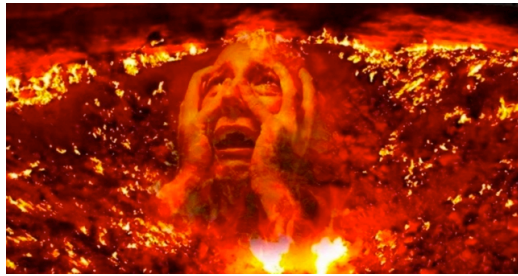


What Is Hell?

(Part 1)

- R.C. Sproul -



We have often heard statements such as “War is hell” or “I went through hell.” These expressions are, of course, not taken literally. Rather, they reflect our tendency to use the word *hell* as a descriptive term for the most ghastly human experience possible. Yet no human experience in this world is actually comparable to hell. If we try to imagine the worst of all possible suffering in the here and now we have not yet stretched our imaginations to reach the dreadful reality of hell.

Hell is trivialized when it is used as a common curse word. To use the word lightly may be a halfhearted human attempt to take the concept lightly or to treat it in an amusing way. We tend to joke about things most frightening to us in a futile effort to declaw and defang them, reducing their threatening power.

There is no biblical concept more grim or terror-invoking than the idea of hell. It is so unpopular with us that few would give credence to it at all except that it comes to us from the teaching of Christ Himself.

Almost all the biblical teaching about hell comes from the lips of Jesus. It is this doctrine, perhaps more than any other, that strains even the Christian’s loyalty to the teaching of Christ. Modern Christians have pushed the limits of minimizing hell in an effort to sidestep or soften Jesus’ own teaching. The Bible describes hell as a place of outer darkness, a lake of fire, a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, a place of eternal separation from the blessings of God, a prison, a place of torment where the worm doesn’t turn or die. These graphic images of eternal punishment provoke the question, should we take these descriptions literally or are they merely symbols?

I suspect they are symbols, but I find no relief in that. We must not think of them as being merely symbols. It is probably that the sinner in hell would prefer a literal lake of fire as his eternal abode to the reality of hell represented in the lake of fire image. If these images are indeed symbols, then we must conclude that the reality is worse than the symbol suggests. The function of symbols is to point beyond themselves to a higher or more intense state of actuality than the symbol itself can contain. That Jesus used the most awful symbols imaginable to describe hell is no comfort to those who see them simply as symbols.

A breath of relief is usually heard when someone declares, “Hell is a symbol for separation from God.” To be separated from God for eternity is no great threat to the impenitent person. The ungodly want nothing more than to be separated from God. Their problem in hell will not be separation from God, it will be the presence of God that will torment them. In hell, God will be present in the fullness of His divine wrath. He will be there to exercise His just punishment of the damned. They will know Him as an all-consuming fire.

No matter how we analyze the concept of hell it often sounds to us as a place of cruel and unusual punishment. If, however, we can take any comfort in the concept of hell, we can take it in the full assurance that there will be no cruelty there. It is impossible for God to be cruel. Cruelty involves inflicting a punishment that is more severe or harsh than the crime. Cruelty in this sense is unjust. God is incapable of inflicting an unjust punishment. The Judge of all the earth will surely do what is right. No innocent person will ever suffer at His hand.

Perhaps the most frightening aspect of hell is its eternity. People can endure the greatest agony if they know it will ultimately stop. In hell there is no such hope. The Bible clearly teaches that the punishment is eternal. The same word is used for both eternal life and eternal death. Punishment implies pain. Mere annihilation, which some have lobbied for, involves no pain. Jonathan Edwards, in preaching on Revelation 6:15-16 said, “Wicked men will hereafter earnestly wish to be turned to nothing and forever cease to be that they may escape the wrath of God.”

Hell, then, is an eternity before the righteous, ever-burning wrath of God, a suffering torment from which there is no escape and no relief. Understanding this is crucial to our drive to appreciate the work of Christ and to preach His gospel.

<https://www.ligonier.org/blog/hell/>

This excerpt is from R.C. Sproul's Essential Truths of the Christian Faith.

What Is Hell?

(Part 2)

- bible.org -



What Jesus and the New Testament Say About Hell

Key Facts About Eternity

- (1) Everyone will exist eternally either in heaven or hell** ([Daniel 12:2,3](#); [Matthew 25:46](#); [John 5:28](#); [Revelation 20:14,15](#)).
- (2) Everyone has only one life in which to determine their destiny** ([Hebrews 9:27](#)).
- (3) Heaven or hell is determined by whether a person believes (puts their trust) in Christ alone to save them** ([John 3:16, 36](#), etc.).

Key Passages About Hell

- (1) Hell was designed originally for Satan and his demons** ([Matthew 25:41](#); [Revelation 20:10](#)).
- (2) Hell will also punish the sin of those who reject Christ** ([Matthew 13:41,50](#); [Revelation 20:11-15](#); [21:8](#)).
- (3) Hell is conscious torment.**
 - [Matthew 13:50](#) “furnace of fire...weeping and gnashing of teeth”
 - [Mark 9:48](#) “where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched”
 - [Revelation 14:10](#) “he will be tormented with fire and brimstone”
- (4) Hell is eternal and irreversible.**
 - [Revelation 14:11](#) “the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever and they have no rest day and night”
 - [Revelation 20:14](#) “This is the second death, the lake of fire”
 - [Revelation 20:15](#) “If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire”

Biblical Terms Describing Where the Dead Are

- **Sheol** - a Hebrew term simply describing “the grave” or “death” – Does not refer to “hell” specifically
- **Hades** - A Greek term that usually refers to hell – a place of torment ([Luke 10:15](#); [16:23](#), etc.)
- **Gehenna** - A Greek term (borrowed from a literal burning dump near Jerusalem) that always refers to hell – a place of torment ([Matthew 5:30](#); [23:33](#))
- **“Lake of fire”**- the final abode of unbelievers after they are resurrected ([Revelation 20:14,15](#))
- **“Abraham’s bosom”** - ([Luke 16:22](#)) a place of eternal comfort
- **“Paradise”** - ([Luke 23:43](#)) a place of eternal comfort
- **“With the Lord”** - a key phrase describes where church age believers are after death ([Philippians 1:23](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#); [2 Corinthians 5:8](#))
- **“New heavens and earth”** – where believers will be after they are resurrected ([Revelation 20:4-6](#); [21:1-4](#))

Conclusion

Our curiosity about the abode of the dead is not completely satisfied by biblical terms or verses. What we do know is that either eternal torment in hell or eternal joy in heaven awaits all people after death, based on whether they trust in Christ’s payment for sin or reject Christ.

<https://bible.org/article/what-bible-says-about-hell>

What Is Hell?

(Part 3)

- Matt Slick - carm.org -



What are the verses that mention hell in the New Testament?

Depending on the Bible translation, there is anywhere from 13 to 23 times that the word “hell” appears in English Bibles. The King James Version has more verses than all the other Bibles because it renders three Greek words (**Gehenna**, **Hades**, **Tartaros**) into “hell” where modern Bibles render them as hell and hades. Thus, verses that mention hell by name can be divided as follows:

Gehennah, [Matt. 5:22, 29, 30](#); [10:28](#); [18:9](#); [23:15](#); [23:33](#); [Mark 9:43, 45, 47](#); [Luke 12:5](#); [James 3:6](#)

Hades, [Matt. 11:23, 16:18](#); [Luke 10:15](#); [16:23](#); [Acts 2:27, 31](#); [1 Cor. 15:55](#)^[fn] [1 Cor. 15:55](#) has textual variants where some ancient manuscripts say “O Hades, where is your victory” and others say “O Death where is your victory.”^[/fn]; [Rev. 1:18](#); [6:8](#); [20:13, 14](#)

Tartaros, [2 Pet. 2:4](#)

All of these verses that mention hell (or hades, depending on the translation) are given fully below.

Gehennah, γέεννα, (12)

[Matt. 5:22](#), “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to **the hell of fire.**”

[Matt. 5:29](#), “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into **hell.**”

[Matt. 5:30](#), “And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into **hell.**”

[Matt. 10:28](#), “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body **in hell.**”

[Matt. 18:9](#), “And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into **the hell of fire.**”

[Matt. 23:15](#), “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child **of hell** as yourselves.”

Matt. 23:33, “You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced **to hell?**”

Mark 9:43, “And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go **to hell, to the unquenchable fire.**”

Mark 9:45, “And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into **hell.**”

Mark 9:47, “And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into **hell.**”

Luke 12:5, “But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into **hell.** Yes, I tell you, fear him!”

James 3:6, “And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire **course** of life, and set on fire by **hell.**”

Hades, αἰδης (11)

Matt. 11:23, “And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to **Hades.** For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.”

Matt. 16:18, “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of **Hades** shall not prevail against it.”

Luke 10:15, “And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to **Hades.**”

Luke 16:23, “and in **Hades**, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.”

Acts 2:27, “For you will not abandon my soul to **Hades**, or let your Holy One see corruption.”

Acts 2:31, “he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to **Hades**, nor did his flesh see corruption.”

Rev. 1:18, “and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and **Hades.**”

Rev. 6:8, “And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider’s name was Death, and **Hades** followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.”

Rev. 20:13, “And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and **Hades** gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.”

Rev. 20:14, “Then Death and **Hades** were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.”

Tartaros, ταρταρός (1)

2 Pet. 2:4, “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into **hell** and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment.”

How many times do different English Bibles use the word hell in their translations? KJV, 23 times NKJV, 13 times RSV, 13 times NASB, 13 times NIV, 14 times

<https://carm.org/about-the-bible/what-are-the-verses-that-mention-hell-in-the-new-testament/>