

TITLE: THE REALITY OF HELL!

INTRO: On Tuesday of this past week (2/27/07) the stock market took its worse hit since 9/01. The DJIA lost 416 points, and at one point was down 546! Thoughts of 1929 & 1987 came to mind! Much worry & panic, all over the fear of losing money. What about losing your soul? The Bible clearly teaches the eternity of life, a continuous existence of our souls in either Heaven or Hell. Yet there are many who say that Hell is not real. But what does the Bible say about this place? Our understanding of its reality & horrible nature ought to heavily influence (even dictate) how we live our lives – in obedience to Christ.

I. TERMS DEFINED:

- A. In the OT (KJV), “hell” occurs 31 times, all of which are a translation of the Hebrew “sheol.”
1. “Sheol” occurs 63 times, being also translated “grave” and “pit.”
 2. In all 63 occurrences, almost always, the reference is to the grave.
 3. The word is the equivalent of the Greek “Hades,” meaning unseen (whether physically in the grave, or spiritually in Hades).
- B. In the NT (KJV), “hell” occurs 23 times:
1. Gehenna (12) – all twelve occurrences are translated “hell.” Its origin is from two Hebrew words “gay” (valley) and “Hinnom.” The valley of Hinnom was on the south side of Jerusalem, outside the city walls. It was where children were sacrificed in fire to the false god Milcom (Chemosh). It later became the garbage dump, where the fire **burned continually**.
 2. Hades (10) – 11 total occurrences, one of which is “grave” (1 Cor 15:55). It means “unseen”; grave, place of departed souls. In reference to the dead body, it is the grave. In reference to the soul, it is the “unseen” place of departed souls. It is **not** Hell.
 3. Tartarus (1) – only one occurrence (**2 Pet 4:4**). “Tartarus” is defined as “to be held captive, in the darkest abyss of Hades.” **Luke 16:19-31** (Rich man & Lazarus) gives the best picture/definition of Hades: two parts of Hades (Paradise & Tartarus). No crossing over – great gulf fixed; nobody is returning to life. Every soul’s destiny is set at/after death.

II. TERMS USED:

- A. “HADES”
1. **Matt 16:18** – the gates of Hades shall not prevail against the kingdom/church. This is not a reference to hell, but to death & the grave. Death is an end for everyone in any endeavor of life **except** the church. Death will come, but it won’t win!
 2. **Acts 2:27** – “*Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (Hades), neither will thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption.*” So clearly this is a reference to the grave, seeing Jesus did not go to hell, but to Hades (Paradise, not Tartarus).
 3. **1 Cor 15:55**–“*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*” – Re: the resurrection, so “grave” is the meaning.
 4. ***Rev 20:13** –“*The sea gave up the dead, and death & hell (Hades) delivered up the dead... & they were judged...*” This agrees with the rich man & Lazarus. The dead wait in Hades (Paradise or Tartarus) until the end, when they will all be delivered up to be judged (the righteous *and* the wicked–**Jn 5:28-29**). Then every knee will bow, every tongue confess (**Phil 2:10-11**)!
- B. “GEHENNA”
1. ***Matt 5:22**–“*Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*” Gehenna (Hinnom) fire was always burning.
 2. But some argue that the punishment of Hell is temporary, just like the body being burned in Hinnom. However:
***Mark 9:43-48** –“*hell - fire never quenched - worm dieth not.*” This is a very harsh picture of eternal punishment:
 - a. The worm never dies – that which consumes the body; an image of the body continually being eaten.
 - b. The fire is not quenched – the punishment of Hell is *not* temporary (as when someone dies in a fire). What then would be the point of the fire not being extinguished? If I die in a fire, why would I care how long the fire burns after I’m gone?
 - c. Also, **Mt 25:46**–“*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.*” If one is real, then they’re both real. If one is figurative, then they’re both figurative; but there is nothing figurative about Jesus’ words.
 - d. **Luke 16** –The rich man was in torment in the flame (continuously). If he was just dying in a fire (soon to be dead), why would he ask for water to cool his tongue? Have you ever seen a man burning to death ask for a drink of water?
 3. **Matt 10:28**–“*...fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*” This is in contrast to the person who can only kill the body. God can and will destroy (but not annihilate) the wicked.
 4. **Matt 23:15** –“*Woe unto you...ye compass sea & land to make one proselyte...ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.*” False teachers & their followers are called children of hell! God has always hated false teachers (**2 Pet 2:1f**). They were to be put to death (**Deut 13:5**).
 5. **Matt 23:33** – “*...how can ye escape the damnation (judgment) of hell?*” Hell is final punishment, and it is inescapable!

III. LESSONS LEARNED:

- A. Hell is real! It is just as real as Heaven, since the two are discussed in the same contexts (Mt 25:46; Jn 5:28-29).
- B. Hell is fire! The most horrible picture God could paint for us is that of burning eternally in fire. This is His description of Hell.
- C. Hell is eternal! Again, if Heaven is eternal, then so is Hell. And this is the way both are described.
- D. Hell is in God’s control. It is God that is to be feared; it is He who will destroy the wicked in Hell.
- E. Hell is for false teachers and their followers. This includes **any** who follow them.
- F. Hell is for those separated from God. **Isa 59:2** –“*your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*” Sin is the problem. God cannot be a part of it, and will punish those who do it.
- G. BUT, the plan of salvation is for all! Jesus’ blood was shed for forgiveness of sins. And that blood cleanses the sinning Christian too, if he repents and confesses it to God (**1 Jn 1:9**).

CONCLUSION: There are moments in a child’s life when his only motivation for being obedient to his parents is fear – he doesn’t want to get in trouble! He knows that the punishment for his disobedience is very real. Punishment in Hell for our sins is also a reality, so we too need to be aware of it. This doesn’t mean we’re daily in fear of going to Hell. Rather it means we live obedient to Christ, experiencing God’s blessings, but still aware of the ultimate punishment for those who disobey and fall away.