

Degrees of Punishment in Hell

The most important point is that no passage in the Bible talks specifically about whether some will suffer more in hell than others. So, we must first draw the conclusion that this is not a particularly important point. The fact of eternal punishment for the unrighteous is certain. Exactly how that punishment will be meted out is not described in detail. Most of what people believe is from a poem titled “The Inferno” by Dante (actually a part of his greatest work, “The Divine Comedy”) in the early 14th century.

Peter implies that those who fall away from the faith will have it worse than those who never believed at all (2 Peter 2:20): “For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.”

Jesus, in Matthew 11:20 – 24, compares the relative badness of several cities, saying that it will be more tolerable for one city than another on Judgment Day. This would imply that some punishments would be worse than others. In Luke 12:47 – 48, Jesus used a parable about the relative punishments of slaves who deliberately or ignorantly disobeyed, implying that some would receive worse punishment than others in the Judgment.

That’s about it. There’s not much detail. But, the less the Bible has to say about a subject, the more time people will spend on it, feeling religious because they are uncovering some secret God forgot to tell us about. Bottom line, whether there are degrees of suffering in Hell is unimportant. Hell is eternal. Infinity times two is the same as infinity times three. Whether there are degrees of hell makes no difference in how I will live. But, topics that do not require any action on my part are popular.