



Is Hell Real?
Matthew 17:13-14

There are fewer blanks than usual in order to retain complete passage quotations.

One day you'll _____ your eternal destiny. Will it be a day of _____ or will it be a day of _____? We know that if God _____ it, that it's true and significant. We're going to be judged one day by the _____ found in this book. The Bible is God _____ to us! We need to _____ what it says and to take it seriously. God doesn't tease or joke around when it comes to our _____.

Our study today deals with our eternal _____ after this life is over, and it should matter to you. We're all going to face an _____ destiny someday. According to a recent Pew Forum poll, 72 percent of Americans believe in _____, but only 58 percent believe in _____. Only a few people believe they will be _____ in hell. It would be _____ to think you're saved when in fact you're not. While most folks know there is a hell, they _____ it. If we could open the _____ of the dead and ask them about Hades, that unseen place where the spirits of the dead go, we might be more inclined to think about our future. Whether they were in a place of comfort or a place of torment, they would say with one loud, clear voice, "Do everything you can to _____ God and go to heaven; and do everything you can to stay out of this place of torment." I wonder if we take our afterlife seriously enough. Moses said in Deuteronomy 32:29, "Would that they were _____, that they understood this, that they would discern their _____!" What will happen to us when we die? The Bible says in Hebrews 9:27 it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes _____.

Our reading today comes from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself as He was speaking in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:13-14. That is a surprising passage for many.

The Lord Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who've done good to the resurrection of life, and those who've done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29). At the resurrection, we will stand before the _____ of Jesus our Lord. Jesus said, "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious _____. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will _____ them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He'll put the sheep on His right, and the goats on His left. And then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'" (Matthew 25:31-34). Verse 41 continues: "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.'" Verse 46 says: "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

There are two destinies _____ the resurrection and judgment; the blessed one with joy in heaven, and the other is hell. The word hell or *gehenna* appears _____ times in Scripture,

mostly from the lips of Jesus. Some people think preaching hell is _____ or uncouth, but Jesus preached on it because people _____ to hear about it. Heaven and hell ought to be _____ to us since we'll spend eternity in one place or the other. I find no joy in thinking about the final end of unbelievers or sinners.

God said, "Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no _____ in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11). Perhaps you remember the broken heart of Jesus as he _____ over Jerusalem. He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" (Matthew 23:37). There are people who will not come to the Lord, people who will not _____ of their sins, people who will not _____ the truth, and will not serve God. It breaks God's heart to think about the _____ they have made. Jesus could have remained _____ about hell and just let them perish, but he did not do that. If hell is real, it's _____ not to tell people about it. Cruel preachers _____ the subject. That's why Jesus spoke on the matter—He did it out of _____ and out of truth.

Read the warnings of our Lord in Mark 9:43-48. Jesus warns us about the consequences of _____. It's worse to be _____ in sin than to lose an eye, or a hand, or a foot. On another occasion Jesus warned, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can _____ both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). Dying is tragic, but it's even more tragic to be lost in _____.

When the Bible speaks of the eternal punishment of sinners or unbelievers, it uses phrases such as "outer darkness," "weeping and gnashing of teeth," an "unquenchable fire," or an "eternal fire, and "the place where the worm does not die." Hell is the place of complete separation from God.

Paul describes the second coming of Jesus as a frightening one for those who _____ God. Jesus will come again to _____ His followers, but He'll also come to _____ those who reject Him. This inspired apostle said, "and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels 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. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Can you imagine how _____ it would be to spend eternity separated from God? God closes his _____ to their prayers in eternity because they have closed their _____ toward Him in this life.

What can you expect of the future? That depends on you. The Bible says, "He will render to each one according to his _____: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does _____, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality" (Romans 2:6-11). Those who choose to rebel against God and to ignore Him will indeed

_____ eternal punishment according to Matthew 25:46.

The Bible warns us about where sin will lead. Hebrews 10:26-27 says, “For if we go on sinning deliberately (willfully) 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.” Verse 31 concludes, “It’s a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Some people ask if hell is really _____. The New Testament uses the words *aion* and *aionios*—eternity and eternal—141 times to speak about someone or something that is unceasing, endless, or perpetual. If the word eternal means “without end” when applied to the blessings of eternal _____, it must also mean “without end” when describing the eternal punishment of the lost.

The Bible describes our eternal punishment, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or his hand, he will also drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name” (Revelation 14:9-11).

Someone at this point asks, “Well, isn’t all this just a _____ of speech?” There are many figures of speech in the Bible. Many people fall into doctrinal _____ because they interpret a passage literally when they should interpret it figuratively, or they interpret it figuratively when it should be understood literally. Many think because a passage is figurative that this somehow _____ what the passage is trying to say. But this is not right at all. Jesus did not use figures of speech to _____ what he was saying. He used them to _____ the points he was making. He felt it important enough to emphasize it with a figure of speech. Because He wanted people to remember what He had to say is why He sometimes uses figures of speech.

We learn a little more about this _____ punishment in Revelation 20:13-15. The Bible says, “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.” I can’t imagine anything _____ than going to hell; it’s a horrible thought. I don’t wish that for anybody. The only thing worse would be that I _____ someone else to go there. It’s not just you or me that’s involved here; when you choose to do evil, you may lead someone _____ to do evil; it’s often those who we love and who we influence.

At this point somebody says, “Well, how can a _____ God send anyone to hell and punish them forever?” This is an important question and it deserves an _____. First, God didn’t make hell for people, for humans; according to Matthew 25:41 He made Hell for the _____ and his angels. If anyone is lost, it’s by his own _____ to follow the devil by giving in to sin. Hell is filled with people who either ignore God or live in rebellion toward God and His _____.

Second, God must punish sin to be _____ and righteous. When sinners follow evil, they become _____ to sin. When people become unchangeably set in their thinking and their ways, they’ll likely always wish God would just go away and quit interfering with their lives. They

can actually begin to _____ righteousness.

Third, God has done everything possible to _____ us from being lost. He's given us the Bible to teach us; He's given us the church to help us; He sent His Son as a sacrifice for us. Before you _____ God is unloving, remember that He sacrificed His Son for you, and Jesus suffered terribly on the cross for you. The Lord Jesus didn't suffer for his _____ sins, but for your sins and mine. Jesus has demonstrated beyond question His great _____ by dying on the cross for us. He died in our place; He bore the punishment we should have received. The Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, so that we could live free from sin and _____ with Him forever. He took our place on the cross so that we could be set _____ from sin and death. If God had not provided an answer for hell, we'd all be in a sorrowful condition; but Jesus sacrificed His body on the cross to give us a solution to the threat of hell; He did it willingly; and He gave it to us freely. God hasn't left you without _____. You don't have to be lost. You can go to heaven if you'll love and serve the Lord Jesus.

Each day you're choosing whether you want to _____ closer to the Lord or whether you're going to _____ away from Him. If you wish to have a home with God in heaven, you need to let God have a home in your _____ and your _____. The Lord Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23). Could God make His _____ with you? Do you love God? Are you living in obedience to His Word? Have you given God even a second thought? Are you for Him, or living in rebellion to His Word? What are you choosing for your _____ destiny?

The Bible says that God "desires _____ people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4). Jesus came to _____ and to _____ that which was lost so that they might not go to that place. Jesus chose twelve apostles and gave the _____ the task of taking the gospel to every person. Because He doesn't want you to be _____ eternally, he wants you for his own. I have no desire to see anyone lost, and that's why I have spent my whole life _____ the good news of Jesus Christ. That's why churches of Christ and many individuals _____ this program. We're in the _____ business, teaching people about the love of God and the blood of Christ. Part of preaching is helping people to see how sin _____ us, but the other part is telling how God has opened a _____ of hope and forgiveness for them.

The loss of your soul is the _____ thing that can happen to you. I don't have words to describe the hopelessness and the horror of that place the Scriptures call "hell." Rather than ignore the Scriptures or reject the Lord, listen to His _____ and come to Him. I pray that you'll come to Him by loving and _____ in the Lord Jesus, _____ of your sins, by _____ Him publicly to all, and by being _____ in water for the remission of your sins. When you do this, the _____ of Jesus will cleanse you. You may have become a Christian many years ago but maybe in more recent years you've rebelled against Him. You need to come _____ to Him. I want everyone, everywhere to be a citizen of heaven. One day the only question that will matter will be whether we hear: "Well done, good and faithful servant," or "Depart from me, you worker of lawlessness." My friend, what will you hear? What will you hear?