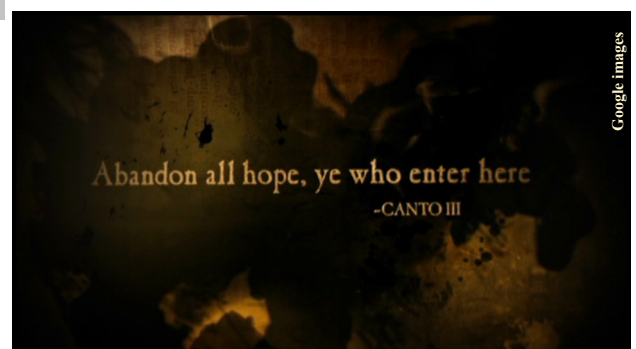
Hell is one of the logical consequences of Cre-



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### Fiery Hell

merely shelved our sins with them lurking threateningly waiting to pounce when we least expect it, but rather that they are forgiven, completely forgotten and no longer exist in the mind of God. The slate truly is absolutely clean. He blots them out of His mind for ever. It is as if they never existed and this is what He will one day do with the unrepentant sinners. Hell for them will occur when God blots them out of His mind completely and for ever.



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From Dante’s Inferno

ation. It was not God's will that any should end up abandoned in Hell, not even Satan who was created as one of the majestic cherubim - probably the most magnificent (See Study 9). But for God to have created a world where the will was not free to choose, thereby preventing the possibility of rebellion becoming a dreadful reality, would not have been creation but merely extension. Creation demands Free Will and Free Will demands that genuine choices are real, not illusory. The creation which included Heaven as the goal of faithfulness had to include Hell as the result of choosing freely to disobey.

There was no other choice.

We may perhaps think that the very notion of Judgement and Hell is almost an evil concept but then we frequently fail to grasp the enormity of sin in God's mind for, as sinners ourselves, we hope to soft-peddle on its consequences. One look at the Saviour hanging on Calvary's tree so that He could pay the eternal price of our sin for us, tells us that such a view is an insult to the grace and love of an Almighty Heavenly Father.

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## Tasks

What is your idea of Heaven and Hell? Can you reconcile this with what the Bible tells us?