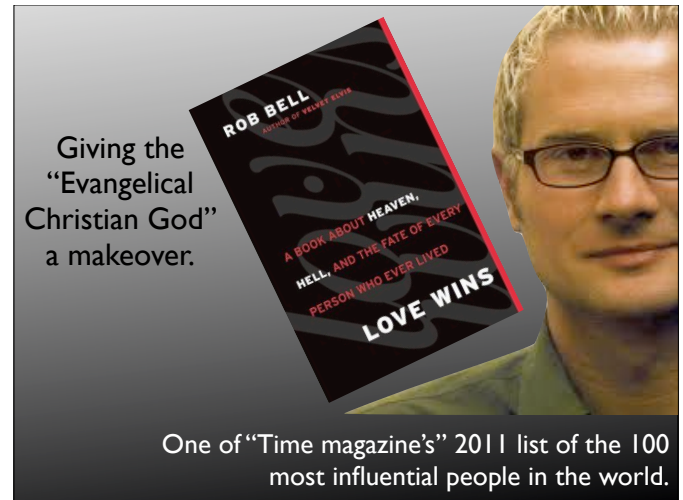


**“God loves us.  
God offers us everlasting life by grace,  
freely, through no merit on our part.  
Unless you do not respond the right way.  
Then God will torture you forever, in hell.”**

**Huh?**

**“Can we realistically ask  
and expect modern people  
to love, worship, and follow  
“that kind of God?”**



Giving the  
“Evangelical  
Christian God”  
a makeover.

One of “Time magazine’s” 2011 list of the 100  
most influential people in the world.

### ***Rob Bell’s thesis***

***The essence of God is (a verb) LOVE  
not (a noun) HOLY!***

1. The Evangelical culture has pictured God as unloving and almost impossible to respect.
2. The Biblical picture of God has been distorted and needs to be corrected.
  - Hell is more like temporary rehabilitation.
  - Salvation is available to people other than baptized Christians.
  - The Gospel is good news for everyone.

### **Biblical terms describing “hell”**

- Destruction (perdition) - 2 Pet.3:7
- Eternal punishment - Matt.25:36
- Lake of fire - “gehena” - a dump for burning garbage. Matt.5:22
- Weeping and gnashing of teeth - Matt.25:30
- Separated from God - 2 Thess.1:9
- Torments - Lk.16:23
- Sorrows - Lk.16:23
- Outer darkness - Matt.22:13
- Bottomless pit - Rev.9:2
- No rest - Rev.14:11
- Death - Rev.20:6

### **Rob Bell’s traditional view of hell**

- Hell is God’s vengeance on sinners as **endless, conscious, punishment in body and soul by fire.**
- Hell is the fate of **all who are not elect** by the sovereign will of God and therefore have not trusted and obeyed Him.
- Hell is a place and condition that **glorifies God as the sovereign, just, and holy Lord** of the universe.
- Hell is a condition that will be the **source of praise to God and rejoicing** by His elect.
- Hell will **co-exist with heaven forever.**

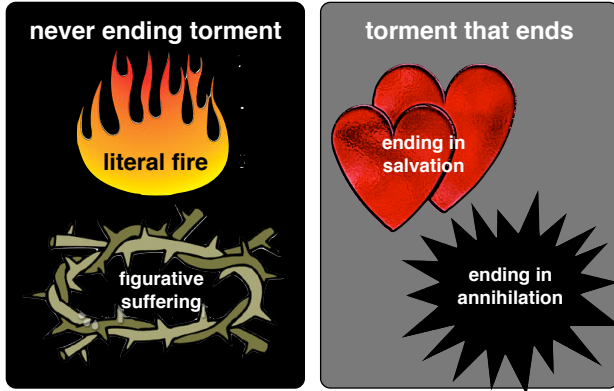
“It is sad to find so many professing Christians who appear to regard the wrath of God as something for which they need to make an apology, or at least they wish there were no such thing. While some would not go so far as to openly admit that they consider it a blemish on the Divine character, yet they are far from regarding it with delight.”

*A.W. Pink*

“God is as angry with *sinner*s as He is with those miserable creatures He is *now* tormenting in hell, and who - at this very moment - do feel and bear the fierceness of His wrath.”

*Jonathan Edwards*

## Four Christian views of hell conscious suffering for sin



## HELL

### - Least likely alternative views

- Materialism** - everything ends at physical death. The souls of the lost are not immortal.
- Universalism** - all (including non believers) are immortal and eventually "saved."

## HELL

### - More likely alternative views

- Metaphor**  
- fire and brimstone are metaphors of total isolation from God (peace, justice, grace, love, etc.)
- Annihilationism - Conditional Immortality**  
- only believers are granted immortality (eternal life). The unbeliever is eventually annihilated after a period of torment. Clark Pinnock, John Stott, Philip Hughes, & C.S Lewis.

**John Stott** "I find the concept intolerable and do not understand how people can live with it without either cauterizing their feelings or cracking under the strain."

*Essentials p.314*

**Clark Pinnock** "I conclude that the traditional belief that God makes the wicked suffer in an unending conscious torment in hell is unbiblical, is fostered by a hellenistic view of human nature, is detrimental to the character of God, is defended on essentially pragmatic grounds, and is being rejected by a growing number of biblically faithful, contemporary scholars."

*Four Views of Hell p.165*

## Observation #1

### There are four Biblical words for hell.

- **Sheol** (used 31 times) An O.T. expression meaning the general abode of the souls of the dead. It is an obscure, shadowy place of futility
- **Hades** (used 10 times) The N.T. equivalent of Sheol, "the lower parts of the earth" Eph.4:9
  - **Gehenna** (used 10 times in the Gospels) The place of future eternal punishment of the wicked the lake of fire (a burial pit outside Jerusalem).
- **Tartarus** (used only in 2 Pet.2:4) A prison for demons and Satan (abyss, bottomless pit).

## Observation #2

### The true literal sense of a text is sometimes metaphor.

1. **Jesus' teaching is rich with metaphor** - "if your eye offend you, cut it out", etc.
2. **Teaching on "last things" (heaven, hell, etc) is rich in metaphor** - towered cities, streets of gold, etc.
3. **Literal meanings create nonsense** - fire / outer darkness, gnashing teeth.
4. **Eternal (aion)** - can have the meaning of "extended but not necessarily unending time."

## Observation #3

### The Bible often uses annihilation terminology for hell.

- **Ps.37:38** "Transgressors will be altogether destroyed."
- **Matt.10:28** "fear Him who is able to **destroy** both soul and body in hell."
- **2 Thess.1:9** "the penalty of **eternal destruction**, away from the presence of the Lord"
- **Matt.3:12** "**burning up** the chaff with unquenchable fire"

#### Observation #4

### Immortality is a gift given to the redeemed (only).

1. The O.T. suggests that the soul is not immortal.
2. The idea of universal human immortality is a Greek philosophical idea adopted by the early church.
3. The N.T. indicates that only God is immortal (1 Tim.2:12-16) and those who are raised in Christ (1 Cor.15:51-55).

- 1 Cor.15:53 “For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.”
- 1 Tim.6:16 “(Lord of lords) who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light.”
- Rom.2:7 “to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life.”

#### Observation #5

### Eternity is best understood as a timeless state of being.

1. The Hebrew term translated “everlasting” is (עולם olam). When it is not referring to God it usually means “a period of time” as in Jonah 2:6 where it refers to 3 days in the great fish.
2. The Greek term translated “eternal” is (αιων aion) often meaning “age” or “period of time.”

Psalm 78:69  
“the earth which is founded forever”  
2 Peter 3:10  
“the earth and its works will be burned up”

Romans 16:25  
“according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages (eternity) past,”

- The Law of Moses was to be an “everlasting covenant” (Lev.24:8) yet we read in the New Covenant the first was “done away” and “abolished” (2 Cor.3:11,13), and God “made the first old” (Heb.8:13).
- Sodom’s fiery judgment is “eternal” (Jude 7) until - God “will restore the fortunes of Sodom” (Ezek.16:53-55).

2 Corinthians 4:18  
“while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

1. The eternal are contrasted with the temporal (limited by time).
2. The eternal can be understood not as never ending time (an endless series of years) but as timeless.

### Observation #6

#### Eternal life or death as a state of being can be experienced now.

1. A person can consciously exist in a state of life or death.
2. Believer's can experience eternal life (now) as well as at the resurrection.
3. Humans can experience a taste of hell (absence of life) now as well as at the judgement.

### Observation #7

#### The historical understanding of hell does not include annihilation.

1. The **Pharisee's** view was "never ending suffering."
2. The **1st two centuries of church history** viewed hell as "eternal (never ending) fire and brimstone."
3. The **vast majority of Christians** throughout history have viewed hell as "eternal (never ending) suffering."

### Observation #8

#### Hell is basically the absence of God and all that represents the image of God in us.

2 Thessalonians 1:9

"And these will pay the penalty for eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

1. We can hardly imagine what existence would be like without any love, hope, goodness, etc.
2. We have a hint of hell in this life when we are hopeless, alone, depressed, and full of shame.

### Observation #9

#### The suffering of Christ for the sins of the world applied to believers has implications for hell.

1. Jesus' suffering is a parallel to hell in that he suffered hell for sinners.
2. Jesus' suffering seems to be of little value if the alternative for non believers is simply termination.
3. Hell must be at least the equivalent of the crucifixion.

### Observation #10

#### Passages that present challenges to annihilation.

Mark 9

"43 And if your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, 44 where *their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.*"

Matthew 25:46

"These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

1. Eternal life is the state of immortality in union with God.
2. Eternal punishment is the state of separation from God (second death) without change.
3. Hell is not rehabilitation but punishment - possibly capital punishment?

### **HELL - my personal conclusions**

- **Hell is real** - Hell is a necessary corollary to God's holiness, and human free choice.
- **Be open minded** - The details about Hell are not as clear as we might like.
- **Literal meaning** - The vocabulary of hell is often metaphoric.
- **Separation from God** - Hell is not a place that anyone will want to go although many will choose it.
- **Eternality** - Hell is not defined by time so much as experience.

### **So what do I think hell will be like? God and His glory are gone!**

- **The torment of isolation** - It will be an existence where those who are formed in the image of God will find themselves completely displaced, alone, and without a point of meaningful reference.
- **The terror of hopelessness** - It will be a place of ultimate despair where there is no possibility of relief, or rescue.
- **The trauma of ultimate discomfort** - It will be an experience where body and soul are trapped in a context of unimagined, inexplicable trauma.
- **The termination of life** - I will not be surprised to learn that it might end in annihilation as the "second death."

### **C.S. Lewis**

"There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power, but it has the full support of scripture and specially of our Lord's own words."

"Whether this eternal fixity [of hell] implies endless duration-or duration at all-we cannot say."

"Sin is the human being saying to God throughout life, "God go away and leave me alone." Hell is God finally saying to the human, "You may have your wish."

"There are two kinds of people: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, "All right, have it your way."

**Give thanks to God  
for His grace to you in Christ.**

**Abide in Christian faith  
and live a life of worship and grace.**

**Spread the Gospel of hope  
that is in Christ with compassion to all  
who have ears to hear it.**

**Pray for the moving of the Spirit to  
move the hearts of the lost.**