



Is Hell Real?

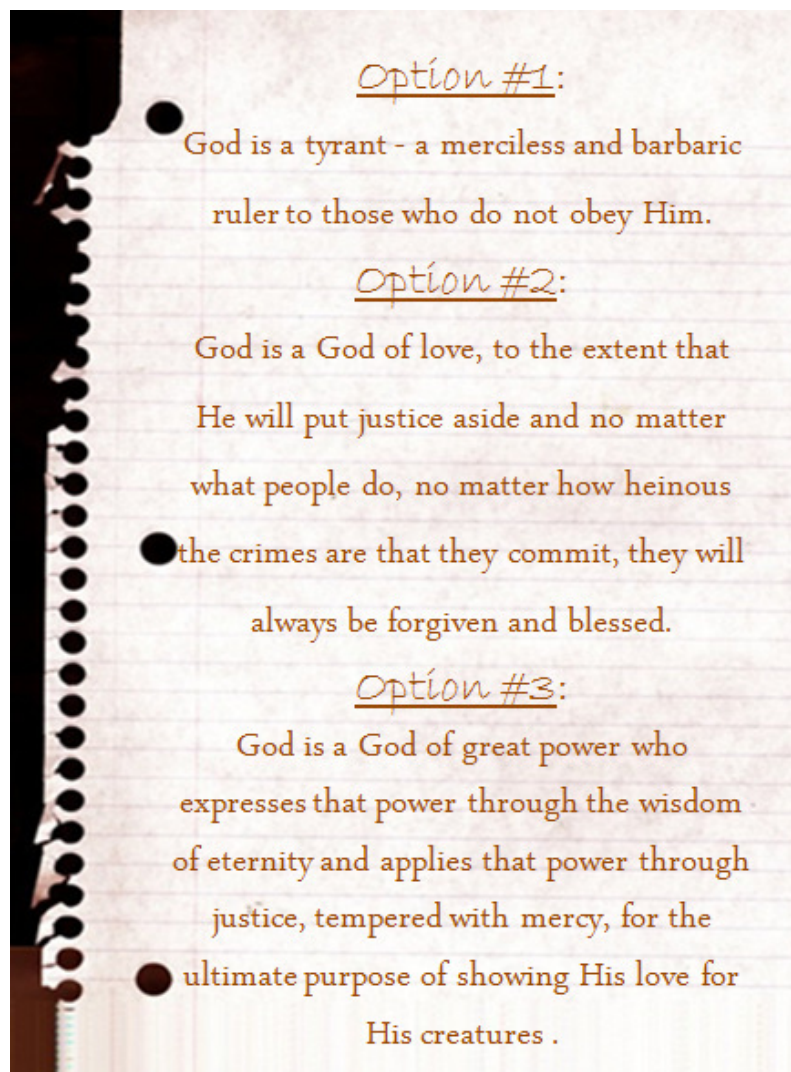
Matthew 25:41: (NASB) *Then he will also say to those on his left, Depart from me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels...*



One of the more difficult tasks of Christianity is understanding the future judgment regarding those who do not come to Jesus in this life. There are many different and contradictory teachings that we as Christians have drawn from the Scriptures regarding this judgment. On one hand, these range from the teaching that they will mercilessly burn in the torture of hell forever, to the other hand which says that God is far too loving

to hurt or destroy anyone forever. This morning we will open the book and look critically at what we think the Bible actually teaches on this matter. Is hell real?

The concept of hell varies within Christian denominations, but one of the first questions we must at least think about is "What kind of God is God?"



Option #1:

● God is a tyrant - a merciless and barbaric ruler to those who do not obey Him.

Option #2:

● God is a God of love, to the extent that He will put justice aside and no matter what people do, no matter how heinous the crimes are that they commit, they will always be forgiven and blessed.

Option #3:

● God is a God of great power who expresses that power through the wisdom of eternity and applies that power through justice, tempered with mercy, for the ultimate purpose of showing His love for His creatures .



Hell - The Devil's Domain, Introduction, *History Channel*

- *Stories of an evil Satan and hell's torment are handed down in Scripture.*
- *Jesus spoke far more about hell than he did about heaven.*



What did Jesus say about the concept of hell?

Matthew 13:40-42: (KJV) ⁴⁰As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. ⁴¹The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; ⁴²And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 13:47-50: (KJV) ⁴⁷Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: ⁴⁸Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. ⁴⁹So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, ⁵⁰And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Is this literal or symbolic? How can we know?

Jesus not only mentions some very unsettling imagery, he repeats it many times. The question is, what is the lesson he is teaching?

Hell - The Devil's Domain, Hell imagined from times beginning, *History Channel*

- *Hell has been imagined in countless ways - those perceptions began to take shape ages ago, in a time before Jesus walked the earth.*
- *The hell of fire and brimstone is but the most well-known vision of the underworld...Humankind has created strikingly similar images of an unpleasant afterlife, portraits of our darkest imaginings.*

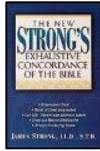
Many ancient cultures had similar imaginings of what the afterlife was like. The Egyptian culture, for one example, taught a lot about the imagined underworld of torture. This was in drastic contrast to what the Hebrews of the Old Testament believed.

Did the Egyptians know more about God's truth than God's own chosen people?



Mark 9:43-47: (KJV) ⁴³And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:...⁴⁵And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:...⁴⁷And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

What does the Old Testament tell us about hell?



In the Old Testament, we will see that there is only one word translated "hell":

Hell: Strongs #7585 she'owl (sheh-ole'); or sheol (sheh-ole'); a subterranean retreat

The Old Testament word "sheol" (Strongs #7585) is used 66 times: 31 times it is translated into English as "grave," 31 times it is translated "hell," and four times it is translated as "pit."

Let's look at some of the "warnings" using this word:

Deuteronomy 32:21-23: (KJV) ²¹They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. (This text quoted in Romans 10:19-21 relating to the Gentiles coming to favor.) ²²For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest **hell <7585>**, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.

Is God talking about literal flames or was the fire of His anger used as a metaphor?

Psalms 9:17: The wicked shall be turned into **hell <7585>**, and all the nations that forget God.

Psalms 55:15: Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into **hell <7585>**: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.

Proverbs 27:20: **Hell <7585>** and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

Wickedness/Sheol/Hell - these all seem to fit together, don't they?



Hell - The Devils Domain, Sheol is the grave, History Channel

- *Biblical conceptions of hell evolve over the course of the Bible. The Old Testament contains only fleeting and indirect references to hell.*
- *Sheol, the Hebrew abode of the righteous and unrighteous dead, was synonymous with the grave and separation from God.*
- *Everybody went there; it wasn't a reward or punishment. It was just another way of describing what happens to you when you die.*

The previous scriptures correlated sheol with wickedness. But let's look at other scriptures that use the exact same Hebrew word:

1 Samuel 2:6: The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the **grave <7585>**, and bringeth up.

Here we see a concept of resurrection...bringing back up. This isn't associated with wickedness.



Job 14:13: *O that thou wouldest hide me in the **grave <7585>**, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!*

Job is praying to go to hell to be hidden, because the word for "hell" and "grave" are the same.



Psalms 49:14-15: *¹⁴Like sheep they are laid in the **grave <7585>**; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the **grave <7585>** from their dwelling. ¹⁵But God will redeem my soul from the power of the **grave <7585>**: for he shall receive me. Selah.*

If this is a place of torment, why are sheep going there as well?

Hosea 13:14: *I will ransom them from the power of the **grave <7585>**; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O **grave <7585>**, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.*

If we replace the English word "grave" with "hell" in the translation, it would create for many a big contradiction. The common belief is that there is no ransoming from hell because it is for eternity. So what does this mean?

 **Hell gives purpose to Jesus' death, Guidelines.org**

- *If there is no hell, God didn't need to send His son to be cruelly treated, rejected, and ultimately crucified to point the way back to heaven. He could have sent a spokesperson, even an angel, but not demand the death of His one and only son.*

This view is saying that hell makes Jesus' death purposeful. If there is no hell of torment, there is no reason for Jesus' sacrifice. But wait - Jesus died in sacrifice as a ransom price for Adam. To give mankind an opportunity at life, a price had to be paid. A spokesperson making an announcement doesn't pay a price, they just say something. The death sentence would have continued without Jesus.

Daniel 12:1-2: (NASB) *¹Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. ²Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.*

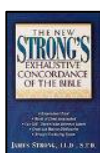
This talks about resurrection for everyone - some to everlasting life and some to everlasting contempt. In the Old Testament, the word "everlasting" means "age lasting." There was no word in Hebrew for everlasting. So this actually would be interpreted as "age-lasting contempt." It actually makes more sense that everyone is in the dust of the ground before the resurrection process.

Why is this one word translated in different ways if it means the same thing all of the time?

So, is hell the same in both the Old and New Testaments?

New Testament Primary word for "Hell" - "Hades" -

Hell: Strong's #86, haides (hah'-dace); unseen, i.e. "Hades" or the place (state) of departed souls: KJV-- grave, hell.





Hell - The Devils Domain, Hades is the same as Sheol, History Channel

- *In Greek mythology, Hades is both the name of the ruler of the netherworld and his domain.*
- *Scholars have assigned the same meaning to Sheol and Hades - the realm of the dead, not a place of torment.*

The next two examples are undeniable links between Sheol and Hades:



Psalms 16:10: (NIV) *because you will not abandon me to **the grave**, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.* (Hebrew)

Acts 2:27: (NIV) *because you will not abandon me to **the grave**, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.* (Greek)

The New Testament is quoting from the Old Testament, and uses Sheol (Hebrew) and Hades (Greek). The word itself has no connotation of torture. It literally means the grave, being buried.



If hell exists as a place of eternal torment which will never go away, then is it logical to conclude that hell is victorious over those who are incarcerated therein?
Does hell "win" the vast majority of humanity or does God triumph over evil?

Isaiah 25:8: (NIV) *He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.*

Hosea 13:14: (NIV) *I will ransom them from the power of **the grave** <(sheol) 7586> ; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O **grave** <(sheol) 7586>, is your destruction? I will have no compassion...*

Both the above verses are quoted partially below:

1 Corinthians 15:54-55: (NIV) ⁵⁴*When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: Death has been swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵Where, O **death** <(Hades) 86>, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?*

We agree with the History Channel that the scholars agree that Sheol and Hades are describing the same thing.

Hell Part 4 - Justice demands that hell exists, Guidelines.org

- *I believe God could not be just unless there is such a place.*
- *It is inconceivable that an Adolf Hitler, who sent 14 million people to their deaths in the Holocaust, could spend eternity in the same place as my mother or the martyrs through the centuries who have died.*
- *Justice demands that God has His payday someday and I'm willing to wait until that day and will rejoice when it comes!*

We also agree that justice must be served, but what does that mean? What is just?

Is Hitler a typical or an extreme example of those who would be sentenced to hell? He is the extreme! However, by Christian denominational teaching, the vast majority of the world is sentenced to hell. Looking through the history of



time, that could be as many as 30 billion people. So if Hitler is an extreme example, what about the "typical" person?

Does justice demand that an eternal suffering be the price of a finite life lived in sin? Is *that* God's justice?

Here is God's justice:

Acts 17:31: (NASB) *...because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising him from the dead.*

The Apostle preached to pagans that God will judge the world in righteousness through Jesus. It is not based on emotion or anger. Righteousness is essentially an emotionless approach.

Romans 5:18: (NASB) *So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.*

There seems to be a very clear-cut, just approach to eternity. Transgression came because of one man, therefore the ransom price that Jesus paid means that righteousness and justification come to all men. A man for a man - that's justice. Everyone stuck in the downward spiral of sin is included in the upward spiral of righteousness.

God created us in His image and gave us dominion over the earth. Would it not be sensible to think that as our Father, God would have taught us the basics of justice? In the Old Testament, it was justice that prevailed - an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, life for a life. When Jesus came on the scene, he wanted us to live not by the letter of the law, but by the spirit of the law. We were to apply mercy. God's justice is life for life, not an eternity of suffering for a few life-changing decisions.

The vast majority of those we look at as being sentenced to eternal torment and torture with their few life decisions - is it just to put them into an eternal, no-way out situation? Does that reflect the God that we know?

So, if there is no fire in "Hell" then what about all the teachings of Jesus about flames not going out?

 **Is there a Hell, Introduction, Bill O'Reilly**

- *The basis of the Judeo-Christian tradition is that good will be rewarded and evil punished in the afterlife.*
- *If that equation breaks down, so does the tradition.*

Is justice part of God's plan? Yes, it is.

Jesus' own words:

John 14:6: (KJV) *... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*



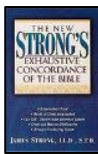
Even though we look at the concept of goodness in all people as pretty important, this scripture tells us unequivocally that we can only come to God through Jesus. So what does it mean if one is outside of this requirement?

Mark 9:43: (KJV) *And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into **hell**, into the fire that never shall be quenched:*

Now flames are being introduced! What does this mean?

 **Hell - The Devils Domain - Jesus - Gehenna is an image of hell, History Channel**

- *Jesus also gives his followers a visual depiction of what Hell might be like. Just outside of Jerusalem was Gehenna, a noxious trash dump where refuse was burned.*
- *Christ speaks of Gehenna as a metaphor for the fires that will not cease to burn.*



Hell: Strongs #1067 *geena* (gheh'-en-nah); of Hebrew origin; valley of (the son of) Hinnom.



Modern day Valley of Gehenna, Jerusalem

(Source: Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary) What is "Gehenna" The Valley of Hinnom: In the time of Jesus the Valley of Hinnom was used as the garbage dump of Jerusalem. Into it was thrown all the filth and garbage of the city, including the dead bodies of animals and executed criminals. To consume all this, fires burned constantly. Maggots worked in the filth. When the wind blew from that direction over the city, its awfulness was quite evident.

Nothing alive was thrown into this garbage dump, but the everlasting flames were good imagery at that time, because the fires consumed everything within and were always kept going.

Here is the awful history of Gehenna and its "imagery" that is presented:

Jeremiah 19:2-6: (ASV) ²and go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, (**Gehenna**) which is by the entry of the gate Harsith, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee; ³and say, Hear ye the word of Jehovah, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem: thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle. ⁴Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, that they knew not, they and their fathers and the kings of Judah; and have filled this place with the blood of innocents, ⁵and have built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons in the fire for burnt offerings unto Baal; **which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind:** ⁶therefore, behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that this place shall no more be called Topheth, nor The Valley of the son of Hinnom, but The Valley of Slaughter.

Child sacrifices were being made by Israel in this valley! God was livid by this idea. Torturing human beings by fire was not considered by Him. God changed its name, every living thing was moved out of this valley and it was turned into a garbage dump.



Is it reasonable to assume that Jesus took a God-proclaimed symbol of utter destruction and shame and relabeled it a symbol of torture - which God Himself said never entered his mind?

 **Is there a Hell? Unrepentant will get something, Bill O'Reilly**

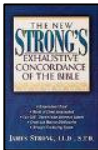
- *I think God wants everybody to repent. God wants everyone to be good and gives everybody the opportunity to do that - free will. But if you spit in the face of God, kill millions of people, I think there has to be a reckoning.*
- *People who turn their back on good - unrepentant people who do evil in this world - I believe will get something when they die. They will not be with the Lord in heaven.*



KEY POINT: Just because we are saying there is no fire in hell does not mean we are saying there is no consequence for sin.

God taught us about justice and His plan is full of justice and accountability.

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



Destroyed: Strongs #1842, exolothreuo, to destroy out of its place, destroy utterly, to extirpate (wipe out)

Acts 3:23: (KJV) *And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be **destroyed <1842>** from among the people.*

Hosea 13:12: *The yoke of Ephraim is stored up, whose sins are kept on record.*

In the Old Testament, Ephraim is another word for Israel. Israel had turned their backs on God, and yet, God gave the prophet Hosea the following prophecy:

Hosea 13:14: *I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death. Where, O **grave <sheol 7585>**, is your destruction?*

Hosea 14:4: *I will heal their apostasy. I will love them freely for mine anger is turned away from him.*

This is amazing grace!

God remembers sins, and that is what the Day of Judgment is about.

These next verses are Jesus warning about stumbling any of his followers:

Mark 9:43-48: (KJV) ⁴³*And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: ⁴⁴Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. ⁴⁵And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: ⁴⁶Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. ⁴⁷And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: ⁴⁸Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*



Clearly the imagery in this text has nothing to do with torture and everything to do with Jesus pleading with us to do whatever is necessary to live righteously. It would be contrary to his teachings for him to literally mean that we should cut off our own hands and feet and gouge out our eyes. If where we are going is going to keep us from God - don't go there! If what you see is tempting you - don't look!

Jesus is using the imagery of the day. For the Jewish mind, the Valley of Hinnom stunk, fires burned, and what the fire didn't destroy, the worms did. Whatever was thrown in there was for the purpose of complete, utter destruction and annihilation. Nothing was tortured. It was a valley of destruction *because* of the torture man had done. Jesus was comparing entering life eternal with Gehenna - utter destruction.

Jesus quoted from here:

Isaiah 66:22-24: (NASB) ²²For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me, declares the LORD, So your offspring and your name will endure. ²³And it shall be from new moon to new moon and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all mankind will come to bow down before Me, says the LORD. (obviously a future time) ²⁴Then they will go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched; And they will be an abhorrence to all mankind.

Jesus is referencing that Valley of Hinnom. What would you be looking at? Corpses! He uses the exact imagery quoted from Isaiah describing the death, destruction, and utter consuming of those that had done evil.

What about weeping and gnashing of teeth and a furnace of fire?



Is there a Hell, Good news for Hitler, Polpot, Mao, Bill O'Reilly

- Good news for Adolf, Polpot, Stalin, Mao Tse Tung and other villains who slaughtered millions of people - they're not gonna pay! That sounds like good news, huh?

Whenever we see "weeping (or wailing) and gnashing of teeth," it is accompanied by either outer darkness or a furnace of fire - so what does this mean? Torture?

The account of the Centurion asking for the healing of his servant:

Matthew 8:10-12: (NASB) ¹⁰Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. ¹¹I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; ¹²but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This outer darkness is in no way connected with torment by fire. This refers to the children of Israel, having rejected the Messiah, who were cast into disfavor. Jesus predicted that upon the realization of that in the next age, they will exhibit anger and lamentation over their loss, looking in from the outside, so to speak. This isn't torment or torture, it is a reaction to something lost.

Isaiah 60:1-3: (KJV) ¹Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. ²For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people:



but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. ³And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

This gives clear explanation of who is in the light and who is subject to "outer darkness." Being cast into darkness is the gross darkness that covers the people here in Isaiah 60. The light is the light of the gospel through Jesus.

We are trying to find the scriptural basis and apply the principle.

The Basis: Isaiah 60:1-3

The Principle: Weeping and gnashing of teeth; outer darkness, away from the favor of God.

 **To Hell and Back - People burning but not consumed, Dr. Maurice Rawlings**

- *I began to hear the voices of a multitude of people screaming and groaning and crying - I was seeing fire, smoke and people inside of this burning place - they were burning but they weren't burning up, they weren't being consumed.*

That's a scary vision! But there are billions and billions that are reportedly in torment for eternity. What happens to the atheists who live their lives in service of others? Does that doom them to eternal torment?

Eternity really is something beyond our ability to grasp. Is such a punishment just for a belief choice?

Matthew 13:40-43: (NASB) ⁴⁰So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send forth his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, ⁴²and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Fire, especially in a furnace, does two things: It purifies and destroys. This demonstrates the great day of trouble - there will be a day of God's wrath, but it is not eternal. The fire devours but doesn't torture forever. It is a contained fire, a furnace of fire.

This text reflects the heart and will of God and shows His justice, wisdom, power and love:

1 Timothy 2:3-6: (NASB) ³This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.

We believe God is love and has a plan for all mankind. Does the concept of a hell of torture and torment equal to what you believe God is?

*So is hell real...?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*





Psalms 21:8-9: (NASB) ⁸Your hand will find out all your enemies; Your right hand will find out those who hate you. ⁹You will make them as a fiery oven in the time of your anger; The LORD will swallow them up in His wrath, and fire will devour them.

Total destruction is the biblical end for the incorrigible.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: (ASV) ⁷and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, ⁸rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: ⁹who shall suffer punishment, even eternal **destruction** <3639> from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might,

This is the only text using Hades that could be interpreted as hellfire, but remember, this is a parable!

Luke 16:23-24: (KJV) ²³And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

Tormented: Strongs #3600 odunao (od-oo-nah'-o) to grieve: KJV-- sorrow, torment.

Luke 2:48: (KJV) And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee **sorrowing**.

Acts 20:38: (KJV) **Sorrowing** most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

What about the flame that causes the "torment?"

Flame: Strongs # 5395 phlox (flox); from a primary phlego (to "flash" or "flame"); a blaze: KJV-- flame (-ing).

Some uses:

Luke 16:24: (KJV) And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this **flame**.

Acts 7:30: (KJV) And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a **flame** of fire in a bush.

2 Thessalonians 1:8: (KJV) In **flaming** fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

These next texts from Revelation bear explanation:

Revelation 14:9-11: (KJV) ⁹And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship **the beast and his image**, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, ¹⁰The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: ¹¹And the **smoke** of their **torment** ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

Symbols of the text: the beast and his image represent great religious systems - the mark, the forehead and the hand are all symbols as well, as is the wine of God's wrath, the cup of indignation - so is it any surprise that the fire, brimstone and smoke are symbolic as well?



Torment: (Same root word as in the Rich Man parable) Strong's #929 *basanismos* *bas-an-is-mos'*
1) to torture, a testing by the touchstone, which is a black siliceous stone used to test the purity of gold or silver by the color of the streak produced on it by rubbing it with either metal
2) torment, torture 2a) the act of tormenting
2b) the state or condition of those tormented

Symbol of smoke: ("the smoke of their torment rising up...") Consequently, a rising column or cloud of smoke came to be used symbolically as a token of warning, a portent of woe to come or of destruction. (Revelation 9:2-4; compare Joel 2:30-31; Acts 2:19-20; Revelation 9:17-18.) Smoke also symbolized the evidence of destruction. (Revelation 18:9,18) Smoke that keeps ascending "to time indefinite" therefore is evidently an expression denoting complete and everlasting annihilation, as in Isaiah's prophecy against Edom, "to time indefinite its smoke will keep ascending." (Isaiah 34:5,10) Edom as a nation was wiped out and remains desolated to this day, and the evidence of this fact stands in the Bible account and in the records of secular history.

Isaiah 34:5-10: (ASV) ⁵For my sword hath drunk its fill in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Edom, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. ⁶The sword of Jehovah is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams; for Jehovah hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. ⁷And the wild-oxen shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls: and their land shall be drunken with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness. ⁸For Jehovah hath a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. ⁹And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. ¹⁰It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever; from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.

While the above text does not use the actual word "Gehenna," the destruction of Gehenna is certainly implied. To attempt to put it more plainly (especially in light of the Isaiah text where the same fire, brimstone and ascending smoke are used as a clear description of utter destruction), we would suggest the following interpretation:

All of the great religious systems that lead people away from truth (the Beast, his image) and any who worship them will be subject to the wrath of God and be clearly and utterly exposed as false and hypocritical and as such will meet with total and complete destruction (fire and brimstone), in the presence of Jesus and his true followers (the lamb and his angels). Though destroyed, the remembrance of their now revealed false systems and hypocrisy (the smoke of their torment) will be forever (they have no rest day or night) in the minds of men.

Revelation 20:7-10: (NRSV) ⁷When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸and will come out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, in order to gather them for battle; they are as numerous as the sands of the sea. ⁹They marched up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from heaven and consumed them. ¹⁰And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

This text is very similar to the Revelation 14 discussed above and we believe that it warrants the same answers as already given...We get a sense that all evil in all of its forms ends up in this "Lake of Fire," this total destruction...



A couple of examples of "torment" used in these two Revelation texts:

Matthew 14:24: *But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, **tossed <928>** with waves: for the wind was contrary.*

Matthew 8:29: *And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to **torment <928>** us before the time?*

A new Harris Poll (December, 2009) finds that the great majority (82 percent) of American adults believe in God, exactly the same number as in two earlier Harris Polls in 2005 and 2007.

Large majorities also believe in miracles (76 percent), heaven (75 percent), that Jesus is God or the Son of God (73 percent), in angels (72 percent), the survival of the soul after death (71 percent), and in the resurrection of Jesus (70 percent).

Less than half (45 percent) of adults believe in Darwin's theory of evolution but this is more than the 40 percent who believe in creationism.

These are some of the results of The Harris Poll of 2,303 adults surveyed online between November 2 and 11, by Harris Interactive.

The survey also finds that:

- 61 percent of adults believe in hell;
- 61 percent believe in the virgin birth (Jesus born of Mary);
- 60 percent believe in the devil;
- 42 percent believe in ghosts;
- 32 percent believe in UFOs;
- 26 percent believe in astrology;
- 23 percent believe in witches;
- 20 percent believe in reincarnation - that they were once another person.

None of these numbers have changed much since previous surveys in 2005 and 2007.

There are very big differences between the beliefs of Catholics, Protestants, born-again Christians and Jews.

Catholics are more likely than all adults to believe in: God (94 percent compared to 82 percent); heaven (86 percent vs. 75 percent); that Jesus is God or the Son of God (90 percent vs. 73 percent); angels (83 percent vs. 72 percent); the survival of the soul after death (82 percent vs. 71 percent); the resurrection of Jesus Christ (87 percent vs. 70 percent); hell (70 percent vs. 61 percent); and the virgin birth (by 74 percent vs. 61 percent).

Catholics are also somewhat more likely than all adults to believe in Darwin's theory of evolution (51 percent vs. 45 percent).

Protestants are also more likely to believe in God (92 percent), percent); that Jesus is God or the Son of God (91 percent); heaven (90 percent); angels (88 percent); the resurrection of Jesus (88 percent); miracles (87 percent); the survival of the soul (85 percent); the virgin birth (79 percent); the devil (77 percent) and hell (73 percent).

But Protestants are much less likely than all adults to believe in Darwin's theory of evolution (32 percent), ghosts (33 percent); astrology (20 percent); and reincarnation (13 percent). They are more likely than all adults to believe in creationism (56 percent vs. 40 percent).

Born-again Christians are much more likely than Catholics or all Protestants to believe in God (97 percent); heaven (97 percent); the Resurrection (97 percent); miracles (95 percent); angels (95 percent); the virgin birth (92 percent); the survival of the soul (91 percent); hell (89 percent); and the devil (89 percent).



Born-again Christians are also much more likely to believe in creationism (68 percent), and much less likely to believe in Darwin's theory of evolution (16 percent).

Jews are, of course, very unlikely to believe in the basic elements of Christianity. They are also less likely than all adults to believe in miracles (63 percent); heaven (48 percent); the survival of the soul (37 percent); angels (36 percent); hell (21 percent); and the devil (7 percent).

Jews are by far the most likely to believe in Darwin's theory of evolution (80 percent) and the least likely to believe in creationism (20 percent). They are also less likely than all adults to believe in ghosts (10 percent vs. 42 percent), UFOs (20 percent vs. 32 percent), astrology (19 percent vs. 26 percent); and witches (8 percent vs. 23 percent).

Two "big picture" findings are worth noting:

- Many people consider themselves Christians without necessarily believing in some of the key beliefs of Christianity. However, this is not true of born-again Christians.
- In addition to their religious beliefs, large minorities of adults, including many Christians, have "pagan" or pre-Christian beliefs such as a belief in ghosts, astrology, witches and reincarnation.

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Arguments For An Eternal Hell

Among the common arguments advanced for the existence of an eternal hell are these:

1. Words and pictures in the New Testament imply finality.
2. The doctrine of hell has been believed for a long time by eminent theologians.
3. Offers of pardon are restricted to the present world.
4. The judgment occurs at the close of the redemptive era, and hence is final.
5. Character tends to final permanence.
6. The conscience expects and demands retribution in another life.

Arguments Against An Eternal Hell

Commonly presented arguments against the existence of an eternal hell include:

1. Words and pictures in the New Testament imply death and destruction (i.e., annihilation).
2. "Eternal punishment" can refer to *results* that are eternal, not an eternal process.
3. Vindictive justice is not compatible with the God of love and compassion revealed in the New Testament.
4. The punishment does not fit the crime (i.e. non-eternal sin and disbelief).
5. Hell contradicts the Christian assertion of the final victory of God over evil.