The Great Final Judgement

Described

The Great Final Judgement refers to when God will judge every unbeliever, revealing all things about their previous lives here on Earth and declaring His final judgement of eternal condemnation on each of them.

Elementary knowledge for all believers

Hebrews 6:1-2 shows teaching about eternal judgement should be basic understanding for all believers: “Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgement.” But I know a multitude of Christians who know little about or who have a warped view of the topic of eternal judgement. This is one reason why I believe Pentecostal, Charismatic and Evangelical churches need to again start preaching on this topic without being caught in the bondage of concentrating on it all of the time.

The time of the Great Final Judgement

The Great Final Judgement will occur either before, at the same time as or after the creation of the New Heavens and Earth (see Revelation 21:1, 2 Peter 3:7 and Revelation 20:11).

The length of the Great Final Judgement Day

The expression “day” used in relation to the Great Final Judgement may not necessarily mean 24 hours. This is because the Biblical expressions “the day of Lord’s vengeance” (see Isaiah 34:8) and “the day of salvation” do not mean exactly 24 hours. It is hard to be certain about how long the Great Final Judgement Day will be. This is because it will occur in the realm outside of the limits of time as we know it.

Trinitarian judgement delegated primarily to Jesus Christ

The Great Final Judgement Day will be an expression of God as the Trinity. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit will all be involved in different ways. But Romans 2:16 expresses God has delegated this judgement primarily to Jesus Christ: “in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.” John 5:22 states: “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgement to the Son.”

John 5:27 shows one of the reasons for this delegation of judgement is Jesus is a man: “and has given Him authority to execute judgement also, because He is the Son of Man.” As a human, He will judge as one of us. No one will be able to complain Jesus does not understand
human conditions and temptations. He was tempted in every way like we have been, as Hebrews 4:15 shows: “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

Acts 17:31 shows Jesus Christ will judge everyone in the world by perfectly righteous or just standards: “because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” The resurrection of Jesus Christ’s body was one sign given by God that Christ has been delegated as Judge of all.

In John 8:15-16, Jesus Christ stated His and God the Father’s judgements are true or correct and different from human standards: “You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. And yet if I do judge, My judgement is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me.”

John 3:17, 8:15 and 12:47-48 show that while on Earth the first time, Jesus did not make final judgements of eternal condemnation on anyone. John 12:47-48 declares: “And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.” Here Jesus Christ said His Word, if rejected by humans, would be the thing by which they would be condemned on the Final Judgement Day. Jesus’ spoken Words were recorded later in His written Word – the Scriptures.

Jesus came the first time to offer God’s undeserved grace and mercy to all people. When He returns, He will come as Judge. At the Final Judgement Day, all will bow before Him, even the most wicked and proud (see Romans 14:9-12 and Philippians 2:9-10). This will be a very humbling experience for multitudes.

**Jesus spoke often of Hell and the Final Judgement**

Contrary to what many think about Jesus Christ, He spoke often about the Final Judgement and eternal punishment in Hell or the Lake of Fire. 1 Jesus manifested enormous love in warning us about these things. He would have done wrong if He had not warned us in this way when He clearly knew the dreadful torments of those in Hell or the Lake of Fire.

**The day of God’s righteous anger – a fearful time**

Romans 2:5 calls the Great Judgement Day by the expression “the day of wrath”: “But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God.” This shows God’s righteous anger will be displayed on that Day against the stubborn unrepentant hearts of unbelievers.

Hebrews 10:26-27 and 29-31 shows the Great Judgement Day will also be a fearful time for those who once knew God but then turned away from Him: “For if we sin willfully after we

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have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a
certain fearful expectation of judgement, and fiery indignation which will devour the
adversaries... Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy
who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he
was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said,
‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. And again, ‘The Lord will judge His
people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Humans who try to ignore the future Great Judgement Day are sadly like ostriches
sticking their heads in the sand imagining they are safe because they cannot see a hunter who is
about to shoot them.

Ecclesiastes 12:14 warns all humans: “For God will bring every work into judgement,
including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil.” Every human will be
present on the Final Judgement Day and every one of their motives and actions will be judged.
All secrets will be exposed.

The books and the book of life

God knows everything about everything, as Psalm 139:1-4 shows: “O Lord, You have
searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand
my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with
all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it
altogether.” Hebrews 4:13 says: “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all
things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

The Scriptures teach all humans will be judged according to the books. Daniel 7:10 and
Revelation 20:12-13 refer to people being judged by the books. Revelation 20:12-15 says: “And
I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another
book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their
works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in
it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each
one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the
second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of
fire.” Note here the books are said to be different from the Book of Life. Verse 12 says the
books record people’s actions. This seems to be similar to Hosea 7:2 which says God records
all evil acts.

Revelation 20:15 stresses a person must have their name written in the Book of Life to
avoid being thrown into the eternal Lake of Fire. Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8 and 21:27 also refer
to the Book of Life. Exodus 32:32 and Revelation 3:5 speak of having some people’s names
being blotted out of the Book of Life. (Exodus 32:32 only uses the word “book” but seems to
refer to the Book of Life.) We cannot be sure whether the books and the Book of Life are
literally books or whether they are symbolic of some other means by which God has recorded
these things.

Luke 8:17, 12:2-3, Romans 2:16 and Jude 14-15 reveal unbelievers and religious
hypocrites will have all their wicked acts and words told to them on the Great Judgement Day.
Romans 2:16 states: “in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ,
The purpose of the Great Judgement Day will not be for God to try to work out what people were, did and said, but to reveal His perfect knowledge of all these things.

The standards God will use

The Scriptures reveal the standards by which God will judge unbelievers and religious hypocrites.

Firstly, those who have heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ will be judged for having rejected Him, as Luke 12:8-9 reveals: “Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.” In John 3:17-18, Jesus said: “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

In John 12:47-48 records Jesus’ Words will be used to judge those who have heard and rejected them: “And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”

In Luke 10:10-12, Jesus said it would be worse on the Final Judgement Day for those who rejected the ministry of His disciples preaching about Him than it would be for the wicked people of the city of Sodom who had never heard the Gospel of Christ: “But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ‘The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.’ But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city.”

Secondly, unbelievers and religious hypocrites will also be judged on the basis of everything they have done in their lives. This is regardless of whether they have heard the Gospel or not. Romans 2:5-11 says: But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; For there is no partiality with God.” They will be judged on the basis of any disobedience to God’s commands (see Romans 2:12-16, 3:19 and 1 Timothy 1:8-11).

Romans 2:12-16 shows even if they have not heard the Law preached, they will still be held accountable for any disobedience to it. This is because some of these laws have been written on their consciences by God. Romans 2:12-16 says: “For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their
thoughts accusing or else excusing them) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.”

James 2:10 shows even if people only disobey one command of the Law just once in their lives, they will be as guilty as if they disobeyed the whole Law: “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” It can be argued Jesus’ Words recorded in Matthew 5:21-30 show some of His standards of judgement will be even higher than those listed in the Mosaic Law.

Thirdly, Matthew 7:2 shows people will be judged partly on the basis of the ways they judge others: “For with what judgement you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” This verse demonstrates if unbelievers or religious hypocrites have ever criticised even one other person on only one occasion for some form of selfishness or lack of love or injustice, God will record their own words as a judgement against them. By criticising another person for selfishness or lack of love or injustice, they are showing they know these things are wrong.

Romans 2:1 needs to be preached to the unsaved: “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.”

Matthew 12:36-37 proves every word unbelievers or religious hypocrites speak will be recorded by God and used to judge them on the Final Judgement Day: “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the days of judgement. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Fourthly, Luke 12:47-48 seems to suggest Jesus will judge unbelievers partly on the basis of how much of His will they knew: “And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”

Fifthly, John 15:24, Matthew 11:20-24 and Luke 10:13-15 reveal unbelievers and religious hypocrites will also be judged partly on the basis of whether they have seen miracles of God and still rejected His claims over their lives.

Other aspects of the Final Judgement

There are a number of other aspects of the Final Judgement we must know:

a) It is difficult to determine from Scripture whether the Great Judgement will occur on Earth or in the sky or in heaven.

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2 Matthew 11:20-24 states: “Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgement than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgement than for you.”
b) Even during their earthly lives, unbelievers are already under a just sentence of eternal condemnation. John 3:18 declares: "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Read also 2 Peter 2:9. The Great Final Judgement will fully reveal what is already true about unbelievers. If unbelievers, however, turn to God, their present sentence of condemnation will be changed.

c) Romans 2:2 shows God’s judgement will be based on perfect truth: “But we know that the judgement of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.” There will be no highly paid lawyers to defend unbelievers and religious hypocrites by twisting the truth or by twisting the teachings of the Bible. God will not allow any lies or part truths to be used as excuses for sin.

d) Romans 2:11 reveals God’s judgement will be perfectly fair involving no favouritism to anyone: “For there is no partiality with God.” God will not favour people who have had the opportunity to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ nor those who did not. Also, God will not favour people just because they have wonderful reputations among other humans or have held special positions in government, the church or in social welfare work. In fact, many church leaders and social workers throughout history will be sadly condemned to eternal punishment. Galatians 2:6 says God does not judge by external appearance. Humans are so used to seeing injustices in this world, they find it hard to imagine someone judging with perfect fairness.

e) At the Final Judgement Day, unbelievers and religious hypocrites will basically reap what they sow, as Galatians 6:7-8 shows: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” Here we see people will be condemned to everlasting destruction because they did not want to be ruled by the Holy Spirit but preferred to be governed by corrupted human nature.

Positive applications of the Final Judgement

The Final Judgement:

a) will satisfy the God-imparted human desire for perfect justice. Constantly humans complain to each other about the many injustices in this world. They criticise politicians, kings and judges for not always judging rightly. God had placed this longing for perfect justice in all humans. Even criminals in gaol have their own form of justice in which they punish child molesters and those they regard as more evil than themselves. God-imparted human conscience already provides some basis for justice in this world (see Romans 2:15). But because of the corrupted state of human nature and the ignoring of conscience by all humans at some time, their consciences do not operate as God intended. The Final Judgement will be the most complete expression of perfect justice in human history.

b) emphasises God holds every human accountable for every thought, motive, word, feeling, feature of character and action.

c) will express God’s awesome love and mercy. The Great White Throne Judgement will express God’s awesome love, compassion and mercy in the pardon and forgiveness of the
sins of believers. These believers really deserved eternal punishment. Romans 9:23 says: “and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory.”

d) will reveal God’s ability to triumph over all who practice any evil and who oppose Him.

e) will result in God being glorified through the expression of His perfectly just but loving merciful character, the manifestation of His perfect knowledge and power, and the absolute authority He will display over Satan and demons.

f) shows history is heading towards God-ordained goals despite its seeming meaninglessness and disorder to many.

g) will display God’s exaltation of Jesus Christ as the absolute ruler of all. Philippians 2:9-10 says: “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth.”

h) encourages us to forgive others. Romans 12:19 and 1 Peter 2:22-23 show we do not need to inflict punishment on others for their evils against us. They will be judged severely for such things if they do not turn to Jesus Christ. If they turn to Him, we should be pleased to see them go unpunished. This is just as God has forgiven us of similar evils towards Him and others.

i) will result in the total removal of all sin and evil out of God’s kingdom. Matthew 13:41 says: “The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness.” The only place evil will remain will be in the place of eternal punishment – the Lake of Fire or Hell.

j) provides believers with a supreme motive for personal witnessing and evangelism. Knowing the nature of the Final Judgement should encourage believers to be willing to suffer rejection and criticism in order to give unbelievers an opportunity to be saved from eternal punishment.

Believers are not under eternal condemnation

Those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour are no longer under a God-declared sentence of eternal condemnation. Romans 8:1 shows this: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus…”

Eternal choices are being made now

2 Thessalonians 1:9 and Matthew 25:46 refer to unbelievers being punished eternally. Therefore, eternal choices are being made by all humans now. People who choose to be religious hypocrites or remain as unbelievers very sadly face a terrible future after death (see Matthew 24:48-51 and Luke 12:45-46).

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3 Luke 12:45-46 states: “But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the menservants and maidservants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.”
People are not re-incarnated

Occults, spiritualists, Hindus, Buddhists and New Age cultists try to comfort themselves by saying humans are reincarnated many times. Hindus even believe humans can be reincarnated as rats or various types of insects. Many will be shocked to find all humans only die once and will then face God’s judgement. Their religious gurus, swamis, monks and false teachers will be standing there also ready to be judged. Hebrews 9:27 declares: “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgement.”

Believers judging on the Great Judgement Day

Matthew 19:28, Luke 22:30, 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 and Revelation 20:4 prove believers will receive some God-given delegated authority to judge unbelievers and fallen angels on the Great Judgement Day. 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 says: “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels...?” On this Final Judgement Day, believers in total submission to the Great Judge – Jesus Christ – will also judge fallen angels (see 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6).

Unrepentant unbelievers have an inner fear of punishment

People who do not love God but love to sin mostly have an inner fear of punishment, as 1 John 4:18 infers. Some suppress this but it is always resident somewhere in their conscience as long as the latter has not been totally seared (see Romans 2:14-16 and 1 Timothy 4:2).

Strict Judge and loving merciful Saviour combined

Many people wrongly think God can only be either a strict righteous Judge or a loving merciful gracious Saviour. They do not understand the Bible teaches God is both. Isaiah 45:21 says: “…And there is no other God besides Me, a just God and a Saviour…” Romans 3:24-26 also demonstrates how God is perfectly just and gracious at the same time.

How could a God of love sentence people to eternal punishment?

Those non-Christians who say a God of love could not send people to eternal punishment need to consider the following limited comparison between God and human judges: A human judge who is full of love for His children would be regarded as a corrupt unjust judge if after his own son and daughter were found guilty of robbery and murder, he let them go free saying that he totally forgave them. A just judge would have to pronounce a severe punishment on his guilty children no matter how much he loved them. If the judge totally pardoned his children on the basis of his love and mercy, this would be extremely unjust.

As the Supreme Ruler and Judge of the Universe, God has to maintain His perfectly right standards and opposition to every form of evil and wickedness. These standards are higher than those maintained by human judges. Therefore, He has to pronounce the most severe
penalty against any human who chooses to reject Him and His rightful claim to be the Lord of their lives and who treats other people wrongly in any way. As a result, every human is declared “Guilty” by God and under a sentence of future eternal punishment in Hell.  

God’s perfect love and mercy have been expressed in:

- providing Jesus Christ’s death as a suitable substitute for the punishment we deserved.
- giving us Christ to live within us by His Spirit in order to empower us to live more and more as God requires.

**Eternal condemnation is an act of perfect justice**

Some people say God should not condemn anyone to eternal punishment. But if He did not for example, condemn unrepentant mass murderers like Hitler, other Nazi leaders and Stalin the Communist leader to eternal punishment, God would be unjust. A human comparison to this can be seen after World War Two. If out of misplaced mercy, the Allied judges of Nazi exterminators of Jewish civilians had totally pardoned these murderers, this would have been an horrendous injustice. Such wicked Nazis deserved death.

If out of love, God showed mercy towards unrepentant mass murderers, letting them go totally free without punishment, this would be an incentive for many people to do similar acts of wickedness in this life. They would think, “It does not matter what I do? I will never be held accountable when I die?”

Some may argue that humans who commit less evil than Hitler or Stalin should not be eternally punished. But this is an example of the sin-warped imaginations of humans failing to see how shockingly wicked it is in God Our Creator’s eyes for humans to not perfectly love, depend on and obey Him in everything and to not perfectly love all other people. In Matthew 5:21-22, Jesus revealed just becoming spitefully angry with someone is in His eyes almost as bad as the act of murder.

**God hates seeing any human suffering eternally**

God hates having to condemn anyone to eternal punishment, as 2 Peter 3:9 shows: “The Lord is...longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” In John 3:17, Jesus said: “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

**Being distressed about the future eternal punishment of the unsaved**

It is right for us to be very distressed and burdened about the fact many humans are heading towards horrendous eternal punishment in the future. This should motivate us to be more involved in personal evangelism or witnessing.

The reason we find it very difficult to accept the idea of people being eternally punished in Hell is that God has placed in all humans, both unbelievers and believers, a portion of natural

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4 The above comparison between God and human judges is limited in the sense that His love and justice are both far superior to that of human judges.
non-sexual love for other people created in His image. But we need to be careful not to use this God-given love in ways which distort the truth about His justice. He has also put a sense of justice in all humans created in His image. But because of the Fall, this sense of justice is perverted.

Revelation 6:9-10 and 19:1-3 show that believers in heaven understand God’s justice and the need of eternal punishment. They understand this because in heaven, they no longer have a corrupted human nature. While on Earth, we must long for the salvation of all humans. At present, we do not know which unbelievers shall later be converted. But at the Final Judgement, believers will not think it is unjust for all unbelievers and religious hypocrites to be eternally condemned.

Also while living on Earth, we must feel no mercy or pity for wicked demons or Satan. They are fully devoted to evil and can never be saved from eternal punishment.

State of those in Hell or the Lake of Fire

Many non-Christians comfort themselves with the fantasy they will enjoy themselves in Hell. This is part of the deception Satan and demons who hate them, have put into their thoughts. Satan and demons long to see humans suffer eternally similarly to how they will. The truth of what happens to people in Hell or the Lake of Fire is both tragic and dreadful:

a) They will be eternally cut off from God’s Presence, as 2 Thessalonians 1:9 states: “These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

b) They will be constantly dominated by evil thoughts and feelings. Because they will be cut off totally from God – the Source of all love – they will become progressively more and more like Satan and demons. They will be continually filled with sinful thoughts and feelings of anger, hatred, fear, envy, self-pity, depression and similar things. Their bodies will be resurrected on the Great Day of Judgement (see Matthew 10:28 and Acts 24:15). So they will experience the effects of these horrific thoughts and feelings in both their spirits and bodies forever. Think of how bad your body felt when you were full of anger, fear or depression. In Hell, people will feel like this for day after day without end.

c) Those in Hell will be tormented by the evil attitudes and responses of these millions of other people with them. Imagine how you feel having to endure the anger, hatred, depressive moods and selfishness of just one other person. In the Lake of Fire, each individual will suffer having multitudes of angry, hate-filled, fearful, selfish people inflicting further hurts and rejections on them. This in itself will be unbearable torture. Can you imagine living for eternity with unrepentant mass murderers and similar people? It will be worse than the worst human jail throughout history. (Some who are in human gaols at present and who have sincerely turned from their sins and accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour will escape Hell while some self-righteous more moral people sadly will not.

d) People in Hell will continually suffer from unfulfilled selfish desires.

e) They will experience feelings of guilt to some degree. Even though their consciences will be seared to some extent by their continual sin and lack of repentance during their earthly lives, Romans 2:15-16 shows on the Great Judgement Day their consciences will make
them feel guilty. It is possible after repeatedly sinning multiplied millions of times in Hell, their consciences will cease to work at all.

f) The eternally condemned will also suffer terribly from the flames of the suffocating fire in Hell. Matthew 13:50, Mark 9:43, 9:48, Revelation 14:10 and 21:8 refer to this. Revelation 21:8 says: “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

g) Matthew 8:12 and 13:50 show there will be much weeping and grinding of teeth in Hell. People will weep for many reasons, one of these being the despair of having to endure this place forever.

Deserved punishment, not aimed at reformation

Punishment in Hell is not aimed at reforming those there. Instead it is what they justly deserve because of their proud rejection of their Creator’s rightful claims over them and the times they have not loved or have selfishly treated others. Psalm 94:2 says: “Rise up, O Judge of the earth; Render punishment to the proud.” Psalm 10:4 links pride to wickedness and rejecting God: “The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.”

God can use punishments to reform the attitudes and behaviour of humans during their earthly lives (see 1 Corinthians 10:32). But after the Final Judgement Day, this no longer happens.

The early church theologian Origen (185-254 A.D.) popularised the idea that hell was a place of reformation (In Ezech. Hom. 1, 2). This fitted in with his teaching that all humans, Satan and demons would be finally saved. In his writing Oratio catechetica 26, the early church leader Bishop Gregory of Nyssa (335-394 A.D.) also supported the idea of a remedial hell. But the Bible does not support such false teachings.

Warning of Christ’s judgement should be a part of Gospel preaching

Romans 2:16 proves a part of the proclaiming of the Gospel involves warning unbelievers Jesus will judge them in future: “in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.” Much so-called “modern Gospel preaching” involves a pitifully diluted form of the real Gospel Paul and the other Apostles preached.

God commands all His leaders to warn of His judgement

Acts 10:42 records Peter said Jesus Christ commanded him and other church leaders to tell all others that Christ is the Judge of the living and the dead: “And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.”

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6 Ibid.
The Book of Acts records that at least sometimes, the Apostles Paul and Peter warned of God’s Final Judgement when they preached the Gospel. Acts 24:24-25 mentions Paul preaching to Governor Felix and Felix’s wife: “And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgement to come, Felix was afraid and answered, ‘Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.’”

Paul was in danger of being sentenced by Felix to be punished but he still warned Felix of God’s judgement of eternal condemnation for those who reject Jesus Christ. Paul here linked this mention of God’s Final Judgement to teaching about His perfect righteousness. Paul did not avoid offending them. Because he loved them, he told them the truth about God and themselves. Felix became afraid as a result of listening to Paul’s preaching.

Acts 17:16-34 mentions how Paul ministered in the Greek city of Athens. Verse 17 says he firstly spoke with Jews and God-fearing Greeks in the Jewish synagogue and then to pagan Greeks in the marketplace.

Among these pagans there were some Epicurean and Stoic intellectuals. They took Paul to a meeting of the Areopagus – the council of the elders of Athens. These elders were trained in pagan Greek philosophy and religion and would have despised the teachings of the Old Testament including its prophecies about Jesus Christ, the idea there is only one God and the notion of one God appointing a man to judge all humans in perfect justice. But note Paul did not water down the Gospel to make it supposedly more contemporary to them. Read what Paul said in Acts 17:22-31.

Paul wisely used two things the Athenians were familiar with to begin his preaching to them. He spoke of an altar with the inscription “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD” on it and mentioned a Greek poet’s words: “We are his offspring” (see verses 23 and 28). It is wise for preachers to find things with which their unbelieving audiences are familiar in order to communicate effectively. This is as long as this does not involve compromising with even the slightest sin nor watering down the Gospel in any way.

After finding common ground with his audience, Paul then presented a very strong Gospel message. He attacked the sins of idolatry (see Acts 17:24-25, 29). He preached they must repent of known sin and emphasised they would be judged one day by Jesus Christ. Paul also spoke of the resurrection, even though many pagan Athenians thought such an idea was intellectually foolish as Acts 17:32 shows: “And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, ‘We will hear you again on this matter.”’

Acts 17:22-31 says: “Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshipped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, “For we are also His offspring.” Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He had ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”’
Paul’s preaching here shows us how foolish is the modern idea that we should not include attacks on sin, a strong call to repentance and an emphasis on God’s future Final Judgement in our preaching to modern Westerners. Modern Western unbelievers are very similar to the pagan Athenians in their mixing of intellectualism with occultic practices, their immorality, drunkenness, cold-heartedness and pride.

The Book of Acts provides brief points from some of the sermons of the Apostles. So it is highly possible that in most or all of the sermons of Peter and Paul that they did actually speak about God’s future judgement. This is even though the very concise summaries in Acts do not record every one of these mentions.

The revivalist preaching of James McGready and Peter Cartwright

James McGready was one of the main preachers at the famous Cane Ridge revival of 1801 when between ten to twenty-five thousand people gathered at a camp meeting in the United States. This was an enormous gathering considering Lexington, the largest town in Kentucky at that time had only about 1,800 inhabitants. Keith Hardman states that James McGready in his preaching would describe “heaven so magnificently that his calloused hearers would almost see its glories and long to be there. When he came to speak of hell and its horrors before the wicked, they would tremble and quake, imagining a lake of fire and brimstone yawning to overwhelm them and the wrath of God thrusting them down the horrible abyss.”

Barton Stone (1772-1844) said of James McGready’s preaching: “Such earnestness, such zeal, such powerful persuasion, enforced by the joys of heaven and miseries of hell, I had never witnessed before. My mind was chained by him, and followed him closely in his rounds of heaven, earth, and hell with feeling indescribable. His concluding remarks were addressed to the sinner to flee the wrath to come without delay. Never before had I comparatively felt the force of truth. Such was my excitement that, had I been standing, I should have probably sunk to the floor under the impression.”

When speaking of the highly successful evangelists like the American Peter Cartwright, Hardman said, “His methodology in evangelism was shared with the other successful preachers of the West: portray in the most vivid terms the terrors of hell, and then proclaim the gospel of God’s love, grace and forgiveness, and the beauties of the Lord Jesus Christ in His resurrected power and glory.”

Most of the people to whom successful evangelists such as McGready, Cartwright and so on preached in the late 1700’s and early 1800’s on the American frontier were very irreligious immoral people. For example, in the state of Kentucky the early settlers here had named some of their towns after French intellectuals who hated Christianity like Rousseau, Altamont, Bourbon and La Rue.
Preaching based on love and fear of the Lord combined

The Apostle Paul was exceptionally balanced in his preaching of the Gospel. In 2 Corinthians 5:11 and 14, Paul said: “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men…For the love of Christ compels us…” Here we see Paul and Timothy’s ministries were based on Jesus Christ’s love for other people. They were not mere salesmen or professional marketers like some ministries are. They sincerely loved people through Jesus’ love within them.

In verse 11, Paul also said he and Timothy aimed to persuade men to surrender their lives to Jesus Christ because of fear of the Lord. In the original Greek, the word “fear” in this verse is a form of the word “phobos” which means “that which arouses fear, a terror”. 12 Paul and Timothy also preached out of a knowledge of the fear of the Lord which relates partly to an understanding of His future judgement of unrepentant sinners.

Bible Study Questions

1. What is the Great Final Judgement?
2. When will the Final Judgement occur and how long will it take?
4. What do John 3:17 and 12:47-48 teach us about Jesus Christ’s judgements?
5. When Jesus was here on Earth, how often did He speak about the Final Judgement and eternal punishment in Hell or the Lake of Fire?
6. Why is the Great Final Judgement called “the day of wrath” in Romans 2:5?
7. What are the Books mentioned in Daniel 7:10 and Revelation 20:12-13?
8. What is the Book of Life referred to in verses like Revelation 20:15?
9. Explain what Romans 2:15 shows will happen about all the things we have done in secret.
10. What are the standards God will use to judge unbelievers and religious hypocrites?
12. At the Final Judgement, will people be able to use lies or part-truths as excuses for their evil thoughts and actions?
13. What are some of the positive applications of the Final Judgement?
14. Will real believers in Jesus Christ be eternally condemned?
15. What does Hebrews 9:27 reveal is wrong about re-incarnation?
16. Explain how a God of love could sentence people to eternal punishment.
17. Would God enjoy seeing any human suffering eternally?
18. Why do we find it difficult to accept the idea that other humans may suffer eternal punishment?
19. Explain what will be the state of those in the eternal Lake of Fire.
20. In which verses does God reveal He wants His church leaders to warn others of the Great Final Judgement?

12 Bauer, page 863.