

HELL

WHAT IS YOUR CONCEPT?

- * A place to party?
- * Your life on earth?
- * The grave?
- * A place of torment?
- * A foolish myth?

Where exactly is "hell?" What is it like? Is there such a place as "hell" at all? Most people have asked these questions at one time or another. What they may not realize, however, is that the Bible gives us some very clear answers about these very real questions.

HELL

The word "HELL" is used twelve times in the New Testament of the Bible. In James 3:6 it is used as a general term or synonym for evil. The Lord Jesus Christ speaks of "HELL" eleven times, always referring to the punishment of the unsaved in flames and torment after death, either the immediate punishment of the soul and spirit in the heart of the earth (Hades), or the eternal punishment of the resurrected body, soul, and spirit in the lake of fire after this heaven and earth are destroyed (Rev. 20:11-15). Jesus begins His warnings in Matt. 5:22.

*"...but I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into **the fiery hell**.*

Here our Lord speaks of HELL as a place of fire. Again, He warns people in Matt. 5:29-30 and in Matt. 18:8-9.

*Matt. 5:29-30 "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into **hell**. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into **hell**."*

*Matt. 18:8-9 "If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into **the eternal fire**. If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the **fiery hell**."*

Jesus is teaching us that it is better to suffer the temporary loss of someone or something (as dear as a body part), than to suffer forever in HELL and the lake of fire after you die! Jesus also warns us in Luke 12:5;

"But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell, yes, I tell you, fear Him!"

Again, He warns in Matt. 10:28 as follows: *"And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."*

We are not to fear MAN, who can only kill and destroy the flesh. But we are to fear God, who can kill and destroy BOTH soul (spirit) and body in HELL--the place of eternal punishment for our sins. (Note: Our soul and spirit are not separated at death.)

Jesus talks about two places where people will spend eternity after death, and He uses the word "eternal" to describe them.

*"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the **eternal fire** which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;..., and these will go away into **eternal punishment**, but the righteous into **eternal life**'" (Matt. 25:41, 46).*

THE LAKE OF FIRE

When we die, we **all will** go on into eternity. The question is not "if" we will exist eternally; it is "where" that eternity will be spent, with God (eternal life), or in hell and in the lake of fire (eternal punishment) "day and night, forever and ever!" Jesus said in Rev. 20:10,

*"And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of **fire** and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."*

Our Lord also talks about the "lake of fire" in Rev. 19:20.

*"And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who had worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive in the lake of **fire** which burns with brimstone."*

Let's go to Jude 1:7 and see what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah.

"Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after

strange flesh, are exhibited as an example, in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire."

Notice what kind of punishment they are undergoing, and how long it lasts. To escape the "punishment of eternal fire," your name **MUST** be found in the book of life. This book contains only the names of those who believe that they will never be good enough to go to heaven and that God became a man to suffer on the cross and in hell to save them from an eternal punishment of flames that they deserve for their sins.

"And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15).

*"And these will pay the penalty of **eternal** destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power..." (II Thess. 1:9).*

The above verse says "AWAY" from the presence of the Lord; not "IN" His presence, but in "eternal destruction" – the lake of fire! The horrible suffering that will begin the moment a person dies in his sins, without a Savior, is a sobering thought. It is even more sobering to comprehend the fact that God would love us enough to become a man and suffer the flames of hell for us! Amazing grace!

HADES

HADES (synonym - hell) is mentioned ten times in the New Testament, five times by Jesus. It always refers to the place of the punished unsaved inside the earth, and is almost always synonymous with "lower" Sheol, "Abaddon," and the "lower parts of the earth" in the Old Testament.

*"For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and burns unto the **lowest part of Sheol**, And devours the earth with its increase, And sets on fire the foundations of the mountains" (Deut. 32:22).*

Sheol (upper Sheol) in the Old Testament corresponds to "Abraham's bosom" in the New Testament. Upper "Sheol," also inside the earth, is where the souls of "saved" people resided after their death until Christ was resurrected. They could see and talk to those below in Hades, as we see in Luke 16:19-30. Jesus emptied upper Sheol after His resurrection. Now the souls of the saved who die now go directly to heaven, to wait for the resurrection of the body (II Cor. 5:6-9; Eph. 4:8).

We read in Luke 16 of an actual, literal account of someone whose departed soul is experiencing HADES even now, as you read this. In verse 22 his body is buried. In verse 23 the man's soul, is conscious of his whereabouts, "*and in **Hades** he lifted up his eyes, being in torment,*" (severe pain and torture). In verse 24 he is still conscious and cries out, "*Father Abraham!*" He is speaking to the soul of Abraham, a REAL person, not a fictitious person. He asks if Abraham, who is being comforted above Hades in upper Sheol, would have mercy on him and if he would send the soul of Lazarus, another REAL person, to "*dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, because I am in AGONY in this FLAME.*" This is literal "AGONY" and it truly means suffering and pain. In Luke 16:27-30, knowing that he himself cannot leave Hades, the man BEGS Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead to his family still living on earth, to warn them of this place of TORTURE that they, like he, did not believe in. Abraham's answer in verses 29-31 is summarized as "Let them read the Bible!" ("Moses and the prophets"--The Old Testament, completed approximately 500 B.C.)

*"And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' "But Abraham said, '**They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.**' "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' "But he said to him, '**If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead**' " (Luke 16:27-31).*

In other words, if they won't accept the Bible's testimony of Hades, they won't listen even if someone comes back from Hades. But someone did come back from Hades--Jesus--and people still do not listen.

The people in Capernaum did not accept Jesus as their Messiah. Even all of the miracles He performed did not change their minds, therefore, they would be punished in HADES with all the departed, unsaved spirits, as stated in Matt. 11:23.

"And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day.

God also speaks of HADES in Acts 2:27: "*Because Thou wilt not abandon my soul to **Hades**, nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay.*" After Jesus died for your sins He went to the same place as the rich man

in Luke 16. Acts 2:31 states, "...he [David] *looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He [Jesus] was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay.*" Now go back seven verses to Acts 2:24, "*And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the AGONY of death ...*" Like the account in Luke 16:24, this reveals the pangs, pain, and suffering of Hades--a place of torment. Jesus was in "**agony**" paying for our sins; the resurrection ended that agony!

Once again look at Acts 2:31. Peter is giving testimony about Jesus Christ, stating that God did not allow His Son's soul to be "*abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay*" in the tomb, fulfilling the prophecy that He would rise again after three days, having PAID the complete death and hell penalty for those who would believe (Luke 24:26 and Mark 8:31). This was predicted in Matt. 12:40, as follows:

*"for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the **heart of the earth** [Hades]."*

Jesus tells us in Revelation 1:18 that He has "*the keys of death and of Hades.*" Rev. 6:8 tells of Satan and his demons who will have power during the Great Tribulation to kill one quarter of the people on the earth. Rev. 6:8 says,

*"And I saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and **Hades** followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth."*

THE ABYSS

Rev. 9:1-3 "*And the fifth angel sounded and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the **bottomless pit** (Gk. abyss) was given to him. And he opened the **bottomless pit** (Gk. abyss); and the smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power."*

Rev. 9:10-11 "*They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months. They have as king over them, the angel of the **abyss**; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon."*

ABYSS (Gk. abussos, also translated “bottomless pit”) is found nine times in the New Testament and is always a synonym for Hades. Christ was in that “abyss” with the spiritually dead, suffering for our sins:

Rom. 10:7 “*or ‘Who will descend into the **abyss**?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).*”

GOD’S PRISON SYSTEM

The structure of our legal system is designed to deal with the guilty in three steps--first, local jail; second, appearance before the judge for sentencing; and third, prison. God's plan is similar. At death, the souls/spirits of all unbelievers, (including “false” Christians, Matt. 7:22-23) immediately drop into the hell of Hades. At the proper time, all those in the abyss/hell--"death and Hades"--will stand before the ultimate judge, God Almighty, for sentencing. Rev. 20:11-15 refers to this event as the White Throne Judgment. Finally, they will be cast into the hell of the "lake of fire" to burn "day and night forever and ever" without parole.

Rev. 20:14-15 “*And death and Hades were cast into the lake of **fire**. This is the second death, even the lake of **fire**. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of **fire**.*”

The following verse tells us that Jesus Christ Himself will deal out retribution (vengeance) on those who do not accept the "FREE GIFT" of salvation by faith alone.

*"dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of **eternal destruction**, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power..."* (II Thess. 1:8-9).

When people do not accept the totality of Jesus’ payment alone for their sins, but add things such as baptism, confirmation, church sacraments, prayer, repenting, confessing, keeping the Commandments or the Golden Rule, giving money, loving their neighbors, going to church, living a good life, or doing anything else considered "good" by human standards, then salvation is no longer a "FREE GIFT," but demands good “works.” The Bible clearly states:

*“For by grace you have been **saved** through faith; and that not of yourselves, **it is the gift of God**, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast”* (Eph. 2:8-9).

*“But to the one who does not work, but **believes in Him who justifies the ungodly**, his faith is credited as righteousness” (Rom. 4:5).*

THE CRIMINAL ON THE CROSS

Luke 23:43 *And He said to him, "Truly I say to you today, you shall be with Me in Paradise."*

Jesus' soul and spirit did not go to "Paradise" that day after dying on the cross, but went into "the heart of the earth," and would be there for "three days and three nights" as we saw earlier in Matt. 12:40. He did not "ascend" until after the resurrection, Jn.20:17. "Paradise" is a synonym for "heaven," **not** a synonym for Abraham's bosom or upper Sheol (II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7). What Jesus is literally saying is "Today I say to you, you shall be with Me in [heaven] Paradise." This actually happened when Jesus ascended into heaven and "led captive a host of captives" (Eph.4:8). Jesus was "the first born from the dead" (Col 1:15).

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT IS REAL

HELL (a synonym for death, Hades, bottomless pit, abyss, heart or lower part of the earth, lower Sheol and the eternal lake of fire) is very real. Please take time to see what God's Word says; then believe it. Realize that understanding the Scriptures is not a matter of one's own interpretation. *"But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation" (II Pet. 1:20).*

You **WILL** exist forever. But **WHERE** you will be **FOREVER** is entirely up to you. Trust in the suffering of God in flesh (Jesus Christ) alone as the total payment for all your sins (to save you from the HELL you deserve) and you will spend your eternity in heaven, since all your sins are paid for! If you refuse to believe and trust in Christ alone, you will find out, much too late, that you've made the same choice as the rich man that we saw earlier in Luke 16. Your time to decide may be up soon. God's grace to you may soon be at an end. Please don't delay. It's a matter of eternal life or eternal death. **YOURS!** *"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).*

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