

PEACE

Justice Secures Peace

LESSON 3



The Bible and the Reality of the Hell

In this lesson, we come to one of the biggest sticking points for people curious about Christianity: Hell. Hell is one of the reasons many people give for rejecting Christianity.

“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 men who do not believe, and this would include my father, brother and almost all of my friends, will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable doctrine.” - Charles Darwin

R. C. Sproul was asked which doctrine he struggles with most. He replied: **“Hell.”**

I would rather talk about heaven, but we need to talk about Hell, because the Bible speaks not only of the Good News of heaven but of the Hard Truth of Hell:

Daniel 12:2-3 - Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Matthew 13:41-43 - The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

John 5:28-29 - Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.

I cannot preach on hell unless I
preach with tears.

Dwight L. Moody

Misunderstandings of Hell and the Heart of God

Hell is NOT a product of a Narcissistic God

Judgment and hell are treated by modern people as the petty response of a capricious and vain deity who demands we love him upon pain of the most horrible death.

Detractors portray God as King George in Hamilton. In the song, *You'll Be Back*. King George sings about the United States independence as a sort of 1960's breakup song:

**You'll be back, soon you'll see
You'll remember you belong to me
You'll be back, time will tell
You'll remember that I served you well
Oceans rise, empires fall
We have seen each other through it all
And when push comes to shove
I will send a fully armed battalion to remind you of my love!**

Hell is NOT due to a Failure to Keep LAWS

Don't say that a loving God is going to send you to hell. He's not. The thing that's going to send you to hell is that you're a sinner and you don't want to admit it.

J. Vernon McGee

The Law REVEALS a Deep Human Flaw

Romans 3:19-20 - **Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.**

The Law Reveals Our Lack of love

Romans 13:9-10 - **The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.**

2 Timothy 3:1-4 - **But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.**

The Law Reveals Our Need To Be Saved by FAITH

We need to be saved by faith because faith was precisely the thing that was broken in the Garden.

Ephesians 2:8-9 - **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.**

God's Justice Equally Displays God's Great Love

How could a God of love send people to hell? The answer is: He is a God of love. And he created people in his image, to be creatures of love, to be in a loving relationship with him and each other. And it is because he, a God of love, created us to be creatures of love that there is such a thing as hell. Hell is for people who are distorted in the loves of the heart, distorted and growing more and more deficient in love in a way that becomes increasingly harmful and destructive to the world around them.

When the Bible's teaching about judgment is dismissed, all victims of injustice, violence, and oppression are then put at risk. If God is a God of love without the accountability of justice, then vulnerable people are made more vulnerable, and bullies are encouraged to continue bullying.

For love to be truly loving, there must be judgment. If there is no judgment, then there is really no hope for a slave, a rape victim, a child who has been abused or bullied, or people who have been slandered or robbed or had their dignity stolen from them. If *nobody* is called to account before a cosmic judgment seat for violence and oppression, then the victims will not see justice, *ever*. We *need* a God who gets angry. We *need* a God who will protect his kids, who will **once and for all remove bullies and perpetrators of evil from his playground. Scott Sauls, Divine Judgment Fueled by Divine Compassion, 2.26.202.**

Justice secures Peace. It holds evil to account and removes every aspect of its influence.

God's Justice is permanent removal

We tend to focus on Hell as a punishment for sin. It is that, but the primary reason for Hell is to remove the influence and impact of sin from the beautiful future that God has in store for his people, a kingdom that Jesus says that those who believe will inherit. Romans 14 succinctly describes this kingdom of God as a place of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. That is the nature of the kingdom that God has in store.

God's stated goal in the Bible is to make all things new. God's final purpose in salvation is not simply getting us to heaven when we die but world reclamation, transformation, and restoration of all that is beautiful, life-giving, joyful, and excellent. For this to exist, God must remove anything that harms, distorts, dehumanizes, threatens these values. Hell is the removal of all that causes grief to mankind and to the world that God made. Hell fosters Heaven's beauty, peace, unity, love, joy, and righteousness. It is about the removal of everything that keeps good things from running wild.

Ancient cities kept rolls of their citizens. Guards were posted at the city gates to keep out criminals and enemies by checking their names against the list. This is the context for Revelation 21:27: "Nothing impure will ever enter [the city], nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Randy Alcorn.

Images of Hell are images of removal.

FIRE

Matthew 13:40-41 - As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil, and throw them into the fiery furnace.

DARKNESS

Matthew 8:13 - Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

WEEPING AND GNASHING OF TEETH

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WORM DOES NOT DIE

Mark 9:47-48 - And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where 'the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.'

Most commentators recognize that this is a gruesome image but do not think that it literally means that we have a permanent case of worms. They say that it is symbolic of the caving in of ourselves when left to ourselves.

Hell begins with a grumbling mood, always complaining, always blaming others... but you are still distinct from it. You may even criticize it in yourself and wish you could stop it. But there may come a day when you can no longer. Then there will be no you left to criticize the mood or even to enjoy it, but just the grumble itself, going on forever like a machine. It is not a question of God 'sending us' to hell. In each of us there is something growing, which will BE hell unless it is nipped in the bud. C.S. Lewis

Hell is horrible, because we know what human beings and life are supposed to be like

All DESERVE Hell, but all who RETURN to God by FAITH in Jesus are fully and completely forgiven and JUSTIFIED.

Acts 4:12 - Salvation is found in no one else. For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

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!

Ezekiel 33:10

How does Knowledge of Hell shape life?

1. Deep gratitude to Jesus for what he endured for us.
2. Zeal to tell others.
3. Deep prayer fueled by the glory and grace of God, AND grief and compassion for people.
4. Humility. We all deserve hell, but in Jesus, we have been given as a gift the Heaven of God.
5. Real pity.
6. Praise, anticipation, and gratitude to God, because all that causes harm, all that needs to go away to enable eternal joy in God's presence and God's world will go away, and only what gives life, fosters joy, and maintains peace will form our dwelling place forever.