

# 4 Instructions for Recognizing the Reality and Revulsion of Hell

By Todd A. Dykstra

**Revelation 14:9-11** ~ *Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone 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; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."*

## #1 Understand the Wrath of Hell

**Revelation 14:10** ~ *he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger*

- The angel says that one of the characteristics of hell is that it will be a place where God's wrath will be poured out
- Notice the words used to describe this: "wrath and anger"
- There is an interesting relationship between these two words
  - Wrath (*thumos*) means "a vehement fury, hot anger, fierce outbursts of wrath, more sudden in its rise, but which does not last as long"
  - Anger (*orge*) means "a settled indignation, settled anger, less sudden in its rise, but more lasting in its nature"
- When used together, these words intensify the reality of God's anger
- He will unleash the white heat of His wrath that has been restrained for so long
- It will be a purposeful, settled, deliberate anger/wrath poured out on those who rejected Him
  
- The angel says that this wrath and anger will be in the form of "wine" and drunk from a "cup"
- The angel is using figurative language here and not referring to a literal cup or wine
- To "drink from the cup of God's wrath" is an OT way of picturing the awfulness of future judgment by God
- Psalm 75:8 ~ For in the hand of the LORD *there is* a cup, And the wine is red; It is fully mixed, and He pours it out; Surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth Drain *and* drink down
- Jeremiah 25:15-17 ~ For thus the Lord, the God of Israel, says to me, "Take this cup of the wine of wrath from My hand and cause all the nations to whom I send you to drink it. They will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them." Then I took the cup from the Lord's hand and made all the nations to whom the Lord sent me drink it
- The "wine of wrath" is a symbol of divine judgment
  
- Revelation 14:10 indicates that this wine of God's wrath will be "mixed in full strength"
- Literally it refers to what is "mixed undiluted"
- The angel is referring to God's wrath being poured out in its greatest concentration
- The common practice in that culture was to mix wine with water to weaken its concentration
  
- But God's wrath in hell will not be like that... John is saying that the wrath of God poured out in hell will be in full strength, in its fullest concentration
- It won't be mixed with any grace, or mercy, or compassion

- It will be undiluted vengeance, wrath, and anger
- So when the angel uses words like “wrath, full strength, anger,” he is emphasizing the terror of falling into the hands of the living God
- Those who fail to embrace Christ in this life will be forced to drink the cup of God’s anger in the next because of His holy hatred against sin
- Jonathan Edwards in his famous sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, captures this idea:

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours.

- God is holy and righteous and, in his justice, He cannot allow sin to go unpunished
- He must pour our wrath upon sin – this has been done through Christ already and so those who embrace Christ are exempt from this wrath, but those who fail to receive Christ must face God’s wrath
- 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 ~ the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power

## #2 Grasp the Pain of Hell

*Revelation 14:10 ~ and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone*

- One of the difficult things about studying hell is the graphic language that is used to portray its terrors
- It is a place of unmatched pain...the pain is so real and horrible that human language cannot even communicate it
- John Calvin recognized that Scripture uses figurative language in an attempt to describe the terrible suffering of the wicked

Now, because no description can deal adequately with the gravity of God’s vengeance against the wicked, their torments and tortures are figuratively expressed to us by physical things, that is, by darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth, unquenchable fire, and an undying worm gnawing at the heart. By such expressions the Holy Spirit certainly intended to confound all our senses with dread.

- It is impossible to exaggerate the horrors of hell
- The angel says that this torment will come in the form of “fire and brimstone”
- “Fire” may be literal fire, but more likely symbolizes the horrible suffering of the unrighteous in hell
- “Brimstone” is a fiery sulfur
- Fire and brimstone are often associated with divine judgment in Scripture
- God used them to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24) in His judgment

- Likewise, hell, and the final hell known as the lake of fire, are described with fire and brimstone as the place of God’s judgment:
- Revelation 19:20 ~ And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone
- Revelation 20:10 ~ And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever
- Revelation 21:8 ~ But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.
- God is driving home the fact that hell is a place of untold grief, agony, pain
- It’s described throughout Scriptures as:
  - The outer darkness – Matthew 8:12
  - The place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth – Matthew 22:13; 25:30
  - Eternal fire, Place where fire is not quenched, fiery furnace – Matthew 13:42; 18:8
  - Place where worm does not die – Mark 9:48
- In fact, Jesus used the parable of Lazarus and the rich man to illustrate the torments of hell in Luke 16:23-24 ~ In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.’
- Hell’s torments will be worse than anyone could imagine and the language used to describe hell cannot accurately communicate its pain
- The terms “fire, brimstone, darkness, weeping, gnashing of teeth” are intended to confound all our senses with dread
- Martin Luther said:

“It is of little importance whether a person holds hell to be what now men paint or picture it to be. No doubt it now is, and will be, far worse than anyone is able to describe, picture, or think it to be.”

- Someone else has said:

There is no way to describe hell. Nothing on earth can compare with it. No living person has any real idea of it. No madman in wildest flights of insanity ever beheld its horror. No man in delirium ever pictured a place so utterly terrible as this. No nightmare racing across a fevered mind ever produces a terror to match that of the mildest hell. No murder scene with splashed blood and oozing wound ever suggested a revulsion that could touch the border lands of hell.

- Because of our sin, rebellion, and hatred of God, we deserve that kind of pain and suffering and torment
- We deserve the fire, the brimstone, the darkness, the weeping, the gnashing of teeth

### #3 Realize the Location of Hell

*Revelation 14:10 ~ in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb*

- Many presume hell to be a place away from God's presence which is ruled by the devil
- Many tend to think of hell as Satan's kingdom over which he rules
- Would it surprise you if I said that hell is in the very presence of God?
- Would it surprise you if I said that God, not Satan, rules hell?
  
- That's what this verse says...it says that hell is in the presence of God and that hell is ruled by Christ and not Satan
- Notice Revelation 14:10 indicates that hell is "in the presence of the holy angels" and "in the presence of the Lamb"
- Both the holy angels and the Lamb (who is Christ) are in the presence of God
- Thus, this verse says that hell is in the presence of God and those who are in hell experience God's wrath and punishment in His very presence!
- God is present in hell!
  
- But isn't hell being separated from God?
- That is true...those in hell are separated from the presence of the Lord
- 2 Thessalonians 1:9 ~ And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power
- Those in hell are separated from God and banished from His presence relationally
- They are barred from his love and grace and mercy
  
- But it's only half true because they are also in the very presence of God's wrath, justice, and hatred against sin
- Although hell is separation from God's grace and mercy, it is also a place of his holiness and wrath
- In this sense, hell is ruled by God and is in the very presence of God
  
- How do we know that Satan is not the ruler of hell?
- Matthew 25:41 ~ 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.'
- Revelation 20:10 ~ And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever
- Those verses say, that, instead of reigning over hell, Satan will suffer the worst punishment there
- There is an eternal fire prepared for Satan and all those who do not submit to Christ
- Rather than being cast in the role of hell's master, Satan is portrayed as one who will suffer eternally alongside wicked angels and wicked people at the hands of hell's true Master – Almighty God
- So, in one sense hell is so terrible because it entails separation from God's grace
- Yet, in another sense, it is God's very presence that makes hell so dreadful
- Although he is not present in grace and blessing, he is present in holy wrath
- Martin Luther said:

[It is not] as though the ungodly see God and His appearance as the godly will see Him; but they will feel the power of His presence, which they will not be able to bear, and yet will be forced to bear

- God will be the hell of the one and the heaven of the other

#### **#4 Comprehend the Duration of Hell**

- So far the picture of hell that has been painted has been dreadful, but it gets even worse in verse 11

*Revelation 14:11 ~ And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night*

- The angel says “the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever”
- Smoke means fire and this fire is an eternal fire...it never goes out...their torment is endless
- “forever and ever” means literally “unto the ages of ages”
- This is the strongest expression of eternity of which Greek is capable
- This is not a momentary torment, but one that continues forever
- Hell never ends!
  
- The angel reinforces this true by saying “and they have no rest day and night”
- This emphasizes the idea of continual suffering
- The wicked enjoy no relief from the unrelenting wrath of God; their punishment is eternal
- Day will turn into night and night into day...day after day after day...forever and ever and there will be no end; they will have no rest
  
- This is reinforced over and over in the New Testament:
- Mark 9:47-48 ~ “And if your eye causes you to stumble, cast it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell, where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED”
- 2 Thessalonians 1:9 ~ And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power
- Jude 7 ~ Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example, in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire
- Jude 13 ~ wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever
- The witness of the New Testament is that hell is forever
  
- Some today find it so difficult to believe that the torments of hell will last forever, they look for ways to get around it
- Listen to Clark Pinnock:

Let me say at the outset that I consider the concept of hell as endless torment in body and mind an outrageous doctrine, a theological and moral enormity, a bad doctrine of the tradition which needs to be changed. How can Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness whose ways include inflicting everlasting torture upon his creatures, however sinful they may have been?

- Because so many find the concept of eternal suffering intolerable, an alternative has become popular in the last few years called Annihilationism
- This teaches that the wicked are ultimately annihilated...that instead of enduring conscious eternal torment, they are simply destroyed
- Unfortunately, Annihilationism is not true
- The thrust of the Bible is eternal torment in hell not obliteration or annihilation of the wicked
- Martin Luther described it this way:

The fiery oven is ignited merely by the unbearable appearance of God and endure eternally. For the day of judgment will not last for a moment only but will stand throughout eternity and will thereafter never come to an end. Constantly the damned will be judged, constantly they will suffer pain, and constantly they will be a fiery oven, that is, they will be tortured within by supreme distress and tribulation

- Listen to Jonathan Edwards attempt to explain it:

We can conceive but little of the matter, but to help your conception, imagine yourself to be cast into a fiery oven or a great furnace where your pain would be as much greater than that occasioned by accidentally touching a coal of fire as the heat is greater. Imagine also that your body were to lie there for a quarter of an hour full of fire. What horror would you feel at the entrance of such furnace? How long would that quarter of an hour seem to you? And after you had endured it for one minute, how overbearing would it be to think that you had to endure another 14? But what would be the effect on your soul if you knew you must lie there enduring that torment to the full for 24 hours, for a whole year, for 1000 years? Oh then would not your heart sink if you knew that you must bear it forever and ever? That there would be no end? That after millions and millions of ages your torment would be no nearer to an end and that you never, never should be delivered? But your torment in hell will be immensely greater than this illustration represents.

- Hell is a dreadful reality, one in which it is impossible to overstate its terrors