

# Your Kingdom Come: The Doctrine of Eschatology

Lesson 2

The Living and the Dead

Forum



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# **Your Kingdom Come: The Doctrine of Eschatology**

## **Lesson Two: The Living and the Dead**

### **Discussion Forum**

With

Dr. Jimmy Agan

Dr. Danny Akin

Dr. Randy Alcorn

Dr. Voddie Baucham, Jr.

Dr. Matt Carter

Dr. Gareth Cockerill

Dr. Lynn Cohick

Dr. Saul Cruz

Dr. Paul Gardner

Dr. Mark Gignilliat

Dr. Benjamin Gladd

Rev. Dan Hendley

Rev. Clete Hux

Dr. Samuel Lamerson

Dr. Jeff Lowman

Dr. Douglas Moo

Dr. Amy L. Peeler

Dr. Greg Perry

Dr. Robert A. Peterson

Dr. Richard Phillips

Dr. Vern S. Poythress

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

Dr. Stephen C. Roy

Dr. Simon Vibert

Dr. Peter Walker

Dr. Guy Waters

### **Question 1:**

#### **Is it fair for God to punish all human beings for Adam's initial sin?**

##### **Dr. Douglas Moo**

As I read Romans 5, for instance, Paul is teaching there that somehow all human beings are caught up in the initial sinful act of Adam, that his sin and death becomes the sin and death of all human beings, who are, of course, traced back to him. This is compensated for, of course, by the fact that on the other side Christ represents all who belong to him and that we have the benefit as we belong to him of life and the good things that come to us because we belong to Christ as well. The idea of what we sometimes call "original sin" has been called an "offense to reason." In his day, Pascal, the great French philosopher/theologian dealt with this, and he said, in a sense, yes, it is. It is hard for all of us to understand how it can be fair for all human beings to be judged by something Adam did so many millennia ago. Yet that's what Scripture seems pretty clearly to teach. I don't think we can ultimately remove that offense, but there are a couple of things we can say. First of all, there is the fact that according to Romans 5, we all really were with Adam when he sinned, so it's not just kind of an arbitrary fact in which God says, "Well, because Adam sinned I'm going to consider you sinned also." No, there was a sense when we really were with him when he sinned so that his sin is our sin. Second, we have to remember as well, that at least for humans who are reaching an age where they can commit sin on their own, all humans do in fact sin on their own. So, whether we attribute our sin and death ultimately to Adam or just realistically recognize that, yeah, I am a human being, have sinned and deserve death, we come out to the same place in some ways in the end. And the third point, and this is a point that Pascal made himself, is original sin can be a sort offense to reason, but he went on to say, how do we explain the world

without it? I think that if any of us are realistic about the world we live in, we're going to see that in fact the tendency of humans is to be self-centered, to be concerned about themselves, to treat others badly, to exalt ourselves at the expense of others in all kinds of ways. I'm always amused when people say, "Oh, there is a genocide that took place in country "X"; what a terrible thing, what an unusual thing." And in fact if you look at human history, genocide has been the *typical* thing that has happened again and again and again and again. And Pascal's point was to say, how do we explain the actual human condition we see around us unless something like an original sin in Adam took ... place, so that we can understand how universally it is the case that humans everywhere all across the globe are caught up in this nexus of evil and sinfulness, and ultimately death.

### **Dr. Stephen C. Roy**

In the third and fourth centuries in the debates between Augustine and Pelagius over sin and grace, Augustine's position was that God did hold all humanity accountable for the sin of Adam, that original sin. He affirmed that all humanity, all subsequent humanity, inherited from Adam both legal guilt and moral corruption. And this position of Augustine, over and against that of Pelagius, was affirmed by the church in the Council of Ephesus in the year 431. And that has been the dominant position in the church ever since. But the question then is "why?" Why would God hold you, and me, and all subsequent humanity both legally guilty and morally corrupt as the result of this original sin of Adam? Augustinians have affirmed in general that that is because of a unique and special closeness that exists between Adam and all humanity. Now, among Augustinians, there are two primary ways of explaining this closeness. There is a position that's been called "realism," which was the position of Augustine himself and many others that accounts for this closeness because of Adam being the first human and the biological head of the human race, and in a very real sense all humans are *in* Adam, even as an example would be how the author of Hebrews argued that Levi, the founder of the Levitical priests, was in the loins of Abraham when Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek, who was the forerunner of the priesthood that Christ himself would one day have. So, realists would say that this connection is natural. The other view among Augustinians has been called "federal headship," which says that the closeness between Adam and all subsequent humanity is *covenantal*. They would argue that Adam is the covenant head of a covenant of creation that God had with all humanity. And so, as covenant head, Adam represents us all, and so his actions — in this case, his sin — is rightly held... we are held accountable for that. In an analogous way, Paul will argue in Romans 5 that Christ is also the covenant head of his people of the covenant of redemption. And so, even as Adam's sin was transmitted to the people of his covenant, so Christ's righteousness is as well... My own position is that of federal headship. I think this best fits the covenantal structure of Scripture as a whole. It accounts for the comparisons that Paul makes in Romans 5 and also in 1 Corinthians 15 of Christ as the second Adam whose righteousness, obedience and righteousness, also impacts his people. I think this best accounts for the reason why God holds all humanity accountable for that original sin of Adam.

## **Question 2:** **Are the unregenerate morally able to please God?**

### **Dr. Jeff Lowman**

Before the Fall, everything that Adam did — this is interesting to think about — everything that Adam did was pleasing to God, except eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. But once that sin was committed and once our lives were affected in our heart, mind, soul, entire being, everything that we do now is sinful. And so, not even the righteous actions that we take — or what we would call righteous actions — are free of sin. And so, in our hearts we're not only totally depraved, we're also totally unable to do anything that would truly bring glory to God. And so, the Fall is complete. And without the gracious work of Christ, there is nothing that we can do ultimately that will please and honor our God.

### **Rev. Dan Hendley**

Unregenerate people are not morally capable of pleasing God. Here's precisely why: the Scriptures say that without faith it is impossible to please God, and obviously people that are not born again haven't put their faith in God, so everything they're doing comes from a fountain and heart of unbelief and, therefore, could only be grievous to God. In addition, what does Jesus say is the chief and foremost command? To "love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength." Those who don't believe in God, those who have not entered into a personal relationship with God, certainly can't even begin to keep that commandment to love their God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength.

## **Question 3:** **What is eternal life?**

### **Dr. Gareth Cockerill**

Life and eternal life are an important theme in Scripture... And the eternal life that God gives us, then, is his very own life. It is not something I ever owned myself or have in my possession. Now, of course, as far as existence goes, the Bible teaches that we will exist forever, be it in fellowship with God in heaven and then in the new heaven and the new earth, or for those who have rejected God, in hell, separated from God. But when we talk about eternal life, it is a quality of life that is God's own life that he gives to the people who live and trust in obedient fellowship with him. And John's gospel makes it so clear. He calls it — receiving this life — being "born again." And that life then — the imagery is so strong there — that life is preserved by Jesus, who is the Bread of Life, and Jesus, who gives the water of life, the Holy Spirit. And we're shown how that we have it only in union with him. For instance, in John 15, the parable of the vine and the branches, where we are branches, he is the vine; we receive our life only from him. So, this eternal life, this life that God gives, his own life to his people who put their trust in Christ and live in obedient fellowship

is eternal life. So, in one sense, I mean, it's always there with God... This is the amazing thing that God promises us, to put his own life within us so that we become, in a way that is beyond our explanation, the children of God, and live in fellowship with him. This is the joy — it's from this eternal life and the fellowship with God that the joy and gladness of the Christian life comes.

**Dr. Simon Vibert**

The phrase “eternal life” could be understood in two ways. So, there is the idea of life eternal. Jesus said, “I’ve come that you might have life and life in all its fullness,” and believers recognize that by being brought into a living relationship with the living God, we enjoy a fullness of life now. But ultimately, eternal life refers to the fact that we will live forever with resurrected and new bodies, and that will result in God bringing about the new heaven and the new earth, and therefore, we will experience eternal life in that respect.

**Dr. Greg Perry**

In the Synoptic Gospels, in Matthew, Mark and Luke, we see that Jesus is declaring the kingdom of God, but he gets these questions from the lawyer talking about, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus begins to answer that in terms of who will experience the resurrection unto life. There’s a sense in which eternal life is what will happen at the final resurrection, at the final judgment — who will experience the salvation and deliverance of God in the final day? We see that also in Luke 18 where Peter is saying, “We’ve left our families and our homes to follow you,” and Jesus says that, “Anyone who has left family or father or mother to follow me for the sake of the kingdom will inherit much more in the new world” — inherit eternal life. Again, there he seems to be talking about this final judgment, this final salvation, the experience of the new heavens and the new earth. But interestingly, in John’s gospel this concept of eternal life has much more prominence. We see less reference to the kingdom of God, and Jesus talks more about eternal life, not just in terms of the final salvation, of the resurrected life in the new heavens and the new earth — he does refer to that — but he says in John 5 and in John 6 that whoever believes in the Son, whoever believes my word, whoever abides with me *right now* experiences eternal life. And so, in John’s gospel we get the sense of, already beginning to participate in this kingdom of God, in this new life, where it’s a little bit different in the Synoptics.

**Dr. Vern S. Poythress**

What is eternal life? That’s a question which many people ask, and the most common answer might be, well, it’s life that just goes on forever. And that is one sense of the term, but in the Bible, frequently the focus is on the way God *designed* us to live life forever enjoying his presence, enjoying life with him; the true living is living the way God designed you to live. So, typically when Jesus, for instance, speaks of eternal life and, “he who believes in me has eternal life,” when he says that kind of thing, he’s not just saying you’re going to live forever, because that’s not the heart of it. The heart of it is you’re going to live in fellowship with the God who made you and who destined you to enjoy his presence forever, and that presence is mediated through

Christ himself, who is our Savior. So, it's a tremendously rich promise to be promised eternal life just because you trust in Christ who has life in himself.

### **Question 4:** **When does eternal life begin?**

#### **Dr. Lynn Cohick**

Eternal life begins the moment that Jesus enters into our lives, the moment when we receive the call, we hear the call, and accept the gift of salvation. And with that acceptance of the gift, we suddenly find ourselves in new territory, because we will have one foot in the eternal kingdom, sealed with the Spirit, ready to live our lives in our resurrected bodies with God, but we also have one foot in what Paul calls "this present evil age." And it's an age that tempts our flesh — the siren sounds of pleasures and desires — and so it is a time of conflict, if you will. But we have the promise that Paul tells us in Romans 8, that God has predestined us to be conformed to the image of his Son, and so we know where we're going. We are on a journey to look more and more like our brother, if you will, co-heirs with Christ. We are being shaped to look like Jesus. Thus, when we begin this journey of faith, until we are called to the Lord and then we establish our life in heaven, in the new heavens and new earth, this life that we live now, we can think of it as a journey, and Paul encourages us to run through the tape. So, our eternal life begins now, but it is a life, a life that we walk each and every day having put on Christ, walking with the Spirit, trusting God, knowing that the end is secure, but that we show that confidence each and every day in the wise choices that we make.

#### **Dr. Jimmy Agan**

John 3:16, as is so well known, promises us that anybody who puts their faith in Jesus will receive eternal life. And what a precious promise if you know what eternal life is. And so, if you think eternal life is simply this life continuing on forever and ever, that might not be such a good promise, because this life is filled with a lot of sorrows, a lot of frustrations. So, how wonderful that when Scripture promises us eternal life, it has in mind not just a quantity, a duration of life forever and ever, but a quality of life. Simply put, eternal life is the kind of life that can't be diminished in any way. It's a life that comes from the Holy Spirit; life that can't be damaged by death, by sickness, by disease; life that can't be frustrated by sorrow; life that can't be undone by sin and its curse; life that is the power of the Holy Spirit extending into every aspect of who we are; life that means we are in perfect fellowship with God our Father; life that means we're perfectly united to Christ our Savior and our head and so life that we wouldn't want to end and life that will never end. It's a quality of life that is perfect and a quantity of life that endures forever. When will that life begin? It begins at the transition from this present age, which is dominated by sin and death, into the age to come, which is dominated by the power of the Holy Spirit and life that he gives. That age will never end, and so eternal life will go on as long as the age to



come, and that's forever and ever. So, eternal life is the kind of life that God wants us to have, being enjoyed for as long as God loves us, which will be forever.

**Dr. Amy L. Peeler**

Eternal life is an important concept in the New Testament. Especially, I think of the writings of John. Whereas the Synoptics talk a lot about God's kingdom, John has this vision of life that will be eternal, coming from death, as does Paul and Hebrews and others, but he gives particular emphasis to it. When does this eternal life begin? I know that I grew up in a context in which salvation was emphasized on the moment; you have a moment of conversion. And I'm very grateful for that background, but once I started studying the New Testament in a more focused way in my academic work, I realized that its picture of salvation is quite broad. It's not just the moment that you convert that you are justified before God, but it's also that process of becoming more like Christ, typically talked about as "sanctification," *and* that hope that we have of dwelling with God forever eternally. So, I believe that moment of eternal life actually begins when you come to know Christ, when God in his grace calls you, and you're allowed to respond to him. The Holy Spirit comes to indwell you. The Scripture says that he is our guarantee, and that's when we start to get a taste of the life that we'll experience forever. It doesn't mean that life on earth becomes perfect, but you get a sense of God's presence through his Spirit and the *kind* of life that you will share with him forever.

**Dr. Mark Gignilliat**

Paul makes a profound statement in 1 Corinthians 15 when he says that we're in the resurrection, the age of the resurrection right now. I tell my students here where I teach, if the apostle Paul were to walk into the room, which would be a pretty big moment, actually, but if he were to walk into the room and we were to ask him, "Paul, when does the resurrection begin? When is the age of the resurrection? When is eternal life?" His answer would be, "We're in that now because Christ is raised, and he's the firstfruits, the guarantee of the future resurrection." And then in Jesus' High Priestly Prayer in John 17:3, Jesus says that eternal life is to know God the Father and the Son that he sent to us. So there's an organic connection between eternal life and the life lived now, there's a continuity between the two. So, the very simple answer to the question, "When does eternal life begin?" the answer for the Christian is eternal life begins now.

**Question 5:**

**Are our eternal rewards in heaven based solely on Christ's merit, or do our works count as well?**

**Dr. Douglas Moo**

When the New Testament talks about the time of judgment, it makes clear that somehow Christians are going to be involved in that judgment as well. Now, we have to make sure that we always move into that issue with the fact that we as Christians,

by virtue of being in Christ and justified in Christ, have already been declared innocent before God in the judgment. So, we don't have to fear the day of judgment. We have what the New Testament calls "assurance" for that day, the certainty that the verdict is going to go our way. Nevertheless, we have to stand at the judgment, and most Christians think that involved will be some degree of reward that Christians will be given at that time. Now, on the one hand it's clear that any reward that we get, any benefit or blessing that is ours at that time comes because of Christ's work on our behalf and because of the Spirit's work in our lives as well. We cannot take credit for those things. But I think there's a sense also, however, in which the N.T.<sup>1</sup> talks about the importance of Christians living lives that do honor God, responding well to God's grace and the promptings of the Spirit, so that the reward that we receive ultimately at the time of the judgment, while always based on and given to us in and through Christ and his Spirit, will nevertheless also have to do with what we have actually done. This theme of God's work in us and our responsibility to take God's work and use it, is a kind of fine balance you see throughout Scripture, and it affects also this idea then of the rewards, the blessings, as it were, that we receive at the time of the judgment.

#### **Dr. Benjamin Gladd**

The question is what role do our works play in the final judgment? A very difficult question. Evangelicals, Protestants, Catholics, we all... a lot of people disagree over this. It's both, *a bit*. What we bring to the table at the final judgment is our works. God will say, "Show me these works, that you are joined to Christ," and our works demonstrate our position in him. They demonstrate that we are "already in." So, we use the word "evidence," or "proof." But nevertheless, there are works through God's Spirit, through God's grace, it's fully God, it's fully monergistic, but there are works that we show to God, and God says, "Yes, you demonstrated that you are indeed a follower of the Lamb." They're attesting works; they're works that are a result of our position... This is the perseverance of the saints... In other words, if you're in Christ, you've got to act like Christ and everybody who acts like Christ will be with Christ in the new heavens and new earth.

#### **Dr. Danny Akin**

You know, the Bible teaches that revelation brings responsibility; the more you know, the greater is your accountability. So, I think the Scriptures teach clearly that there are degrees of punishment for those who die apart from Christ, but there are also degrees of reward for those who are in Christ. Certainly, we stand before God because of the imputed righteousness of Christ. Nevertheless, the Bible speaks of the judgment seat of Christ where we are also judged on the basis, not of our salvation, but of the things we've done in Christ. And so, I expect there'll be degrees of reward in heaven based upon our faithfulness both in terms of actions, but also in terms of the intention of the heart.

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<sup>1</sup> New Testament

**Dr. Randy Alcorn**

Are eternal rewards based only on the merit of Christ, or does our own merit count? Well, in the interesting question, the merit of Christ is exclusively what *saves* us, so there's no question of that. We contribute nothing to our own salvation. We receive a gift. We believe in the work of Christ on our behalf... However, we as people also have a responsibility to do things, and God kindly gives us rewards for doing so, promises us those rewards. For instance, in Philippians 2, you see a picture of God working and us working when we're told to, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for God is at work in you" to do his good pleasure, and to will — to work and to will. And so, God works in us, God wills in us, yet we are working out our salvation, and we are making choices that are important, and they're so important that God promises us rewards, crowns. He says, I won't overlook so much as a cup of cold water given to one of these little ones in my name. So, we have a choice of whether to give the cup of cold water or not. So, does our merit result in reward? I hesitate to use the word "merit" because it's so easily and quickly confused with our salvation, which is not what this is about. But yes, our faithful work done for him is something he chooses to reward us for. That's all by his grace, but yes, our works and what we choose to do really does matter and will matter for eternity.

**Question 6:****What happens to believers at death?****Dr. Stephen C. Roy**

The evidence of the New Testament points clearly to the direction that believers at the point of their physical death are ushered directly and immediately into the presence of God, a state that Paul will say is "better by far." This conclusion is pointed to by several texts in the New Testament. Paul says in Philippians 1:23 that he desired to depart from this life and be with Christ, which, again, he says is better by far than anything this life has to offer. In 2 Corinthians 5:8, Paul says that to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord. The reality of this, of believers being in the presence of God after their death is pointed to in Luke 16 in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, where Lazarus, this poor man throughout his life, is now, after death, in the presence of God in the company of Abraham, the father of the people of God, and enjoying blessedness in the presence of God. Perhaps the most definitive statement comes in Luke 23 with the words that Jesus spoke to the repentant thief on the cross... He said in Luke 23:43 to this repentant thief, "Today you will be with me in paradise." So, that very day when that thief died, when Jesus died, they would be together in paradise in the presence of God himself. So, the testimony of the New Testament seems clear: believers at the point of physical death are ushered into the presence of God and into the blessedness that comes from that.

**Dr. Vern S. Poythress**

Many people want to know what happens to Christian believers at death. And the Bible is clear that we go to be with Christ. Paul talks about that himself in Philippians 1, and there's pictures of it in several places in the New Testament... That picture is a picture of consciously enjoying the presence of Christ; it's better than this life, but it's before the final resurrection of the body. That's what we are promised if we believe in Christ; we go to be with him and we're blessed immediately with the blessings of salvation, but we still anticipate a final resurrection of the body.

**Rev. Dan Hendley**

Believers, when they die, the Scriptures tell us, go to be with Christ. The Bible doesn't tell us a great deal about what happens at that point, but Paul says, "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain," so we know that whatever happens, it's going to be good... In 2 Corinthians the apostle Paul talks about us being absent from the body but present with the Lord, which suggests to us that there's a period after death when believers, their spirit or soul is separated from their body — and will be until the time of the resurrection — but during that time, again, we're not told a lot about what that experience is like, but we're told that we're with the Lord. You think of the thief on the cross and Jesus said, "Today you will be with me in paradise." That's not the ultimate state where we have redeemed bodies in the new heaven and the new earth, but it's still very good because Jesus is there and we will be with him.

**Question 7:****When we die, do our bodies stop being part of us?****Dr. Voddie Baucham, Jr.**

It is very important for us to understand the connection between our whole selves and the fact that when we die our bodies don't stop being a part of us. This is the central idea behind the doctrine of the resurrection. Christ has been raised, but he is the firstfruits of the resurrection. There is another resurrection to come. Our bodies will be raised. They will be raised imperishable. This is why Christians respect the body. This is why Christians bury their dead. This is why we treat the dead with honor and respect. This is why Christian churches have often had graveyards, because it is a central aspect of who we are as Christians that we have hope in the resurrection. We don't believe, like the pagans do, that somehow the goal is to be released from this body and, therefore, we can mistreat the body, or asceticism becomes our goal. It is not our understanding that the body is somehow sinful. We don't have that sort of platonic dualism. Our understanding is that we are whole people, and we were always meant to be whole people. And in eternity we will be whole people. So, we will be made new, but it's *our* bodies that will be made new.

**Dr. Benjamin Gladd**

When a person dies, right now, that is, we are in within the — we call this the overlap of the ages — right now, when a person dies, their soul goes to be with God in

heaven. Think of it like that. For example, the most explicit text in this regard is Revelation 6 where it talks about how the souls of the martyred saints are under the altar, if you'll remember, but they're crying out because they realize that something is amiss, that they don't have their bodies and they're not in the new creation. In fact, they say, "How long, O Lord?" because their fellow servant, their fellow brothers and sisters are still being persecuted. So, they realize that there's still a problem on earth, and there's a problem with them; that is, they don't have their bodies yet, and they're wondering when will wickedness be put down, *and* when will we receive our bodies? And the answer is, the answer is, "a little longer, just wait a little bit more." But yet, what does God do? God gives them a white robe, and so he clothes them. But this is all sort of a temporary fix for what will happen in the new heavens and new earth. *Then*, then, souls — those who die now — will receive their bodies. That's the way it's supposed to be. To be dislodged, for the soul to be dislodged from the body is a very bizarre thing; it's something that is incomplete. It's in God's plan, but it's incomplete, and it's not the way it's supposed to be. The Old Testament looks at a person and sees wholeness. It doesn't like to see this tri-part division of mind, soul and body. In fact, it sees the entire being, the entire person. That's all platonic thought that's related to ripping a person into pieces. The biblical understanding of a person is that they are *whole*, and so when you're resurrected you're resurrected both spiritually *and* physically.

### Question 8:

#### What is the intermediate state?

##### Dr. Stephen C. Roy

When theologians speak of the "intermediate state," they refer to a period of time between the death of a believer and final resurrection. During that time, according to the New Testament, a person's soul, or spirit, is with God in a state, as Paul says in Philippians 1:23, is "better by far." Their body is in a grave, and so they, believers in this intermediate state, are experiencing a disembodied state, different than the unified state of their ... life on earth or what will be true in the new heavens and new earth. This intermediate state, this intervening time of whatever duration between their death and final resurrection is a state of great blessedness in the presence of God. It's a state where the transformation of their souls is completed. John says in 1 John 3:2 that we know that we shall be like Jesus, for we will see him as he is — that transformation. But as wonderful as that is, is not all that God has in store for his people. That awaits a final resurrection when glorified, perfected bodies are reunited with transformed spirits, and as whole people, body and soul in the new heavens and earth we will see God, we will live with God, we will love God, we will serve God, we will worship God for all eternity. That's the ultimate hope. Before that time, an intermediate state — great blessedness, yet not all that awaits the people of God.

**Dr. Vern S. Poythress**

The term “intermediate state” is a term that theologians have developed that describes something that’s actually mentioned and taught about in the Bible. It’s the time between when a person dies and the resurrection of the dead when Christ returns. So, anybody who dies before Christ returns, where do they go? They don’t go into nonexistence. The Bible is clear that they continue to exist, and we who are believers are taken immediately into the presence of Christ, where we enjoy fellowship with him even more intensely than what we have in this life. Paul says in ... Philippians 1 that to go and be with Christ is better by far. The intermediate state is that time, but it’s called “intermediate” because it’s short of the time when our bodies are raised from the dead and we enter into the consummate state of the new heaven and the new earth.

**Dr. Richard Phillips**

One thing you learn as a pastor is how really surprisingly unaware most Christians are about what the Bible teaches about life after death, and so if you were to ask believers, “What is the intermediate state?” probably most would not know. That’s a theological term — it’s not in the Bible, but it’s a category we should know about. Christians believe that when they die they go to heaven. What they need to realize is that going to heaven is not the end of our history. The reason we speak of the intermediate state is because there’s something after it; there is life after life after death... The intermediate state tells us that when we die and go to heaven, there is something yet to happen after that ... That’s an intermediate life after death situation, but it’s not the final state that we have. Now, the intermediate state is, when we die, our souls are separated from their bodies, and our non-bodily selves, our conscious selves, will be in heaven. As soon as you die — here’s wonderful news for a Christian — the instant you die... Death is not a process in that sense... Death is an instantaneous departure of the soul from the body into the presence of the Glory. But you’re separated from your body. Your body goes into the grave. It’s interesting when John’s gospel says they laid Jesus’ body into the grave, the next verse says they laid Jesus into the grave. The body is the self, but that’s separated from the conscious self, which is the soul. Now, presently all believers who have died and are in heaven are in the intermediate state. Their souls are in the presence of the glory of the Lord, seeing him in light and glory; what a glorious state is that of those in the intermediate state. But the good news is there’s more, and that’s why Revelation 6:10 has the saints in heaven crying out, “How long, O Lord!” Well, what are they crying out for? The return of the Lord Jesus, when there will be the resurrection of the body and our souls will be rejoined to our bodies, our bodies will be resurrected, will be renewed like the body of Jesus after he rose from the grave and then, together with our Lord and all the glorified resurrected states ... then we enter into the eternal glory, when the cosmos will have been renewed, and we will live in a bodily form in eternal glory. Well, the intermediate state is that time after death and before the bodily resurrection.

**Dr. Voddie Baucham, Jr.**

The intermediate state is that state between our death and our resurrection. It’s interesting the Bible doesn’t give us a lot of very clear information about this state

other than to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. So, we don't teach as some do that there is a "soul sleep," that your soul ceases to be, or that there ceases to be any activity. We are present with the Lord when we die... However, in the coming age there is this resurrection of our bodies, and there is this reuniting of the whole, so that the fact that the intermediate state doesn't include our bodies doesn't mean that our bodies aren't important. It's a very difficult doctrine to grasp; however, we need to be very clear that those who have died are still in existence, and they're either in existence in the presence of God in glory, or they're in existence in torment.

### **Question 9:**

#### **Why should Christians today continue to believe in hell?**

##### **Dr. Guy Waters**

Well, as Christians we're people of the Book. That means we're committed to believing and embracing what Christ has given us in the Scripture. And when we come to something as unpopular as the doctrine of hell, the most important question we have to ask as Christians is, is this something that the Bible teaches? And it is. Whether we look at the teaching of Jesus, say in Matthew 25, or we look at the teaching of the apostles, be it in 2 Thessalonians 1 or in the Revelation, hell is something that is taught in the Bible, and so for that reason, we believe it, though it's unpopular.

##### **Dr. Harry L. Reeder III**

Should Christians jettison the doctrine of hell? Should they believe in it? And if so, why? Well, the answer to that's really, on the one hand, is relatively simple. On the other hand, it's pretty profound. The simple answer is, is the Bible teaches it, and God's Word is infallible and inerrant, and, therefore, we must hold to all that God's Word reveals, because it's true. And that's our responsibility, is to be good stewards of the truth. Paul says that he is innocent of the blood of all men because he has declared the whole counsel of God. So, while we fully recognize that some doctrines are more important than others, there is no such thing as a superfluous doctrine in the Bible. And the doctrine of hell, by no means, would fall into a secondary or tertiary element of doctrine. So, why is it so important? Well, number one is you can't preach the gospel without preaching the doctrine of hell. The gospel is that God has delivered us from sin, death, hell and the grave. So, if you don't articulate those issues, it's not good news if you don't know what the bad news is and the bad news is that we are under the judgment of sin; we are under the power of sin, and therefore the wages of sin is death, and death is an eternal death of everlasting condemnation in a place called hell, and we go there by way of death, and therefore the grave seemingly has the victory, unless you've heard the good news that Jesus Christ has overcome death and the grave because he overcame our sin, and he did that by paying our penalty. So, on the cross he endured our hell — all the judgment of God for all the sins of all of his people for all of eternity. So, to preach the gospel you have to

preach the doctrine of hell as well as sin and death and that Jesus delivers us from all of our enemies. But the second reason is, is that we can't be more spiritual than Jesus, and the number one teacher of the doctrine of hell is Jesus, in the Bible. At least two-thirds, perhaps more than two-thirds of the material we have in the Bible comes directly from the lips of Jesus himself. And then thirdly and finally is just an argument from church history. You can't have a Great Awakening without the gospel, and you can't preach the gospel without dealing with the issue of sin and hell. All great gospel awakenings have had a clear, robust preaching of the doctrine of hell.

### **Dr. Randy Alcorn**

Why should Christians today continue to believe in hell? ... If you look at Jesus in the Gospels and the things that he says about hell — Matthew 8, Matthew 10, Matthew 13, each of the other Gospels ... he talks about hell in ways that portray it as a horrifying place. He talks about the worm that does not die, the fire that burns. You've got darkness, which seems like a contrary metaphor because you've got the great heat and fire, and then you've also got darkness. But I think the aloneness, the utter desolation of this place, and he speaks of it as a place that's eternal. The righteous ... go to eternal life and the wicked to eternal punishment, everlasting punishment... Though he's a God of love, he talks very directly about hell. And I shouldn't say *though* he's a God of love — *because* he's a God of love, he talks about hell. Hell is a reality. If we love people we will tell them the truth about hell... We're doing nobody a favor by denying the reality of hell. If we love people, we'll tell them the truth. Just as if we saw somebody on a canoe and he's going down the river and we know that river is going off into a waterfall, and they don't see it coming, and we're on the shore, we need to yell at them to get their attention, if that's what it takes. And it might seem rude to be doing that, but if you love people, you warn them... If you love people, you'll warn them about a disaster that's imminent. And that's why Jesus loved people enough to warn them about hell.

### **Dr. Matt Carter**

Hell for many can seem like an antiquated subject, but the question is, why should Christians today still believe in it? And I think the answer is twofold. One, we believe in it because Christ believed in it, he talked about it, he taught on it, he spoke about it as a very real place. That's one. So, there's a theological foundation for why we should believe in hell. But number two, it ought to drive our mission. If hell's a real place, if there is a real place where people who are separated from the Lord who do not know Christ are going to spend eternity in suffering, then that ought to drive what we do every day of our lives. We have been given the gift of salvation through Jesus; we're not going to hell, we're going to heaven but our calling and our goal is to be motivated to see others who do not know Christ, to know him. And if hell is a real place, then we've got to get off our backsides and go to the nations like Jesus called us to. It ought to impact the way you work. It ought to impact the way you raise your family... It ought to impact the way that you spend your money. The doctrine of hell and eternal suffering for those that are separated from Christ, if it's true — and I believe that it is because Scripture says that it is — ought to impact every aspect of our life and motivate the way that we spend every day.



**Question 10:**

**How should believers respond to the doctrine of annihilationism — the belief that, at some point after death, unregenerate souls will cease to exist?**

**Dr. Robert A. Peterson**

Annihilationism is the view that the wicked in hell, after paying the punishment, the penalty for their sins will be annihilated or destroyed so that they no longer exist... Jesus, in Matthew 25 says that the lost, the unsaved, the wicked, will be thrown into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. And John, in Revelation 20:10 says that involves being tormented forever and ever. So, plainly, hell is everlasting punishment... In Revelation 14, the fire imagery doesn't mean *consumption* so the wicked are made extinct and exist no more. Rather, it speaks of pain. He'll be tormented with fire and sulfur... And concerning the length of the punishment in hell, the duration: "the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever." Annihilationists claim, oh, this is symbolic of the extinction of the wicked; they're gone and the smoke continues to go up forever. No, it isn't symbolic of the extinction of the wicked. Far from it. The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest day or night. The ongoing smoke testifies to their ongoing suffering of terrible punishment in hell.

**Rev. Clete Hux**

Christians ought to respond to the doctrine of annihilationism by seeing that Scripture really doesn't teach the extinction of the soul. When God created man in his image, he created him with a soul that will last forever. It is eternal. The Scriptures talk about this: "It's appointed unto man once to die, after this comes the judgment." Some people might point to the situation with Lazarus and the rich man... He named a certain man Lazarus and he named the rich man, so he's talking about everlasting, not extinction of the soul.

**Dr. Jeff Lowman**

When we think about annihilationism, we have to realize that that type of thinking is never even approached in Scripture... You really don't even see the basis for thinking that we simply cease to exist if we are damned, so to speak, if we have not received salvation through Christ, because the same adjectives are used consistently in the New Testament that salvation lasts forever and that we go to eternal torment forever.

**Question 11:**

**How can a loving God send anyone, even his enemies, into eternal condemnation?**

**Dr. Paul Gardner**

Perhaps one of the most frequently asked questions of me, especially when we're introducing those who don't know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, to the Christian

faith is, how can a loving God ever judge anybody? How can a loving God think of sending anybody to hell? It's not an easy question. And we need to be very careful, those of us who are Christians, *very careful* not to give rather pious, easy answers to a dreadful question at some levels, because it is a *fearful* thing to contemplate being judged by Almighty God, to being placed in hell, being placed away from the presence of God forever. This is fearful, and we must never take the question lightly. Perhaps the best way of coming at it is this: we understand that God is both a loving God but that he is also a just God. And, actually, I want my God to be a just God. When I look at some of the atrocities there are in this world, I'm horrified and I don't think the perpetrators of wife abuse, of child sex abuse, of, let alone things like the holocaust, I don't think those perpetrators should be left simply to just get by with it all. So, I do want, at the end of the day, God to hold people accountable for the evil of this world. Now, of course, I've specifically stated some dramatic incidents, where I think probably everybody would agree, they shouldn't be allowed to get away with it, but it's an attempt to make the point that I want my God to be just as a judge. I also, of course, want him to show love and mercy, and the way the Bible portrays this is that God comes to us, all of us who have sinned, all of us who have rebelled against him, all of us who do things — you know, I might not think I've done quite as much that's as bad as the particular sins I just mentioned — but we have, the Bible says; “all have sinned” and fallen short of God's glory. And God comes to all of us, reaching out with his love and saying, “You are sinners. You are worthy of judgment, but if you will turn to Jesus, and if you will trust in him and believe in him, then forgiveness is available, and I will forgive, because the punishment has been taken by Jesus if you trust in him.” And I think that's really the only way of coming at what is a very difficult question. It is in the cross of Christ that we see both the perfect justice of God — sin is dealt with, sin is judged, the penalty is paid for sin — *and* we see God's perfect love, because for those of us who believe in him, whatever our past sin, as we repent, as we come to him in faith, that price for our sin has been paid by Jesus on the cross.

### **Dr. Samuel Lamerson**

One of the most troublesome doctrines for Christians today is the doctrine of hell, and often I will have people come to me and say, it just doesn't seem fair that God should punish a person infinitely for finite number of sins. That is, it seems as if God ought to punish them for a finite period and then either annihilate them or let them go. And there are several things that we should realize. First is that the text, that is, the Bible, very clearly tells us, number one, that hell exists; number two, that it was prepared for the Devil and his angels; and number three, that there will be other people there with the Devil and his angels. That is, that hell is not just a place where the Devil and his angels will go, but it is a place where anyone who rejects Jesus Christ as Messiah will go... But in short, if someone were to ask me, why do you believe in hell? It's because Jesus Christ, the Messiah himself, taught me that hell exists and that I should believe in it.

**Question 12:****Why is Jesus' bodily resurrection such an indispensable part of the gospel message?****Dr. Paul Gardner**

The resurrection of Jesus functions in so many different ways in Scripture. It is something that is at the very core of the Christian faith, that Jesus rose from the dead, and that he rose *bodily* from the dead. So, the resurrection ends up showing to us all sorts of things. It shows to us that we too will be raised bodily from the dead eventually, when we have died, or when Christ returns and all people are raised from the dead. The resurrection of the dead, though, also confirms to us that we are justified by faith. So, what scriptures tell us is that the resurrection is, as it were, the evidence that God has accepted the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf, that we have been declared not guilty, and the evidence is that Jesus, the one who was slain for us, is raised from the dead by the Father. The resurrection works in other ways as well because, of course, the resurrection is the precursor to the ascension and glorification of Jesus. As he is raised bodily from the dead that leads into the fact that he then ascends back into heaven and he's given all authority under the Father; he is given all authority to be able to rule the world, to be over, not just us but absolutely everything that is in this universe, this cosmos. And that resurrection means that we have a human being there on the throne over everything. God, yes, the Divine Lord Jesus, but a real human being who is there on the throne ruling everything. And in that sense he becomes the firstfruits of our resurrection. The Bible says that one day we too will reign with him ... that we will have bodies raised and be like Christ; we will see him face to face. So, the resurrection is just one of those core things of the gospel that speaks to us of our eternal future, of Christ's lordship, of the central place of created human beings in God's plan for all eternity.

**Dr. Saul Cruz, translation**

Christ's resurrection is key to the Christian message, to the gospel message. Because if Christ had not been resurrected, everything else would just be a theories; everything else would be only ideas, postulations about life. Christ's resurrection proves that Christ was not defeated by death. Death could not hold him, nor could it capture him because he was innocent, because there never was sin in his life. Death can hold people for eternity, because they've sinned, because there is a sentence against them, but Jesus does not have a sentence against him, and so he defeated death. Death was unable to hold him, and as he defeated death, he created a way, a path, to be the new Adam, and therefore, all of us who believe in him, we will also be resurrected with him.

**Dr. Peter Walker**

The resurrection of Jesus is basic to the gospel because without the resurrection, with a dead Jesus, we have nothing. I mean, what help is there in a dead Jesus, crucified, failed? So, the resurrection in the New Testament is a sign that Jesus has been vindicated and if we talk about the forgiveness of sins coming about through his

death, well, if Jesus had died and not been raised again, we don't know that we're forgiven. The whole doctrine of salvation falls apart without the fact that Jesus is raised from the dead. But its more than that, I mean, it means that Jesus Christ is alive today. And an essential part of the good news is that here is a living person that we can know and have our lives transformed by. We're not following just a dead hero. We're following a living person. But it's more than that, it's that there's actual new life beyond the grave, for those who believe in Christ. So, death is not the end. The resurrection is a sign that there is a new kingdom established and that we have hope beyond the grave. And it is even more than that. It's that God has got a purpose for his whole world. This creation which is subjected to frustration finds through the resurrection that there's a hope of new creation. And so, the resurrection turns out to be absolutely key, not just for individuals, but for the whole world.

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