

# Can Eternal Hell be Supported by the Bible?

Hell's been called ***"THE WORST LIE IN THE WORLD"***!

People have said, ***"If that's God, I won't serve Him."***

- Charles Darwin claimed he slowly ceased to believe in Christianity because he could not accept that those who do not believe would be in his words, ***"everlasting punished."*** He said, ***"And this is a damnable doctrine..."***

Lots of people have questions about hell and one of the most frequently asked is:

***"IS HELL A REAL PLACE?"***

***--THE ANSWER IS: – Of course it is! Haven't you been to Phoenix, AZ in July?"***

- Sometimes people say things like, ***"My life is like hell!"*** or ***"I've gone through hell"***, but they are speaking figuratively.

## Can Eternal Hell be Supported by the Bible?

**YES. THE BIBLE TEACHES HELL IS A REAL, LITERAL PLACE.**

**Hell is just as real as heaven.**

- Throughout the gospels you'll notice that Jesus' teaching about hell is often contrasted with His teaching about Heaven.
- And Jesus actually spoke more about a real, literal hell than He spoke about heaven!

**"Thus disbelief crept over me at a very slow rate, but was at last complete. The rate was so slow that I felt no distress, and have never since doubted even for a second that my conclusion was correct. I can indeed hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for if so the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe, and this would include my Father, Brother and almost all of my friends, will be everlasting punished. And this is a damnable doctrine."**

*(Autobiography of Charles Darwin, 1958) p.87).*

**HE SEEMED TO CONTRADICT HIMSELF:** He also admitted:

**"A man who has no assured and ever present belief in the existence of a personal God or of future existence with retribution and reward, can have for his rule of life, as far as I can see, only to follow those impulses and instincts which are the strongest or which seem to him the best ones."**

*(Autobiography of Charles Darwin (1958))*

- **MOST of the teaching in the Bible about hell comes from Jesus.**

**What made Jesus so eager to share about hell?  
What compelled Him to labor tirelessly for a lost, dying world?**

**IT WAS BECAUSE JESUS KNEW THE FATE OF THE LOST! --Jesus knew about hell.**

**APPLICATION: KNOWING THE TRUTH ABOUT HELL gives a person a sense of the importance of this life and of eternal destiny. --You develop a sense of what's important!**

**Jesus said, *"And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?"* Matt. 16:26, NLT.**

- **LOOK AT 2 THESSALONIANS 1:9: it says that those who refuse to know God and do not believe in the Gospel will pay the penalty of eternal destruction that THIS PENALTY WILL BE SERVED:**

***"...away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,"* NAS**

**Those who are lost will not cease to exist, but they will lose all the reason for existence.**

**Commenting on this verse, John MacArthur shares: "The lost will not cease to exist but will experience forever a life of uselessness, hopelessness, emptiness, and meaninglessness, with no value, worth, accomplishment, purpose, goal, or hope. They will be ruined forever; "They pass into a night on which no morning dawns" (Leon Morris, *The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976], 120).**

**THE BIBLE USES GRAPHIC TERMS TO DESCRIBE WHAT HELL WILL BE LIKE.**

**HELL IS DESCRIBED AS:**

- A place of **weeping and gnashing of teeth.** (Matt. 25:30)
- A place of **outer darkness.** (Matt. 22:13)
- A place of **torments.** (Luke 16:23)
- A place of **everlasting destruction.** (2 Th. 1:9)
- A place where people **are tormented with fire and brimstone.** (Rev. 21:8)
- A place of **maggots that don't die.** (Mark 9:43)
- A place where **fire is not quenched.** (Mark 9:43), a **furnace of fire.** (Matt. 13:42, 50)
- A place where **there is no rest.** (Rev. 14:11)
- A place that **will ultimately be a lake of fire.** (Rev. 20:14)

- A place of **hopelessly unsatisfied desires, like unquenchable thirst** (Luke 16:24).
- A place of **separation**. (Matthew 13:49).
- A place filled with the **cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, murderers, sexual perverts and immoral persons**, those who practice magic arts, **idolaters**, and all **liars**. (Rev. 21:8)
- A place **filled with demons and fallen angels**. (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:16). (list adapted from RW Research, Inc. Rose Publishing, Inc., Rose Book of Bible Charts, Maps & Time lines, Rose Publishing, Inc. Torrance, CA, 2005, p. 99).

**THIS IS WHAT IT IS LIKE AWAY FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD, --it means being away from every good thing and safe thing forever!**

### **REVELATION 20:7-10:**

*“When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. 9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”*

### **Judgment at the Throne of God**

**Let's read on: verses 11-15:**

*“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.” NASU*

**Some people have questions about THE OF HELL.  
DURATION OF HELL.**

- Groups like Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses insist that hell is not eternal.
- They say it ends with the total annihilation of the wicked.

Teaching like that strikes a chord in many people's hearts.

- Lots of people contact me, sharing that **THEY JUST CAN'T BELIEVE IN A HELL THAT INVOLVES ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.**

*Bless your heart! You love people, --but so does God!*

**“HOW LONG WILL HELL LAST?”**

**LET'S LET JESUS SPEAK: Look at Matthew 25:31-33, 41-46:**

**MATTHEW 25:31-33:**

*“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left....”*

*vs. 41-46 “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; 42 for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; 43 I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ 44 Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ 45 Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ 46 These will go away into **eternal punishment**, but the righteous into **eternal life**.”* NASU

**“ETERNAL PUNISHMENT” is not something that someone made up, --it is a reality.**

- ◆ **JESUS indicates that it will be eternal, --it will last forever.**
- ◆ ***The New Testament speaks about hell 162 times and in its teaching about hell, it indicates that hell is eternal punishment.***

**NOW, Some people try to reason that “ETERNAL” hell is not “ETERNAL,” BUT JUST HOW LONG IS “ETERNAL”?**

- Well, the same Greek word that describes the duration of HELL, “aionios,” translated, “eternal,” is used to describe the duration of “LIFE” for the righteous, -- it’s also “aionios,” --“eternal”!

### **GOD IS EVERLASTING**

God is eternal, --everlasting God. **How long is God’s glory and life?** It’s forever! So the duration of the punishment is just as everlasting and eternally long as God’s life.

**Genesis 21:33:** *“Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.”* NASU

**Psalm 90:1-2:** *“Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. 2 Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”* NASU

Listen to what Jeremiah the prophet says: *“But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King....”* Jeremiah 10:10a NASU

**THAT SAME WORD, “ETERNAL” IS USED TO DESCRIBE GOD HIMSELF:**

[see side bar]

- REVELATION 4:9-10 records a scene of worship from heaven:

*“And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever,...”*

- In REVELATION 5:13 John records more worship in heaven:

*“And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”*

- The angel John saw in REVELATION 10:6 *“...swore by Him who lives forever and ever,”* (See also Revelation 15:7-8).

**THIS WORD “ETERNAL” or “EVERLASTING” is also used to describe the RESURRECTION-LIFE of CHRIST:**

- Look at REVELATION 1:17-18:

*“When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, ” Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.”*

NASU

**THIS WORD “ETERNAL” or “EVERLASTING” is used to describe the LENGTH of JESUS’ REIGN:**

- REVELATION 11:15:

*“‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.’ 16 And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God.”* NASU

**This same word is used to describe the LENGTH of THE REIGN OF GOD’S SAINTS:**

- REVELATION 22:5:

*“And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.”*

**10 TIMES the New Testament uses this SAME WORD TO ASCRIBE [attribute] GLORY TO GOD:**

- *“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”* 1 Timothy 1:17
- *“...to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”* 2 Timothy 4:18c
- *“to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.”* Galatians 1:5
- *“...through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”* Hebrews 13:21c
- *“to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”* 1 Peter 4:11
- *“To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.”* 1 Peter 5:11
- *“to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”* Revelation 1:6b
- *“...“To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”* Revelation 5:13b
- *“...saying, ‘Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.’”* Revelation 7:12

**BUT THIS VERY SAME WORD IS USED IN REFERRING TO THE TORMENT OF THE WICKED:**

- **REVELATION 14:11** – *“And the smoke of*

*their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”*

- **REVELATION 20:10** – *“And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”*

- **2 THESSALONIANS 1:8-9:** *“...the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,”*

**REMEMBER: THIS IS AN ETERNAL OFFENSE AGAINST THE ETERNAL, HOLY GOD!**

**Now, with this in mind, remember Jesus' words in MATTHEW 25:41,46:**

*“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;”  
...46 "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

## **“HOW CAN SPIRITUALLY DEAD PEOPLE EXPERIENCE TORMENT?”**

### **“DOES THE TERM ‘ETERNAL DEATH’ APPEAR IN THE BIBLE?”**

No, but the term “second death” does, and it speaks of a dead people eternally experiencing hell.

Look at REVELATION 20:6a.

*“Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power.”* ESV

*“These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,”* 2 Thess. 1:9 NASU

The NIV translates it *“everlasting destruction.”*

Amplified: *“Such people will pay the penalty and suffer the punishment of everlasting ruin (destruction and perdition) and eternal exclusion and banishment from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,”*

■ **The word “destruction” does NOT refer to annihilation, but to ruination.**

It’s not referring to the cessation of existence but to the loss of everything that makes existence worthwhile.

2 Thessalonians 1:9 – *“Those people will be punished with a destruction that continues forever.”* NCV

## WHY SUCH A DRASTIC PENALTY?

**“HOW CAN A GOD OF LOVE SEND PEOPLE TO AN ETERNAL HELL?”**

The answer is another question:

**“How could a God of love *NOT* uphold justice and punish evil?”**

- THE ENORMITY OF HELL SUGGESTS THE ENORMITY OF THE OFFENSE AGAINST GOD.

Habakkuk 1:13a NIV says: *“Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong...”*

- Hell is eternal because the offense against God is eternal.

**We must remember that God’s love does not preclude God’s justice.**

God is not unjust; the penalty always matches the crime. God’s justice is perfect justice.

Daniel 4:37 NLT says: *“...All his acts are just and true...”*

- God takes no pleasure in wickedness (Hab. 5:4) and those who indulge in sin are the ones who will receive his punishment (11:6,7).

**“HOW CAN A “GOOD” GOD CONDEMN  
SOMEONE TO HELL FOREVER?”**

Some think that a “good” God and Hell are mutually exclusive.

“...a real program of punishment would be consistent with the attributes of a good, loving and perfect God. Both philosophically and theologically, God’s nature demands such punishment. We can rest assured that God gives men many chances to show whether they will follow Him or not. But when they refuse, there is not alternative. Disobedience cannot go unpunished if God is to be true to His nature.

We must also face the fact that many men will never follow God’s ways, even given an infinite amount of chances. Rather than deny a man free will, God gives him that choice to rebel. Norm Geisler states it this way:

“God will permit a man the free choice to do his “thing” eternally, just as He will permit other men to do His “thing” forever. Only those persons will be permitted in heaven who God knows would never change their will; and only those will be pronounced reprobate and eternally “dead” who God knows will never change their will. In brief, the omniscience of God guarantees that the decisions are eternal (cf. Luke 16;26; Heb. 9:27). (Geisler, *Philosophy of Religion*, especially p. 374). [The Resurrection of Jesus, pp. 112-113).

Many people don’t WANT hell, but they don’t WANT God either.

Lee Strobel:

“The fairness of hell was a major stumbling block for me when I was a spiritual seeker. Ultimately, though, I saw enough of the justice behind eternal punishment that I didn’t let

the doctrine derail by spiritual journey. Especially helpful to me were the comments that D.A. Carson made to me during a talk I had with him. He said, "Hell is not a place where people are consigned because they were pretty good blokes, but they didn't believe the right stuff. They're consigned there, first and foremost, because they defied their Maker and want to be at the center of the universe."

Hell is not filled with people who have already repented, only God isn't gentle enough or good enough to let them out. It's filled with people who through all eternity still want to be at the center of the universe and who persist in their God-defying rebellion.

What is God to do? If He says it doesn't matter to Him then God is no longer a God to be admired; He is either amoral or positively creepy. For Him to act in any other way in face of such blatant defiance would be to reduce God Himself. Well to me that made a lot of sense."

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pO3QO1vj\\_PU&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pO3QO1vj_PU&feature=related)

## ***WHAT DOES HELL PROVE?***

- **EVIL DOES NOT PAY! –or actually, -- there IS payment for evil.**
- **Without the reality of Hell many things do not make sense.**
- **We know that in society the punishment of evil shows that good has prevailed.**
- **Ultimately, God's eternal goodness and victory over evil is shown in the eternal punishment of sin.**

- **JUSTICE** makes no sense without the reality of hell,

...because ultimately, our sense of justice is backed up by the understanding that God is perfectly just and will someday punish all sin and wrong doing.

- **THERE IS NO REASON TO FEAR DOING EVIL** because there is no ultimate accountability without the reality of hell.
- Hell is eternal because though the thought of being executed and sent into non-existence is awful, it is not a deterrent to sin.
- **WHY THE CROSS IF THERE IS NO HELL?**, --Jesus' suffering, agony & death on the cross was for nothing.

***“I HAVE FRIENDS OR RELATIVES WHO BELIEVE THAT GOD HAS PREDESTINED SOME PEOPLE TO GO TO HELL, --IS THIS TRUE? Does God want some people to go to hell?”***

**SIMPLY: --NO.--**This question is answered directly in 2 Peter 3:9

*“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”*

**Look at 1 Timothy 2:3-6** *“This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself as a*

**GOD HONORS CHOICE.** From the very beginning in the Garden of Eden God has honored choice.

- He created Adam & Eve and placed them in the Garden and told them not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- He didn't put electric fences and German Shepherds around the tree.
- He allowed them to choose who they would obey and serve.

***"WHY?" "If God wouldn't have done that then this whole world would have turned out differently!"***

- Yes, but God didn't create robots, -- He created human beings with the ability to love.
- For love to be love, --it must be free from coercion, it must be a free choice.

**An incident, near the end of Jesus' ministry sheds light on this:**

**LOOK AT MATTHEW 23:37-39:**

*"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 38 "Behold, your*

*house is being left to you desolate!*" (a quotation of Ps 118:26).

Listen to how several other translators have put it:

- ◆ *"... but you wouldn't let me."* NLT
- ◆ *"...you were not willing!"* NIV
- ◆ *"...but you refused and turned away! And now it's too late..."* vss. 34b-35a, *The Message*

Commenting on this, Warren Wiesbe says: *"I would have... ye would not"* summarizes the tragedy of final rejection of the truth. There is no argument here about divine sovereignty and human responsibility, for both are included. God could not force His salvation on the people; neither could He change the consequences of their stubborn rejection. "You will not come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:40)."

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**"They were responsible to make a choice and their choice brought condemnation. The result was their house was left... desolate."**

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The Bible tells us that people go to hell ultimately because of their choice. They have chosen to reject God's plan for life.

Remember what John 3:16 says?

*"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."*

NLT

**People send themselves to hell by rejecting God's way of salvation in Jesus Christ.**

**God doesn't send anyone to hell. It was never His design to send people to hell.**

That's why God sent Jesus to die on the cross in our place, --to bridge the gap between sinful people and a Holy God

- In Ezekiel 18:23 – The Lord says: *“Do you think that I like to see wicked people die?’ says the Sovereign Lord. ‘Of course not! I want them to turn from their wicked ways and live.’”* NLT
- Again, in Ezekiel 33:11 listen to what God says: *“Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?’”* NIV

Someone has said, “The gates of hell are locked from the inside. If you end up in hell, you will practically have to climb over Jesus to get there.”

## HELL WASN'T MADE FOR PEOPLE!

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.’”*