

For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many.

— Isaiah 66:15-16 —

## What is Hell

Is hell a burning cavern in the hollow center of the Earth? Is it a place where the Devil and his demons wait eagerly for the death of the "unsaved," to torment them day and night forever and ever? These beliefs are commonly held and taken for granted throughout Christianity. Did these beliefs come from the Bible? If not, then where did they come from?

### *Three Different Hells*

When the translation of the King James version of the Bible began in A. D. 1607, the word hell had a common usage. The Old English word meant a covered hole. In those days, a person might dig a "hell" in the ground, put something in it, and cover it up. Why was it used in the Bible? The word hell is used thirty-one times in the Old Testament and twenty-two times in the New Testament of the King James version.

In the Old Testament, hell is translated from the word sheol. In the New Testament, it comes from three words: hades, tartaroo, and gehenna.

Sheol and Hades, meaning the place of the dead or the grave, are used in the same context in the Old and New Testaments. In this sense, hell simply represents death. A covered hole is a very appropriate description if we are talking about the grave. In the New Testament tartaroo appears only once. In 2 Peter, it is a sort of prison for sinful angels awaiting their judgment.

The last word translated hell in the Bible is gehenna. Gehenna means the valley of Hinnom. Gehenna was the city dump of Jerusalem in Bible times. It burned perpetually in those days. In this context it represents a punishment of burning or fire.

Are there three different hells in the Bible? Yes!

Revelation talks about death and hell "hades" being cast into the lake of fire. It also says that the lake of fire is the second death. If hell is cast into the lake of fire, then it cannot be the lake of fire. Hades "the grave" is cast into gehenna "the everlasting fire". Hades is the first death, and gehenna is the second death after the resurrection and judgment<sup>1</sup>. Read Revelation 20.

Tartaroo is the next hell.

2 Peter 2:4 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;

Without using the word hell, Jude 1:6 says,

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

This hell is a jail that holds angels waiting for trial.

The Bible gives us only a glimpse of this hell. Revelation 20:13 speaks of Satan being bound with a great chain and cast into something called the bottomless pit for a thousand years. He cannot deceive the world during that time. Verse 10 says that afterwards he is cast into the lake of fire to be tormented forever. Tartaroo also is not the lake of fire. It is another hole, a bottomless pit. Could it be a black hole in space?

The lake of fire is the final hell, gehenna, "the everlasting fire". God says the wages of sin is death. Does this change after the judgment? Why did God use the name of a city dump to represent the final punishment?

Revelation 20:13-14 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Revelation 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:8 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.

The final hell, gehenna, is the second death.

## ***The Lake of Fire***

What is the lake of fire? There is a literal description of it.

2 Peter 3:7 But the heavens and the earth, which now are, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

"Perdition" being destruction or laying waste.

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Now we know what the Bible says about hell. There is a hell for humans, which is simply the grave or death; a hell that holds angels waiting for their own judgment; and the final hell, which is the lake of fire or the second death.

The Bible says the penalty or "wages of sin *is* death" (Romans 6:23) and that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). This is why Jesus died. He volunteered to pay the penalty for us so we would not have to die the second death; a death we cannot come back from.

## ***Bible Truth***

So where did our mistaken beliefs about hell come from? Part of the problem stems from the King James translators' use of one word to describe three different things. Many of those beliefs came from the imagination of Alighieri Dante, an Italian poet who lived from 1265 to 1321 A. D.

In his *Divina Comedia* or "Divine Comedy," Dante takes us on a fanciful journey through the afterlife down to the lower realms of the next world. His version of hell is a funnel shaped hollow leading to the center of the earth. At the very bottom of this pit is Lucifer, supposedly, Satan's name before he became Satan. None of his narrative is biblical.

Do we just accept our beliefs without searching for the truth? Do we believe Dante's version, or do we

believe in the Bible?

Jesus was born and raised a Jew. The Jewish faith never considered that there was life after death. The Israelite religion taught that death was the end of human existence. Jesus never taught differently. That is why He came to earth.

He came with a plan to salvage the human race, "salvation". If humans must die for their sins, then the human race is doomed. We might as well not even exist. If Someone could die in our place, and His death would be sufficient to cover the penalty for everyone, then we could be pardoned from death. Jesus lived a perfectly sinless life. He did not deserve death; He deserved eternal life. He was the only One who could pay the price and live again. Jesus gave His life for ours.

John 10:18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

## ***Two Resurrections***

Now, because He died in our place, there is a resurrection of the dead, a "restoration of life."

1 Corinthians 15:22-26 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death.

There are two resurrections.

Revelation 20:6 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.

Revelation 20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished...

The followers of Christ are resurrected at His coming. The rest of the dead includes every one else. They are resurrected a thousand years later to face judgment.

Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged<sup>1</sup> out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Revelation 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. [the second death]

The lake of fire is not a place. It is a final cataclysmic event that is yet to happen.

2 Peter 3:11-13 *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Science theorizes that the universe came into being with a "big bang." God tells us that the present heaven and earth will pass away with a "great noise," and a new heaven and a new earth will be

created. This is where the baptism of fire comes in. In the transition from the old heaven and earth to the new heaven and earth, we must of necessity pass through that fire. Just as the Son of God led Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego through the burning fiery furnace, so shall He lead us through the lake of fire into the eternal kingdom of God. Death and the grave are symbolically cast into the fire. After the fire, there will be no more death. We will be baptized with fire!

Revelation 21:4 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.

Isaiah 65:17-18 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever *in that* which I create:...

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Revelation 21:5 ...Behold, I make all things new....

Malachi 4:1-3 For, behold, 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. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do *this*, saith the LORD of hosts.

What is a lake of fire? What is eternal fire? Sparks from the creation still burn to this day. Note the size of the sun compared to other known stars<sup>2</sup> in the universe. At this scale, the sun is not even visible. See also the size relationship of the earth to the sun.<sup>3</sup>

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