

What Is Hell?

Many people believe that the wicked shall burn in hell forever, but is this true? A careful study of the scriptures shows something all together different!

Satan ever attempts to convince us that we are immortal - that "ye shall not surely die." Gen. 3:4. This lie has been repeated in many different ways. By mixing truth with error and by taking scriptures out of context, Satan has convinced most Christians and other religions that we are immortal - ever burning hell is one of the means he employs.

The Middle English/Anglo-saxon term "Hell" [from the word *helan*] means, "to cover or conceal." Not the definition you were expecting? With this definition in mind, the following scripture becomes clearer: "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." Psalms 34:16.

The definition of one the original words translated into to "hell," "Gehenna," is listed in Strong's Concordance of the Bible as: "Of Hebrew origin [HSN1516 and HSN2011]; valley of (the son of) Hinnom; ge-henna (or Ge-Hinnom), a valley of Jerusalem, used (figuratively) as a name for the place (or state) of everlasting punishment."

This does not mean that you will burn forever in a place called "hell," but rather that the wicked shall be blotted out of existence forever, i.e., "...the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: **and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.**" Mal.4:1. "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with **everlasting destruction...**" 2 Thess. 1:8-9. There will be no more remembrance of them.

The next word translated into hell is the Greek "Hades" [the Hebrew equivalent, and only word translated "hell" found in the Old Testament is "she' ol," Strong's # 7585]. Hades is defined as: "from GSN0001 (as negative particle) and GSN1492; properly, unseen, i.e. "Hades" or the place (state) of departed souls."

The place of departed souls is the grave, which is where a corpse is concealed and decomposes until the resurrection. Speaking of the translation of the saints, Paul says, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave [Hades], where is thy victory?" 1

Cor. 15:5.

In a Greek Lexicon, you will find that "Hades," the grave, is the "**temporary abode of the dead**" instead of a place of eternity.

The last word translated into the English word, hell, is found only once in the Bible: Tartaroo. In 1 Cor. 6:3, we read, "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." This verse excludes the possibility of hell being a place of eternal pain and torment within itself. It says that wicked angels are "**reserved** unto judgment." Satan and the evil

angels have not yet faced their final judgment. Says Paul, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" 1 Cor. 6:3. The saints of the Most High shall judge the deeds of the evil angels, and God's decree will be found to be justified; His laws of liberty, the ten commandments, honorable.

Who is in charge of Hell?

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell (Hades, the grave) and of death." Rev. 1:18 Jesus Christ is in charge of hell.

The Reward of the Wicked

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28-9. "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." Acts 24:15. We all wait in the grave to hear the Masters voice. Some will be raised up into life eternal, some to face final judgment.

"...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise **perish.**" Luke 13:3.

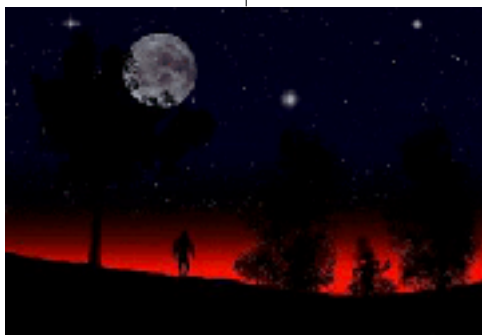
"But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall **utterly perish** in their own corruption." 2 Pet. 2:12.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not **perish**, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

In all three preceding verses the word translated to "perish" is "apollumi" (Strong's #622), **to destroy fully.**

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the 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: which is the second death." Rev. 21:8

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." Rev. 20:14.



"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Rev. 20:10.

Upon reading this verse we might think that the fire of justice will burn for all eternity, but is this what it really means?

Let us look to some other scriptures where the term "for ever" is used.

"But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever." 1 Sam. 1:22. How long did Samuel appear before the Lord in the temple?; how long was "for ever"? Until life ended.

"...his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever." Ex. 21:6. How long would the servant serve his master; how long was "for ever"? Only until life ended.

How long will the wicked burn? How long will for ever be? Until life ends.

Remember: "the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: **and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.**" Mal.4:1

"Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" 1 John 3:15.

The wicked are rewarded with eternal death, not immortality in any realm. Ezekiel 18:4 says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

When will it happen?

"But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, **reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.**" 2 Pet. 3:7. Just as the wicked angels await their final judgment, so the wicked await theirs in the grave. The word translated into "perdition" (apoleia) means "destruction."

Of Christ's second coming we read, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thess. 4:16-17.

At Christ's second coming, all the righteous that ever lived will be brought forth from the grave, and the rest of the righteous, those that are living, will meet them in the air. We are told that "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years... This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." Rev. 20:4; 6.

Of the wicked at Christ's second coming Paul says, "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." 2 Thess. 2:8. The wicked are slain by the brightness of Christ's coming, and Jer. 25:33 says, "the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground."

The wicked will have a resurrection, and they shall face the second, eternal death. They are not already burning somewhere. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Rev. 20:6.

After the 1000 years in heaven, the wicked dead are raised to face the final judgment with Satan and his wicked angels.

"... the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone... whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire... And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." Rev. 20:10, 14 & 15.

Notice that "hell," that is, the grave [Hades] and death are "cast into the lake of fire." Paul tells us that "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." 1 Cor. 15:26.



"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

"Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Luke 16:19-31.

This parable has often been used to imply an ever burning hell. There are many clues within this story that show it to be merely a rebuke to the Jews instead of a literal event.

Abraham's "bosom" is not the abode of the saved, nor is it a reference to heaven. Simply, the Jews thought that to be Abraham's seed meant that you were automatically saved. In a form of blasphemy the Jews referred to him as "Father Abraham," but Christ tells us that our Father is in heaven. Abraham can impart his righteousness to no one: "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." Eccl. 9:5-6. Abraham is dead!

Common Sense Points

1.) If people went straight to a place called hell to burn for all eternity, Cain would burn about six thousand years longer for the murder of one man than Hitler would for killing millions!

2.) There would be no need of a "resurrection of damnation." In fact, if man were already immortal, why would we read, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and **this mortal must put on immortality.** So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, **then** shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." 1 Cor. 15:53-54. No man, righteous or wicked, is immortal. "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast." Eccl. 3:19.

3.) "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Isa 43:25. If there were people burning forever in a place called hell, how could God forget? Sin and sinners alike will be blotted from existence and "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Rev. 21:4. If your loved ones that didn't make it were burning in hell forever, wouldn't you feel sorrow? Wouldn't there still be tears? Crying?

Very simply put, the wicked "shall be punished with everlasting destruction." 2 Thess. 1:9.

***Sweetwater Seventh-day Adventist Association
PO Box 771
Athens, TN. 37371***