

BOOKS ON HELL

Prepare for the LTL's 9/24 lecture with Edward Fudge with these resources about hell.

CONDITIONALIST VIEWPOINT

***The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of the Doctrine of Final Punishment, Third Edition* – Edward Fudge**

Evangelical Christians affirm together that a dreadful destiny awaits those who reject God's grace throughout life. According to the traditional view, that destiny will involve unending conscious torment in hell. However, believers are increasingly questioning that understanding, as both unbiblical and inconsistent with the character of God revealed in the Scriptures and in the man Jesus Christ.

This internationally acclaimed book--now fully updated, revised, and expanded--carefully examines the complete teaching of Scripture on the subject of final punishment. It concludes that hell is a place of total annihilation, everlasting destruction, although the destructive process encompasses conscious torment of whatever sort, intensity, and duration God might require in each individual case.

***Hell: a Hard Look at a Hard Question. The Fate of the Unrighteous in New Testament Thought.* – David J. Powys**

"This book is an impressive, thorough discussion of a thorny question. Dr Powys is at home in many branches of biblical studies . . . He examines the biblical evidence carefully and sets his case out lucidly and with real insight, showing convincingly how ill-founded are many ancient and many recent views on the fate of the unrighteous. His own solution of a set of complex exegetical and theological issues is judicious and clearly the end result of careful thought."

- from the Foreword by Graham Stanton, University of Cambridge

"David Powys has made a significant contribution to an increasingly important debate. His book's real strength lies in its very careful study of New Testament teaching in the light of a comprehensive analysis of the Old Testament and Jewish literature. This literature is rightly seen not merely as background but as the key to a right understanding of the New Testament teaching. I wish that such a clear discussion had been available when I first began engaging with these questions."

- Stephen Travis, St John's College, Nottingham

***Facing Hell* – J.W. Wenham**

MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS

***Two Views of Hell: A Biblical & Theological Dialogue* – Edward William Fudge & Robert A. Peterson**

Two distinguished authors convincingly present their opposing views on hell. Introductory remarks on both traditionalism (the belief that the wicked suffer in hell for eternity) and conditionalism (the

belief that the wicked are punished by God and then destroyed) set the stage for the authors' in-depth studies. Edward Fudge, a practicing lawyer and theologian (*The Fire That Consumes: The Biblical Case for Conditional Immortality*) argues on behalf of conditionalism, drawing from a study of Old Testament figures, Jesus' teachings on hell, the writings of Paul and other New Testament verses and explanations. Robert Peterson (professor of theology at Covenant Theological Seminary and editor of the *Presbyterian*) responds from the traditionalist perspective, as his previous book's title (*Hell on Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment*) would suggest. Peterson provides readers with the positions of early Church Fathers and exegeted verses, and offers an overall theological look at why traditionalism is biblically sound. Each section ends with the other author debating the preceding arguments, contributing to the "dialogue" of the book. Throughout the text, both authors do their level best to dismantle the other's arguments. Professionals, seminary students and well-educated laity will find much to mull over here, though the average reader may consider the continual bantering somewhat tedious.

***Four Views on Hell: Literal, Metaphorical, Purgatorial and Conditional* – edited by William Crockett**

Most contemporary Christians acknowledge the doctrine of hell, but they'd rather not think about how God punishes the wicked. The authors of *Four Views on Hell* meet this subject head-on with different views on what the Scriptures say. Is hell to be understood literally as a place of eternal smoke and flames? Or are such images simply metaphors for a real but different form of punishment? Is there such a thing as 'conditional immortality,' in which God annihilates the souls of the wicked rather than punishing them endlessly? Is there a Purgatory, and if so, how does it fit into the picture? The interactive Counterpoints forum allows the reader to see the four views on hell---literal, metaphorical, conditional, and purgatorial---in interaction with each other. Each view in turn is presented, critiqued, and defended. This evenhanded approach is ideal for comparing and contrasting views in order to form a personal conclusion about one of Christianity's key doctrines. The Counterpoints series provides a forum for comparison and critique of different views on issues important to Christians. Counterpoints books address two categories: Church Life and Bible and Theology. Complete your library with other books in the Counterpoints series.

TRADITIONALIST VIEWPOINT

***Erasing Hell* – Francis Chan**

With humble respect for God's Word, Francis Chan and Preston Sprinkle address the deepest questions you have about eternal destiny. They've asked the same questions. Like you, sometimes they just don't want to believe in hell. But as they write, "We cannot afford to be wrong on this issue." This is not a book about who is saying what. It's a book about what God says. It's not a book about impersonal theological issues. It's a book about people whom God loves. It's not a book about arguments, doctrine, or being right. It's a book about the character of God.

***Hell Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment* – edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson**

Of all the teachings of Christianity, the doctrine of hell is easily the most troubling, so much so that in recent years the church has been quietly tucking it away. Rarely mentioned anymore in the pulpit, it has faded through disuse among evangelicals and been attacked by liberal theologians. Hell is no

longer only the target of those outside the church. Today, a disturbing number of professing Christians question it as well. Perhaps more than at any other time in history, hell is under fire. The implications of the historic view of hell make the popular alternatives, annihilationism and universalism, seem extremely appealing. But the bottom line is still God's Word. What does the Old Testament reveal about hell? What does Paul the apostle have to say, or the book of Revelation? Most important, what does Jesus, the ultimate expression of God's love, teach us about God's wrath?

Upholding the authority of Scripture, the different authors in *Hell Under Fire* explore a complex topic from various angles. R. Albert Mohler Jr. provides a historical, theological, and cultural overview of 'The Disappearance of Hell.' Christopher Morgan draws on the New Testament to offer three pictures of hell as punishment, destruction, and banishment. J. I. Packer compares universalism with the traditional understanding of hell, Morgan does the same with annihilationism, and Sinclair Ferguson considers how the reality of hell ought to influence preaching. These examples offer some idea of this volume's scope and thoroughness. Hell may be under fire, but its own flames cannot be quenched by popular opinion. This book helps us gain a biblical perspective on what hell is and why we cannot afford to ignore it. And it offers us a better understanding of the One who longs for all people to escape judgment and obtain eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Hell On Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment – Robert A. Peterson

God Wins: Heaven, Hell, and Why the Good News Is Better than Love Wins – Mark Galli

Rob Bell's book, *Love Wins*, has generated a national conversation about ultimate issues, such as the nature of hell, heaven, and the ultimate destiny of humankind. Yet, the book has also created unnecessary confusion. *God Wins* is a response to the provocative questions *Love Wins* has raised. In *God Wins*, Mark Galli explores the important questions that are left unasked and the issues left uncharted. Mark shows how *Love Wins* is not enough—and that there is even better news for our world. Includes a group-discussion guide with relevant Scripture passages.

UNIVERSALIST VIEWPOINT

Razing Hell: Rethinking Everything You've Been Taught About God's Wrath and Judgment – Sharon L. Baker

Fear of hell has been instrumental in gaining converts to Christianity, Baker asserts in this critique of traditional assumptions about a punishing torment awaiting sinners and non-believers after death. Assistant professor and coordinator of the peace studies program at Messiah College, Baker argues for a kinder, gentler image of the afterlife that better comports with the supposed nature and intentions of a gracious and loving God. One result is that the book includes refreshing ways of thinking about how justice might be reconciled with forgiveness. It frequently relies, however, on popular Christian assumptions about God and a nutshell "message of the Bible" that not every reader may agree with. This is odd because Baker discusses biblical texts that challenge reductionist assertions. While the book's conclusions are intriguing and sometimes convincing, Baker's vehicle for pursuing and communicating them through annoying anecdotes and exchanges with three individuals cheapens an otherwise sophisticated argument. This should be a useful book for Christians struggling to reconcile Jesus's sacrifice and a loving God with the place of punishment and the necessity for justice.

The Evangelical Universalist – Gregory MacDonald

- Can an orthodox Christian, committed to the historic faith of the Church and the authority of the Bible, be a universalist?
- Is it possible to believe that salvation is found only by grace, through faith in Christ, and yet to maintain that in the end all people will be saved?
- Can one believe passionately in mission if one does not think that anyone will be lost forever?
- Could universalism be consistent with the teachings of the Bible?

Gregory MacDonald argues that the answer is yes to all of these questions. Weaving together philosophical, theological, and biblical considerations, MacDonald seeks to show that being a committed universalist is consistent with the central teachings of the biblical texts and of historic Christian theology.

Universal Salvation?: The Current Debate – edited by Robin A. Parry

Will God one day save all people through Christ's atoning work? That is the question at the heart of the debate in this volume - a debate sure to challenge readers, whatever their current perspective. Featuring evangelical writers of exceptional insight and sensitivity, *Universal Salvation?* offers a conversation worth everyone's attention. The volume opens with a rigorous three-part defense of Christian universalism by philosopher Thomas Talbott, who argues that Scripture teaches the ultimate salvation of all people, including those in hell. Gabriel Fackre in his foreword calls Talbott's work the most thoughtfully wrought argument for universalism to date from within the contemporary evangelical community. The rest of the book gathers incisive responses to Talbott by Christian scholars from different disciplines, who evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Talbott's arguments, take his thought in new directions, or explain why they think he is mistaken. Talbott then responds to his critics. The aim of this volume is not to persuade people that universalism is true, but to open up a fairer debate on a controversial subject of continuing importance to theologians and nontheologians alike. By exploring universal salvation from biblical, philosophical, theological, and historical perspectives, the book helps readers think through the issues more carefully than has been possible with resources previously available.

Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived – Rob Bell

Millions of Christians have struggled with how to reconcile God's love and God's judgment: Has God created billions of people over thousands of years only to select a few to go to heaven and everyone else to suffer forever in hell? Is this acceptable to God? How is this "good news"?

Troubling questions—so troubling that many have lost their faith because of them. Others only whisper the questions to themselves, fearing or being taught that they might lose their faith and their church if they ask them out loud.

But what if these questions trouble us for good reason? What if the story of heaven and hell we have been taught is not, in fact, what the Bible teaches? What if what Jesus meant by heaven, hell, and salvation are very different from how we have come to understand them?

What if it is God who wants us to face these questions?

Author, pastor, and innovative teacher Rob Bell presents a deeply biblical vision for rediscovering a richer, grander, truer, and more spiritually satisfying way of understanding heaven, hell, God, Jesus,

salvation, and repentance. The result is the discovery that the "good news" is much, much better than we ever imagined.

Love wins.