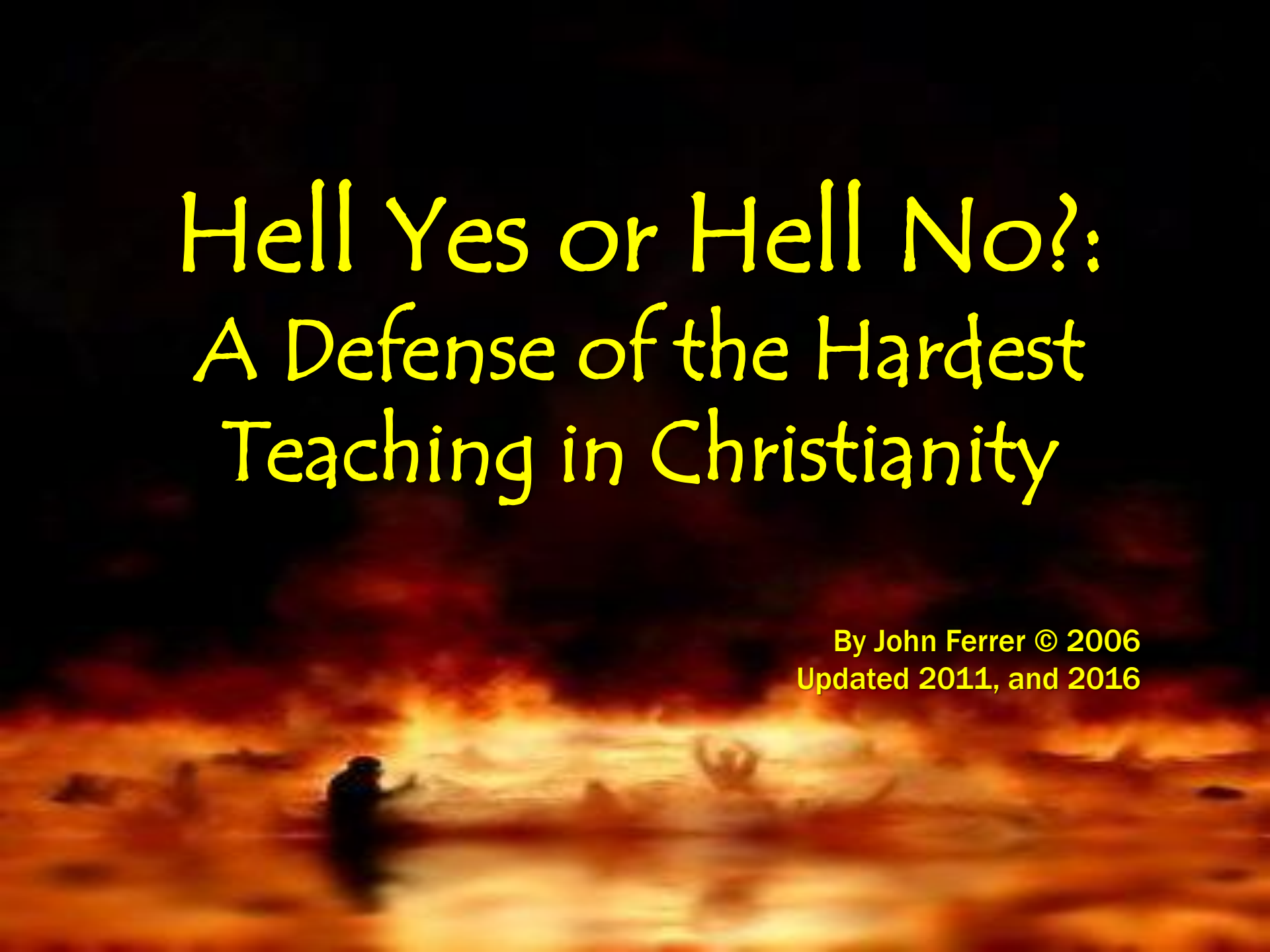


Hell Yes or Hell No?: A Defense of the Hardest Teaching in Christianity

By John Ferrer © 2006
Updated 2011, and 2016



Objective:

- The purpose of this talk is to establish the biblical and theological bases for the doctrine of hell.
 - This is *not* how to conduct your soul-winning crusade. Hell has a place, but that place is after you've earned the trust and opportunity to share about the love of Christ.
 - Nor does this justify unloving or graceless attitudes towards other Christians



What is Hell?

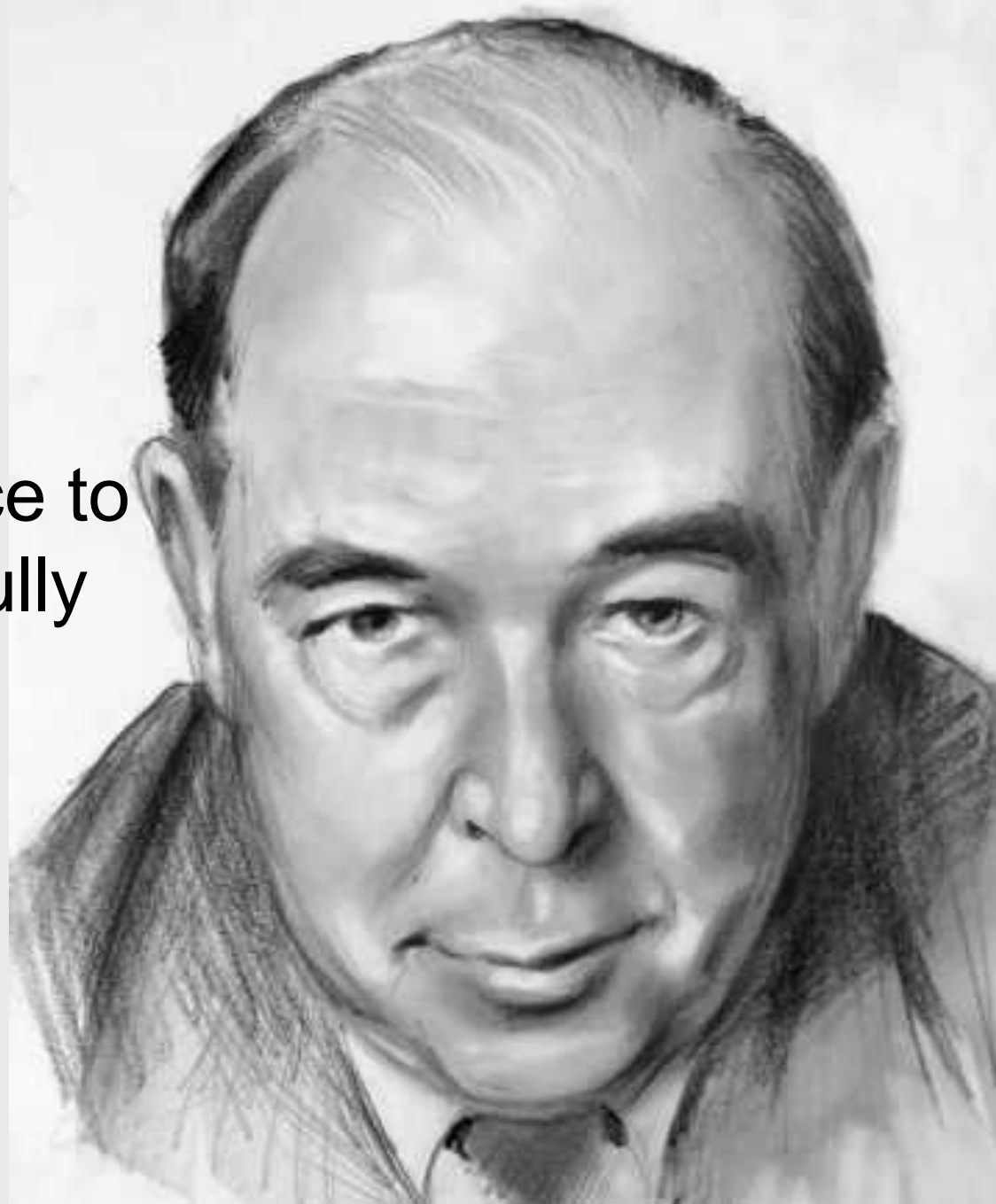
**A clearly biblical teaching
unavoidable for the Jesus-loving,
Bible-believing, God-fearing
Christian.**

(But we kinda wish it wasn't true)

“I would pay any price to
be able to say truthfully
‘All will be saved.’”

C.S. Lewis

The Problem of Pain, Bles. 1940. pg. 107



What's our problem with Hell?



What's our problem with Hell?

Scared of
Fear-
Baiting



What's our problem with Hell?

Scared of
Fear-
Baiting

Bad
Theology



What's our problem with Hell?

Scared of
Fear-
Baiting

Bad
Theology

Lack of
Love



What's our problem with Hell?

Scared of
Fear-
Baiting

Bad
Theology

Lack of
Love

We only
say we
believe it.





WARNING

- Hell is Controversial Stuff
 - Different defenses w/in the church (Calv., Arm.)
 - Some choose “soft-literalism” (J.P. Moreland, W. V. Crockett).
 - Doctrinally, this teaching is not very convincing to people w/ a small view of sin/man, God, or Scripture



WARNING

- Hell is Embarrassing Stuff
 - “hellfire and brimstone” preaching has made it laughable, or overkill, or fear-baiting
 - Church abuse often has threats of hell and perpetual guilt to manipulate people.



WARNING

- Hell is Important stuff
 - If we avoid it we are neglecting Scripture.
 - If we avoid it we gag Christ's teaching
 - If we delete it we distort our worldview and our view of God (ie: Santa Claus theology, Humanism, Buddy Jesus, Romanticized Love, Prosperity Gospel, etc.)
 - Eternal lives are at stake.
 - Several heresies hinge on this

Universalism



Annihilationism





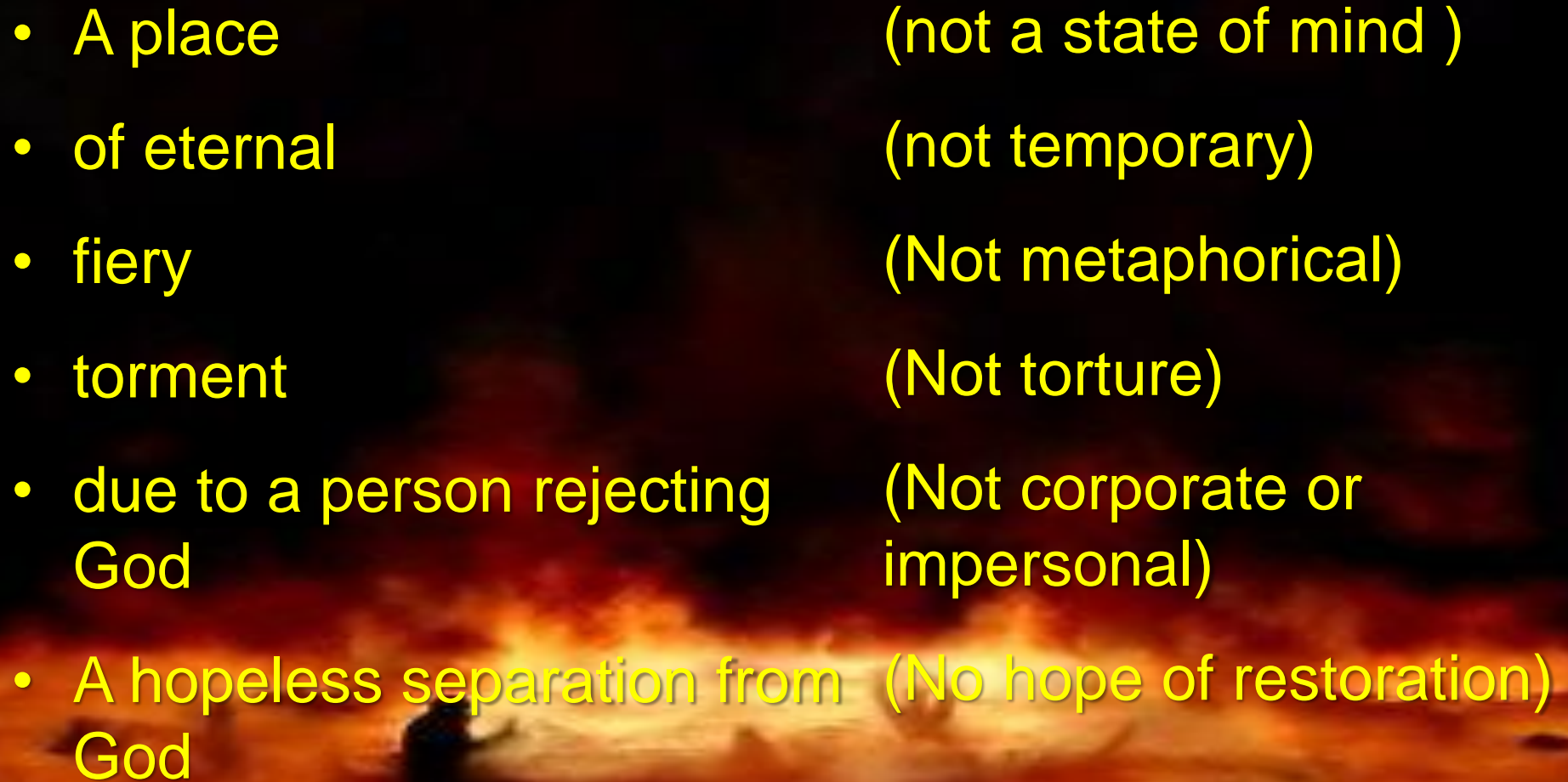
Reincarnation

Hell Yes or Hell No?

- 1) Definition of Hell**
- 2) Historical Defense**
- 3) Biblical Defense**
- 4) Theological Defense**
- 5) Objections**

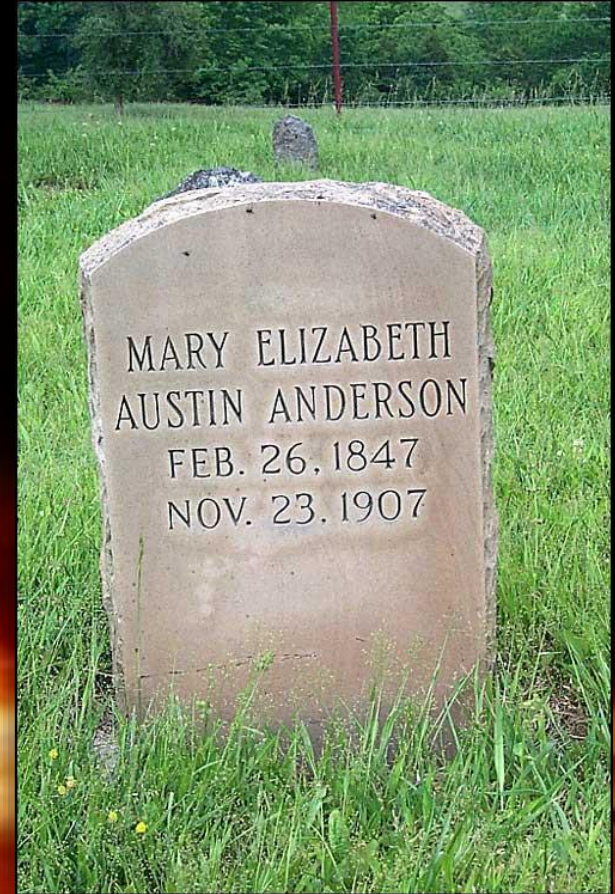


The Literal View: Hell Is. . .

- A place (not a state of mind)
 - of eternal (not temporary)
 - fiery (Not metaphorical)
 - torment (Not torture)
 - due to a person rejecting God (Not corporate or impersonal)
 - A hopeless separation from God (No hope of restoration)
- 
- A silhouette of a person stands in the center of a vast, fiery, and smoky landscape, representing Hell. The background is a mix of bright orange and red flames and dark, billowing smoke, creating a sense of intense heat and desolation. The person is small in the distance, looking out over the expanse of fire.

Terms For Hell

1) Sheol—Hebrew word for the abode of departed souls. Rendered “grave,” “pit,” or “hell” according to context.



“Let them go down alive to Sheol,
for evil is in their dwelling,
in their midst”
(Ps. 55:15)



Terms For Hell

2) Hades –Greek (NT) equivalent of “Sheol.” Generally viewed as “below.”



“And I tell you that you are Peter,
and on this rock I will build my church,
and the gates of Hades will not
overcome it.”

(Matt. 16:18)



Terms For Hell

3) Gehenna—"Valley of Hinnom." Former place of human sacrifice to Molech. Viewed as an abomination. Used for trash and refuse. Subject to constant burning to limit pestilence.



“It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into [Gehenna], where the fire never goes out.”

(Mark 9:43)



Terms For Hell

4) Tartaroō—the subterranean abyss of Greek mythology also mentioned in the apocryphal book Enoch. In the NT appears only in 1 Peter 2:4.



“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to [tartaroō] putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for the judgment”

(2 Peter 2:4)



In Defense of Hell

- 1) Definition of Hell
- 2) A Historical Defense
- 3) A Biblical Defense of Hell
- 4) A Theological Defense
- 5) Objections



A Historical Defense of Hell

1) The Various Creeds Councils and Statements Affirm Hell



Creeds and Councils

- Athanasian Creed (5th cent.)
- 2nd Council of Constantinople (553)
- Waldensian Confession (1120)
- Council of Florence (1438)
- Luther's 95 Theses (1517)
- The Augsburg Conf. (Luth., 1530)
- The Geneva Conf. (Presby., 1536)
- Heidelberg Conf. (Ref., 1563)
- 2nd Helvetic Conf. (1566)
- 39 Articles (Angl., 1573)
- Westminster Conf. (Ref., 1646)
- Conf. of Dositheus (Orth., 1672)
- Keach's Catechism (Bapt., 1677)
- London Bapt. Conf. (1689)
- Puritan Catechism (17th cent.)
- New Hampshire Bapt. Conf. (1833)
- Statement of Fundamental Truths (AoG, 1916)
- Wesleyan Gen. Conf. (1996)
- Evangelical Free Church Statement of Faith (2008)

And Many More...

A Historical Defense of Hell

2) The Church Fathers and Christian Orthodoxy Taught Hell

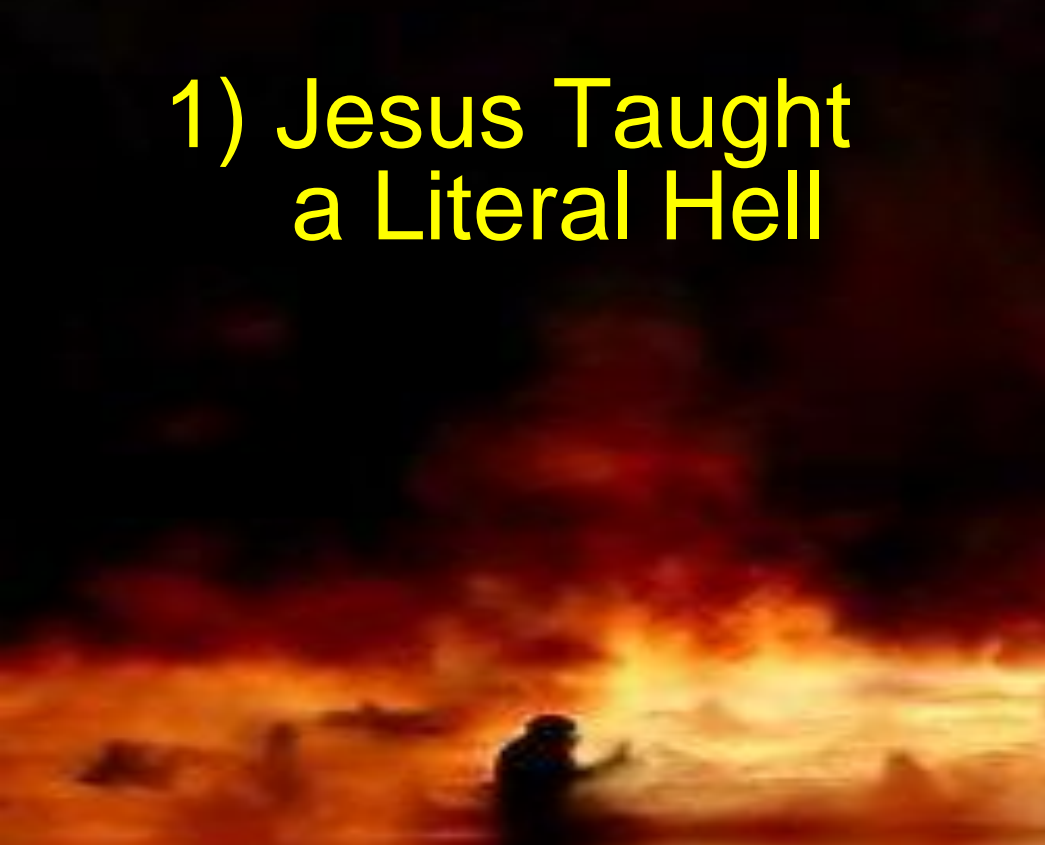


Church Fathers & Teachers

- Barnabas
 - Ignatius
 - Minucius Felix
 - Cyprian of Carthage
 - Cyril of Jerusalem
 - Tatian
 - Justin Martyr
 - Irenaeus
 - Polycarp
 - Theophylus
 - Hippolytus
 - Lactantius
 - Augustine
 - Athenasias
 - Athenagorus
 - Chrysostome
 - Greg. The Great
 - Greg. Of Nazianzus
 - T. Aquinas
 - Duns Scotus
 - Francisco Suarez
 - Luis De Molina
 - John Calvin
 - Ulrich Zwingly
 - Martin Luther
 - Dante
 - Charles Wesley
 - Charles Spurgeon
 - Jonathan Edwards
 - A.A. Hodge
 - Charles Hodge
 - J.I. Packer
 - Billy Graham
 - Wayne Grudem
 - Millard Erickson
 - William Lane Craig
 - JP Moreland
 - Al Mohler
 - Douglas Moo
- And More. . .

Biblical Defense for Hell

1) Jesus Taught a Literal Hell



“But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

(Matthew 8:12)



“Better for you to enter the Kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where ‘their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’ Everyone will be salted with fire.”

(Mark 9:47-49)



“Let [Lazarus] warn [my brothers] so
that they will not also come to this
place of torment.”
(Luke 16:28)



“A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out . . . Those who have done evil will rise to condemnation.”

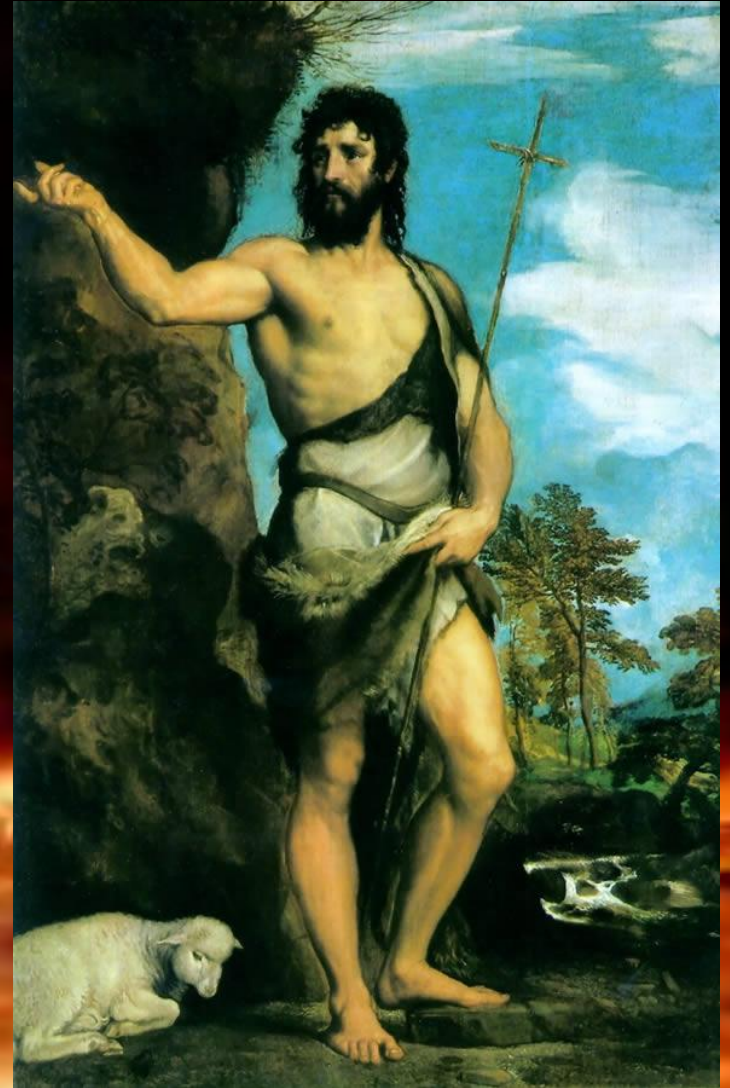
(John 5:28-29)

(see also, Matt. 5:22; 10:28; 11:23; 13:30, 42, 47-50; 22:13; 23:33; 25:30, 41; 46; Mark 9:43-46; Luke 16:25-26; 19:27.)



Biblical Defense for Hell

2) John the Baptist Taught a Literal Hell



“His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

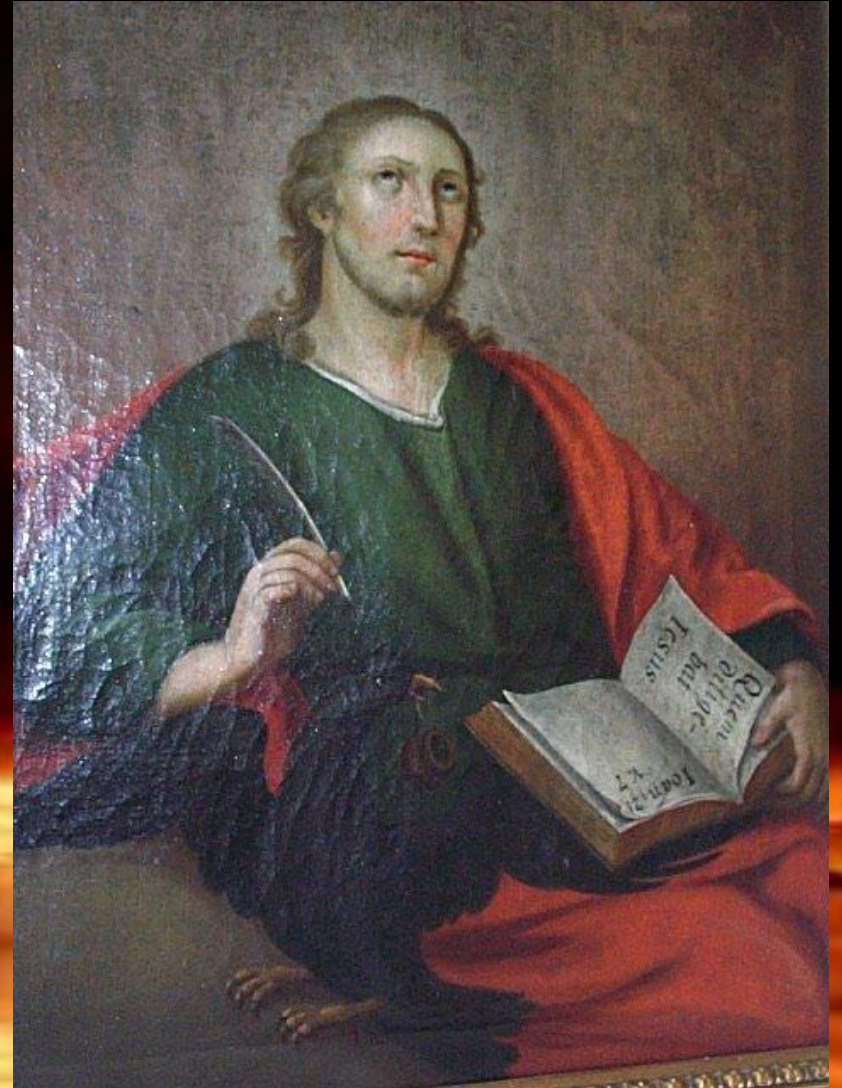
(Matthew 3:12)

* See also, Matt. 3:10; Luke 3:9,17



Biblical Defense for Hell

3) John the Beloved Foresaw a Literal Hell



“And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. . . . if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

(Revelation 20:10, 15)

* See also, Rev. 19:20; 20:10-15; 21:8



Biblical Defense for Hell

4) Some Are Called
Who are Not
Chosen.



“For many are called,
but few [are] chosen.”

(Matthew. 22:14)



Biblical Defense for Hell

5) The Old Testament Teaches A Literal Hell



The Old Testament View of Hell

- A place of future retribution (Job 26:6)
- The abode of the wicked (Prov. 23:4; Job 21:30)
- A spiritual death (Ps 89:48)
- A place of punishment (Prov 15:11)
- Contrasted with the destiny of the righteous (Ps 17:15)



Biblical Defense for Hell

6) The New Testament Teaches A Literal Hell



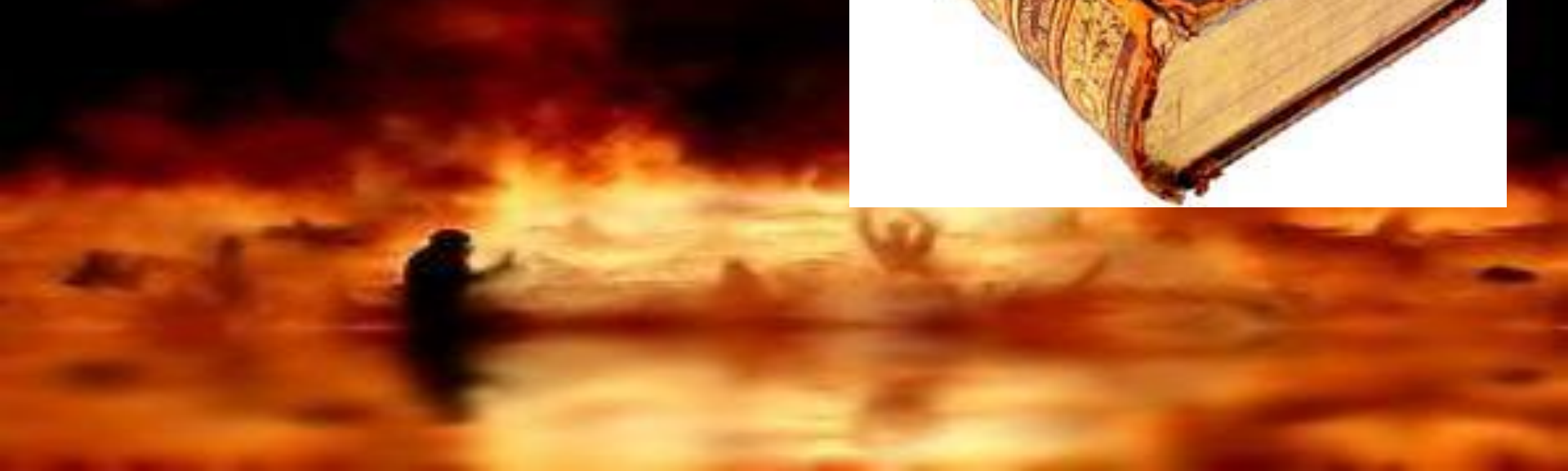
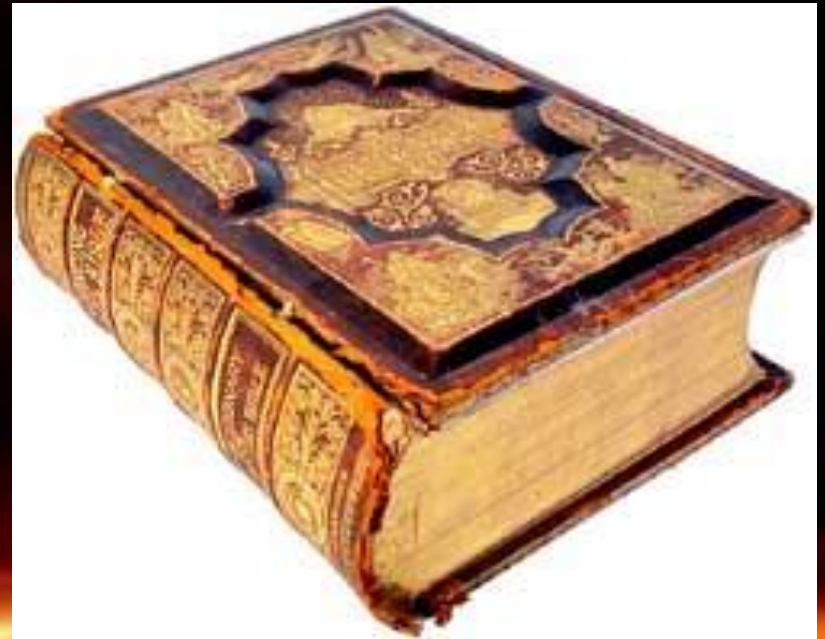
The New Testament View of Hell

- The Pit of the Abyss
(Rev 9:2,11)
- Outer Darkness
(Matt 8:12)
- Everlasting
(Matt 25:41,46; 18:8; Mark 3:29; 2Thess 1:8,9; Heb 6:2; Jude 6-7)
- Final Separation from God
(John 3:36; Matt 8:12)
- The Wrath of God
(Rom 2:5)
- Fiery
(Matt 18:8; Jude 7)
- Destructive
(2 Thess 1:9)
- Bondage
(lit. “chains” 2 Thess 1:8)



Biblical Defense for Hell

7) The full picture of Scripture teaches a literal hell.



“And they will go out and look upon the
dead bodies of those who rebelled
against me; their worm will not die,
nor will their fire be quenched, and
they will be loathsome to all
mankind.”
(Isaiah 66:24)



“And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, he has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.”
(Jude 6)



“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”
(Daniel 12:2)

* See also, 2Thess. 1:8-9; 2:9-12; 2Pet. 2:1, 4-9; Jude 1:12, 13



Theological Defense of Hell



From God

- 1) God's Justice Demands A Hell
to tolerate evil is itself evil
- 2) God's Love Demands a Hell
Love Cannot be forced
- 3) Heaven implies a Hell
Eternal fellowship with God is only for some.



From God

4) God's Sovereignty Demands a Hell

Without hell there's no final victory over evil

5) From the Crucifixion

Were sin not deserving of hell then the cross would have been overkill



From Man

1) Human Depravity Demands a Hell

All sin is against God, so our sin is infinitely “heavy.” Only an infinite punishment is just.

2) Human Dignity Demands a Hell

It would be unloving to leave man no choice but to love God. Plus it would insult the *imago dei* & man's free will



From Man

3) To Deny Hell Is Illusory

man is aware of God's standard, his own failure, and his guilt (Rom. 1:20; 2:23). To deny hell is convenient but such beliefs do not reality make.

4) Hell is affirmed in many of the Cults and Religions of the World.

Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Islam, Judaism, The Bahai, Zoroastrianism, etc.

5) All other judgment options fail



Judgment Options

- a) God May Not Exist (no ultimate judgment)
- b) God could let unforgiven sinners into heaven
- c) God could forgive everyone regardless.
- d) God could force change upon sinners to prevent their sinning.
- e) God could let people go on till they succeed.
- f) God could annihilate the unregenerate.



a) God May Not Exist (no ultimate judgment)

- Proofs for God: Argument from Design, Cause and Effect, Morality.
- Psychologically, all men feel guilt and fear judgment—witnessing to their awareness of a Good God.
- Scripture affirms that all men know about God and his righteous standard (Rom 1:18-20; 2:12)



“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

(Romans 1:18-20)



“All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.”

(Romans 2:12)



b) God Could Let Unforgiven Sinners Into Heaven (Universalism)

- Then heaven would not be heaven
- Treats sin like it's no big deal.
- Demeans God's justice in exalting man.
- Declared Heresy in the 2nd Council of Constantinople (5th ecumenical council, 553AD)



c) God could forgive everyone regardless. (Universalism)

- Again, sin is treated like it's no big deal
- Again, God's justice is compromised
- To force forgiveness on everyone demeans man since not everyone wants God to forgive them (especially if that forgiveness proves costly)
- Declared heresy.



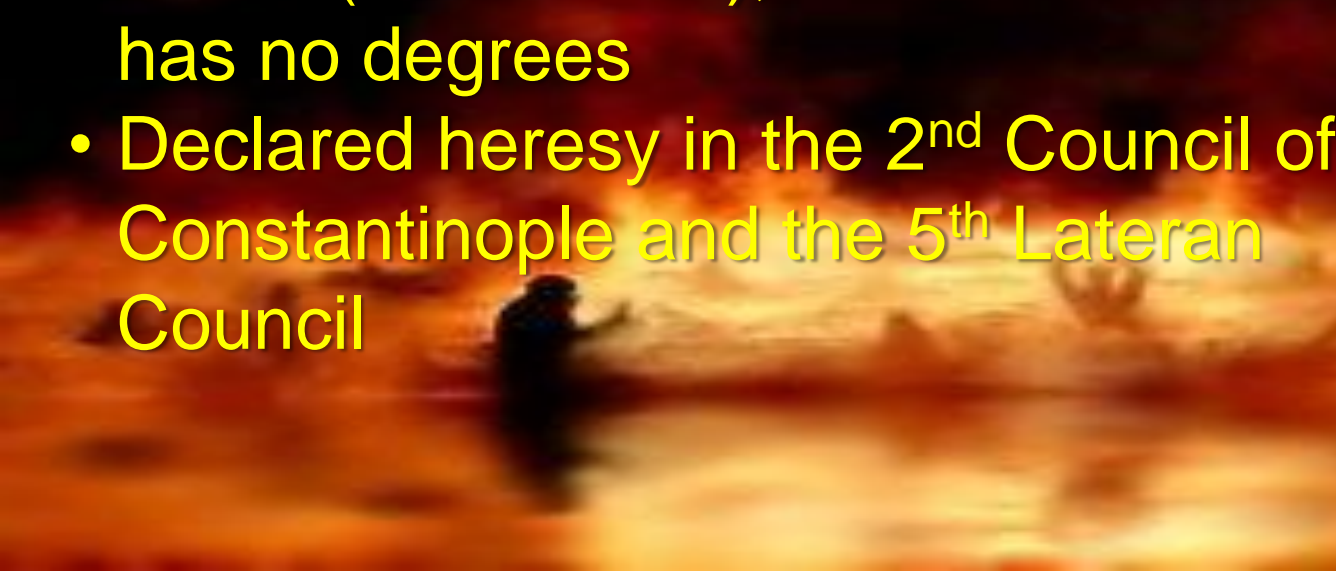
d) God could force sinners to be good.

- Insults man by denying his free will.
- Demeans God by making Him into a divine slave-master or rapist.
- Disallows a loving relationship since love requires free-will and this option denies that opportunity.



e) God could annihilate the wicked at death (Annihilationism)

- Kills God in effigy (Gen 1:26)
- Mutes the affect of sin.
- Scripture's default meaning of "death" is separation, not annihilation
- Scripture teaches degrees of punishment in hell (Matt. 11:24), but annihilationism has no degrees
- Declared heresy in the 2nd Council of Constantinople and the 5th Lateran Council



f) God could let people go on till they succeed (Reincarnation, 2nd Probation).

- God has “permitted man once to die” and then the judgment (Heb. 10:27)
- History, theology and psychology suggest it’s naïve to think everyone will eventually get it right.
- Presumes that God is not longsuffering enough (2Pet.3:9)



“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

(2 Peter 3:9)



Answering Objections



Objection 1: Hell Is Not In the Old Testament



- Hell is a place of future retribution (Job 26:6)
- Everlasting shame and contempt (Dan 12:2)
- The abode of the wicked (Prov. 23:4; Job 21:30)
- A spiritual death (Ps 89:48)
- A place of punishment (Prov 15:11)
- Opposite the destiny of the righteous (Ps 17:15)
- A place of rot and fire for the rebellious (Isa 66:24)



Objection 2: Hell is just a colorful term for “death.”



- Death means “separation”
- Dishonest handling of the text.
- The Old Testament, The New Testament, Christian Theology, and Church history uniformly reject this.



**Objection 3: People in Heaven
Could Not Be Happy Knowing
That Others Were In Hell.**



- We will celebrate that justice is served, and God's name is vindicated.
- God's glory will be our preoccupying interest
- We have time to mourn now, but we also have time to do something about it.
- "Now I know in part, then I shall know fully" (1 Cor 13:12, ESV).



**Objection 4: The Literalist is
Biased in Selecting what is
Biblical “Metaphor.”**



- If anything, the maligning bias pulls the other way. If a soft/no-hell doctrine could come from a fair reading of the whole Scripture it would have become orthodoxy, as that is much more attractive.
- Everyone's biased—so what? The bias must be maligning to be a problem.
- There are textually responsible reasons for interpreting passages as metaphor.



- **Biblical Metaphors**

- Key Words: “Like” or “As”

- The passage includes a legend (list of what symbols mean), ala: Matt 13:18-23

- The “normal” reading contradicts other Scriptures

- The passage is poetic and the term or idea in question is part of that poetic framing. Poetry is indicated by devices like parallelism, hyperbole, repetition, alliteration, or song cues



**Objection 5: No One Alive
Has Experienced Hell so No
One Really Knows.**



- Experiential fallacy—assumes that experiential knowledge is the only kind of knowledge.
- We can know about Hell through a reliable authority (Scripture) and by inference (theology and philosophy).



Objection 6: A Good God Couldn't Send People To Hell



- A good God couldn't let sin go unpunished as that would make Him a bad judge.
- God doesn't send anyone to Hell. People send themselves to hell as He allows them the consequence of their own choices.



Objection 7: Some Scriptures Suggest Universalism



- *I Corinthians 15:22*. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

This teaches bodily resurrection, not universal salvation.

- *Colossians 1:19-20*. For in him [Christ] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Reconciliation and peace include just consequences for sin. No one is condemned without “due process.”



- *Romans 5:18*: Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. ¹⁹For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.

All have access to acquittal and life, but they must have faith (5:1; 10:9-10)

- *Romans 11:32*: For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

People from all the tribes of Israel/church will be saved.



Hell Yes or Hell No?

**By John Ferrer © 2006
Updated 2011**



