

**Heaven**  
**What about Hell? • Message 5**  
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**May 24, 2026**

**Prayer Points for Prayer Time:**

- Pray to live with a real awareness of eternity.
- Thank God for His mercy shown through Jesus on the cross.
- Ask God to give you a deeper burden for people that do not know Him.

**Worship Psalm:**

*“There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.”*

**Acts 4:12 (NLT)**

**Scripture Reading:**

*“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”*

**Matthew 25:41-46 (NIV)**

**A. Introduction**

I once paid my son \$30 to touch a snake. I did this in hopes that it would teach him to not be afraid. I thought that if the reward felt big enough, maybe he'd reach deep inside and overcome his fear.

Ignoring danger doesn't remove danger.

There might not be any subject that we are more tempted to ignore, soften, joke about, or avoid than the reality of hell's existence.

I don't think we do this because hell is insignificant. I think we do it because hell is devastating and terrifying.

In our *Heaven* series, Bryan has been talking about the importance of thinking rightly about heaven, because it impacts how we live today. I think the same is true about hell. We need to believe rightly about hell and think about it because it has implications for us and the people around us.

I think that sometimes we do not approach hell like that.

Our culture doesn't just avoid thinking or talking about hell. It teaches us to dismiss its reality altogether.

And whatever you may believe about judgment, we cannot escape the reality that Jesus spoke about hell clearly, seriously, and compassionately. Which means if we are going to think rightly about heaven and hell, we have to listen to Him.

## **B. What about Hell?**

### **1.) Refusing to THINK about hell doesn't REMOVE it.**

(Matthew 25:31-33. C/R: Deuteronomy 30:19)

Here are 3 ways culture minimizes hell:

A. Hell is just a metaphor.

It is not a real place with real punishment.

B. Hell as a cartoon.

[show animated pictures of Satan and hell that soften what it truly is]

C. Hell is morally impossible.

A loving God would not send people to hell.

### **Jesus spoke on judgment and hell more than any other person in the Bible.**

One of the most surprising things about the Gospel is how often Jesus spoke about judgment. The clearest warnings about hell in all of Scripture come from Jesus Himself. In fact, Jesus spoke about eternal consequences more than many of the topics modern culture obsesses over. Why? Because Jesus understood something we often forget: eternity is real, human souls matter, and our response to God has everlasting significance.

And in Matthew 25, Jesus shows us a picture of the end of human history.

*“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne.”*

#### **Matthew 25:31 (NIV)**

Jesus, standing in first-century Israel, is claiming that one day every nation, every ruler, every person who has ever lived will be standing before Him as He sits on the throne.

Jesus is not presenting Himself as a teacher, a craftsman, or another of many powerful or wise human beings. He is presenting Himself as the Judge, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords.

Then Jesus says something stark:

*“All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.”*

#### **Matthew 25:32-33 (NIV)**

In Jesus' statement, this isn't a theory. He is dividing humanity.

No wealth matters in this moment. No skills, degrees, or accomplishments. No pretending or wearing of masks. Every person fully exposed before Jesus Christ.

The One doing the separating is Jesus Himself.

God of the Old Testament/Jesus are not the same. But they are. Jesus in the New Testament is presenting Himself as the Judge and The Father in the Old Testament not only decides in judgment but also is communicating to people to choose life rather than death.

*This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live*  
**Deuteronomy 30:19 (NIV)**

## **2.) Hell REVEALS the seriousness of sin and the JUSTICE of God.**

(Matthew 25:41, 46. C/R: Matthew 8:12; James 1:17; Revelation 20-21)

What does the Bible say that hell is?

Hell is God's final and just judgment against sin and rebellion.

And in Matthew 25, Jesus gives a devastating description of that judgment.

*"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"*

**Matthew 25:41 (NIV)**

This might be one of the most terrifying sentences in all of the Bible.

It is not merely pain. It is separation from God.

*Depart from me.*

You were created for relationship with God. Real relationship, fellowship, enjoyment of the status of your connection with your Heavenly Father. Created for joy in God's presence.

But Jesus describes separation and exclusion from that presence that we were made for.

The devastation of hell is not only physical suffering. It is forever being on the outside of the kingdom of God. Outside of the joy and outside of the belonging that humans were made for.

The horror of hell is that God is not stopping from being good or merciful, it is that sinners do not experience that goodness. They only experience Him as righteous Judge.

Everything good we know ultimately comes from the hand of God.

*Every good and perfect gift is from above, ...*

**James 1:17a (NIV)**

So the authors in Scripture are searching for image after image to describe what happens when a sinner is separated from the goodness and blessing of God forever.

Jesus speaks of fire. Fire is the language of judgment – the consuming holiness of God against evil.

He speaks of weeping and gnashing of teeth – the anguish and grief of realizing too late what is lost forever.

And He speaks of outer darkness – the terrifying reality of being forever shut out from the joy, fellowship, and belonging that you were made for.

Scripture stacks these images on top of each other because there isn't an earthly picture that can fully capture the horror of that final judgment.

*"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."*

**Matthew 25:46 (NIV)**

Christians have debated exactly how to understand the duration and nature of hell's punishment.

Historically, most Christians have understood Scripture to teach eternal conscious judgment. Others believe the final judgment results in ultimate destruction rather than eternal conscious suffering.

But both views agree on something sobering: judgment is real, final, irreversible, and only Christ rescues us from it.

Sin is the refusal of God's presence and rule, and hell is God finally giving people over to that choice. Hell is simply one's freely chosen identity apart from God on a trajectory into infinity.

C.S. Lewis says it this way:

*"There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.' All that are in Hell, choose it."*

God gave us a choice. A loving God gives us the ability to choose, and a just Judge judges our choice fairly.

### **3.) Jesus took on JUDGMENT for US.**

(Isaiah 53:4-6. C/R: Romans 8:1)

Here is the breathtaking reality of the gospel:

The same Jesus who warned people about judgment came to endure judgment for sinners.

The gospel is not that God ignored sin. The gospel is not that God lowered His standards. The gospel is not that judgment disappeared.

The gospel is that God satisfied justice Himself. Christ fully paid the penalty that our sins earned.

On the cross, Jesus stepped into the place of the guilty. He bore sin, shame, wrath, and judgment so that you could be forgiven and brought near to God.

The Judge stepped down from the bench and stood in the place of the condemned. And the most sobering thing in the world is that the One who sits on the judgment seat is the One who offered His body to save us.

700 years before the cross, Isaiah described what Jesus would do for sinners.

*Surely, he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

**Isaiah 53:4-6 (NIV)**

This is what makes the cross both horrifying and beautiful. It is horrible because it reveals the seriousness of our sin. It is beautiful because it reveals how deep and immeasurable the mercy and love of God truly are.

Because Jesus bore the judgment for sinners, Romans 8 tells us that:

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,*  
**Romans 8:1 (NIV)**

Jesus spoke about judgment because He came to save people from it. And Praise God that if we are in Christ, we will not endure the real consequences of hell. Jesus did.

And that means no one in this room is beyond the mercy of God today.

The invitation of the gospel is still open:  
Repent. Trust Christ. Be forgiven. Be reconciled to God.

Because one day every person will stand before the Judge. And the only safe place to stand on that day is in the righteousness of Christ.

**Close:**

Hell is not meant to make us despair of God. It is meant to awaken us to how desperately we need Him.

Jesus spoke about judgment because He wants to warn the people He loves.

And this morning, the invitation of Jesus is still open.

The same Christ who spoke about eternal judgment is the Christ who stretched out His hands on the cross and said, *I will take your place.*

That is the scandal and beauty of the gospel: The Judge became the substitute.

Jesus took all of this and carried the weight and consequences of it to the cross.

The wrath that should have fallen on us fell on Him.

The judgment we deserved was poured out on Christ so that mercy could be poured out on us.

And the invitation of the gospel is not:  
“Pretend hell is not real.”

The invitation is:  
“Because hell is real, run to the Savior who rescues sinners.”

Hell is a warning and that warning is intended to point you towards God and not away from Him. It is a proclamation of opportunity to receive grace from God.

Do not minimize judgment. Do not ignore eternity. Do not assume there will always be more time.

Jesus stands before humanity not only as righteous Judge, but as merciful Savior.

And today, His invitation is still open:  
Surrender. Turn toward Him. Trust Him.

Lay down your failure, weight and your self-righteousness. Stop running from God and receive the mercy Christ purchased for you.

Because one day every person will stand before the throne of Christ.

And on that day there will only be two options:  
Stand before Him in your sin or stand before Him covered in His righteousness.

No one in this room is beyond the reach of God today. The cross is proof that God is willing to forgive anyone who comes to Him through Christ.

So do not walk away from this lightly. Let the reality of judgment drive you toward the mercy of Jesus. The safest place in eternity is in the hands of the Savior who took punishment in our place.