



### LESSON 17

## THE DOCTRINE OF "HELL" Part 2

### Introduction

**W**e learned in part 1 of this study (lesson 16) that the word "hell" in the King James version of the Old Scriptures 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 eternally tormented and punished, is a product of pagan mythology and represents a corruption of God's Word.

We also discovered that this repulsive and perverse doctrine of "hell-fire" is a complete distortion and corruption of the original intent of the word "hell" (which means covered; concealed). Using the word "hell" for the Hebrew "sheol" is an unfortunate translation and is the cause of much confusion and misunderstanding in Christendom.

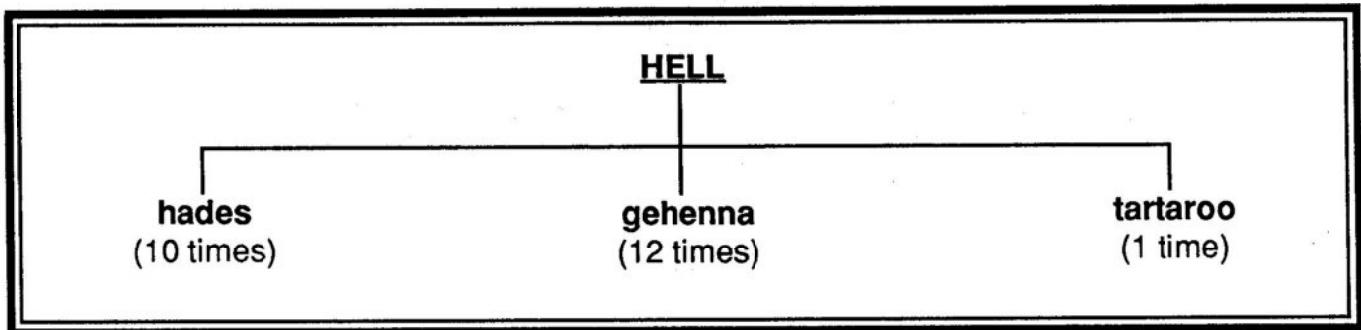
Now, in lesson 17, we will study the use of "hell" in the Greek New Scriptures. We will examine the three Greek words from which it was translated and find that the word "hell" has been misunderstood, as was the case in the Old Scriptures.

This artist's conception of hell, a figment of man's darkened imagination, illustrates the traditional Judeo-Christian view of "Hell-fire." It certainly does not portray the Scriptural view of "sheol-hades."



## "HELL" IN THE NEW SCRIPTURES

In the King James version of the New Scriptures, the word "hell" appears twenty three times and is translated from three different Greek words: "hades," "gehenna" and "tartaroo." The diagram below illustrates these various renderings along with the number of occurrences.



### Hades

The Greek word "hades" appears eleven times in the Greek New Scriptures. The King James translators used the word "hell" in ten of those occurrences, and the word "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 *Strong's Concordance* used the Greek word "hades" in defining the Hebrew word "sheol." *Strong's* defines the Greek word "hades" (#86) as "unseen." This corresponds to the 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 sheol is also true of hades.

## Both Righteous and Wicked 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** (at least for the three days of His burial), and the wicked city of Capernaum was to go to the same place. In both instances the King James translators chose to use the word "hell" in rendering the Greek word "hades." The traditional "hell-fire" of Christendom would have our holy Savior and King in the 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 "sheol," those in the Greek "hades" are dead. They are not alive as the traditional "hell-fire" believers expound. 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 those in hades are dead. Jesus plainly states in Luke 16:22 that the rich man was dead and buried. (Refer back to the study of the rich man and Lazarus parable in lesson 15 to review why this symbolic story does not prove 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 and hades" are references to death. However, Jesus triumphantly announces that He has the "keys" to death. In other words, He has the power and authority to unlock its gates and set its captives free in resurrection – i.e. bring them out of death into life. Jesus' statement would be empty, meaningless words if those in hades (hell) were already alive as the "immortal soul" proponents preach.

Paul also refers to this freeing through resurrection (raising) when he states how the redeemed captives will taunt their former captive power (death).

### FIND THE ANSWERS

4. 1 Corinthians 15:55 proclaims, "O death, where is thy sting? O \_\_\_\_\_, where is thy victory?"
5. The above answer is translated from what Greek word? \_\_\_\_\_

It is obvious from the examples we have examined that the Greek word "hades," like the Hebrew "sheol," represents death rather than life. Those under the power of hades (hell) are dead, not alive as the "hell-fire" believers teach. None of the New Scripture references to "hades" describe a fiery abode where so-called "disembodied immortal spirits" are punished and tortured endlessly. The only mention of "fire" and "torment" in relation to hades appears in the rich man and Lazarus parable which is symbolic in meaning rather than literal (as explained in lesson 15). To associate "hades" with the traditional "hell-fire" concept simply defies Scriptural evidence and corrupts the truth of God's Word.

## Geenna (Gehenna)

The Greek word "gehenna" (# 1067 in *Strong's Concordance*) appears twelve times in the Christian Greek Scriptures. Whereas the King James translators took the unfortunate liberty to translate it into the word "hell," which has caused much confusion and misunderstanding throughout Christendom, 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 Scriptures.

### Gehenna

The deep, narrow Valley of Hinnom, later known by this Greek name, lay 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 the making of human sacrifices by fire to Baal (2 Chron. 28:1, 3; 31:1, 6; Jer. 7:31, 32; 32:35). Later, faithful King Josiah had the place of idolatrous worship polluted, 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 vile 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 characteristic of Gehenna with the burning of human sacrifices that were carried on prior to King Josiah's reign. 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 practice.

### **FIND THE ANSWERS**

2. Referring to Judah's practice of burning her children in fire, 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 – to Him. With this in mind it seems most unlikely that God's Son, in discussing divine judgement, would make such idolatrous practice the basis for the symbolic meaning of Gehenna. God prophetically decreed that the Valley of Hinnom would serve as a place for mass disposal of dead bodies rather than for the torture of live victims (Jer. 7:32, 33; 19:2, 6, 7, 10, 11). Jesus, then, used the term "gehenna fire" as a symbol of destructive judgement by God, not for some mythical pagan place of "everlasting torment in literal fire" (a non-Scriptural teaching).

### **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 the 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" rather than some invisible, bodiless "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 bodies are in "gehenna" (hell) 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 9:43-45**

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**).



If there are no physical bodies in hell 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 only so-called "spirits without bodies" go there.

So far, we have seen that fire is in Gehenna and bodies put there are destroyed. These two facts show that Gehenna (translated "hell" in most Bibles) is a place of consuming fire for flesh, not a place of endless torment for bodiless spirits.

## Worms In Hell

### **FIND THE ANSWERS**

#### **Read Mark 9:43-48**

1. Verses 44, 46 and 48 use 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 in his grave. 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 worms and fire. This logically explains the appropriate references to both worms and fire in the New Scripture 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 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 and 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 prematurely 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 of utter, complete destruction – not endless burning. The refuse in the pit was burned, including the carcasses, until all were consumed. Rather than "endless consumption," this refers to complete destruction – two completely different concepts.

## Jesus Used "Gehenna" Symbolically

Jesus used the term "Gehenna" to represent utter destruction resulting from judgement by God. 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 [judgement] of \_\_\_\_\_"

Jesus told these wicked, unrepenting men that they faced the judgement of destruction (hell) as did those they converted to their sinful ways and perverse beliefs. So, as to avoid such destruction, 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 they prize or consider desirable and hold intimately close to them (Matt. 18:9; 5:27-30; Mark 9:43-47).

### **FIND THE ANSWERS**

3. Referring to the carcasses of the men that transgressed against Him, 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 complete destruction is evident from the fact that the Isaiah text dealt, not with persons who were alive, but with the "carcasses" of the men who transgressed against God. 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 anything not destroyed by the fire. Thus, Jesus' words of "gehenna fire" (or "hell fire") alluded to the completeness of God's judgement.



## Another Figurative Use of Gehenna

### **FIND THE ANSWERS**

#### **Read James 3:5-10**

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 inflame people and that one's life can be defiled by an undisciplined tongue, inflaming him and consuming him. Such a person's tongue (words), full of deadly poison, denotes a condition of spiritual death, whereby a person's existence is likened to being in the symbolic "Gehenna" – i.e., degradation and destruction (compare Matt. 12:37; Psa. 5:9; 140:3; Rom.

## Gehenna – Lake of Fire

The Biblical use of Gehenna as a symbol for judgement or destruction corresponds to that 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 in proving 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 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 refer to eternal existence in literal fire.

## Tartaroo

### **FIND THE ANSWERS**

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

The phrase "cast down to hell" in the above verse is translated from the single Greek word "tartaroo" (#5020 in *Strong's Concordance*). The word "hell" corresponds to the Greek word "tartaros" (tartarus) which refers to a low or abased position. The Biblical phrase "cast down to tartarus" represents a condition of utter debasement (spiritual darkness) and does not refer to the mythological place called "Tartarus," as does the traditional hell-fire doctrine taught by the Judeo churches.

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 debasement of people who had sinned against God. The mythological idea of disobedient spirits being cast into a place of eternal torment in fire is mistakenly read into this passage by misguided or dishonest Bible teachers and students. Such a fiery abode could hardly be described as a place of "darkness" as Peter declares. 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 deep underground 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 Scriptures 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-fire" doctrine taught by most Judeo-Christian 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 called "devils" and "demons."



## ANSWER KEY

### LESSON 17

## THE DOCTRINE OF "HELL" Part 2

### Page 162

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 hades (hell)

### Page 164

1. gates
2. gates
3. keys
4. grave
5. hades (#86)

### Page 165

1. fire
2. heart
3. mind; abomination

### Page 166

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

### Page 167

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

### Page 168

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

### Page 169

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

**Notes:**