

## Studies on Hell – Part 3 – The Fire of God

Hi everyone and welcome to “Grain of Wheat Publishing” and “Studies in Scripture.” My name is Jack Marshall and thank you for joining me today.

This is Part 3 of my series, “Studies on Hell.” If you haven’t had a chance to view Part 1 or 2, I would encourage you to do so.

Our topic today is “The Fire of God.”

Let’s begin our study with the following from Romans, Chapter 1, verses 18 through 20, the New International Version.

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. **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.**

As these passages indicate, the greatest evidence of God’s Word and truth can be found in creation. As Paul stated, “God’s invisible qualities—**His eternal power and divine nature**—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.” Perhaps this explains why humankind’s beginning recorded in the first few chapters of Genesis, is written in parable form and includes the “Garden of Eden” and the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” and the “tree of life.”

So what is a parable? Vincent’s Word Studies in the New Testament tells us that the word “parable” is taken from two Greek words which basically mean, “To *throw beside*,” so it is a, quote, “form of teaching in which one thing is *thrown beside* another. Hence its radical idea is *comparison*,” end quote. Now, consider the following from J. Preston Eby about parables.

If a parable is only a story, why not call it a story? Why use an unusual word like parable, if an ordinary word like story will do? The answer is simple: A parable is more than a story. It is a story plus, it has a bonus added to the story. It has two things that run side by side – the lesson and the reality!

So that’s where a parable is different; it’s more than a story – it has a story line and then a parallel line – a new idea, concept, or meaning to comprehend! Also – parables may be based upon actual events. For instance, when Jesus begins His parable by saying, “A sower went forth to sow...” if there were no such things as actual farmers, soil, and seed we would miss His point altogether. The natural and outward corresponds in principle to the spiritual and inward – the one is set along side the other. That’s just what makes it a parable!

In keeping with the idea of parables, consider what’s recorded in Matthew 13, verses 34 through 35.

All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, **he said nothing to them without a parable.** This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world."

Also, from Mark 4, verses 33 and 34.

With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. **He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.**

So think about this. Jesus never spoke “without a parable.” Now, not for a second do I think this means that Jesus said everything in parables, but it does mean that every time He taught the mysteries of God’s kingdom, He always used parables.

Now, look once more at Romans 1:20.

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.

According to Paul, God’s “eternal power and divine nature” are “clearly seen” and “understood from what has been made.” So, wouldn’t this include His teachings on “hell”? That being said, consider what John wrote in 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:5, the English Standard Version.

**This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.**

Think about what John said. “This is the message we have heard from Him.” Not just any message, but THE message, and not from just anyone, but from the Lord Jesus Himself. And this is the message they proclaimed, that “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”

“God-is-light,” and ONLY light. There is no darkness in Him whatsoever. So if this is true, and in light of Romans 1:20, can we not consider the “created” light to help us better understand? Yes we can, so, consider the following passages in Hebrews, Chapter 12.

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. **For our God is a consuming fire.**

Beloved, did you know that ALL LIGHT is some form of FIRE? Let me say that again. ALL LIGHT is some form of fire. And, did you know that FIRE is not a substance, BUT A PROCESS? That’s right! Fire is a PROCESS. Consider the following from the “Science Learning Hub” website and the article, “What is Fire?”

Quote, “Fire is the visible effect of the process of combustion – a special type of chemical reaction. It occurs between oxygen in the air and some sort of fuel. The products from the chemical reaction are completely different from the starting material.

The fuel must be heated to its ignition temperature for combustion to occur. The reaction will keep going as long as there is enough heat, fuel and oxygen. This is known as the fire triangle.” end quote.

I could of course keep going on this, but I think the point is clear. “Fire is the visible effect of the process of combustion,” which “occurs between oxygen in the air and some sort of fuel.”

Now, what does the “process” of fire do? It causes LIGHT, HEAT, and SOUND, and any fire can be advantageous or harmful, depending on whether it is controlled or not. So, fire, OR LIGHT, can “warm” us and give us the ability to see, OR, it can “burn” and CONSUME whatever is in its path. This being the case, would this not describe what John meant when he said, “God is light” and what Hebrews records, that “our God is a CONSUMING FIRE”?

So think about this—the SAME fire that provides light and warmth in our homes is the SAME fire that can also burn or consume it. So in our Creator, we have both LIGHT and A CONSUMING FIRE. They go hand in hand.

And what does “light” symbolize in scripture? Consider the following from John, Chapter 8.

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "**I am the light of the world.** He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, **but have the light of life.**"

"He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, BUT HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE," Jesus said. So "light" signifies "life." Here's confirmation in John, Chapter 1.

In Him was **life**, and the **life** was **the light of men.**

"The LIFE was THE LIGHT OF MEN," and beloved, what validates this understanding is the most powerful and wondrous light that all of us know, which is the sun, without which, all life on this planet would cease to exist! So FIRE is LIGHT and LIGHT is LIFE! So could we not say then that FIRE is LIFE?

So again, light has a dual effect. The SAME light that warms and lightens our way is the exact SAME light which burns and consumes, so, there is but ONE FIRE involved. Once we really get this, then we should realize that EVERY PASSAGE IN THE BIBLE PERTAINING TO FIRE IN A "SPIRITUAL" SENSE refers to the LIGHT AND LIFE of our CREATOR, for "God is light," and "a CONSUMING FIRE." So even when our Maker, quote, "CONSUMES US," it is for our good, for there is "no darkness" or "death" in Him at all.

With all of this in mind, consider what Paul wrote in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, Chapter 3, verses 10 through 15, the New International Version.

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, **because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.**

In these passages, Paul is speaking of the spiritual concepts concerning the kingdom of God which are built on the foundation of "Jesus Christ." In keeping with our idea of "ONE FIRE," Paul uses "gold, silver," and "costly stones" to illustrate that which is "purified" by FIRE and "wood, hay," and "straw" to illustrate what is "consumed" by it. According to Paul, the "Day" or "light" or "fire" of God is what tests "the quality of each man's work," and if that work is "burned up" or CONSUMED, "he will suffer loss," yet, "he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames." Also realize that once a fire consumes its fuel, it goes out!

So, how does all of this apply to the idea of "hell"? Let's consider this with the following from Matthew 5.

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the **hell of fire.**

Note the phrase, "The HELL OF FIRE." The King James renders this "hell fire," but Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament tells us it is "more accurately, the hell OF fire" as we see in the English Standard Version. What's interesting about this phrase is that it is used just three times in the New Testament, and all three times are by the Lord Himself. And what is the spiritual meaning of *three*? It signifies "divine fullness" or "perfection." In his book, The Biblical Meaning of Numbers from One to Forty, Stephen Jones tells us that, quote, "two witnesses are enough to establish truth, but three brings completeness, clarity, and shape to it," end quote. See Deuteronomy 19:15.

Now, consider the context of our passages from Matthew 5. There we find Jesus referring to the SIXTH COMMANDMENT, "You shall not murder." He then follows with, "But I say to you" and addresses the idea

of anger, judgment, insult, and accusation in the “LIGHT” of this commandment. In other words, He is addressing our heart and the consequences of our actions in the “LIGHT” of the MORAL ESSENCE of the Sixth Commandment. And yes, I said, “in the LIGHT” twice to emphasize my point. In this case, the “light” IS the Sixth Commandment and defines the “fire” to which we are “liable.” So the “hell” OF “fire” speaks of our liability “in the light” of the moral essence of God’s law. Consider Psalms 119:105.

Your word is a **lamp** to my feet and a **light** to my path.

And Proverbs 6:23:

For the commandment *is* a lamp, **and the law a light**; reproofs of instruction are the way of life...

Do you see it? His “law” is a “light.” And light is FIRE. So our “fire” in the “hell OF fire” speaks of the moral and righteous nature of His law, which reflects the DIVINE NATURE of the Giver, who is God Himself.

Now, I could go a couple of different directions here, but let’s consider our word “hell” in Matthew 5. It is the transliteration, “Gehenna.” This word is used only *twelve* times in the King James New Testament, eleven of them in the gospels by the Lord Himself, and just once outside of them in the book of James. And *twelve*? It is the number of “governmental perfection and divine authority.” Coincidence? I don’t believe so.

The definition of Gehenna tells us it is “of Hebrew origin” and refers to the “Valley of the Son of Hinnom” in the Old Testament. Let’s look at what is recorded about this valley in 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles, Chapter 28, verses 1 through 4.

**Ahaz** was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as his father David had done, but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. He even made metal images for the Baals, and he made offerings **in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom and burned his sons as an offering**, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. And he sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.

Now, look at these passages from 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles, Chapter 33, verses 1 and 2 and 5 and 6.

**Manasseh** was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel... And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. **And he burned his sons as an offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom**, and used fortune-telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger.

Ahaz and Manasseh were kings of Israel; wicked kings who “did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord.” And what did both of them do? They “burned” their “sons as an offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom.” This was the valley that Jesus referred to in Matthew 5.

Now, it goes without saying that both of these kings were severely judged by the Lord for their wickedness for what they did in this valley. Consider what Jeremiah recorded in Chapter 7, verse 31, pertaining to the “sons of Judah” and this valley.

And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, **which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart.**

In agreement with this passage, we read the following in regard to the “children of Israel” and the “children of Judah” in Jeremiah, Chapter 32, verse 35.

They built the high places of Baal in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, **though I did not command them, nor did it enter into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.**

Do you see it? Twice it’s recorded that the idea of burning their sons and daughters “in the fire” did not come into the “heart” or “mind” of the Lord God, and, He called it “abomination.” If this was true then, would it not be true today? If our heavenly Father condemned this atrocious act so long ago, would He not condemn it today? So in light of our idea of the “hell of fire,” was Jesus suggesting that God Himself would do what He clearly condemned in Israel, that is, burn anyone in a literal, unending fire? I don’t think so! Rather, as we have already considered, the “fire” of God denotes His righteous and holy nature as exemplified in His law, and the “hell” or “Gehenna” which Jesus referenced appears to be a “type” of our own rebellion and wickedness against the spiritual nature of His law as evidenced in Christ. Now, let me share with you what happened to this Valley of the Son of Hinnom. Consider the following from **New Unger’s Bible Dictionary**.

**To put an end to these abominations the place was polluted by Josiah**, who rendered it ceremonially unclean by spreading over it human bones and other corruptions (see 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 23:10, 13-14 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 34:3-5). From that time it appears to have become the common cesspool of the city, into which its sewage was conducted to be carried off by the waters of the Kidron, as well as a laystall, where all its solid filth was collected.

Here’s an excerpt from **Easton’s Illustrated Dictionary**.

**This valley afterwards became the common receptacle for all the refuse of the city.** Here the dead bodies of animals and of criminals, and all kinds of filth, were cast and consumed by fire kept always burning.

What happened to the Valley of the Son of Hinnom? It became a “common cesspool,” a place of “sewage,” a “common receptacle for all the refuse of the city.” In other words, it became a garbage dump filled with all manner of corruption. So God’s judgment for the idolatrous and wicked acts which took place in this valley was to forever condemn it as a PLACE OF CORRUPTION. This being true, consider the idea of “corruption” in light of the following from Romans 8.

For the creation, that is you and me, was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, **in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.**

In the Lord’s time, the “Valley of the Son of Hinnom” was a “garbage dump,” a place of CORRUPTION, so was this what the Lord had in mind when He referenced GEHENNA in Matthew 5? Was He not speaking in a PARABOLIC SENSE and using the GEHENNA of FIRE to refer to our “SLAVERY TO CORRUPTION” which reveals our resistance to God’s “holy” and “righteous” NATURE as reflected in His divine law? With this in mind, consider what Jesus said to the religious leaders of His time in Matthew 23:15.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, **you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.**

What did Jesus say? “Twice as much a son of hell,” or GEHENNA, “as-you-are.” Beloved, this is present tense, indicating a present state of being, which means that Jesus was NOT referring to some future punishment somewhere but to their current “slavery to corruption” which was plainly evident by their words and deeds. For clarification, look at Matthew 23 verses 27 and 28.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! **You are like whitewashed tombs**, which look beautiful on the outside **but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean**. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but **on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness**.

Outwardly, the Pharisees appeared righteous, however, Jesus made it clear in no uncertain terms that "inwardly," they were "full of dead men's bones and everything unclean." Would this not be another description of and reference to Gehenna or CORRUPTION?

So, let's bring this to the book of James, Chapter 3.

We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check. When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. **Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts**. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. **The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell**. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, **but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison**. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

Our word "hell" in these passages is our word GEHENNA, and James tells us that our tongue or "what we say" "is a FIRE" because it is "set on fire BY HELL" or GEHENNA. In other words, like the Pharisees of old, we speak out of our CORRUPTIBLE NATURE when we "curse" or condemn others. Would this be what Jesus meant for us to understand in Matthew 5 when He spoke of the "hell of fire"? With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with the same tongue we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the SAME MOUTH come praise AND cursing. My brothers, THIS SHOULD NOT BE." Could this also be why we see "cloven tongues like as of fire" in Acts 2:3?

Just as our God is "light" AND "a consuming fire," so our tongue is but ONE FIRE, and out of the "SAME MOUTH," we can speak either "light" and "life" or "death" and "destruction." The difference, of course, is whether we speak out of the Spirit of truth and the "incorruptible" nature of our Lord, or speak from out of our own "corruptible" nature. No wonder then that Proverbs 18:21 reads, "DEATH and LIFE are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it," either death or life, "will eat its fruit."

That's it for today's video and I sincerely hope it has helped you. Please keep in mind that I will be continuing this series on "hell," so be sure to subscribe to my channel. Also, feel free to leave your comments and questions below and visit my Facebook page at Grain of Wheat Publishing or my website at [www.grainofwheatpublishing.org](http://www.grainofwheatpublishing.org). Thank you so much for joining me today and may God bless you in your walk with Christ.