

## THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF HELL

All doctrines in the Bible concerning every subject are **inspired and important**. All doctrines in the Bible are sacred and serious. Most doctrines in the Bible are neglected to some degree and very few churches actually teach doctrine or Systematic Theology.

**But of all the doctrines found in the Bible there can be none more neglected or more serious than the doctrine of Hell**. To consider the fact that there is a real place where conscious souls go forever as punishment that is identified as Hell is the most solemn of all the doctrines.

Quite frankly the language that is used to describe this place throughout Scripture is scary and sad. So we think it is fitting and extremely important to carefully crawl through Scripture to form the truth of our conclusions about the doctrine and subject of Hell.

**QUESTION #1** – What is the source of our information about Hell?

Dr. Chafer observed that the doctrine of Hell does not come from human reason and will not be influenced by human sympathy (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 4, p. 427). **The source of our information about Hell is the inspired written word of God. Our authority for what we believe about Hell is the written word of God. This is our only authority. The concept of Hell comes from the Bible. It certainly does not come from the feelings or intellect of humans.**

The idea of eternal hell, eternal punishment, eternal condemnation, eternal perdition and eternal damnation is not the kind of doctrine that would ever originate from humans. Humans, quite frankly, don't like this doctrine. We will examine many passages of Scripture in this study but we cite six here to show that **Hell is a stated and revealed Biblical doctrine**:

**Matthew 5:22** - Jesus says there is a place where guilty people go that he says is **the fiery hell**.

**Matthew 5:29-30** - Jesus says two times there is a place where people are thrown, He names "hell."

**Matthew 10:28** - Jesus says to fear God who is able to cast a **soul and body into hell**.

**Matthew 25:41** - "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into **the eternal fire** which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;'"

**II Thessalonians 1:8-9** - Paul says there is a punishment place that God has for retribution that is a place of "**eternal Destruction**."

**Revelation 14:9-11** - John saw a place of God's wrath where one is **tormented with fire and Brimstone**.

Clearly just from these six passages we see that the subject and doctrine of hell comes from the Bible. This is a Biblical doctrine and we need to know Biblical doctrine from God's word.

(2)

**QUESTION #2** – Why study the doctrine of Hell?

There are at least six Biblical reasons for this study:

**Reason #1** - Because Hell is a Biblical subject God has revealed in His word.

**II Timothy 3:16** says, “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable...” We also know that Paul said we need to be diligent to accurately handle the word of God so we are unashamed people (**II Tim. 2:15**). Our job is to know and defend what God has revealed. Hell is a critical doctrine in the Bible. We are to study and accurately understand what God has revealed.

**Reason #2** - Because knowledge of Hell is necessary for a proper perspective of God.  
**Psalms 7:11; Rom. 9:22**

**As we will see, the character of God demands the existence of Hell.** Hell wasn't created by Satan or humans; it was created by God. His character demands such a place. The more we learn about Hell, the more we learn about the character of God. Most people want to maximize the love side of God and minimize the just side or wrath side, but the subject of Hell doesn't permit that. At the end of the day, or better at the end of life on earth, is a Hell created by God.

**Reason #3** - Because knowledge of Hell is necessary to justify the cross-work of Jesus Christ.  
**II Thess. 1:8-9**

For God to actually permit His Son to go through what He went through demands the study of Hell. Dr. Chafer said, “if God could save one soul from one sin by mere generosity, He could save all souls from sin by generosity and the death of Christ thus becomes the greatest possible divine blunder” (*Ibid.*, p. 433). What Jesus Christ did, He did not do for some lightweight reason. He is not dying on a cross to save people from something mundane, He is dying to save them from Hell.

**Reason #4** - Because knowledge of Hell is necessary to bring some to salvation. **Jude 23**

The truth is very few churches study the doctrine of hell. In fact, very few even mention it. Most talk about the love of God. But when we carefully read what Jude writes here, it is clear that one of the things that bring people to faith in Jesus Christ is the fear of being cast into eternal fire. Hell should be studied because some people will conclude I don't want to go there.

**Reason #5** - Because Hell is necessary to us knowing God will justly right many wrongs.  
**Rev. 6:10-11**

There have been many horrible and evil things done against God's people and Hell is a place to justly settle those scores. People need to know about this place and know why it exists. One may temporarily live a God mocking, Bible hating, Christ rejecting life. But when life is over, eternal Hell will become their forever existence.

(3)

**Reason #6** - Because Hell is necessary for us to be encouraged knowing that godly people will forever be blessed and separated from ungodly people who will be forever cursed and punished. **Psalm 7:9; Revelation 21:24-27**

**QUESTION #3** – What sources do we reject as a source of our information about hell?

There are four main sources that we reject as our authority:

**Rejected Authority Source #1** - We do not base our view of Hell on human reason.

Actually, we will discover that the idea of Hell may be fully supported by human reason. Norman Geisler said, “The existence of hell is supported by many arguments from both the authority of God’s word and the use of human reason” (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 4, p. 327).

However, the truth is the concept of Hell does not come from human reason, even though Hell is supported by reason. Frankly, humans have a mindset that revolts against such a doctrine. Humans don’t like the doctrine and many, even some believers, try to dismiss it from their minds by using rational arguments.

Humans use their reason to argue against Hell with various humanistic arguments. We will discuss these matters along the way later.

**1) Why punish people in Hell and not reform them in Heaven?**

God gives people plenty of time to reform and repent; Hell is for those who wouldn’t. Hell is not a temporal place of reform; it is an eternal place of punishment.

**2) Isn’t eternal punishment in Hell a little much for temporal sins on earth?**

Sins are committed against the Eternal God; if one refuses the gift of Jesus Christ that forgives all sins against the Eternal God, one must pay the Eternal price.

**3) How could we be happy in heaven knowing there are loved ones burning in Hell?**

Our happiness and worship in heaven will include people being in Hell (Rev. 19:3). Also heaven will be a wonderful happy place where God will wipe away tears (Rev. 21:4).

**4) Why would God create people He knew would go to hell?**

**Nonexistence would be better than existence if there is a Hell.**

God has a purpose for everyone. Just because many people die every day in a car accident doesn’t stop those who don’t die from driving.

**5) If God’s goal is to save sinners, why have a Hell where people cannot be saved?**

God’s only goal is not just to save sinners. The existence of Hell where people cannot be saved satisfies the holiness, the righteousness of God and the justice of God. We will discuss this later. Actually, Eternal Hell is demanded by the character of the Eternal God.

(4)

**6) Since people are born sinners and cannot change that, then how is it right to send them to Hell for that?**

It is precisely this point that one is born a sinner and does sin, where people are offered Grace, Eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ that will and does change them.

**7) Why not just annihilate sinners and not eternally punish them in Hell?**

Humans are made in the image of God and cannot be annihilated but live forever.

**8) Hell is contrary to the grace and mercy of God, so why would it exist?**

Grace and mercy are in the cross of Jesus Christ and the patience of God in putting up with all kinds of abominable sins. God's perfect grace and mercy do not eliminate God's perfect holiness, justice and righteousness.

**9) Everlasting punishment is not the same as being everlastingly punished.** Why not just punish and have it over forever like Sodom and Gomorrah, rather than have it go on forever? Being created in the image of God means one will live somewhere forever and since faith in Christ brings eternal heaven, rejection of Christ brings eternal hell.

For a good discussion of these arguments see Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 4, pp. 340-347).

So our authority is not human reason. If it comes down to a choice to believe the word of God or believe what one reasons or rationalizes or argues, we stick with the inspired Scriptures.

**Rejected Authority Source #2** - We do not base our view of Hell on human sentiment.

Human sentiment and human sympathy does not determine our doctrine of Hell. Just because someone feels as though they don't want or agree with or accept the doctrine, has nothing to do with whether or not it is true. Truth often initially goes against feelings and sentiment which is why there are so many admonitions to develop sound minds.

Our job is not to defend how humans feel but to determine what God's word says. As Dr. Chafer said, "The theologian...is appointed to discover and defend that which God has revealed" (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 4, p. 428). God's word takes a higher precedence over human reason and human sentiment.

**Rejected Authority Source #3** - We do not base our view of Hell on religious opinions.

There are a variety of religious views on the subject of Hell. For example, some religions have invented the notion that when a person dies they go to some probationary place and may have a chance to get out later and escape. Others have invented their own concepts and opinions of what they think Hell is. Some think it is a party place where all friends in Hell have a good time.

(5)

Jehovah's Witness teach that the soul ceases to exist when a person dies and therefore Hell is a state of non-existence.

Mormons teach that Hell is a temporary place where non-repentant people go to suffer for their sins for a while between their death and resurrection.

Islam believes that Hell is a place with seven layers that features fire and boiling water that is blazing, crushing, raging, scorching, furnace and infernal.

In 1439 AD, the Council of Florence and the Council of Trent (AD 1545-1563) developed their "erroneous doctrine of purgatory." They based their beliefs on the apocryphal book of II Maccabees 12:42. They concluded that a person's soul went to a place of temporary punishment, a limbo place and if prayed for and candles are lit, they can get out and go to heaven rather than Hell.

We don't base our views of Hell on religious opinions or viewpoints; we base our view of Hell on the inspired word of God.

**Rejected Authority Source #4** - We do not base our view of Hell on sensational experiences.

Every now and then someone will claim they saw Hell or went to Hell and then came back. They tell a sensational story of how they were permitted to come back. The fact is if they really went to Hell they don't get out and they don't come back. We don't base our view of Hell on any of that. It may make for a riveting story, but not sound doctrine.

But Dr. Chafer really summarized the truth against this religious opinion when he wrote: "Uncounted legions of angels have sinned and for them there is not the slightest intimation to be found in the Bible which extends to them a ray of hope. By divine decree these angels are already consigned to the lake of fire, not under a possible proviso that this doom which be averted if in the meantime they repent; but they are arbitrarily, unrevokably consigned to retribution that without remedy" (*Ibid*, p. 429).

The study of the doctrine of Hell must be based on the word of God for this is the only inspired truth we have on the subject.

**QUESTION #4** – What is the root cause of all false information and thinking about Hell?

**From the Scriptures, we may conclude that Satan is behind any untruth or twisting of truth or any false views when it comes to real truth about Hell.**

**Satan is a liar.** He has his arsenal of false ministers who are also deceptive liars. They appear as ministers of light, but they proclaim theological distortions and lies. **Satan does not want people knowing the truth of God on any subject, especially a subject like Hell.**

(6)

Jesus Himself said, “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (**John 8:44**).

In that very context, two times Jesus says if anyone keeps My word, he will not taste death, speaking of eternal death (**John 8:51, 52**).

Paul said in **II Corinthians 11:13-15** that Satan has false ministers who proclaim false messages appearing as good ministers.

Naturally, these kinds of devilish ministers are not going to proclaim the truth about Hell.

**QUESTION #5** – What are two main theological reasons why humans question the existence of Hell?

Undoubtedly there is a pride within humans that does not want to concede the truth or submit to the truth about any doctrine, especially one like Hell. But when it comes to this doctrine the real issue is people don't know truth about God.

When it comes to admitting the existence of Hell, there are two theological root causes of human speculation that humans, quite frankly, do not know:

**Root Cause #1** - Most do not know about the magnitude of sin and guilt as it relates to God.

If God could have forgiven one sin of one person just by overlooking it, He would have compromised His holiness that demands judgment for sin.

**Root Cause #2** - Most do not know about the majestic holiness and righteousness of God.

In Proverbs 9:10 we read: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and **the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.**” Clearly one of the basic things to grasp that is a key to understanding God's truth about Hell is the realization that **God is Holy**.

These are two critical issues most humans know very little about. The holiness of God demands Hell because sin is so egregious and offensive to God. Man has little or no sense of sin as it relates to the Holy God.

It is more than just a coincidence to see what David says and predicts in **Psalm 22:1-3**. In this Psalm, David is setting forth precisely what Jesus would cry while taking the full brunt of the wrath of God for sin - “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Right after crying this out, immediately it is written, “**Yet, You are holy**” (22:3).

**What we conclude from this is that the extreme punishment of sin, in which one is abandoned by God, is clearly connected to the Holiness of God.**

(7)

This is the reason why so many humans fail to understand the reality of and the necessity of Hell. They do not comprehend or even care to comprehend the matter of sin as it relates to the Holiness of God.

**QUESTION #6** – Does the Bible teach that Hell is a real place?

This is an important question to answer because many make Hell out to be a thought or state of mind or a present condition of life. Certainly one place to begin is to ask does the Bible teach that Hell is a real place? What does the Bible say?

1. **Matthew 5:22** - Jesus said one who is guilty will go “into the fiery hell.”
2. **Matthew 5:29-30** - Jesus warned that one could be “thrown into hell and go into hell.”
3. **Matthew 8:12** - Jesus said there is a **place** of outer darkness with weeping and gnashing teeth.
4. **Matthew 10:28** - Jesus said fear the one who can destroy body and soul in hell.
5. **Matthew 11:23** - Jesus says to the people of Capernaum that “you will descend to Hades.”
6. **Matthew 13:42** - Jesus said there is a place of fiery furnace with weeping and gnashing teeth.
7. **Matthew 16:18** - Jesus described this place as having “**gates**.”
8. **Matthew 25:41** - Jesus will cause an accursed one to depart from Him “into the eternal fire.”
9. **Mark 9:44** - Jesus says there is a Hell where one may go that is **unquenchable fire**.
10. **Luke 3:17** - John said Jesus would burn up the chaff of rejecters with unquenchable fire.
11. **Luke 10:15** - Jesus said Capernaum would be brought down to Hades.
12. **Luke 16:23** - Jesus said the rich man was in Hades in torment.
13. **Luke 16:28** - Jesus said one in Hell requests brothers not “come to this **place** of torment.”
14. **James 3:6** - James says there is a Hell behind iniquity.
15. **Jude 13** - Jude says men will go to a place of black darkness forever.
16. **Rev. 1:18** - Jesus says he has the **keys** of death and Hades. **Keys imply a real place.**
17. **Rev. 9:2** - John saw a great furnace like a bottomless pit.
18. **Rev. 14:10-11** - John saw a torment place of fire and brimstone that burns forever and ever.
19. **Rev. 20:1** - John saw some scary abyss and an angel had a **key** to it, implying a real place.
20. **Rev. 20:13-14** - Jesus throws all unbelievers into lake of fire.
21. **Rev. 21:8** - There is a lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

Now we ask a simple question: does the language of the Bible teach Hell is a real place? **The obvious answer is “yes.” Also carefully observe who it is that is speaking the most in describing Hell - Jesus Christ.**

### **Specific References and Inferences to Hell by Jesus Christ**

There are 22 specific references and contexts in which Jesus Christ specifically speaks of or alludes to a judgment place of Hell. He refers to this the most of any Person in the New Testament. He is the One who actually knows about this place and what it is like.

- 1) **Matthew 5:22** - Jesus said one may be guilty to go “into fiery hell.”
- 2) **Matthew 5:29-30** - Jesus warned that one could be “thrown into hell.”

(8)

- 3) **Matthew 7:19** - Jesus alludes to the fact that one could be “cut down and thrown into the fire.”
- 4) **Matthew 8:12** - Jesus states there is a place where there is outer darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- 5) **Matthew 10:15** - Jesus said a judgment would come worse than Sodom and Gomorrah.
- 6) **Matthew 10:28** - Jesus said fear God who can “destroy both soul and body in hell.”
- 7) **Matthew 11:22-24** - Jesus said there would be a judgment descent “to Hades.”
- 8) **Matthew 13:40-42** - Jesus said there is a place of fire where there is weeping and gnashing teeth.
- 9) **Matthew 13:50** - Jesus said one may be “thrown into a furnace of fire” where there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
- 10) **Matthew 18:7-9** - Jesus mentions a place of “eternal fire” and “fiery hell” where one may go.
- 11) **Matthew 22:13** - Jesus mentions a place of “outer darkness” where there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
- 12) **Matthew 24:51** - Jesus mentions a place where there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
- 13) **Matthew 25:30** - Jesus mentions “outer darkness” and “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
- 14) **Matthew 25:41** - Jesus says there is a place one may be judged of “eternal fire.”
- 15) **Matthew 25:46** - Jesus said there is a place of “eternal punishment” and “eternal life.”
- 16) **Mark 9:42-49** - Jesus speaks of judgment of “unquenchable fire,” “hell.”
- 17) **Luke 12:46-47** - Jesus spoke of a place where unbelievers go.
- 18) **Luke 13:28-30** - Jesus spoke of a judgment place of “weeping and gnashing teeth.”
- 19) **Luke 16:23-31** - Jesus speaks of “Hades,” “agony in flame,” “place of torment.”
- 20) **Luke 17:26-29** - Jesus speaks of a judgment of “fire and brimstone.”
- 21) **John 15:6** - Jesus speaks of casting one into fire to be burned.
- 22) **Revelation 1:18** - Jesus says He has the keys of death and Hades.

Now certainly a logical question to ask is why Jesus Christ would refer to this judgment place so many times if it were not a real place. Jesus Christ is referring to this because it is a very real place. He created it. He has seen it. He knows what it is like.