

## What is the History of Hellfire?

**Luke 4:18-19:** (NASB) *<sup>18</sup>The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed; <sup>19</sup>To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.*



Sometimes we as Christians just don't see eye to eye. We all (hopefully) take the doctrine of Christ seriously and want to abide by the word of God, so when we come to a subject that is widely interpreted we have a dilemma. The concept of a hell of torment is one such topic. There are many views on the matter - today we want to look at it through the eyes of history to see if we can find the threads of truth and separate them from the threads of error. This may be surprising so stay with us!

Our main historical resource for this program is:

*The Origin and History of the Doctrine of Endless Punishment, Thomas B. Thayer (1881)*

### Were there ancient cultures that adhered to a hell/torment type of teaching?

 *Gates of Hell, Documentary, History Channel*

- *Hell is home to our most primal fears. It's full of torture, torment, pain, for all eternity.*
- *Is hell more than a myth?*
- *There is hell fire. There is fire in hell. There is a literal fire in hell that is burning right now.*
- *To some not only is hell real; it can be found here on earth. An erupting volcano in Iceland; pitch black taverns twisting beneath the jungle; a lake of fire in an African desert. These remote places share one thing in common: they are all believed to be ancient entrances into hell.*

#### SECTION I. DESCRIPTION OF THE HEATHEN HELL.

Among the ancient pagans, the belief in a hell of some sort was very general, if not universal. It was known by various names, as *Orcus, Erebus, Tartarus, and Infernus or Inferna*, whence our expression "infernal regions," etc. The views current respecting it were different at different periods, and among different nations, according to the degree of civilization and the genius of the people. What I shall offer on this point will have respect mostly to the Romans, Greeks, and Egyptians.

1. *Its Location.* It was supposed to be as far below the earth (or as deep down in it), as the heavens are above it, Hesiod, the Greek poet, who lived in 850 BC (around the time of Elijah) is very precise in his statement, and says a mass of iron would be nine days falling from heaven to earth, and nine more in falling from earth to hell, so say also Apollodorus, Virgil, and others.



Who was Virgil? (He will become relevant later because he is a character in Dante's *Divine Comedy*.)

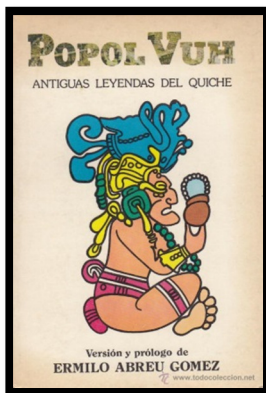
Publius Vergilius Maro (October 15, 70 BC - September 21, 19 BC), usually called Virgil or Vergil in English, was an ancient Roman poet of the Augustan period. He is known for three major works of Latin literature, the *Eclogues* (or *Bucolics*), the *Georgics*, and the epic *Aeneid*. A number of minor poems, collected in the *Appendix Vergiliana*, are sometimes attributed to him.

Virgil lived well before Christ and agreed with Hesiod, the Greek poet, on a geographical definition of hell.

*Of the Punishments.* Virgil gives us a brief account of these in *Aeneid*:

"And now wild shouts,  
and wailings dire,  
and shrieking *infants* swell the dreadful choir.  
Here sits in bloody robes the Fury fell,  
By night and day to watch the gates of hell.  
Here you begin terrific groans to hear,  
And sounding lashes rise upon the ear,  
On every side the damned their fetters grate,  
And curse, 'mid clanking chains, their wretched fate."

 **Mayan belief, Gates of Hell, Documentary, History Channel**



- *The Mayan people believe that this cave was the entrance to an underworld known as Xibalba, or Place of Fear. Even today surviving Maya fear the hell's mouth.*
- *For the Maya, there is still an apprehension and so they will not enter in many cases, or if they do it will be only after conducting many rituals to appease the gods.*
- *Dr. Jamie Archway has spent several years in the jungles of Belize investigating the strange legend surrounding Xibalba. As a messiah, references to Xibalba describe black rituals of human sacrifice and the Mayan sacred text, the Popol Vuh, tells of claustrophobic chambers that await the souls who dare to venture into Xibalba.*

Does the Old Testament support the belief of torment, as it is also ancient history and runs parallel in time with these other cultural beliefs? Daniel lived 150 years after Hesiod. Daniel lived in Babylon, a mighty seat of idolatry and superstition with ties to many cultures.

**What was Daniel's Jewish perspective on judgment?**

**Daniel 12:1-2:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Now 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. <sup>2</sup>Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

If this was referring to everlasting torment, Daniel had the opportunity to describe it here. Instead of "torment," he uses the word *contempt*, meaning "abhorrence."

## Where did these ancient cultures get their teachings? On what does the Old Testament focus?

**Numbers 16:31-33:** (NASB) <sup>31</sup>As he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open; <sup>32</sup>and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with their possessions. <sup>33</sup>So they and all that belonged to them **went down alive to Sheol**; and the earth closed over them, **and they perished from the midst of the assembly.**

The fault line opened up and the people fell in while they were alive. This catastrophic event killed them. Death was their judgment because of rebellion.

 **Sumerians, Greeks and Job, *Gates of Hell, Documentary, History Channel***

- *Nearly four thousand years ago, Sumerians believed in "a great below" where the dead resided. Ancient Greeks wrote of an abyss so deep that a soul could fall for a year and not reach the bottom. And in the book of Job, the underworld is called "Sheol" and is described as a dark pit beneath the earth. Nearly all cultures have believed in a real underworld - a universe of the dead beneath the earth.*
- *Almost every religion of the world believes in a place called hell and it's actually believed as a literal tangible place - this domain of evil beneath our feet. Eerily, although they come from different times and cultures, the accounts of hell are strikingly similar.*

**Was Job talking about the same thing?** (This was written between 1600-1700 BC.)

**Job 14:13:** (NASB) *Oh that You would hide me in Sheol, (the word also translated "pit") that You would conceal me until Your wrath returns to You, that You would set a limit for me and remember me!*

Job is asking God to be hid in Sheol. Why would Job pray to go to a place of eternal torment to be hidden from the anguish he was going through in his life? He wanted to die and be buried until resurrection. He was not describing a dark, evil, torment-filled place.

### SECTION II. THE HEATHEN INVENTED THE DOCTRINE OF ENDLESS PUNISHMENT - SHOWN BY THEIR OWN CONFESSIONS.

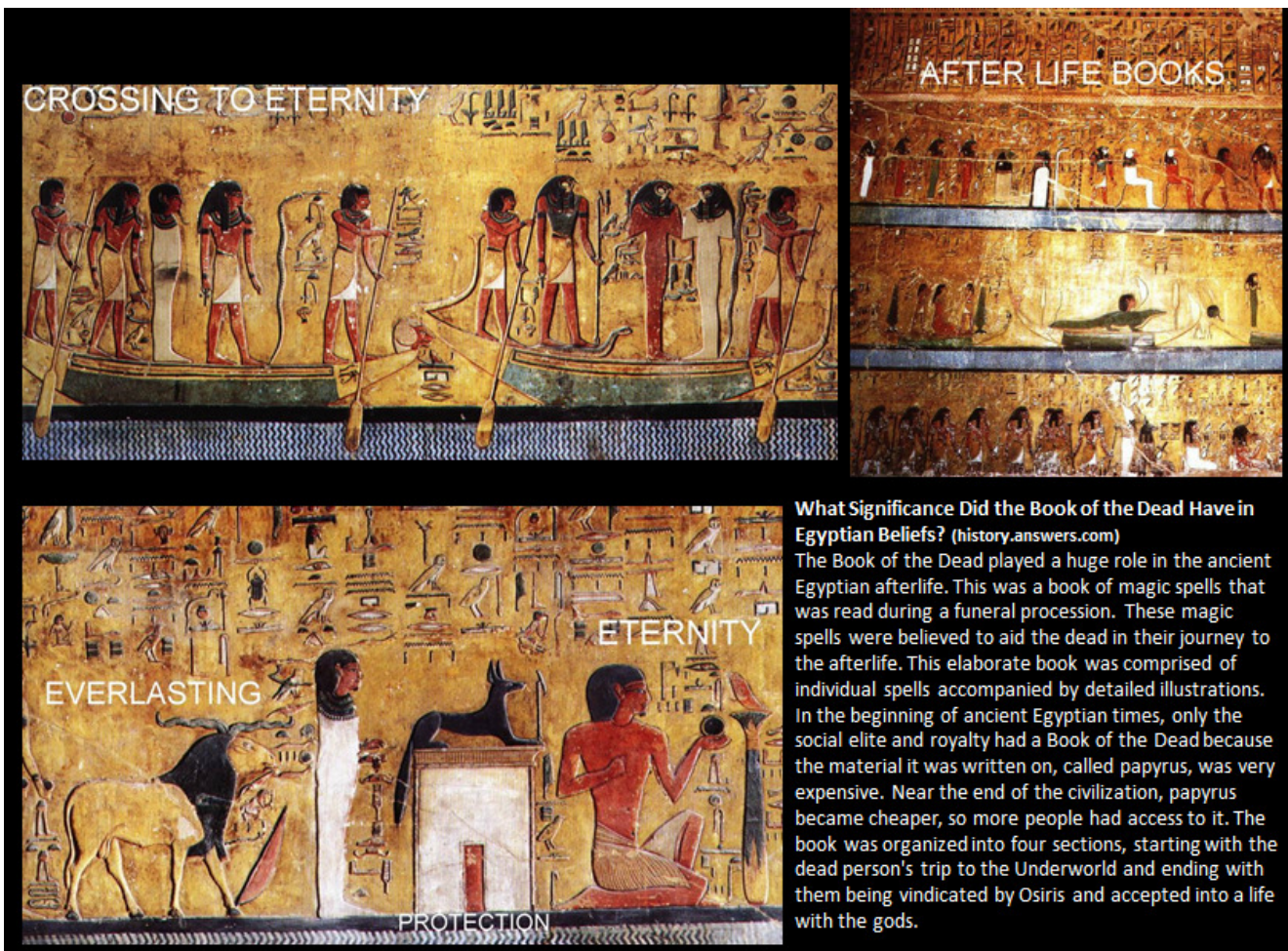
Anyone at all familiar with the writings of the ancient Greeks or Romans cannot fail to note how often it is admitted by them that the national religions were the inventions of the legislator and the priest for the purpose of governing and restraining the common people. Hence, all the early lawgivers claim to have had communications with the gods, who aided them in the preparation of their codes. Zoroaster claimed to have received his laws from a divine source; Lycurgus obtained his from Apollo; Minos of Crete from Jupiter; Numa of Rome from Egeria; Zaleucus from Minerva, etc. The object of this sacred fraud was to impress the minds of the multitude with religious awe, and command a more ready obedience on their part.

Egypt has been called the "Mother of Superstitions," and her whole religious history shows the propriety of the appellation. Greeks and Romans, lawgivers and philosophers, acknowledge their indebtedness to her in this respect, and freely credit her with the original invention of the fables and terrors of the invisible world; though it must be allowed that they have improved somewhat upon the hints given, and shown a wonderful inventive faculty of their own.

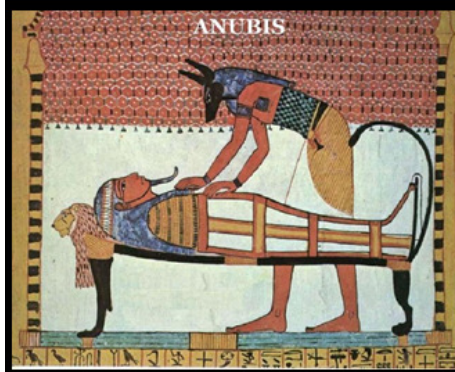
Zoroastrianism arose in the eastern region of the ancient Persian Empire, when the religious philosopher Zoroaster (7th century BEC, around the time of Jeremiah the prophet) simplified the pantheon of early Iranian gods into two opposing forces: Spenta Mainyu (Progressive Mentality) and Angra Mainyu (Destructive Mentality) under Ahura Mazda (Illuminating Wisdom).

In attempting to set out the Egyptian notions on the subject, it is difficult to choose between the conflicting accounts of the Greek writers, Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Plutarch, etc., as well as of the modern interpreters of the monumental hieroglyphics. Still, with regard to the main question, they are tolerably well agreed, though there is great diversity of opinion in respect to the details. It is plain enough, from their united testimony that the whole matter of judgment after death, the rewards of a good life, and the punishments of a bad life, with all the formal solemnities of trial and condemnation, originated and was perfected among the Egyptians, according to the peculiar character of their mythology. From them it was borrowed by the Greeks, who made such changes and additions as fitted the system to the genius and circumstances of that people.

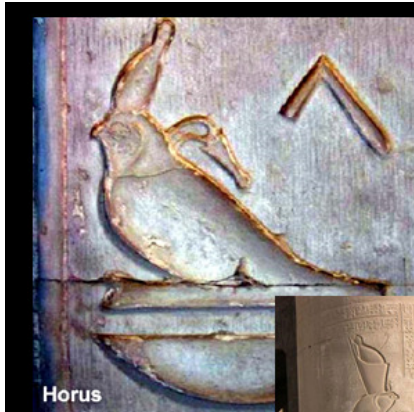
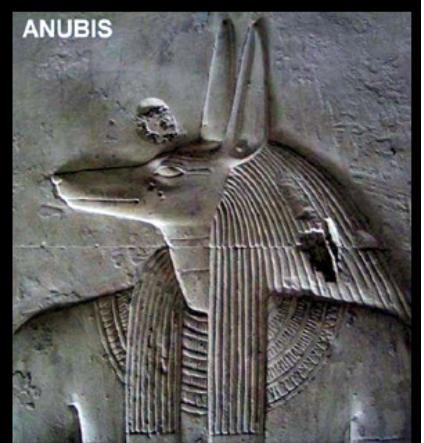
It would seem that each district of Egypt had what was called its "sacred lake," beyond which were the tombs and burial places of the dead. *Acherusia*, the lake near Memphis, was the model probably for the rest, and appears to have furnished a general name for them.



**What Significance Did the Book of the Dead Have in Egyptian Beliefs?** ([history.answers.com](http://history.answers.com))  
 The Book of the Dead played a huge role in the ancient Egyptian afterlife. This was a book of magic spells that was read during a funeral procession. These magic spells were believed to aid the dead in their journey to the afterlife. This elaborate book was comprised of individual spells accompanied by detailed illustrations. In the beginning of ancient Egyptian times, only the social elite and royalty had a Book of the Dead because the material it was written on, called papyrus, was very expensive. Near the end of the civilization, papyrus became cheaper, so more people had access to it. The book was organized into four sections, starting with the dead person's trip to the Underworld and ending with them being vindicated by Osiris and accepted into a life with the gods.



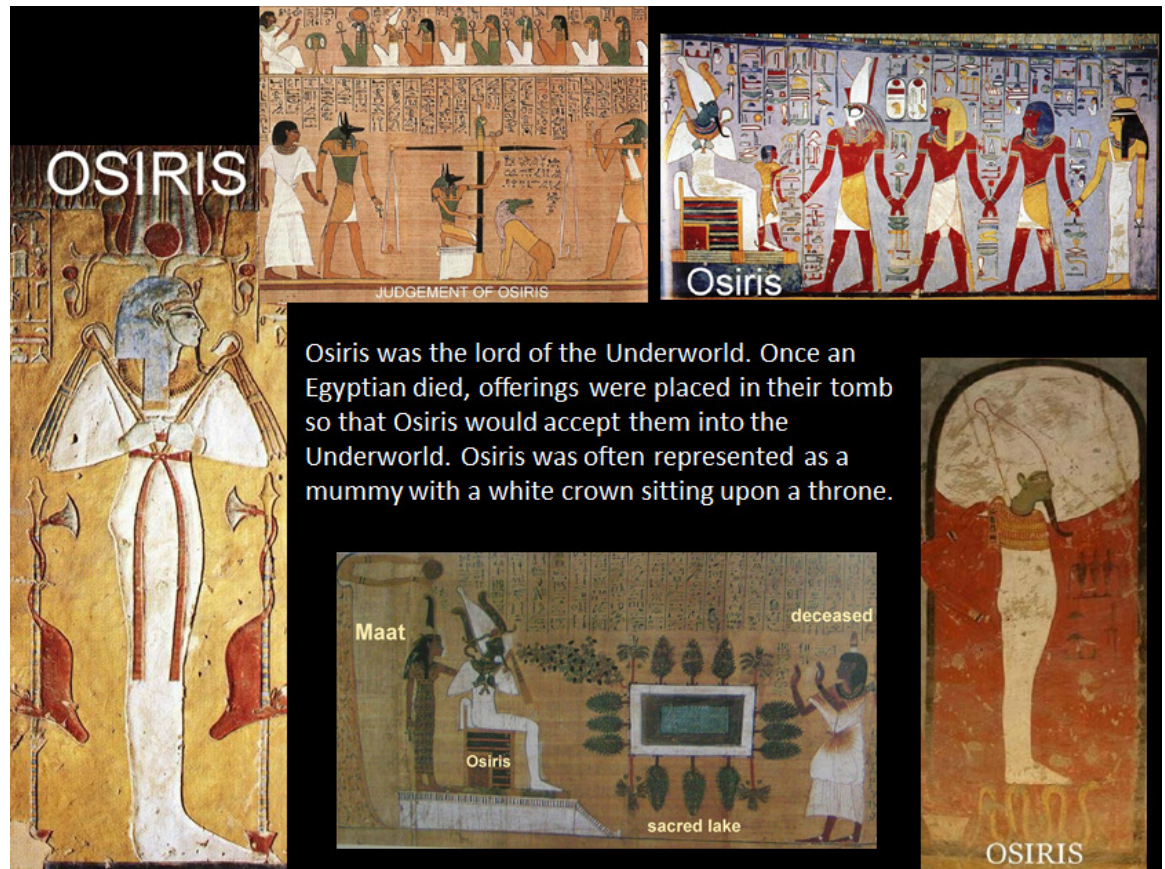
The highest of all of the afterlife gods is Anubis because he is the one who watches over the deceased and their tombs. Anubis had the head of a jackal and the body of a man.



Horus

Horus was the middleman between Earth and the Underworld. His main role was to safely guide the spirits of the ancient Egyptians to the Underworld. He was given the head of a falcon and the body of a man.





Osiris was the lord of the Underworld. Once an Egyptian died, offerings were placed in their tomb so that Osiris would accept them into the Underworld. Osiris was often represented as a mummy with a white crown sitting upon a throne.

Isaiah 38:17-19: (NASB) <sup>17</sup>Lo, for my own welfare I had great bitterness; It is You who has kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back. <sup>18</sup>For Sheol cannot thank You, death cannot praise You; Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your faithfulness. <sup>19</sup>It is the living who give thanks to You, as I do today; A father tells his sons about Your faithfulness.

Again, there is no mention of torment as a warning. The only reference is to silence, the pit of nothingness.

### What part did Greek influence play in promoting the idea of torment in an afterlife?

...These records of the ancient Greeks, confirmed by the monuments as illustrated by modern scholars, open to us the origin of the doctrines of a judgment after death, and of future endless rewards and punishments, for the good or evil deeds of this life. From the Egyptians it passed, with suitable modifications, to the Greeks and Romans. Diodorus himself clearly shows that the fables of the Acherusian lake, of Hecate, Cerberus, Charon, and the Styx, have their origins in these Egyptian ceremonies and doctrines...

 **Hell's earthly gates, *The Gates of Hell, Documentary, History Channel (August 2010)***

- *Could religions separated by thousands of years and thousands of miles all be describing the same place? The answer may lie in hell mouths across the globe, each believed by the ancients to be actual entrances into hell. A hidden cave in Belize, a volcano in Iceland, underwater passageways beneath Greece, a mysterious basilica in Ireland, a lake of fire in Africa. Each gateway could open a new window into an alternate universe beneath us. But what lies past these gates inside hell itself?*

What is the common thread? Fear! Fear of death, darkness, pain and fear of the unknown.

But, as I have remarked, though the Greeks borrowed, they altered and improved. And, true to that individualism which so marked a characteristic of that people, they are not satisfied with the Egyptian method of generalizing respecting the punishments of the wicked, but begin specifying particular sinners, and particular kinds of punishment adapted to particular offenses. Hence the fables of *Ixion, Tantalus, Tityrus*, etc., whose torments in the infernal regions are mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. Everything must be sharp, pointed, and dramatic to suit the lively genius of the Greek; and the terrors of the invisible world must be presented in a way to strike the imagination in the most powerful manner and produce some direct result on the individual and on society.

**Did the Old Testament teach and feed this fear?**

Jeremiah 19:2-6: (ASV) <sup>2</sup>and go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the gate Harsith, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee; <sup>3</sup>and 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. <sup>4</sup>Because 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, <sup>5</sup>and have built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons in the fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal;....

Jeremiah described what was happening in the Valley of Hinnom back in his day. This was a place of blatant idolatry where live, human child sacrifices were made.

*Polybius, the historian, says: "Since the multitude is ever fickle, full of lawless desires, irrational passions and violence, there is no other way to keep them in order but by the fear and terror of the invisible world; on which account our ancestors seem to me to have acted judiciously, when they contrived to bring into the popular belief these notions of the gods, and of the infernal regions."*

Polybius (200-118 BC) was a Greek historian of the Hellenistic Period noted for his work, *The Histories*, which covered the period of 264-146 BC in detail.

**Back to Jeremiah:** ...*which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind:* <sup>6</sup>therefore, 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.

**Biblical commentary by John Gill:** That this place shall no more be called Tophet: as it had been, from the beating of drums in it, that the cries and shrieks of infants burnt in the fire might not be heard by their parents:

Strabo (64/63 BC-AD 24) was a Greek geographer, philosopher and historian.

*Strabo, the geographer, says: "The multitude are restrained from vice by the punishments the gods are said to inflict upon offenders, and by those terrors and threatening which certain dreadful words and monstrous forms imprint upon their minds, .... For it is impossible to govern the crowd of women, and all the common rabble, by philosophical reasoning, and lead them to piety, holiness and virtue - but this must be done by superstition, or the fear of the gods, by means of fables and wonders; for the thunder, the aegis, the trident, the torches (of the Furies), the dragons. etc., are all fables, as is also all the ancient theology. These things the legislators used as scarecrows to terrify the childish multitude."*

So, in the ancient world they not only adopted this thought of an afterlife of torture and torment, but many in power realized this was made up and used the fear of the unknown as a tool to keep people in line.

The Old Testament teachings do not agree with what was going on in the heathen nations around Israel. If torment in the afterlife was true, why would God have hidden such a basic, formative truth from His chosen people? Were they left in the dark on such an important factor of their lives?

**Did all of the pagan beliefs regarding an afterlife and torment influence the Jews in any way?**

 **Egyptian post-death judgment, *The Devil's Domain*, History Channel**

- *The Egyptians were the first to believe that souls would be judged after death. Those who traversed the underworld came before King Osiris for final judgment. The just were granted eternal life; the unworthy savagely devoured by the hideous monster Ammut, one of the first depictions of a "hell mouth," a gruesome creature who devours the damned.*
- *One of the oldest and most pervasive images of hell is the "hell mouth."*

Chapter IV. The Jews Borrowed the Doctrine from the Heathen

It is allowed on all hands that the Jews in our Savior's time believed the doctrine of future endless punishment; that it was a part of the common faith. Of course, as the doctrine is nowhere to be found in their Scriptures, the question arises, where did they find it? At the close of the Old Testament Scriptures, they did not believe it; at the beginning of the New, they did.

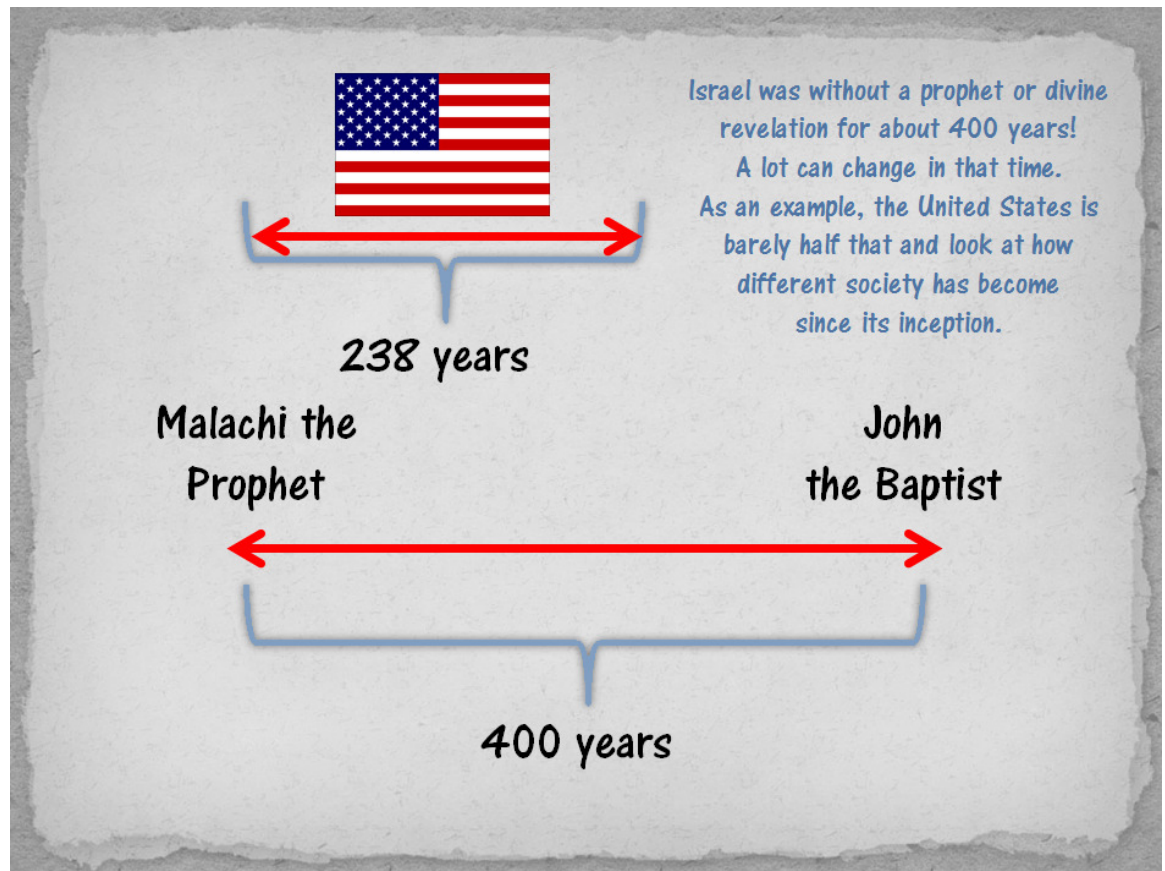
**Here is part of the prophecy of Malachi:**

**Malachi 4:4:** (NASB) *Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.*

At the close of the Old Testament, the people were warned.

Between these two points of time there was an interval of some four hundred years, during which there was no prophet in Israel. *Malachi* was the last of the Hebrew prophets, and from him to Christ there stretches this waste period of four centuries, when the Jews were without any divine teacher or revelation from heaven. And all this while they were in constant and close intercourse with the heathen, especially the Egyptians, the Greeks and Romans, who held the doctrine in review as part of the national faith. From these, therefore, they must have borrowed it, for it is certain that they could not have obtained it from any inspired source, since none was open to them during this period.





 Tool of fear, [Understanding the Origins of Christian Hellfire, youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

- *Relatively few religions tell us to do as much good on earth while we still can. The vast majority of religions terrify us with threats of a horrible afterlife if we don't obey authority now. So, very clearly, the concept of hell lends itself to manipulating trusting yet uninformed people. That is certainly a political opportunity for the educated. Whether or not they exploit that opportunity introduces ethical criteria for critique of religion.*

...The process is easily understood. About three hundred and thirty years before Christ, Alexander the Great had subjected to his rule the whole of Western Asia, including Judea, and also the kingdom of Egypt. Soon after he founded Alexandria, which speedily became a great commercial metropolis and drew into itself a large multitude of Jews, who were always eager to improve the opportunities of traffic and trade. A few years later, Ptolemy Soter took Jerusalem and carried off one hundred thousand of them into Egypt. Here, of course, they were in daily contact with Egyptians and Greeks, and gradually began to adopt their philosophical and religious opinions, or to modify their own in harmony with them.

**Malachi 4:5-6:** (NASB) <sup>5</sup>Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. <sup>6</sup>He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.

"To what side soever they turned," says a careful writer, "the Jews came in contact with Greeks and with Greek philosophy, under one modification or another. It was around them and among them; for small bodies of that people were scattered through their own territories, as well as through the surrounding provinces. It insinuated itself very slowly at first; but stealing upon them from every quarter, and operating from age to age, it mingled at length in all their views, and by the year 150 before Christ, had wrought a visible change in their notions and habits of thought." (Universalist Expositor, vol. for 1834, p. 423.)

### The last verse of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple:

**1 Kings 8:53:** (NASB) <sup>53</sup>*For You have separated them from all the peoples of the earth as Your inheritance, as You spoke through Moses Your servant, when You brought our fathers forth from Egypt, O Lord GOD.*

Truth was within the people of God; error was on the outside. There was a great focus on their separation throughout the Old Testament.

**Amos 3:1-2:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>*Hear this word which the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt: <sup>2</sup>You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.*

The *iniquities* were idolatry influenced by other cultures. The clear-cut Jewish thinking was a non-torment afterlife. By the time of the New Testament, they brought in the thinking of the nations around them, which corrupted what was true.

### Was there evidence of this polluted thought pattern when Jesus came on the scene?

So, what is the conclusion regarding the Old Testament? What did the Old Testament focus on?

- God's promise to Abraham *in thee and thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed:* Repeated several times through many generations
- The Law and its importance: Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy all focused around the Law
- Being separate from other nations: Different government, rituals, beliefs, marriage, etc.
- Punishment in this life for sins and transgressions: Many times to the third and fourth generations

If eternal torment was a God-sanctioned punishment, is it not reasonable to assume that it would have been disclosed and explained repeatedly during the 4,000 years of the Old Testament just as these other important principles of life were? What is the final Old Testament testimony on hell as a place of eternal torment??

 Silence!

- *(Crickets chirping)*

... Evidently transmigration (like reincarnation; transferring of one soul into another body) in the time of Christ was regarded by some as a method of punishment. Hence, in the account of the blind man restored to sight by Jesus, we have the question: "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" John 9. This shows plainly that the people thought the man might have been sent into a blind body as a punishment for some sin in a preexistent state; which is an exact copy of the Egyptian and Oriental doctrine.

John 9:1-5: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup>And his disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?

**So, how does Jesus deal with this question that is so far off base from truth?**  
<sup>3</sup>Jesus answered, it was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup>We must work the works of Him who sent me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. <sup>5</sup>While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.

He doesn't ridicule or condemn - he simply states what is true.

In Matthew 16:14, we have another trace of the doctrine among the people. In answer to the question of Jesus, "Whom do men say that I, the son of man, am?" the disciples reply, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some say Elias; and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." They seemed to think the soul of some one of these ancient men of God had returned again to the earth in the body of Jesus, which to them was a satisfactory explanation of the miracles he wrought. Many of the Jewish doctors have believed that the souls of Adam, Abraham, and others, have at different times animated the bodies of the great men of their nation.

Let's discuss a very famous and much more modern view of hell:

 Overview of the book, *the Divine Comedy*, Dante Alighieri

- Now, we'll give a brief overview of the *Divine Comedy* before we tell you some of the details of this work. First the title: The word "comedy" in this instance doesn't mean something that's amusing. It's taken from an Italian word that means a prosperous ending after a difficult beginning. The poem was written in Italian, which was a revolutionary thing in Dante's time. Most important works then were written in Latin. Italian was considered the language of the masses and it was a new concept that people would read and enjoy poetic literature.
- The comedy is written in three books: Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. Each book is a place in a world beyond our own, and Dante visits each of these realms. Not only do we see what happens there, but we get to know how the realms are physically constructed. Most editions of the book show artist's renderings of the levels and geography of hell, purgatory, and paradise, based on Dante's explicit descriptions. He's divided these places into specific circles and each one represents the results of an earthly experience for good or bad.

Durante degli Alighieri, simply referred to as Dante (Italian: c. 1265-1321), was a major Italian poet of the Middle Ages. His *Divine Comedy*, originally called *Comedia* and later called *Divina* by Boccaccio, is widely considered the greatest literary work composed in the Italian language and a masterpiece of world literature.



Statue of Dante in the Piazza di Santa Croce, Florence, Italy



Modern Day Caesarea Philippi, Israel



**Another example of contaminated Jewish thinking:**

**Matthew 16:13-17:** (NASB) <sup>13</sup>Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he was asking his disciples, Who do people say that the Son of Man is? <sup>14</sup>And they said, some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

**So, how does Jesus deal with this answer that is so far off base from truth?**

<sup>15</sup>He said to them, But who do you say that I am? <sup>16</sup>Simon Peter answered, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. <sup>17</sup>And Jesus said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

He simply moved past it. Jesus' way was just to teach truth.

There was a definite sense of paganism permeating Judaism at the time of Jesus.

### So, what did Jesus save us from? An eternal torment?

**Romans 6:23:** (NASB) *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Just as it said in Genesis! 4,000 years later, what God said is what He meant!

**Titus 2:11-14:** (NASB) *<sup>11</sup>For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, <sup>12</sup>instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup>looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, <sup>14</sup>who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.*

Notice, we are not redeemed from a future torment, but from a present evil.

### What does Jesus rescue us from?

**Galatians 1:3-5:** (NASB) *<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup>who gave himself for our sins so that he might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup>to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.*

Now, is not this a most marvelous thing, if Jesus really came to deliver us from a future evil world - from the endless torments of a hell which begins only after death - plainly; if it be so, this statement of the Apostle is a deliberate deception; for it not only conceals the main fact, but it substitutes something else in the place of it, as if to draw attention away from the substantial truth in the case.

### Now our theme text:

**Luke 4:18-21:** (NASB) *<sup>18</sup>The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are oppressed, <sup>19</sup>To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. <sup>20</sup>And he closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup>And he began to say to them, Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*

Again, this is the very core of what Jesus came to do and no mention of hell or torment. More than that, Jesus STOPS SHORT the part of [Isaiah 61:2](#) that says, *And the day of vengeance of our God.*

But there is another fact, of great weight in this inquiry, and one worthy of all remembrance. The original words translated "save" and "salvation," if I have counted rightly, occur one hundred and fifty-seven times in the New Testament. Of these, nineteen refer to the healing of bodily infirmities; as when Jairus besought Christ to lay hands upon his daughter, "that she might be *healed*" [Mark 5:23] - literally, "saved" - thirty-five of these refer to deliverance from danger or death, as when the mocking Jews said of Jesus, "He saved others; let him save himself." [Luke 23:35]

The remaining one hundred and three examples refer to spiritual or Gospel salvation. And yet in not one of these texts is it said that Christ came to save the world, or any part of it, from endless punishment, or even from "hell." But it is said repeatedly, and emphatically, that he came expressly to save us from something quite different from this. How shall we explain this, if the doctrine be true? What shall we say of those, who, speaking by the Spirit of God in exposition of Gospel salvation, never state the case as it really is, but spend all their words on matters of comparatively trifling importance?

Ancient world history shows much evidence of many cultures believing in some sort of torment-filled afterlife because of fear. Historical writings point to the fact in many of these cultures, these things were admittedly made up so that the people could be controlled.

In the Old Testament there is no such evidence. You would think God would tell Israel - His chosen people - what would come in the afterlife. The fact that He did not tells us those things were not true. They were pagan stories that crept into Christianity and contaminated what we are and what we believe. Remove the pagan thinking from our Christian doctrine and replace it with just scriptural thoughts.

*So, what is the history of hellfire?  
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!***

First, a few Old Testament scriptures that are in some ways harsh, but in no way represent an afterlife of torment:

**Isaiah 66:24:** (KJV) *And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.*

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.) The psalmist says of the wicked: "In smoke they must come to their end." (Psalms 37:20) 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." (Isa 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. Similarly, the everlasting destruction of Babylon the Great is foretold at Revelation 18:8, and a like judgment is entered against those who worship "the wild beast" and its image, at Revelation 14:9-11.

**Isaiah 34:5-10:** (ASV) <sup>5</sup>For my sword hath drunk its fill in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Edom, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. <sup>6</sup>The 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. <sup>7</sup>And 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. <sup>8</sup>For Jehovah hath a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. <sup>9</sup>And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. <sup>10</sup>It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up forever; from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever.

**Jeremiah 19:2-6:** (ASV) <sup>2</sup>and go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the gate Harsith, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee; <sup>3</sup>and 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. <sup>4</sup>Because 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, <sup>5</sup>and 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: <sup>6</sup>therefore, 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.

(Source: Biblical commentary by John Gill: that this place shall no more be called Tophet: as it had been, from the beating of drums in it, that the cries and shrieks of infants burnt in the fire might not be heard by their parents: nor the valley of the son of Hinnom; which was its name in the times of Joshua, and long before it was called Tophet; but now it should have neither names: but the valley of slaughter; or, "of the slain," as the Targum; from the multitude of those that should be killed here, at the siege and taking of Jerusalem by the army of the Chaldeans; or that should be brought hither to be buried; see #Jer 19:11 and see Gill on "Jeremiah 7:32.")

**Jeremiah 7:30-33:** (NKJV) <sup>30</sup>For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight," says the LORD. They have set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to pollute it. <sup>31</sup>And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart. <sup>32</sup>Therefore behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when it will no more be called Tophet, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter; for they will bury in Tophet until there is no room. <sup>33</sup>The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. And no one will frighten them away.

Total destruction is the biblical end for the incorrigible.

### New Testament examples:

**Romans 8:6:** (KJV) For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

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

**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.

**Destroyed:** Strongs #1842 exolothreuo (ex-ol-oth-ryoo'-o); to extirpate (meaning to destroy completely; wipe out; pull up by the root, cut out by surgery) to destroy out of its place, destroy utterly, to extirpate

**Matthew 7:13:** (KJV) Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to **destruction** <684>, and many there be which go in there at:

**Destruction:** Strongs #684 apoleia (ap-o'-li-a); from a presumed derivative of 622; ruin or loss (physical, spiritual or eternal):

AV-perdition 8, destruction 5, waste 2, damnable 1, to die, pernicious

**Philippians 3:19:** (KJV) Whose end is **destruction** <684>, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

**2 Thessalonians 1:7-9:** (ASV) <sup>7</sup>and 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, <sup>8</sup>rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: <sup>9</sup>who shall suffer punishment, even eternal **destruction <3639>** from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

**Destruction:** Strongs #3639 olethros (ol'-eth-ros); (to destroy; a prolonged form); ruin, i.e. death, punishment

AV-destruction 4; 41) ruin, destroy, death  
for the destruction of the flesh, said of the external ills and troubles  
by which the lusts of the flesh are subdued and destroyed

**1 Corinthians 5:5:** (KJV) To deliver such an one unto Satan for the **destruction <3639>** of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

### A bit more miscellaneous information:

(Source: Wikipedia) **Zoroastrianism**, also called Zarathustraism, Mazdaism and Magianism, is an ancient Iranian religion and a religious philosophy. It was once the state religion of the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sasanian empires. Estimates of the current number of Zoroastrians worldwide vary between 145,000 and 2.6 million.

Zoroastrianism arose in the eastern region of the ancient Persian Empire, when the religious philosopher Zoroaster simplified the pantheon of early Iranian gods into two opposing forces: Spenta Mainyu (Progressive mentality) and Angra Mainyu (Destructive Mentality) under Ahura Mazda (Illuminating Wisdom) in the 7th century BCE.

Zoroaster's ideas led to a formal religion bearing his name by about the 6th century BCE and have influenced other later religions including Judaism, Gnosticism, Christianity and Islam.

Zoroastrians believe that there is one universal, transcendent, supreme god, Ahura Mazda, or the 'Wise Lord'. (*Ahura* means 'Being' and *Mazda* means 'Mind' in Avestan language). Zoroaster keeps the two attributes separate as two different concepts in most of the Gathas and also consciously uses a masculine word for one concept and a feminine for the other, as if to distract from an anthropomorphism of his divinity. Some Zoroastrians claim Ahura Mazda as the uncreated Creator to whom all worship is ultimately directed, thereby formulating a pantheistic faith with a transcendent divinity, widely believed to have influenced the theology of the Ismaeli branch of Islam. Other scholars assert that since Zoroastrianism's divinity covers both being and mind as immanent entities, it is better described as a belief in an immanent self-creating universe with consciousness as its special attribute, thereby putting Zoroastrianism in the pantheistic fold where it can be easily traced to its shared origin with Indian Brahmanism. In any case, Ahura Mazda's creation—evident is widely agreed as *asha*, truth and order—is the antithesis of chaos, which is evident as *druj*, falsehood and disorder. The resulting conflict involves the entire universe, including humanity, which has an active role to play in the conflict.



### A bit more description on Greek influence regarding torment in an afterlife from Thayer:

The whole thing is designed for effect, to influence the multitude, to restrain their passions, and to aid the magistrate and ruler in keeping them subject to authority. It is the invention of priests and law-makers, who take this as the easiest method of governing the people. They claim the "right divine" to govern; claim that their laws originate with the gods, as we have shown above; and that, therefore, the gods will visit on all offenders the terrors and tortures of the damned. Hence, through the joint cunning of priest and legislator, of church and state, mutually supporting each the other, we have all the stupendous frauds and falsehoods respecting the invisible world.

But, without further remarks of my own, I will introduce the testimony of the heathen themselves on this point, and those the best informed among them, who will tell their own story in their own way. One preliminary observation, however, partly made already, I wish to repeat, and I desire the reader to have it always in mind: The rulers and magistrates, or priests, invent these terrors to keep the people, the masses, in subjection; the people religiously believe in them; while the inventors, of course, and the educated classes, the priests and the philosophers, though they teach them to the multitude, have themselves no manner of faith in them.

Lucius Annaeus Seneca (often known simply as Seneca; c. 4 BC-AD 65) was a Roman Stoic philosopher, statesman, dramatist, and in one work humorist, of the Silver Age of Latin literature.

Seneca says: "Those things which make the infernal regions terrible, the darkness, the prison, the river of flaming fire, the judgment-seat, etc., are all a fable, with which the poets amuse themselves, and by them agitate us with vain terrors." Sextus Empiricus calls them "poetic fables of hell;" and Cicero speaks of them as "silly absurdities and fables" (*ineptiis ac fabulis*).

### More on the Egyptian hell from *The Devil's Domain* on the History Channel:

The ancient Egyptians were obsessed by the idea of immortality. They built elaborate tombs to protect the physical body. For any soul to reach the next life it first had to conquer a gauntlet of terrors: lakes of flames, harsh deserts, and ravenous crocodiles.

The whole afterlife according to the Egyptians was an incredibly complex world that had to be navigated. When a person died there were seven different gates that a person had to go through just to get to the entrance to the actual afterlife.

The Egyptian book of the dead listed the secrets, spells and intricate rituals needed to navigate this supernatural maze.