

“The Almighty’s Troubling Axe”

Matthew 3:10

June 16, 2024

INTRO: *Normal... Abnormal... Too much... Truly challenging.*

- **What do you want?**
- In a word... *how would you describe Jesus Christ?*
- What’s **your worst sin & biggest mistake ever?**
 - **What lessons did they teach you?**
 - *How do they impact & shape your DAILY life?*
- Today’s sermon covers a topic that few WANT to hear but everyone NEEDS to hear & HEED!
- **What does love look & live like?**
- *What are the dangers of ½ truths & bad assuming?*
- Why does the Bible utilize so much corrective language and eternal testing?
- Do you know, and just as importantly, **do you believe what the Bible teaches about hell?**
- What do you do when you find God’s Word, will, & way(s) distasteful, convicting, or condemning?
- Finally, *how are we to unify and love one another through those questions... & our array of answers?*

T/S: Please pray with me as I try to tie in and unpack many of those questions from God’s Word (Matthew 3:10).

Repent! is a loving warning...

Repentance is a loving & worshipful response. – JDP

PRAYER

CONTEXT:

- Gospel of Matthew: mMm series
- A “troublesome puzzle” is being pieced together
 - Troublesome **Messiah, manger, & mission**
 - Troublesome **miracles, methods, & message**
 - Troublesome **messenger, mess, & > miracles**
 - Troublesome **truth, narrative, & clarity**
 - Troublesome **ambassadors, impact, & souls**
 - Troublesome **eternal Word & wrath of God**
 - Troublesome **metaphors, tests, assumptions**

BIG IDEA: Jesus & His close & coming
JUDGMENT are **shockingly-real**,
confrontationally-raw, &
eternally-READY!

TEXT:

Matthew 3:10

“Already/Even now, the axe is laid at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

PREVIEW:

1. **REAL**
2. **RAW**
3. **READY**

I. SHOCKINGLY **REAL**

“Already/Even now,

A. Don't miss the sense of urgency found in these words!

B. **This is a LOVING WARNING from Almighty God!**

a. ILLUSTRATION:

The National Safety Council

Journal of Safety Research

“Effects of emphasis terminology in warning instructions on compliance intent and understandability”

(Dept. of Psychology; North Carolina State University)

August 11, 2015

➤ ***“Warning Emphasizers”***

○ Red is best color

○ **DANGER** is best single word

○ ***Consequence statements*** are critical:

▪ Make them obvious.

▪ Make them specific.

▪ Make them easy to obey.

b. Now you can **see J.B. the PEACEMAKER!**

C. ***Think about how you think about time...***

D. How often... & how many of us take time for granted?

E. ***What if today is your last day before your eternity?***

F. **What if someone knew... but did not tell you?**

G. Hear me... Hear J.B... Hear Jesus... **Hear the Bible!!!**

T/S: In [Matthew 3:7](#) he spoke of the wrath of God *future*, as yet *to come*; he now speaks of it as already *present*, or close at hand...

II. CONFRONTATIONALLY **RAW**

“Already/Even now, the axe is laid at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

12 “parts” of the Almighty’s axe metaphor:

the axe

- A. **Definition:** tool meant & made for chopping & cutting
- B. **Purpose:** biblically ***chops off branches & downs trees***
- C. **Metaphoric message:** it is the visual & functional tool that will bring about God’s righteous judgment upon ALL of the biblically unrighteous (many of whom will be SHOCKED to find themselves so defined... [Matthew 7:21-27](#))

is laid at the root

A. **“is laid”** = READY for ACTION!

- a. Both **present & future** tense/action are implied
- b. **NOTE:** both **specificity** & **intentionality** are clear
- c. Whether **“laid”** = placed or positioned... **its bad!**
- d. **SEE the “axe” “Carrier/Holder/Wielder/User”**

B. **“at the root”**

- a. NOTE the **precision...**
- b. NOTE the **progression...** (*from branches to trees*)
- c. NOTE the **patience...**
- d. NOTE the **purpose...**
- e. NOTE the **permanence...**
 - i. **“the root”** = tree/branch/fruit’s **life source**
 - ii. **3X:** *cut down, thrown in, burnt up!*

of the trees.

A. There are 2 HUGE but subtle particulars here to see...

B. **NOTE** the entirety of the WHOLE TREE...

- a. This is **NOT** pruning branches for more fruit.
- b. This is **NOT** cutting off branches for the fire.
- c. This is **NOT** an empty threat!

C. **NOTE** the FOREST of the PLURAL TREES (vs. 1 tree).

God IS ready to cut down
ALL of ALL of these trees!

Therefore,

- A. Always ask: “What is the therefore there for?”
- B. Therefore is a connecting & clarifying pivot point
- C. Therefore links the past, present, & future...
- D. Since the past, now, prepare for the future in the following way...
- E. Here comes **the contextual link...** the *“So what?”*
- F. **“Therefore”** connects the previous with the next...
- G. This **“therefore”** connects to **CONSEQUENCES...**
- H. Here’s a little insight on therefores... Therefores offer information, inspection, and inspiration.
- I. Biblical therefores are God pearls of merciful grace and illuminating instructions.
- J. In this case, God’s therefore is coming after a stack of loving warnings (cf. 1 John 5:13)...
 - a. *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*
 - b. *Prepare the way of the Lord...*
 - c. *Make straight paths for Him.*
 - d. *You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come?*
 - e. *Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.*
 - f. *Do not presume...*
 - g. *(Do not presume to) say to yourselves...*
 - h. *I tell you... God is able... to raise up... stones...*

every tree

- A. *When God uses absolutes, He absolutely means it!* - JDP

- B. In this case, every means EVERY!
- C. **This EVERY is a Gospel defining every.**
- D. Even if/when God's use of absolutes like "every, all, always, never, none, etc." are in a hyperbolic context, He still means what the hyperbole means.
- E. Don't miss this **POWERFUL PARADOX**...
 - a. **"every"** = 100%, NO-exclusions, TOTALITY, ALL!
 - i. It's true, sometimes God uses hyperbole...
 - ii. Also true... **this is NOT one of those times!**
 - iii. We must learn/respect God's true absolutes.
 - 1. John 3:16... **we love the absolutes**...
 - 2. Matthew 28... **we accept the absolutes**...
 - 3. Titus 2:15... we ignore &/or resist them.
 - 4. Matthew 3:10...**most hate the absolutes**
 - b. **"tree"** = contrasts "TREES" above = INDIVIDUAL!
 - i. The Jewish nation was/is Jewish persons
 - ii. Church = the collection of Christian persons
 - iii. The **"false church"** is made up of ALL the **"false converts & fake professing Christians"**
 - iv. The collective liars = all the individual liars...
 - v. ALL the hypocrites = all hypocrite persons...

NO ONE can hide from Jesus & His just judgment! EVERY tree will be judged!

- JDP

that does not

- A. We must apply discipline here... **BE careful!**
- B. NOTE: the test is a **NEGATIVE test...**
- C. **Read 2 Corinthians 13:5 to back up this directive!**
- D. Thus, **whoever does not, is!** (the tree defined).
- E. God & His Word... **look for something particular!**
 - a. Consistent over time, biblical, good fruit of repentance = **PASSED God's test! :-)**
 - b. Rebellious disobedience, inconsistent, biblical, good fruit of repentance = **FAILED God's test! :-)**
 - c. Don't miss the two critical criteria:
 - i. **Good, authentic, biblical, fruit of repentance**
 - ii. ***Biblical genuineness & consistency over time***

bear

- A. **This is a simple but profound word/verb...**
- B. NOTE again that, **per GOD, it is a test/filter for proof!**
- C. Bearing or NOT bearing is NOT just descriptive...
- D. Bearing or NOT becomes definitive per God's Word!
- E. **Biblically, this is an eternal fork in the road...**
 - Note the miraculous & missional component.
 - Spiritual bearing = *miracle, Messiah, mission*
 - Spiritual bearing = **spiritual roots & fruits**
 - Spiritual bearing = witness via worship, walk, work, and even warfare.

good fruit

A. Words and their definitions are SO important...

B. God is BEing so specific & clear here... see BOTH:

a. **“good”**

- i. *The qualifier/modifier is again definitive!*
- ii. **Fruit that is NOT “good” fails God’s test!**
- iii. Thus, *we must mean & measure “good” by **HARMONIZING, in FULL CONTEXT...***
 1. Only & always *God’s COLLECTIVE WORD*
 2. Only & always *God’s COLLECTIVE WILL*
 3. Only & always *God’s COLLECTIVE WAYS*

b. **“fruit”**

- i. Again, let us take God at His Word...
- ii. *If we have something that is “good” but it is not biblical “fruit of repentance” over time, even that “good” FAILS God’s TEST! - JDP*
- iii. *“We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags...” - Isaiah 64:6*
- iv. Affirming biblical fruit is pro-duce proof!
- v. *It’s one’s fruit that reveals their real roots. - JDP*
- vi. Fruitless repentance is like fruitless faith... they are both dead & lead to death. - JDP
- vii. Luke 3:10-16 parallels... like **1st John 3:18**

C. Revisit... what is biblical FRUIT?

a. **Faithful fruit**

- i. Fruit of REDEMPTION (ie. witness)
- ii. Fruit of REPENTANCE (ie. witness)

b. **Fake/phony fruit**

- i. Fake fruit of Goats, Vipers, & Wolves
- ii. Fake fruit of G's, V's, & W's Repentance
- c. **Family fruit** ([Matthew 12:33](#))
 - i. *“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit.”*
 - 1. Authenticating ([John 15:8](#)) *By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*
 - a. Ambassadors
 - b. Aroma
 - c. Army

is cut down

- A. This is where God's “raw” gets real...
- B. This “is” affirms a present/future reality...
 - a. This “is” is more than a mere “will be.”
 - b. Here we have another biblical “*already/not-yet.*”
 - c. NOTE: there is **no wiggle room** or loophole here.
 - i. No “might” or “maybe” here...
 - ii. No “probably” or “most likely” here...
 - iii. God's “is” real, right now!
 - iv. God's promised future... a guarantee now!
- C. **EVERY tree** that does not bear good fruit of repentance WILL BE “**cut down**” – **let that sink in!**
- D. Now the whole “**troubling puzzle**” is getting clear

- a. This is coming from Creator God + His messenger
- b. ***This is a universal test for the fruit of repentance***
- c. Only ***“good”*** (consistent) ***“fruit”*** = passing God’s test.
- d. Any & ALL who FAIL God’s test will be ***cut down***
- E. Remember, the cutting will not be limited to branches, but entire TREES... it will mark the end of life’s opportunities...
- F. ***To be cut down by God is to be ended.***
- G. While impossible to see with the human eye, God has a predetermined, predestined timeline of mercy and grace for every person on the planet – past, present, and future. If you/someone is still breathing, you have hope because the invitation of The Gospel is still being extended to you (see Revelation chapters 2-3).

***Cry out to Christ
before He cuts you down!***

- H. ***Don’t be naïve & don’t wrongly presume.*** *(last week)*
 - a. Remember:
Any & all “enough assumptions” that are not grounded in The Gospel of Jesus Christ are eternally wrong, deadly, & damning!
 - b. Remember: ***“God hates...”***
 - c. Remember: God’s hate is not what people think.
 - d. Remember: ***see both God’s love & hate on the cross!***

***Every time I hear somebody say “ya but”
I hear a swing of the axe. -JDP***

You don't take an axe to living stones!

- JDP

We're not managing the waiting room for heaven!

- JDP

and

- A. Here is another subtle giant of a small word...
- B. ***“and”*** is a conjunction... it puts things together
- C. ***“and”*** adds on!
- D. In this case, ***“and”*** is saying: ***“Wait! There's more!”***
- E. In this case, being ***“cut down”*** gets **EVEN WORSE!**
- F. I cannot overstate the importance of your grasping, embracing, and understanding of this simple conjunction...
- G. In this case, “thrown into the fire” is being connected to “cut down.”
- H. What's the big deal?
 - a. Being “cut down” is bad... REAL bad! But...
 - b. The fire is far worse than the forest floor!***
 - c. Let us not make lite of what being “cut down” means... (for Christians)
 - i. **Discipline**
 - ii. **Done**
 - 1. *Being cut down could be like being put up on a shelf & taken out of God's favored & blessed service:*
 - a. Moses' siblings were cursed...
 - b. Moses' 40 wilderness years...

- d. **Cut down for lost souls (non-Christians) means death eternal and biblical hell forever.**
- i. **No second chances. No do-overs.**
 - ii. **No hope. No help. No healing.**
 - iii. **Now comes eternal pain & punishment.**
 - iv. **Now comes a real unimaginable horror.**
 - v. **Never forget God's forewarnings of hell:**
 - 1. **Eternal**
 - 2. **Weeping & Gnashing of teeth**
 - 3. **Fire**

thrown into

- A. ***See here shock & raw contrast shock & awe...***
- B. ***"thrown"*** is akin to cast, flung, or PURGING...
- C. First, hear the warning's 2nd modifier...
 - a. #1 = If you do not repent AND bear the good fruit of consistent, biblical repentance, you will be divinely "cut down" by God and His axe.
 - b. #2 = Then, by Almighty God, you will be thrown
- D. Back to one of my opening questions: How would you describe Jesus Christ?
- E. Do you know this biblical Jesus?
 - a. ***Everybody loves Jesus until they realize what He really said. - Platt***
 - b. Do you know *He who Prunes, Purges, & Purifies?*
 - i. The God who cast out & closed the Garden
 - ii. The God who sent a Flood over all the earth

- iii. The God who scorched Sodom & Gomorrah
 - iv. The God who used the Red Sea & wilderness
 - v. The God who sent Joel's locusts & liberty
 - vi. The God who sent J.B. here to prep & warn
 - vii. The God who will also deal with the vipers...
 - viii. The God who prunes & disciplines His own
 - ix. The God who both washed & purged Judas
 - x. The God who's parables both purge & purify
 - 1. He pursues His lost... (Luke 15)
 - 2. He purges the unrighteous (but gives them opportunities to turn back to Him)
 - 3. He purifies with eternal fire... (at that point, there are no more opportunities).
 - a. See here with J.B.
 - b. See with the parable of the talents.
- c. Put forth the positives of purging:
- i. Extracting cancer
 - ii. Eradicating poison
 - iii. Sex offenders around children...
 - iv. Water away from pasta...
 - v. Dog poop off of the lawn...
 - vi. Noise cancellation head phones...
 - vii. Brush & floss our teeth...

Hebrews 12:29

For our God is a consuming fire.

thrown into the fire.

- A. This fire is hell.
- B. See below and all of Scripture to understand the eternally troublesome reality of this loving warning.
- C. Commentary on Jonathan Edward's famous sermon:

"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 ... you are ten thousand times so abominable in his eyes, as the most hateful and venomous serpent is in ours."

"Therefore, let anyone who does not now know Christ awake and fly from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over a great part of this congregation. Let everyone fly out of Sodom!! Run for your lives! Don't look back! Escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed!"

"Though ... vast multitudes of God's enemies combine and associate themselves, they are easily broken in pieces: they are as great heaps of light chaff before the whirlwind; or large quantities of dry stubble before devouring flames."

"Almost every natural man that hears of hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security; he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do."

“There is laid in the very nature of carnal men a foundation for the torments of hell.”

“The foolish children of men do miserably delude themselves in their own schemes, and in their confidence in their own strength and wisdom; they trust to nothing but a shadow.”

Edwards understands that he needs to address the protests that might arise in the heads of his congregation as he is delivering the sermon. He has certain points in the sermon which serve that purpose, and this is one of them. Edwards highlights the belief of certain individuals in themselves, and he believes that this kind of confidence is the most dangerous since it surely leads to hell. He tells the congregation that countless others before them have thought that they have been shielded from the consequence of hell because of their confidence in themselves. All of these people have inevitably failed, and if you were to address these people from hell, they would all tell you that they had planned things otherwise and had not intended to be in hell.

“The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose.”

“And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has flung the door of mercy wide open, and stands in the door calling ... to poor sinners; a day wherein many are flocking to him and pressing into the Kingdom of God ...

Calling for (and BE-ing an example of) ongoing repentance differentiates the biblical ambassador from the religious pharisee or self-appointed "bouncer," working the church door. - JDP

III. ETERNALLY **READY**

"the fire."

The fire is HELL. Make no mistake... the fire is eternal hell!

JFBCommentary:

The "fire," which in another verse is called "unquenchable," can be no other than that future "torment" of the sinners whose "smoke ascendeth up for ever and ever," and which by the Judge Himself is styled "everlasting punishment" ([Mt 25:46](#)).

Fire is a frequent biblical symbol of the torment of divine punishment and judgment. Because of their exceptional wickedness, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by "brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven" (Gen. 19:24). After Korah, his men, and their households were swallowed up by the earth and "went down alive to Sheol ... fire also came forth from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense" (Num. 16:32-33, 35). In His role as a righteous Judge, God is frequently called "a consuming fire" (Ex. 24:17; Deut. 4:24; 9:3; etc.). In the last chapter

in the Old Testament, Malachi speaks of the coming day that will be “burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze” (Mal. 4:1). John’s preaching picked up where Malachi left off, and Jesus Himself often spoke of the fires of hell (Matt. 5:22, 29; Mark 9:43, 47; Luke 3:17; etc.). - MacArthur

According to the Bible, hell is real ([Mark 9:43](#)), it is where sinners are punished ([Matthew 5:22](#)), it is a place of torment ([Revelation 14:11](#)), and it is eternal ([Mark 9:48](#)).

Now... having unpacked and laid out all of the **troublesome puzzle pieces...** let me ask you some of my potentially opening questions again:

- **What do you want?**
- In a word... *how would you describe Jesus Christ?*
- What’s **your worst sin & biggest mistake ever?**
 - **What lessons did they teach you?**
 - *How do they impact & shape your DAILY life?*
- Today’s sermon covers a topic that few WANT to listen to but everyone NEEDS to hear & HEED!
- **What does love look & live like?**
- *What are the dangers of ½ truths & bad assuming?*
- Why does the Bible utilize so much corrective language and eternal testing?
- Do you know, and just as importantly, **do you believe what the Bible teaches about hell?**
- What do you do when you find God’s Word, will, & way(s) distasteful, convicting, or condemning?

➤ Finally, *how are we to unify and love one another through those questions... & our array of answers?*

T/S: *You need to see John the Baptist as a Peace-Maker (like Jesus cleansing the Temple)... because*

“Soft men create hard times!”

- Anonymous

REVIEW:

The latter part of the text is made use of by our Savior in [Matthew 7:19](#), in the latter part of his sermon upon the mount.

See 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 in application here... At the same time, this verse very much underscores 1st John 5:13

Let John 15:6-8 show it to you, directly coming from Christ...

CLOSE:

***** Now ask WHY? *****

- **Why is Jesus this way?**
- *Why are we to BE this way?*

Meta-Modernism / Meta Modernists
(“adjusted to incoherence”).

Metamodernism accepts this incoherence because it values

mood and affect (how I'm feeling / what I'm resonating with) more than rigid logic.

...metamodernism is a worldview as wide open and consumer friendly as the smartphone. Take or leave what you want, follow or unfollow, swipe right or left: it's your hyper-individualistic iWorld, so make it a good one.

In response...

God's devoted shepherds will never settle for "managing" one or some of Satan's sedation stations.

- Like John the Baptist... in pursuit of God-glorifying Christ-likeness, ***we're to BE Satan's worst nightmares***

(We are to BE... truthfully-loving, faithfully-obedient, courageously-compassionate, deadly-serious, appropriately-assertive, missionally-urgent, concisely-clear, passionately-persistent, single-minded, happily-serving, fully-devoted, eternally-secure, shrewdly-innocent, freed-prisoners, co-heirs, Discipled-Warriors, reconciling-ministers, Christ's-ambassador, salty-lights, giant-slayers, snake-stompers, viper-spotters, & wolf-shooters!)

God's devoted shepherds will never settle for "managing" one or some of Satan's sedation stations.

A new friend recently told me:

“Preaching is like working with paint...”

Some preachers do a great job of paint selection... they know just the right paint to pick. From there, they carefully open the paint, lifting the lid and eloquently describing the paint's intentional combination of colors. Others go further, gently stirring and masterfully mixing the paint, creating just the right combination of preparation and presentation... but that's where they end. They never take the paint out of the can and apply it. They never put the paint on anything/anyone. For them, paint is complex noun. For God, paint is simple noun... and a commanded verb! I aim to BE a messy, Christ-like, painting preacher... I pray that today you were painted on all over, but most importantly... I pray you were painted on the inside, from your head to your heart... and out to your finger tips. -JDP

Vance Havner

‘It is not our business to make the message acceptable, but to make it available.

*We are not to see that they like it,
but that they get it’*

PRAYER

WORSHIP: *God Can Use A Broken Man & Yet*

Study Notes:

Matthew 3:10

New International Version

The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

New Living Translation

Even now the ax of God's judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire.

English Standard Version

Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Berean Standard Bible

The axe lies ready at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Berean Literal Bible

Already now the ax is applied to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into *the* fire.

King James Bible

And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

New King James Version

And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

New American Standard Bible

And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit is being cut down and thrown into the fire.

NASB 1995

"The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

NASB 1977

"And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Legacy Standard Bible

And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Amplified Bible

And already the axe [of God's judgment] is swinging toward the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Christian Standard Bible

The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Holman Christian Standard Bible

Even now the ax is ready to strike the root of the trees! Therefore, every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Already/even now

the axe

is laid

at the root

of the trees!

But by itself it is useless, even dangerous, because it tends to make a person think that mere recognition is all that is necessary. A hardened pharaoh admitted his sin (Ex. 9:27), a double-minded Balaam admitted his (Num. 22:34), a greedy Achan acknowledged his (Josh. 7:20), and an insincere Saul confessed his (1 Sam. 15:24). The rich young ruler who asked Jesus how to have

eternal life went away sorrowful but not repentant (Luke 18:23). Even Judas, despairing over his betrayal of Jesus, said to the chief priests and elders, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood" (Matt. 27:4). All of those men recognized their sin, yet none of them repented. They were experiencing what Paul called "the sorrow of the world" that "produces death" instead of the "godly sorrow" that "produces a repentance" (2 Cor. 7:10–11).

Therefore,

every tree

that does not

Bear

good

fruit

is

cut down

and

thrown

The Jews generally considered Gentiles to be the occupants of hell, spiritually lifeless and hopeless, dead stones as far as a right relationship with God is concerned. It may be that John played on that figure in declaring that **God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham**, that is, true children of Abraham who come to the Lord as Abraham did, by faith. When the Roman centurion asked Jesus to heal his servant simply by saying the word, Jesus replied, “Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. And I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom [i.e., Israelites] shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:10–12).

- MacArthur

into the fire.

Fire is a frequent biblical symbol of the torment of divine punishment and judgment. Because of their exceptional wickedness, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by “brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven” (Gen. 19:24). After Korah, his men, and their households were swallowed up by the earth and “went down alive to Sheol ... fire also came forth from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense” (Num. 16:32–33, 35). In His role as a righteous Judge, God is frequently called “a consuming fire” (Ex. 24:17; Deut. 4:24; 9:3; etc.). In the last chapter in the Old Testament, Malachi speaks of the coming day that will be “burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze” (Mal. 4:1). John’s preaching picked up where Malachi left off, and Jesus Himself often spoke of the fires of hell (Matt. 5:22, 29; Mark 9:43, 47; Luke 3:17; etc.).

- MacArthur

According to the Bible, hell is real ([Mark 9:43](#)), it is where sinners are punished ([Matthew 5:22](#)), it is a place of torment ([Revelation 14:11](#)), and it is eternal ([Mark 9:48](#)). Hell was originally created for Satan and his angels ([Matthew 25:41](#)). - [GotQuestions.org](#)

Luke 12:49 (Jesus Bringing Fire)

"I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!"

Jesus makes a **bold statement** in Luke 12:49 about bringing fire to the earth. He's not talking about literal flames but something much deeper. This **fire symbolizes big changes** and demands attention.

Think of it as a **wake-up call** that can't be ignored.

The impact is clear—Jesus' message **purifies and refines**, just like how metal is tested by fire. It challenges us to change our lives for the better. His words stir hearts and provoke thought, kindling a **spiritual blaze** that spreads far and wide.

1 Peter 1:7 (Trials by Fire)

"These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

Trials come into our lives like fire testing gold. 1 Peter 1:7 tells us that **faith is more precious** than this metal, and hard times prove its true worth. Just as heat reveals the strength of gold, **challenges show the realness of our belief** in God.

We may face tough situations, but these experiences test and purify our trust in Him.

Christians find joy even when things get rough because it means their faith stands strong. Every trial is a **chance to grow closer to God** and let our confidence in Him shine brighter than ever.

Like **refining gold**, hardships can strip away what's not needed—leaving behind pure faith ready for anything.

Jeremiah 23:29 (God's Word as Fire)

"Is not my word like fire," declares the Lord, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"

Jeremiah 23:29 reveals a **powerful truth**—God's Word is like fire. Just as fire can melt the toughest metals, God's message **burns through lies** and warms cold hearts. It's not just words on a page; it **transforms us from inside out**.

Like a hammer crushing rock, this verse shows that divine Scripture can **shatter stubbornness** and resistance.

[The Bible Bible](#) doesn't just sit there; it acts, purifies, and changes those who embrace it. Imagine God's Word in your life as **an unstoppable force**—burning away all deceit and leaving only what's real behind.

Believers carry this blaze within them, compelled to spread its warmth everywhere they go.

1 Kings 18:38 (Elijah and the Prophets of Baal)

"Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench."

Fire from heaven proved who the real God was. The prophets of Baal tried and failed to call down fire. Then **Elijah built an altar**, drenched it with water, and prayed. Immediately, fire came from the sky! It burned up everything: the sacrifice, wood, stones, and even licked up the water in the trench.

This amazing sight made all the people fall on their faces. They shouted that the Lord is God! That day showed **God's power** through his prophet Elijah on **Mount Carmel against false gods**.

Leviticus 10:1-2 (Nadab and Abihu)

"Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord."

Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, made a grave mistake. They **brought strange fire** before the Lord, against his command. This act of disobedience cost them their lives—God's punishment was swift and severe.

Their story is a stark warning: follow God's instructions carefully. Worship him in ways he has approved, or face **dire consequences**. Nadab and Abihu's error reminds us that God's commands are not suggestions; they are requirements for our reverence and obedience.

Daniel 3:19-25 (Fiery Furnace)

"Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

King Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He **heated the furnace seven times hotter** than usual. These men showed no fear as they stood before the raging flames.

Their **trust in God** was **unshakeable**.

Thrown into the flames bound and fully clothed, something amazing happened. The king jumped up in astonishment; he saw four men walking around freely in the fire, unharmed! The fourth looked like a son of the gods.

This miracle stunned everyone—**God had sent an angel** to **save his faithful servants** from death.

Conclusion

Fire in the [Bible](#) holds many meanings, from **God's presence** to **judgment and purification**. It appears in powerful stories and deep teachings. Remember, fire transforms — it can destroy or refine.

Think about how these verses apply to life today. We can find **strength, guidance, and inspiration** in their light.

BibleREF.com

What does John 15:6 mean?

Earlier in this passage, Jesus distinguished between branches "in" a vine and branches which "abide in" the vine. Merely being close to the source of life is not enough; neither is being intertwined with other branches. Only branches truly connected to the source of life—the vine—will bear fruit.

A good vinedresser cuts out those dead, fruitless branches and destroys them.

The analogy Jesus presents here is not about loss of salvation, which is impossible. Rather, His message is about those who "put on" an appearance of faith, but are disconnected from the True Vine that gives eternal life.

For the purposes of this statement, that is what Jesus means by those who "abide in [Him]."

Bearing true spiritual fruit is only possible through the power of Christ (John 15:4-5). That fruit, like any other good works or holiness, is always presented as evidence of salvation, never as a requirement for it.

The pruning and destruction Jesus refers to here echoes a statement made in **Matthew 7:21-23**. There, Jesus likewise pointed out that putting on an appearance of faith is not the same as being born again.

Jonathan Edwards' quotes from his famous sermon:
"Sinners In The Hands Of An Angry God"

1. **"There is laid in the very nature of carnal men a foundation for the torments of hell."**
2. "There is laid in the very nature of carnal men a foundation for the torments of hell."
3. "As he that walks in slippery places is ... liable to fall, he can't foresee one moment whether he shall stand or fall the next; and when he does fall, he falls at once, without warning."
4. **"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 ... you are ten thousand times so abominable in his eyes, as the most hateful and venomous serpent is in ours."**
5. **"Therefore, let anyone who does not now know Christ awake and fly from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over a great part of this congregation. Let everyone fly out of Sodom!! Run for your lives! Don't look back! Escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed!"**
6. "So that your punishment will indeed be infinite. Oh, who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is!"
7. **"Though ... vast multitudes of God's enemies combine and associate themselves, they are easily broken in pieces: they are as great heaps of light chaff before the whirlwind; or large quantities of dry stubble before devouring flames."**
8. "The corruption of the heart of man is ... immoderate and boundless in its fury ... it is like fire pent up by God's restraints, when as if it were let loose, it would set on fire the course of nature; and as the heart is now a sink of sin, so, if sin was not restrained, it would immediately turn the soul into a fiery oven, or a furnace of fire and brimstone."

9. "For it is said, that when that due time, or appointed time comes, their foot shall slide."
10. **"Almost every natural man that hears of hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security; he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do."**
11. **"The devils watch them ... like greedy hungry lions that see their prey, and expect to have it, but are for the present kept back; if God should withdraw his hand by which they are restrained, they would in one moment fly upon their poor souls."**
12. "It would be a wonder, if some that are now present should not be in hell in a very short time, before this year is out. And it would be no wonder if some persons that now sit here in ... this meeting-house in health, and quiet and secure, should be there before to-morrow morning."
13. "Thus it will be with you that are in an unconverted state, if you continue in it; the infinite might, and majesty, and terribleness, of the Omnipotent God shall be magnified upon you in the ineffable strength of your torments."
14. **"And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has flung the door of mercy wide open, and stands in the door calling ... to poor sinners; a day wherein many are flocking to him and pressing into the Kingdom of God ... To see so many others feasting, while you are pining and perishing! To see so many rejoicing and singing for joy of heart, while you have cause to mourn for sorrow of heart and howl for vexation of spirit!"**
15. "Oh, who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it; **it is inexpressible and inconceivable: For "who knows the power of God's anger?"**
16. **"Some make gods of their pleasures; some choose Mammon for their god; some make gods of their own supposed excellencies, or the outward advantages they have above their neighbors: some choose one thing for their god, and others another. But**

- men can be happy in no other God but the God of Israel: he is the only fountain of happiness.”
17. **“The foolish children of men do miserably delude themselves in their own schemes, and in their confidence in their own strength and wisdom; **they trust to nothing but a shadow.**”**
 18. **“The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose.”**
 19. **“The bow of God’s wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood.”**
 20. **“All the kings of the earth before God are as grasshoppers; they are nothing, and less than nothing: both their love and their hatred is to be despised.”**

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Top 4 Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God quotes:

“The sword of divine justice is every moment brandished over their heads, and 'tis nothing but

***the hand of arbitrary mercy, and God's mere will,
that holds it back.”***

This quote from the beginning of the sermon expresses the justice of God that humans deserve. Edwards tells us that human beings are born in a state of sin that makes them hated by God. Their rightful place is in hell with the rest of God's creations that chose to disobey his word. In this quote, Edwards personifies justice as a sword that is extended over the necks of men but is held back only with the will of God.

***“There is laid in the very nature of carnal men a
foundation for the torments of hell.”***

Edwards goes a step further than the bible when he begins to claim that the souls of men belong to hell. In these early sections, it can be difficult to follow a rational narrative in concluding that human beings are originally from hell, and he never cites any passages from the bible as the source of his assertions. It must be remembered that the Great Awakening was meant to incite fear in the hearts of men, and perhaps it was with this motivation that Edwards made this claim about the origin of man's soul being hell. In this quote, he supports his belief by citing the fire of anger that burns in some aggressive men.

***“The foolish children of men do miserably delude
themselves in their own schemes, and in their***

***confidence in their own strength and wisdom;
they trust to nothing but a shadow.”***

Edwards understands that he needs to address the protests that might arise in the heads of his congregation as he is delivering the sermon. He has certain points in the sermon which serve that purpose, and this is one of them. Edwards highlights the belief of certain individuals in themselves, and he believes that this kind of confidence is the most dangerous since it surely leads to hell. He tells the congregation that countless others before them have thought that they have been shielded from the consequence of hell because of their confidence in themselves. All of these people have inevitably failed, and if you were to address these people from hell, they would all tell you that they had planned things otherwise and had not intended to be in hell.

***“So that your punishment will indeed be infinite.
Oh, who can express what the state of a soul in
such circumstances is!”***

Edwards discusses the nature of the punishment in hell, and he highlights the torturous nature of it as he discusses the prospect of suffering the fury of God for the rest of time. Edwards tells the members of his congregation that not only is God’s punishment terrible but that it is everlasting. He explains that there are no words in the English language that can communicate the truly horrid nature of the punishment in Hell.

R.C. Sproul Bible Commentary:

“Even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees” (v. 10).

Do you see the urgency? The kingdom of God is not going to come in some distant time. The woodsman has penetrated that tree down to its very core, the root, so that one more swing of that ax and the tree will come crashing down. That is how close things are, John is saying.

“Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire”

(v. 10). **Our Lord gave this same metaphor:** *“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned”* **(John 15:6).**

If you profess to be a Christian and do not bring forth the fruit of repentance, you will be like the branches that are cast off and are thrown into the fire.

Have you thought about that?

We live in a culture where no one is afraid of the judgment of God, but the biblical portrait is of a God who will judge the earth, a God who will call every living creature to account.

If we do not bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, we will be cast into the fire, where we belong.

Expositor's Commentary: D.A. Carson

10 The ax is “already” (emphatic) at the root of the trees (for the idiom, cf. Isa 10:33–34; Jer 46:22). *“Not only is there a coming Messianic wrath, but already there is a beginning Messianic discrimination among the descendants of Abraham” (Broadus). Just as the kingdom is dawning already (Mt 3:2), so also is the judgment,*

*the two are inseparable. To preach the kingdom is to preach repentance; any tree (not “every tree,” NIV; cf. Turner, Syntax, p. 199), regardless of its roots, that does not bring forth good fruit will be destroyed.*¹

MacArthur Commentary:

THE CONDEMNATION

Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (3:8–10)

The marks of a truly repentant heart are fruit in keeping with repentance, or as Paul described them to King Agrippa, “deeds

¹ D. A. Carson, [“Matthew,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 104.

appropriate to repentance” ([Acts 26:20](#)). In his parallel account Luke mentions several examples of the kind of **fruit** John was talking about. To the general multitude he said, “Let the man who has two tunics share with him who has none; and let him who has food do likewise” (Luke 3:11). To the tax-gatherers he said, “Collect no more than what you have been ordered to” (v. 13), and to some soldiers he said, “Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages” (v. 14).

As James points out, **“Faith, if it has no works, is dead”** ([James 2:17](#)).

John says in his first epistle, “The one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous” ([1 John 3:7](#)); and that “if someone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (4:20). Our actions toward our fellow men are indicators of our true attitude toward God.

Axios (**in keeping with**) has the root idea of having equal weight or worth, and therefore of being appropriate. **True repentance not only should but will have correspondingly genuine works, demonstrated in both attitudes and actions.**

Right relationship to God brings right relationship to our fellow human beings, at least as far as our part is concerned (cf. Rom. 12:18).

Those who claim to know Christ, who claim to be born again, will demonstrate a new way of living that corresponds to the new birth.

The Pharisees and Sadducees knew a great deal about repentance. That God fully and freely remits the sins of a penitent is a basic doctrine of Judaism. The ancient rabbis said, “Great is repentance, for it brings healing upon the world. Great is repentance, for it

reaches to the throne of God,” and, “A man can shoot an arrow for a few furlongs, but repentance reaches to the throne of God.”

Some rabbis maintained that the law was created two thousand years before the world, but that repentance was created even before the law. The clear meaning of repentance in Judaism has always been a change in man’s attitude toward God that results in a moral and religious reformation of the individual’s conduct. The great medieval Jewish scholar Maimonides said of the traditional Jewish concept of repentance: “What is repentance? Repentance is that the sinner forsakes his sin, puts it out of his thoughts, and fully resolves in his mind that he will never do it again.”

Such understanding of repentance is basically consistent with the teaching of the Old Testament. Repentance always involves a changed life, a renouncing of sin and doing righteousness.

The Lord declared through Ezekiel,
“When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, then he shall die in it. But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and practices justice and righteousness, he

will live by them
(Ezekiel 33:18–19).

Hosea pleaded, “Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to Him, ‘Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously’ ” (Hos. 14:1–2).

After Jonah’s reluctant but powerful warning to Nineveh, “God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, [and] then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it” (Jonah 3:10).

Nineveh brought **forth fruit in keeping with repentance.**

The idea that repentance is evidenced by renunciation of sin and by righteous living did not originate with John the Baptist, but had long been an integral part of orthodox Judaism.

Faithful rabbis had taught that one of the most important passages in Scripture was, “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless; defend the orphan, plead for the widow” **(Isa. 1:16–17).**

Theologian Erich Sauer, in *The Triumph of the Crucified* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951, p. 67), speaks of repentance as “a threefold action. In the understanding it means knowledge of sin; in the feelings it means pain and grief; and in the will it means a change of mind.”

True repentance first of all involves understanding and insight, intellectual awareness of

the need for moral and spiritual cleansing and change. Second, it involves our emotions. We come to *feel* the need that our mind knows. Third, it involves appropriate actions that result from what our mind knows and our heart feels.

Recognition of personal sin is the important first step.

But by itself it is useless, even dangerous, because it tends to make a person think that mere recognition is all that is necessary. A hardened pharaoh admitted his sin (Ex. 9:27), a double-minded Balaam admitted his (Num. 22:34), a greedy Achan acknowledged his (Josh. 7:20), and an insincere Saul confessed his (1 Sam. 15:24). The rich young ruler who asked Jesus how to have eternal life went away sorrowful but not repentant (Luke 18:23). Even Judas, despairing over his betrayal of Jesus, said to the chief priests and elders, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood" (Matt. 27:4). All of those men recognized their sin, yet none of them repented. They were experiencing what Paul called "the sorrow of the world" that

“produces death” instead of the “godly sorrow” that “produces a repentance” (2 Cor. 7:10–11).

True repentance will include a deep *feeling* of wrongdoing and of sin against God.

David begins his great penitential psalm by crying out, “Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions” (Ps. 51:1). **He not only clearly saw his sin but deeply felt his need to be rid of it.** In another psalm he declared, *“When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long”* (Ps. 32:3).

The sorrow of true repentance is like David’s; it is sorrow for offense against a holy God, not simply regret over the personal consequences of our sin.

Sorrow over being found out or over suffering hardship or discipline because of our sin is not godly sorrow, and has nothing to do with repentance. That sort of sorrow is but selfish regret, concern for self rather than for God. It merely adds to the original sin.

*Even acknowledgement of sin and feeling of offense against God do not complete repentance. If it is genuine, it will result in a changed life that bears **fruit in keeping with repentance.***

David, after confessing and expressing great remorse for his sin against God, determined that, with God’s help, he would forsake his sin and turn to righteousness. “Create in me a clean heart,

O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me, ... Then I will teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners will be converted to Thee” (Ps. 51:10, 13).

Fruit is always seen in Scripture as manifested behavior (cf. Matt. 7:20).

The great Puritan Thomas Goodwin called for repentance with these striking words:

Fall down upon thy knees afore him, and with a heart broken to water, acknowledge, as Shimei, thy treason and rebellions against him who never did thee hurt; and acknowledge, with a rope ready fitted to thy neck by thy own hands, as they Benhadad’s servants wore; that is, confessing that if he will hang thee up, he may.... Tell Him that He may shew his justice on thee, if he will; and present thy naked breast, thy hateful soul, as a butt and mark for him, if He please, to shoot his arrows into and sheathe his sword in. Only desire him to remember that he sheathed his sword first in the bowels of his Son, Zech. 13:7, when he made his soul an offering for sin. (*The Works of Thomas Goodwin* [Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1863], 7:231)

Another Puritan, William Perkins, wrote, “Godly sorrow causeth grief for sin, because it is sin. It makes any man in whom it is to be of this disposition and mind, that if there were no conscience to accuse, no devil to terrify, no Judge to arraign and condemn, no hell to torment, yet he would be humbled and brought on his knees for his sins, because he hath offended a loving, merciful, and longsuffering God.”

Ultimately, of course, repentance like that is a gift of God. Speaking to the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish council, Peter and some of the other apostles said, *“He [Jesus] is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins”*

(**Acts 5:31**). Some while later, after he himself had finally been persuaded by God that the Gentiles were eligible for the kingdom (10:1–35), Peter managed to convince skeptical Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, who then “glorified God, saying, ‘Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life’ ” (**11:18**). Paul called Timothy to be a gentle bond-servant of the Lord in proclaiming the truth to the lost in the hope that “God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will” (2 Tim. 2:25–26).

It was clearly not God-given repentance that the Pharisees and Sadducees professed before John. Of all people they should have known the meaning of true repentance, but they did not.

They were hypocrites and phonies, as John well knew.

He had seen absolutely no evidence of true repentance, and he demanded to see such evidence before he would baptize them. As in the case of all baptisms since John, they are to be outward signs of inward transformation.

John's words to those religious leaders was at once a rebuke and an invitation: **Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance.**

"You have shown no evidence of it," he was saying, "but now you have opportunity to truly repent if you mean it. Show me that you have turned from your wicked hypocrisy to genuine godliness, and I will be glad to baptize you."

The rabbis taught that the gates of repentance never close, that repentance is like the sea, because a person can bathe in it at any hour.

Rabbi Eleezar said, "It is the way of the world, when a man has insulted his fellow in public, and after a time seeks to be reconciled to him, that the other says, 'You insult me publicly, and now you would be reconciled to me between us two alone! Go bring the men in whose presence you insulted me, and I will be reconciled to you.' But God is not so. A man may stand and rail and blaspheme in the market place and the Holy One says, 'Repent between us two alone, and I will receive you.' " (cited in William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], 1:56).

Some years ago a well-known man in public ministry openly and repeatedly ridiculed a fellow minister. After many months of criticism, the first man decided that he was wrong in what he had done and went to the other minister asking his forgiveness. It was reported that the one who had been criticized replied, "You attacked me publicly and you should apologize publicly. When you do I will forgive you."

There is no reason to believe that John the Baptist intended to humiliate the Pharisees and Sadducees or demand some sort of public demonstration of their sincerity. But he insisted on seeing valid evidence of true repentance and would not be party to their using him to promote their own selfish and ungodly purposes.

Knowing what they were probably thinking, John continued, **and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, “We have Abraham for our father.” They believed that simply being Abraham’s descendants, members of God’s chosen race, made them spiritually secure. Not so,** John said, **for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Descent from Abraham was not a passport to heaven.**

It was a great advantage in knowing and understanding God’s will (Rom. 3:1–2; 9:4–5), but without faith in Him that advantage becomes a more severe condemnation.

If Abraham himself was justified only by his personal faith (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:1–3), how could his descendants expect to be justified in any other way (Rom. 3:21–22)?

Many Jews of New Testament times believed, and many Orthodox Jews of our own day still believe, that simply their Jewishness assures them a place in God’s kingdom. The rabbis taught that “all Israelites have a portion in the world to come.” They spoke of the “delivering merits of the fathers,” who passed on spiritual merit to their descendants. **Some even taught that Abraham stood guard at the gates of Gehenna, or hell, turning back any Israelite who happened that way. They claimed that it was Abraham’s merit that enabled Jewish ships to sail safely on the seas, that sent rain on their crops, that enabled Moses to receive the law and to enter heaven, and that caused David’s prayers to be heard.**

That was the sort of presumption John the Baptist rebuked.

No descent from Abraham, no matter how genetically pure, could make a person right with God. Jesus contradicted the similar claims of another group of Pharisees, except in even stronger terms than John's. After they self-righteously asserted, "Abraham is our father," Jesus said, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do" (John 8:39–40). **Our Lord went on to say that their deeds proved their father was actually Satan.** In Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus, it is overlooked that the rich man in hell addresses Abraham as "Father," and Abraham, speaking from heaven, calls the rich man his "Child." But the rich man was then told by Abraham, "Between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us" ([Luke 16:25–26](#)). **A child of Abraham in hell was beyond their thinking.**

The Jews generally considered Gentiles to be the occupants of hell, spiritually lifeless and hopeless, dead stones as far as a right relationship with God is concerned. It may be that John played on that figure in declaring that **God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham**, that is, true children of Abraham who come to the Lord as Abraham did, by faith. When the Roman centurion asked Jesus to heal his servant simply by saying the word, Jesus replied, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. And I

say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom [i.e., Israelites] shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:10–12).

In John’s preaching, as in the Old Testament prophets, judgment was closely connected with salvation in the coming of the Messiah. Those men of God saw no gap between His coming to save and His coming to judge.

Isaiah wrote of the “shoot” that would “spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots” who would “decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked” (Isa. 11:1, 4).

Speaking again of the Messiah, Isaiah wrote, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; ... to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God” (Isa. 61:1–2; cf. Joel 3).

In his blessing of the infant Jesus in the Temple, Simeon said of Him, “Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel” (Luke 2:34).

Israel experienced a foretaste of God’s judgment in the ravaging of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, only about forty years after John the Baptist preached. Every unbeliever likewise faces a certain judgment when he dies, and even before death people may suffer foretaste judgments from God because of sin and rebellion.

As the book of Proverbs repeatedly reminds us (1:32–33; 2:3–22; 3:33–35; etc.), God makes certain that ultimately, and even to a great extent in this life, the good will reap goodness and the evil will reap evil (cf. Rom. 2:5–11).

John apparently believed that God’s ultimate judgment was imminent.

Because the Messiah had arrived,
the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

At the end of every harvest season the farmer would go through his vineyard or orchard looking for plants that had borne no good fruit. These would be cut down to make room for

productive vines and trees and to keep them from taking nutrients from the soil that were needed by the good plants. A fruitless tree was a worthless and useless tree, fit only to be *cut down and thrown into the fire.*

Jesus used a similar figure in describing false disciples.

“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned”
(John 15:6).

Fruitless repentance is worthless and useless; it means absolutely nothing to God.

Fire is a frequent biblical symbol of the torment of divine punishment and judgment. Because of their exceptional wickedness, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by “brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven” (Gen. 19:24). After

Korah, his men, and their households were swallowed up by the earth and “went down alive to Sheol ... fire also came forth from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense” (Num. 16:32–33, 35). In His role as a righteous Judge, God is frequently called “a consuming fire” (Ex. 24:17; Deut. 4:24; 9:3; etc.). In the last chapter in the Old Testament, Malachi speaks of the coming day that will be “burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze” (Mal. 4:1). John’s preaching picked up where Malachi left off, and Jesus Himself often spoke of the fires of hell (Matt. 5:22, 29; Mark 9:43, 47; Luke 3:17; etc.).

*John was speaking specifically to the unrepentant Pharisees and Sadducees, but his message of judgment was to every person, **every tree ... that does not bear good fruit**, who refuses to turn to God for forgiveness and salvation and therefore has no evidence, no **good fruit**, of genuine repentance.*

Salvation is not verified by a past act, but by present fruitfulness.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

(10) **Now.**—Rather, *already*. The present of an act no longer future.

The ax is laid unto the root of the trees.—The symbolism which saw in “trees” the representatives of human characters, of nations, and institutions, had been recognised in Isaiah’s parable of the vine ([Isaiah 5:1-7](#)), in Jeremiah’s of the vine and the olive ([Jeremiah 2:21](#); [Jeremiah 11:16](#)), and the Baptist’s application of it was but a natural extension. Judgments that were only partial or corrective were as the pruning of the branches ([John 15:2](#)). Now the axe was laid to the *root*, and the alternative was preservation or destruction. For the unfruitful tree there was the doom of fire.

Benson Commentary

[Matthew 3:10](#). *And now, also, the axe, &c.* —

To enforce his exhortation, he informs them that they had no time to delay their repentance, because

the patience of God was very near exhausted, and come to an end with respect to them.

His judgments were at hand and ready to be inflicted, so that, if they continued unfruitful, notwithstanding the extraordinary means that were now to be tried with them, destruction would speedily overtake them; as if he had said, **God now once more offers you his grace in and through his Son, which, if you refuse, he will no longer bear with you.**

You think of national deliverances, but I am sent to warn you of national judgments; judgments, which even now hang over your heads, and are ready to fall upon you if you still continue barren, or do not bring forth good fruit: for I assure you, the hand of God is lifted up to strike the fatal blow.

There is an allusion in the words to a woodman, who, having marked a tree for excision, lays his axe at the root of it, till he puts off his upper garment, and then immediately goes to work to cut it down.

Therefore, every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit — Every one that, while he professes to be one of God's people, contradicts that profession by a wicked life, or by the neglect of vital and practical religion, is cut down, &c. — Instantly, without further delay; and cast into the fire

— Of hell: a prediction this,

1st, of that dreadful destruction which, within the short period of forty-four years, came, by the Romans, upon the whole Jewish nation; as if he had said, The Babylonians formerly lopped off your branches, but

now the tree shall be cut down; your commonwealth shall be destroyed, and your temple, city, and nation totally ruined:

and,

*2dly, it is a prediction of that particular destruction which shall soon overtake all that reject the counsel of God against themselves, or, as the apostle expresses it, **that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

The axe is laid at the root of the tree –

Laying the axe at the root of a tree is intended to denote that the tree is to be cut down. It was not merely to be trimmed, or to be cut about the limbs, but the very tree itself was to be struck.

That is, a searching, trying kind of preaching has been commenced. A kingdom of justice is to be set up. Principles and conduct are to be investigated. No art, no dissimulation,

will be successful: People are to be tried by their lives, not by birth or profession. They who are not found to bear this test are to be rejected. The very root shall feel the blow, and the fruitless tree shall fall. This is a beautiful and very striking figure of speech, and a very direct threatening of future wrath.

John regarded them as making a fair and promising profession, as trees in blossom do. But he told them, also, that they should bear fruit as well as flowers. Their professions of repentance were not enough. They should show, by a holy life, that their profession was genuine.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

10. *And now also—And even already.*

the axe is laid unto—"lieth at."

the root of the trees—

*as it were ready to strike: an expressive figure
of impending judgment, only to be averted in
the way next described.*

*therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is
hewn down, and cast into the fire —*

Language so personal and individual as this can scarcely be understood of any national judgment like the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, with the breaking up of the Jewish polity and the extrusion of the chosen people from their peculiar privileges which followed it; though **this would serve as the dark shadow, cast before, of a more terrible retribution to come.**

The "fire," which in another verse is called "unquenchable," can be no other than that future "torment" of the impenitent whose "smoke ascendeth up forever and ever," and which by the Judge Himself is styled "everlasting punishment" (Mt 25:46).

What a strength, too, of just indignation is in that word "cast" or "flung into the fire!"

The third Gospel here adds the following important particulars in Lu 3:10-16.

Lu 3:10:

And the people—*the multitudes*.

asked him, saying, What shall we do then?—that is, to show the sincerity of our repentance.

Lu 3:11:

He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat—provisions, victuals.

let him do likewise—This is directed against the reigning avarice and selfishness. (Compare the corresponding precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, Mt 5:40-42).

Lu 3:12:

Then came also the publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master—Teacher.

what shall we do?—In what special way is the genuineness of our repentance to be manifested?

Lu 3:13:

And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you—

This is directed against that extortion which made the publicans a byword. (See on [1214]Mt 5:46; [1215]Lu 15:1).

Lu 3:14:

And the soldiers—rather, "And soldiers"—the word means "soldiers on active duty."

likewise demanded—asked.

Matthew Poole's Commentary

A prediction, as some think, of that dreadful destruction which within a few years came by the Romans upon the whole Jewish nation.

The sense is, The vengeance of God is very near to be revealed, men must repent now or never, for

every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down, and cast into the fire; judgment now is as nigh unto men, as the tree is to falling, to the root of which the axe is already applied: whether it be to be understood of the judgment common to all unbelievers, all that

*know not God, and obey not the gospel of Christ, as **2 Thessalonians 1:8-9**, or the particular destruction of this nation of the Jews.*

I shall not determine, though I rather judge the latter probable.

*The latter part of the text is made use of by our Savior, **Matthew 7:19**, in the latter part of his sermon upon the mount.*

It lets us know, that it is not improper
...to the style of John Baptist, and
Christ, and others the most eminent
first gospel preachers, to press
repentance, faith, and holiness of
life, from arguments of terror.

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

And now also the axe is laid,... These words may be rendered, "for now also", and contain in them a reason why they might expect future wrath;

why they should bring forth good fruit; and why they should not trust to nor plead their descent from Abraham, because **"the axe is now laid":**

by which is meant, not the Gospel which now began to be preached by John; though this was like an axe laid to the root of, and which cut down, their pride and vanity, their self-confidence and glorying in their righteousness, holiness, carnal wisdom, and fleshly privileges:

but rather;

the axe of God's judgment and vengeance is here designed, which,

because of the certainty and near approach of it, is said to be "now laid";

and that not to some of the branches only, to lop them off, to take away from the Jews some particular privileges, but "to the root" of all their privileges, civil and ecclesiastical; even the covenant which God had made with that people as a nation, who was now about to write "Lo Ammi" upon them; so that henceforward they would have nothing to expect from their being the seed of Abraham, Israelites, or circumcised persons.

The time was just at hand, when the Lord would take his "staff Beauty and cut it asunder, that he might break the covenant he had made with all the people", [Zechariah 11:10](#) in a short time their civil polity and church state would be both at an end. The Romans, who were already among them and over them, would very quickly come upon them, and cut them off root and branch; and utterly destroy their temple, city, and nation: and this ruin and destruction was levelled not at a single tree, a single person, or family only, as Jesse's, or any others, but at the root

of the trees: of all the trees of the whole body of the people; for the covenant which was made with them all being broke, and which was their hedge and fence, they were all exposed to the wild boar of the forest.

Therefore, every tree, every individual person, though one of Abraham's children, and made never such a fair show in the flesh, **which bringeth not forth good fruit; does not perform good works from a right principle, to a right end, such as are meet for repentance; particularly, does not believe in the Messiah now ready to be revealed, which is the main and principal work; and does not continue so doing, and thus believing,**

is hewn down and cast into the fire. Temporal **ruin and destruction shall come upon him; he shall not escape divine vengeance here, and shall be cast into everlasting burnings hereafter; which is**

quite contrary to a notion of theirs, that "by the merits of Abraham", the Israelites shall be delivered from the fire of hell (d).

(d) Zohar in Exod. fol. 34. 4.

Meyer's NT Commentary

[Matthew 3:10](#). *Already, however* (it is then high time), *is the decision near at hand*, according to which **the unworthy are excluded from Messiah's kingdom, and are consigned to Gehenna.**

In ἤδη is contained the thought that **the hearers did not yet expect this state of things;** see Baeumlein, *Partik*. p. 139;

the presents ἐκκόπτεται and βάλλεται denote *what is to happen at once and certainly*, with demonstrative definiteness, not the general idea: *is accustomed to be hewn down*, against which οὖν is decisive (in answer to Fritzsche), the meaning of which is: "that, as a consequence of this, the axe, etc., every tree will be, and so on." See upon the *present*, Dissen, *ad Pind. Nem.* iv. 39 f., p. 401.

Expositor's Greek Testament

[Matthew 3:10](#). ἤδη δὲ ἡ ἀξίνη ... κεῖται: judgment is at hand. **The axe has been placed (κεῖμαι = perfect passive of τίθημι) at the root of the tree to lay it low as hopelessly barren.**

This is the doom of every non-productive fruit tree.

—ἐκκόπτεται: the present tense, expressive not so much of the usual practice (Fritzsche) as of the near inevitable event.—μὴ ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλόν, *in case* it produce not (μὴ conditional) **good fruit, not merely fruit of some kind.** degenerate, unpalatable.—εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται: **useless for any other purpose except to be firewood, as the wood of many fruit trees is.**

Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges

10. *which bringeth not forth*] Lit. **if it bring not forth.**

fruit] The Oriental values trees only as productive of fruit, all others are cut down as cumberers of the ground. He lays his axe literally at the root. *Land and Book*, p. 341.

the fire] Rather, **fire**, there is no definite article in the original.

Bengel's Gnomes

[Matthew 3:10](#). Ἦδη δὲ, *but now*) **Placed in opposition**[126]
to μελλούσης, *which is to come*, in [Matthew 3:7](#).—καὶ, κ.τ.λ., *also*, etc)

Where grace manifests itself, there also
is wrath shown to the ungrateful.

It is not only *possible* that you should be punished, but *also* punishment is nigh at hand.—τὴν ῥίζαν, *the root*)

The axe was aimed not merely at the branches, but at the root itself.

—τῶν δένδρων, *of the trees*) i.e. the Jews (see [Luke 13:7-9](#)), in comparison with whom the Gentiles were mere stones.—κεῖται, *lies*) Although the blow has not yet begun to be struck.—ἐκκόπτεται, *is being cut down*)

The present tense is used, to show that there will be no delay.—πῦρ, *fire*) See [Hebrews 6:8](#).

In [Matthew 3:7](#) he spoke of the wrath of God as *future*, as yet *to come*; he now speaks of it as already *present*, or close at hand.—(I. B.)

Pulpit Commentary

Verse 10. - *And now also*; Revised Version, **and even now**. "And" (δέ), slightly adversative.

In contrast to the delay supposed in ver. 9 a, preparations have already been made for your destruction.

The axe is laid; Revised Version, is the axe laid; bringing out more emphatically its present position.

The American Revisers propose, "the axe lieth at," avoiding the suggestion of an agent; but κείμαι often implies one, being used of vessels set ready for use; e.g. [John 2:6](#); [John 19:29](#) (cf. [Revelation 4:2](#)).

Unto (πρὸς); brought near to (Thayer, s.v., 1:2, a).

Therefore. The axe is lying there, therefore every useless tree is sure to be cut down (cf. Winer, 40:2, a).

Every tree, etc.; even the noblest (Weiss).

However good the tree ought to be, from the character of its original stock (you claim to be Abraham's children, ver. 9), yet, if it does not bear good fruit, it is cut down ([Matthew 7:19](#), note).

Into the fire (εἰς πῦρ). Not into a fire prepared with a definite purpose, nor into any one fire pictured as burning ([Matthew 17:15](#); cf. τὸ πῦρ, [John 15:6](#)), but into fire generally, which may be in many different places.

Worthless trees are only for burning.

(For **thought**, cf. [Hebrews 6:8.](#)) Matthew 3:10

Vincent's Word Studies

Is laid (καίται)

Not, is applied, as "She layeth her hands to the spindle" ([Proverbs 31:19](#)), but is lying.

Is hewn down and east

The present tense is
graphic, denoting what is
to happen at once and
certainly.

BibleStudyTools.com

Matthew 3:10

And now also the axe is laid

These words may be rendered, "for now also", and contain in them **a reason why they might expect future wrath; why they should bring forth good fruit; and why they should not trust to nor plead their descent from Abraham, because "the axe is now laid"**: by which is meant, not the Gospel which now began to be preached by John; though this was like an axe laid to the root of, and which cut down, their pride and vanity, their self-confidence and glorying in their righteousness, holiness, carnal wisdom, and fleshly privileges: but rather; **the axe of God's judgment and vengeance is here designed, which, because of the certainty and near approach of it, is said to be "now laid"; and that not to some of the branches only, to lop them off, to take away from the Jews some particular privileges, but "to the root" of all their privileges, civil and ecclesiastical; even the covenant which God had made with that people as a nation, who was now about to write "Lo Ammi" upon them; so that henceforward they would have nothing to expect from their being the seed of Abraham, Israelites, or circumcised persons.**

The time was just at hand, when the Lord would take his "staff Beauty and cut it asunder, that he might break the covenant he had made with all the people", (**Zechariah 11:10**) **in a short time their civil polity and church state would be both at an end.**

The Romans, who were already among them and over them, would very quickly come upon

them, and cut them off root and branch; and utterly destroy their temple, city, and nation: and this ruin and destruction was levelled not at a single tree, a single person, or family only, as Jesse's, or any others, but at the root

of the trees:

of all the trees of the whole body of the people;

for the covenant which was made with them all being broke, and which was their hedge and fence, they were all exposed to the wild boar of the forest.

Therefore every tree,

every individual person, though one of

Abraham's children, and made never such a fair show in the

flesh, which bringeth not forth good fruit;

does not perform good works from a right principle, to a right end, such as are meet for repentance;

particularly, does not believe in the Messiah now ready to be revealed, which is the main and principal work; **and does not**

continue so doing, and thus believing,

is hewn down and cast into the fire.

Temporal ruin and destruction shall come upon him; he shall not escape divine vengeance here, and shall be cast into everlasting burnings

hereafter; which is quite contrary to a notion of theirs, that (Mhrbad ytwkzb) "by the merits of Abraham," the Israelites shall be delivered from the fire of hell {d}.

◀ Thrown ▶

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Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary

1. (*p. p.*) of Throw.

2. (*a. & p. p.*) from Throw.

Greek

4018. [peribolaion](#) -- that which is **thrown** around, a covering

... that which is **thrown** around, a covering. Part of Speech: Noun, Neuter Transliteration: peribolaion Phonetic Spelling: (per-ib-ol'-ah-yon) Short Definition: a ...

[//strongnumbers.com/greek2/4018.htm](http://strongnumbers.com/greek2/4018.htm) - 6k

293b. [amphiblestron](#) -- something **thrown** around

... 293a, 293b. [amphiblestron](#). 294 . something **thrown** around. Transliteration: [amphiblestron](#) Short Definition: net. Word Origin from ...

[//strongnumbers.com/greek2/293b.htm](http://strongnumbers.com/greek2/293b.htm) - 5k

579. [apobletos](#) -- to be **thrown** away, ie rejected

... to be **thrown** away, ie rejected. Part of Speech: Adjective Transliteration: [apobletos](#) Phonetic Spelling: (ap-ob'-lay-tos) Short Definition: worthy to be cast away ...

[//strongnumbers.com/greek2/579.htm](http://strongnumbers.com/greek2/579.htm) - 6k

4496. [rhipto](#) -- to throw, cast, spec. to throw off, toss

... to throw off, toss NASB Word Usage cast (1), dispirited (1), laid...down (1), threw (2), throwing off (1), **thrown** (1), had **thrown**...down (1). ...

[//strongnumbers.com/greek2/4496.htm](http://strongnumbers.com/greek2/4496.htm) - 7k

4657. [skubalon](#) -- refuse

... 4657 (from 2965 , "dog" and 906 , "throw") -- properly, **thrown** to dogs, like filthy

scraps of garbage (table-scraps, dung, muck, sweepings); (figuratively ...
[//strongnumbers.com/greek2/4657.htm](http://strongnumbers.com/greek2/4657.htm) - 7k

293. amphiblestron -- to throw around

... Transliteration: amphiblestron Phonetic Spelling: (am-fib'-lace-tron) Short Definition: a fishing net, drag-net Definition: prop: something **thrown** around; a ...
[//strongnumbers.com/greek2/293.htm](http://strongnumbers.com/greek2/293.htm) - 6k

2360. throeo -- to be troubled

... 2360 (from, "clamor, tumult") -- properly, (**thrown** into confusion, , 953); (figuratively) troubled (disturbed), wanting to "cry aloud, to scream (passive ...
[//strongnumbers.com/greek2/2360.htm](http://strongnumbers.com/greek2/2360.htm) - 6k

1544b. ekballo -- to expel, to drive, cast or send out

... puts forth (1), putting (1), scorn (1), send (2), sending...away (1), sent (3), sent...away (1), take (6), threw (3), throw (3), throwing (1), **thrown** (1), took ...
[//strongnumbers.com/greek2/1544b.htm](http://strongnumbers.com/greek2/1544b.htm) - 6k

906. ballo -- to throw, cast

... 1), lying (3), lying sick (1), place (1), poured (4), put (22), puts (2), putting (4), rushed (1), swung (2), threw (12), throw (16), **thrown** (27), tossing (1). ...
[//strongnumbers.com/greek2/906.htm](http://strongnumbers.com/greek2/906.htm) - 10k

4027. perikatharma -- that which is cleaned off, refuse

... literally refers to the rubbish left-over after "cleansing all ." The Greeks used 4027 () "of criminals kept at the public expense, to be **thrown** into the sea ...
[//strongnumbers.com/greek2/4027.htm](http://strongnumbers.com/greek2/4027.htm) - 7k

Strong's Hebrew

3400. Yeriel -- "**thrown** by God," a man of Issachar

... 3399, 3400. Yeriel. 3401 . "**thrown** by God," a man of Issachar. Transliteration: Yeriel Phonetic Spelling: (yer-ee-ale') Short Definition: Jeriel. ...
[/hebrew/3400.htm](http://hebrew/3400.htm) - 6k

7993. shalak -- to throw, fling, cast

... her down (1), threw his down (1), threw them down (1), threw down (1), throw (13), throw it down (1), throw them away (1), throw away (1), **thrown** (8), **thrown** ...
[/hebrew/7993.htm](http://hebrew/7993.htm) - 6k

7971. shalach -- to send

... spread (2), spreads (3), stretch (13), stretch forth (3), stretched (11), stretches (2), surely let (1), surely let me go (1), throw (1), **thrown** (1), thrust (1 ...
[/hebrew/7971.htm](http://hebrew/7971.htm) - 7k

8058. shamat -- to let drop

... root Definition to let drop NASB Word Usage let it rest (1), let go (1), release (2), threw her down (1), throw her down (1), **thrown** down (1), upset (2). ...

</hebrew/8058.htm> - 6k

4053. megraphah -- a shovel

... clod. From garaph; something **thrown** off (by the spade), ie A clod -- clod. see HEBREW garaph. 4052, 4053. megraphah. 4054 . Strong's Numbers.

</hebrew/4053.htm> - 6k

7420. romach -- a spear, lance

... buckler, javelin, lancet, spear. From an unused root meaning to hurl; a lance (as **thrown**); especially the iron point -- buckler, javelin, lancet, spear. ...

</hebrew/7420.htm> - 6k

5927. alah -- to go up, ascend, climb

... 1), set (1), sets (2), sprang (1), spring (2), sprout (1), stacking (1), stirs (1), surely bring (1), take (3), take me away (1), taken (4), **thrown** (1), took (...

</hebrew/5927.htm> - 8k

2040. haras -- to throw down, break or tear down

... you down (1), pull down (1), ruined (2), shatter (1), tear them down (1), tear you down (1), tear down (5), tears it down (1), tears down (1), **thrown** down (3 ...

</hebrew/2040.htm> - 6k

Library

[An Idol **Thrown** Out of a Temple.](#)

... CHAPTER SEVENTEEN. AN IDOL **THROWN** OUT OF A TEMPLE. ... He then said, 'Runga Swami has

been **thrown** out of his temple, and is now outside the door among the stones.' ...

<//christianbookshelf.org/hodson/old daniel/chapter seventeen an idol thrown.htm>

[Narrow Escapes. Is **Thrown** from a Horse. Has Pneumonia. Nearly ...](#)

... PART I."AUTOBIOGRAPHY. CHAPTER X. Narrow Escapes. Is **Thrown** from a Horse. Has Pneumonia. ...

Reflections. Narrow Escapes. Is **Thrown** from a Horse. Has Pneumonia. ...

</.../chapter x narrow escapes is.htm>

[But in the Case of those Who, after that they were **Thrown** into ...](#)

... Canon II. But in the case of those who, after that they were **thrown** into prison? But in the case of those who, after that they ...

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[Argument. --And Thus Unclean Animals are not to be Reproached ...](#)

... Argument."And Thus Unclean Animals are Not to Be Reproached, Lest the Reproach Be **Thrown** Upon Their Author; But When an Irrational Animal is Rejected on Any ...

[/.../novatian/on the jewish meats/chapter iii argument and thus unclean.htm](#)

[At this Time, by Command of Constantine, the Statues of Maximian ...](#)

... Chap. XLII. At this time, by command of Constantine, the statues of Maximian Herculus were **thrown** down? At this time, by command ...

[/.../of the manner in which the persecutors died/chap xlii at this time.htm](#)

[Of the Unique Vase of Oil **Thrown** Away by Abbot John at his ...](#)

... Prolegomena. Chapter XXV. Of the unique vase of oil **thrown** away by Abbot John at his senior's command. Thus the youth, trained up ...

[/.../cassian/the works of john cassian /chapter xxv of the unique.htm](#)

[The Accusation of Fate is **Thrown** Back Upon the Adversaries.](#)

... Book II. Chapter 11 [VI.]"The Accusation of Fate is **Thrown** Back Upon the Adversaries. But is it true, O children of pride, enemies ...

[/.../augustine/anti-pelagian writings/chapter 11 vi the accusation of.htm](#)

[The Test by Fire](#)

... Whoever does not fall down and worship shall be **thrown** into a burning, fiery furnace."

So when all the people heard the sound of the trumpet, flute, lute, harp ...

[//christianbookshelf.org/sherman/the childrens bible/the test by fire.htm](#)

[Argument. From the Prison they are Led Forth with Joy into the ...](#)

... They are Scourged, They are **Thrown** to the Wild Beasts. ... Perpetua and Felicitas are **Thrown** Down; They are Called Back to the Sanavivarian Gate. ...

[/.../chapter vi argument from the prison.htm](#)

[You See How He Represents These Opinions as Things which are Held ...](#)

... If I say that an opinion is another man's, let it be another's; if you afterwards find any opinion written down without any other' person being **thrown** in, you ...

[/.../41 you see how he.htm](#)

Thesaurus

[Thrown \(126 Occurrences\)](#)

... Multi-Version Concordance **Thrown** (126 Occurrences). ... Matthew 4:12 Now when Jesus heard

that John was **thrown** into prison, He withdrew into Galilee, (WEY). ...

[/t/thrown.htm - 37k](#)

[Possession \(251 Occurrences\)](#)

... It is better for you to enter into Life crippled in hand or foot than to remain

in possession of two sound hands or feet but be **thrown** into the fire of the Ages ...
</p/possession.htm> - 41k

[Tear \(97 Occurrences\)](#)

... to you, tear it out and away with it; it is better for you that one member should be destroyed rather than that your whole body should be **thrown** into Gehenna. ...
</t/tear.htm> - 37k

[Deceiver \(9 Occurrences\)](#)

... Revelation 12:9 The great dragon was **thrown** down, the old serpent, he who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. ...
</d/deceiver.htm> - 9k

[Cast \(640 Occurrences\)](#)

... 28. (n.) The act of casting or throwing; a throw. 29. (n.) The thing **thrown**.
30. (n.) The distance to which a thing is or can be **thrown**. 31. ...
</c/cast.htm> - 41k

[Teeth \(50 Occurrences\)](#)

... Isaiah 30:28; compare 2 Kings 19:28) is descriptive of the ultimate check of the Assyrian power at Jerusalem, "as when a bridle or lasso is **thrown** upon the ...
</t/teeth.htm> - 25k

[Dress \(38 Occurrences\)](#)

... (d) The usual outer garment consisted of a piece of woollen cloth like a Scotch plaid, either wrapped round the body or **thrown** over the shoulders like a shawl ...
</d/dress.htm> - 53k

[Millstone \(9 Occurrences\)](#)

... Mark 9:42 Whoever will cause one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him if he was **thrown** into the sea with a millstone ...
</m/millstone.htm> - 15k

[Devil \(58 Occurrences\)](#)

... and come out of him. And when the devil had **thrown** him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. (KJV). Luke 7:33 For John ...
</d/devil.htm> - 25k

[Torn \(100 Occurrences\)](#)

... you? Most certainly I tell you, there will not be left here one stone on another, that will not be **thrown** down." (See NAS). Matthew ...
</t/torn.htm> - 37k

Thrown (126 Occurrences)

[Matthew 3:10](#)

And already the axe is lying at the root of the trees, so that every tree which does not produce good fruit will quickly be hewn down and **thrown** into the fire.

(WEY NAS RSV NIV)

Resources

[Where was Daniel when his three friends were thrown into the fiery furnace for refusing to worship Nebuchadnezzar's statue? | GotQuestions.org](#)

[What does hell look like? How hot is hell? | GotQuestions.org](#)

[What is the second death? | GotQuestions.org](#)

[Thrown: Dictionary and Thesaurus | Clyx.com](#)

[Bible Concordance](#) • [Bible Dictionary](#) • [Bible Encyclopedia](#) • [Topical Bible](#) • [Bible Thesaurus](#)

Interview with

John Piper

Founder & Teacher, [desiringGod.org](#)

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Audio Transcript

Welcome back to the podcast. We start this new week off with a solid Bible question from a listener named Andrew. "Pastor John, hello to you! My question is about who will judge the world finally — Jesus, the Father, or the word of Christ? Of course, [John 3:17](#) and [John 12:47](#) tell us that Jesus did not come into the world the first time to play the role of judge. I understand that. That comes later. And as [John 5:22](#) says it, it's not the Father who judges in the end, but Christ. But then other passages, like [1 Peter 1:17](#), seem to actually say, no, the Father judges in the end. And then [John 12:48-49](#) says final judgment comes from the word of Christ, under the authority of the Father. Can you help me understand all this? In the end, who judges the world?"

I think if you put all the pieces of the New Testament together, the answer goes something like this (it's kind of a complicated answer, but I'll unpack it): God the Father

judges the world through Jesus Christ, the God-man, sharing that judgment in appropriate ways with apostles and Christians and with the confirming indictments of sin and truth. So that's the sentence that answers the question as I see all the pieces going together. But before I give the building blocks and unpack those pieces, let me say why I think this is worth talking about.

“Every single human being will be held personally accountable before the Maker of the universe.”

I mean, I think this is really important. And the reason is because every single human being, every single individual listening to our voices, will be held personally accountable before the Maker of the universe for the way each of us has responded to the measure of revelation that each of us has concerning God, concerning his ways in the world, and for the way we have lived our lives — including our attitudes and our words and our actions in response to the witness of God in nature, in Scripture, in our own conscience (which is just another witness to God's reality). “We will all stand before the judgment seat of God,” Paul says in [Romans 14:10](#).

So that's why it matters. And I think there should be a kind of trembling seriousness about it over against the superficiality of most of what happens in the world.

Judged by Father and Son

Now, here are the building blocks of that complex answer that I summed up in that sentence about who judges the world. There are biblical passages that say, plainly, that God judges the world — the Father judges the world. [First Peter 1:17](#): “If you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.” So there it is, clear. The Father judges, impartially, all of us. Or [Romans 3:5-6](#):

If our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) By no means! For then how could God judge the world?

So that's the first building block. The Father judges the world.

Here's the second one. You have biblical passages about Christ judging the world. So, [2 Timothy 4:1](#) says, "... Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom" — he judges the world. So, you have Christ at his second coming described as the judge of the living and the dead.

Judged Through the God-Man

And then, if you ask how these two threads of Scripture — that talk about Christ and talk about the Father judging the world — fit together, how those threads are woven together, the clearest answer is that God the Father judges through God the Son, the God-man, Christ Jesus. And the New Testament expresses that relationship between the Father and Son in different ways.

For example, Luke in the book of Acts expresses it by saying that God *appointed* Christ to be the judge of the world. "[Christ] is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead" ([Acts 10:42](#)). We see the same thing in [Acts 17:31](#): "[God] has fixed a day on which *he* will judge the world in righteousness *by a man* whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." So that's about the clearest statement you could get of God judging by a man, Christ Jesus. So God judged through Jesus Christ.

Then Jesus expresses this relationship between the Father and the Son in judgment with the same kind of emphasis, with focus on the God-man — that God intends to do his judging through a man, an incarnate Son. [John 5:27](#): "[God] has given the Son authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man."

So, I think when Jesus says in [John 5:22-23](#), which is just a few verses earlier, “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father” — I think when he says that, he doesn’t mean that the Father is not involved at all in judgment, but that he’s not involved in judgment without the Son. “The Father judges no one” means, I think, “The Father judges no one apart from the Son.”

And I say that because eight verses later, Jesus says, “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just because I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me” ([John 5:30](#)). In other words, both God the Father and God the Son say, “I don’t judge anyone without perfect harmony between my will and my Father’s will,” or “my will and my Son’s will.”

Judged by Apostles and Saints

Now, besides the judgment of the world through the Father and Son, the New Testament also speaks of the involvement of the apostles and the saints in the judgment of the world. This is really amazing. For example, Jesus says to the twelve apostles in [Matthew 19:28](#), “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” And then Paul says in [1 Corinthians 6:2-3](#) to the church, the whole church,

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!

Now, if that sounds incredible, which it does, it gets even more incredible in [Revelation 3:21](#), where Jesus says, “The one who conquers [that is, the one who triumphs over persecution and temptation by keeping the faith — the one who triumphs], I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.” That’s just breathtaking.

“To be part of Christ’s body, his bride, is to be part of his rule.”

In other words, to be part of Christ’s people by faith — simple, childlike trust in the infinitely worthy Christ — to be part of his body, his bride, is to be part of his rule. That’s what he said. And part of his rule includes part of his judgment. So, if we sit with him on his throne, in some sense sharing in his rule, we then share in his judgment, just like Paul said.

Judged by Sin and Truth

Now, there are two more building blocks in that sentence that I gave. So besides God, Christ, apostles, and Christians, listen to the way Jesus describes the judgment in [John 3:19](#): “This is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.” In other words, it is our own sin, our own love of darkness, that will be our judge at the last day.

And then Jesus says in [John 12:48](#): “The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.” In other words, at the last judgment, the truth that Jesus spoke — and that we knew and did not follow — will rise up as our judge. So, the truth and our sin will also be our judges.

What Judgment Means

Now, let me draw in one last cluster of a different kind of building block to use when we’re building our biblical theology of divine judgment. There are not only six judges, so to speak: God, Christ, apostles, Christians, truth, sin. There are at least six meanings of the word *judgment*. And we should ask, each time we’re talking about it, Which one are we talking about?

1. Judgment is an expression of the highest and final authoritative decision about our destiny by God ([Romans 3:6](#)).

2. Judgment is an expression of the immediate execution of the act of judgment ([Acts 17:31](#)).
3. Judgment is an act of final and decisive separation from God for non-Christians ([Matthew 25:32](#)).
4. Judgment is an act of meting out various rewards to Christians ([1 Corinthians 3:15](#)).
5. Judgment is any effect of truth that has been believed or rejected ([John 12:48](#)).
6. Judgment is an effect of sin in response to truth ([John 3:19](#)).

So, we should always clarify what we're talking about when we ask about particular texts concerning God's judgment.

Christ Judged for Sinners

So, to give the summary answer once more: Who will judge the world? God the Father judges the world through Jesus Christ, the God-man, sharing that judgment in appropriate ways with apostles and Christians, and with the confirming indictments of sin and truth.

And I think, Tony, that the note we should end on is the distinctive Christian reality. Lots of religions believe in the final judgment of God. There's nothing distinctively Christian about final judgment.

The distinctive Christian reality is that God's Son came into the world in order to take on himself the judgment that we deserve when he died on the cross, so that these words from Jesus in John would be gloriously true. He said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" ([John 5:24](#)). That's the distinctive Christian message.

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Sins Thrown In Lake Of Fire

[**Matthew 25:41**](#) ESV / 13 helpful votes

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

[**Revelation 20:10**](#) ESV / 12 helpful votes

And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

[**Matthew 25:46**](#) ESV / 11 helpful votes

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

[**Revelation 19:20**](#) ESV / 10 helpful votes

And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.

[**Revelation 20:11-15**](#) ESV / 9 helpful votes

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the

dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And **if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**

[Revelation 21:8](#) ESV / 8 helpful votes

But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

[John 3:36](#) ESV / 8 helpful votes

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

[Revelation 20:12](#) ESV / 6 helpful votes

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.

[2 Peter 2:4](#) ESV / 6 helpful votes

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;

[Revelation 2:11](#) ESV / 5 helpful votes

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'

[1 John 1:9](#) ESV / 5 helpful votes

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[**Acts 2:27**](#) ESV / 5 helpful votes

For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.

[**Mark 9:43-48**](#) ESV / 5 helpful votes

And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'

[**Matthew 10:28**](#) ESV / 5 helpful votes

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

[**Revelation 14:11**](#) ESV / 4 helpful votes

And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

[**Revelation 13:8**](#) ESV / 4 helpful votes

And all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

[2 Thessalonians 1:9](#) ESV / 4 helpful votes

They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,

[Matthew 23:33](#) ESV / 4 helpful votes

You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?

[Jude 1:7](#) ESV / 3 helpful votes

Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

[Hebrews 9:27](#) ESV / 3 helpful votes

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,

[2 Corinthians 5:18](#) ESV / 3 helpful votes

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;

[2 Corinthians 5:10](#) ESV / 3 helpful votes

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Romans 6:23 ESV / 3 helpful votes

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

Romans 3:23 ESV / 3 helpful votes

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

John 3:16 ESV / 3 helpful votes

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 1:29 ESV / 3 helpful votes

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

Matthew 23:15 ESV / 3 helpful votes

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

Matthew 13:50 ESV / 3 helpful votes

And throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

1 John 3:8 ESV / 2 helpful votes

Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

1 John 2:2 ESV / 2 helpful votes

He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

2 Peter 2:6 ESV / 2 helpful votes

If by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;

1 Peter 5:8 ESV / 2 helpful votes

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.

[Hebrews 12:29](#) ESV / 2 helpful votes

For our God is a consuming fire.

[2 Timothy 3:16](#) ESV / 2 helpful votes

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

[Ephesians 2:1](#) ESV / 2 helpful votes

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins

[Galatians 5:19-21](#) ESV / 2 helpful votes

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

[2 Corinthians 11:14](#) ESV / 2 helpful votes

And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

[1 Corinthians 3:11-15](#) ESV / 2 helpful votes **Helpful Not Helpful**

For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

[Romans 14:12](#) ESV / 2 helpful votes

So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

“The Axe At the Root of the Tree... Cut It Down!”

Introduction. God began preparing the human race for the coming of His Son shortly after the creation as a promise to Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:15). God continued adding details as He developed His “*eternal purpose*” (Eph. 3:8-11).

God’s Wonderful Promise of a Messiah. When God called **Abraham** and started the nation of Israel, He promised through his seed to **bless all nations** (Gen. 12:1-3). **Moses** revealed the Messiah would be **another lawgiver like him** (Deut. 18:15-18). **David**, after God’s own heart, was promised his seed would be a **king who would reign forever**.

Long after **Melchizedek** ministered to Abraham, God swore an oath He would make His Messiah both **king and priest on His throne** (Ps. 110; Heb. 7). **Isaiah** revealed Him as a

servant who would **suffer and die for our sins** (Isa. 53).

The Messenger Sent to Prepare. His coming and work were so important God promised to send someone to prepare people for Him. *I am going to send **My messenger**, and he **will clear the way before Me.**" "I am going to **send you Elijah the prophet before the coming**" (Mal. 3:1; 4:5). *I send **My messenger** before Your face, who **will prepare your way before you.**" (Lk. 7:26-27 Isa. 40:3-5). This was fulfilled by John the Baptist. His success was great! Matthew said **"Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him"** (3:5-6). Luke stated **"the multitudes came out to be baptized by him."****

A Parable of Repentance and Fruit. John's preparation for Jesus consisted of warning them of **"the wrath to come"** and demanding **"fruits worthy of repentance."** These **"fruits"** were necessary to escape that **"wrath."** John gave a parable for all to remember: **"the axe is already laid at the root of the trees"** and **"every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire"** (Lk. 3:7-9). This axe is still there. Death will come suddenly and without warning and if there are no **"fruits worthy of repentance"** we will **"die in our sins"** (Lk. 13:3) and face the **"wrath to come."**

Yet many **trusted their relationship to Abraham as a class would nullify any need for personal consecration or repentance.** As long as they believed this, John's words fell on deaf ears. **John removed any hope that a connection to Abraham could help them.** **"Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones."**

We make a grave error if we think John minimized the relationship to Abraham. They were God's people because of an oath sworn to Abraham. **John's point was subtler. Just as all fruit bearing trees are blest, but only as each produces fruit, so also all of Abraham's seed are blest, but only as they produce fruit.**

Paul spoke of this later. "For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham"(Rom. 9:6-7).

Christians Must Learn This Same Truth. Everyone "baptized into Christ puts on Christ" and is "Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:27-29). But we have a similar parable and a similar warning about the need for repentance and fruit.

- *"I tell you, no; but **unless you repent you will all likewise perish.**" 6 And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he **came seeking fruit on it and found none.** 7 And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. **CUT IT DOWN.** Why should it use up the ground?' 8 And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. 9 Then if it should **bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can CUT IT DOWN.** **Lk. 13:5-9***

Nothing changed from those prepared to enter the kingdom and those who had entered. Both needed fruits of repentance! **As the owner of the vineyard, God expected fruit. The tree had every blessing.** It was a fig tree to produce after its kind, planted in a vineyard, and tended by a vine dresser, but it still refused to produce fruit. **This echoes Isaiah's parable of a vineyard.** God had planted a vineyard (Israel). Since it had not produced good fruit, He laid it waste (Isa. 5:1-7).

Ligonier.org

APR 2, 2009

What Does the Bible Say about Hell?

R. Fowler White

7 Min Read

This topic is very important. But it is also very uncomfortable. My subject is what the Bible teaches us about hell. You may respond with fear. You should respond with fear if you are not a Christian. But **my prayer is that God will replace your fear with faith in our Lord Jesus.** He is God's Son who saves sinners from hell. If you are a Christian, my prayer is that you will praise God for Jesus who has saved you from hell. And so **let me ask two questions to begin. Do you know what the Bible teaches about hell? Do you believe what the Bible teaches about hell?**

It is very important that we take seriously what the Bible says about hell.

The Bible, you see, is the revelation of God's will to man. The Bible is the word of the only living and true God. The Bible is the only rule of faith and practice. **What the Bible says, God says.**

You and I must, therefore, take the Bible seriously. God speaks to us in the Bible about hell. We must take seriously what the Bible teaches about hell. We must believe what the Bible says about hell.

And what does the Bible mean when it speaks of hell? **What does God mean by hell? He means the punishments for sin in the life to come.**

- He does not mean the punishments for sin in this life. Hell does not refer to the miseries of suffering and death that we experience now, in this life, because we are sinners.
- No, hell refers to the punishments for sin in the life to come. If you know yourself to be a sinner as I do, you must take seriously what God says about hell.
- We shall consider five points that the Bible teaches about hell.

1. Hell Is a Place Far More Frightful Than We Could Ever Imagine

Consider, first, that hell is a place far more frightful than we could ever imagine. **The Bible uses many very graphic pictures to describe hell. Each image is terrifying.**

But the combination is even more horrifying than you can imagine.

- Hell is a place of **“black darkness”** ([2 Peter 2.17](#)).
- It is a place of “outer darkness” where **“weeping and gnashing of teeth”** will be heard ([Matt. 25.30](#)).
- It is **“a lake that burns with fire and sulfur”** ([Rev. 21.8](#)).
- Hell is a prison of everlasting chains from which there is no hope of release ([Jude 6](#)).
- It is a furnace of conscious torment where the fire never goes out ([Matt. 13.49-50](#)).
- It is a place of excruciating misery where the worm does not die ([Mark 9.47-48](#)).
- Hell is a place of agonizing thirst that can never be quenched ([Luke 16.22-24](#)).

The suffering in hell is beyond all comparison to the suffering found in this world.

And the variety of images for hell in the Bible tells us that the reality of hell is much more frightful than any one of the Bible's images considered by itself. Hell, you see, is far worse than we can ever imagine.

Does the reality of hell horrify you? Does it terrify you? If you know yourself to be a sinner, it should terrify you; it should horrify you. The reality of hell should cause us to seek a place to hide. The reality of hell should cause us to look for a way of escape.

2. Hell Is a Place Where God Is Present

Consider, second, that hell is a place where God is present. Yes, as odd as it sounds at first, God is present in hell. We are not to think that hell is a place from which God is absent. No, hell is not a place where sinners are forever separated from God. Rather, **hell is a place where sinners are forever separated from God's comforting presence.**

You see, the Bible teaches us that God is present in hell in His holy wrath and just punishment. The punishments of sin in the world to come will include everlasting separation from God's comforting presence. God's wrath against sin in the life to come will include the most grievous of torments. These punishments will afflict soul and body. These torments will occur without interruption. These punishments will take place in fire forever.

Who, then, in the Bible teaches us the most about hell? The answer is Jesus.

If you are a sinner, do not think that hell is a place from which God is absent. No, hell is a place where God is present in His holy wrath and just punishment. Hell is a place much more frightful than you or I could ever imagine. Does the truth about hell horrify you as it does me? Does it terrify

you as it does me? If you know yourself to be a sinner, it should terrify you; it should horrify you. This truth should cause us to seek a place to hide. This truth should cause us to look for a way of escape, an escape that only God can provide.

3. Hell Is a Place of God's Perfect Justice

Third, consider that hell is a place of God's perfect justice. We are not to think that hell is a place of "cruel and unusual" punishment. **The God of the Bible always does what is right. He always pays His creatures the wages that are due to them. He always rewards the obedient and punishes the disobedient.** So, if you are a disobedient sinner, do not think that the punishments for sin in hell are cruel and unusual. No, **those punishments are thoroughly just.**

Hell is a place of God's perfect justice, just as it is a place where God is present in holy wrath. Hell is a place far more frightful than you can ever imagine. Does the truth about hell horrify you? Does it terrify you? If you know yourself to be a sinner, it should terrify you; it should horrify you. This truth should cause you to seek a place to hide. This truth should cause you to look for a way of escape.

4. Hell Is a Place of Eternal Punishment

Consider, fourth, that hell is a place of eternal punishment. That is, we are not to think of hell as a place of temporary punishment. The torments of hell are everlasting. The suffering in hell does not come to an end. **Some teachers these days are saying that the miseries of hell do come to an end. They preach that unbelievers are annihilated; they teach that unbelievers cease to exist. But Jesus teaches us otherwise.**

In [Matthew 25](#), Jesus tells us about the Day of Judgment, the day when He will appear as Judge of all the world. That day, Jesus teaches us, will bring about two contrasting futures, one future for the sheep, the other for the goats.

Please note this fact: according to Jesus, both of these futures are eternal. The sheep will enter into life that is eternal. The goats will go away into punishment that is eternal. Clearly, the agonies of hell last as long as the glories of heaven.

Hell, you see, is a place where the fire never goes out. It is a place where the worm does not die. Hell is a place of eternal punishment, just as it is a place of God's perfect justice. It is a place where God is present in holy wrath. It is a place far more frightful than you or I can ever imagine.

And so, **we should ask the Spirit of God to press these questions upon our souls, upon our**

consciences: Does the truth about hell horrify you? Does it terrify you? If you know yourself to be a sinner, it should haunt you, hound you. This truth should cause you to seek a place to hide. This truth should cause you to look for a way of escape.

5. Consider the Person in the Bible Who Teaches Us the Most about Hell

Fifth, consider the person in the Bible who teaches us the most about hell. Do you know who in the Bible teaches us the most about hell? Perhaps you would say, "It is Moses. Ah, yes, that OT prophet Moses." No, it is not Moses. Perhaps you would say, "It is Paul. Or maybe Peter? Or how about John?" No, it is none of these.

Who, then, in the Bible teaches us the most about hell? The answer is Jesus.

The Bible tells us that it is Jesus, the Judge of all the world, who has the most to say about hell.

- It is He who will usher the sheep into eternal life. It is He who will send the goats to eternal punishment.
- **Have you listened to His teaching about hell?**
- **Will you be a sheep or a goat?**
- **Jesus will be your Judge on the Last Day. You do well, therefore, to listen to all that Jesus teaches about hell.**
- **It is Jesus who teaches us that hell is a place of eternal punishment, even as it is a place of God's perfect justice, a place where God is present in holy**

wrath, a place far more frightful than we can ever imagine.

You know, don't you, that all of us sinners go to hell unless we find a place to hide? You know, don't you, that all of us sinners go to hell unless we find a way of escape? Have you found that place to hide? Have you found that way to escape? If not, won't you let us make known to you the good news that God has made known to us in the Bible?

You see, God Himself has provided the place for you to hide. God Himself has provided the way of escape for you. The place to hide from hell is in Jesus. The way of escape from hell is through Jesus. How can this be?

Read on with care.

On the cross, our Lord Jesus Christ died as God's substitute for sinners. There God poured out His holy wrath on Jesus. There Jesus endured the anguish and agony of hell. There God afflicted the body and soul of Jesus with His just punishments. There Jesus endured the terror and torment of hell. On the cross our Lord Jesus Christ delivered from hell any and all sinners who will trust in Him alone.

As ambassadors of Jesus Christ, we beseech you, trust in Him alone and in Him you will find the place to hide from hell. Rest on Christ alone and through Him you will find the way of escape from hell.

Let all sinners who trust in Christ praise Him. It is Christ who saves you from hell!
Let all sinners who rest in Jesus praise Him. It is Jesus who gives you the assurance of eternal life!

What does the Bible say about hell?

There is sometimes confusion about use of the term *hell* as the temporary gathering place of the dead (also known as [Sheol](#) or Hades). This article will focus on one common usage of the word *hell* as being synonymous with *the lake of fire*, the eternal place of punishment reserved for the lost.

If heaven is vastly misunderstood thanks to misconceptions and falsehoods perpetuated by myth and popular culture, the realities of hell are all the more misunderstood.

Medieval art, fanciful literature, and biblical illiteracy may be the top three reasons why the average person's understanding of hell is clouded with ignorance and fallacies.

Compounding the problem, many pastors and Bible teachers avoid discussing hell for fear of upsetting their congregants. Indeed, hell is a most unpleasant topic, but since our Lord Jesus taught on hell, we should not remain silent on the matter.

According to the Bible, hell is real ([Mark 9:43](#)), it is where sinners are punished ([Matthew 5:22](#)), it is a place of torment ([Revelation 14:11](#)), and it is eternal ([Mark 9:48](#)). Hell was originally created for Satan and his angels ([Matthew 25:41](#)).

Dispelling some of the more prevalent myths about hell is useful in adding to our biblical understanding:

Myth 1: The devil's headquarters are in hell. The

devil is not in hell now. Hell, or the lake of fire (also referred to as the second death), will receive its first occupants at the end of our Lord Jesus' millennial reign ([Revelation 20:7–10](#)). Also, hell is a place of torment ([Luke 16:23–24](#); [Revelation 20:10](#)), so cartoonish images of prancing devils brandishing pitchforks while merrily dancing around a ring of fire are nonsensical. Rather than partying with his legions of demons, Satan will languish in hell.

Myth 2: Hell is reserved solely for the worst of evildoers such as cruel dictators and serial killers.

- While there are likely degrees of eternal punishment ([Luke 12:47–49](#)), all who refuse God's mercy must endure His wrath ([John 3:18](#)).
- There is heaven, and there is hell; **there is no third option.**
- While this reality makes the average person uncomfortable, there will be more unrepentant barbers, plumbers, middle school teachers, bricklayers, airline pilots, and accountants in hell than tyrants such as Hitler, Stalin, and Mao. Stalin will not be sent to the lake of fire because he murdered millions of his own countrymen; rather, Stalin, like the unrepentant librarian, will suffer in hell because he scorned God's mercy and rejected Christ.

Myth 3: A loving God would not send people to hell.

If, by “love,” one is thinking of an indulgent, enabling, misguided sort of sentimental affection, then there would be no eternal punishment. But ***God is not to be confused with a drowsy old man who winks at his grandchildren’s mischievous antics from a rocking chair.*** *God is just ([Romans 12:19](#)), and He will repay evil with affliction ([2 Thessalonians 1:6](#)).* Rather than accusing God of being cruel, we should remember hell is reserved for those who, by their own volition, snubbed God’s mercy ([Hebrews 2:3](#)). Salvation is a free gift for the asking ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)), but the world is filled with those whose minds and hearts are so full of earthly matters they haven’t any room for what God would gladly give them. Ultimately, hell will prove to be a place for those who were willing to settle for less than God’s best.

Myth 4: A just God would not send people to hell.

Of all the arguments against hell, this may be the weakest. **Where else would a just God send rebels who stubbornly and steadfastly refused to repent of their evil?** Even in our own sometimes corrupt criminal justice system, lawbreakers are sent to prison. Should a just God reward hardened evildoers with eternal bliss? Additionally, those who will occupy hell will be those who avoided contact, companionship, and communication with the One who made them. **Why should we think the unrepentant sinner who ran from the presence of God here on earth would be happy in His intimate company in heaven?**

In his usual pithy style, Christian writer and apologist [C. S. Lewis](#) explained,

“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’” (*The Great Divorce*, Signature Classics, p. 339). Hell will be populated by people who chose to be there.

Myth 5: Hell is merely a scare tactic to enforce a particular brand of allegiance or behavior.

If hell is real, then we will do well to fear it, and if hell is only a scare tactic, then might the same be said of warnings against tobacco use, drinking and driving, or income tax fraud? Jesus warned of the dangers of hell (Matthew 10:28). Would He have alerted us to the dangers of hell if the dangers were not real?

Are those who deny hell's existence wiser, smarter, and better informed than the Son of God? To deny the perils of hell is to cast doubt on the words of our Savior.

Hell is a place of misery and suffering; hell is where torment and anguish never cease (Revelation 14:11).

Whether the flames are literal or symbolic of some even greater woe, we can be certain that all this world has to offer—money, fame, reputation,

power, or sexual gratification—is hardly worth the forfeiture of our eternal souls ([Mark 8:36–38](#)).

God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked ([Ezekiel 18:32](#)). He finds no satisfaction in those who choose hell over Him. On the contrary, God loved the world so much that He sent His Son to rescue and redeem us ([John 3:16](#)). Jesus' death and resurrection are good news for lost sinners willing to believe that our sin debt has been paid in full.

Those who receive God's grace through faith will live forever with Him.

Jesus is the best God can give us. God has nothing greater to offer than His Son.

Those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ have no reason to fear death and the grave; on the contrary, the best is yet to come.

Yet there are those whose hearts are hardened and are more interested in gaining what the world has to offer. What a tragedy this is, for Christ has overcome sin and death and hell on our behalf.

[The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#)

10 *The ax is “already” (emphatic) at the root of the trees* (for the idiom, cf. Isa 10:33–34; Jer 46:22).

“Not only is there a coming Messianic wrath, but already there is a beginning Messianic discrimination among the descendants of Abraham” (Broadus).

Just as the kingdom is dawning already (Mt 3:2), so also is the judgment, the two are inseparable.

To preach the kingdom is to preach repentance;

any tree (not “every tree,” NIV; cf. Turner, *Syntax*, p. 199), regardless of its roots, that does not bring forth good fruit will be destroyed.²

ARTS & CULTURE

² D. A. Carson, “[Matthew](#),” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 103–104.

Understanding the Metamodern Mood

MAY 30, 2024 **BRETT MCCRACKEN**

Why, when we look at contemporary pop culture—movies, music, TV, campus protests, meme culture, and TikTok (especially TikTok)—**does the word “incoherence” often come to mind?** Why does so much today feel random, disconnected, contradictory, aimless, and altogether void of coherent logic and purpose?

Part of it is that social media’s inherent denarrated randomness has powerfully shaped a schizophrenic cultural consciousness. We see the world as we see our scrolling feeds: one random thing after another, ephemeral and quickly forgotten, providing mild amusement and occasional resonance but without an anchoring narrative that offers lasting satisfaction. As Byung-Chul Han puts it in *The Crisis of Narration*, digital platforms provide “media of information, not narration. . . . The coherence from which events derive their meaning gives way to a meaningless side-by-side and one-after-the-other.”

Charles Taylor’s concept of “cross-pressures” also helps explain the situation. Contemporary people are bombarded from all directions by information, ideas, experiences, affinities, and spiritual quests—each pulling them in a different direction. Naturally, the experience of cross-pressured life (and its artistic expression) tends to be dizzying, conflicted, and incoherent.

One term academics, artists, and critics have started to use to explain what’s going on is “metamodernism.” **For Christians and church leaders, knowing what this term describes—and especially how it finds expression in pop culture—will be helpful for our mission.**

Metamodernism: What It Is

Metamodernism is what came after postmodernism, which is what came after modernism. If postmodernism cynically reacts against and deconstructs modernism, metamodernism reacts against modernism *and* postmodernism, affirming and critiquing aspects of both. Metamodernism opposes the “either/or” bifurcation of modernism and postmodernism. It refuses to choose between sincerity/certainty/hope (modernism) and irony/deconstruction/nihilism (postmodernism). It values both, even if—or perhaps precisely because—such a synthesis is, in the end, illogical and incoherent.

Metamodernism accepts this incoherence because it values mood and affect (how I’m feeling / what I’m resonating with) more than rigid logic.

If this seems like a “have your cake and eat it too” philosophy, that’s sort of the point. Shaped by the endless, have-it-your-way horizons of the internet (a structural multiverse of innumerable “truths”), **metamodernism is a worldview as wide open and consumer friendly as the smartphone. Take or leave what you want, follow or unfollow, swipe right or left: it’s your iWorld, so make it a good one.**

Metamodernism is a worldview as wide open and consumer friendly as the smartphone. Take or leave what you want, follow or unfollow, swipe right or left: it’s your iWorld, so make it a good one.

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The nice academic term for metamodernism’s hyperconsumerist, bespoke toggling between seemingly contradictory ideas is “oscillation.” The metamodern outlook constantly oscillates between the poles of modernism and postmodernism.

This has the effect of making the metamodern posture impossible to pin down and ultimately **hyperindividualistic.**

Each person, in any given moment, might swing multiple times between deconstruction and construction, truth and relativism. It seems to depend only on a vague mood disposition mixed with a cautious sense of avoiding “all-in” commitment to any one direction.

Here's how one writer describes it:

Metamodernism considers that our era is characterized by an oscillation between aspects of *both* modernism and postmodernism. We see this manifest as a kind of informed naivety, a pragmatic idealism, a moderate fanaticism, oscillating between sincerity and irony, deconstruction and construction, apathy and affect, attempting to attain some sort of transcendent position, *as if* such a thing were within our grasp. The metamodern generation understands that we can be both ironic and sincere in the same moment; that one does not necessarily diminish the other.

This last oscillation—between irony and sincerity—is especially noticeable when you start to look at contemporary pop culture.

Metamodernism in Movies

The best analysis I've seen on metamodernism in movies is a video essay by media critic Thomas Flight (embedded below). It's long (about 40 minutes) but well worth the time if you'd like to learn how the cerebral concepts of metamodernism show up in concrete ways in contemporary movies.

Flight highlights *Top Gun: Maverick* as an example of a recent “modernist” film and gives an array of examples of “postmodernist” films (*Pulp Fiction*, *No Country for Old Men*). Among his examples of “metamodern” movies are the Oscar-winning *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022), Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019), Steven Spielberg's *The Fabelmans* (2022), and most of Wes Anderson's filmography. These movies are characterized both by postmodern reflexivity (self-aware movies about the artifice of movies) and sincere appreciation for real,

uncynical emotional encounters, both a postmodern suspicion of narrative optimism and an unabashed desire for the possibility of a “Hollywood ending.”

Three Recent Examples

Once you understand metamodernism, you start to see it everywhere in movies and TV. Here are a few examples of “metamodern movies” from the last year.

1. *The Fall Guy* (2024)

This recent Ryan Gosling action blockbuster epitomizes metamodernism. The “movie within a movie” plot follows a stunt man (Gosling) who, while on a film set in Australia, gets tied up in real-life peril as well as real-life romance (with Emily Blunt, who plays a film director). *The Fall Guy* is heavy on postmodern reflexivity and constant self-referential jokes about Hollywood. It’s hyperaware of its artifice.

And yet the film’s central romance is sweet and sincere and appeals to the audience’s nostalgic hunger for earnest, straightforward love stories in movies. In the film’s (spoiler alert) happily-ever-after ending, Gosling says, “What we got is even better than the movies.” The ending is simultaneously sincere and ironic, playfully acknowledging its “Hollywood ending” cheesiness, even as it gives audiences permission to sincerely love and desire such an ending.

2. *Love at First Sight* (2023)

This Netflix rom-com was a hit with audiences last fall, likely because it embodies the metamodern approach to ironic but sincere romance. The film follows a young woman and young man who meet on a flight to London and, you guessed it, fall in love. The Hallmark-esque plot is unabashedly cheesy but *knows it*, and this is the key.

The film is just self-aware enough to make it palatable to metamodern audiences who’d otherwise find its love story too naive. The film’s postmodern street cred is reinforced when one character regularly breaks the fourth wall, speaking to the audience in a wink-wink way. Yet this ironic detachment is interspersed with heaps of sincerity and real moments of emotional affect. “We know love stories like this don’t happen in real life,” the film communicates. “But it feels good and right to desire that they do.”

3. *Barbie* (2023)

Greta Gerwig's record-breaking blockbuster showcases the "OK with incoherence" nature of metamodernism. The film constantly oscillates between detached, ironic self-awareness ("Yes, we know how ridiculous it is to take seriously a movie about plastic dolls") and earnest attempts at meaningful reflection ("How might we see ourselves in Barbie's and Ken's existential conundrums?").

As I wrote last summer, *Barbie* is disorienting yet "at ease in its contradictions." I found the film unsatisfying due to its incoherent, "have my cake and eat it too" approach to questions of gender. But clearly, most audiences didn't mind. Indeed, *Barbie's* box-office dominance is the clearest signal yet that metamodernism has gone mainstream—and needs to be taken seriously.

Metamodernism's Implications for the Church

Much more needs to be written about metamodernism's implications for culture and Christianity, and I hope to revisit these questions in subsequent essays. But for now, **here are two brief reflections on the "so what?"** of this admittedly cerebral concept: one observation of concern and one reason to be encouraged.

1. Aversion to Logic and...

'Adjusted to Incoherence'

I've long been haunted by a phrase Neil Postman used in his 1985 book *Amusing Ourselves to Death* to describe the way television had eroded our logical faculties: we'd become "adjusted to incoherence." How much more is this the case in the social media era? And **this is indeed what metamodernism reflects.**

Metamoderns have become so adjusted to incoherence that they no longer recognize

inconsistencies and seem not to mind art, politics, philosophies, and **activism rife with internal**

contradictions. This explains the illogical phenomenon of “woke jihad” that has become ubiquitous on college campuses of late: kaffiyeh-clad hipsters who denounce the patriarchy and promote LGBT+ equality even as they declare solidarity with patriarchal, anti-LGBT Islamist terrorists.

Metamoderns have become so adjusted to incoherence that they no longer recognize inconsistencies and seem not to mind art, politics, philosophies, and activism rife with internal contradictions.

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This is but one of countless examples of our **adjusted-to-incoherence culture**, which shows up in metamodernism’s oscillation between contradictory ideas (can you really believe in both absolute truth and relativism?).

The biggest challenge here is that many metamoderns don’t flinch when their illogical views are pointed out. They aren’t bothered by the internal incoherence of their contradictory stances. This will no doubt pose new challenges to Christian pastors, church leaders, evangelists, and apologists:

How do we disciple people toward a coherent, consistently biblical view of the world when they’re increasingly at ease in whatever contradictions best suit them?

2. Real Desire for Meaning and Certainty

Likely because metamodernism is fundamentally subjective, it contains within it an awareness of subjectivity's limits. Relativism won't ultimately satisfy. There has to be more than me and my oscillating mood.

This is why the certainty and optimism of modernism appeals. Metamodern people have seen the unsustainability of postmodern deconstruction, and they desire construction. They want to believe problems can be solved and progress can be made. Even as they're suspicious of absolute truth *in theory*, their existential reality leads them to desire it. After all, to construct anything, one must have foundations.

It's here that Christians can find a hopeful inroad with metamodern seekers.

Insofar as our faith offers solid foundations and, as a result, demonstrates ongoing construction in a world of deconstruction, it holds natural appeal. The church is well positioned to meet people in the acedia of postmodernity's afterglow and invite them into a time-tested community of truth, growth, and purposeful mission.

Is the digital age making us foolish?



Do you feel yourself becoming more foolish the more time you spend scrolling on social media? You're not alone. Addictive algorithms make huge money for Silicon Valley, but they make huge fools of us.

It doesn't have to be this way. With intentionality and the discipline to cultivate healthier media consumption habits, we can resist the foolishness of the age and instead become wise and spiritually mature. Brett McCracken's *The Wisdom Pyramid: Feeding Your Soul in a Post-Truth World* shows us the way.

To start cultivating a diet more conducive to wisdom, click below to access a FREE ebook of *The Wisdom Pyramid*.

[Download your copy today »](#)

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