



# *discover justice*

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*Uncover the good news that God's justice liberates us  
and will bring unfairness and injustice to an end*

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Life is not fair!

In his classic book *The Road Less Travelled*, Scott Peck says that this is one of the great certainties of existence – Life is not fair. He suggests the sooner we accept that fact, the sooner life makes sense.

But before the epic story ends, justice will be done.

## THE COMING JUDGMENT

Centuries ago a German philosopher named Emmanuel Kant said that if you could accept one premise - just one - which is that *God is just*, then you had to assume that some sort of afterlife, in one form or another, had to exist.

Why?

Because, he argued - it was so patently obvious that God's justice was *not* being revealed in this life. If we were ever to see justice, it would have to be in another one!

And we will. The Bible is clear - God is a God of justice and judgment.

If we have learned anything about God's epic drama, it is that the story is still unfolding. Not until the end of the final scenes will the full significance of the story come into clear focus. God is just. Justice is a vital ingredient of love, just as grace, mercy and compassion are.

Look at these texts:



***For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.***

*Ecclesiastes 12:14*



***But the LORD shall endure forever; He has prepared His throne for judgment. He shall judge the world in righteousness.***

*Psalm 9:7-8*



***And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.***

*Revelation 22:12*



***But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.***

*Matthew 11:22*



***And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.***

*Hebrews 9:27*



***But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.***

*2 Peter 3:7*



***Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come ...***

*Revelation 14:7*

There are many other texts besides these, and though all appear in various contexts, the one point in all this is that God is a God of judgment, and justice will come. How could it not? How could a loving God, a just God, not at some point manifest the justice that is so lacking in this world now?



***Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.***

*Romans 12:19*

God's people have always looked forward to the time when God's justice would be exercised. In fact they plead for it. The cry from God's people - *How long?* - is heard all through the Bible. For example, David cried to God: *How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?* Psalm 13:1

## JUDGMENT AT THE CROSS

The Bible is clear that sin brings death, and once Adam and Eve sinned they should have died. They should have faced the righteous judgment of God against sin right then and there. God said very clearly: *But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.* Genesis 2:17

The original language is unambiguous - that very day you eat from it you will die. Adam, though, didn't die - at least not that day. In fact he lived hundreds of years more.

Why not? Because the moment there was sin, there was a Saviour. God had a plan, that, should mankind rebel, He would make a way out.



***He (Jesus) indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.***

*1 Peter 1:20*

When our first parents sinned against God, the foreordained plan was revealed and put into operation. He gave Adam and Eve the hope and promise of redemption, which was revealed to them and Satan in Genesis 3:15:



***And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.***

In Booklet 2, we saw that this verse revealed the hope of the gospel - that the serpent would one day be defeated. And we also saw that this defeat was made certain by the death of Jesus on the cross.

In other words, the judgment and the condemnation that Adam and Eve deserved for their sin - as well as the judgment and condemnation that we all deserve - fell on Jesus at the cross. He was judged there, and condemned there, in our place.



***For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.***

*John 3:16-17*

Satan expected God to condemn the world. Instead, He sent Jesus to save it. And central to that salvation was the cross. Right there was an amazing revelation of God's character of love.

Look at these texts:



***All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.***

*Isaiah 53:6*



***For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.***

*2 Corinthians 5:21*



***Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree).***

*Galatians 3:13*

Though expressed in different ways, all these texts teach the same thing, which is that Jesus paid in Himself the penalty for our sins. God executed His righteous judgment, His righteous wrath against sin, but He did it on the person of Jesus on the cross. Though innocent, He was judged guilty, so that we, though guilty, can be judged innocent.

Hence Christ's words just before going to the cross:



***Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.***

*John 12:31*

That was a turning point in the epic story - a revelation of both God's and the villain's characters. The world was to be judged, judged guilty, and yet



Jesus Himself would take that judgment upon Himself, thus assuring that Satan - the ruler of this world - would be cast out. That is, his doom would be certain.

## THE SEPARATION

Jesus died as our substitute. We don't have to pay the penalty for our sins, because Jesus paid it for us. The moment we accept Jesus, our sins are covered and we are forgiven. The provision has been made for everyone. All we have to do is accept it for ourselves.

Of course, even a cursory reading of the Bible reveals that people will be judged and condemned in the end of days. There is going to be a separation between the saved and the lost, the justified and the condemned.

Look at these texts:



***Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.***

*John 5:28-29*



***And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.***

*Daniel 12:2*

And these:



***When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.***

*Matthew 25:31-33*

And these:



***And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.***

*Matthew 10:28*



***If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.***

*Matthew 5:29-30*

Hell is the final act of God in eliminating sin from His universe.

These texts, and others, are very clear that not only is there a hell, but there are going to be people cast into it and destroyed. There is going to be a final judgment, and those who have not been covered under the

blood of Jesus, those who have not claimed the righteousness of Christ for themselves, are going to have to stand before God in the full shame of their sin and evil.



***For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.***

*Ecclesiastes 12:14*

Every work, every secret thing, is to be brought into judgment before an all-knowing, all-seeing God. Who could stand before the scrutiny of God when every wrong thing that they have ever done is exposed?

No one. That's why we all need a Saviour - a substitute - now and in the judgment.

This final judgment, the eradication of rebellion and rebels once and for all, is what is known in the Bible as hell.

## THE GREATEST INJUSTICE

TIME magazine once ran a cover article entitled, *What If There's No Hell?* It was about a popular American preacher who challenged the whole notion of anyone being condemned to burn in hell for eternity. He reacted so strongly against it that he wondered if it was all totally symbolic, and if, in the end, everyone would be saved.

He's wrong, at least on a couple of points. The Bible is clear - people will be judged, and condemned, if they are not forgiven. They have to be. Otherwise, what? Adolph Hitler winds up in the same place with all those whom he had murdered?

What kind of justice would that be?

Hell is real, and the fires are real, too. What he's right about, however, is the incredible injustice and absurdity of the idea of this hell fire burning people for eternity.

Talk about injustice! That would be the greatest one.

## EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION

Look at this, one of the most quoted texts in the Bible:



***For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.***

*John 3:16*

Notice carefully one of two fates that await everyone. One is everlasting life, which is placed in contrast to what?

Everlasting torment?

No, it says *perish*. Perish, as in being destroyed. Perish, as in being gone forever. Perish, as in death - eternal death. The opposite of eternal life is not eternal torture, because that is still life - life in agony. The opposite of eternal life is eternal death, eternal destruction.



***Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.***

*2 Thessalonians 1:9*

Everlasting what? Torment? Torture? Punishing? No, everlasting destruction. The end result is everlasting, eternal, which is death, oblivion, not torture in a hole in the earth as is popular belief.

The destruction is eternal, not the act itself of destroying.

Look at these texts:



***Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.***

*Matthew 7:13*



***Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame - who set their mind on earthly things.***

*Philippians 3:19*

Hell is real. The punishment is real. The fire is real. It's just not eternal. People are destroyed in hell, not eternally tormented there. In fact, the fire of hell is hotter than the common notion teaches, because in the Bible hell fire ultimately consumes the lost, destroys them completely, as opposed to tormenting them forever.

Look at the words of Jesus:



***And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.***

*Matthew 10:28*

If ever a text proved that the soul wasn't immortal, or that hell wasn't eternal, this is it. What is the fate of those who face hell? They are destroyed, and that is not the same as eternal torment.



***And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.***

*Matthew 25:46*

The punishment, not the punishing itself, is eternal. The result, the punishment, which is death, lasts forever. Again, eternal death, eternal destruction, is the opposite of eternal life. And it is the fate that will await the lost in the second resurrection:



***But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. ... Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.***

*Revelation 20:5,7-9*

The fire came down from God and did *what* to them? Started tormenting them forever and ever and ever? Of course not! Instead it says that it *devoured them*. Devoured, as in destroyed.



***For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

*Romans 6:23*

It does not say the wages of sin is eternal life in torment. It says the gift of God is eternal life in happiness. The contrast is - death or everlasting life.

## FOREVER

Talking about final punishment, the book of Revelation says of the lost that they shall be *tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.*

Revelation 14:10-11

Isn't that eternal torment?

The book of Revelation is filled with language and imagery from the Old Testament, and in numerous places in the Old Testament the word forever, and the concept behind it, means something different than what we commonly associate it with today.

For example, talking about Jonah in the belly of the whale, the Bible says:



***I went down to the moorings of the mountains; the earth with its bars closed behind me forever; yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God.***

*Jonah 2:6*

Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days - not forever - and yet that is the word he used.

The book of Genesis tells about the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19. The New Testament, referring to those cities as an example of the fate of the lost, says: *Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.* Jude 1:7

Eternal fire? Those places aren't still burning. No, they were destroyed. If an eternal fire were still burning there, they would be easy to find. The idea of eternal, in this context, means completed, fulfilled, eternally accomplished. This is the kind of language the Bible uses.

When Scripture referred to God bringing judgment upon a place, such as Jerusalem, it talked about him destroying the place with a fire *that shall not be quenched*. Jeremiah 7:20 A fire not quenched? Does that mean it's burning forever? How could it? There is no eternally burning fire there. Instead, it's biblical language that gives the idea of completion, of fulfilment, the idea that the fire will do its work and nothing can stop it.

## THE END

One of the devil's most successful pictures to distort God's character is to present Him as a tyrant that tortures sinners throughout eternity. That is the issue at the heart of the great conflict - Is God love as He claims, or is He ruthless and unjust? How the devil must rejoice as he sees people taking up his arguments, and presenting them as truth, in the name of Christ! No wonder there have been more infidels created through the doctrine of an eternally burning hell than through any other false teaching.

Psalm 37:10 reads:



***For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; indeed, you will look carefully for his place, but it shall be no more.***

The wicked shall be *no more*. In a real sense, the lost go back to the nothingness out of which we all came.



And so the epic story nears its conclusion. A loving God will not let sin, suffering, heartache and pain go on forever. He is not a tyrant. He waits, because He loves us, wanting as many as possible to choose Him. *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.* 2 Peter 3:9

No one is in hell yet. Hell is still future. It is God's final act of eradicating sin from His universe. He does it by fire, and it is only for those who reject his offer of everlasting life.





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and how that affects us*

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