

Learning to Worship God for His Judgments

Revelation 19:1-5

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2018-05-20

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Text

19:1 After these things I heard as it were the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven saying, “Hallelujah! The salvation and power and glory of our God! 2 Because His judgments are true and just, because He has judged the great whore who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and has avenged the blood of His slaves by her hand.” 3 And a second voice said, “Hallelujah! Her smoke goes up for ever and ever!” 4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living beings fell down and worshiped God, who sits on the throne, saying, “Amen, Hallelujah!” 5 And a voice came from the Throne saying, “Praise our God, all you His slaves and those who fear Him, small and great!”

Introduction

It probably seems pretty shocking to modern sensibilities to have these words (that celebrate the destruction of Babylon) to be placed right before the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (which begins in verse 6). But the bride is after all marrying a Mighty Warrior who defeats all His and her enemies. This mighty warrior has been her defender. And the bride is eternally grateful and sings these songs of praise.

I. This rejoicing takes place in heaven

The first thing I want you to notice about this song of praise is that the rejoicing over God’s judgments takes place in heaven. Verse 1 says, “After these things I heard as it were the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven saying, “Hallelujah!” On earth we still struggle over God’s retributive judgments. And I suspect that part of the reason we struggle is that we are still infected by sin, and sin distorts our vision of the true nature of reality. When we get to heaven, we will see clearly that God’s ways are perfect, beautiful, just, and praiseworthy. But down here below even some Reformed and Reconstructionist exegetes have had a hard time agreeing with God’s judgments - even God’s judgments of the death penalty outlined in the Old Testament. They struggle with those things.

I don’t think those struggles are ultimately exegetical struggles; they are struggles to see the perfection of God’s character through the cataract-laden

eyes of our sinful flesh. I guarantee you that when those Reconstructionists get to heaven, they too will praise God with this joyful host. God's perfect and beautiful justice has never changed. Hebrews 2:2 says that every Old Testament crime corresponded with a "just penalty. The Greek word is μισθαποδοσία, and it clearly refers to criminal penalties that God instituted in the Old Testament. To say that those penalties have passed away or change implies a certain degree of injustice in God's Old Testament ways. And of course, that is exactly what the modern church thinks - that the Old Testament was too strict and harsh and thus unjust. Well, when people accuse the Old Testament of being too harsh and strict, I point them to Revelation. There is no difference whatsoever. The angels and saints in Revelation praise and worship God for exactly the same judgments that the Old Testament said were just. We need to align our thinking with God's thinking. And when you get to heaven, that will instantly be the case.

II. This rejoicing is loud (v. 1b)

Second, this rejoicing is loud. It was enthusiastic worship. Of course, it may have been loud in part because it was the voice of a great multitude. When I used to go to the PCA General Assembly, it gave me chills to hear 1200 elders belting out hymns and Psalms with gusto. You were immersed in the sound, and it made you think that this must be a tiny picture of the loud worship of millions of people in heaven. But since heaven is a pattern for our worship, it should encourage us to be enthusiastic as well - even when the subject matter is as heavy as the subject matter of their worship service. We have a tendency to think that worship has gone well when the subject matter is pleasant. But here is awesome worship of God because the people are enamored with God, even when God shows Himself to be a God of judgment. I guarantee you that heaven's worship will not change to meet the seeker-sensitive values of man. It is man who must be conformed to God's image and must learn to appreciate God's values, not vice versa. Here was loud enthusiastic worship of the God of all judgment.

III. This worship used the name of God - Yehowah (v. 1c)

The third thing I notice here is that this worship used the name of God. "Hallelujah!" is a Hebrew word that means, "Praise Jehovah," or as some pronounce it, "Praise Yehowah." While "Lord" is authorized by the New Testament as an occasional shortcut term that points to Yehowah, it shouldn't be the only term that we use. This verse is very clear that we are to

pronounce Yehowah's name.

Jews and some Christians superstitiously refuse to say God's name out loud. Sometimes they won't even write the non-name, God, writing instead, G_d. You've maybe seen that before in literature. But that superstition finds absolutely no support in Scripture. I did a count on my computer Bible, and the name Yehowah is written out 6,828 times in the Old Testament. In Genesis 12:8 and in over a hundred other passages God's people called on the name of Yehowah. While Exodus 20:7 warns us not to take the name of Yehowah in vain, Scripture commands ministers to minister in His name (Deut. 18:5,7) and to bless the congregation in His name (Deut. 10:8; 21:5). The members of the church are commanded to take oaths in His name (Deut. 6:13; 10:20), to declare the name Yehowah in Zion (Psalm 102:21), to bless His holy name (Psalm 103:1), and to call upon His name (Psalm 105:1), etc., etc., etc. The Bible has no shyness about using the name Yehowah.

It's the one fault I find in the new blue Psalter that we use - it reversed the practice of the older red Psalter of using the name Yehowah and now only uses the word "Lord" exclusively. It's the one negative. In other ways the blue Psalter is fantastic. But don't be shy about worshiping God with His holy name. He is honored when we love His name.

IV. What were they worshiping God for?

A. *Salvation*

But let's look next at what they were worshiping God for. I think this is instructive. They didn't just worship God for His love. That is an awesome attribute. They didn't just worship Him for His mercy. That too is wonderful, and I never tire of praising Yehowah for His daily mercies to us. It makes me want to say, "Hallelujah!" But verse 1 also says, "The salvation and power and glory of our God!" are three reasons why they were shouting Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah.

Barclay rightly says of these three things, "The salvation of God should awaken our gratitude; the glory of God should awaken our reverence; and the power of God ...should... awaken our trust. Gratitude, reverence, trust — these are the elements that make up real praise."¹ Let's look at each one.

Salvation that brings gratitude. How often do you thank and praise God for your salvation? He has saved us from an eternity in hell. If that does not

¹ William Barclay, *Revelation of John*, vol. 2, *The New Daily Study Bible* (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 190–191.

elicit gratitude, I don't know what would. But God continues to save us from sin - that's the part of salvation known as sanctification. And day by day He saves us from sickness, car accidents, and other disasters. And yes, the word for "salvation" in the Greek is used not just for eternal salvation and for sanctification, but also for health and daily provisions of food. James Utley says of this word, "It can refer to the OT concept of physical deliverance, but [also] probably relates to a total eternal salvation for the individual, the society, and the planet (cf. Rom. 8:18–25)."² Romans 8 (which he references) talks about the planet being redeemed and saved as the very physical creation gets restored in our future.

So in what way did AD 70 usher in a new appreciation for salvation? Wasn't it the cross that reverses history? Yes. But there is a transition period of forty years in which New Covenant and Old Covenant overlap. And there is a celebration point when the old is completely done away with. AD 70 is a critical pivot point in history. It is not as critical as Christ's death and resurrection, but it is still a pivotal date. Duncan McKenzie says,

Although the new covenant was instituted in AD 30 the old covenant wasn't totally dissolved until the AD 70 destruction of the Temple. During this transition time of AD 30 to AD 70 (the already/not yet of the kingdom), the old covenant was obsolete and fading away but not yet totally gone. As the writer of Hebrews notes: "He has made the first [covenant] obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:13).

There was something about AD 70 that ushered in the continuing application of salvation in a much broader way than it had been seen before. We saw in a previous sermon that God had cleansed heaven of all demons. That had never been true before. Demons no longer have access to heaven. Romans 16 says that God was about to crush Satan under the feet of the church - shortly. That too was new. Within fifteen years of it being written Satan was bound in the pit. Another thing that had been finalized forty years after Christ has gotten process started, was that Christ had now put away his former adulterous wife (Israel) and was about to institute the marriage feast of the New Covenant Church - a feast that would keep getting larger and larger as more and more of planet earth became converted.

AD 70 was the turning point that guaranteed the eventual conversion of the world that the next three chapters will be preoccupied with. And it is a salvation of every tribe and nation. It is a salvation of every principality and power on the earth. It is a salvation that will eventually extend to the resurrection of our bodies and the renovation of the earth. It is a salvation so

2 Robert James Utley, *Hope in Hard Times - The Final Curtain: Revelation*, vol. Volume 12, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2001), 126.

glorious and so comprehensive that it is stunning even to those who are already perfect in heaven. They see much more clearly than we do the enormity and scope of Christ's salvation. It makes Him praiseworthy.

B. Power

Second, they worship Him for His power. There is obviously power demonstrated in the judgments we have been looking at during the past few months. There is obviously power demonstrated when enemies like Saul got converted and when hatred was turned to love, rebellion was turned to worship. There is power demonstrated in God's plan for planet earth in the next few chapters. Nothing but God's infinite power could achieve what this book says it will achieve. And God's power awakens our trust to follow Him and to serve Him.

C. Glory

But they worship because of God's glory as well. To glorify God is to showcase all of His attributes and character. And His attributes and character are glorious. God's glory is not only shown through salvation of the elect; it is shown through His wrath and judgments. Without sinners to judge, who would have ever known that God even had the attribute of wrath? No one but God. Without sinners to save, who would have known that God had the attribute of mercy? We wouldn't have known what mercy was. Without sinners to challenge God, how would we have known the depth of God's love? So even the negative aspects of judgment showcase God's glory. And His glory elicits wonder and reverence.

D. Judgment

But the next reason it gives for the exuberance of these worshipers is God's true and just judgments of the whore. Verse 2 says, "Because His judgments are true and just, because He has judged the great whore who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and has avenged the blood of His slaves by her hand."

This brings us back to where we started - that those in heaven understand the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the exceeding holiness of God and that this mismatch must result in one of two things: either salvation or judgment.

Because of the truth and justice of His judgments (v. 2a)

The first phrase says, "Because His judgments are true and just." Many people today question the truth of God's penalties for crimes and His

penalties for sins. They also question the justice of what the Scriptures lay out. But if you reject the Bible's definition of justice, you have no rational basis for deciding what is just or what is true. Jesus said to God the Father, "Your Word is Truth." And at that time, the only revealed Word available was the Word of the Old Testament. It was true and it was just. Christians need to learn that today. Without the whole Bible defining truth and justice, our nation will only be governed by power and force.

According to the dictionary, the word for judgments (κρίσις) deals with one or more of four things: 1) the legal process of judging, 2) the legal basis for judging, 3) the court of judges that render judgment, or 4) the punishment or penalty of those judged as guilty.³ In other words, this is a passage that deals with the controversial side of theonomy, or God's law. Do the civil penalties and the church censures of the Old Testament continue to apply today? This passage would seem to indicate that they do. It doesn't say that some of God's judgments are true and just. It just gives a blanket endorsement of all God's judgments.

Let me give some sample Scriptures that say the same thing about each of the four dimensions of judgment that the dictionary gives. As to the process of judging, Jesus commanded His church in John 7:24, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." And in context, He referred them to the law of Moses for judging with righteous judgment on even the Sabbath question. The Pharisees had not been handling the law properly. So Jesus uses the Old Testament to correct the process of judgment. We speak of that process as the rules of jurisprudence - handling the law, the court, the witnesses, and everything else about judgment properly.

1 Timothy 1 is another similar passage. It lists various crimes of the Old Testament and said, "But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully." That implies that an unlawful process of applying the law is not good; that it will make a mess. He said, "But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully." The Pharisees violated due process in their handling of crimes just like Facebook judges today are violating due process even though they may have a good case in terms of law. Their process stinks and therefore their judgment is not good. Well, that's what Christ was accusing the Pharisees of. My latest blog on KayserCommentary.com shows how the

3 Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 686; Arndt gives the following definition: "legal process of judgment, judging, judgment... board of judges, court... administration of what is right and fair, right." William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 569. See also BDAG.

court that tried Jesus violated 15 of God's rules governing court process. Process is a very important part of justice and judgment. And it has never changed.

What about the legal basis of the judgment, or the law itself? Does the Old Testament law continue to be just and true? Yes it does. In Romans 7:12 Paul said, "Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." And in context he is referring to the Old Testament commandments that he had just quoted. Paul was not embarrassed by the Old Testament. He said that the Mosaic law as a whole was holy, just, and good. Matthew 5:17-19 says that till heaven and earth pass away, Christ was going to continue to uphold every detail of the law.

What about the courts of judges that render judgment? That's the third part of the definition. There is no just judgment if the proper courts are not used - and Facebook is not one of those courts. Has this definition of judgment changed? And the answer is "No." There were two courts with two quite separate jurisdictions in the Old Testament. The civil courts dealt with a very limited subset of laws called crimes. And the church courts dealt with another limited subset of disciplinable offenses. Some could lead to rebuke. Some could lead to suspension. And some could lead to the highest censure that the church could inflict - excommunication. Unfortunately, some churches think they can discipline for any and every sin. And some people think that if legitimate courts fail to give justice that they have to take justice into their own hands. But the way God set judgments up, if a crime or a disciplinable sin are not provable in a legit court of law using God's process of judgments, a guilty person can technically go free. Facebook courts don't like guilty people going free, so they lynch them. That's wrong. It's ignoring a central part of God's judgment and justice.

Let me briefly prove that the courts of the Old Testament continue to be the courts of today. As to church courts, passages like Jeremiah 3, Jeremiah 23, Ezekiel 34 called Old Testament elders "shepherds." Some were faithful shepherds and some were not. They were also called scribes, teachers, rulers, overseers, and judges just as the New Testament office of elder shares those names and functions. When they met together, they met in what was called a council, just as Jesus in Matthew 5:22 says that certain sins in the church can be in danger of being called before the council. And of course, the very term "elders" carries right over from the Old Testament. If you study this subject you will find that New Testament church courts are identical to the Mosaic synagogue courts set up in Exodus. They are identical.

But what about civil courts? Can they inflict judgment? Some people say No, I believe the Bible says, Yes. In Acts 25:11 Paul upheld the legitimate function of even an unbelieving civil court, but insisted that that even that court was bound by God's law. He said, "For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; [In other words, if he was truly guilty of spreading apostasy (as they claimed), he wouldn't fight it. Why? Because this was a legitimate court, and they were charging him with a Biblical crime. But he goes on to say,] but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar." He was using civil courts and treating them as legitimate to be used. And many other passages do the same thing.

The last dictionary definition of judgment is the penalty of those judged as guilty. Do the Old Testament criminal penalties continue to be true and just? Yes. Many passages affirm this. Hebrews 2:2 calls all the Old Testament civil penalties, "just penalties." They continue to be the definition of justice. To throw out God's definition of justice is to automatically embrace injustice. And that is what the vast majority of Christians today do. They throw out God's standards and embrace humanistic standards. This is a call to worship and adore God for His standards of judgment.

The saints in Revelation 19 worship God "Because His judgments are true and just." Justice is a term that is misused by socialists today to promote theft and redistribution of wealth. But justice can only be defined by God in His Word. And these saints worshiped God and adored God for that judgment and justice and truth. We need to do the same. With David we need to say, "Oh how I love your Law! It is my meditation all the day."

Because of who was judged (v. 2b)

Now, verse 2 goes on to give yet another reason for their praise of God. They praise God because of who was judged. And I also find this hugely instructive for current debates. Verse 2 goes on to say, "because He has judged the great whore." Who was the great whore? We have already seen that it was Israel, God's adulterous former wife. This whole section has been pronouncing God's penalty upon her and His penalty for adultery is true and just.

Because of why she was judged (v. 2c)

And why was she judged? Two reasons: "because He has judged the great whore who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and has avenged the blood of His slaves by her hand." She was guilty of adultery and murder.

This implies that the Old Testament penalties for adultery and murder continue to be true and just. Life imprisonment is not a just penalty for murder. God never allowed for prisons.

Now, let's examine this specific execution because I think it is one of dozens of verses in the New Testament that at least hint at the fact that Joel McDurmon's book, *The Bounds of Love*, is wrong. More than one commentator mentions the burning of the whore's corpse has the Old Testament background of the burning of a priest's daughter. The only crime in the whole Bible that resulted in the burning of a body was when a priest's daughter committed adultery and became a whore. So this is a great passage for testing out McDurmon's thesis that such laws have passed away. Chilton said,

The prophets who spoke of Jerusalem as the Whore had said that just as a priest's daughter who became a harlot was to be "burned with fire" (Lev. 21:9), so God would use Jerusalem's former "lovers," the heathen nations, to destroy her and burn her to the ground (Jer. 4:11-13, 30-31; Ezek. 16:37-41; 23:22, 25-30)⁴

Well, just as the law's criminal penalty was applied by Jeremiah to Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day, chapters 17-19 apply the same criminal law to Jerusalem in AD 70. McKenzie's commentary says,

Revelation 17:16 says that the harlot would be stripped naked and burned with fire. Burning was the sentence of death prescribed in Leviticus for a harlot who was the daughter of a priest: "The daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by playing the harlot, she profanes her father. She shall be burned with fire" (Leviticus 21:9). The punishment of harlot Babylon is burning because she was of the priestly class and had profaned her heavenly Father. The Temple was destroyed by fire in the holocaust of AD 70.⁵

That would not be a possible penalty unless Old Testament criminal laws for sexual crimes continued to be a standard for justice after the cross. And people might say, "Yeah, but she was also guilty of murder. Maybe the death was for murder." The problem with that logic is that murderers never had their dead bodies burned. That was reserved for one specific sexual crime.

Joel McDurmon claims that the death penalty for sexual and most other crimes was ceremonial and passed away once the Messiah came. If he had instead argued that it was a maximum penalty and not a mandated penalty, I would agree. That was always the case in the Old Testament as the book of Hosea and other books prove. But he doesn't say that. He says it would no longer be just to apply it.

4 David Chilton, [Days of Vengeance](#)cb74b002-2cb6-4ddb-8ca1-8fe422cd3448, (Forth Worth: Dominion Press, 1987), p. 439.

5 Duncan McKenzie. [The Antichrist and the Second Coming: Volume II: The Book of Revelation](#)cb74b002-2cb6-4ddb-8ca1-8fe422cd3448 (Xulon Press, 2012), p. 239.

Now, I will grant you that this is using that crime symbolically to refer to spiritual adultery, and that the earthly capital penalty symbolizes how deserving of eternal punishment the sin is, but so is the death penalty for murder. You will notice that she is being convicted of two crimes - adultery and murder. The point is that just as those two crimes had to be just earthly penalties to symbolize the spiritual in Jeremiah's time, they have to continue to be crimes to do so in AD 70. And of course, there are many New Testament passages that uphold the death penalties for crimes that Joel McDurmon say have passed away. In his book, [The Bounds of Love](#), McDurmon claims that the Old Testament civil laws against sodomy and adultery are no longer binding, but 1 Timothy 1:8-11 insists that the laws against fornicators and sodomites continue to be good laws. The only laws against Sodomites in the Old Testament were criminal laws with penalties attached. 1 Timothy 1 is upholding criminal laws for sexual crimes.

Sometime I hope to write a thorough critique of Joel McDurmon's book, but this passage at least gives a hint that adultery should be taken seriously. Many humans find that offensive, but those in this chapter whose hearts are close to God say, "Halleljah." They come into agreement with God's legal system and judgment.

V. There is even praise for hell (v. 3-5)

But the last thing that we find God being worshiped for is probably the most offensive thing imaginable to modern man. It is far more offensive than the Old Testament capital crimes. It is apostate Israel burning for all eternity after they have been punished in history for their crimes. The punishment God inflicted on earth was bad enough, but to inflict eternal punishment in hell seems horrifying on some levels. Yet we find people praising God and worshiping God for precisely this doctrine of hell.

A. An angel praises God for hell (v. 3)

Look at verse 3. "And a second voice said, "Hallelujah! Her smoke goes up for ever and ever!" That's like saying, "Praise the Lord! She will burn forever." It's a clear reference to hell, because only hell's smoke goes up for ever and ever. No earthly fire goes up for ever and ever. This is an eternal punishment that happens after the earthly historical punishment.

I will admit that I am not as spiritual as the people described in this passage, and I judge my lack of spirituality by the fact that I don't get as enthusiastic as this angel did. Maybe if the Sadducees had arrested my family, confiscated all my goods, and killed my wife and relatives, I might have a

bit more rejoicing over the fact that the Sadducees were right then burning in hell. But this spells the difference between a perfect angel and us. He can see things much more clearly because his judgment lines up with God's judgment; his judgment squares perfectly with God's Word. But that we are called by God to at least try to enter to some degree into this praise of our holy and just God can be seen by the last two points:

B. The leaders of the church and other angelic beings agree and praise God for hell (v. 4)

First, the leaders of the church and other angelic beings agree with this voice and they too praise God that there is a hell. I believe their ability to do what the angel did shows the degree of their spirituality and closeness to God. Verse 4 says, "And the twenty-four elders and the four living beings fell down and worshiped God, who sits on the throne, saying, "Amen, Hallelujah!" "Amen" means, "I agree." Actually, it is stronger than I agree. The dictionary defines it as a "strong affirmation of what is stated." Maybe, "I totally agree" would be closer to the meaning. They were in total agreement with the angel who had just said, "Hallelujah! Her smoke goes up for ever and ever!"

And that their hearts were in this praise can be seen by the fact that they fell down and worshiped God while saying it. They worshiped God that He does not let people get away with the horrible apostasy and rebellion that the Sadducees had been engaging in. Our God is a God who brings justice. He doesn't let the Stalins and the Hitlers go unpunished. He does not let apostates who knew the truth and then abandoned it to go unpunished.

C. All believers in heaven and earth are commanded to praise God for the same reasons (v. 5)

But verse 5 goes one step further and actually commands all believers in heaven and earth to praise God for the same reasons. It says, “And a voice came from the Throne saying, “”Praise our God, all you His slaves and those who fear Him, small and great!”” Maybe those of us on earth must be commanded to praise God for hell because we might otherwise be reluctant to do so. But the very command shows that it is good to praise God for hell. And notice that he doesn’t just command older people to do so. He commands both small and great. This is a maturity goal for all believers - to be able to worship God for exactly who He is. We are immature if we only worship God for what our sinful hearts want Him to be. We are mature when we worship God for who He actually is. And part of His being that must be admired is His retributive justice that punishes people in hell for all eternity.

VI. Good reasons to praise and worship God for His judgments and for hell

When I find it difficult to obey a given command of God from the heart, I begin to meditate on the Scriptural reasons why it is good. Why is hell a praiseworthy thing? I’ve already given you some hints of why this is the case, but let me end with just a few more reasons why such worship and praise is good for us. I won’t tell you all the reasons why, but let me point you in the right direction.

A. It gives us God’s view of sin

First, it reminds us that sin is far more heinous and hateful to God than we can possibly imagine. We tend to treat sin lightly and we tend to think that God treats our sins lightly. Meditating on hell makes us realize that’s not the case. It makes us treat sin much more seriously. We tend to be only horrified by the punishment of sin. But God is more horrified by the presence and nature of sin. Worshiping God for hell is an incredible reminder of how much we really ought to hate our sins. Don’t ever trifle with sin. It sent Jesus to suffer God’s judgment so that you could be saved, and it is certainly worthy of hell if you don’t trust in Jesus. You church members will burn in the flames of hell for all eternity if you do not repent of your sins and put your faith in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation. Flee to the cross while you still have opportunity. It is freely offered to you, and if you harden yourselves you may cross the line where repentance eventually becomes impossible. Flee to the cross.

B. It destroys the myth of the self-esteem movement

The second reason why hell is praiseworthy is that it reminds us that without Christ we are nothing. Hell destroys the lie of the self-worth and the self-esteem movement. In fact, I cannot think of a better way to disprove that heretical movement. The more we meditate on the fact that we are worthy of hell, the less we will be enamored with ourselves and the more we will find Father, Son, and Holy Spirit awesome and praiseworthy. Our significance is in Jesus, not in how wonderful we are. A.W. Pink pulled out dozens of metaphors by which God describes sinners, and those metaphors are not pretty. God likens us to scum, a filthy rag, a menstrual rag, an oozing pus-filled sore. Some of you are troubled by how badly people think about you; and you realize you have done some bad things. Well, cheer up! You are far worse than they realize and are far worse than you can possibly imagine. Throw away the idol of self-worth. It is useless. God does not want a self-esteem movement. He wants us to fix our eyes on Jesus who is the Author and Finisher of our faith. The fact that we deserve hell removes any ground for self-worth and self-esteem. Look to Christ, not yourself.

C. It develops fear of God that trembles at His Word

Third, when we consider the fact that hell was created by God (Matt. 25:41; John 1:3), exists by His will (Rom. 9:22), and shows forth His justice, wrath, power, and hatred for sin, it makes us learn to fear God and to tremble at His Word. This is not a God whom we can trifle with. There is too little fear of God in even this church. Hebrews 12:28-29 says, “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.” The fire of God’s justice ought to produce reverence and godly fear in God’s children. It ought to make us reverence His name and to quit trivially abusing His name with euphemisms or even outright blasphemy. As one blogger put it,

If the fear of God is the beginning of all wisdom (and it is) then losing the fear of God in any generation will only be disastrous. Faithful preaching on the doctrine of eternal punishment will rescue the pathetic state of the church from our Santa-god.⁶

D. It makes us cling to grace and to Christ tighter

But that same verse gives a fourth reason why hell is praiseworthy. It makes us cling to grace much tighter, and to cling to Christ much tighter. It makes us appreciate the Gospel that much more. One theologian said, Here’s a reality we sometimes miss: God would have been praised by the heavenly host

⁶ <https://www.crosswalk.com/blogs/paul-tautges/hell-glorifies-god.html>

for all eternity if he would have damned every single member of the human race to hell, because, in so doing, he would be the God of justice, the One who punishes sin. If God had simply given us what we deserved, the angels would have glorified him forever and ever... It is seeing the wrath that we deserved, the wrath he could have given us, that causes us to marvel at the mercy we've received. Understanding hell for what it is helps us to understand our salvation for what it is, unmerited and unnecessary grace from a God who is both just and merciful.⁷

God would have been perfectly just in not giving any of us salvation. He didn't give a single angel that fell with Satan the opportunity of salvation. Not a one. And He didn't owe them a chance to be saved. Scripture divides angels up into the elect and the reprobate, and He never offered salvation to one of the reprobate. He could have done the same for us and been perfectly just. That much is crystal clear from Scripture. And the angels would be praising God for us burning in hell if that had been the case. But Hallelujah! He chose to save us. It was sovereign unmerited electing grace that saw nothing good in us that would have moved him to save us. It is all of God's goodness, kindness, mercy, and grace and has nothing to do with our deserving of it. No wonder these people worship our great and awesome God! He is so generous! He is so kind! Hell teaches us to value the Gospel.

E. It shows that His victory is comprehensive, not partial

Fifth, a true understanding of hell shows us that God's victory is comprehensive. As the same theologian said, Hell doesn't exist because God loses; hell exists because God wins over sin. If hell is the anti-heaven, then you have a realm that stands outside God's domain, an area of creation that his kingdom has not conquered. But hell is not the anti-heaven. While the new heaven and earth are a place where God's grace is displayed, hell is a place meant to display his justice. Both are praiseworthy, and both celebrate God's victory over sin and death. In heaven, that death is defeated in the cross of Christ. In hell, that death is defeated in eternal punishment (Revelation 20.13). Hell, like heaven, declares God's victory, they just declare it in different ways.

F. It shows that injustice on earth will be fixed in eternity (see Psalm 73)

And if you study various books on the doctrine of hell, you will find that meditating on hell has many benefits. According to Psalm 73, the doctrine of hell helped Asaph to resolve the frustration of seeing evil men get away with their evil in history. In eternity all wrongs will be righted. Stalin, who murdered millions, will not get away with his atrocities. Rapists who have tortured and brutalized women and children will be punished for all eternity

⁷ <https://baptist21.com/blog-posts/2015/afterlife-matters-common-misconceptions-of-life-after-death-and-why-they-matter-part-three/>

if they have not trusted Christ to bear that punishment for them. And people like Jonah think, “It’s not fair for such torturing rapists to be saved!” Let me tell you something - it is not fair that any of us get saved - except that Jesus and His sufferings as our substitute made it just.

G. A quick summary of several other benefits

I won’t take the time to tell you all the benefits of worshiping God for hell, but let me end by quoting a few more summary statements by James Hamilton, a professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He says, In sum, hell glorifies God because

- it shows that he keeps his word; • it shows his infinite worth, lasting forever; • it demonstrates his power to subdue all who rebel against him; • it shows how unspeakably merciful he is to those who trust him; • it upholds the reality of love by visiting justice against those who reject God, who is love; • it vindicates all who suffered to hear or proclaim the truth of God’s word; • and it shows the enormity of what Jesus accomplished when he died to save all who would trust him from the hell they deserved. If there were no hell, there would be no need for the cross.⁸

If you struggle to worship and to praise this God of the book of Revelation, I would call you to get converted and to pray that God would give you a new heart - a heart that shares His vision, His hatred for sin, His love for righteousness and justice. I think this passage is a great test of your spiritual state. Matthew 7:21 says that there will be many people surprised to be in hell who were part of the church. But they weren’t regenerate. If your heart rebels against this passage and completely refuses to praise and worship Him, it may be that you are either unregenerate or that your heart is still clouded by demonic attachments. If you can praise and worship Him for His judgments, then it is a sign that you are probably regenerate and are beginning to be conformed into His image from glory to glory.

But for sure, see this doctrine in light of the Gospel. Jesus said in John 6:37, “the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” If you burn in hell after you die you will never be able to use the excuse that you did not have the opportunity to escape from hell. Christ’s invitation is to come to Him, and the one who cannot lie promises, “the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” Flee to Jesus and trust Him alone for your salvation. He is your only security from the wrath of God. Amen.

8 Jim Hamilton at <https://www.9marks.org/article/how-does-hell-glorify-god/>