

Introduction

All my life I was taught, and accepted as a fact, that hell was a literal place of never-ending torment – a place of burning fire for all those who failed to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ. I was raised in a church that was part of a large, mainstream denomination which taught a traditional, orthodox view of hell. That is, all who did not receive Jesus Christ were doomed to spend eternity in never-ending torment in hell. While I am sure the Bible was taught in this church, I really don't remember much I was taught there. But I got the part about hell! I remember being very scared of the devil and hell at a young age, before I ever started school.

The vast majority of Christian churches today believe that all people who do not receive Jesus Christ will be doomed to spend eternity tormented in the flames of hell with no possible escape forever. Every church I ever belonged to taught this same view of hell. This is what my parents and grandparents believed. This is what my Bible school teachers taught. This is what I believed as I became a pastor of a church. And it is very likely the official teaching of whatever church group you may belong to now.

However, based on the evidence you will find in these pages, I can confidently say we have been wrong, at least in part!

This realization did not come easily or quickly. It was a struggle for me to change my thinking. Tradition is hard to overcome.

Frankly, I was so certain that the Bible taught hell as a place of eternal suffering for all who did not receive Jesus Christ, that for years I never even bothered to study the subject. The Bible seemed clear, so why waste any time on the subject?

But what I was taught is not the true teaching of the Bible. I admit that, on the surface, it seems beyond dispute that the Bible does teach an eternal hell of torment, based on what our English translations of the Bible say about hell and punishment. But the New Testament was not written in English, but in Greek. So, all English Bibles are only translations and not infallible.

Yet you don't have to become a Greek scholar to clearly see what we have been taught about hell is not entirely correct. This book, written so anyone should be able to understand it, will give you all the information you need to make an informed decision.

If we want to know the truth, we need look no further than the Bible. But to understand the Bible we must consider that all English Bibles are translations from the original languages and therefore may have some problems. But it is not that difficult for a person who only understands English to use the Bible study tools that are available to help us grasp the true meaning of the words used in the Bible.

I want everyone to know that I accept the Bible as the Word of God. So we will not look to any authority other than the Bible, and we will not ignore anything the Bible says on this subject. This study will be based completely and solely on the Bible itself.

This book will show that nothing in the Bible indicates there will be eternal, never-ending torment for anyone. This is not to say there will be no judgment, for the Bible clearly teaches there will be judgment and punishment. There will be consequences for our actions! But the Bible, properly translated, never says punishment will be never-ending torment in a fiery hell.

In this book I am not insisting that there is no hell -- only that the Bible does not clearly teach everlasting, never-ending punishment. I freely admit that I am not the judge and therefore don't claim to know all about how judgment will be rendered for anyone, or how long any individual's punishment may last, or what that punishment may be. According to the New Testament, only Jesus Christ is fully qualified to be our judge.

After I began to truly study what the Bible actually said, I finally reached a point where I had to choose between believing what I had been taught about hell, by people I respected, or to believe the Bible. Although I was not quick to make the choice, there really was never any doubt what choice I would make, for I am a Bible believer. I knew making this choice might cost me, and that I could not expect everyone to understand or agree with me, for it seems that the traditional teaching on hell is one of the biggest sacred traditions of Christianity, and anyone who dares to question it is immediately labeled a false teacher.

That same decision confronts you. Will you believe the Bible, or will you believe what you have been taught? After you read this book, you will face that decision. I hope you will choose to believe Jesus and His Word!