

THE PRESENT...AND FUTURE...HELL

I would a thousand times rather write on the subject of heaven...the eternal place of the believer's **blessed** abode...than to write on the subject of hell...the eternal tormenting abode of those who have not been redeemed. Well do I wish that I could believe there was no hell, however, to do so...to believe there was no future punishment for wrongdoing... would, as I stated in Lesson One, violate every single principle of moral justice in the universe.

The only thing that can ever account for Calvary is the reality of the doom and judgment that man must be saved from...the doom and judgment of an eternal hell. The very depths of agony and suffering that Jesus was willing to endure in order to save man proves that there must be an eternal hell from which man must be saved from or Christ's suffering is without point or reason...it was in vain.

As unpleasant, unpopular, and painful as the subject of hell might be...and as much as one tends to tremble and shrink from even the **thought** of hell . . . we are, nonetheless, commanded to warn others of the reality of hell...the eternal doom of the wicked.

Spurgeon once said, "*We love to play on the silver trumpet of grace much more than we do to blow the ram's horn of judgment.*"

It is a shame...and an indictment...to our culture that one can hear the word "*hell*" used on the street...by profane men in their cursing...far more frequently than one ever hears it spoken of...by his preacher...from the pulpit...The pulpit is the place where the word "*hell*" should be spoken the most...to warn the wicked of this terrible, eternal abode...and, yet, the pulpit is the very place where the word "*hell*" is avoided the most!!

WHERE DID HELL COME FROM?

There is no mention of hell in the story of God's original creation. We read in Genesis 1:1, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,*" but it does not mention hell! We cannot know positively **when** hell was prepared, however, it had to be sometime **after** the fall of the angels that sinned.

The only clue we have from Scripture...as to when hell became a reality ...is in Jude 6, where we read, "*And the angels which kept not their first estate, but let their own habitation, he (God) hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day,*" and, then we are told, in Matthew 25:41, that the wicked will hear on the judgment day, "*Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire **prepared for the devil and his angels!***"

So, we see that hell was never meant for mankind, but, rather, it was "*prepared for the devil and his angels*" and, if anyone goes to hell, it is because he **chooses** to go...it is, therefore, **his** choice...rather than **God's**...and, when he winds up spending eternity in hell, he cannot rightly blame God for what is **his** choice!

WHERE IS HELL?

Again, there is no definite answer to this question in Scripture. Hell might be some blazing planet millions of light years away...or it might be some burned out, ruined, star out in some distant galaxy somewhere...but, **wherever** it is, it is **complete separation from God**. Who will say, "*Depart from me into everlasting fire.*"

Please note that...so far in this discourse about "*hell*"... I have been referring to the eternal, "*future*" hell which awaits those who have died without Jesus Christ . . . because Scripture talks about both a "*future*", **and** a "*present*", hell.

The **present** hell is in the lower parts of the earth...the center...or the core...of our earth. Numbers 16:31-35...which is a very interesting story of how the men, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, rebelled against Moses...states, "*the ground clave asunder that was under them ...and opened her mouth, and swallowed them up...and they went down alive into the pit (more literally, "hell"), and the earth closed upon them, and they perished.*"

Also, Ephesians 4:9 refers to Hades, or the present "*hell*", as being in the "*lower parts of the earth.*"

In 20 of the 65 Old Testament passages that refer to Sheol, the references are to it being located "**downward**"...for example, Genesis 37:35 states, "*I will go **down** to Sheol.*" Likewise, when New Testament passages refer to Hades, the references are also to it being located downward... for example, Matthew 11:23 states, "*Thou shalt be brought **down** to Hades*", and Luke 10:15 states, "Thou shalt be thrust **down** to Hades." Never do we find the Scriptures locating "*Sheol*"..."*Hades*" ...**on** earth...or **above** earth...but, rather, Scripture always locates "*Sheol*"..."*Hades*"..."*hell*"...**downward**...**below** earth!

("*Sheol*" is the Hebrew, Old Testament, word for the **present** hell while "*Hades*" is the Greek, New Testament, word for the **present** hell.)

Since the "*lower parts of the earth*" is the only one place that could always be "*down*" from anywhere in the world while, at the same time it is always in the center of the earth, therefore, "*Sheol-Hades*"...the temporary place of departed spirits...which Scripture always refers to as being "*downward*"...must be located in the "*lower parts of the earth.*"

There is much confusion concerning the word "*hell*" and rightfully so...because:

The Hebrew word "*Sheol*" is found 65 times in the Old Testament:

- * 31 times it is translated "**hell**",
- * 3 times it is translated "**pit**", and
- * 31 times it is translated "**grave**"

...and, yet, despite the fact that these three translations differ from one another, they are translated from the same Hebrew word, "*Sheol*," which means, "***the place of departed spirits***". So, despite the fact that these three translations differ from one another, they all, nonetheless, refer to the same place...the place of departed spirits.

To make things even more confusing for the Bible student, the word "hell" is found in the New Testament 24 times...**but** it is translated from **three different Greek words**:

1. 12 times it is translated from the Greek word "*Gehenna*",
2. 1 time it is translated from the Greek word "*Tartarus*", and
3. 11 times it is translated from the Greek word "*Hades*".

...And these three different Greek words refer to three different places, despite the fact that all three of these words are translated into the one word "hell":

1. "*Gehenna*" is the future abode...the **final** hell...of the departed spirits of the wicked.
2. "*Tartarus*" is...rather than being an abode for any departed human spirits... the abode...hell...*in which the fallen angels are confined*.
3. "*Hades*", which has the same meaning as the Hebrew word "*Sheol*", is the **present** abode...hell...of the departed spirits of the wicked.

The words for "grave"...in both the Hebrew and Greek languages...are altogether different from the words "*Sheol*" or "*Hades*". The Hebrew word for "grave"...into which only the "*bodies*" of the dead go...is "*Queber*" and the Greek word is "*Mnemeion*". There are many Scriptures that clearly distinguish between the abode of the spirits and the resting place...grave ...for the body. I have listed many of these in my study: "*After Death, What?*"

Revelation 20:13 seems to teach that, at the Great White Throne Judgment, both the "grave" (where the physical body is after death) and "*Sheol*" (where the soul is after death) deliver up those that are in them and, after they are judged, they are cast into the eternal "*lake of fire*".

Jesus' physical body was in the tomb, but His soul went to "*Hades*"..."*the place of the departed spirits of the dead*".

Because some of the Biblical truths concerning hell are very difficult to understand, I would like to endeavor to make them as clear as I possibly can:

1. To reiterate, the Hebrew word "*Sheol*" of the Old Testament...and the Greek word "*Hades*" of the New Testament...are one and the same place.

For instance, Acts 2:27, in quoting Psalms 16:10, states, "*Thou wilt not leave my soul in `hell'*"...The Greek word used for "hell" in the New Testament is "*Hades*," while the Hebrew word used for hell in the Old Testament (Psalms)...from which the New Testament quotes...is "*Sheol*".

2. This "*Sheol-Hades*" (using both the Hebrew and the Greek words together) was simply, "*the place of the departed spirits of the dead*" which was in two sections... the abode of the righteous...known as "Abraham's bosom" or "*paradise*"...and the

abode...or "*place of torment*"...of the wicked. "*Paradise*" was separated from the "*place of torment*" by a "*Great Gulf Fixed*."

3. The only description we have of this place is from the lips of Jesus Himself in

Luke 16:19-31. *"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"*

4. Note again that there were **two sides** to this place "Sheol-Hades", which is so graphically described here by Jesus...one side...which was called "Paradise"...was for the saved, and one side...which was called "Place of Torment"...was for the unsaved.
5. In Old Testament times, the spirits of those who were **just**...as well as those who were unjust...went to this place of Sheol-Hades because their sins had not **yet** been paid for and, until Jesus died for man's sin, no one could enter into heaven.
6. When Jesus died on the Cross for mankind, His soul descended into "Sheol-Hades": Acts 2:27, Jesus, praying to His Heavenly Father, said, "*Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades*"

Ephesians 4:9, "He (Christ) **also descended** first into the `lower parts of the earth' (Sheol-Hades)." Jesus, at His death, descended into the "paradise side" of Sheol-Hades because He told the thief on the Cross, "*Today, thou shalt be with Me in paradise.*"
7. Jesus, when He **descended** into Sheol-Hades, led the souls of those who were "**just**" up into the third heaven...where God dwells...Ephesians 4:10 states that He "*ascended up far above all heavens.*"
8. Now...after Christ's ascension... "Paradise" is the third heaven where God dwells ...Note that, in 2 Corinthians 12:2,4, Paul refers to "*the Third Heaven*" and "*Paradise*" as one and the same place.
9. In this day and age, when a believer dies, he is **immediately** present with the Lord. (2 Cor.5:6-9).

10. When an unbeliever dies, he goes to "*Sheol-Hades*," the place described by Jesus in Luke 16:19-31. Sheol-Hades is a "*place of torment*" where the unbeliever awaits until he is cast into the "*lake of fire*."

And what is the difference between "*Hades*" and the "*lake of fire*"...the eternal "*hell*"? It is the same as the difference between a jail and a penitentiary...one is "*temporary*" while the other is "*eternal*"!

Revelation 20:14 tells us, "*...hell (Hades) is cast into the lake of fire.*" This is the "*second death*."

WHAT ABOUT PURGATORY?

There is **no Scriptural** warrant for the assertion that, as some teach, "*Purgatorial fires will burn out sin and fit our soul for God's presence.*"

The very first time "*purgatory*" was ever mentioned in Church history was when it was presented by Pope Gregory the Great in 600 A.D...which means that it was unknown for the first 600 years of Christianity! The doctrine of purgatory became a dogma of the Catholic Church in 1459 and was confirmed by the Council of Trent in 1548. If, in fact, "*purgatory*" is a Scriptural reality, why would it take the Church fathers 600 years to discover that it is and then another 1000 years to confirm it?

When we see what a mockery the doctrine of purgatory makes of the efficacy of Christ's atonement, we realize how damning a doctrine it is! Jesus paid for **ALL** of man's sins!

I Peter 2:24, "(Jesus) *bore our sins in His body on the tree.*"

Hebrews 10:10 "*We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*"

Scripture teaches us that, when believers die, they go **immediately** to be with God. If anyone could "pay"...or pray... enough to quench the fires of hell, then Christ's death would have been in vain!

Unlike the teaching of "*purgatory*"...which holds out hope of heaven for one who has died without Christ...the Bible holds out no such hope because Scripture tells us that unless one comes to the Father through Jesus Christ...and Him alone...one is doomed to an eternity in hell...Jesus said, "*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" (John 3:3)!