

# *The Doctrine of Hell*

## *Does Hell Really Exist?* *Revelation 20:15*

**Main Idea:** To give Biblical evidence for the literal existence of a place called hell

### **Introduction:**

*Five minutes after you die you will either have had your first glimpse of heaven with its euphoria and bliss or your first genuine experience of unrelenting horror and regret. Either way, your future will be irrevocably fixed and eternally unchangeable. In those first moments, you will be more alive than you ever have been. Vivid memories of your friends and your life on planet earth will be mingled with a daunting anticipation of eternity. You will have had your first direct glimpse of Christ or your first encounter with evil as you have never known it. And it will be too late to change your address (Erwin Lutzer, *How You Can Be Sure That You Will Spend Eternity With God*, p. 9).*

**From where do we derive truth and understanding about hell?**

### **Outline:**

#### **I. Does everyone believe that hell exists as an eternal place of torment?**

2004 Gallup poll reveals that 70% of Americans believe in hell. According to the Barna Group, of those that believe in hell, 39% believe it is a state of eternal separation from God and 32% believe it is an actual place of torment and suffering.

According to a study published in 2008 by the *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, only 59% of Americans believe in a hell “where people who have led bad lives, and die without being sorry, are eternally punished.

“The most common image of people “roasting in hell” pictures a God willing to burn people for all eternity without ever totally burning them up. Apart from what the scriptures teach, ask yourself, what kind of God is capable of this? Modern “human rights activists” recognize the terrible evil of torture—even in its *temporary* forms. Would the loving God of the Bible design an *everlasting* torture chamber? If so, He would have to witness—for the rest of eternity—the suffering of those that He had condemned to such a “hell.” We might also ask: How enjoyable could salvation be for the saved, if they were forced to watch their children or parents—and other loved ones—screaming in pain and agony for the rest of time? Do you see the absurdity of this

idea? Yet millions upon millions come to this conclusion when they accept the beliefs surrounding the popular concept of hell” (David C. Pack, *The Truth about Hell*, [www.thercg.org/books/ttah.html](http://www.thercg.org/books/ttah.html)).

“I do not believe in the Christian Hell. It makes no sense to me. My understanding is that a murderer can repent for his sins on his deathbed and go to Heaven if he accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior. But if I live my entire life with compassion, peace, and love in my heart, never intentionally hurting another living soul, and I do **not** accept Jesus as my savior then it’s off to the fires for me. How is that fair? Truthfully? I believe Hell was made up by men who wanted to scare the living daylights out of people, and so they concocted the stories, put it in a book, and passed it on from one generation to another, and now some people accept it as fact” (Erin Pavlina, *Does Hell Exist? Does Satan Exist?*, [www.erinpavlina.com](http://www.erinpavlina.com)).

*Hell in the Bible . . . always refers to the present and never to the immortal world* (J.W. Hanson, *The Bible Hell*, [www.tentmaker.org/books/TheBibleHell.html](http://www.tentmaker.org/books/TheBibleHell.html)).

“Skepticism about hell is growing even in evangelical churches and seminaries, says one theologian here, a bastion of conservative evangelicalism. "In a pluralistic, post-modern world, students are having a more difficult time with (the idea of) people going to hell forever because they didn't believe the right thing," says Mike Wittmer, professor of systematic theology at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary. "That's the biggest question out there right now: `Would God send someone to hell if they were someone as good as me, but didn't believe what I believe?'" It was easier to believe in hell 20 years ago when missionaries tried to convert people in far-flung places, Wittmer says. In today's global village, many live next to good, non-Christian neighbors and wonder why an all-powerful, loving God wouldn't eventually empty out hell, Wittmer says. "I've noticed in the last five years how that view is making inroads even in conservative churches, whereas five years ago it wasn't even uttered or discussed," he adds. Americans' optimism and tolerance for diversity complements a growing view of God as benevolent, not judgmental, other experts say” (Charles Honey, *Religion News Service*, 14 August 2008).

What kind of God would create people and send them to hell? Clark H. Pinnock [Theologian] states that such a view, “makes God into a bloodthirsty monster who maintains an everlasting Auschwitz for victims whom he does not even allow to die. He also states that such a God is more nearly like Satan than like God” (Clark H. Pinnock, *The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent*, *Criswell Theological Review* 4.2 (Spring 1990), pp. 247-253).

“The traditional doctrine of hell now bears the mark of odium theologium – a doctrine retained only by the most stalwart defenders of conservative theology, Catholic and Protestant. Its defenders are seemingly few. The doctrine is routinely dismissed as an embarrassing artifact from an ancient age – a reminder of Christianity’s rejected worldview. . . . Take out the doctrine of hell, and the entire shape of Christian theology is inevitably altered” (Al Mohler, *Hell Under Fire*, p. 16).

## **II. Are there false concepts about hell and the afterlife?**

### **A. False concepts common in our culture**

1. Hell is nothing more than a term frequently used in the English language.

2. Hell is a place of enjoyment and partying with friends.
3. Hell is reserved for the extremely wicked people of this earth.
4. Hell exists in the events, conditions, and circumstances of one's life. (Hell is here on earth. It is war, etc.)
5. All life ceases to exist when the physical body dies. Life ends at the grave (II Cor. 5:6-8; Lk. 23:43; John 3:36; 14:2-3; Acts 7:59; Phil. 1:23).

B. False concepts common in theology

1. **Universalism** – The belief that all people will eventually be reconciled to God and welcomed into Heaven. “What universalism does require is that finally from everlasting to everlasting there be no person left in hell or not included in the kingdom of heaven” (Peter Toon, *Heaven and Hell*, p. 183).
2. **Annihilationism** – Any punishment in hell is only temporary. Eventually, all who go to hell experience the “second death” and cease to exist. They are consumed or annihilated.
3. **Soul Sleep** – The departed souls of both the saved and the unsaved remain in the grave asleep, awaiting the final resurrection.
4. **Purgatory** – “This is the belief of the Roman Catholics that all those who die at peace with the church but are not perfect must undergo penal and purifying sufferings. However, this is only for those who die in venial (lesser) sin, for all dying in mortal sin are forever condemned to hell. Roman doctrine teaches that a person's stay in purgatory may be shortened by the gifts or services rendered by living people in behalf of the beloved dead through the Roman Catholic church” (Harold Willimington, *Complete Guide to Bible Knowledge: Introduction to Theology*, p. 278).
5. **Limbo** – “This is another aspect of Roman Catholic theology that teaches that all unbaptized children and the mentally incompetent, upon death, proceed to a permanent place of “natural happiness,” but not heaven” (Harold Willimington, *Complete Guide to Bible Knowledge: Introduction to Theology*, p. 278).

In Roman Catholic theology, the place that is believed to be home to the souls of children who died before baptism, and the souls of the righteous who died before Jesus Christ. Although they are barred from entry to heaven, they are not condemned to the eternal suffering of hell.

### III. What does the Bible declare about the existence of hell?

*But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire (Matthew 5:22).*

*And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell (Matthew 5:29-30).*

*And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28).*

*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves (Matthew 23:15).*

*Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell (Matthew 23:33).*

*Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).*

*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal (Matthew 25:46).*

*And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:43-48).*

*But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him (Luke 12:5).*

*And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his*

*finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence (Luke 16:22-26).*

*And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell (James 3:6).*

*And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name (Revelation 14:9-11).*

*And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever (Revelation 20:10).*

*And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14-15).*

Based upon the written Word of God, what do you believe about the existence of hell?

## **Application**

1. We cannot dismiss the existence of an eternal hell based upon our own logic, its repulsive reality, popular beliefs in our culture, or erroneous interpretations of the Word of God.
2. We must accept as truth the clear teaching of the Word of God regarding the existence of a literal, eternal hell.
3. We must not allow the sober reality of hell's existence to escape our thinking.
4. We must regularly share the gospel with others and tell them of God's saving grace.