

He Leadeth Me



**What Say the Scriptures
About Hell?**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Hell an English Word?

Hell in the Old Testament

**Other Occurrences
of the Word Hell**

**Undying Worms &
Quenchless Fires**

**Print Friendly "What Say the
Scriptures About Hell?"**

Home

What Say the Scriptures About Hell?



Here is an exposition of every text of Scripture in which the word hell is found. It is condensed from *Food for Thinking Christians*, written by Charles T. Russell and first published in 1881.

This is not a rewrite or a paraphrase, but a true condensation in the author's own words as they appear in the original edition, and although only one-third the size, the author's treatise does not suffer from the abridgement. For the convenience of the reader, the texts have been rearranged in Bible sequence.

It is the hope that this booklet will serve as a Bible class textbook as well as a reference in private study by young and old alike.

Introduction

A correct understanding of the subject of this booklet is almost a necessity to Christian steadfastness. For centuries it has been the teaching of "orthodoxy," of all shades, that God, before creating man, had created a great abyss of fire and terrors, capable of containing all the billions of the human family which he purposed to bring into being; that this abyss he had named hell; and that all of the promises and threatenings of the Bible were designed to deter as many as possible (a "little flock") from such wrong-doing as would make this awful place their perpetual home.

While glad to see superstitions fall, and truer ideas of the great, and wise, and just, and loving Creator prevail, we are alarmed to notice that the tendency with all who abandon this long-revered doctrine is toward doubt, skepticism, infidelity. Why should this be the case, when the mind is merely being delivered from an error—do you ask? Because Christian people have so long been taught that the foundation of this awful blasphemy against God's character and government is deep-laid and firmly fixed in the Word of God—the Bible—and consequently, to whatever degree their belief in hell is shaken, to that extent their faith in the Bible, as the revelation of the true God, is shaken also; so that those who have dropped their belief in a hell, of some kind of endless torment, are often open infidels and scoffers at God's Word.

Guided by the Lord's providence to a realization that the Bible has been slandered, as well as its divine Author, and that, rightly understood, it teaches nothing on this subject derogatory to God's character nor to an intelligent reason, we have attempted in this booklet to lay bare the Scripture teaching on this subject, that thereby faith in God and his Word may be reestablished, on a better, reasonable foundation. Indeed, it is our opinion that whoever shall hereby find that his false view rested upon human misconceptions and misinterpretations will, at the same time, learn to trust hereafter less to his own and other men's imaginings, and, by faith, to grasp more firmly the Word of God, which is able to make wise unto salvation; and on this mission, under God's providence, it is sent forth.

Hell an English Word

In the first place, bear in mind that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. The word hell is an English word sometimes selected by the translators of the English Bible to express the sense of the Hebrew word *sheol* and the Greek words *hades*, *gehenna*, and *tartaroo*.

The word hell in old English usage simply meant to conceal, to hide, to cover; hence a concealed, hidden, or covered place. In old English literature records may be found of the helling of potatoes—putting potatoes into pits; and of the helling of a house—covering or thatching it. The word hell was therefore properly used synonymously with the words grave and pit, to translate the words *sheol* and *hades* as signifying the secret or hidden condition of death.

The Hebrew word *sheol* occurs sixty-five times in the Old Testament. In the King James Version it is translated hell thirty-one times, grave thirty-one times, and pit three times. If the translators of the Revised Version had been thoroughly disentangled from error, they would have done more to help the English student than merely to substitute the Hebrew word *sheol* and the Greek word *hades* as they have done. They should have translated the words. But they gave us *sheol* and *hades* untranslated, and thus permitted the inference that these words mean the same as the word hell has become perverted to mean. Yet anyone can see that if it was proper to translate the word *sheol* thirty-one times grave and three times pit, it could not have been improper to so translate it in every other instance.

A peculiarity to be observed in comparing these cases, as we will do shortly, is that in those texts where the torment idea would be an absurdity the translators of the King James Version have used the words grave or pit; while in all other cases they have used the word hell, and the reader, long schooled in the idea of torment, reads the word hell and thinks of it as signifying a place of torment, instead of the grave, the hidden or covered place or condition. For example, compare Job 14:13 with Psalm 86:13. The former reads, “O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave [*sheol*],” etc., while the latter reads, “Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell [*sheol*].” The Hebrew word being the same in both cases, there is no reason why the same word grave should not be used in both. But how absurd it would have been for Job to pray to God to hide him in a hell of eternal torture.

Hell in the Old Testament

As before noted, the word hell occurs thirty-one times in the Old Testament, and in every instance it is *sheol* in the Hebrew. It does not mean a lake of fire and brimstone, nor anything at all resembling that thought; not in the slightest degree! Quite the reverse: instead of a place of blazing fire, it is described in the context as a state of “darkness” (Job 10:21); instead of a place where shrieks and groans are heard, it is described in the context as a place of “silence” (Psalm 115:17); instead of representing in any sense pain and suffering, or remorse, the context describes it as a place or condition of “forgetfulness” (Psalm 88:11, 12. “There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, in the grave [*sheol*] whither thou goest” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

The meaning of *sheol* is “the hidden state,” as applied to man’s condition in death, in and beyond which all is hidden, except to the eye of faith; hence, by proper and close association, the word was often used in the sense of grave—the tomb, the hidden place, or place beyond which only those who have the enlightened eye of the understanding can see resurrection, restitution of being. And be it particularly noted that this identical word *sheol* is translated grave thirty-one times and pit three times in our Common Version by the same translators—more times than it is translated hell; and twice where it is translated hell, it seemed so absurd, according to the present accepted meaning of the English word hell, that scholars have felt it necessary to explain in the margin of modern Bibles that it means grave (Isaiah 14:9 and Jonah 2:2). In the latter case, the hidden state, or grave, was the belly of the fish in which Jonah was buried alive, and from which he cried to God.

Thirty-One Texts in Which *Sheol* is Translated Hell

Deuteronomy 32:22—“For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn in the lowest hell.” [A figurative representation of the destruction, the utter ruin of Israel as a nation “wrath to the uttermost,” as the apostle called it, God’s anger burning that nation to the “lowest deep,” as Leeser here translates the word *sheol*—1 Thessalonians 2:16.]

2 Samuel 22:6 (margin)—“The cords of hell compassed me about.” [A figure in which trouble is represented as hastening one to the tomb.]

Job 11:8—“It [God’s wisdom] is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell [than any pit]; what canst thou know?”

Job 26:6—“Hell [the tomb] is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering.”

Psalms 9:17—“The wicked shall be [re]turned into hell [the condition of death], and all the nations that forget God.” [That the application of this text belongs to the coming age is evident, for both saints and sinners go into *sheol* or *hades* now. This Scripture indicates that in the time when it applies, only the wicked shall go there. In further proof of this, we find that the Hebrew word *shub*, which in our text is translated turned, signifies turned back, as to a previous place or condition. Those

referred to in this text have been either in *sheol* or liable to enter it, but, being redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, will be brought out of *sheol*. If then they are wicked, they, and all who forget God, shall be turned back or returned to *sheol*.]

Psalm 16:10—“Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” [This refers to our Lord’s three days in the tomb. Acts 2:31; 3:15]

Psalm 18:5 (margin)—“The cords of hell compassed me about.” [As in 2 Samuel 22:6, trouble is represented as hastening one to the tomb.]

Psalm 55:15—“Let them go down quick into hell [margin: the grave].”

Psalm 86:13—“Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell [margin: the grave].”

Psalm 116:3—“The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me.” [Sickness and trouble are the figurative hands of the grave to grasp us.]

Psalm 139:8—“If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.” [God’s power is unlimited; even over those in the tomb he can and will exert it and bring forth all that are in the graves. —John 5:28.]

Proverbs 5:5—“Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell” [i.e., lead to the grave].

Proverbs 7:27—“Her house is the way to hell [the grave], going down to the chambers of death.”

Proverbs 9:18—“He knoweth not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell.” [The harlot’s guests are represented as dead, diseased, or dying, and many of the victims of sensuality are in premature graves from diseases which also hasten their posterity to the tomb.]

Proverbs 15:11—“Hell and destruction are before the Lord.” [Here the grave is associated with destruction and not with a life of torment.]

Proverbs 15:24—“The path of life [leadeth] upward for the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.” [This illustrates the hope of resurrection from the tomb.]

Proverbs 23:14—“Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell” [i.e., wise correction will save a child

from vicious ways which lead to premature death, and may also possibly prepare him to escape the Second Death].

Proverbs 27:20—“Hell [the grave] and destruction are never full: so the eyes of man are never satisfied.”

Isaiah 5:14—“Therefore hell hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure.” [Here the grave is a symbol of destruction.]

Isaiah 14:9,15—“Hell [margin: grave] from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming . . . thou shalt be brought down to hell” [the grave—so rendered in verse 11].

Isaiah 28:15-18—“Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell [the grave] are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: Therefore, saith the Lord . . . Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell [the grave] shall not stand.” [God thus declared that the present prevalent idea, by which death and the grave are represented as friends, rather than enemies, shall cease; and men shall learn that death is the wages of sin, and that it comes as a result of Satan’s power (Romans 6:23; Hebrews 2:14) and not as an angel sent by God.]

Isaiah 57:9—“And didst debase thyself even unto hell.” [Here figurative of deep degradation.]

Ezekiel 31:15-17—“In the day when he went down to the grave . . . I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit . . . They also went down into hell with him, unto them that be slain with the sword.” [Figurative and prophetic description of the fall of Babylon into destruction, silence, the grave.]

Ezekiel 32:21—“The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him.” [A continuation of the same figure, representing Egypt’s overthrow as a nation to join Babylon in destruction—buried.]

Ezekiel 32:27—“And they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war: and they have laid their swords under their heads; but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.” [The grave is the only hell where fallen ones are buried and lie with their weapons of war under their heads.]

Amos 9:2—“Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them.” [A figurative expression; but certainly pits of the earth are the only hells men can dig into.]

Jonah 2:1,2—“Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord, his God, out of the fish’s belly, and said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.” [The belly of the fish was for a time his grave—see margin.]

Habakkuk 2:5—“Who enlargeth his desire as hell [the grave] and as death, and cannot be satisfied.”

Thirty-One Texts in Which *Sheol* Is Translated Grave

Genesis 37:35—“I will go down into the grave unto my son.”

Genesis 42:38—“Then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.” [See also the same expression in Genesis 44:29,31. The translators did not like to send God’s servant, Jacob, to hell simply because his sons were evil.]

1 Samuel 2:6—“The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.”

1 Kings 2:6,9—“Let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace . . . his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.”

Job 7:9—“He that goeth down to the grave.”

Job 14:13—“O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me [resurrect me].”

Job 17:13—“If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness.” [Job waits for resurrection in the morning.]

Job 21:13; 24:19—“They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. . . . Drought and heat consume the snow waters: so doth the grave those which have sinned.” [All have sinned, hence death passed upon all men, and all go down to the grave. But all have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ; hence all shall be awakened and come forth in

God's due time in the morning—Romans 5:12,18,19.]

Psalm 6:5—“In death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?”

Psalm 30:3—“O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.” [This passage expresses gratitude for recovery from danger of death.]

Psalm 31:17—“Let the wicked be ashamed; let them be silent in the grave.”

Psalm 49:14,15—“Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright [the saints, Daniel 7:27] shall have dominion over them in the morning [the Millennial morning]; and their beauty shall consume, the grave being an habitation to every one of them. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave.”

Psalm 88:3—“My life draweth nigh unto the grave.”

Psalm 89:48—“Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?”

Psalm 141:7—“Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth.”

Proverbs 1:12—“Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit” [i.e., as of an earthquake, as in Numbers 16:30-33].

Proverbs 30:15,16—“Four things say not, It is enough: the grave . . .”

Ecclesiastes 9:10—“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”

Song of Solomon 8:6—“Jealousy is cruel as the grave.”

Isaiah 14:11—“Thy pomp is brought down to the grave.”

Isaiah 38:10—“I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years.”

Isaiah 38:18—“The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.”

Ezekiel 31:15—“In the day when he went down to the grave.”

Hosea 13:14—“I will ransom them from the power of the

grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction. Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.” [The Lord did not ransom any from a place of fire and torment, for there is no such place; but he did ransom all mankind from the grave, from death, the penalty brought upon all by Adam’s sin, as this verse declares.]

Three Texts in Which *Sheol* Is Translated Pit

Numbers 16:30-33—“If . . . they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand. . . . The ground cleave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.”

Job 17:16—“They shall go down to the bars of the pit [grave], when our rest together is in the dust.”

The three lists given foregoing include every one of the sixty-five occurrences of the Hebrew word *sheol* in the Old Testament. From this examination it must be evident to all readers that God’s revelations for four thousand years contain not a single hint of a hell, such as the word is now understood to signify.

Hell in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the Greek word *hades* corresponds exactly to the Hebrew word *sheol*. As proof see the quotations of the apostles from the Old Testament in which they render it *hades*. For instance, Acts 2:27, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [*hades*],” is a quotation from Psalm 16:10, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [*sheol*].”

And in 1 Corinthians 15:54,55, “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave [*hades*], where is thy victory?” is an allusion to Isaiah 25:8, “He will swallow up death in victory,” and to Hosea 13:14, “O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave [*sheol*], I will be thy destruction.”

Ten Texts in Which *Hades* Is Translated Hell

Matthew 11:23—“And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell.” [In privileges of knowledge and opportunity the city was highly favored, or, figuratively, “exalted unto heaven;” but because of misuse of God’s favors, it would be debased, or, figuratively, cast down to *hades*, overthrown, destroyed. It is now so thoroughly buried in oblivion that even the site where it stood is a matter of dispute. Capernaum is certainly destroyed, thrust down to *hades*.]

Matthew 16:18—“Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” [Although bitter and relentless persecution, even unto death, should afflict the Church during the Gospel Age, it should never prevail to her utter extermination; and eventually, by her resurrection, accomplished by the Lord, the Church will prevail over *hades*—the tomb.]

Luke 10:15—“And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell.” [Same thought as in the parallel passage, Matthew 11:23]

Luke 16:23—“In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.” These words form part of a parable—that of the rich man and Lazarus. To our understanding, the rich man represented the Jewish nation. At the time of the utterance of the parable, and for a long time previous, the Jews had “fared sumptuously every day”—being the special recipients of God’s favors. Lazarus represented the outcasts from Divine favor. Although these included publicans and sinners of Israel, in the main they were Gentiles—all nations of the world aside from the Israelites. These, at the time of the utterance of this parable, were entirely destitute of those special Divine blessings which Israel enjoyed. They lay at the gate of the rich man. When, as a nation, Israel rejected Christ, the “Rich Man” soon found himself in a cast-off condition—in tribulation and affliction. In such condition Israel has suffered from that day to this.

In the parable the dissolution of the Jewish polity is well illustrated by the symbol of death, and their dispersal amongst the nations by the symbol of burial. To these symbols our Lord added a third: “In hell [*hades*, the grave] he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off.”

The dead cannot lift up their eyes, nor see either near or far, nor converse; for it is distinctly stated: “There is no work, nor

device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave”; and the dead are described as those who “go down into silence” (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Psalm 115:17).

But the Lord wished to show that great sufferings or “torments” would be added to the Jews as a nation after their national dissolution and burial, and that they would plead in vain for release from the hand of the formerly despised Gentiles. And history has borne out this parabolic prophecy.

Christ in Hell [*hades*] and Resurrected From Hell [*hades*]

Acts 2:1,14,22-31—“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come . . . Peter . . . lifted up his voice, and said . . . Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you . . . being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains [or bands] of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it [for the Word of Jehovah had previously declared his resurrection]. For David speaketh concerning him [personating or speaking for him], I [Christ] foresaw the Lord [Jehovah] always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [*hades*, the tomb, the state of death], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou [Jehovah] hast made known to me [Christ] the ways of life.”

Here our Lord, as personified by the prophet David, expresses his faith in Jehovah’s promise of a resurrection and in the full and glorious accomplishment of Jehovah’s plan through him, and rejoices in the prospect.

Peter proceeds: “Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day [so that this prophecy could not have referred to himself personally; for David’s soul was left in hell—*hades*, the tomb, the state of death—and his flesh, did see corruption]. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he, seeing this before [prophetically], spake of the resurrection of Christ [out of hell—*hades*, the tomb—to which

he must go for our offenses], that his soul was not left in hell [*hades*, the death state], neither did his flesh see corruption.”

Thus Peter presents a strong, logical argument based on the words of the prophet David showing first, that Christ, who was delivered by God for our offenses, went to hell, the grave, the condition of death, destruction (Psalm 16:10); and second, that according to promise he had been delivered from hell, the grave, death, destruction, by a resurrection, a raising up to life; being created again, the same identical being, yet more glorious, and exalted even to the express image of his [the Father's] person (Hebrews 1:3).

And now “that same Jesus” (Acts 2:36), in his subsequent revelation to the Church, declares in Revelation 1:18, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell [*hades*, the grave] and of death.”

Amen! Amen! our hearts respond; for in his resurrection we see the glorious outcome of the whole plan of Jehovah, to be accomplished through the power of the Resurrected One, who now holds the keys of the tomb and of death and in due time will release all the prisoners who are, therefore, called the “prisoners of hope” (Zechariah 9:12; Luke 4:18).

Revelation 6:8—“And behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.” [Symbol of destruction or the grave.]

Revelation 20:13,14—“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [the grave] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell [the grave] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”

The lake of fire is the symbol of final, everlasting destruction. Death and hell [the grave] go into it. “There shall be no more death.” “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (Revelation 21:4; 1 Corinthians 15:26).

Other Occurrences of the Word Hell

Having examined the word *sheol*, the only word in the Old Testament rendered hell, and the word *hades*, most frequently in the New Testament rendered hell, we now notice every remaining instance in Scripture of the English word hell. In the New Testament two other words are rendered hell: namely, *gehenna* and *tartaroo*, which we will consider in the order named.

Twelve Texts in Which *Gehenna* Is Translated Hell

This word occurs in the following passages: Matthew 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15,33; Mark 9:43, 45,47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6. It is the Grecian mode of spelling the Hebrew words which are translated “Valley of Hinnom.” This valley lay just outside the city of Jerusalem, and served the purpose of sewer and garbage burner to that city. The offal, garbage, etc., were emptied there, and fires were kept continually burning to consume utterly all things deposited therein, brimstone being added to assist combustion and insure complete destruction. But no living thing was ever permitted to be cast into *gehenna*. The Jews were not allowed to torture any creature.

When we consider that in the people of Israel God was giving us object lessons illustrating his dealings and plans, present and future, we should expect that this Valley of Hinnom, or *gehenna*, would also play its part in illustrating things future. As we shall see, it was indeed the type or illustration of the Second Death—final and complete destruction, from which there can be no recovery; for after that, “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,” but only “fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:26,27).

Let us remember that the people of Israel, for the purpose of being used as types of God’s future dealing with the race, were typically treated as though the ransom had been given before they left Egypt, though only a typical lamb had been slain. When Jerusalem was built, and the temple—representative of the true Temple, the Church, and the true kingdom as it will be established by Christ in the Millennium—Israel typified the world in the Millennial Age. Their priests represented the glorified Royal Priesthood, and their Law and its demands of perfect obedience represented the law and conditions under the New Covenant, to be brought into operation for the blessing of all the obedient, and for the condemnation of all who, when

granted fullest opportunity, will not heartily submit to the righteous ruling and laws of the Great King.

Seeing, then, that Israel's polity, condition, etc., prefigured those of the world in the coming age, how appropriate that we should find the valley or abyss, *gehenna*, a figure of the Second Death, the utter destruction in the coming age of all that is unworthy of preservation; and how aptly, too, is the symbol, "lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Revelation 19:20), drawn from this same *gehenna*, or Valley of Hinnom, continually burning with brimstone.

The expression adds force to the symbol, "fire," to express the utter and irrevocable destructiveness of the Second Death; for burning, brimstone is the most deadly agent known. How reasonable, too, to expect that Israel would have courts and judges resembling or prefiguring the judgments of the next age; and that the sentence of those (figurative) courts of the (figurative) people under those (figurative) laws to that (figurative) abyss, outside that (figurative) city, would largely correspond to the (real) sentences of the (real) court and judges in the next age. If these points are kept in mind, they will greatly assist us in understanding the words of our Lord in reference to *gehenna*; for though the literal valley just at hand was named and referred to, yet his words carry with them lessons concerning the future age and the antitypical *gehenna*—the second Death.

Shall Be in Danger of *Gehenna*

Matthew 5:21,22—"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be amenable to the judges; but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall [future—under the regulations of the real kingdom] be amenable to the judges; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca [villain], shall be in danger of the [high] council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell [*gehenna*] fire."

To understand these references to council and judges and *gehenna*, all should know something of Jewish regulations. The "Court of Judges" consisted of seven men (or twenty-three—the number is in dispute), who had power to judge some classes of crimes. The High Council, or Sanhedrin, consisted of seventy-one men of recognized learning and ability. This constituted the highest court of the Jews, and its supervision

was over the gravest offenses. The most serious sentence was death; but certain very obnoxious criminals were subjected to an indignity after death, being refused burial and cast with the carcasses of dogs, the city refuse, etc., into *gehenna*, there to be consumed. The object of this burning in *gehenna* was to make the crime and the criminal detestable in the eyes of the people, and signified that the culprit was a hopeless case. It must be remembered that Israel hoped for a resurrection from the tomb, and hence they were particular in caring for the corpses of their dead. Not realizing fully God's power, they apparently thought he needed their assistance to that extent (Exodus 13:19; Hebrews 11:22; Acts 7:15,16). Hence the destruction of the body in *gehenna* after death (figuratively) implied the loss of hope of future life by a resurrection. Thus, to such, *gehenna* represented the Second Death in the same figurative way that they as a people illustrated a future order of things under the New Covenant.

The same thought is continued in Matthew 5:29,30: "It is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell [*gehenna*]." Here again the operation of God's Law under the New Covenant is contrasted with its operation under the Old or Jewish Covenant, and the lesson of self-control is urged by the statement that it is far more profitable that men should refuse to gratify depraved desires (though they be dear to them as a right eye, and apparently indispensable as a right hand) than that they should gratify these, and lose, in the Second Death, the future life provided through the atonement for all who will return to perfection, holiness, and God.

The point to be specially noticed here is that *gehenna*, which the Jews knew, and of which our Lord spoke to them, was not a lake of fire to be kept burning to all eternity, into which all would be cast who get "angry with a brother" and call him "a fool." No; the Jews gathered no such extreme idea from the Lord's words. The eternal torment theory was unknown to them. It had no place in their theology. The point is that *gehenna* symbolized the Second Death—utter, complete, and everlasting destruction. This is clearly shown by its being contrasted with life as its opposite. "It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, than [otherwise] to be cast into *gehenna*." It is better that you should deny yourselves sinful gratifications than that you should lose all future life, and perish in the Second Death.

Able to Destroy Both Soul and Body in *Gehenna*

Matthew 10:28—“Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [*gehenna*].” Here our Lord pointed out to his followers the great cause they had for courage and bravery under the most trying circumstances. They were to expect persecution, and to have all manner of evil spoken against them falsely, for his sake, and for the sake of the “good tidings” of which he made them the ministers and heralds; yea, the time would come, that whosoever would kill them would think he did God a service. Their consolation or reward for this was to be received, not in the present life, but in the life to come. They were assured, and they believed, that he had come to give his life a ransom for many, and that all in their graves must in consequence, in due time, hear the Deliverer’s voice and come forth, either to reward (if their trial had been passed in this life successfully), or future trial (judgment), as must be the case with the great majority who do not, in this present life, come to the necessary knowledge and opportunity essential to a complete trial.

Under present conditions men are able to kill our bodies, but nothing that they can do will affect our future being (soul), which God has promised shall be revived or restored by his power in the resurrection day, the Millennial Age. Our revived souls will have new bodies (spiritual or natural)—“to each seed his own [kind of] body,” and these none will have liberty to kill. God alone has power to destroy utterly—soul and body. He alone, therefore should be feared, and the opposition of men even to the death is not to be feared if thereby we gain Divine approval. Our Lord’s bidding then is, fear not them which can terminate the present (dying) life in these poor, dying bodies. Care little for it, its food, its clothing, its pleasures, in comparison with that future existence or being which God has provided for you, and which, if secured, may be your portion forever. Fear not the threats, or looks, or acts of men, whose power can extend no farther than the present existence; who can harm and kill these bodies, but can do no more. Rather have respect and deference to God, with whom are the issues of life everlasting—fear him who is able to destroy in *gehenna*, the Second Death, both the present dying existence and all hope of future existence.

Here it is conclusively shown that *gehenna*, as a figure, represented the Second Death—the utter destruction which must ensue in the case of all who, after having fully received the opportunities of a future being or existence through our Lord’s sacrifice, prove themselves unworthy of God’s gift, and refuse to accept it, by refusing obedience to his just requirements. For it does not say that God will preserve soul or body in *gehenna*, but that in it he can and will “destroy” both. Thus we see that any who are condemned to the Second Death are hopelessly and forever blotted out of existence.

Matthew 18:9—“It is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell [*gehenna*] fire.” This verse refers to that same discourse recorded in Mark 9:43-48 (see subsequent page).

Matthew 23:15,33 The class here addressed was not the heathen who had no knowledge of the truth, nor the lowest and most ignorant of the Jewish nation, but the Scribes and Pharisees, outwardly the most religious, and the leaders and teachers of the people. To these our Lord said, “How can ye escape the judgment of hell [*gehenna*]?”

These men were hypocritical. Abundant testimony of the truth had been borne to them, but they refused to accept it, and endeavored to counteract its influence and to discourage the people from accepting it. And in thus resisting the Holy Spirit of light and truth, they were hardening their hearts against the very agency which God designed for their blessing. Hence they were wickedly resisting his grace, and such a course, if pursued, must eventually end in condemnation to the Second Death, *gehenna*. Every step in the direction of willful blindness and opposition to the truth makes return more difficult, and makes the wrongdoer more and more of the character which God abhors, and which the Second Death is intended to utterly destroy. The Scribes and Pharisees were progressing rapidly in that course: hence the warning inquiry of our Lord, “How can ye escape?” The sense is this: Although you boast of your piety, you will surely be destroyed in *gehenna* unless you change your course.

Undying Worms and Quenchless Fires

Mark 9:43-44 It may be remarked that verses 44 and 46, and part of 45, are not found in the oldest Greek manuscripts, though verse 48, which reads the same, is in all manuscripts. We quote the text as found in these ancient and reliable manuscripts: “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 [*gehenna*], into the fire that never shall be quenched: and 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 [*gehenna*], and 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 [*gehenna*] fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

Here the lesson is the same as that unfolded by the Master in Matthew 5:29,30, considered foregoing. But what about the undying worms and the unquenchable fire? We answer, in the literal *gehenna*, which is the basis of our Lord’s illustration, the bodies of animals, etc., frequently fell upon ledges of rocks and not into the fire kept burning below. Thus exposed, these would breed worms and be destroyed by them, as completely and as surely as those which burned. No one was allowed to disturb the contents of this valley; hence the worm and the fire together completed the work of destruction—“the fire was not quenched and the worms died not.” This would not imply a never-ending fire, nor everlasting worms. The thought is that the worms did not die off and leave the carcasses there, but continued and completed the work of destruction. So with the fire: it was not quenched, it burned on until all was consumed. Just so if a house were ablaze and the fire could not be quenched, but burned until the building was destroyed, we might properly call such an “unquenchable fire.” Our Lord wished to impress the thought of the completeness and finality of the Second Death, symbolized in *gehenna*. All who go into the Second Death will be thoroughly and completely and forever destroyed; no ransom will ever again be given for any (Romans 6:9); for none worthy of life will be cast into the Second Death, or lake of fire, but only those who love unrighteousness after coming to the knowledge of the truth.

Not only in the above instances is the Second Death pointedly illustrated by *gehenna*, but it is evident that the same teacher used the same figure of the Valley of Hinnom to represent the same thing in the symbolic language of Revelation though there it is not called *gehenna*, but a “lake of fire.”

The same valley was once before used as the basis of a discourse by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 66:24). Though he gives it no name, he describes it; and all should notice that he speaks, not as some with false ideas might expect, of billions alive in flames and torture, but of the carcasses of those who transgressed against the Lord, who are thus represented as utterly destroyed in the Second Death.

The two preceding verses show the time when this prophecy will be fulfilled, and it is in perfect harmony with the symbols of Revelation: it appertains to the new dispensation, the Millennium, the “new heavens and new earth” condition of things. Then all the righteous will see the justice as well as the wisdom of the utter destruction of the incorrigible, willful enemies of righteousness, as it is written: “They shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.”

Luke 12:5—“Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell [*gehenna*].” This is another account of the same discourse recorded in Matthew 10:28, considered foregoing.

Set on Fire of *Gehenna*

James 3:6—“So [important] is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and [or when] it is set on fire of hell [*gehenna*].”

Here, in strong, symbolic language, the apostle points out the great and bad influence of an evil tongue—a tongue set on fire (figuratively) by *gehenna* (figuratively). For a tongue to be set on fire of *gehenna* signifies that it is set on going in evil by a perverse disposition, self-willed, selfish, hateful, malicious, the sort of disposition which, in spite of knowledge and opportunity, unless controlled and reformed, will be counted worthy to be destroyed—the class for whom the Second Death, the real “lake of fire,” the real *gehenna*, is intended. One in that attitude may by his tongue kindle a great fire, a destructive disturbance, which, wherever it has contact, will work evil in the entire course of nature. A few malicious words often arouse all the evil passions of the speaker and engender the same in others. And continuance in such an evil course finally corrupts the entire man, and brings him under sentence as utterly unworthy of life.

One Text in Which *Tartaroo* Is Translated Hell

The Greek word *tartaroo* occurs but once in the Scriptures and is translated hell. It is found in 2 Peter 2:4, which reads thus: “God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast [them] down to hell [*tartaroo*], and delivered [them] into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.”

Having examined all other words rendered hell in the Bible, and all the texts in which they occur, we conclude the examination with this text, which is the only one in which the word *tartaroo* occurs. In the above quotation, the words “cast down to hell” are translated from the one Greek word *tartaroo*.

This word very closely resembles *tartarus*, a word used in Grecian mythology as the name for a dark abyss or prison. But *tartaroo* seems to refer more to an act than to a place. The fall of the angels who sinned was from honor and dignity, into dishonor and condemnation, and the thought seems to be: “God spared not the angels who sinned, but degraded them.”

Thus we close our investigation of the Bible use of the word hell. Thank God, we find no such place of everlasting torture as the creeds and hymn books and many pulpits erroneously teach. Yet we have found a hell, *sheol*, *hades*, to which all our race were condemned on account of Adam’s sin, and from which all are redeemed by our Lord’s death; and that hell is the tomb—the death condition. And we find another hell (*gehenna*—the Second Death—utter destruction) brought to our attention as the final penalty upon all who, after being redeemed and brought to the full knowledge of the truth, and to full ability to obey it, shall yet choose death by choosing a course of opposition to God and righteousness. And our hearts say, “Amen! True and righteous are thy ways, thou King of nations! Who shall not venerate thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou art entirely holy. And all nations shall come and worship before thee, because thy righteous dealings are made manifest” (Revelation 15:3,4).

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What Say the Scriptures About Hell?



Here is an exposition of every text of Scripture in which the word hell is found. It is condensed from *Food for Thinking Christians*, written by Charles T. Russell and first published in 1881.

This is not a rewrite or a paraphrase, but a true condensation in the author's own words as they appear in the original edition, and although only one-third the size, the author's treatise does not suffer from the abridgement. For the convenience of the reader, the texts have been rearranged in Bible sequence.

It is the hope that this booklet will serve as a Bible class textbook as well as a reference in private study by young and old alike.

Introduction

A correct understanding of the subject of this booklet is almost a necessity to Christian steadfastness. For centuries it has been the teaching of “orthodoxy,” of all shades, that God, before creating man, had created a great abyss of fire and terrors, capable of containing all the billions of the human family which he purposed to bring into being; that this abyss he had named hell; and that all of the promises and threatenings of the Bible were designed to deter as many as possible (a “little flock”) from such wrong-doing as would make this awful place their perpetual home.

While glad to see superstitions fall, and truer ideas of the great, and wise, and just, and loving Creator prevail, we are alarmed to notice that the tendency with all who abandon this long-revered doctrine is toward doubt, skepticism, infidelity. Why should this be the case, when the mind is merely being delivered from an error—do you ask? Because Christian people have so long been taught that the foundation of this awful blasphemy against God’s character and government is deep-laid and firmly fixed in the Word of God—the Bible—and consequently, to whatever degree their belief in hell is shaken, to that extent their faith in the Bible, as the revelation of the true God, is shaken also; so that those who have dropped their belief in a hell, of some kind of endless torment, are often open infidels and scoffers at God’s Word.

Guided by the Lord’s providence to a realization that the Bible has been slandered, as well as its divine Author, and that, rightly understood, it teaches nothing on this subject derogatory to God’s character nor to an intelligent reason, we have attempted in this booklet to lay bare the Scripture teaching on this subject, that thereby faith in God and his Word may be reestablished, on a better, reasonable foundation. Indeed, it is our opinion that whoever shall hereby find that his false view rested upon human misconceptions and misinterpretations will, at the same time, learn to trust hereafter less to his own and other men’s imaginings, and, by faith, to grasp more firmly the Word of God, which is able to make wise unto salvation; and on this mission, under God’s providence, it is sent forth.

Hell an English Word

In the first place, bear in mind that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. The word hell is an English word sometimes selected by the translators of the English Bible to express the sense of the Hebrew word *sheol* and the Greek words *hades*, *gehenna*, and *tartaroo*.

The word hell in old English usage simply meant to conceal, to hide, to cover; hence a

concealed, hidden, or covered place. In old English literature records may be found of the helling of potatoes—putting potatoes into pits; and of the helling of a house—covering or thatching it. The word hell was therefore properly used synonymously with the words grave and pit, to translate the words *sheol* and *hades* as signifying the secret or hidden condition of death.

The Hebrew word *sheol* occurs sixty-five times in the Old Testament. In the King James Version it is translated hell thirty-one times, grave thirty-one times, and pit three times. If the translators of the Revised Version had been thoroughly disentangled from error, they would have done more to help the English student than merely to substitute the Hebrew word *sheol* and the Greek word *hades* as they have done. They should have translated the words. But they gave us *sheol* and *hades* untranslated, and thus permitted the inference that these words mean the same as the word hell has become perverted to mean. Yet anyone can see that if it was proper to translate the word *sheol* thirty-one times grave and three times pit, it could not have been improper to so translate it in every other instance.

A peculiarity to be observed in comparing these cases, as we will do shortly, is that in those texts where the torment idea would be an absurdity the translators of the King James Version have used the words grave or pit; while in all other cases they have used the word hell, and the reader, long schooled in the idea of torment, reads the word hell and thinks of it as signifying a place of torment, instead of the grave, the hidden or covered place or condition. For example, compare Job 14:13 with Psalm 86:13. The former reads, “O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave [*sheol*],” etc., while the latter reads, “Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell [*sheol*].” The Hebrew word being the same in both cases, there is no reason why the same word grave should not be used in both. But how absurd it would have been for Job to pray to God to hide him in a hell of eternal torture.

Hell in the Old Testament

As before noted, the word hell occurs thirty-one times in the Old Testament, and in every instance it is *sheol* in the Hebrew. It does not mean a lake of fire and brimstone, nor anything at all resembling that thought; not in the slightest degree! Quite the reverse: instead of a place of blazing fire, it is described in the context as a state of “darkness” (Job 10:21); instead of a place where shrieks and groans are heard, it is described in the context as a place of “silence” (Psalm 115:17); instead of representing in any sense pain and suffering, or remorse, the context describes it as a place or condition of “forgetfulness” (Psalm 88:11, 12. “There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, in the grave [*sheol*] whither thou goest” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

The meaning of *sheol* is “the hidden state,” as applied to man’s condition in death, in and beyond which all is hidden, except to the eye of faith; hence, by proper and close association, the word was often used in the sense of grave—the tomb, the hidden place, or place beyond which only those who have the enlightened eye of the understanding can see resurrection, restitution of being. And be it particularly noted that this identical word *sheol* is translated grave thirty-one times and pit three times in our Common Version by the same translators—more times than it is translated hell; and twice where it is translated hell, it seemed so absurd, according to the present accepted meaning of the English word hell, that

scholars have felt it necessary to explain in the margin of modern Bibles that it means grave (Isaiah 14:9 and Jonah 2:2). In the latter case, the hidden state, or grave, was the belly of the fish in which Jonah was buried alive, and from which he cried to God.

Thirty-One Texts in Which *Sheol* is Translated Hell

Deuteronomy 32:22—“For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn in the lowest hell.” [A figurative representation of the destruction, the utter ruin of Israel as a nation “wrath to the uttermost,” as the apostle called it, God’s anger burning that nation to the “lowest deep,” as Leeser here translates the word *sheol*—1 Thessalonians 2:16.]

2 Samuel 22:6 (margin)—“The cords of hell compassed me about.” [A figure in which trouble is represented as hastening one to the tomb.]

Job 11:8—“It [God’s wisdom] is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell [than any pit]; what canst thou know?”

Job 26:6—“Hell [the tomb] is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering.”

Psalms 9:17—“The wicked shall be [re]turned into hell [the condition of death], and all the nations that forget God.” [That the application of this text belongs to the coming age is evident, for both saints and sinners go into *sheol* or *hades* now. This Scripture indicates that in the time when it applies, only the wicked shall go there. In further proof of this, we find that the Hebrew word *shub*, which in our text is translated turned, signifies turned back, as to a previous place or condition. Those referred to in this text have been either in *sheol* or liable to enter it, but, being redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, will be brought out of *sheol*. If then they are wicked, they, and all who forget God, shall be turned back or returned to *sheol*.]

Psalms 16:10—“Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” [This refers to our Lord’s three days in the tomb. Acts 2:31; 3:15]

Psalms 18:5 (margin)—“The cords of hell compassed me about.” [As in 2 Samuel 22:6, trouble is represented as hastening one to the tomb.]

Psalms 55:15—“Let them go down quick into hell [margin: the grave].”

Psalms 86:13—“Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell [margin: the grave].”

Psalms 116:3—“The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me.” [Sickness and trouble are the figurative hands of the grave to grasp us.]

Psalms 139:8—“If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.” [God’s power is unlimited; even over those in the tomb he can and will exert it and bring forth all that are in the graves. —John 5:28.]

Proverbs 5:5—“Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell” [i.e., lead to the grave].

Proverbs 7:27—“Her house is the way to hell [the grave], going down to the chambers of

death.”

Proverbs 9:18—“He knoweth not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell.” [The harlot’s guests are represented as dead, diseased, or dying, and many of the victims of sensuality are in premature graves from diseases which also hasten their posterity to the tomb.]

Proverbs 15:11—“Hell and destruction are before the Lord.” [Here the grave is associated with destruction and not with a life of torment.]

Proverbs 15:24—“The path of life [leadeth] upward for the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.” [This illustrates the hope of resurrection from the tomb.]

Proverbs 23:14—“Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell” [i.e., wise correction will save a child from vicious ways which lead to premature death, and may also possibly prepare him to escape the Second Death].

Proverbs 27:20—“Hell [the grave] and destruction are never full: so the eyes of man are never satisfied.”

Isaiah 5:14—“Therefore hell hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure.” [Here the grave is a symbol of destruction.]

Isaiah 14:9,15—“Hell [margin: grave] from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming . . . thou shalt be brought down to hell” [the grave—so rendered in verse 11].

Isaiah 28:15-18—“Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell [the grave] are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: Therefore, saith the Lord . . . Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell [the grave] shall not stand.” [God thus declared that the present prevalent idea, by which death and the grave are represented as friends, rather than enemies, shall cease; and men shall learn that death is the wages of sin, and that it comes as a result of Satan’s power (Romans 6:23; Hebrews 2:14) and not as an angel sent by God.]

Isaiah 57:9—“And didst debase thyself even unto hell.” [Here figurative of deep degradation.]

Ezekiel 31:15-17—“In the day when he went down to the grave . . . I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit . . . They also went down into hell with him, unto them that be slain with the sword.” [Figurative and prophetic description of the fall of Babylon into destruction, silence, the grave.]

Ezekiel 32:21—“The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him.” [A continuation of the same figure, representing Egypt’s overthrow as a nation to join Babylon in destruction—buried.]

Ezekiel 32:27—“And they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war: and they have laid their swords under

their heads; but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.” [The grave is the only hell where fallen ones are buried and lie with their weapons of war under their heads.]

Amos 9:2—“Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them.” [A figurative expression; but certainly pits of the earth are the only hells men can dig into.]

Jonah 2:1,2—“Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord, his God, out of the fish’s belly, and said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.” [The belly of the fish was for a time his grave—see margin.]

Habakkuk 2:5—“Who enlargeth his desire as hell [the grave] and as death, and cannot be satisfied.”

Thirty-One Texts in Which *Sheol* Is Translated Grave

Genesis 37:35—“I will go down into the grave unto my son.”

Genesis 42:38—“Then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.” [See also the same expression in Genesis 44:29,31. The translators did not like to send God’s servant, Jacob, to hell simply because his sons were evil.]

1 Samuel 2:6—“The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.”

1 Kings 2:6,9—“Let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace . . . his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.”

Job 7:9—“He that goeth down to the grave.”

Job 14:13—“O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me [resurrect me].”

Job 17:13—“If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness.” [Job waits for resurrection in the morning.]

Job 21:13; 24:19—“They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. . . Drought and heat consume the snow waters: so doth the grave those which have sinned.” [All have sinned, hence death passed upon all men, and all go down to the grave. But all have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ; hence all shall be awakened and come forth in God’s due time in the morning—Romans 5:12,18,19.]

Psalms 6:5—“In death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?”

Psalms 30:3—“O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.” [This passage expresses gratitude for recovery from danger of death.]

Psalm 31:17—“Let the wicked be ashamed; let them be silent in the grave.”

Psalm 49:14,15—“Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright [the saints, Daniel 7:27] shall have dominion over them in the morning [the Millennial morning]; and their beauty shall consume, the grave being an habitation to every one of them. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave.”

Psalm 88:3—“My life draweth nigh unto the grave.”

Psalm 89:48—“Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?”

Psalm 141:7—“Our bones are scattered at the grave’s mouth.”

Proverbs 1:12—“Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit” [i.e., as of an earthquake, as in Numbers 16:30-33].

Proverbs 30:15,16—“Four things say not, It is enough: the grave . . .”

Ecclesiastes 9:10—“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”

Song of Solomon 8:6—“Jealousy is cruel as the grave.”

Isaiah 14:11—“Thy pomp is brought down to the grave.”

Isaiah 38:10—“I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years.”

Isaiah 38:18—“The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.”

Ezekiel 31:15—“In the day when he went down to the grave.”

Hosea 13:14—“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction. Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.” [The Lord did not ransom any from a place of fire and torment, for there is no such place; but he did ransom all mankind from the grave, from death, the penalty brought upon all by Adam’s sin, as this verse declares.]

Three Texts in Which *Sheol* Is Translated Pit

Numbers 16:30-33—“If . . . they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand. . . . The ground cleave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.”

Job 17:16—“They shall go down to the bars of the pit [grave], when our rest together is in the dust.”

The three lists given foregoing include every one of the sixty-five occurrences of the Hebrew word *sheol* in the Old Testament. From this examination it must be evident to all readers that God's revelations for four thousand years contain not a single hint of a hell, such as the word is now understood to signify.

Hell in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the Greek word *hades* corresponds exactly to the Hebrew word *sheol*. As proof see the quotations of the apostles from the Old Testament in which they render it *hades*. For instance, Acts 2:27, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [*hades*]," is a quotation from Psalm 16:10, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [*sheol*]."

And in 1 Corinthians 15:54,55, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave [*hades*], where is thy victory?" is an allusion to Isaiah 25:8, "He will swallow up death in victory," and to Hosea 13:14, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave [*sheol*], I will be thy destruction."

Ten Texts in Which *Hades* Is Translated Hell

Matthew 11:23—"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell." [In privileges of knowledge and opportunity the city was highly favored, or, figuratively, "exalted unto heaven;" but because of misuse of God's favors, it would be debased, or, figuratively, cast down to *hades*, overthrown, destroyed. It is now so thoroughly buried in oblivion that even the site where it stood is a matter of dispute. Capernaum is certainly destroyed, thrust down to *hades*.]

Matthew 16:18—"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." [Although bitter and relentless persecution, even unto death, should afflict the Church during the Gospel Age, it should never prevail to her utter extermination; and eventually, by her resurrection, accomplished by the Lord, the Church will prevail over *hades*—the tomb.]

Luke 10:15—"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell." [Same thought as in the parallel passage, Matthew 11:23]

Luke 16:23—"In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." These words form part of a parable—that of the rich man and Lazarus. To our understanding, the rich man represented the Jewish nation. At the time of the utterance of the parable, and for a long time previous, the Jews had "fared sumptuously every day"—being the special recipients of God's favors. Lazarus represented the outcasts from Divine favor. Although these included publicans and sinners of Israel, in the main they were Gentiles—all nations of the world aside from the Israelites. These, at the time of the utterance of this parable, were entirely destitute of those special Divine blessings which Israel enjoyed. They lay at the gate of the rich man. When, as a nation, Israel rejected Christ, the "Rich Man" soon found himself in a cast-off condition—in tribulation and affliction. In such condition Israel has suffered from that day to this.

In the parable the dissolution of the Jewish polity is well illustrated by the symbol of death, and their dispersal amongst the nations by the symbol of burial. To these symbols our Lord added a third: "In hell [*hades*, the grave] he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off."

The dead cannot lift up their eyes, nor see either near or far, nor converse; for it is distinctly stated: "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave"; and the dead are described as those who "go down into silence" (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Psalm 115:17).

But the Lord wished to show that great sufferings or "torments" would be added to the Jews as a nation after their national dissolution and burial, and that they would plead in vain for release from the hand of the formerly despised Gentiles. And history has borne out this parabolic prophecy.

Christ in Hell [*hades*] and Resurrected From Hell [*hades*]

Acts 2:1,14,22-31—"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come . . . Peter . . . lifted up his voice, and said . . . Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you . . . being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains [or bands] of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it [for the Word of Jehovah had previously declared his resurrection]. For David speaketh concerning him [personating or speaking for him], I [Christ] foresaw the Lord [Jehovah] always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [*hades*, the tomb, the state of death], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou [Jehovah] hast made known to me [Christ] the ways of life."

Here our Lord, as personified by the prophet David, expresses his faith in Jehovah's promise of a resurrection and in the full and glorious accomplishment of Jehovah's plan through him, and rejoices in the prospect.

Peter proceeds: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day [so that this prophecy could not have referred to himself personally; for David's soul was left in hell—*hades*, the tomb, the state of death—and his flesh, did see corruption]. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he, seeing this before [prophetically], spake of the resurrection of Christ [out of hell—*hades*, the tomb—to which he must go for our offenses], that his soul was not left in hell [*hades*, the death state], neither did his flesh see corruption."

Thus Peter presents a strong, logical argument based on the words of the prophet David showing first, that Christ, who was delivered by God for our offenses, went to hell, the grave, the condition of death, destruction (Psalm 16:10); and second, that according to promise he had been delivered from hell, the grave, death, destruction, by a resurrection, a raising up to life; being created again, the same identical being, yet more glorious, and exalted even to the

express image of his [the Father's] person (Hebrews 1:3).

And now “that same Jesus” (Acts 2:36), in his subsequent revelation to the Church, declares in Revelation 1:18, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell [*hades*, the grave] and of death.”

Amen! Amen! our hearts respond; for in his resurrection we see the glorious outcome of the whole plan of Jehovah, to be accomplished through the power of the Resurrected One, who now holds the keys of the tomb and of death and in due time will release all the prisoners who are, therefore, called the “prisoners of hope” (Zechariah 9:12; Luke 4:18).

Revelation 6:8—“And behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.” [Symbol of destruction or the grave.]

Revelation 20:13,14—“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [the grave] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell [the grave] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”

The lake of fire is the symbol of final, everlasting destruction. Death and hell [the grave] go into it. “There shall be no more death.” “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (Revelation 21:4; 1 Corinthians 15:26).

Other Occurrences of the Word Hell

Having examined the word *sheol*, the only word in the Old Testament rendered hell, and the word *hades*, most frequently in the New Testament rendered hell, we now notice every remaining instance in Scripture of the English word hell. In the New Testament two other words are rendered hell: namely, *gehenna* and *tartaroo*, which we will consider in the order named.

Twelve Texts in Which *Gehenna* Is Translated Hell

This word occurs in the following passages: Matthew 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15,33; Mark 9:43, 45,47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6. It is the Grecian mode of spelling the Hebrew words which are translated “Valley of Hinnom.” This valley lay just outside the city of Jerusalem, and served the purpose of sewer and garbage burner to that city. The offal, garbage, etc., were emptied there, and fires were kept continually burning to consume utterly all things deposited therein, brimstone being added to assist combustion and insure complete destruction. But no living thing was ever permitted to be cast into *gehenna*. The Jews were not allowed to torture any creature.

When we consider that in the people of Israel God was giving us object lessons illustrating his dealings and plans, present and future, we should expect that this Valley of Hinnom, or

gehenna, would also play its part in illustrating things future. As we shall see, it was indeed the type or illustration of the Second Death—final and complete destruction, from which there can be no recovery; for after that, “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,” but only “fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:26,27).

Let us remember that the people of Israel, for the purpose of being used as types of God’s future dealing with the race, were typically treated as though the ransom had been given before they left Egypt, though only a typical lamb had been slain. When Jerusalem was built, and the temple—representative of the true Temple, the Church, and the true kingdom as it will be established by Christ in the Millennium—Israel typified the world in the Millennial Age. Their priests represented the glorified Royal Priesthood, and their Law and its demands of perfect obedience represented the law and conditions under the New Covenant, to be brought into operation for the blessing of all the obedient, and for the condemnation of all who, when granted fullest opportunity, will not heartily submit to the righteous ruling and laws of the Great King.

Seeing, then, that Israel’s polity, condition, etc., prefigured those of the world in the coming age, how appropriate that we should find the valley or abyss, *gehenna*, a figure of the Second Death, the utter destruction in the coming age of all that is unworthy of preservation; and how aptly, too, is the symbol, “lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Revelation 19:20), drawn from this same *gehenna*, or Valley of Hinnom, continually burning with brimstone.

The expression adds force to the symbol, “fire,” to express the utter and irrevocable destructiveness of the Second Death; for burning, brimstone is the most deadly agent known. How reasonable, too, to expect that Israel would have courts and judges resembling or prefiguring the judgments of the next age; and that the sentence of those (figurative) courts of the (figurative) people under those (figurative) laws to that (figurative) abyss, outside that (figurative) city, would largely correspond to the (real) sentences of the (real) court and judges in the next age. If these points are kept in mind, they will greatly assist us in understanding the words of our Lord in reference to *gehenna*; for though the literal valley just at hand was named and referred to, yet his words carry with them lessons concerning the future age and the antitypical *gehenna*—the second Death.

Shall Be in Danger of *Gehenna*

Matthew 5:21,22—“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be amenable to the judges; but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall [future—under the regulations of the real kingdom] be amenable to the judges; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca [villain], shall be in danger of the [high] council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell [*gehenna*] fire.”

To understand these references to council and judges and *gehenna*, all should know something of Jewish regulations. The “Court of Judges” consisted of seven men (or twenty-three—the number is in dispute), who had power to judge some classes of crimes. The High Council, or Sanhedrin, consisted of seventy-one men of recognized learning and ability. This constituted

the highest court of the Jews, and its supervision was over the gravest offenses. The most serious sentence was death; but certain very obnoxious criminals were subjected to an indignity after death, being refused burial and cast with the carcasses of dogs, the city refuse, etc., into *gehenna*, there to be consumed. The object of this burning in *gehenna* was to make the crime and the criminal detestable in the eyes of the people, and signified that the culprit was a hopeless case. It must be remembered that Israel hoped for a resurrection from the tomb, and hence they were particular in caring for the corpses of their dead. Not realizing fully God's power, they apparently thought he needed their assistance to that extent (Exodus 13:19; Hebrews 11:22; Acts 7:15,16). Hence the destruction of the body in *gehenna* after death (figuratively) implied the loss of hope of future life by a resurrection. Thus, to such, *gehenna* represented the Second Death in the same figurative way that they as a people illustrated a future order of things under the New Covenant.

The same thought is continued in Matthew 5:29,30: "It is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell [*gehenna*]." Here again the operation of God's Law under the New Covenant is contrasted with its operation under the Old or Jewish Covenant, and the lesson of self-control is urged by the statement that it is far more profitable that men should refuse to gratify depraved desires (though they be dear to them as a right eye, and apparently indispensable as a right hand) than that they should gratify these, and lose, in the Second Death, the future life provided through the atonement for all who will return to perfection, holiness, and God.

The point to be specially noticed here is that *gehenna*, which the Jews knew, and of which our Lord spoke to them, was not a lake of fire to be kept burning to all eternity, into which all would be cast who get "angry with a brother" and call him "a fool." No; the Jews gathered no such extreme idea from the Lord's words. The eternal torment theory was unknown to them. It had no place in their theology. The point is that *gehenna* symbolized the Second Death—utter, complete, and everlasting destruction. This is clearly shown by its being contrasted with life as its opposite. "It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, than [otherwise] to be cast into *gehenna*." It is better that you should deny yourselves sinful gratifications than that you should lose all future life, and perish in the Second Death.

Able to Destroy Both Soul and Body in *Gehenna*

Matthew 10:28—"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [*gehenna*]." Here our Lord pointed out to his followers the great cause they had for courage and bravery under the most trying circumstances. They were to expect persecution, and to have all manner of evil spoken against them falsely, for his sake, and for the sake of the "good tidings" of which he made them the ministers and heralds; yea, the time would come, that whosoever would kill them would think he did God a service. Their consolation or reward for this was to be received, not in the present life, but in the life to come. They were assured, and they believed, that he had come to give his life a ransom for many, and that all in their graves must in consequence, in due time, hear the Deliverer's voice and come forth, either to reward (if their trial had been passed in this life successfully), or future trial (judgment), as must be the case with the great

majority who do not, in this present life, come to the necessary knowledge and opportunity essential to a complete trial.

Under present conditions men are able to kill our bodies, but nothing that they can do will affect our future being (soul), which God has promised shall be revived or restored by his power in the resurrection day, the Millennial Age. Our revived souls will have new bodies (spiritual or natural)—“to each seed his own [kind of] body,” and these none will have liberty to kill. God alone has power to destroy utterly—soul and body. He alone, therefore should be feared, and the opposition of men even to the death is not to be feared if thereby we gain Divine approval. Our Lord’s bidding then is, fear not them which can terminate the present (dying) life in these poor, dying bodies. Care little for it, its food, its clothing, its pleasures, in comparison with that future existence or being which God has provided for you, and which, if secured, may be your portion forever. Fear not the threats, or looks, or acts of men, whose power can extend no farther than the present existence; who can harm and kill these bodies, but can do no more. Rather have respect and deference to God, with whom are the issues of life everlasting—fear him who is able to destroy in *gehenna*, the Second Death, both the present dying existence and all hope of future existence.

Here it is conclusively shown that *gehenna*, as a figure, represented the Second Death—the utter destruction which must ensue in the case of all who, after having fully received the opportunities of a future being or existence through our Lord’s sacrifice, prove themselves unworthy of God’s gift, and refuse to accept it, by refusing obedience to his just requirements. For it does not say that God will preserve soul or body in *gehenna*, but that in it he can and will “destroy” both. Thus we see that any who are condemned to the Second Death are hopelessly and forever blotted out of existence.

Matthew 18:9—“It is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell [*gehenna*] fire.” This verse refers to that same discourse recorded in Mark 9:43-48 (see subsequent page).

Matthew 23:15,33 The class here addressed was not the heathen who had no knowledge of the truth, nor the lowest and most ignorant of the Jewish nation, but the Scribes and Pharisees, outwardly the most religious, and the leaders and teachers of the people. To these our Lord said, “How can ye escape the judgment of hell [*gehenna*]?”

These men were hypocritical. Abundant testimony of the truth had been borne to them, but they refused to accept it, and endeavored to counteract its influence and to discourage the people from accepting it. And in thus resisting the Holy Spirit of light and truth, they were hardening their hearts against the very agency which God designed for their blessing. Hence they were wickedly resisting his grace, and such a course, if pursued, must eventually end in condemnation to the Second Death, *gehenna*. Every step in the direction of willful blindness and opposition to the truth makes return more difficult, and makes the wrongdoer more and more of the character which God abhors, and which the Second Death is intended to utterly destroy. The Scribes and Pharisees were progressing rapidly in that course: hence the warning inquiry of our Lord, “How can ye escape?” The sense is this: Although you boast of your piety, you will surely be destroyed in *gehenna* unless you change your course.

Undying Worms and Quenchless Fires

Mark 9:43-44 It may be remarked that verses 44 and 46, and part of 45, are not found in the oldest Greek manuscripts, though verse 48, which reads the same, is in all manuscripts. We quote the text as found in these ancient and reliable manuscripts: “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 [*gehenna*], into the fire that never shall be quenched: and 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 [*gehenna*], and 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 [*gehenna*] fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

Here the lesson is the same as that unfolded by the Master in Matthew 5:29,30, considered foregoing. But what about the undying worms and the unquenchable fire? We answer, in the literal *gehenna*, which is the basis of our Lord’s illustration, the bodies of animals, etc., frequently fell upon ledges of rocks and not into the fire kept burning below. Thus exposed, these would breed worms and be destroyed by them, as completely and as surely as those which burned. No one was allowed to disturb the contents of this valley; hence the worm and the fire together completed the work of destruction—“the fire was not quenched and the worms died not.” This would not imply a never-ending fire, nor everlasting worms. The thought is that the worms did not die off and leave the carcasses there, but continued and completed the work of destruction. So with the fire: it was not quenched, it burned on until all was consumed. Just so if a house were ablaze and the fire could not be quenched, but burned until the building was destroyed, we might properly call such an “unquenchable fire.” Our Lord wished to impress the thought of the completeness and finality of the Second Death, symbolized in *gehenna*. All who go into the Second Death will be thoroughly and completely and forever destroyed; no ransom will ever again be given for any (Romans 6:9); for none worthy of life will be cast into the Second Death, or lake of fire, but only those who love unrighteousness after coming to the knowledge of the truth.

Not only in the above instances is the Second Death pointedly illustrated by *gehenna*, but it is evident that the same teacher used the same figure of the Valley of Hinnom to represent the same thing in the symbolic language of Revelation though there it is not called *gehenna*, but a “lake of fire.”

The same valley was once before used as the basis of a discourse by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 66:24). Though he gives it no name, he describes it; and all should notice that he speaks, not as some with false ideas might expect, of billions alive in flames and torture, but of the carcasses of those who transgressed against the Lord, who are thus represented as utterly destroyed in the Second Death.

The two preceding verses show the time when this prophecy will be fulfilled, and it is in perfect harmony with the symbols of Revelation: it appertains to the new dispensation, the Millennium, the “new heavens and new earth” condition of things. Then all the righteous will

see the justice as well as the wisdom of the utter destruction of the incorrigible, willful enemies of righteousness, as it is written: “They shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.”

Luke 12:5—“Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell [*gehenna*].” This is another account of the same discourse recorded in Matthew 10:28, considered foregoing.

Set on Fire of *Gehenna*

James 3:6—“So [important] is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and [or when] it is set on fire of hell [*gehenna*].”

Here, in strong, symbolic language, the apostle points out the great and bad influence of an evil tongue—a tongue set on fire (figuratively) by *gehenna* (figuratively). For a tongue to be set on fire of *gehenna* signifies that it is set on going in evil by a perverse disposition, self-willed, selfish, hateful, malicious, the sort of disposition which, in spite of knowledge and opportunity, unless controlled and reformed, will be counted worthy to be destroyed—the class for whom the Second Death, the real “lake of fire,” the real *gehenna*, is intended. One in that attitude may by his tongue kindle a great fire, a destructive disturbance, which, wherever it has contact, will work evil in the entire course of nature. A few malicious words often arouse all the evil passions of the speaker and engender the same in others. And continuance in such an evil course finally corrupts the entire man, and brings him under sentence as utterly unworthy of life.

One Text in Which *Tartaroo* Is Translated Hell

The Greek word *tartaroo* occurs but once in the Scriptures and is translated hell. It is found in 2 Peter 2:4, which reads thus: “God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast [them] down to hell [*tartaroo*], and delivered [them] into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.”

Having examined all other words rendered hell in the Bible, and all the texts in which they occur, we conclude the examination with this text, which is the only one in which the word *tartaroo* occurs. In the above quotation, the words “cast down to hell” are translated from the one Greek word *tartaroo*.

This word very closely resembles *tartarus*, a word used in Grecian mythology as the name for a dark abyss or prison. But *tartaroo* seems to refer more to an act than to a place. The fall of the angels who sinned was from honor and dignity, into dishonor and condemnation, and the thought seems to be: “God spared not the angels who sinned, but degraded them.”

Thus we close our investigation of the Bible use of the word hell. Thank God, we find no such place of everlasting torture as the creeds and hymn books and many pulpits erroneously teach. Yet we have found a hell, *sheol*, *hades*, to which all our race were condemned on account of Adam’s sin, and from which all are redeemed by our Lord’s death; and that hell is the tomb—the death condition. And we find another hell (*gehenna*—the Second Death—utter destruction) brought to our attention as the final penalty upon all who, after being redeemed

and brought to the full knowledge of the truth, and to full ability to obey it, shall yet choose death by choosing a course of opposition to God and righteousness. And our hearts say, “Amen! True and righteous are thy ways, thou King of nations! Who shall not venerate thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou art entirely holy. And all nations shall come and worship before thee, because thy righteous dealings are made manifest” (Revelation 15:3,4).

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