

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE REALLY SAY ABOUT HELL?

Study Handout — Participant Guide

## BIG IDEA

- The Bible uses multiple words translated "hell" in the KJV; to understand the doctrine, we must define terms and follow the storyline to final judgment.

## KEY TERMS (Quick Reference)

- **Sheol (OT, Hebrew):** the grave / pit / realm of the dead (definition depends on context).
- **Hades (NT, Greek):** the unseen realm / abode of the dead; depicted in Luke 16:19–31.
- **Gehenna (NT, Greek):** judgment term rooted in the Valley of Hinnom (see 2 Kings 23:10); used in Jesus' warnings (e.g., Matthew 10:28; Mark 9:43–48).
- **Tartarus (2 Peter 2:4):** punitive confinement for sinning angels, "reserved unto judgment."
- **Lake of fire (Revelation):** final judgment and "second death" (see Revelation 20:10, 14–15; 21:8).

## OLD TESTAMENT CONTEXT: Sheol (KJV)

### 1. The Universal Reality of Death (The Grave)

- Genesis 37:35 — Jacob: "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning."
- Ecclesiastes 9:10 — "...there is no work...nor knowledge...in the grave, whither thou goest."

### 2. God's Sovereignty and Deliverance

- 1 Samuel 2:6 — "The LORD...bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up."
- Psalm 16:10 — "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."
- Psalm 49:15 — "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me."

### 3. Sheol as Judgment and Warning

- Psalm 9:17 — "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."
- Proverbs 15:24 — "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath."
- Isaiah 14:9 — "Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming..."

### 4. The Bridge to Resurrection

- Daniel 12:2 — "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

## REQUIRED SCRIPTURE READINGS (KJV) + What to Look For

- **Daniel 12:2** — Resurrection; two everlasting outcomes.

- **Matthew 25:46** — Parallel: "everlasting punishment" / "life eternal."
- **Mark 9:43–48** — Seriousness of sin; unquenchable fire / undying worm imagery.
- **Matthew 10:28** — Fear God rightly; ultimate authority over body and soul.
- **Matthew 13:42** — Furnace of fire; "weeping and gnashing of teeth."
- **Matthew 8:12** — "Outer darkness"; exclusion and sorrow.
- **Luke 16:19–31** — Conscious after-death reality; irreversible separation; urgency now.
- **2 Peter 2:4** — Sinning angels; chains of darkness; reserved unto judgment.
- **Revelation 20:10, 14–15** — Devil's doom; "death and hell" cast into lake of fire; book of life.
- **Revelation 21:8** — The "lake...fire and brimstone," "the second death."
- **2 Kings 23:10** — Historical background for Gehenna imagery.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (Open-Ended)

1. Which term (Sheol/Hades/Gehenna/lake of fire) is being used in each passage, and what does that term emphasize?
2. What does Revelation 20:14 imply about the relationship between "hell" (as a state/place) and the "lake of fire"?
3. In Matthew 25:46, how does the parallel structure shape your understanding of "everlasting"?
4. What is the main warning of Mark 9:43–48—and what is the main hope implied by "enter into life"?
5. What do you learn about God's justice and God's mercy when reading Daniel 12:2 alongside John 3:18–19?
6. How should the reality of judgment change the tone of our evangelism (truth + compassion)?
7. What is one way to talk about hell that is biblically faithful and pastorally wise?

### KEY DISCUSSION POINTS TO ADDRESS

- Eternal Punishment vs. Eternal Life: If "everlasting punishment" is not forever, how can we say "life eternal" is forever? (Matthew 25:46; Daniel 12:2)
- Distinction: Abode of the Dead vs. Final Punishment: Hades (Luke 16) is not the same as the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14).
- A Loving God and Eternal Punishment: What about demons/angels? They are created beings under eternal judgment (2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 20:10).
- Human Responsibility: God did not "send" you to hell; condemnation is tied to rejecting the Son (John 3:18–19).

### PRACTICAL CHALLENGE (1 Week)

Gospel Clarity Practice: Write a 3–4 sentence explanation of the gospel that includes (1) God's holiness, (2) human sin, (3) Christ's saving work, and (4) the call to repent and believe—without exaggeration or manipulation.

### MEMORY VERSE (Choose One)

Matthew 25:46 (KJV) — "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

John 3:18 (KJV) — "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."