

7. HELL

In the New Testament, 162 passages speak about unrepentant people going to hell, and 70 of these were described by Jesus, as he warned people to avoid it.

When the unsaved die, they go immediately to hell. Later, at the end of Christ's 1,000 year reign on earth, the unsaved will leave hell, receive their resurrected bodies, go to the Great White Throne Judgment and will then be cast into the Lake of Fire, where they remain forever (Revelation 20:11-15).

I. FOUR BIBLE WORDS THAT DESCRIBE HELL:

1. **GEHENNA**¹⁰⁶⁷ referred to the continually burning rubbish dump on the south west side of Jerusalem, known as the valley of the sons of Hinnom (or Tophet). Jesus used the word "Gehenna" to describe the place of everlasting punishment because hell is a place of filth and stink, a place of smoke and pain, a place of everlasting fire and suffering. This garbage dump was likened to hell. It is used as a name for the place of everlasting punishment of the lost. It occurs twelve times in the New Testament. It is the ultimate hell of fire. It is the same as the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:14,15).

Matthew 5:22 "whosoever shall say, "Thou fool", shall be in danger of hell fire" (gehenna of the fire).

Matthew 5:29 "And if thy right eye offend thee ... and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell" (gehenna).

Matthew 5:30 "And if thy right hand offend thee ... and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell" (gehenna).

Matthew 10:28 "...fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (gehenna).

Matthew 18:9 "And if thine eye offend thee, ... rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire" (gehenna).

Matthew 23:15 "Pharisees, ... ye make him twofold more the child of hell (gehenna) than yourselves."

Matthew 23:33 "Ye serpents,... how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (gehenna).

Mark 9:43 "And if thy hand offend thee, ... two hands to go into hell (gehenna), into the fire that never shall be quenched."

Mark 9:45 "And if thy foot offend thee, ... two feet to be cast into hell (gehenna), into the fire that never shall be quenched."

Mark 9:47 "And if thine eye offend thee, ... two eyes to be cast into hell fire" (gehenna of fire).

Luke 12:5 "Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell" (gehenna).

James 3:6 "the tongue is ... set on fire of hell" (set on fire by gehenna).

2. **HADES**⁸⁶ is the intermediate state between death and the ultimate hell (gehenna), the Lake of Fire. It is where unsaved departed spirits reside. Luke 16:23. Hades never denotes the physical grave, nor is it the permanent region of the lost. Hades occurs 10 times in the New Testament, and Sheol, the Old Testament equivalent occurs 59 times. Hades is associated with privation, detention and just punishment of the unsaved dead.

Matthew 11:23 "Thou, Capernaum... shalt be brought down to hell" (hades).

Luke 10:15 Hades here expresses Capernaum's absolute overthrow, from pride to humiliation.

Matthew 16:18 "The gates of hell (hades) shall not prevail against it" (the churches' attack).

Luke 16:19-31 "And in hell (hades) he lifted up his eyes, being in torments"⁹³¹ (punishment)" v.23. Hades here has two compartments, close to each other, yet different.

Acts 2:27 "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (hades)."

Acts 2:31 "That his (Christ's) soul was not left in hell (hades)."

Christ here descended into the underworld of the departed (Ephesians

4:9,10), to take the believers in it (eg: thief on the cross) up to heaven.

Believers now go to heaven at death, while unbelievers still go to hades at death, a place of punishment.

Revelation 1:18 "I (Christ) ... have the keys of hell (hades) and of death."

Revelation 6:8 "a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and hell (hades) followed with him." Hades here is personified as the temporary destiny of the unsaved.

Revelation 20:13 "death and hell (hades) delivered up the dead which were in them."

Revelation 20:14 "death and hell (hades) were cast into the lake of fire."

Note: Fire is used 27 times in the New Testament to describe the after-death punishment of unbelievers and of demons.

2 Thessalonians 1:8 "In flaming **fire** taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Matthew 13:42, 50 "And shall cast them into a furnace of fire."

Matthew 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43,45,47 "cast into fire unquenchable, hell fire."

Isaiah 66:24 "... look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me, for their worm shall not die, neither shall their **fire** be quenched." Mark 9:44,46,48.

Isaiah 33:14 "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?"

Who among us shall dwell with the everlasting burnings?"

Matthew 18:8 "Two hands or two feet be cast into everlasting fire."

Matthew 25:41 "Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Jude 7 "Sodom and Gomorrah ... an example suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." (**Literally:** of fire eternal, the penalty undergoing).

Revelation 19:20 "Beast, .. false prophet, ... and them that worshipped his image. These were cast alive into a lake of **fire** burning with brimstone."

Revelation 20:10 "the devil ... shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (for the ages of the ages).

Revelation 20:14,15 and Rev. 21:8 "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire."

Revelation 14:10,11 "tormented with **fire** and brimstone ... the **smoke** of their torment ascends up for ever and ever (for ages of ages), and they have no rest (respite) day nor night..."

3. **SHEOL**⁷⁵⁸⁵ is hades of the Old Testament. In Hebrew, it means the depth, abyss, pit, world of the dead, underworld. It occurs 66 times in the Old Testament (grave 31 times, hell 30 times, pit 3 times). Though all Old Testament people went to the grave, the souls of some will receive punishment in sheol.

Numbers 16:30 "Korah, Dathan and Abiram went down into the pit."

Psalms 9:17 "The wicked shall be turned into hell (sheol)."

4. TARTARUS⁵⁰²⁰ is the deepest abyss of Hades; a place where evil angels are imprisoned in torment, awaiting judgment and everlasting punishment.

2 Peter 2:4 is its **only** reference in the Bible.

“If God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell (tartarus), and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.”

II. WHAT IS HELL (GEHENNA and HADES) LIKE?

1. UNQUENCHABLE FIRE: “He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” Matthew 3:12. Hell “fire” is real “fire” because the same Greek word (pur) for fire is used for both. “It rained fire and brimstone...” Matthew 17:15 and Luke 17:29.

The rich man in hades said: “I am tormented in this flame.” Luke 16:24.

2. MEMORY AND REGRET. Abraham said to the rich man in hades “remember” in Luke 16:25. Lost people will remember their sins and the times that they rejected the Holy Spirit convicting them of their sins and their need for Jesus Christ to be their Saviour. They will remember how Christians told them the plan of salvation.

3. THIRST. The rich man in hell begged Abraham to “send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue” (Luke 16:24), yet this was refused. Imagine going without water for one day, let alone for eternity without water.

Jesus Christ offers in John 7:37, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.”

4. SEPARATION. People in hell will experience a “great gulf” (Luke 16:26) between them and God. They took all the good things of life for granted when they were on earth. They will be forever separated from all the good gifts of God. Many unbelievers joke that “I won’t be lonely in hell, as all my friends will be there.” Friendship means nothing under everlasting torment.

5. INJUSTICE AND FILTHINESS OF SIN are in hell. Revelation 22:11. “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy let him be filthy still.” No one likes people treating them unjustly, nor do people like being abused in a filthy manner. The unsaved will experience these conditions forever in hell.

6. HOPELESSNESS FOR ALL ETERNITY. Hell is the everlasting dwelling place of the unsaved. Sooner or later they will realise that they are in hell to stay there forever, with no escape. In Luke 16:26, Abraham told the rich man in hell: “They which would pass from here to you cannot; neither can they pass to us.”

7. STINK OF SULPHUR. “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and **brimstone** (sulphur); which is the second death.” Revelation 21:8.

8. EYESIGHT, HEARING, TOUCH, TASTE AND SMELL are senses that people possess in hell. The rich man in Luke 16:19-31 could “see” Abraham, “hear” his voice, “touch” the flames, desire to “taste” water, and “smell” the sulphur. Revelation 21:8.

9. THE DEVIL and DEMON ANGELS will accompany the Christ rejecters forever.

10. UNSATISFIED DESIRES. Both of the rich man's requests were denied in Luke 16:19-31. He requested a drop of water to cool his tongue, and for Lazarus to return to tell his five unsaved brothers how to be saved and avoid hell. Both requests were denied. How many times a day do you want something and get it? In hell, no one ever gets what they want.

11. PLACE OF WORMS. “Where their worm dieth not...” Mark 9:44,46,48.

Worm means maggot. If the maggots do not die, and the people own the maggots, then neither do the people die or get annihilated in hell.

12. TORMENT and PUNISHMENT. “In hell, he lift up his eyes being in torments.” Luke 16:23.

13. SHAME and HATRED. “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Daniel 12:2. People suffering in hell will get a resurrection body. They will be judged, and sent to the lake of fire in shame at their sins. They will experience everlasting contempt, hating their situation forever.

14. DEGREES OF PUNISHMENT IN HELL. “It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgement, than for that city.” Mark 6:11.

Those who reject Christ most often, will receive greater punishment. Matthew 10:15.

15. WEEPING, WAILING, GNASHING OF TEETH. “So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Matthew 8:12 and 13:49,50. People who today are arrogant, proud Christ-rejecters will be wailing and gnashing their teeth in hell.

16. HADES IS IN THE EARTH. Amos 9:2 “though they dig into hell ...”, Isaiah 14:9 “hell from beneath”, Ephesians 4:9 “descended into lower parts of earth”, Numbers 16:33 “they went down alive into the pit”, Psalm 63:9 “those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth.”

17. HELL IS ORIGINALLY PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS

“Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Matthew 25:41.

How does one get to hell? By neglecting to receive Christ as Saviour.

Hebrews 2:3 “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”

How does one avoid hell? By receiving Christ as their Saviour. John 1:12.

Christians should work harder to rescue people from hell, and seek to build their church to better achieve this task, both at home and overseas.

Question 1: Does “hell” mean “grave” where good and bad must go?

Answer: No, because in Luke 16:19-31 both men went to the grave, but the soul of Lazarus was comforted, and the soul of the rich man was tormented.

Question 2: How can a loving God send people to hell?

Answer: People send themselves to hell by rejecting Christ. God is loving in sending Christ to die for our sins, but God is just in punishing sin.

III. JESUS' STORY OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS in Luke 16:19-31.

An unbelieving rich man who had abundant material possessions and food in this life, died and went to hell. A believing poor man named Lazarus who had nothing in this life but sickness and poverty, died and was carried by the angels into the comfort of paradise. The suffering rich man in hell made two requests of Abraham in paradise:

i) To send Lazarus to put one drop of water on his tongue to relieve his suffering.

The rich man, who refused to show mercy to Lazarus in need, now begged that Lazarus might show mercy to him in his need (v.24). The rich man declares the greatness of his torment saying: “I am in torment (agony) in this fire (or flame).” v.24.

Lesson: Material things have only temporary, not eternal value. Luke 16:25. Abraham responded by calling him "son". This means that he was a son of Abraham by flesh, not by faith. The rich man trusted his **wealth** and his **physical** descent from Abraham for his salvation. Christ showed that neither reason was sufficient for salvation. At death, one's eternal destiny is settled. "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed" (v.26). The rich man could remember his false confidence in wealth, and his wrong devotion to it. This story refutes "**soul-sleep**", because the rich man and Lazarus were conscious, one enjoying comfort, and the other suffering **torment**.

Note: Hades had two sections: paradise and hell punishment. Jesus emptied the paradise section when He rose from the dead and took the Old Testament believers' souls to heaven. Eph. 4:8-10; John 20:17.

"Torment" is used four times and means sorrow and grief.

Abraham gave two reasons why Lazarus could not comfort the rich man:

- a) The rich man had received his reward (Matthew 6:2,5,16), and he had left God out of his life.
- b) The great gulf separated them.

ii) To send Lazarus back to warn his five brothers. Luke 16:27-31.

The rich man did not say: "I'm glad my brothers will come here, we'll have a wonderful time together."

People sometimes say: "I want to go to hell. All my friends will be there."

Answer: There is no friendship in hell. Hell is a place of torment and loneliness.

Lesson: People in hell have a concern for the lost, but they cannot do anything about it, **BUT WE CAN!** What are you doing?

v.29-31: Abraham said that the only thing that could prevent his five brothers from coming to hell was:

Hearing the Word of God, and **responding** to it by faith in Christ as Saviour.

A man named Lazarus did come back from the dead, and some of the Pharisees wanted to kill him (John 11:43-57; 12:10).

God had spoken many times to the rich man while on earth:

1. God permitted him to have riches, but not attributing his riches to God's goodness, he did not repent.

"The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." Romans 2:4-5.

2. Lazarus would have witnessed to him, but his pride rejected Lazarus' message.

3. Old Testament scriptures spoke to him.

4. Lazarus dying first, should have reminded him how he would also die. In hell he was still self-centred, praying for his comfort and for the safety of his family. He was not concerned about other lost sinners. C.S. Lewis says: "The safest road to hell is the gradual one - the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts."

Lessons from the rich man and Lazarus:

1. The souls of men **do not die** with their bodies.
2. The souls of men are **conscious** after death, not asleep until resurrected.
3. The righteous at death are taken immediately to a place of happiness and the wicked are sent to a place of misery and torment.
4. Wealth does not protect us from death.
5. We **should not envy the rich**, as riches can blind us to the reality of eternity.
6. We should seek a better inheritance than this life can give.
7. The sufferings of the wicked in hell will be indescribably great of torment, burning flame, and insatiable thirst, forever.

8. Hell is a place of suffering beyond the grave. If not, this story has no meaning.

9. There will never be any escape from hell. The gulf is fixed.

10. God warns us to prepare for death through:

His Word.

His Holy Spirit pleading with sinners.

His servants.

His goodness leading us to repentance.

Pleadings of friends.

Heaven.

If all that would not move sinners, then what would? He threatens hell.

11. God will give us nothing more to warn us. No dead man will return to tell us what he has seen. If he did, no one would believe him. If you will not hear Christ or the Bible, there is nothing you will hear. You will never be persuaded, and you will never escape the place of torment.

12. We see the amazing folly of those wanting to go to hell. They have been deceived.

IV. THE IMPLICATIONS OF HELL FOR US TODAY

1. **Soul winning** is important. When people get angry at a preacher preaching on soul winning, they are doing the devil's work.

2. We need to become **fishers of men**. Matthew 4:19.

3. If we are **busy** pulling souls out of the fire, we will **not waste our time** fighting other Christians. We will seek to maintain unity in our church.

4. We see **our Church** as of **great importance** in rescuing people from hell. Rescuing people from hell is a major purpose of churches.

5. Hell focuses our attention on **eternity**, taking our attention off petty present things like latest worldly fashions which pale into insignificance in the light of lost people going to an eternal hell.

6. Hell makes us **train workers** to be soul winners.

7. It gives us a **love for people** to win to Christ and to train in the Bible.

8. It makes us **use our time wisely** so that **all we do** helps in some way to rescue people from hell.

9. Hell makes us **mission minded** so that we try to win lost people to Christ overseas. For example, Roman Catholics in Africa grew from 52 million in 1980 to 92 million in 1993.

10. Hell and eternal judgment is the **sixth principle of the Doctrine of Christ**, so it must be emphasised in our doctrinal teaching. "the foundation ofeternal judgment." Hebrews 6:1,2.

11. Hell will give us a **better testimony** as Christians. If we sin, people will go to hell.

12. Hell will **stop us backsliding** because we will realise that our job is important to accomplish in rescuing people from hell. "For what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Mark 8:36. What is your answer to this question?

Conclusion

Are you really saved?

Have you received Jesus Christ as your Saviour, trusting Him alone to save you, not your religion or your good works?

If you are saved, then what are you doing to tell people how Jesus Christ can save them from hell?