

## "Is Hell Real"

One day you'll face your eternal destiny. Will it be a day of joy or will it be a day of regret? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're going to explore what the Bible says about hell. So stay tuned.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We know that if God said it, that it's true and significant. After all, we're going to be judged one day by the words found in this book. This book is God speaking to us! We need to hear what it says and to take it seriously. God doesn't tease or joke around when it comes to our souls. So thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Our study today deals with our eternal future after this life is over, and it should matter to you. We're all going to face an eternal destiny someday. According to a recent Pew Forum poll, 72 percent of Americans believe in heaven, but only 58 percent believe in hell. And only a few people believe they will be lost in hell. It'd be tragic to think you're saved when in fact you're not. While most folks know there is a hell, they ignore it. If we could open the graves of the dead and ask them about Hades, that unseen place where the spirits of the dead go, we might be more inclined to think about our future. Whether they were in a place of comfort or a place of torment, they would say with one loud, clear voice, "Do everything you can to please God and go to heaven; and do everything you can to stay out of this place of torment." I wonder if we take our afterlife seriously enough. Moses said in Deuteronomy 32 verse 29, "Would that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would discern their future!" What will happen to us when we die? Well the Bible says in Hebrews 9 verse 27 that it's appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.

Perhaps you want to study more about these matters, we offer this study free. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org).

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Matthew 7:13 to 14, and we'll explore what the Bible teaches about hell.

Our reading today comes from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself as He was speaking in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew, chapter 7, verses 13 and 14. "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." That's a surprising passage for many. Let's pray together. Father we're grateful for Your love, and we're thankful that You have given us Your way. Help us Father to enter through the narrow way and to avoid the broad path. Help us to do Your will always, on earth as it is done in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

The Lord Jesus said in John 5 verses 28 and 29, "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who've done good to the resurrection of life, and those who've done evil to the resurrection of judgment." At the resurrection, we will stand before the throne of Jesus our Lord. Jesus said in Matthew 25:31 to 34, "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 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; and He'll put the sheep on His right, and the goats on His left. And then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" Now verse 41 continues: "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.'" Verse 46 says: "That these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Now there are two destinies after the resurrection and judgment. The blessed one with joy in heaven, and the other is hell. The word hell or *gehenna* appears twelve times in Scripture, mostly from the lips of Jesus. Some people think preaching hell is cruel or uncouth, but Jesus preached on it because people needed to hear. Heaven and hell ought to be important to us, since we'll spend eternity in one place or the other. Now I find no joy in thinking about the final end of unbelievers or sinners.

You'll remember that God said in Ezekiel 33 verse 11, "Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?" Perhaps you remember the broken heart of Jesus as he wept over Jerusalem. And He said in Matthew 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" There are people who will not come to the Lord, people who will not repent of their sins, people will not obey the truth, and will not serve God. And it breaks God's heart to think about the choices that they have made. My friend, Jesus could have remained silent about hell and just let them perish, but he did not do that. If hell is real, it's cruel not to tell people about it. Cruel preachers avoid the subject. That's why Jesus spoke on the matter—He did it out of love and out of truth.

Listen to these warnings of our Lord. Mark 9 verses 43 to 48 says, "And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It's better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It's better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It's better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'" Jesus is here warning us about the consequences of sin. I tell you it's worse to be lost in sin than to lose an eye, or a hand, or a foot. On another occasion Jesus warned in Matthew 10:28, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." Now dying is tragic, but it's even more tragic to be lost in hell.

When the Bible speaks of the eternal punishment of sinners or unbelievers, it uses phrases such as "outer darkness," "weeping and gnashing of teeth," an "unquenchable fire," or an "eternal fire," "and the place where the worm does not die." You see, hell is the place of complete separation from God.

Paul describes the second coming of Jesus as a frightening one for those who reject God. Jesus will come again to reward His followers, but He'll also come to punish those who reject Him. This inspired apostle said in 2 Thessalonians 1 verses 7 to 9, "and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might." Can you imagine how sad it would be to spend eternity separated from

God? You see, God closes his ears to their prayers in eternity, because they have closed their hearts toward Him in this life.

What can you expect of the future? Well, that depends on you, my friend. The Bible says in Romans 2 verses 6 to 11: that “He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality.” Now those who choose to rebel against God and to ignore Him will indeed face eternal punishment according to Matthew 25 and verse 46.

The Bible warns us about where sin will lead. Hebrews 10:26 to 27 says, “For if we go on sinning deliberately (willfully) after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.” Verse 31 concludes, “It’s a fearful thing (a fearful thing) to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Now some people ask if hell is really eternal. Well the New Testament uses the words *aion* and *aionios*--eternity and eternal—141 times to speak about someone or something that is unceasing, endless, or perpetual. If the word eternal means “without end” when applied to the blessings of eternal life, it must also mean “without end” when describing the eternal punishment of the lost.

The Bible describes our eternal punishment in Revelation 14 verses 9 to 11: he says “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or his hand, he will also drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.”

Now someone at this point asks, “Well isn’t all this just a figure of speech?” Well there are many figures of speech in the Bible. And many people fall into doctrinal error, because they interpret a passage literally when they should interpret it figuratively or they interpret it figuratively when it should be understood literally. Many think because a passage is figurative, that this somehow denies what the passage is trying to say. But this is not right at all. Jesus did not use figures of speech to deny what he was saying. He used them to emphasize the points he was making. He felt it important enough to emphasize it with a figure of speech. Because He wanted people to remember what He had to say, and that’s why He sometimes uses figures of speech.

Now we learn a little more about this future punishment in Revelation 20 verses 13 to 15. The Bible says, “And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” Now I can’t imagine anything worse than going to hell; it’s a horrible thought. And I don’t wish that for anybody. The only thing worse would be that I led someone else to go there. You see, it’s not just you or me that’s involved here; when you choose to do evil you may lead someone else to do evil; it’s also those who we love and who we influence.

Now at this point somebody says, “Well how can a loving God send anyone to hell and punish them forever?” Well this is an important question and it deserves an answer. First, God didn’t make hell for people, for humans; according to Matthew 25 and verse 41 He made Hell for the devil and his angels.

Now if anyone is lost, it's by his own choice to follow the devil by giving in to sin. Hell is filled with people who either ignore God or live in rebellion toward God and His teaching.

Second, God must punish sin to be holy and righteous. Now when sinners follow evil, they become enslaved to sin. When people become unchangeably set in their thinking and their ways, they'll likely always wish God would just go away and quit interfering with their lives. They can actually begin to hate righteousness.

Third, God has done everything possible to keep us from being lost. He's given us the Bible, the Bible to teach us, He's given us the church to help us, He sent His Son as a sacrifice for us. Now before you decide God is unloving, remember that He sacrificed His Son for you, and Jesus suffered terribly on the cross for you. Now the Lord Jesus didn't suffer for his own sins but for your sins and mine. Jesus has demonstrated beyond question His great love by dying on the cross for us. He died in our place; He bore the punishment that we should have received. The Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, so that we could live free from sin and live with Him forever. He took our place on the cross, so that we could be set free from sin and death. Now if God had not provided an answer for hell, we'd all be in a sorrowful condition; but Jesus sacrificed His body on the cross to give us a solution to the threat of hell, and He did it willingly, and He gave it to us freely. God hasn't left you without hope. And you don't have to be lost. You can go to heaven, if you'll love and serve the Lord Jesus.

Now each day you're choosing whether you want to draw closer to the Lord or whether you going to pull away from Him. If you wish to have a home with God in heaven, you need to let God have a home in your heart and your life. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:23, that "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him." My friend, could God make His home with you? Do you love God? Are you living in obedience to His Word? Have you given God even a second thought? Are you for Him, or living in rebellion to His Word? What are you choosing for your eternal destiny? Let's pray together. Oh Father, we're thankful for all that You have provided for us, that we may live with You forever. Help us to take You seriously, and Your word seriously. And Father may Your will be done on earth, in our lives, just as it's done in heaven. In Jesus name we pray, Amen!

The Bible says in 1 Timothy 2 verses 3 to 4 that God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost, so that they might not go to that place. Jesus chose twelve apostles and gave the church the task of taking the gospel to every person. Because He doesn't want you to be lost eternally; he wants you for his own. I have no desire to see anyone lost, and that's why I have spent my whole life preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. That's why churches of Christ and many individuals support this program. We're in the saving business, teaching people about the love of God and the blood of Christ. Part of preaching is helping people to see how sin destroys us, but the other part is telling how God has opened a door of hope and forgiveness for them.

The loss of your soul is the worst thing that can happen to you. I don't have words to describe the hopelessness and the horror of that place the Scriptures call "hell." Rather than ignore the Scriptures or reject the Lord, listen to His warnings and come to Him. I pray that you'll come to Him by loving and believing in the Lord Jesus, repenting of your sins, by confessing Him publicly to all, and by being baptized in water for the remission of your sins. When you do this the blood of Jesus will cleanse you. You may have become a Christian, my friend, many years ago but maybe in more recent years you've rebelled against Him. You need to come back to Him. I want everyone, everywhere, to be a citizen of

heaven. And one day the only question that will matter will be whether we hear: "Well done, good and faithful servant" or "Depart from me, you worker of lawlessness." My friend, what will you hear? What will you hear?

We hope that today's study about the afterlife has stirred you to think about your soul. Think about what God says. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, then mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, if you get a hold of us, we're not here to exploit you or to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

We do ask that you please, please get involved with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a healthy, sound Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So we ask that you keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. As always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.