

# ***A BIBLICAL LOOK AT HELL***

There are three primary words that are often translated “hell” in scripture.

Old Testament: “Sheol”- defined as the place of the dead, and is general enough to include the righteous and the wicked. The writer’s intended meaning is usually obvious by the context.

New Testament:

“Hades”- defined as the region of the departed, underworld, **intermediate** (temporary) state between death and the resurrection. Usually is used to describe the state of the wicked, but is general enough in the Greek to include the righteous, too. Once again the writer’s intended meaning is usually obvious by the context. Some day the intermediate Hell (Hades) will be cast into the eternal Hell (i.e. Lake of Fire, Rev 20:11-15).

“Gehenna”- defined as the eternal state (home) of the lost after resurrection (eternal hell i.e. Lake of Fire). Name comes from the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where filth, dead bodies, and dead animals were cast out and burned.

## **I. Biblical Descriptions**

Abyss (Rev 9:1-11)

Burning Sulfur (Rev 14:10)

Condemnation (Mt 23:33; Mk 16:16; Jn 3:18, 5:29; II Pet 2:3)

Darkness (Mt 8:10-12, 22:13, 25:9-10; Jude 4, 13)

Destruction; Everlasting destruction (Mt 7:13; Rm 9:22; Phil 3:18-19; I Thes 5:2-3; II Thes 1:8-9)

Eternal Fire (Mt 18:8, 25:41; Jude 7)

Eternal Punishment (Mt 25:46)

Fiery Furnace; Burning (Mt 13:30, 40, 42)

Fire (Mt 3:10; Lk 16:24)

Hell (Mt 5:22, 29-30, 10:28, 11:23, 16:18, 18:8-9, 23:33; Mk 9:43, 45, 47; Lk 12:5; Rev 1:8, 6:8, 20:13-14)

Judgment (I Tim 5:24; Heb 6:2; II Pet 2:4-9; Jude 6)

Lake of burning sulfur (Rev 19:10, 20:10)

Lake of fire (Rev 20:14-15)

Second Death (Rev 20:14, 21:8)

Unquenchable fire (Mt 3:12; Lk 3:17)

Weeping/gnashing of teeth (Mt 8:12, 13:42, 50, 22:13, 24:51)

## **II. Nature of Hell**

- 1) Everlasting (Mt 12:32; Mk 9:43, 47; II Thes 1:8-9; Rev 14:11, 20:10)
- 2) Exclusion from God’s presence (Mt 25:31-33, 41-46; Lk 13:24-28; II Thes 1:8-9)
- 3) Place of Suffering (Mt 8:12, 10:28; Lk 16:19-31; Rev 14:9-11)
- 4) Separation from the Righteous (Mt 13:47-50, 25:31-33, 46)

## **III. Occupants**

- 1) Satan & other fallen angels; beast & false prophet (Mt 25:41; Rev 20:10)
- 2) All who have not put their faith in Jesus Christ, i.e. evil doers & unbelievers (Mt 7:19, 21-23, 13:38-41, 23:29-33; I Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:5; II Thes 2:9-12; Rev 21:7-8, 22:14-15; Lk 8:11-12; Jn 3:18, 3:36; I Cor 1:18-23; Heb 3:12-19, 4:1-3; I Jn 5:12). Everyone deserves Hell.

No one deserves Heaven. Jesus went to the cross to offer salvation to all (John 3:16) and God doesn't desire any to perish (1 Tim 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9). Yet many will reject Jesus gift of salvation and will perish (Mat 7:13-14).

#### IV. Issues/Questions

**Q: What about the people who never had the gospel message presented to them. Will they be cast into hell?**

A: Most likely yes. No person is without excuse. God revealed Himself to ALL people through His creation (Rm 1:18-21; Ps 19:1-4). People that sincerely start to seek after the God of creation will often receive greater revelation, even if God has to resort to supernatural or extreme means (e.g. radio broadcasts, internet, "tongues"- speaking the known language under influence of Holy Spirit, dreams/visions, angels, appearance of Jesus Himself, etc.)

The Bible (Rev 5:9, 7:9) says that people from every tribe, language, people & nation will be in Heaven, which implies that people are being saved even in areas that lack a formal Christian church.

**Q: Will there be different levels for punishment in hell?** For example, it seems that people that never heard the gospel, or people who were sincerely religious yet deceived should receive lesser punishment than the very evil mass murderer.

A. The Bible does point to people in hell receiving different levels of punishment:

- Luke 12:47-48  
The slaves were judged according to the light they have received and were given a different number of stripes (different punishment level).
- Luke 10:13-14; Mt 11:20-24  
The degree of punishment for the cities are different (Korazin & Bethsaida will be punished more severely than Tyre & Sidon; Capernaum punished worse than Sodom).
- Rev 20; Rm 2:6  
People will be judged according to their works. This implies that the degree of punishment will vary according to the severity of the evil works (i.e. the greater the evil works, the greater the punishment).
- Rom 2:12  
People who had the law will be judged by the law; people without the law will be judged without the law.
- **Bottom Line: God is a just judge and His judgment is righteous! (Rom 2:5; Acts 17:31)**