

FAITH CHAT

with James & John

Will God Ever Empty Or Annihilate Hell?

Know This...

People say a merciful God wouldn't make hell eternal. But, it's because our God is a God of justice and mercy that hell must be eternal. Catholic theologian and Biblical scholar Dr. Scott Hahn sums up what the Church has always taught: "We choose hell; God does not impose it." If God ever emptied hell of the damned and brought them into heaven; or, if He annihilated all the evil spirits and souls there, God would reject His own gift of free will and force His desire on them. Jesus, the Church, and the Bible say God will never empty or annihilate hell.



James: Yes "[God] desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth;" 1 Tim 2:4 but He does not force anyone to act against his or her will. We freely choose to sin.



John: God's justice demands that the sinner receive a proportionate punishment for rejecting His mercy.

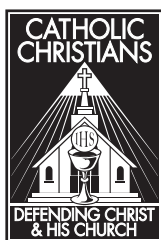
James: The damned hate God because he called them to repent and turn away from sin. Their hatred of God leads them to hate others and, ultimately, themselves.

John: It's irrational for Christians to think and hope that God will disregard his gift of free will and let all fallen angels and human beings enter heaven.

James: If God emptied or annihilated hell, doing so would allow the condemned, including Satan, to claim victory over Him and His plan of salvation.

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Jesus says hell is eternal. "If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter into life maimed or crippled than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into eternal fire." Mt 18:8 "And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. Better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna, where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'" Mk 9:47-48 "Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." Mt 26:24 Though no one knows Judas' fate for sure, it would only have been better for Judas to not have been born if he was destined for hell with no hope of leaving there.

The Church says hell is eternal. "God predestines no one to go to hell; for this, a willful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and persistence in it until the end." CCC 1037 In 150 A.D., St. Justin Martyr said, "We believe that they who live wickedly and do not repent will be punished in the everlasting fire... He will cloth the worthy in immortality; but the wicked, clothed in eternal sensibility, He will commit to the eternal fire, along with the evil demons." St. Ignatius of Antioch in 107 A.D. and St. Theophilus in 181 A.D. also spoke of the unquenchable, everlasting fire of hell.



PAPA SAYS

"'Eternal damnation', therefore, is not attributed to God's initiative because in his merciful love he can only desire the salvation of the beings he created. In reality, it is the creature who closes himself to His love. Damnation consists precisely in definitive separation from God, freely chosen by the human person and confirmed with death that seals his choice for ever. God's judgment ratifies this state." Pope John Paul II



The Bible says hell is eternal. "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some shall live forever; others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace." Dan 12:2 "The Devil who had led them astray was thrown into the pool of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." Rev 20:10

Almighty God, You desire the salvation of all angelic and human beings; yet, I know that You will not force any of us to respond positively to Your desire. I so want to do your will and spend eternity with You. I pray that I will never reject Your justice, wisdom, mercy, or love. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

