

THE TRUTH

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Lesson 11 - The Truth About Hell Fire

One of the most theologically confused subjects in the Bible is that of hell. It has been fumbled by the clergy and distorted by the laity until the word has become best known as a common vulgarism and expletive. Everywhere people ask the same questions, "What and where is hell?" "What is the fate of the wicked?" "Will a God of love torture people throughout eternity?" "Will the fire of hell ever burn the wickedness out of sinners?" These are questions which deserve sound Bible answers, and the controversy surrounding the subject should not discourage us from exposing all the truth as it is in Christ. First of all, we need to understand that there is a heaven to win and a hell to shun. Jesus taught that every soul will be either saved or lost. There is no neutral place, and there are no second prizes.

LET'S TALK ABOUT HELL

1. In the Bible, our English word, "hell," has how many different meanings? Ans. _____

- a. The word "hell" can have the expression figuratively for imminent _____ or current _____ [Jonah 2:1-2; Proverbs 13:15]

NOTE: The service of sin is perfect slavery, and the road to hell is strewn with thorns and thistles. The sad reality is that some will go through hell to get to hell.

- b. The word "hell" can mean the _____ [Psalms 16:10; Revelation 1:18; 1 Corinth. 15:55; Acts 2:27; 31-32]

NOTE: In the Old Testament the word "hell," is translated from the Hebrew word _____, which means the _____, which appears _____ times. However, in the New Testament the word "hell" is translated from the Greek word _____, which also means the grave, this appears _____ times.

- c. The word "hell" can mean "a place of _____" [2 Peter 2:4]

NOTE: In the New Testament the word "hell" is also translated from the Greek word "_____", "a place of darkness" this appears once in the Bible. The word "tartaroo" must not and should not be confused with the word **Sheol**, **Hades** or **Gehenna**.

This figure of speech stems from Tartarus of Greek mythology, and refers to the darkness that surrounds the universe. It is used to describe the darkness that enshrouded Satan and his angels when they were separated from God and heaven, as well as the darkness that has come to the earth because of the presence of the prince of darkness. [Isaiah 60:2]

d. The word “hell” can mean “a place of _____.” [Matthew 5:22; 29-30; 10:28]

NOTE: In the New Testament the word “hell” is also translated from the Greek word _____, which appears _____ times, or the _____ of _____. A place outside of Jerusalem used for the burning of refuse and the bodies of dead animals or criminals. Fires burned there continuously, and what the fire did not destroy, the worms consumed. Thus, it became a symbol of complete annihilation and is used as a name for the _____, which will destroy the wicked.

WHEN?

2. When does “hell fire” or “Gehanna” take place? [Matthew 13:40-43; 13:49-50] Ans. At the _____ of the _____

NOTE: Some Christians today believe very firmly that hell is already burning somewhere, receiving its victims one by one at their death. If a sinner were to begin burning immediately upon their death and still be burning at the end of the world, this would be a great travesty of justice. Millions would burn longer than others, not because they were greater sinners, but because they had the misfortune of living at an earlier time in history.

3. For whom was “hell fire” or “Gehanna” intended? [Matthew 25:41] Ans. _____ and his _____

NOTE: Someone has said that any human being who gets into hell is a usurper, for God did not make hell for humans, but for evil angels. Because God does not want anyone to perish [2 Peter 3:9], He has left no stone unturned to warn us. No opportunity has been passed by to draw us to Him. No appeal has been withheld for all to turn from evil and live. What more can God do if, after all this, we turn Him down?

4. Where does God keep the wicked dead until “hell fire” or “Gehanna” takes place? [Job 17:13; 30:23, John 5:28-29; 2 Peter 2:9] Ans. In the _____: “sheol” or “hades”

NOTE: The grave “sheol,” or “hades” is an impartial place, for everyone goes there at death. [Eccl. 9:2, 20; Psalms 89:48] The rich and the poor, the high and the low, the righteous and the wicked; all go to that place, the grave. It is altogether a mistaken idea to teach that the unsaved go to their punishment when they draw their last breath. Scripture says that they are “_____” until the resurrection to be punished.

Do you know how many people are in hell-fire or Gehanna tonight? _____. There is not a single solitary person in hell-fire or Gehanna tonight. Every unsaved person who has ever died is resting in the grave, sheol or hades until they are brought forth in the resurrection.

5. Who will be in charge of “hell fire” or “Gehanna” when it begins? [Revelation 20:9] Ans. The _____

NOTE: The popular concept of the devil as being the pitchfork supervisor of a burning inferno is nothing more than a myth concocted by those who knew little of what the Bible really teaches about hell. The Bible does not picture the devil as a sinister and gleeful tormentor. It pictures him as one of the chief victims.

Unable to extricate himself from the withering torment and burning, he meets his final end within it. **[Ezekiel 28:18]** Sadly, the Bible is also clear about the fact that others will be caught up in that same burning, besides the devil and his angels - all unrepentant men and women since the beginning of time.

6. Is there another name for “hell-fire” or “Gehanna” in the Scriptures? [Revelation 21:8] Ans. Yes, the _____

NOTE: Notice that the casting of the wicked into the lake of fire is the second death. This shows that the wicked will not be cast into hell fire until after they get a second life. Can a man get a second wife until he finds a second woman who will have him? The very fact that the casting of the disobedient into the lake of fire is the second death shows that sinners will not be cast into hell-fire until after they get a second life, at the end of the one thousand years of Revelation 20.

THE LOCATION

7. Where will “hell fire” or “Gehanna” take place and which direction does it come from? [Ezekiel 28:18; Revelation 20:8-9] Ans. a. Upon the _____ of the _____ b. It descends from _____

NOTE: “Hell fire” or “Gehanna” will not be a localized event; it will be a worldwide event. The prophet portrays the entire planet enveloped in the destroying fire. Even the streams and dust are transformed into an exploding combustion of pitch and brimstone.

HOW LONG?

8. Will “hell fire” or “Gehanna” burn forever and ever?

- **[Malachi 4:1-3]:** States the wicked will be as _____, neither will _____ and _____ be left.
- **[Ezekiel 28:18]:** States the wicked will be reduced to _____.
- **[Obadiah 1:16]:** States the wicked will be as though, _____
- **[Psalm 37:34]:** States the wicked will be _____

Some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days. All are punished “according to their deeds.” The sins of the righteous having been transferred to Satan, he is made to suffer not only for his own rebellion, but for all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit. His punishment is to be far greater than that of those whom he has deceived. After all have perished who fell by his deceptions, he is still to live and suffer on. In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch—Satan the root, his followers the branches. **[Great Controversy, 673]**

9. Why is this fire said to be “forever and ever?” [Revelation 14:11; 20:10]

NOTE: In order to understand it, we must see how this phrase is used elsewhere in the Bible.

- For instance, in **1 Samuel 1:22** we find that Hannah lent Samuel to the Lord “forever.” It means, “as long as he lives.” Verse 28 translates it in that manner: “As long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord.” **[Similar passages are 1 Samuel 27:12; Job 41:4]**
- In **Exodus 21:6**, a man can volunteer to be a slave “forever”; but, if it really meant forever, there would be slavery in heaven.
- Christ is called “a priest forever” **[Hebrews 5:6]**; yet, after sin is blotted out and the Second Advent occurs, Christ’s work as a priest will end.
- Jonah was said to be in the belly of the great fish forever **[Jonah 2:6]**, yet it only lasted three days and nights. **[Jonah 1:17]**
- The Passover was to be kept “forever,” **[Exodus 12:24]** but it ended at the cross. **[See Hebrews 9:24-26]**

Liddell and Scott’s Greek Lexicon, the most exhaustive research work of its kind, gives the following definition of the Greek word, translated “forever,” in the KJV:

- A space or period of time, especially a lifetime, LIFE. Also, one’s *time* of life, AGE: the age of a man.

As long as the wicked live, as long as consciousness lasts, they will be in the flames. For some this will only be a few moments. For Satan it will be longest of all. Yet we are told that even he will eventually cease to exist. While it is taught in many pulpits that all the wicked will burn forever, the Bible, in stark contrast, clearly teaches that some will suffer only a short time, while other more wicked people will suffer a little longer.

THINK: If the fire burned on earth forever and ever throughout all eternity, how does the New Earth concept exist along with the following texts? **[Matthew 5:5; Isaiah 65:22-25]**

We are told that God takes “no pleasure in the death of the wicked.” **[Ezekiel 33:11]** He would have saved every one of them if He could. But they would not come to Him that they might be saved. **[Ezekiel 18:31-32]**

IN CONCLUSION

Someday soon God will have a clean universe. All the effects of sin will be banished forever. There will be no sin, no sinners and no devil to tempt. It will be just exactly like God planned it in the beginning.

The most unanswerable question in the whole world is this: “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” There is no answer because there is no escape except through Christ and His cross. No one will be lost because he sinned, because everyone has sinned. No one will be left out of heaven because he lied, stole, or committed adultery. The only reason anyone will be lost is because he refuses to turn away from his sin into the arms of a loving Saviour who stands ready to pardon and cleanse from all unrighteousness. “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]**