

More Questions About Hell

Maybe you've heard of words like Gehenna, Hades, Hell, Sheol, Tartarus, the lake of fire, outer darkness, eternal punishment, eternal fire, eternal destruction, or away from the presence of the Lord. These are all terms used to in the Bible that are related the fate of the dead. It's not my aim to take a long time defining each one but some brief comments would be helpful.

Sheol/Hades—In the Old Testament you'll read this word Sheol which refers to the place of the dead, not necessarily to a place or torment or blessing. And when the OT was translated into Greek before the time of Jesus, they used the Greek word *Hades* to translate Sheol. We find the same word used in the NT to refer to the place of the dead. These words don't carry, in themselves, the meaning we typically associate with hell—torment and fire. In fact, in the OT, both the righteous and the wicked dead went to Sheol (the grave).

Some argue that the righteous in Sheol/Hades were brought into the presence of Jesus after his resurrection and so only the wicked dead remain and wait the final judgment.

Gehenna/Hell—The word *hell* in English is a translation of the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew word Ge-Hinnom, which literally means Valley of Hinnom. This was a valley outside Jerusalem that child sacrifice was done during the reign of wicked kings in the OT. They copied the practices of the Canaanites around them and would offer their infants to be burned as a sacrifice to the idol Molech. This place of horror became associated with the horror of the wicked who would be punished by God. The same fate of the wicked is described in the Bible as the lake of fire, outer darkness, eternal destruction, eternal punishment, or eternal fire. This is the final state of the wicked after the final judgment. At this final judgment, the devil and his angels, Death and Hades, and all the wicked will be cast into the lake of fire (hell).

* While Gehenna is often said to be a burning garbage dump south of the city, no ancient source or archeological evidence substantiates this dubious claim.

Is there real fire in hell?

Is fire a figure of speech or is it literal? It is true that many figures of speech are used to describe hell: fire, Gehenna, outer darkness, destruction, etc. These are terms that describe what this place of torment is like, but they come short of fully describing what it is. How can it be a literal lake of fire and literal darkness? Whether real fire or not, what we know for sure is that the pain is compared to the pain of being burned with fire. We may not know its exact nature but hell is excruciating. It is devoid of anything good. It is torment.

How can heaven be heaven if the wicked are suffering in hell?

But how could heaven be heaven if the wicked are suffering day and night forever and ever? What about family members and friends in this life who are not in the kingdom of God? How can we rest knowing they are in torment? Certainly this can't be.

Revelation 19 speaks about the coming judgment of God and his victory over evil. After recounting the destruction of the city of wickedness it says this, *"After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, 'Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.' Once more they cried out, 'Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever'"* (Revelation 19:1–3).

As the smoke rises from the judged forever and ever, heaven erupts in praise, not lament. Heaven applauds God. His judgments are true and just. They cry, "Hallelujah, Praise the Lord." When we see with eyes free from sin, when we see from God's perspective, there will be no objections to his justice, wrath, or judgment. There will only be praise and applause. While we cannot imagine it now, on that day when the books are opened and the dead are judged, all will praise God for his wisdom, love for righteousness, and justice.

(what about ezek 33? -> Romans 9. endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.)

(what about 2 Peter 3:9? That's taken out of context.) make video.

Where justice, mercy and love meet is at the cross. Just and the justifier for those who have faith in Christ.

Vessels of mercy. Jesus suffered the wrath of God.

2 Peter 3. God is not willing that any should perish. [handout or follow-up video?]

But.

Prov 16:4. Rom 9.