

# Hell

## A Swear Word? A Reality? A Nightmare? What?

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Answer Questions 1 & 2 privately, and then discuss.

1. What do you think of when you hear the word "hell "?

2. In your opinion, answer True or False?

- |     |   |            |
|-----|---|------------|
| [a] | All people who are not saved by Jesus will go to Hell                         | True/False |
| [b] | Hell is a literal place of fire and brimstone                                 | True/False |
| [c] | Only very evil people go to hell  | True/False |
| [d] | People will eventually be released from Hell                                  | True/False |
| [e] | In the Bible, Jesus spoke very little about Hell                              | True/False |
| [f] | The Old Testament says nothing about Hell                                     | True/False |
| [g] | The Bible says nothing about what happens to the dead                         | True/False |
| [h] | Hell is only described in the Bible with images of fire, brimstone and worms. | True/False |

### OLD TESTAMENT VIEW OF THE AFTER-LIFE (not including heaven)

3. [a] Read the first reference to death (Genesis 2: 17).

Was human death to be a natural event in God's creation?

[b] Read the first account of human death (Genesis 4:8-12).

Since Abel can no longer cry out to God, what does?

[c] Read the first query about life after death (Genesis 5:21-24).

If Enoch did not die, where is he?

4. The place of the dead is referred to in several ways. The Hebrew words include sheol, abaddon, qeber, shichah, shachath, shuchah, shechuth, shechith, & bor.

**Sheol** (translated as grave, hell or pit). This is used 65x in the Old Testament. In almost every case, it refers to a place of the dead and punishment after death is not on view. However, there is 1 reference which should be examined.

[a] Read Deuteronomy 32:19-22. Death in v22 is sheol. Does this suggest God's fire of judgement reaches Sheol?

#Most often, sheol refers to a place of inactivity as in Ecclesiastes 9:10, & a release from suffering, as in Job 14:13. But this is not always the case. The residents of Sheol are not always inactive, lacking suffering, & unconscious forever. Consider the following:

[b] Psalm 49: 15 - Does this have a hope of life after sheol?

[c] Isaiah 14:3-15 - What will sheol's residents do as the king of Babylon enters (v9)?

[d] Ezekiel 32:21 - What will the deceased leaders of nations do?

[e] Jonah 2:2 - What did Jonah do from within the belly of Sheol?

**Abaddon** (translated as Destruction). This is used 6x in the Old Testament. In every case, it refers to a place of the dead.

[f] Job 31:12. Does fire here refer to judgment?

**Qeber** (translated as Grave, burying place, sepulchre). This is used 77x in the Old Testament. In every case, it refers to a place of burial.

**Shichah, Shachath, Shuchah, Shechuth & Shechith.** (translated as pit). These are used 23x in the Old Testament. In every case, they refer to a place of the dead.

**Bar** (translated as pit, cistern, dungeon, well). This is used 65x in the Old Testament. In about 40 cases, it refers to a place of the dead.

5. Read Isaiah 66:22-24.

[a] What is the situation Isaiah is describing?

[b] What is the fate of the wicked in the coming time?

Comments: In the Old Testament, God began to reveal some of Himself to His people. As time went on, they understood more about God. Their understanding of life & death also grew over time as He revealed it to them. In most of the Old Testament, there is not much written about life after death, although it is glanced at occasionally. Basically sheol is the place of the dead, but God is there as well (Psalm 139:8) {NB it can't just be a place of inactivity, for God is there}. Sheol is roughly equivalent to bar & many other synonyms. Israel's hopes are mostly bound up with this world, & only a faint hope with the next. It was commonly understood that missing out on the blessings of this life was punishment from God. But towards the end of the Old Testament, as people are greatly disillusioned with life & sin, God raises their sights to understand more of what happens after death. Much more information is gathered in the New Testament.

#### NEW TESTAMENT VIEW OF THE AFTER-LIFE (not including heaven)

6. The concept of hell is further developed in the New Testament. There are a few Greek words which describe the place of the dead. They include hades, frear, mnemeion, tartaroo & gehenna,

**Hades** (translated as Hades or hell). This occurs 11x in the New Testament. They all refer to the place of the dead.

[a] Read the following verses, & find out

- (i) whether people in Hades have activity or consciousness,
- (ii) if there is torment, &
- (iii) if Hades is permanent.

Verse	Activity/ Conscious?	Torment?	Permanent?
Matthew 11:23			
Matthew 16:18			
Luke 10:15			
Luke 16:25			
Acts 2:27			
Acts 2:31			
Revelation 1:18			
Revelation 6:8			
Revelation 20:13			
Revelation 20:14			

**Frear** (translated as well, Abyss). This occurs 6x, but 3 refer to death, in Revelation 9: 1-2.

[b] Read that passage, & see the imagery. What does it say to you?

**Mnemeion** (translated as memorial grave, sepulchre & tomb). This occurs 42x, and means the burial place.

**Tartaroo** (translated as hell). This occurs once, for a gloomy holding place for bad angels before judgment in 2 Peter 2:4.

**Gehenna** (translated as hell). This occurs 12x, & refers to a place of torment after death.

[c] Read the following verses, & find out

- (i) if people in Gehenna are conscious,
- (ii) if there is torment,
- (iii) if Gehenna is permanent,
- (iv) if people go straight there on death, &
- (v) what imagery is used.

Verse	Conscious?	Torment?	Permanent?	Go Straight?	Imagery?
Matthew 5:22					
Matthew 5:29-30					
Matthew 10:28					
Matthew 18:9					
Matthew 23:15					
Matthew 23:33					
Mark 9:43-47					
Luke 12:5					
James 3:6					

7. Apart from looking at the specific words used, there is also the concept of judgment after death. Jesus was at pains to teach about the judgment to come. Read the following passages, and fill in the table.

Verse	Imagery?	Judgment?	Eternal?	Who for?	Go Straight?
Matthew 25:1-13					
Matthew 25:26-30					
Matthew 25:41-46					
John 5:28-29					
2 Thessalonians 1:6-10					
Jude 6-7					
Revelation 14:9-11					
Revelation 20:10					
Revelation 20:11-15					

8. In your opinion after doing this study, answer True or False?

- [a] All people who are not saved by Jesus will go to Hell True/False
- [b] Hell is a literal place of fire and brimstone True/False
- [c] Only very evil people go to hell True/False
- [d] People will eventually be released from Hell True/False
- [e] In the Bible, Jesus spoke very little about Hell True/False
- [f] The Old Testament says nothing about Hell True/False
- [g] The Bible says nothing about what happens to the dead True/False
- [h] Hell is only described in the Bible with images of fire, brimstone and worms. True/False

This study has tried to dig into what the Bible teaches about the fate of the unrighteous. This has involved looking at many references, so that a relatively full picture is seen, not just an outline sketch full of generalisations. It has not considered what happens to the righteous. Nor has this touched on purgatory, basically because Purgatory cannot be found in the pages of the Bible, and was introduced to solve several pastoral problems. However its introduction created a worse problem. The Bible allows no place for Purgatory. Hell is a real place of torment, which is described with vivid imagery. Avoid it by trusting in Jesus. Do you want your friends to go there? If not, direct them to Jesus.