

# HOPE FOR HUMANITY

## REVELATION TODAY

### PRESENTATION 11 • HOPE BEYOND HELL

**SLIDE • BIBLE.** One of the most controversial subjects when it comes to God, or the Bible, is the subject of hell.

**SLIDE • TELEVISION.** A television personality said this a few years ago. “A more psychopathic character you will not ever find in fiction. Just the idea that people worshiped the God of this Bible is insane. There is no more psychopathic mass murderer than God.” I don’t intend to mention the man’s name as it’s not my intention to ridicule him or point him out as a bad person or anything like that. He was answering a question in reference to an eternally-burning hell.

British atheist Dr. Richard Dawkins said this in his book, *The God Delusion*. With a title like that, you already know what the book is about. He said this.

**SLIDES (2) • QUOTE.** “The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.”

**SLIDE • CHURCH.** Well, sure. Depending on how you view things. And depending on your theology. Richard Dawkins might be an atheist, but he ascribes to a certain theological framework, which in some areas is not at all different to that accepted by the members of the church up the street from where you live.

And there’s a reason why people believe what they believe about hell. And that is because people believe what they’re told. If they believe the person who told them did so with authority, you have no reason to believe otherwise. And this is what people were told.

Jonathan Edwards was a famous 17th century preacher and theologian. His grandson was Aaron Burr, the third Vice president of the United States. For a short time before his death he was the president of what’s now Princeton University. He was a big deal—and he’s best remembered for one sermon, a sermon that was widely read. A classic of early American literature. In “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” Edwards thundered, **(SLIDES (2) • QUOTE)** “The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment.”

**SLIDES (3) • QUOTE.** “It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one moment; but you must suffer it to all eternity. There will be no end to this exquisite horrible misery.

When you look forward, you shall see a long forever, a boundless duration before you, which will swallow up your thoughts, and amaze your soul; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all. You will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains. So that your punishment will indeed be infinite.”

Now, imagine you’re a thinking person. And you’re told that. There’s not a person alive who believes that is reasonable. Not a one. But we believe it because it fits the narrative we’re told. We just believe it. Does it make sense? Think. The Bible says that God is love. It’s very clear about that. God. Is. Love. And we know that the God who does “that” isn’t doing it out of love. This is malice. It’s unnecessary. And it doesn’t go along with the way we typically view love and affection and kindness.

Now, the Bible certainly does talk about the wrath of God, but we’ve got to really understand that. Is that what hell is really all about?

**SLIDE • EZEKIEL 18:23.** “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?”

God is love. How does a God who is love burn lost sinners for eternity? A lady once shared that she had become a witch—left Christianity and became a witch—because of how repulsive she found the idea that God would burn people forever. She said “I decided that if that’s what God was like, I’d be better off without Him.” Hard to blame her for feeling that way. Especially when you read the Bible and see what it says.

Now make no mistake. One day sin will be destroyed. Jesus was clear about that. He said, (**SLIDE • Matthew 10:28**) “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.”

In Matthew 13 you find the parable of the wheat and the tares. In that parable, someone sows weeds in a man’s wheat field. Workers ask if they should pull up the weeds but the man says they should leave the weeds to grow with the wheat until the harvest time. It’s after the harvest that the tares are gathered into bundles and burned. The destruction doesn’t take place until after the harvest. And when is the harvest?

**SLIDE • MATTHEW 13:39.** “The harvest is the end of the world.” The fire doesn’t burn until “the end of the world.” That’s when hell takes place.

**SLIDE • JOHN 5:28–29 NKJV.** “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

We’ve found that there will be TWO resurrections.

**SLIDE • MILLENNIUM CHART.** One when Jesus returns, and the other at the end of the millennium 1000 years later. It’s then that the wicked are raised. So the incredibly good news is that the lost cannot possibly be in hell right now. It’s just not possible.

Now when you attempt to understand the Bible, or try to make sense of what people tell you, there are two things at least that God gave you. One is the Bible, and the other is your brain. You are to

think—and have your thinking guided by God, of course. I heard as a child that hell burns in the center of the Earth, which of course is a ludicrous proposition. Let's see what God Himself says.

**SLIDE • 2 PETER 3:7.** "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."

The heavens and the earth are reserved for fire!

**SLIDE • REVELATION 20:9.** "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."

**SLIDE • THE EARTH.** So the destruction takes place ON THE EARTH. Not in the center of the Earth. On the Earth! And why? We've read together that God is going to create new heavens and a new Earth. The Earth is going to be perfect again, so God is going to get rid of sin, obliterate it. It's going to be gone, and the world is going to be cleaned up.

**SLIDE • FIRE.** Now really the granddaddy of all questions about this subject is, "Is God going to burn people in the fires of hell forever?" The reason this is a crucial question is it will reveal to us a lot about the character of God. What kind of individual could burn even his enemies forever?

Can you imagine what God would be if He would burn people FOREVER. Imagine that. God would be the worst tyrant who had ever lived. He'd be guilty of the worst case of child abuse in the history of the universe, because He is, after all, our Father. Now I know—it's what most of us were told. It's what tons of people believe. But you know people have believed all sorts of odd things through the years. Who do you think wants you to believe that? Not God! The DEVIL wants you to believe that about God. He'd love for you to think that God was cruel, tyrannical, awful.

**SLIDE • PEWS.** You know that number of people attending church is down. Why is everyone leaving church? I think I know a major reason why.

A recent Gallup poll stated that in 2020, less than 50% of Americans claimed to be members of a church, synagogue or mosque, for the first time since records were kept. In 1999 that number was 70%. It's now 47%. People are definitely drifting away from God. But in addition to apathy, there's also a lot of straight-out hostility to God. One well-known atheist described God as narcissistic, a sociopath and a psychopath. Narcissist: "Someone who is excessively vain and selfish."

Sociopath: "Someone who is not only antisocial but doesn't have any feelings of moral responsibility or social conscience."

Psychopath: according to Mental Health America—is someone who, "in general, has a hard time forming real emotional attachments with others. Instead, they form artificial, shallow relationships designed to be manipulated in a way that most benefits the psychopath. People are seen as pawns to be used to forward the psychopath's goals. Psychopaths rarely feel guilt regarding any of their behaviors, no matter how much they hurt others." And that's how people describe God. Now it should be said that not all atheists are as uncharitable, but that's what some people say about the One the Bible says is "love."

But if you'd think for a moment of the idea of being all-powerful, and choosing to hurt someone, and then keep on hurting them, and then FOREVER keep on inflicting indescribable pain...

It isn't even possible that God could burn sinners in hell for all eternity.

**SLIDE • BIBLE.** If Hell Fire was here on earth, forever, how would God recreate earth?

We've learned that man is not immortal. Only God, and the saints are given eternal life at the 2nd coming. If the wicked burn forever, they'd also have eternal life.

**SLIDE • 1 JOHN 5:12.** "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." Do people who are lost possess Jesus? No they do not. So they can't have life, even if it is life in hell. It just can't be, based on what the Scriptures plainly say. Lost people have rejected Jesus.

Consider these verses.

**SLIDE • EZEKIEL 18:4.** "The soul that sins, it shall die."

**SLIDE • ROMANS 6:23.** "The wages of sin is death."

**SLIDE • REVELATION 20:14.** "The second death." In Revelation 20:14, the Bible calls hell the "second death." People die there!

Not even the devil is going to burn forever.

**SLIDE • EZEKIEL 28:18.** "I will bring forth a fire from the midst of you, it shall devour you, and I will bring you to ashes upon the earth." Even the devil will be burned up.

**SLIDES (2) • MALACHI 4:1, 3.** "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, and all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that will leave them neither root nor branch.... You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this, says the Lord of hosts."

**SLIDE • FIRE.** The scenario most of us are fed is that God will actively keep people alive throughout eternity just so He can torture them. That's about as hideous as it gets. God is not going to give immortality to those who don't love Him. Now, this doesn't mean there's no hell. There is! And it doesn't mean it isn't bad. It's terrible! But GOD isn't terrible. We've been lied to, and I'm glad to be able to share the truth with you tonight.

**SLIDE • REVELATION 21:4.** "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any pain, for the former things are passed away." No more pain! But there would be pain FOREVER if God burned people throughout all eternity.

The prophet Nahum said that

**SLIDE • NAHUM 1:9.** "Affliction shall not rise again the second time." Sin is going to be GONE! No more sin. Nor more pain. No more tears. We'll have a new normal to get used to! And it. Will. Be. Fantastic!

**SLIDE • HOSTILITY.** Norm now is people not getting along. War, wickedness, prisons, jails, hospitals, nuclear fear. When this is over, it will be a place of love, no sickness. The new norm. Hellfire is the end of sin. Once sin is eradicated, there will be a new norm. Once sin is gone, (list the opposites to the current norms.)

This is some of the greatest news you will ever hear.

**SLIDE • FLOWER.** Sin will be gone! God is going to get rid of it. It isn't His plan to reserve a corner of the universe as some kind of cesspool filled with sin and sinners. That just doesn't make sense. But this does: He is going to clean up the earth, returning it to even greater beauty than there was in the Garden of Eden. And think: whenever God sent fire down from heaven it always burned up whatever

it came in contact with. It just burned it up. (**SLIDE • MT CARMEL**) On Mt Carmel in the time of Elijah. Sodom and Gomorra. The fire God sends is a fire that consumes.

I've had people ask me, "Well, if people who go to hell just burn up, how bad can that be?" You miss the point if you ask that question. Worse than the physical affliction will be the mental agony of knowing that person is separated from God and family and friends and life—forever! Gone, forever. And all that they could have had, they won't have. Friend, you're not going to make that mistake, are you? Of having eternal life in your grasp... and just letting it go? Why would anyone do that? Imagine hearing the Word of God, of learning that God is love, of discovering that God has a perfect plan for you... and of going back to a life that ends in this world and with this world. I want to appeal to you right now. God is calling to you. This world? We're seeing again and again how fragile it is, how transitory it is. God's kingdom lasts forever.

Remember the issue. God wants to get rid of sin.

**SLIDE • CALVARY.** Jesus came to die for sin so it could be gone forever. God isn't interested in making people suffer for as long as time lasts. God wants to get rid of sin. Imagine being in heaven and knowing that somewhere out there your loved ones were burning away and suffering without any rest. After a few million years I think you'd get a bit tired of that? No, God's plan is to remove the blot of sin from off the face of the earth, and through eternity we'll not be molested by it any more.

**SLIDE • "FOREVER AND EVER?"** So what about where the Bible says Forever and Ever? Revelation 20:10 Ever and ever. cp v9, devoured.

In the Bible, forever does not always = eternity. It's a relative term. Multiple times in the Bible, the term "forever" is used in conjunction with an event that has already passed.

**SLIDE • 1 SAMUEL 1:22.** But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "Not until the child is weaned; then I will take him, that he may appear before the Lord and remain there forever...

**SLIDE • 1 SAMUEL 1:28.** Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord." So they worshiped the Lord there.

**SLIDE • JONAH 2:6.** 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.

**SLIDE • JONAH 1:17.** Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

So what we see is that when the Bible says "forever" it doesn't always mean what we think of forever as meaning. And in this case, it really can't. If hell burns forever, God is disgusting. Repugnant. But He cannot be, because God is love. Justice is one thing, but cruelty is another.

**SLIDE • JUDE 7.** "Sodom and Gomorrah... are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

**SLIDE • 2 PETER 2:6.** "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly."

**SLIDE • SODOM AND GOMORRA.** Sodom and Gomorra are an example, according to the Bible, of what happens with regard to the Lake of Fire.

**SLIDE • JESUS TEACHING.** Well, what about the story of the Rich man and Lazarus? Let's look at it.

**SLIDES (3) • LUKE 16:19–24.** There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

Right away you've got to ask yourself several questions. Perhaps the first is, **(SLIDE • BIBLE)** "Does this story contradict everything else the Bible says on this subject?" Surely it doesn't. It cannot. Second, Is this story meant to be taken literally? It comes at the end of a long line of parables. Third, do we really believe that Abraham's bosom is the abode of the redeemed? And what about a man asking for a drop of water? Wouldn't he want a lake, or an ocean? This parable teaches us a lot about God, and maybe it teaches us something about us.

Jesus is teaching that heaven is not acquired by birthright. The Pharisees thought that because they were Abraham's children, they had some kind of divine right to enter heaven. Who did the Rich Man call to? Abraham! Who should he have called to? God!

Jesus was showing them that wealth is not a sign divine favor any more than poverty is a sign of divine displeasure.

**SLIDE • LUKE 16:31.** The point of it all is found in verse 31.

"But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

Moses and the prophets should have been enough for them to believe Him. He raised one named Lazarus. He says to them all, if won't respond to the plain word of God, accept the Scripture, even a miracle won't convince you.

**SLIDE • PERFECT EARTH.** A merciful, loving God is going to finally get rid of the disease of sin. And God is giving you the opportunity now to look at your life, to reassess everything, to ask yourself if you're really satisfied as things are. If God is not the center of your life, you'll never have a better opportunity to do something about that.

**SLIDE • 1 JOHN 5:12 NKJV.** Remember the great truth of this. 1 John 5:12: "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." If Jesus lives in your heart, if Jesus owns your life, if you're trusting Him and leaning on Him, if He is your Savior and your Lord, you can know you have life.

**SLIDE • JESUS KNOCKING.** Will you allow Jesus to get you out alive, to save you, to rescue you, to give you the best He has to offer? One day there'll be no more death. No more fear! The world will actually be a place of love. God is going to get rid of sin. That's going to be the new normal. A world based not on selfishness but on selflessness, a place where God's way is everyone's way.

**SLIDE • SECOND COMING.**