

Sin vs. Christ: Two Final Destinies

The Bible speaks about two things that every human being will eventually receive: a wage and a gift. A wage is something we earn, and a gift is something we cannot earn. Romans 6:23 says, “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” At the end of Scripture, Revelation 20 shows us the moment when those two destinies are revealed. Those whose names are written in the Book of Life receive eternal life, but those who remain under the wage of sin face what the Bible calls the second death in the lake of fire. When we place these passages together, we see that the doctrine of hell is not an isolated warning—it is the final outcome of sin that has never been forgiven.

At the Great White Throne, the wage that sin has been accumulating throughout a lifetime is finally paid in full. In that moment the question will not be how religious a person was, how moral they appeared, or how many good deeds they did. The only question will be whether their name is written in the Book of Life. Because if the wage of sin is not removed by Jesus Christ, it will one day be paid at the throne of God.

The Doctrine of Hell

There are two significant realities that are clear and unavoidable. The Bible:

1. Teaches that humanity is marching toward an inescapable moment of judgment.
2. Teaches that a life of unrepentant spiritual adultery results in unending torment.

These two Biblical teachings define the Doctrine of Hell, but why are so many churches uncomfortable in teaching them? Paul Tripp shares his theory, and I can certainly agree with him –

“We neither take the holiness of God seriously or the sinfulness of sin seriously. If we meditated on the stunning nature of the absolute perfection of God, and if we meditated on the dark, horrendous, heinous, ugliness of our sin, I’m deeply persuaded that we would have a different response to what the Bible says about hell and judgment.

What Does Scripture Say?

Three Principles

1. Moral Elasticity
2. Moral Specificity
3. Moral Verticality

Sin vs. Christ: Two Final Destinies

Moral Elasticity

First, let's define the terms: Morality are principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior.

In his article *Elastic Nature of Human Morality*, Nitin Kumar closes with this: "Despite our inclination to view morality in black-and-white terms, it exists in shades of gray, reflecting the complexities of ethical decision-making."

I completely disagree – The Bible is very clear with zero ambiguity.

According to Christ, there is no one neutral. There is no middle ground when it comes to our desires, our actions, or our words. Just as Christ described humanity as sheep on the right and goats on the left (with nothing in between) so our decisions fall into one of two categories. They either align with God's will and bring Him glory, or they oppose Him and reflect sin. Every choice we make carries moral weight. We live in a world defined by right and wrong, obedience and disobedience. There is no third category.

Jesus makes something unmistakably clear throughout Scripture and that is that there is no such thing as moral neutrality. There is no middle ground where a person can live spiritually uncommitted.

In Matthew 12:30 (NASB95) Jesus says,
"He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters."

According to Christ, every life falls on one side or the other. Every decision, every desire, every action moves us either toward God or away from Him.

Jesus also said in Matthew 7:13–14,

"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction... For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life."

Notice—two roads, two destinations. Not three.

Scripture says the same thing in Romans 6:16 (NASB95):

"You are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness."

Sin vs. Christ: Two Final Destinies

Every person serves one of two masters. Every life is moving toward one of two outcomes.

And that brings us to the sobering summary the Apostle Paul gives in Romans 6:23:

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

If the wages of sin is death, then justice demands a final accounting for sin. And that is exactly what Scripture reveals when we come to Revelation 20 and the Great White Throne Judgment, where death itself is cast into the Lake of Fire.

Category	Scripture
Two ways	Matthew 7:13–14
Two masters	Matthew 6:24
With Christ or against Him	Matthew 12:30
Sheep or goats	Matthew 25
Sin or righteousness	Romans 6
Faith or sin	Romans 14:23
Life or death	Romans 6:23
Light or darkness	John 3
Book of Life or Lake of Fire	Revelation 20

Moral Specificity

Because we live in a world defined by right and wrong, there must also be a true standard of measurement that defines what is right and what is wrong. Scripture never leaves room for moral relativism—the idea that each person can determine truth for themselves.

ASK: Are you a good person? What makes you good? What is the standard that defines what is *good*?

The Law of God Reveals the Standard

- **READ** Exodus 20:3-4; 7-8; 12; 13-17; Deuteronomy 4:1-2); God’s commandments define what is right and wrong.
- **READ** Psalm 19:7-11; The Law defines right, wrong, and righteousness.

The Words and Person of Christ of Christ Reveals the Standard

- **READ** John 14:6; Jesus embodies the standard
- **READ** John 12:48; Christ’s words define the standard by which all will be judged.

God Reveals His Standard in the Entirety of Scripture

Sin vs. Christ: Two Final Destinies

- **READ** 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Scripture is the objective, God-breathed metric for righteousness and sin.
- **READ** Psalm 119:105; God's Word shows the correct path—meaning it defines the wrong path as well.

Moral Verticality

Every moral choice we make in this life carries vertical consequences. No decision is merely horizontal. We never act in a way that affects only another person; everything we think, desire, say, and do is either an act of defiance against God or an act that honors Him. When someone lashes out at a spouse or cheats a coworker, the sin is not only committed against another human being—it is ultimately committed against God Himself.

Scripture captures this reality powerfully in Psalm 51:4 (NASB95), where David confesses:

“Against You, You only, I have sinned, And done what is evil in Your sight.”

David had grievously wronged both Uriah and Bathsheba, yet when he came before the Lord in repentance, he recognized the deeper reality: before any horizontal sin is addressed, there is first a vertical offense against God. His actions were not merely moral failures toward other people—they were acts of rebellion against the holy God.

In the end, the authority to define righteousness and sin belongs to only one: the Son of Man. Christ alone determines what is right and what is wrong, and He has revealed that standard to us through the Word of God.

“¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” ~Revelation 20:11-15

Sin vs. Christ: Two Final Destinies

Romans 6 Establishes the Two Final Destinies

Every person ultimately belongs to one of two masters.

“Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?” ~Romans 6:16 (NASB95)

Master	Present Condition	Final Outcome
Sin	Slavery to sin	Death
Christ	Slavery to righteousness	Eternal Life

This culminates in the most famous summary statement.

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” ~Romans 6:23

This verse establishes the legal verdict of sin. But the question becomes:

What does “death” ultimately mean?

Revelation 20 reveals the final judicial outcome of the death caused by sin.

¹⁴Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” ~Revelation 20:14–15

So the biblical progression becomes:

Stage	Description
Physical death	Result of sin in the present world
Judgement Seat (Bema)	A time of examination and reward for believers
Final judgment	Great White Throne
Second death	Eternal punishment in the lake of fire

1. Death according to Scripture Means Separation

Sin vs. Christ: Two Final Destinies

In the Bible, *death* rarely refers to annihilation or extinction of existence. Instead, it consistently refers to separation of things that were meant to be united.

There are three primary categories of death revealed in Scripture:

1. Physical Death – Separation of the body and soul

Physical death occurs when the immaterial part of a person separates from the physical body.

- James 2:26
“For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.”

At death:

- The body remains on earth
- The soul/spirit continues conscious existence

This is why Scripture describes believers as being *“absent from the body”* but *“home with the Lord.”* ~2 Corinthians 5:8

Physical death is therefore not extinction, but disunion.

2. Spiritual Death – Separation from God

Spiritual death is the condition of every person born into Adam.

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins...” ~Ephesians 2:1

Spiritually dead people:

- think
- speak
- reason
- rebel

They are not nonexistent. They are separated from the life of God.

- *“being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;”*
~Ephesians 4:18

Spiritual death is alienation from God’s life, holiness, and fellowship.

3. Eternal Death – Separation from God forever

The final form of death is what Scripture calls *“the second death”*.

Sin vs. Christ: Two Final Destinies

“Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.” ~Revelation 20:14–15

The second death is eternal separation from the presence of God’s favor and blessing, while still existing under His judgment.

Jesus describes it as:

- outer darkness (Matthew 8:12)
- eternal fire (Matthew 25:41)
- weeping and gnashing of teeth

If death meant extinction, the phrase “second death” would make no sense. One cannot be punished eternally if one ceases to exist.

2. This Definition Explains Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death...”

Paul is not merely saying humans will stop existing.

He is saying sin produces separation at multiple levels:

- Spiritual separation now
- Physical separation at death
- Eternal separation in the second death

Which is why the verse continues:

“...but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

If death is separation, then eternal life is restored union with God.

3. Why This Matters for the Doctrine of Hell

Understanding death as separation explains why hell must exist.

Sin separates humanity from a holy God.

If that separation is never reconciled through Christ, it becomes permanent.

That is what Revelation calls:

Sin vs. Christ: Two Final Destinies

“the second death.”

Not extinction.

Not annihilation.

Separation that never ends.

Death in Scripture never means the end of existence; it means the end of union. It is the separation of what God originally created to live together. Death is not the cessation of life—it is the separation from the source of life.

Therefore:

Romans 6:23 → Revelation 20:14

The *“death”* earned by sin ultimately culminates in the *“second death.”*

Why Are People Condemned?

Romans 6 also explains the *moral* basis of the judgment.

Remember, people are not neutral. They are enslaved to sin.

“²⁰For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.”

~Romans 6:20

Sin produces fruit.

“²¹Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.” ~Romans 6:21

This connects to Revelation 20:12.

“...and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” ~ Revelation 20:12

The works judged at the Great White Throne are the fruit of the slavery to sin described in Romans 6.

How Does Someone Escape the Great White Throne Judgment?

Romans 6 is not merely about condemnation. It explains deliverance from the reign of sin and death.

“⁴Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” ~Romans 6:4

Sin vs. Christ: Two Final Destinies

Those united with Christ:

- die with Christ
- rise with Christ
- are freed from sin's penalty.

“⁶for he who has died is freed from sin.”~Romans 6:7

This connects directly to the Book of Life in Revelation 20.

Those in Christ:

- are justified
- have eternal life
- are written in the Book of Life.

Therefore, they do not appear at the Great White Throne for condemnation.

The Complete Theological Chain

Step 1 — Sin earns death

Romans 6:23 — “The wages of sin is death.”

Step 2 — Death culminates in final judgment

Hebrews 9:27 — “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”

Step 3 — Judgment results in the second death

Revelation 20:14 — “This is the second death.”

Step 4 — The only escape is union with Christ

Romans 6:4–11 — “Alive unto God through Jesus Christ.”

The Bible teaches that sin is not merely a mistake or weakness—it is a crime against the holiness of God that carries a divine sentence. Romans tells us that the wages of sin is death, and that through Adam all humanity stands under condemnation.

But Revelation shows us where that sentence ultimately leads: to the Great White Throne Judgment and the second death in the lake of fire.

Sin vs. Christ: Two Final Destinies

These passages together reveal a sobering truth: if the penalty of sin is not removed through Jesus Christ, it must eventually be paid in full. That reality is why the gospel is not merely good advice—it is the only hope for sinners facing the justice of God.

Heavenly Father,

We come before You humbled by the truth of Your Word. You are perfectly holy, perfectly just, and perfectly righteous. Your law is pure, Your judgments are true, and Your standard never changes. Today, we are reminded that our sin is not small, and our rebellion is not hidden from Your sight. Your Word tells us plainly that the wages of sin is death, and that apart from Your mercy we would stand condemned before Your throne.

Lord, we confess that our hearts are prone to minimize sin and overlook the seriousness of offending a holy God. Forgive us for the ways we have treated lightly what Your Word calls evil. Forgive us for the times we have lived as though there were moral neutrality, when in reality every thought, word, and action is either for Your glory or against it.

We thank You that Your justice is not the final word for those who come to Christ. Thank You that the same Scriptures that warn us about the second death also proclaim the free gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thank You that at the cross Your Son bore the punishment that our sins deserved, satisfying the justice that we could never satisfy ourselves.

Father, we pray that Your Spirit would press these truths deeply into our hearts. For those who know Christ, strengthen our gratitude, deepen our reverence, and move us to live lives of obedience that honor the One who rescued us from condemnation. And for anyone who has not yet turned to Christ, we ask that tonight would be the night of salvation—that they would see the seriousness of sin, the certainty of judgment, and the sufficiency of the Savior.

Lord, write our names in the Lamb's Book of Life through faith in Your Son. Guard us from hard hearts, awaken us to repentance, and help us cling to the grace that You freely offer through Jesus.

We ask all of this in the name of the One who conquered sin, death, and the grave—our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN.