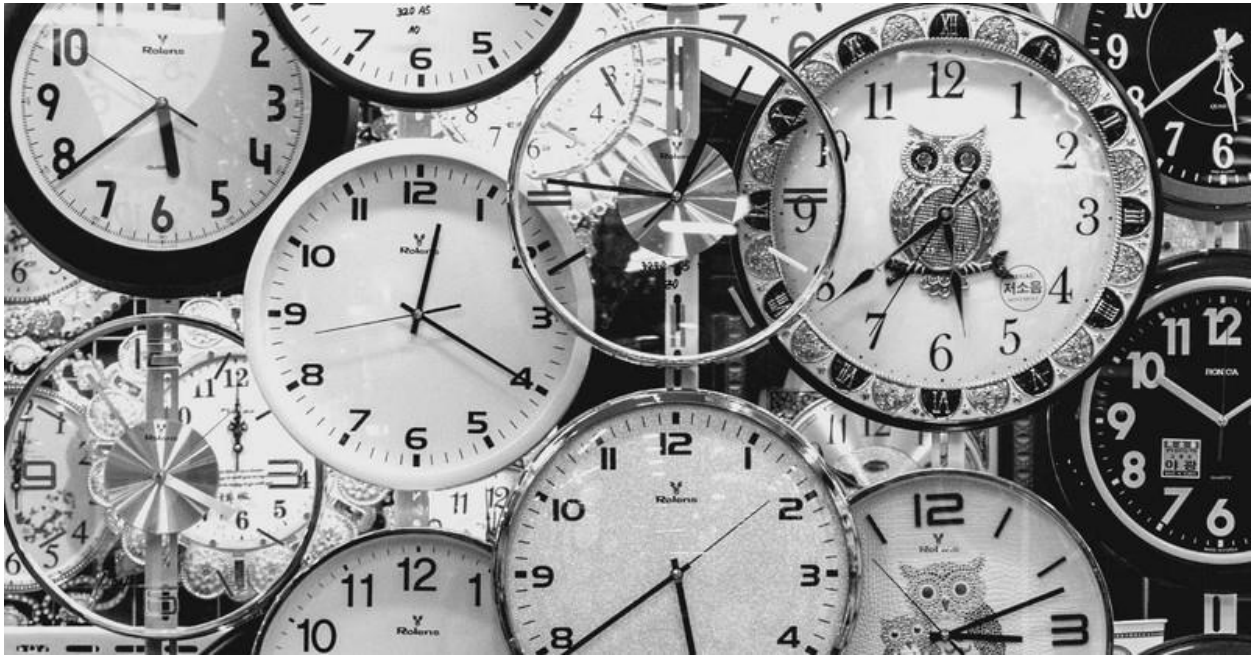


Why Is Hell Eternal?

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Scripture is quite clear that hell is indeed everlasting. Yes, Scripture speaks of hell as “death” and “destruction” but defines these in terms of a place where “they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Revelation 20:10). Why must this go on forever? There are at least two reasons.

Evangelical Christians have spent a lot of time talking about the doctrine of hell. One question weighs particularly heavily: Why, if there is a hell, is it forever?

The idea of eternal hell weighs heavily on the heart, as we think of those we know and love apart from Christ. Sometimes a devilish desire to condemn (“You will not surely die”) is behind a denial of future judgment, but sometimes the human motive is just the unbearable gravity of it all. Why would God sentence an everlasting punishment for crimes committed in what God himself describes as a life so quick that it’s like a vapor of mist ([James 4:14](#); [Psalm 39:5](#); [Psalm 144:4](#))?

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Why Hell is Eternal

1. Sin is more serious than we realize.

First, the revolt against God is more serious than we think it is. An insurrection against an infinitely worthy Creator is an infinitely heinous offense. We know something of this intuitively. This is why, in our human sentences of justice, we sentence a man to one punishment for threatening to kill his co-worker and another man to a much more severe punishment for threatening to kill the nation’s president.

2. Sin does not disappear.

Second, and more important, is the nature of the punishment itself. The sinner in hell does not become morally neutral upon his sentence to hell. We must not imagine the damned displaying gospel repentance and longing for the presence of Christ. They do indeed, as in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, seek for an escape from punishment, but they are not new creations. They do not in hell love the Lord their God with heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Instead, in hell, one is now handed over to the full display of his nature apart from grace. And this nature is seen to be satanic ([John 8:44](#)). The condemnation continues forever and ever, because the sin does too. Hell is the final “handing over” ([Romans 1](#)) of the rebel to who he wants to be, and it’s awful.

Responses to the Reality of an Eternal Hell

1. Avoid the truth.

Attempts to navigate around the truth of hell as everlasting punishment show us something of our complicity in the Edenic sin: the substitution of human wisdom and human justice and, yes, human notions of love for the authority of God.

2. Evangelize the lost.

Yes, hell is horrifying. God deems it so. Our response to such horror should not be denial, but the fervent evangelism of the nations. Knowing the terror of it all, we should plead with people, as though Christ himself were pleading through us, “Be reconciled to God” ([2 Corinthians 5:20](#)).

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As C.S. Lewis writes, “In the long run the answer to all those who object to the doctrine of hell is itself a question: ‘What are you asking God to do?’ To wipe out their past sins and, at all costs, to give them a fresh start, smoothing every difficulty and offering every miraculous help? But he has done so, on Calvary. To forgive them? They will not be forgiven. To leave them alone? Alas, I am afraid that is what he does.”

Hell ought to drive us not to find misplaced hopes for the lost, but to the only hope for us, and for the whole world, the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Christian gospel maintains that “the day of salvation” is now ([2 Cor. 6:2](#)), during this lifetime’s temporary suspension of doom. After this, the grace of God is not extended, only his justice, and that with severity.

3. Turn to Jesus.

Jesus does indeed triumph over all things, making peace through the blood of his cross ([Colossians 1:20](#)). But this peace doesn’t mean the redemption of each individual. Instead, Jesus triumphs over his enemies, as they are defeated beneath the feet of his kingship. Yes, every tongue confessed Jesus as lord, even Satan himself ([Philippians 2:9-11](#)). This does not mean, as Jesus himself teaches, that every tongue cries out to him for salvation. Instead there is a universal recognition that Jesus has triumphed over every rival to his throne. The redeemed will love this truth; the impenitent will lament it.

Until then, we preach, we plead, we beg, we warn. Hell is awful, and unending, and completely avoidable.

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<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/heaven-and-hell/why-is-hell-eternal.html>