

The three Hells of the Bible

1. *Tartarus* is from a Greek word meaning the lowest hell where the Titans who rebelled against Zeus were thrown. It is used only once in the Bible: *II Peter 2:4*: “For God did not spare angles when they sinned, but sent them to hell (*Tartarus*) putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment...”

A. *Jude 6,7* goes on to describe this place: “And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home — these He has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the Great Day...They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.”

(1) Jesus refers to these wicked angelic prisoners in *Tartarus* in the *Parable of the Sheep and Goats*, when He will throw them and the humans that follow them (goats) into the *eternal fire* in *Matthew 25:41*: “Then He will say to those on His left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels’.”

B. *Revelation 12:7-9* says: “And there was a war in Heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon (Satan), and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he (Satan) was not strong enough, and they (wicked angels) lost their place in Heaven. The great dragon was hurled down — that ancient serpent called the Devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth and his angels with him.”

(1) Jesus told His disciples in *Luke 10:18*, that while He was in Heaven, He “...saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven.”

(2) The Jews believed *The Book of Enoch*, which tells of some of these wicked angels, who were thrown with Satan to earth, marrying mortal women, and producing giants called *Nephilim*, found in *Genesis 6:1-5*: “...The *Nephilim* were on the earth in those days (before the Flood) — and also afterward — when the sons of God (all angels came from God as His first creation in His image) went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were heroes of old, men of renown. The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.”

(a) The Jews believed that these particular “sons of God,” were some of the wicked angels or demons that were cast out of Heaven. They had sexual relations with human women and created giant “heroes of old, men of renown” who gave birth to a race of super human people later referred to as gods, or maybe space aliens? These part angel part human beings became so wicked, the Lord decided to destroy the earth with the Flood, and throw these particular angels into *Tartarus* to await Judgment.

(b) But, according to *Genesis 6:4*, more fallen or wicked angels or demons, again had sex with mortal women and produced more Nephilim (giants) even after The Flood, which gave rise to more super human people (remember Goliath in *I Samuel 17:4-7*). Could Zeus really have been an angel (god), and Hercules a super human offspring or Nephilim (half angel, half human)?. Where did all the ancient people get so much knowledge? Space aliens? Or...fallen angels or demons? *I Corinthians 10:20*: “No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons (fallen angels), not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons.”

(3) These wicked or fallen angels were well aware of this place called Tartarus, and the penalty for producing Nephilim.

(a) In *Luke 8:26-39* the story of the demon possessed man called “*Legion*” is told (*Matthew 8:28* tells us there were two of them). They had super human strength (breaking chains that people would try to bind him with). Could they have been Nephilims? When they saw Jesus in *verse 28-31*: *Legion* “cried out and fell at His feet, shouting at the top of his voice, ‘What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!’ And, according to *Matthew 8:29*, the two of them added: “Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time (remember *Matthew 25:41*)?” And then *Luke 8:31* continues: “And they begged Him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.”

(b) What Abyss? *II Peter 2:4 & Jude 6,7!*

2. The second word translated *Hell* is the Greek word *Hades* (New Testament), and the Hebrew word *Sheol* (Old Testament). They are one in the same as *Psalms 16:10*, and *Acts 2:27,31* clearly point out. This word means: “The region of departed spirits...” Some translate the word: “the grave,”(*Genesis 37:35*) “the pit,”(*Numbers 16:30,33*) or “the unseen abode of the dead” (*Luke 16:19-26*).

A. *Hades* differs from *Tartarus* in that *Tartarus* was prepared for wicked angels who can not die, to await the Judgment Day when they would be thrown into the *eternal fire*; and *Hades* was prepared for humans who crossed over from their mortal bodies that died, to immortal bodies that also awaited their Judgment Day.

B. *Hades* includes a place for all those humans who have died. One side for the righteous and one side for the wicked, as Jesus illustrated for us in the *Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus* in *Luke 16:19-26*.

(1) *Verse 22* tells us that Lazarus went to a good place that Jesus called “*Paradise*” in *Luke 23:43*.

(2) **Verse 23** tells us that the rich man (wicked) went to “*Hell*” (KJV), or, correctly translated in the Greek: “*Hades*”

(a) It must be noted that **verse 23** also states that both Lazarus and Abraham were in this place the KJV translates “*Hell*,” (but correctly, from the original Greek manuscripts is translated “*Hades*.”)

(3) Jesus explains in His story that *Hades* was where all the dead went before He died and rose again, to pay for their sins as the only sacrifice God would accept, in order to let humans into Heaven. *Hades* was divided into two sides: A good side Jesus called *Paradise*, and a bad side where the wicked were “*in agony in this fire*.” A “*great chasm*” divided the two places so that the wicked could not cross over to the good side.

C. *Hades* changed after Jesus died and rose again.

(1) **I Peter 3:18-20**: “*For Christ died for your sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison (Hades) who disobeyed long ago...*”

(a) Peter is speaking of the three days Jesus spent in the grave after His death before He rose again. He explained this in his first sermon on the Day of Pentecost in **Acts 2:27-32**: “*...because you will not abandon me to the grave (KJV says “hell,” Psalm 16:10 says “Sheol,” but the original Greek word is “Hades”), nor will you let your Holy One (Jesus) undergo decay...Seeing what was ahead, he (King David in Psalm 16:10) spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was not abandoned to the grave (KJV says “hell,” Psalm says “Sheol,” but original Greek word is again “Hades”), nor did His body undergo decay. God has raised this Jesus to life...*”

(b) It is noteworthy to remember, that if indeed Jesus went to “*hell*” during these three days He spent in the “*grave*,” or “*Hades*,” He would have lied to the thief on the cross next to Him when He told him in **Luke 23:43**: “*today you will be with Me in Paradise* (the good side, not the fire side of *Hades*).”

(c) But, why in **verses 18-20** did Jesus “*...preach to the spirits in prison (Hades) who disobeyed...?*” Even those on the good side of *Hades* had “*disobeyed*.” **Romans 3:23** says “*for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Heaven)*.” That’s why **I Peter 4:6** says “*For this reason the Gospel was preached even to those who are now dead...*” The Old Testament people didn’t know Jesus had just died for their sins, and Jesus

already made it clear that the only way a person could get to Heaven was through Him (**John 14:6**).

(2) After Jesus preached the Gospel to these people who had died, then what?

(a) Ephesians 4:8,9 says that when Jesus rose from the dead (after the three days He spent in *Hades*), He returned to Earth where **John 20:17** tells us He told Mary to let go of Him because He had to ascend to Heaven. It was at that time He took those “*captives*” from *Hades*, to Heaven with Him. Remember, **I Peter 3:18-20** refers to the good side of *Hades* as “*spirits in prison.*”

(b) Before Jesus died, He told His disciples in John 5:24-29: “*I tell you the truth, whoever hears My Word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live...Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out (of Hades) — those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.*”

(c) This is why in **II Corinthians 12:2-4** the Apostle Paul saw Paradise, not in *Hades*, but in Heaven.

(3) So, if Paradise has been removed from Hades, what’s left? People who, according to Jesus’ own words in **Luke 16:24** are: “*in agony in this fire!*”

(a) Revelation 20:14: “*then death and Hades were thrown into the Lake of Fire. The Lake of Fire is the second death. If anyone’s name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire!*”

3. This brings us to the third word translated “Hell:” “Geenna” (or mostly pronounced “Gehenna”). According to “Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words,” it: “*represents the Hebrew Ge-Hinnom (the valley of Tophet) and a corresponding Aramaic word; it is found 12 times in the New Testament, eleven of which are in the Synoptists, in every instance as uttered by the Lord Himself.*”

A. Why did Jesus choose this word to describe what we call “Hell?” The Valley of Tophet or Hinnom was a dump outside of Jerusalem where the fires burned 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. All the garbage, dead animals, and even some human bodies were burned here. Everyone in Jesus’ day knew of the place, and it made a perfect word picture to describe what Hell is like!

B. Here are the 11 instances that Jesus uses *Geenna* to describe what we call “Hell:”

(1) Matthew 5:21,22: “*You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment (Old Testament).’ But I tell you (New Testament) that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment (God’s Judgment). Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ (empty-headed) is answerable to the Sanhedrin (Jewish Supreme Court). But (Jesus says) anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ (condemning or judging someone as morally worthless) will be in danger of the fire of Hell (Geenna).*” **Why? Finish reading verses 23-26, and then read Matthew 7:1,2 which tells us we will be judged in the way and measure we judge others!**

(2) Matthew 5:27-29: “*You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ (Old Testament). But I tell you (New Testament) that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into Hell (Geenna).*”

(3) Matthew 5:30: “*And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into Hell (Geenna).*”

(a) If Jesus was talking about physically committing adultery, indeed they could wind up stoned to death and their body thrown into the dump site or valley of Hinnom (*Gehenna*). And, if the right eye (lust) or the right hand (physical stimulation) actually made them commit the sin of adultery, it would be better to cut those body parts off (which would be thrown into the dump or valley of Hinnom).

(b) But, it is clear that only God could judge if someone was lusting in their heart; and therefore only God could find them guilty and throw them into *Gehenna*. And, the only *Gehenna* (or place where the fire never goes out) that God will throw “*sexually immoral*” people in, according to *Revelation 21:8*, is: “*the fiery lake of burning sulfur;*” where, according to *Revelation 20:10*, “*They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*”

(4) Matthew 10:28: “*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul (like the Sanhedrin that can kill a person’s body for the physical act of adultery, but not the soul for the act of adultery in their heart). Rather, be afraid of the one who can **destroy** both soul and body in Hell (Geenna)!”*

(a) The word “**destroy**” is the Greek word “*apollumi*” which is translated: “*To destroy utterly; perish. The idea is **not***

distinction, but ruin, loss, not of being, but of well-being.” The physical valley of Hinnom or Gehenna could not destroy the soul. Only God’s Gehenna (Geenna) or Lake of Fire can do that!

(b) Jesus made it clear in **Matthew 25:31-46** that the people who don’t make it into Heaven are going to “...go away to *eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.*”

(5) **Matthew 18:6-9:** “*But if anyone causes one of these little ones (children) who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea...If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life (Heaven) maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into (the Greek manuscript adds the article “The”) eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life (Heaven) with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of Hell (Geenna)!*”

(a) Jesus is clearly not talking about the physical dump at the valley of Hinnom; but of Heaven, and “*The Eternal Fire*” which, Jesus clearly told the people He placed on His left at The Judgment in **Matthew 25:31-41:** “*Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels!*” **Was the valley of Hinnom (Gehenna) in Jerusalem prepared for the Devil and his angels? Then neither was it prepared for the wicked people who Jesus will send there on the Judgment Day!**

(6) **Matthew 23:15.** Here Jesus calls the teachers of the Law and Pharisees “*hypocrites,*” and “*a son of hell (Geenna)*” Was Jesus telling them they were born out of the dump outside Jerusalem, or born out of the place prepared for the Devil (whom they were following)?

(7) **Matthew 23:33.** Here Jesus calls the teachers of the Law and Pharisees “*snakes!*” A “*brood of vipers!*” And then He asks them: “*How will you escape being condemned to Hell (Geenna)?*” Again, it is clear Jesus is not asking them how they can escape being condemned to the city dump (Gehenna).

(8) **Mark 9:42-43** repeats **Matthew 18:6-9** (#5).

(9) **Verse 45** also repeats **Matthew 18:6-9**

(10) **Verse 48** adds: “*...and be thrown into Hell (Geenna), where their worm does not die, and the fire is not put out.*”

(a) As long as a worm has a body to feed on, it won’t die. If the body is

forever, the worm is forever. Neither dead bodies, nor the worms that fed on them, nor the fires that burned are still at the Gehenna (valley of Hinnom) in Jerusalem... but they're still active in the **Geenna** we call Hell!

(b) Jesus is quoting what God warned His people some 740 years before Christ in **Isaiah 66:24**: *“And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against Me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched...”*

(11) **Luke 12:5 repeats Matthew 10:28 (#4).**

C. The only other instance that Geenna Hell is used in the Bible is James 3:6: *“The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, set the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by Hell (Geenna).*

(1) Obviously, the human tongue wasn't set on fire down at the Jerusalem dump (Gehenna, or valley of Hinnom). But, Jesus said in **Matthew 12:34-37**: *“...how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks...men will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

(2) **Is James talking about being condemned to the dump or Gehenna hell in Jerusalem, or is he talking about the Geenna Hell he learned from Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46?**

D. Other Scriptures that describe Geenna Hell:

(1) Jesus explained His Parable of the Weeds in **Matthew 13:36-42**: *“...the one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the Kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the Devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will weed out of His Kingdom everything that **causes sin (see B 5,8,9,10)** and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.”*

(2) **Matthew 25:31-46**: *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another...Then He will say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and His angels’...Then they will go away to eternal punishment...”*

(3) II Thessalonians 1:6-9: “God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you (Christians) and give relief to you who are troubled...This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from Heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord...”

(4) Hebrews 10:26-31: “If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the Truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God...For we know Him who said, ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay.’ It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

(5) Jude 4-13: “For certain men whose **condemnation** was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality...they serve as an example of those who suffer the **punishment of eternal fire**...These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm — shepherds who feed only themselves...for whom **blackest darkness has been reserved forever!**”

(6) Revelation 20:7-15: “When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations...But fire came down from Heaven and devoured them. And the Devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the Beast and False Prophet were thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from His presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the Lake of Fire. The Lake of Fire is the second death. If anyone’s name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire.”

(7) Revelation 21:8: “But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolators and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”