

## Will A Loving God Send People To Hell?

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One of the most difficult doctrines for people to accept is the concept of an eternal Hell. It's much easier, of course, to accept that God will provide a place called Heaven than to accept the existence of Hell.

I remember a high school friend telling me one time, "I just don't think a loving God would send people to Hell." That's a very popular opinion, but it's not what the Bible teaches. Unfortunately, that opinion isn't only held by a common church-goer or even someone not very religious. It's even espoused by denominational preachers.

For instance, Stephen Jones, the preacher for the First Baptist church of Kansas City, wrote, "Recent terrorism in Paris speaks of hell on earth. Hell as a future reality isn't a place. It's a theological idea to hold us accountable.

"As a child, I was taught that the "saved" would enjoy eternal life and the "lost" burn in hell," Jones wrote. But "an adult, I don't find those dichotomies helpful. The world doesn't divide that easily.

"I have a difficult time thinking of eternal punishment. I can't imagine anything that would separate my children from my love forever.

"So I find myself in that awkward place of believing in accountable love for the way we live our lives. And believing that there are better ways of considering that accountability beyond the theological construct of eternal damnation."

Part of the mistake people such as Stephen Jones make when it comes to the doctrine of Hell is inserting their opinions and wishes into the equation instead of simply accepting what the Bible teaches regardless of whether they like it or not. So here's what the Bible teaches about Hell.

**God loves us.** First and foremost, John 3:16 affirms, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

In his epistle, John tell us that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). He is the very definition of love. He is the source of love. And his love extends to each and every one of his creation. He doesn't pick and choose whom he will love.

**God wants us to be saved.** Because of his great love for us, he has done everything in his power to save us. He has provided what we could not – a way in which to escape the consequences of our sins. And he did it by giving himself on the cross in the person of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice to appease his wrath and provide a punishment for sins.

Paul tells us that "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

**God doesn't want us to be lost.** It follows that if God loves us and wants us to be saved that he doesn't want us to be lost. Peter wrote that God "is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). Again, he doesn't arbitrarily pick and choose whom he loves or whom will be saved or lost. All are precious in his sight, and he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:32).

**Heaven is the eternal home of the saved, and Hell is the everlasting punishment for the unsaved.** Jesus promised a place where we could be with Him and enjoy eternal life (John 3:16; 14:1-3). The Bible calls that place Heaven (1 Pet. 1:4). He also taught that there is a place called Hell (Matt. 5:22, 29-30) and that it is a place of everlasting punishment (Matt. 22:46). The description of fire in Hell, whether literal or figurative, is used to impress upon us the pain and suffering that exists there.

The Bible teaches that when the world ends, Christ will come "in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Will a loving God send people to Hell? The Bible makes it very clear—Yes! But it's not because God wants to. Rather, it's because people made a choice not to love God and to rebel against him. In a sense the answer is "No!" Because people send themselves by their rejection of God's love, grace and mercy.

The eternal hope of Heaven awaits those who will obey Christ. Sadly, the dire prospects of everlasting punishment in Hell is the end of those who refuse the invitation of Jesus. (Matt. 11:28-30).

The decision is yours.