

## 2 PETER 2—A CSI FOR FALSE TEACHERS

2 Peter 2:1-9. Hell's Prep. Peter is warning about false teachers among the flock. They secretly introduce heresies—even denying the Lord Himself. Their stories are made up; their condemnation is imminent.



After all, if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but prepared hell for their punishment, He will protect the righteous and punish the guilty. Noah and Lot found that to be true. Bottom-line? The Lord God knows how to rescue godly men from the trials, and to detain the unrighteous for judgment.

### 2 PETER 2:1-10

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. <sup>2</sup>Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. <sup>3</sup>In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

<sup>4</sup>For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; <sup>5</sup>if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; <sup>6</sup>if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; <sup>7</sup>and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men <sup>8</sup>(for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)—<sup>9</sup>if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. <sup>10</sup>This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority.

2 Peter 2:10-19—Peter says the above is especially true for those who follow the corrupt desires of their sinful nature, yes, and those who despise authority. They're bold, arrogant and not afraid to slander heavenly beings. Even angels (who are stronger and more powerful than these idiots) do not slander in the presence of the Lord. They blaspheme in matters they don't even understand. Like brute beasts, controlled by instinct, whose only function is to be caught and destroyed, they will perish also.

- Q How are following one's own corrupt desires and despising authority connected?
- Q Why is it useful to be bold and arrogant when slandering that which is holy?
- Q Should those who blaspheme be held accountable, given they are talking about "matters they do not understand?"
- Q Why is blasphemy such a great sin? [A rationale for "great?" See John 19:11]
- Q What distinguishes the "brute beast" from the "human?"

Their punishment will be rendered according to the harm they have done. They find pleasure in carousing in broad daylight (they don't even keep their depravity a secret). They are blemishes and blots on humanity as they revel in their pleasures among you. Full of adulterous motives, they never stop sinning—they seduce the weak (molesting children and women). They are experts at greed—what an accursed breed of people! They've left the straight way and wandered off like Balaam who loved the rewards of wickedness. It took an ass to straighten him out—normally a beast without speech, Balaam was stopped from being so foolish as to challenge the Lord God Jehovah.

- Q What is the harm these "brute beasts" have done?
- Q What does it mean to be an expert at greed?
- Q What are the rewards of wickedness?
- Q Why are they "accursed?"

## 2 PETER 2:10-19

This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings; <sup>11</sup>yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord. <sup>12</sup>But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.

<sup>13</sup>They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you. <sup>14</sup>With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed—an accursed brood! <sup>15</sup>They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. <sup>16</sup>But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—a beast without speech—who spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

<sup>17</sup>These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. <sup>18</sup>For their mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. <sup>19</sup>They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

You see these false teachers are springs without water, mere mists driven by a storm. The blackest of darkness is reserved for them. They speak empty, boastful ideas, and then entice people who are just barely escaping from those who live in error. They appeal to lustful desires of human nature. Sure they promise freedom, even while being slaves to depravity themselves. Remember, a person is a slave to whatever has mastered him (2 Peter 2:19).

- Q What are some attributes of false teacher teachers? What makes their words and ideas empty, yet powerfully seductive for the newly saved?
- Q What is the “freedom” they promise to those “who are just escaping from those who live in error?”
- Q Who and/or what is the master of those enslaved to depravity?

1 Peter 2:20-22—If these who escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ, and are now entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off than they were in the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and turn their backs on God’s sacred commands. A dog returns to its vomit; a pig returns to its mud wallow. And so have they.

#### 2 PETER 2:20-22

If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. <sup>21</sup>It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. <sup>22</sup>Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog returns to its vomit,” [Proverbs 26:11] and, “A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.”

- Q What makes the escaper of corruption so much worse when turning their backs to the Lord God?
- Q Why do we return to the vomit from which we once escaped?

#### OVERALL APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

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- Q To what extent do Christians weep with concern for the enemies of Christ? Why aren’t we more concerned about them?
- Q What is the power that enables Christ to put everything under His control? How did He achieve that power?
- Q Why is blasphemy such a serious sin? [A rationale for “serious?” See John 19:11]

### CONTEXTUAL CONCERNS

We need to provide complete, yet efficient, descriptions of context. Remember, “context” is not just the verses before and after, nor just the book from which verses are taken, but often the entire Bible may be the correct contextual focus. Such is the case with studying 2 Peter 3. We will also look at Paul’s treatment of the “last days” in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-5.

2 Peter 3:1-7—Context: Peter is concerned about false teaching regarding “last days.” Apparently the early church expected my Christ to return any moment—not a bad perspective given His teaching. But scoffers were making fun of Christians—“Where’s the second coming?” Peter reminds them that God does what He says He will do; he uses the example of Noah’s flood as an example.

2 Peter 3:8-9—Even though God is a God of mercy, He is a God of justice: there is a day of judgment and destruction for the ungodly. Our God is an infinite God—time has little meaning to Him. He will take as much “time,” or as little, as He sees fit. And, He keeps His promises; He is neither slow nor unfaithful in His promises—to do what is right, as well as what is just. Even with our depravity, our God is patient—He wants no one to perish—He wants everyone to turn from their wickedness. Here are just a few of the questions Peter’s writing presents...

- Q Will God destroy or eternally punish the ungodly? Annihilation vs. Eternal Punishment (see Appendix A). Big rabbit-trail, but be ready to discuss.
- Q Which is pre-ordained, hell for the ungodly, or heaven for the godly? Who determines who is pre-ordained for hell or heaven? Finally, what is the human being’s role in this foreordained will of God?
- Q Why is God patient with our sin: the holocaust, Cambodia, 9/11, pornography, divorce, unthankfulness, idolatry?
- Q Why is time not an issue, or even a relevant concept for God? How does that impact us as His worshippers?
- Q What does it mean “to come to repentance?” If we fail to repent, are we countermanding God’s will? If we do repent, is God forced to save us? Can we repent for the wrong reasons? If so what are the right reasons?

1 Thessalonians 4:1-5—Paul not only provides instructions for living a Godly life, but why we are do so. We are to be set apart, and demonstrate that consecration by our sexual lives, our self-discipline, and about what we are passionate. It is the heathen knows not God and acts in unbridled passion, idolatrous self-worship, and spiritually ignorant sexuality. Here are some key issues Paul’s writing presents...

- Q Is it righteous to live a Godly life to avoid the consequences of sin (e.g., STD’s, divorce, or obesity, debt)?
- Q Is it righteous to live a Godly life to enter heaven on judgment day?
- Q Is it righteous to live a Godly life to do what God commands, even if we don’t want to?
- Q Then, what is the value, what is the purpose, why should we live a Godly life?

- Q Why is righteousness a process for the saved believer and not a static phenomenon?
- Q Which is the best indicator that a believer is sanctified: avoiding sexual immorality, self-discipline, or selective passion? How do each sanctify (approach a higher plane of righteousness)?
- Q If we have no God-based sexual discipline, self-discipline, or passion discernment, why are we “like the heathen?” Why does the heathen (the ungodly person) displease God (see verse 1)? Or, stated differently, why does ungodliness displease God?

## TEXTUAL ISSUES — 2 PETER 3

2 Peter 3:1-9. *Remember*. As I have written before, I write to you now to encourage you, to stir you up, to stimulate you. To do what? Remember: think purely, cleanly, and sincerely. [εἰλικρινῆς, judged by sunlight, unalloyed, pure 1506; from shining of the sun, “crystal-clear.”]

Remember the words of the prophets and command of the Lord & Savior via your apostles—to wit:

Above all, in these last days, remember in these last days, scoffers will come, ridiculing and seeking others to follow their own evil aspirations. They’ll ask—just when is He going to show up, anyhow? Where was your God at 9/11? When 250,000 died in that tsunami in southeast Asia? When your spouse died? And when your yet to be born child died? Just where was your God?

From the very beginning, everything, everything, everything goes on as it has since the beginning. But, the scoffers find it very useful to forget that by God’s very word the heavens and earth were created—formed out of water and by water. By water the world at that time was flooded [κατακλυσθεῖς, flood over, destroyed, 2626; from κλυδων, rough water] and destroyed [απαλετο; as in none should *perish*, 622]. By the same word of God, the current heavens and earth are preserved until destruction on the day of judgment and the destruction of ungodly people.

### 2 PETER 3:1-9

Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. <sup>2</sup>I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

<sup>3</sup>First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.

<sup>4</sup>They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” <sup>5</sup>But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. <sup>6</sup>By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. <sup>7</sup>By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

<sup>8</sup>But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Bottom line—don't forget, dear friends: With the Lord God a day is meaningless—He can view a day like we would a thousand years, or a thousand years like we view a day. The Lord God keeps His promises, unlike some. He is patient, for He wants no one to perish [ἀπολέσθαι]—He wants *everyone* to change their inner mind; yes, change who they truly, intrinsically, inwardly are [μετανοία, metanoia, 3341].

Q Why did Peter write to encourage us to “wholesome thinking?” Just what is “wholesome?”

Q Why will people in these last days ridicule believers? What cultural elements contribute to this ridicule?

1. McDonalds—I want it now.
2. Thanatopsis syndrome—thanatopic atheism, until the 20's, and then thanatopic agnosticism dominates. Sometimes when death is imminent, people become thanatopically obsessed.
3. Toleration of 6 to 25% credit card interest rates:

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Q Who will destroy the heavens and the earth as we know it today? How? So what?

Q Why is it theologically pragmatic to recall the Lord God's view of time?

Q Why has He preserved the current heavens and earth (verse 7)? What does He *want* people to do? [μετανοία, me-tan' oia, 3341; repent, change the mind].

2 Peter 3:10-18. *Reasons why to remember*. Even though He wishes none should perish, He will nonetheless exact justice suddenly, like a thief [κλεπτης]. Everything will be laid bare.

So what? What kind of people should you seek to be? You ought to live holy lives, Godly lives. Look forward to God's day; cherish its coming. Sure, that day will bring destruction, but His promise for a new heaven, a new earth, a home for righteousness, for justice.

So then? Since you're looking forward to this home, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and most importantly, reconciled to, by, and with Him. Our Lord's patience with us means salvation. Paul talked about it as he shared the wisdom God gave him. Just like other Scriptures, people have distorted his sometimes hard to understand teaching. But they distort to their own destruction [they "cut themselves off"].

Therefore—since you know [προγινώσκοντες, 4267] about this destruction, stand at post. You need not be carried away by people who teach principles don't matter. You can fall from your secure position. **BUT, grow** in the charis (gift) and gnosei (knowledge) of our Lord, our Savior, Jesus the Christ. May *He* get the credit, get the glory, for our salvation now and in the future.

- Q Why will the day of the Lord come suddenly, like a thief?
- Q Why are we to live holy, godly lives?
- Q What will this new heaven and new earth look like? Be like?
- Q What characterizes our efforts? Spotless, blameless, and reconciled to, with, and by Him.
- Q What can mess up your secure position as you live during the last days? For example?
- Q In what are we to "grow?" How do this growth affect our position when the day of the Lord comes?

## 2 PETER 3:10-18

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare [some manuscripts read *be burned up*].

<sup>11</sup>Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives <sup>12</sup>as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming [or *as you wait eagerly for the day of God to come*]. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. <sup>13</sup>But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

<sup>14</sup>So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. <sup>15</sup>Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. <sup>16</sup>He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

<sup>17</sup>Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. <sup>18</sup>But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

## PAUL'S VIEW

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 & 5:15-22. *Live the Life; Do the Deeds.* Here's the bottom line, family—live in order to please the Lord God Almighty. Do this more and more; you know what to do; do it by the authority of the Lord Jesus Himself.

God's purposes you to be sanctified, set apart so avoid sexual immorality. Control your own body in a holy and honorable way, not consumed with lust like the unbeliever who doesn't even know God. Never, never, never wrong your brother/sister and take advantage of him/her. People will be punished for all such sins—you've been warned before, and now again.

God did not call you out to be impure, but to live a holy life. Don't reject this instruction, because to do so is rejecting the Lord God Himself.

As to interpersonal relations, make sure nobody pays back wrong for wrong; try always to be kind to each other within the family and to everyone else for that matter. Be joyful, always; pray, continually; be thankful, in all circumstances—this is what the Lord God intends for you to be εν Christ Jesus. Don't put water on Holy Spirit's fire within you. Contempt for Scripture is unacceptable. Test everything, and hold on to that which is good. Avoid every kind of evil.

- Q Why is "how we live" important to the life of a believer? Are we talking salvation, sanctification and/or glorification?
- Q Why was sexual immorality a problem back then? Now? Why is such behavior and attitude to be controlled so earnestly?
- Q When we do not live a "holy life," who are we rejecting? So?
- Q What is the shortest verse in the Bible? (1 Thessalonians 5:17—ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε, two words, 22 characters; John 11:35 , Ἐδάκρυσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, three words, 16 characters)
- Q Why would Paul urge us to pray continually?
- Q With which of Paul's nuggets for living a great life do you have the most trouble?

### 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-8 & 5:15-22

Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. <sup>2</sup>For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>3</sup>It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; <sup>4</sup>that each of you should learn to control his own body [or *learn to live with his own wife*; or *learn to acquire a wife*] in a way that is holy and honorable, <sup>5</sup>not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; <sup>6</sup>and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. <sup>7</sup>For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. <sup>8</sup>Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

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<sup>15</sup>Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.

<sup>16</sup>Be joyful always; <sup>17</sup>pray continually; <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

<sup>19</sup>Do not put out the Spirit's fire; <sup>20</sup>do not treat prophecies with contempt. <sup>21</sup>Test everything. Hold on to the good.

<sup>22</sup>Avoid every kind of evil.

God the Father consistently proclaims His love via the resurrected Son and daily companion, Holy Spirit. His love is the ultimately profound enigma, since hell satisfies His wrath regarding our sin. This enigma has influenced theologians from Justin Martyr<sup>1</sup> to Wesley<sup>2</sup> to modern Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other individuals (e.g., John Stott<sup>3</sup>) to propose "annihilationism" as a solution to the problem: the *eternality* of hell. To wit, how could a loving God be so full of wrath? Stott summarizes well the angst behind the issue and why Christians are concerned:

"Emotionally, I find the concept [consciously aware torment] intolerable and do not understand how people can live with it without either cauterising [*sic*] their feelings or cracking under the strain. But our emotions are a fluctuating, unreliable guide to truth and must not be exalted to the place of supreme authority in determining it . . . my question must be—and is—not what does my heart tell me, but what does God's word say?" [Nonetheless] "... the ultimate annihilation of the wicked should at least be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment."

Conditional torment is a very useful idea, for example, for it allows liberal wings of the "emerging" and "emergent" church to "resolve" that eons-old paradox regarding God. Specifically, how could a loving God (e.g., the Creator) also be a wrathful God (e.g., Jehovah wars and/or Hell)? A new narrative has evolved to resolve the paradox—"annihilationism." Since the annihilationism construct is very *useful* theologically and psychologically, special Scriptural, logical, and sociological scrutiny should be marshaled.

Based on Scripture, it is clear Jesus preached that the punishment for evil doers will be eternal.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, His use of other language suggests annihilation.<sup>5</sup> While Grudem argues that Scripture "does indeed teach the eternal conscious punishment of the wicked," his argument is based on what he interprets as the "forcefulness of the passages."<sup>6</sup> I find his "forceful" hypothesis problematic. For example, in one instance Jesus is quoted as saying there will be "*eternal* fire" for the condemned, yet elsewhere He says we should "fear the One who can *destroy* both soul and body in hell."

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<sup>1</sup>*Dialogue with Trypho*, Chapter 5, says, "But I do not say, indeed, that all souls die; for that were truly a piece of good fortune to the evil. What then? The souls of the pious remain in a better place, while those of the unjust and wicked are in a worse, waiting for the time of judgment. Thus some which have appeared worthy of God never die; but others are punished so long as God wills them to exist and to be punished."

<sup>2</sup>In Wesley's sermon entitled *Free Grace* given in England in the 1740's, he said regarding hell and those predestined to it, "Accordingly, they are born for this—to be destroyed body and soul in hell."

<sup>3</sup>David L. Edwards and John Stott, *Essentials* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988), 313-320.

<sup>4</sup>Matthew 18:8—"If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire" or see also Matthew 25:41—"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"

<sup>5</sup>Matthew 10:28—"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell" or see also Philippians 3:19-20a—"Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven . . ." or 2 Peter 3:6-7—"By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men."

<sup>6</sup>Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, England, 1994, page 1151.

Reliance on Scripture, when it is itself paradoxical, may be problematic. To wit, Scripture shows God, on the one hand, to be loving and merciful, yet on the other hand a purveyor of blood soaked justice (Revelation 19:13), and commander of earthly armies (Joshua 5:13-15). Similarly, God has an irrational streak, for on the one hand, He demands a holy people, a people free from sin; yet, He also provides an atoning sacrifice to make His naturally sinful people holy. If this atoning sacrifice were justifiable, then God would be rational; instead, He sacrificed Himself so that His creation can be eternally blessed with His presence. It is this latter “irrationality” that we humans love most—we call it “grace” and/or “mercy.” To expect God to be “irrationally” logical with His promise of eternal gift of mercy, but not eternal with His promise of eternal punishment—strains logical sensibilities.<sup>7</sup> I, for one, am glad that God is not “logical,” at least not by human standards.



Sociologically, we humans are not comfortable with the notion of sovereignty, and if there is one attribute of God that trumps all others, it is His sovereignty. In the western world, we historically constrained (e.g., the English) or eliminated (e.g., Americans) monarchical sovereignty—to the point that most monarchies now are figureheads with little power, much less civil sovereignty. Accordingly, we have trouble accepting sovereignty in general, and thus have difficulty understanding God’s sovereignty. So when God chooses to punish conscious individuals eternally, who are we to question God? And, similarly, if God chooses to destroy those who have suffered in hell, who are we to question God?

Theologically overall, we must remember that even an eternal hell fails to atone for our sinfulness. And, just as certainly, heaven is a far greater reward than what we sinners who are professing Christ actually deserve. God is sovereign; contrary to popular thought today, we are not.

For those of us who interpret God’s will in Scripture as: “bless ‘us’ eternally, but do not punish ‘them’ eternally,” what is our motive? Does God not have the right to punish eternally? And, for those who interpret Scripture to mean that God will punish “them” eternally and reward “us” eternally? Does God not have the right to destroy what is His? In the latter case, it appears we may want vengeance on all those who rejected Christ by insisting on “eternal” punishment rather than annihilation. To be sure, vengeance belongs to God—so does mercy. So, what is our motive as we question the eternity of hell? We humans are a curious lot.

<sup>7</sup>Jesus’ story of about the late coming workers is critical here. Compare & contrast Matthew 16:27, where variable rewards are identified to Matthew 20:1-15, where we find equal rewards for different amounts of work. The landowner in Matthew 20 it makes very clear that the money is his to do with as he sees fit. Therefore, God can choose to “destroy” by punishing eternally, or punish eternally without destroying. We humans are His to do with as **He** sees fit, period.