



LESSON 17

THE DOCTRINE OF “HELL” PART 2 INTRODUCTION

We learned in Part 1 of this study (in lesson 16) that the word “hell” in the *King James* version of the Old Testament was translated from the Hebrew word “sheol.” Yet, we found that the traditional concept of hell, as taught by the majority of Judeo-Christian churches, is opposite in meaning and usage to the Biblical teaching of “sheol.” Man’s traditional view of hell as a fiery place where the “disembodied immortal souls” of the wicked are sent after death to be continually tormented and punished, is a product of pagan mythology and is not taught in God’s Word.

We also discovered that this repulsive and perverse doctrine of “hell-fire” is a pagan distortion and corruption of the original word “hell” (which means “covered; concealed”). The modern corruption and religious use of the word “hell” as well as the modern interpretation of the Hebrew word “sheol” is unfortunate to say the least, and is the cause of much confusion and misunderstanding in church circles.

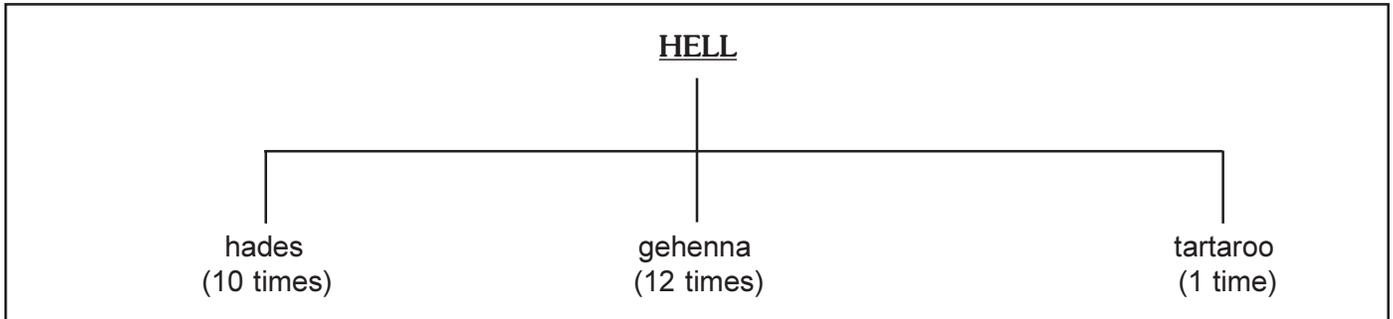
In Lesson 17, we will study the conventional New Testament use of the term “hell” by the churches. We will examine the three Greek words from which church translators have rendered it, and find that the word “hell” has been misused in the English versions of the New Testament as it was in the Old Testament.

This artist’s conception is a figment of man’s darkened imagination. It illustrates the traditional church view of “hell.” It certainly does not portray the Scriptural view of “sheol-hades.”



“HELL” IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the *King James Version* of the New Testament, the English word “hell” appears twenty-three times and is translated from three different Greek words: “hades,” “gehenna,” and “tartaroo.” The diagram below illustrates the various Greek words from which “hell” was rendered in the KJV.



HADES

The Greek word “hades” appears eleven times in the Greek New Testament. The *King James* translators rendered it “hell” in ten of those occurrences, and “grave” once.

HADES = SHEOL

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Psalms 16:10 states, “For thou wilt not leave my soul in _____; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”
2. The above answer is translated from what Hebrew word? _____
3. In a quote from Psalms 16:10, Acts 2:27 states, “Because thou wilt not leave my soul in _____, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”
4. The above answer is translated from what Greek word? _____

In Acts 2:27, the Greek word “hades” is used to quote the Hebrew word “sheol.” In other words, they share a common meaning. You will recall from the last lesson that the Greek word “hades” was used to replace the Hebrew word “sheol.” *Strong’s* defines the Greek word “hades” (#86) as “unseen.” This corresponds to the Hebrew concept of “sheol” (unknown, out of sight) and the original intent of the word “hell” (covered, concealed). Several scriptural examples will show that what we found to be true of the Hebrew word “sheol” is also true of the Greek word “hades.”

BOTH RIGHTEOUS AND WICKED DEAD ARE IN HADES

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. According to Acts 2:31, who was not left in **hell (hades)**? _____
2. In Matthew 11:23 and Luke 10:15, who did Jesus say would be brought (cast) down to **hell (hades)**? _____

According to the inspired Greek Scriptures, righteous Jesus was in **hades** (for the duration of His burial). The *King James* translators chose to use the word “hell” in rendering the Greek word “hades.” The traditional “hell-fire” of the churches would place our holy Savior and King in a place of fiery torment and punishment reserved for the wicked – a most blasphemous proposition.

THOSE IN HADES ARE DEAD

FIND THE ANSWERS

3. Revelation 20:13 states, “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and **hell [hades]** delivered up the _____ which were in them ...”

Read Luke 16:22-23.

4. Verse 22 says that the rich man _____ and was _____.
5. According to verse 23, where was the dead rich man? _____

As was true with the Hebrew word “sheol,” the Greek word “hades” represented the place of the **dead** (either physically or spiritually). They were not being tortured alive as the traditional “hell-fire” doctrine of the churches teach. To insist that those in “hell” (hades) are alive is a direct contradiction to what God’s Word clearly teaches. Revelation 20:13 plainly states that “*death and hell (hades) gave up their **dead.***”

Jesus plainly stated in Luke 16:22 that the rich man was **dead** and **buried** (not in “Purgatory”). (Refer back to the study of the rich man and Lazarus parable in lesson 15 to review how this story does not teach that those in “hades” are alive).

HADES AND SHEOL HAVE GATES

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Speaking of his death, righteous King Hezekiah states in Isaiah 38:10, " ... I shall go to the _____ of the **grave [sheol]** ..."
2. Speaking of His ecclesia, Jesus says in Matthew 16:18, "... the _____ of hell [**hades**] shall not prevail against it."
3. In Revelation 1:18 Jesus boldly declares that He is alive and that He has the _____ of **hell [hades]** and death.

The "gates of sheol (Hebrew) and hades" (Greek) are references to death. However, Jesus triumphantly announces that He had the "keys" to death (both spiritual and physical). In other words, He has the power and authority to unlock those gates and set the captives free – i.e. bring them out of death into life. This concept would be empty and meaningless if there was a hell as taught by the churches where people were being held alive.

Jesus also refers to a city being in "hades" (i.e., debased and spiritually dead).

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. Matthew 11:23 proclaims, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to _____, ..."
5. The above answer is translated from what Greek word? _____

It is obvious from these examples that the Greek word "**hades**," like the Hebrew word "**sheol**," represents death, not life in Limbo (Purgatory), a pagan concept. Those under the power of hades (hell) are dead, not alive in torment as the churches teach. None of the New Testament references to "hades" describe a fiery abode where "disembodied immortal spirits" are kept and tortured endlessly. The only mention of "fire" and "torment" in relation to "hades" appears in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus – a symbolic parable which is not literal (as explained in Lesson 15). To associate "hades" with the churches' traditional "hell-fire" concept simply defies scriptural evidence and corrupts the truth of God's Word.

GEHENNA

The Greek word “gehenna” appears twelve times in the Greek Scriptures. The *King James* translators took the unfortunate liberty to translate it into the word “hell,” which has caused much confusion and misunderstanding. A number of translations have transliterated it into the word “Gehenna.” The Greek word “gehenna” is derived from two Hebrew words: “geh,” meaning “valley,” and “Hinnom,” a man’s name – i.e. “Valley of Hinnom.” It is capitalized in our English translations because it represents the proper name of a place that is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments.

Gehenna

The deep, narrow Valley of Hinnom, later known by the Greek name “Gehenna,” lays to the South and West of ancient Jerusalem (Josh. 15:8; 18:16; Jer. 19:2, 6). Wicked Judean Kings Ahaz and Manasseh engaged in idolatrous worship there, including human sacrifices by fire to Baal, as stated in 2 Chron. 28:1-3; 31:1, 6; Jer. 7:31-32; 32:35). Later, King Josiah had the place of idolatrous worship torn down, particularly the section called Topheth, to prevent further such activities there (2 Ki. 23:10). This valley was later used as a place for the disposal of waste matter from the city of Jerusalem, including the dead bodies of animals and even of criminals not accorded a normal burial. Such was its use during Jesus’ mortal lifetime.

FIRE ASSOCIATED WITH GEHENNA

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. In Matthew 5:22 Jesus states, “... but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of **hell [gehenna]** _____.”

The association of fire with Gehenna, as in the example above, has caused some Bible commentators and theologians to link such fiery characteristics of a “Hell-fire” with the sacrifice of children in the Valley of Hinnom (Gehenna). They further extend this idea to incorrectly conclude that Jesus used Gehenna to teach the doctrine of “everlasting torment in fire.” However, it is important to note that God expressed repugnance for such pagan belief (Jeremiah 32:34-35).

FIND THE ANSWERS

2. Referring to Judah’s practice of sacrificing her children in fire to Molech (Jer. 32:35), God states in Jeremiah 7:31, “... which I commanded them not, neither came it into my _____.”
3. Concerning this same wicked practice, God says in Jeremiah 32:35, “... which I commanded them not, neither came it into my _____, that they should do this _____, to cause Judah to sin.”

God clearly states that such behavior is an abomination – a sin. With this in mind, it seems most unlikely that Jesus would make such heathen practice the basis of God’s judgement. The Valley of Hinnom served as a place for mass disposal of **dead bodies** not for God’s punishment for sinners (Jer. 7:32-33; 19:2, 6, 7, 10, 11). Jesus, then, used the term “gehenna fire” as a symbol of death, not for a mythical pagan place of “everlasting life in a burning torment of fire.”

BODIES IN HELL (GEHENNA)

The typical Judeo-Christian traditional view of “hell” teaches that it is a place occupied by so-called “disembodied spirits.” However, in three occurrences of the Greek word “gehenna,” the physical body itself is said to be in “hell” according to many English versions, including *King James*.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. In Matthew 5:29-30 Jesus refers to the **whole** _____ being cast into **hell (gehenna)**.
2. In Matthew 10:28 Jesus clearly states, “... but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and _____ in **hell [gehenna]**.”

Note that Jesus clearly states that the whole body is in “hell” (gehenna) rather than some bodiless pagan concept of “spirit” or “soul.” Also take note that Jesus says that the “body” is destroyed in “hell” rather than endlessly tortured. Jesus’ statements concerning “hell” are totally opposite to the traditional “hell” of the churches.

Four more verses imply this same idea that physical bodies are in “hell” (gehenna) by their references to “eyes,” “hands,” and “feet.”

FIND THE ANSWERS

3. In Matthew 18:9 Jesus refers to a person with two _____ being cast into **hell (gehenna)** fire.
- Read Mark 9:43-47.**
4. Verse 43 refers to a person with two _____ going into **hell (gehenna)**.
 5. Verse 45 mentions a person with two _____ being cast into **hell (gehenna)**.
 6. And verse 47 speaks of a person with two _____ being cast into **hell (gehenna)**.

If there are no physical bodies in “hell” (gehenna) as the churches teach, then why does Jesus make reference to going there with specific body parts? The fact that physical bodies go into hell makes the traditional Judeo-Christian view untenable, for according to their position the evil “spirits” of the dead go there.

So far, we have seen that fire is in gehenna (the refuse dump outside Jerusalem) and bodies put there are destroyed. These two facts show that gehenna (“hell” in most English Bibles) was a refuse dump that was often set on fire ... not a place of endless torment for bodiless spirits.

WORMS IN HELL

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Mark Chapter 9:43-48.

1. Verse 48 uses the phrase “where their _____ dieth not” in reference to those cast into **hell (gehenna)**.
2. Speaking of the King of Babylon, Isaiah 14:11 states, “Thy pomp is brought down to the _____, and the noise of thy viols: the _____ is spread under thee, and the _____ cover thee.”

Scripture tells us that the worms (maggots) covered the King of Babylon in his burial place in “sheol.” We can easily understand why he would be told that he would be covered with worms in “sheol” since he would be dead. It is a fact of nature that dead bodies are often consumed by worms. The worms of gehenna (the refuse pit outside of Jerusalem) are understandable when we remember that carcasses and other refuse were placed there to be devoured by maggots and fire. This logically explains the appropriate references to both worms and fire in the New Testament verses containing the word “gehenna.”

It is interesting that the traditional “hell-fire” of the churches usually contains no worms. How long could a worm last in a fiery environment, anyway? Or if it is said that worms are indeed there, how do they feed endlessly on bodiless spirits? Some theologians try to use the phrase “their worm dieth not” to prove that those in “hell” are immortal – i.e. they never die. However, this faulty line of reasoning would have the worms immortal. Obviously worms are not immortal, so this phrase is not saying that the worms never die. Rather, it is alluding to the fact that refuse pits are never without flies that breed maggots.

UNQUENCHED FIRE

In the three references to gehenna in Mark 9:43-48, the fire is said to be “not quenched.” Some try to use this to prove the traditional “hell-fire” doctrine of “endless fire.” However, fire that is “not quenched” is not “endless fire.” It is merely fire that is not yet put out – i.e. it goes out naturally when all that is combustible has burned out or is consumed. Thus, the implication of “unquenched fire” is that the fire burns all that is in the pit – not endless burning. The refuse in the pit was burned, including the carcasses, until all were consumed. This refers to destruction with an end, not “unending consumption” - two completely different concepts.

JESUS USED “GEHENNA” SYMBOLICALLY

Jesus used the term “gehenna” (a refuse dump) to represent lives thrown away and destroyed. The scribes and Pharisees, as a wicked class, were denounced by Jesus as subjects of “gehenna.”

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 23:1-36.

1. Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees in verse 15 that once they proselytized a person, they made him “twofold more the child of _____” than themselves.
2. In verse 33 He told them, “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation [end result] of _____.”

Jesus told these wicked, unrepentant men that their lives would result in fiery destruction (gehenna) as would those they converted to their sinful ways and perverse beliefs. So, to avoid a worthless life, Jesus’ followers were to get rid of anything causing spiritual stumbling. The “cutting off of a hand or foot” and the “tearing out of an eye” figuratively represents the elimination of sinful things and beliefs that cause them to live useless lives and end up in a refuse pit (Matt. 5:27-30; 18:9; Mark 9:43-47).

FIND THE ANSWERS

3. Referring to the carcasses of useless, rebellious men, God states in Isaiah 66:24, “... for their _____ shall not die, neither shall their _____ be quenched...”

Jesus apparently alluded to the above passage when he described “gehenna” in Mark 9:47-48. That the symbolic picture here is not one of “endless torture,” but rather of worthlessness and destruction is evident from the fact that the Isaiah text dealt, not with persons who were alive, but with the “carcasses” of men who were considered worthless refuse. Since the “Valley of Hinnom” (later called Gehenna) was a place for the disposal of garbage and carcasses, fire was a suitable means to eliminate such refuse. Sulfur (brimstone) was often added to increase the intensity of the fire and may be connected to the modern phrase “fire and brimstone.” Where the fire did not reach, worms or maggots would breed, consuming things not destroyed by the fire. Thus, Jesus’ words of “gehenna fire” (or “hell-fire”) alluded to the complete loss of man’s life of rejection of God, and to God’s judgment.

ANOTHER FIGURATIVE USE OF GEHENNA

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read James 3:6.

1. Verse 6 states, "And the tongue is a _____, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on _____ of hell [gehenna]."

The disciple James' use of the word "gehenna" indicates that an unruly tongue can destroy people like fire, and that one's life can be defiled by an undisciplined tongue. Such a person's tongue (words) can be like poison, denoting a condition of spiritual death, whereby a person's existence can be likened to being in a state similar to "Gehenna" – i.e. degradation and destruction (compare Matthew 12:37; Psalms 5:9; 140:3; Romans 1:32).

GEHENNA IS SIMILAR TO THE "LAKE OF FIRE"

The Biblical use of the word "gehenna" as a symbol for judgment or destruction corresponds of the "lake of fire" spoken of in Revelation.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Revelation 20:11-15.

2. According to verse 14, death and "hell" (hades) were cast into the _____ of _____.

Some try to use the above passage to prove their "hell-fire" doctrine. However, it makes no sense to cast one place of fire into another place of fire. To understand this passage, it must be remembered that symbolic language is being used rather than literal. We have already seen that "hades" represents the state or condition of death. Therefore, this verse is talking about the end of death and dying. The "lake of fire" refers to destruction as does "gehenna"; hence, they are similar terms. Neither of them refers to unending punishment in a literal fire.

TARTAROO/TARTARY

FIND THE ANSWERS

3. 2 Peter 2:4 states, "For if God spared not the angels [messengers] that sinned, but cast them down to _____, and delivered them into chains of _____, to be reserved unto judgment;"

In the above verse, the *King James* translators' phrase "cast down to hell" is translated from the single Greek word "**tartarosas.**" The word corresponds to a place once called "**Tartaroo or Tartary**" which refers to a large region that existed in Asia encompassing parts of modern China, Russia, and Turkey.

Tartaroo/Tartary was the name of an ancient land/region in Asia that was spiritually dark in that it hadn't received the light of the messages of the prophets and Biblical teaching. The term "Tartarus" also eventually came to designate a mythological place in Greek mythology where condemned souls were supposed to be imprisoned.

The churches, which picked up the pagan stories, began using the term as the traditional mysterious and lost place called "hell," which was the Greek pagan counterpart.

Since the Greek word "angelos" means "messengers," and since the other examples following 2 Peter 2:4 refer to humans, this verse most likely is describing the spiritual debasement of people who had not heard of the God of Israel. The mythological idea of disobedient spirits being cast into a place of unending torment in fire has been read into this passage by misguided or dishonest Bible teachers and students. In reality, such a fiery abode could hardly be described as a place of "darkness" as Peter declares in 2 Peter 2:4. Yet carnal man would rather hold to mysticism than truth.

TARTARUS

The Word "Tartarus" can be found in pre-Christian mythology. In Homer's *Iliad* this mythological Tartarus is represented as a prison. In it were imprisoned Cronus (the Titan ruler of the universe) along with other Titan spirits and lesser gods. The mythological Tartarus was presented as a place for superhuman creatures rather than humans. Thus, the traditional Judeo-Christian concept of wicked superhuman angels rebelling against God and being cast into a deep subterranean prison-like abyss closely follows Greek mythology.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson, we have studied the use of the word "hell" as found in the *King James* version of the New Testament by examining the Greek words from which it was translated. In doing so we have found, as we did with the Hebrew word "sheol," that the traditional "hell" doctrine taught by most churches, preachers, and theologians has no basis in God's Word and comes instead from pagan sources. Like its parent doctrine (the immortality of the soul), the hell-fire doctrine is totally contrary to what God teaches in His Holy Scriptures. May God save our people from these destructive imaginations of wicked men who use such doctrines to control and plunder them.

In the next lesson, we will explore a companion doctrine to the "hell-fire" teaching: the belief in wicked supernatural spirit beings which are called "devils" and "demons" by the churches.



LESSON 17

THE DOCTRINE OF “HELL” PART 2

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1. hell
2. sheol
3. hell
4. hades

Page 163

1. Jesus Christ
2. the wicked city of Capernaum
3. dead
4. died; buried
5. in hell (Gk. “hades”)

Page 164

1. gates
2. gates
3. keys
4. hell
5. hades (#86) (being spiritually dead)

Page 165

1. fire
2. heart
3. mind; abomination

Page 166

1. body
2. body
3. eyes
4. hands
5. feet
6. eyes

Page 167

1. worm (maggot)
2. grave; worm; worms (maggots)

Page 168

1. hell (gehenna)
2. hell (gehenna)
3. worm; fire

Page 169

1. fire; fire
2. lake; fire
3. hell; darkness

NOTES