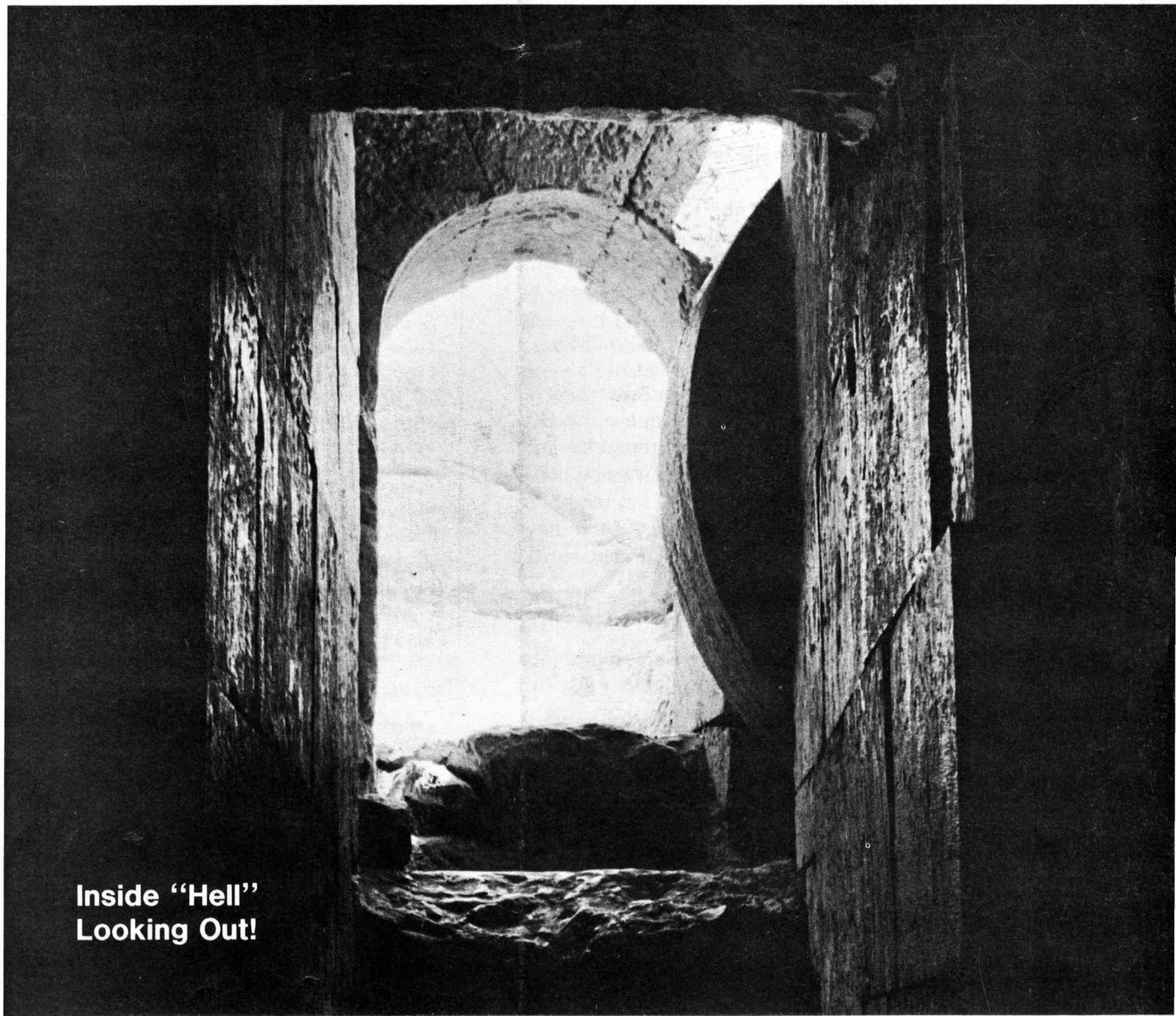




Ambassador College

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

An International Course of Biblical Understanding



Inside "Hell"
Looking Out!

What OUR STUDENTS SAY

"Last week we received the fifth lesson in the Correspondence Course. To say that we were thrilled would be a gross understatement, for as I started into the lesson, all the hodgepodge of information that I had gathered over the months on this subject began to fall perfectly into place. Once again we would like to thank you, and to tell you that we are very happy with the course. We look forward with yearning to receiving the future lessons."

— A.N., Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

"I am now on Lesson 5 of this study course. This lesson, I must say, is absolutely a shocker! All my life I've understood the soul was an immortal spirit which escaped death when the body died, but where it went to I had no idea. For all these years (and I'm 70) I've believed that. I know now that until we have the Spirit of God, we can never become immortal on the day of Christ's second coming. I have learned far, far more through these lessons than I ever learned in my life hitherto."

— Student, Isle of Man

"I have just completed Lesson number five of the Ambassador College Correspondence Course and am so grateful for the enlightenment and knowledge received concerning an 'immortal soul' which has been a real puzzler to me. I am ready for the next lesson and must say that each new revelation is a real eye-opener and a real thriller."

— E.N., Miami Beach, Florida

"I am currently enrolled in your Correspondence Course. I find it very interesting, and exciting. I can hardly wait for the next lesson. I am learning so many new things, and many things which are the direct opposite of what I've always heard and learned before. I recommend your Correspondence Course to everyone."

— T.H., Little Rock, Arkansas

"I want to tell you how much I am enjoying the Correspondence Course. It is really an eye-opener! I not only enjoy studying the Bible, but read five or six chapters every night before going to bed. Reading the Bible like this would never have occurred to me, had I not heard your radio program and received your Correspondence Course."

— B.H., Haughton, Louisiana



Ambassador College CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

LESSON 6

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Editor-in-Chief: HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG

Managing Editor: Richard H. Sedliacik

Associate Editor: John R. Schroeder

Contributing Editor: Ronald B. Nelson

Graphics: Ron Grove

Circulation Manager: Richard Rice

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Canada: P.O. Box 44, Station A, Vancouver, B.C. V6C 2M2

Mexico: Institución Ambassador, Apartado Postal 5-595, México 5, D.F.

Colombia: Apartado Aéreo 11430, Bogotá 1, D.C.

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About Our Cover . . .

This interior shot of Herod's tomb is a far cry from the traditional concepts of hell familiar to most people. This tomb is literally a "hell" (Greek: *hades*) or *hole* in the ground! No demons with pitchforks, no burning, boiling caldrons of molten rock, no screams of the eternally condemned writhing in unbearable, inescapable pain. Will *you* go to this "traditional" hell? Has *anyone*? Or do the "infernal regions" exist only in the minds of men?

P. Gross Photo

WHAT IS "HELL"?

Even if you are a faithful, believing Christian, you may go to hell! Many of your loved ones are right now in hell! But don't be alarmed. You probably have never heard the TRUTH about what "hell" really is—and where most ideas on the subject came from. Just what does the Bible teach about "hell"?

MILLIONS are in confusion about "hell." What is it? *Where* is it? Who really goes there? And why?

Is "hell" a literal place—a geographical location? Is it somewhere in the interior of the earth, in the heart of the sun, in remote space?

A Gallup survey in 1967 showed that 68 percent of Americans believe in heaven, but only 54 percent are persuaded of the reality of hell.

Why the difference?

Probably because many of those who believe in a heaven simply cannot bring themselves to think that a merciful, loving God would consign anyone to a place of eternal torment!

Common Ideas of Hell

A survey in New Zealand indicated that 60 percent of New Zealanders believe hell is simply a state of mind. Only 26 percent believe hell is a literal place.

In San Francisco, random passers-by were asked: "How do you picture hell?" Some of the answers reveal the utter confusion surrounding the subject in the minds of the public.

First person: "Honestly, I have doubts there is such a place. I feel hell is a means of scaring people so they will lead a better life. . . . If there is such a place, I suppose it is craggy and filled with people feeding furnaces or breaking rocks."

Second person: "The idea of hell is one of the greatest means in the world for teaching children good. Personally, however, I think it is just a Biblical term."

Third person: "When I was young I had a clear picture of what hell is like—flames and a devil with horns and a pitchfork. But a person gets over this, just as he does with Santa Claus."

Fourth person: "I would rather not think about it."

Fifth person: "I have never thought of it except as I have seen it staged in operas or plays."

Sixth person: "I picture hell as a big, hot, uncomfortable desert. I think it does exist. Not down in the ground. But since someone put us here, then He could easily have a place for us afterward."

Seventh person: "Hell is a place of unhappy confinement, like a prison. Not necessarily with flames. More a torment of the spirit. I believe it is an actual area, although not necessarily down any more than heaven must be up."

Here are many vague ideas about hell, but almost no real knowledge. Probably the clear majority are those who would just "rather not think about it"!

What the Clergy Thinks

Many theologians today do not believe in a literal "hell." Said one: "The essence of hell is separation from God—not really torture, but torment."

Another described hell as "a condition of human existence."

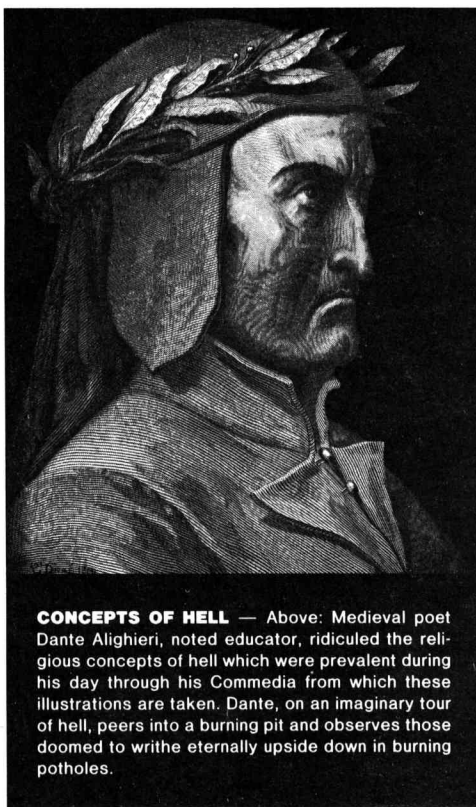
One minister claimed hell is "the loss of communication, insensitivity to spiritual values, the realization of how far short of our capacities we have fallen, the memory of some of the things we have done."

What abysmal confusion!

Isn't it time we learned the TRUTH of the Bible?

The "Fiery Inferno"

Most everyone assumes one of two extremes concerning "hell." One group totally denies that hell exists. Hell is passed off as an ancient superstition which has no bearing whatever on modern life.



CONCEPTS OF HELL — Above: Medieval poet Dante Alighieri, noted educator, ridiculed the religious concepts of hell which were prevalent during his day through his *Commedia* from which these illustrations are taken. Dante, on an imaginary tour of hell, peers into a burning pit and observes those doomed to writhe eternally upside down in burning potholes.



The other group, including most so-called Bible fundamentalists, pictures hell as a terrible place of never-ending torment where the devil rules and his demons gleefully “roast” sinners like millions of wieners on a barbeque spit. There is bitter weeping and wailing, agonized cursing, shrieks and screams from those in eternal torment—according to this concept.

Here is the terse summation of this popular belief from the *Encyclopedia Americana*:

“As generally understood, hell is the abode of evil spirits; the infernal regions . . . whither lost and condemned souls go after death to suffer indescribable *torments* and *eternal* punishment. . . . Some have thought of it as the place created by the Deity, where He punishes, with inconceivable severity, and through all eternity, the souls of those who through unbelief or through the worship of false gods have angered Him. It is the place of *divine revenge*, untempered, NEVER ENDING. This has been the idea most generally held by Christians, Catholics, and Protestants alike. It is also the idea embodied in the Mohammedan’s conception. . . . The main features of hell as conceived by Hindu, Persian, Egyptian, Grecian, and Christian theologians are *essentially the same*” (from the article on “Hell,” emphasis ours throughout lesson).

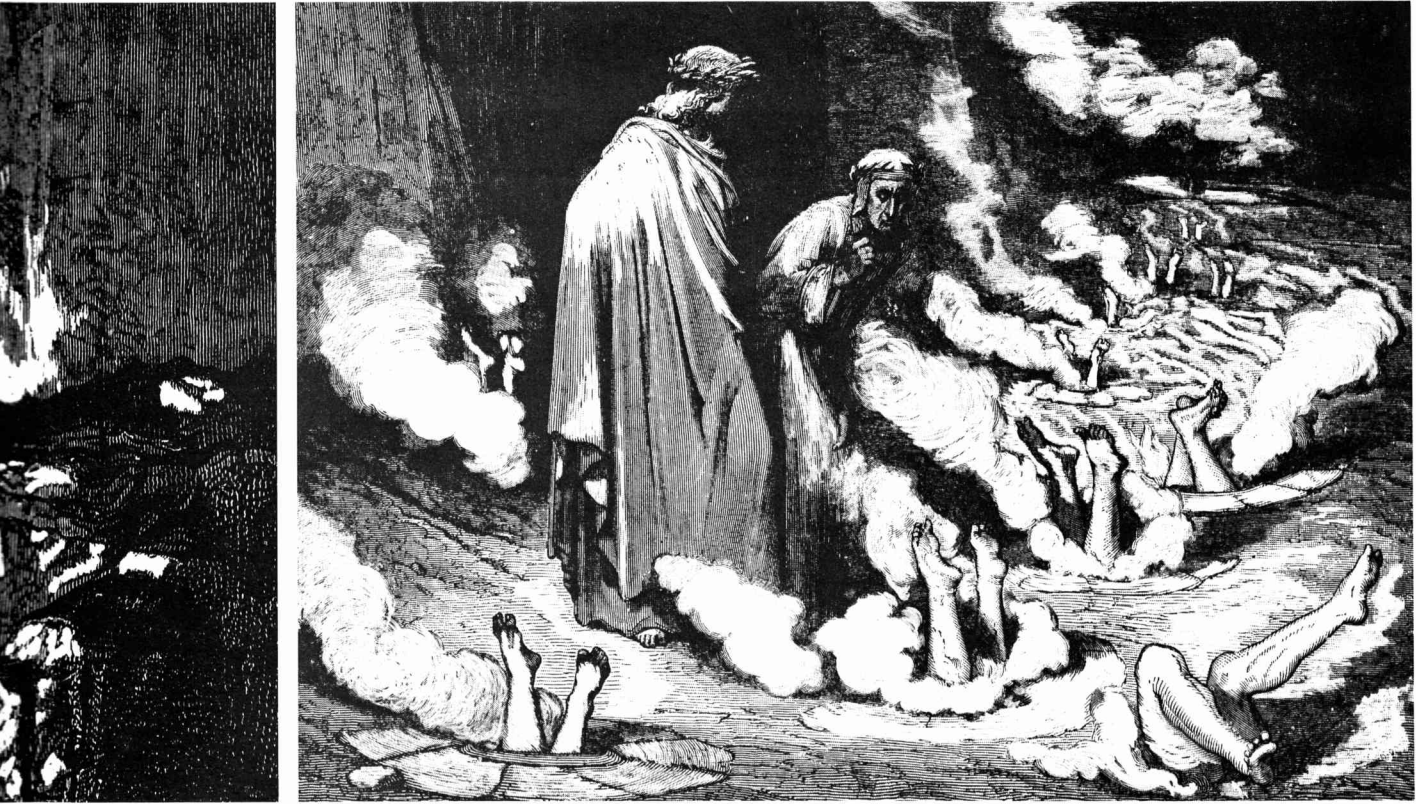
But why do people believe what they believe? From where or from whom have these popular ideas come?

From the Philosophers

A few prominent religious leaders of the Middle Ages left writings and teachings which were so universally believed that they became the accepted doctrine of the Christian-professing world. One of the most important of these influential writers was Augustine (345-430 A.D.).

Augustine reasoned that there should be a temporary cleansing of imperfect souls in purgatorial fire. He, like other influential men of the Christian-professing church, were influenced by “pre-Christian doctrine”—the doctrine of the ancient pagan philosophers and other early church fathers (see *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., article “Purgatory”).

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), wrote a tremendously popular poem, *La Commedia*, in three parts—Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. Although Dante’s purpose for writing his *Commedia* was to ridicule the religious concepts of hell which were prevalent during his day, his writing nevertheless tremendously influenced popular thought and teaching. “Of all poets of modern times,” says a modern author, “Dante Alighieri was, perhaps, the greatest educator. He possibly had a greater influence on the course of civilization than any other man since his day . . . he wrote, in incomprehensible verse, an imaginative and lurid account of a dismal hell—a long poem containing certain phrases which caught the attention of the



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world, such as ‘all hope abandon . . . ye, who enter here!’ . . . His ‘Inferno’ was based on Virgil and Plato” (*Dante and His Inferno*).

And so Dante wrote from the ideas and concepts of the philosophers Plato and Virgil and the prevalent “Christian” concepts of his day.

But who were Plato and Virgil?

Says the *Encyclopedia Americana*: “Virgil, pagan poet, 70-19 B.C., belonged to the national school of pagan Roman thought, influenced by the Greek writers. Christians of the Middle Ages . . . believed he had received some measure of divine inspiration.”

Plato, born in Athens, Greece, 427 B.C., was a student of the renowned Socrates. Plato’s famous literary work *Phaedo* taught the immortality of the soul—the foundation for other writings on the doctrine of an eternal hell where wicked “souls” are supposedly punished forever.

So the world’s concept of “hell” is admittedly a product of *human thinking*—of pagan speculation—as men puzzled over the eventual fate of the wicked.

What About the Billions of Mankind?

Before we examine the Bible to see whether the common ideas about hell could be *true*, let us

consider where this concept of hell, if true, would lead us.

On this earth there are more than three billion people. The most populous lands are China, India, and other parts of Asia. But in spite of the efforts of Western missionaries, more than half of all the people on the earth have never so much as heard the only name by which men may be saved (Acts 4:12)—the name of “Jesus Christ”!

Literally *billions* of people on this earth have lived and died without having known anything about “salvation”—without ever having seen a Bible.

Now think what that means. If all the “unsaved” go immediately to a fiery hell at death, then more than half the people who have ever lived on this earth have been consigned to this terrible punishment without ever having had a chance to escape it!

Can you really believe that is the method an all-wise, all-merciful *loving* God is using to work out His purpose here below?

WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

We face these alternatives: Either the Creator *reveals* the TRUTH on this subject in His *inspired Word*, or else we must fling up our hands and confess we *just don’t know*. Either we believe what the Bible says, or we must—if we are rational and honest—admit ignorance.

What *does* God say about “hell” in the Bible? You may be surprised! So be sure to read *all* of



AP News Features Photo

CONDEMNED?—Would God be fair to condemn the billions who never had a chance to be saved?

the scripture references given in this lesson, and PROVE the truth from the Bible with your own eyes.

LESSON 6

Christ Spoke of “Hell Fire”

1. In His parable-like illustration, what punishment did Christ warn would ultimately befall those who refuse to quit sinning—refuse to *stop using* (obviously not literally “cut off”) various of their members to *commit sin*? Mark 9:43.

COMMENT: “Hell” is an English word. When Mark recorded Christ’s words, he wrote them in the *Greek* language. The Greek word translated “hell,” which Mark was inspired to write down, is *gehenna*. Since in this verse Christ says the sinner is “to go into hell, into the fire,” it follows that those who go to *gehenna* will receive punishment by *fire*.

Keep in mind then that Christ associated the Greek word *gehenna* with *fire*.

2. What did Christ say in Mark 9:45 to emphasize what He said in verse 43?

COMMENT: Mark wrote down the *same* Greek word *gehenna* here in verse 45 that he used in verse 43. The translators of the Authorized or King James Version of the Bible of 1611 A.D. selected the

English word “hell” to represent this Greek word *gehenna*. We will learn more about the real meaning of this word later.

3. How did Christ re-emphasize what He said about “hell fire”? Verse 47.

COMMENT: Again, the Greek word which Mark used in this verse is *gehenna*. *Gehenna* clearly refers to *fire*! But there are other words in the Bible also translated “hell.”

English Word “Hell” Misapplied

Let’s read what *A Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by James Hastings, says about the use of the word “hell” in the Old and New Testaments. Keep in mind, as you read this, that the Old Testament was originally written in the *Hebrew* language, and that the New Testament was originally written in the *Greek* language.

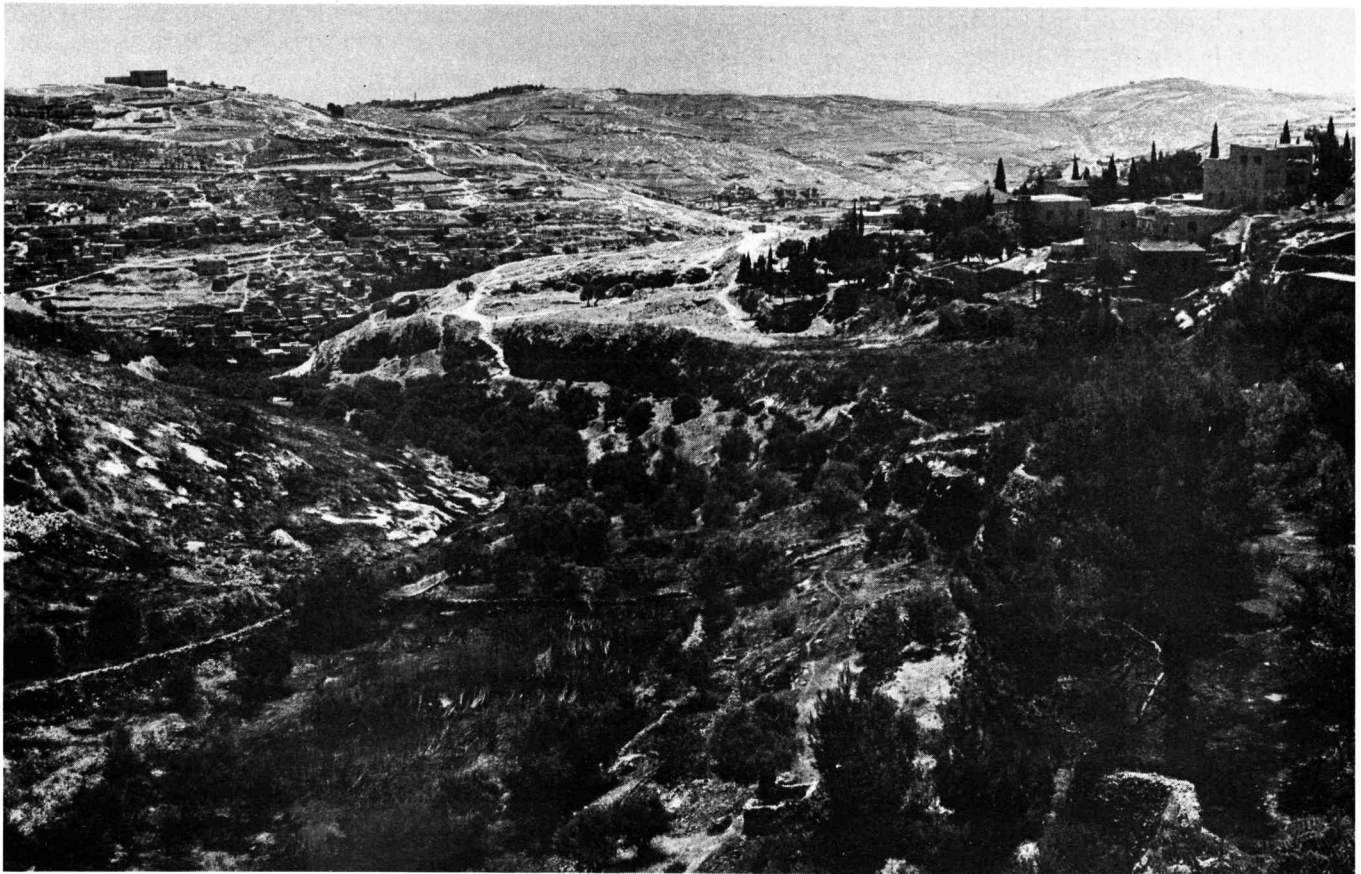
Hastings says: “In our Authorized Version the word hell is unfortunately used as the rendering of *three distinct words*, with DIFFERENT IDEAS [or meanings]. It represents, **1.** the ‘*sheol*’ of the Hebrew Old Testament, and the ‘*hades*’ in the New Testament. . . . It is now an entirely misleading rendering, especially in the New Testament passages. The English revisers, therefore, have substituted ‘*hades*’ [going back to the original Greek word] for ‘hell’ in the New Testament. . . . In the American revision the word ‘hell’ is entirely discarded in this connection. . . .

“The word ‘hell’ is used **2.** as equivalent to [the Greek word] ‘*tartaros*’ (II Peter 2:4) . . . and, **3.** . . . as the equivalent of [the Greek word] ‘*gehenna*’ . . .”

So we see that the real meanings of *three different* Greek words—*hades* (equivalent to the Hebrew *sheol* of the Old Testament), *tartaros* and *gehenna*—have been *confused* with each other because translators have attempted to make the *one* English word “hell” cover the definitions of all *three* words! No wonder confusion has reigned in the minds of millions.

What do these words really mean?

The original Old Testament Hebrew word *sheol* and the New Testament Greek word *hades* mean the same thing—simply the *grave*. These original words have been translated “grave” in many places in the Bible. “Hell” is an old English word, and over 350 years ago when the Authorized Version was translated, the people of England commonly talked of “putting their potatoes in *hell* for the winter”—a good way of preserving potatoes—for the word then meant merely A HOLE IN THE GROUND which was covered up—a dark and silent place—a *grave*! But



Z. Kluger, Ambassador College Photos

TWO DIFFERENT "HELLS"—The Greek word *Gehenna*—translated "hell" in the New Testament—refers to the Valley of Hinnom just outside Jerusalem where, in the days of Jesus, refuse was thrown to be burned. Right: The Greek word *hades*, also translated "hell," simply means the "grave"—a hole in the ground!

pagan teachings gaining popular acceptance have caused people to misapply the old English word "hell" to the lurid imaginations of Dante.

The second Greek word, *tartaros*, which has also been translated into the English word "hell," occurs only once in the New Testament (II Pet. 2:4) and does not refer to humans, but to the *restrained condition* of fallen angels. Its meaning, translated into English, is "darkness of the material universe," or "dark abyss," or "prison."

But what about *gehenna*? This Greek word, as all authorities admit, is derived from the name of the narrow, rocky Valley of Hinnom which lay just outside Jerusalem. It was the place where refuse was constantly burned up. Trash, filth, and the dead bodies of animals and despised criminals were thrown into the fires of *gehenna*, or the Valley of Hinnom. Ordinarily, everything thrown into this valley was *destroyed by fire*—COMPLETELY BURNED



UP. Therefore, Christ used *gehenna* to picture the terrible fate of *unrepentant sinners*!

Two Different “Hells”

In most of the passages of the New Testament where we see the word “hell,” the original Greek word is not *gehenna*. Most often it is *hades*—which does *not* refer to *fire* at all, but to a grave—a hole in the ground. Yet the translators have confused and obliterated the two entirely separate meanings of these words by indiscriminately rendering them both by the same English word “hell.”

Let’s study the proof.

1. What can we learn from Luke 12:5 about “hell”?

COMMENT: If you were to look up the original Greek word that is here translated into the English word “hell,” you would find it is *gehenna*. *Gehenna*, then, is plainly a place where bodies are thrown and, as Christ indicated, **DESTROYED BY FIRE!**

2. But now notice the same English word “hell” in Acts 2:31.

COMMENT: The original Greek word which is translated by the English word “hell” in Acts 2:31 is *hades*. *Hades* means “grave,” as its usage in this verse clearly shows! We can plainly see that the English word “hell” can have *different* meanings! So when we come to the word “hell” in the New Testament, we must *keep in mind these two vastly different meanings* and carefully determine by the context whether it refers to destruction by fire, or the grave where the dead lie buried.

Whenever you’re in doubt about the intended meaning of the word “hell” in the New Testament, look it up in an exhaustive concordance, such as *Strong’s* or *Young’s*, to see which Greek word it was translated from, and hence its true meaning.

Where To After Death?

In the preceding lesson we learned that when a person dies and is interred in his grave, he knows absolutely *nothing* (Eccl. 9:5). He merely lies quietly and silently there as in a “sleep,” totally oblivious to everything.

Let’s briefly review this important truth.

1. What one thing befalls both men and beasts? Eccl. 3:19. Do they all go to one place—the *same place*—when they die? Verse 20 and Gen. 3:19.

COMMENT: Have you ever heard of beasts going to “hell” to be *tortured*?

2. What place does God say man goes to when he dies? Eccl. 9:10. Did Job realize he would go to the *grave* after death? Job 17:13.

3. Was the One who became Jesus Christ “made flesh”? John 1:14. Did Christ take upon Himself the *same* mortal flesh of which we are composed? Heb. 2:14. And didn’t He also have to go to the *grave* as other mortal men do? Turn to Acts 2:31 once again.

CHRIST’S “HELL”—Once belonging to Joseph of Arimathaea, Jesus Christ was buried in this rock tomb, or grave (“hell”), for three days and nights.



COMMENT: The original Greek word in Acts 2:31 is *hades* which, as you now know, means the “grave.” Jesus’ “soul” (body) did not see *corruption* (did not decompose in the grave) because He was resurrected after three days!

Some theologians, however, maintain the tradition that Christ was preaching to departed human “spirits in prison” (I Peter 3:19) while He was in “hell.” That idea is absolutely false. Verse 20 makes it plain that those to whom Christ preached (concerning their rebellious activities on earth) were *demon* spirits, and that He preached to them *during the days of Noah!* This verse is not talking about the three days and nights Jesus was dead in the grave at all!

Resurrected to “Judgment”

You may have heard ministers preach that sinners go *directly* to the fiery tortures of “hell” when they die. But this would mean they are condemned to “hell” *before they are even formally judged and sentenced!*

Let’s notice *when* the wicked dead are judged by God.

1. When will the dead be judged? John 5:28, 29.

COMMENT: Christ said the judgment of the wicked dead, who are now in their graves, is yet in the *future*. “The hour *is coming*,” said Jesus. Then how could they now be receiving punishment when they have not, as yet, even been judged? The two ideas clearly contradict each other!

When will the dead be judged? Obviously after they come up from their graves in a resurrection!

2. While they are in their graves—until the day of their resurrection—are those who have already proved themselves to be *unjust* “reserved” for a future time of formal sentencing and *punishment*? II Pet. 2:9.

3. Does Revelation 20:13 also prove there is to be a *future resurrection to judgment*?

COMMENT: Notice that those who are in watery graves (the “sea”) are to be resurrected; and those who were killed by other means and left unburied (“death”) are to be resurrected; and those who are in earthy graves (“hell”—the Greek word here is *hades* which means the *grave*) are also to be resurrected at this time.

So *all* the wicked dead on land or in the sea, wherever they may be, are to be resurrected to “JUDGMENT” in the future. That is when God will formally sentence them!

No one is, or ever has been, down in a fiery “hell” dancing around on hot coals, shrieking in terror and torment! God’s time for judging and condemning

the wicked *has not yet arrived!* How clear!

The whole question of “judgment” is thoroughly dealt with in supplementary reading material offered in conjunction with this Correspondence Course. Suffice it to say here that the Bible *clearly* shows that the time the wicked are condemned to their fate is **IN THE FUTURE**. The idea that wicked “souls” are *right now* suffering torments in a fiery hell is a pagan myth!

Death By Fire!

What is the ultimate *penalty*—the “wages,” or reward—of sin? Is it eternal life in torment? Or is it eternal oblivion? What is the ultimate **FATE** of the wicked? The Bible makes the truth very clear.

1. What is the “wages of sin”? Rom. 6:23.

COMMENT: The “wages of sin is **DEATH**.” “Death” is the *opposite* of “life”! The final wages the incorrigible wicked will receive, then, is simply the complete cessation of life!

2. What does Paul warn will be the judgment or sentence of those who, knowing God’s commands and having tasted of His way of life, *willfully sin* against Him? Heb. 10:26-27. Will such persons *live on in torment in fire*—or will they be “devoured” by it? Verse 27. Notice that this judgment comes on people because they sin *willfully*.

3. Does Jesus compare false ministers who don’t bring forth *good works* to trees that don’t bring forth “good fruit”? Matt. 7:15-19. What did He say would happen to such people? Verse 19. Is wood put into a fire to be *tormented*—or to be *burned up*? Did Christ clearly indicate that *all* people who do not bring forth good fruit will likewise be *cast into fire*? Matt. 7:17-19.

4. What did Christ say to the unrepentant scribes and Pharisees of His day? Matt. 23:33.

COMMENT: The original Greek word translated here as “hell” is *gehenna*—meaning the Valley of Hinnom. Christ used the fire that burned up refuse in the Valley of Hinnom as a type of the final fate—complete destruction—of the wicked by fire. Those rebellious and stubborn religious leaders could well understand Christ’s analogy. They knew they were being threatened with *complete destruction* as just so much trash!

5. What did Christ warn would happen to those who will not repent of their sinful ways? Luke 13:3.

COMMENT: “*Perish*” means to *cease* existing. It does not mean to *continue* living. *Life* in eternal torment is *not* what God has decreed for incorrigible sinners!

The punishment revealed in the Bible is *death* —

cessation of life forever. *Eternal life* is something we were NOT born with. It is a *gift* of God which He will bestow at the resurrection to those who obey Him. *Eternal life* and *death* are contrasted all through your Bible!

6. Did Christ show by His parable of the *tares* that there is to be a future harvest? Matt. 13:30. Did He say the evil people—the “tares”—will afterward be **BURNED**? Same verse.

COMMENT: In this parable Christ likened the earth to a “field” (verse 24), the obedient people to “wheat” (verses 25, 29), and the disobedient to “tares” (verses 25, 29, 30).

7. Does Psalm 37:20 also show the ultimate fate of the wicked will be *destruction by fire*? Is there coming a time that will be extremely hot—so hot that it will *burn up*—**CONSUME**—the wicked? Mal. 4:1. What will be left of the wicked? Mal. 4:3. *Who* will burn the wicked up—Satan and his demons, or the Eternal God? Same verse.

COMMENT: The “hell fire” that the Bible speaks of will be *thousands of degrees HOTTER* than the imaginary “hell fire” of most preachers—which is only hot enough to *torment*. The Biblical “hell fire” *will totally consume the disobedient! Never* will they exist again.

The Bible plainly shows that those who have *known* God’s truth and still *refuse* to obey it, or *willfully* disobey, will reap the wages of sin—*eternal death*! (Rom. 6:23.) This scripture means what it says. The attempts of many theologians to “explain away” death and to “interpret” it as mere “separation from God” cannot be reconciled with Scripture. Death clearly does NOT mean “eternal life” in the horrifying torments of an eternal “hell.”

The author of this pagan deception is none other than the father of lies—Satan the devil! (John 8:44.) If you have innocently believed his doctrine and have suffered mental torment because of it, thank God that He has opened your mind to understand the TRUTH!

What Is the “Lake of Fire”?

And now comes a most interesting revelation! Exactly what is the *gehenna* fire that will consume the wicked? When and where will it occur?

Forget all the ideas you may previously have been led to believe. Read now in your own Bible what God reveals. For “hell fire” does not even exist yet!

1. Are all who stubbornly refuse to repent and persist in breaking God’s commandments ultimately to find themselves in a “lake of fire and brimstone”? Rev. 21:8.

COMMENT: We’ve already seen that the fate of the wicked is *gehenna* fire. So *gehenna* and the lake of fire are the same. A very large fire would have the appearance of a fiery lake, hence its description.

2. Will it cause the *death* of the wicked? Notice Revelation 21:8 once again. *Which* death will it cause? Same verse.

COMMENT: Mortals naturally die *once*, because we just “wear out” (Heb. 9:27). But if anyone dies the *second* death, that individual will have been judged by God to be guilty of persistent disobedience and incorrigible rebellion. The *second* death will be for *all eternity*!

3. Does Revelation 20:13-14 verify the fact that all who are incorrigible will be cast into this future lake of fire—not now, but *after* the coming judgment? Will all mortals whose names will not have been written in the book of (eternal) life be cast into the lake of fire? Verse 15.

4. When does the lake of fire actually *begin*—at Christ’s *second coming*? Rev. 19:20. Will the two chief enemies of Christ be cast into it at that time? Same verse.

5. How long will this fire last? Matt. 25:41.

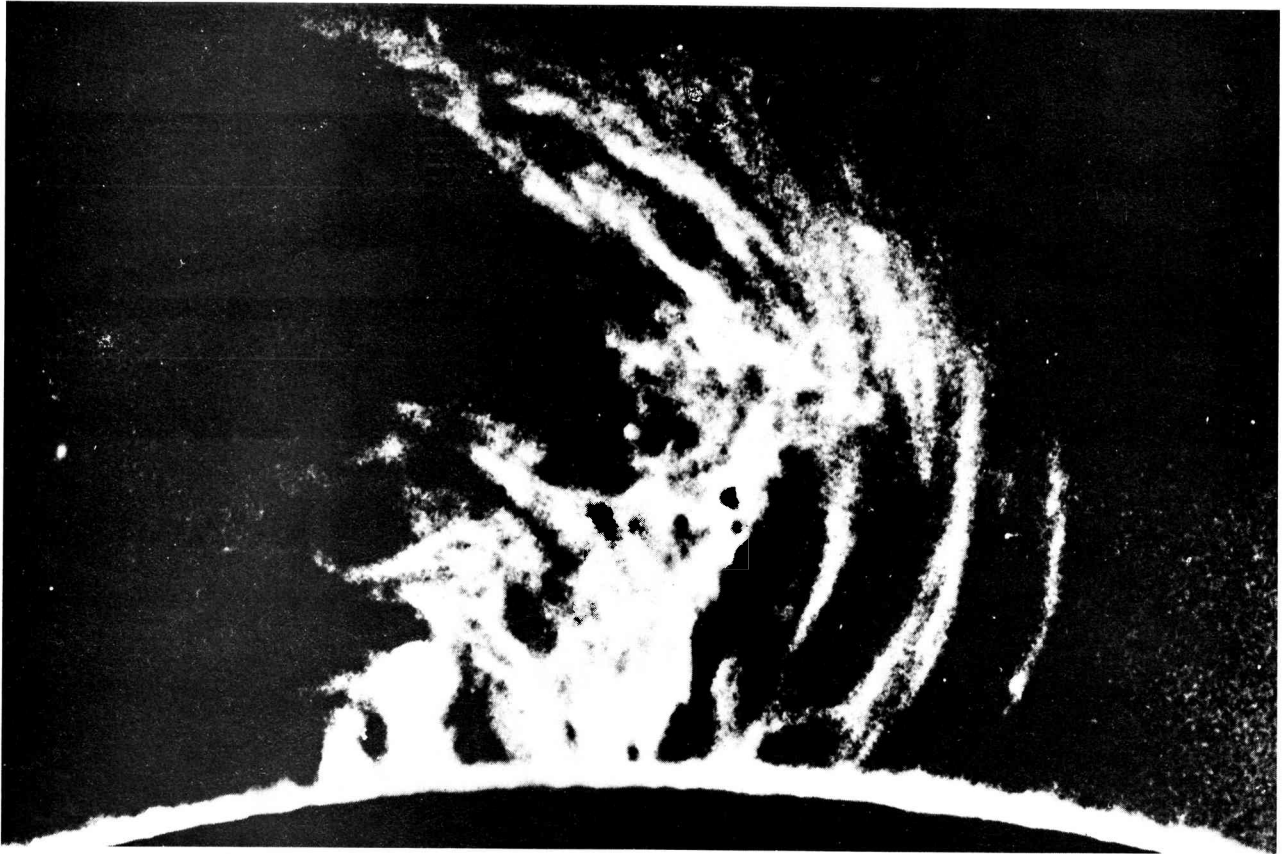
COMMENT: The word “everlasting” is *aionion* in the Greek. *Aionion* comes from the root *aion* which often means “age.” In this case, the correct translation into the English language should be “AGE-LASTING fire.” This lake of fire is going to be burning *all during the Millennium*—the “age” of Christ’s rule.

During the millennial reign of Christ and His saints, the Valley of Hinnom will once more be kept perpetually burning—and the incorrigibly wicked ones who set their WILL to persist in rebellion against God’s laws will be **THROWN INTO** this fire as a stern witness to all the rest of the world! (Isa. 66:24.)

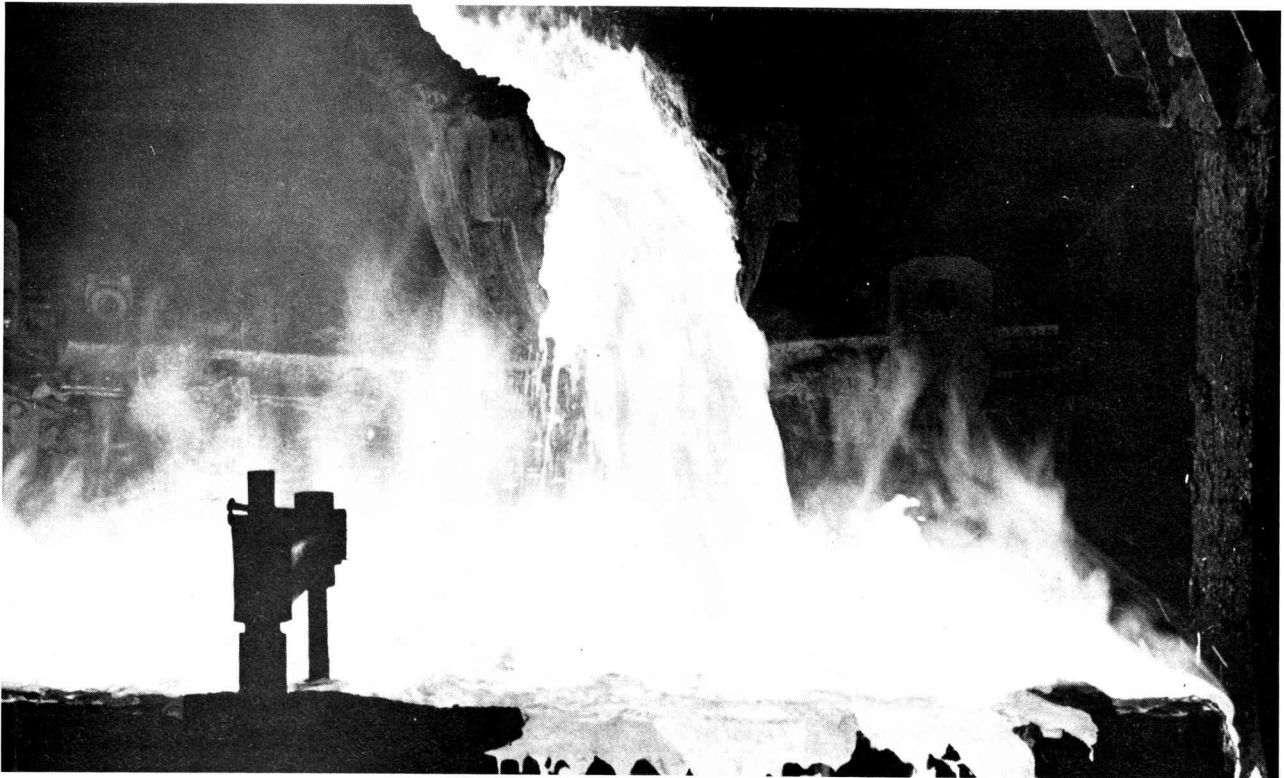
6. Much later—after the Millennium—will the flames of the “lake of fire” purify the *earth’s surface*, burning in one vast worldwide holocaust? II Peter 3:10. Will all the things man has created be *burned up*, as well as the rest of those people who will not have received salvation and eternal life because of willful rebellion against God? Same verse and Rev. 20:15 once again.

COMMENT: Here is God’s—not man’s—description of what the final “hell fire” will be like! It is yet in the future. It has not yet occurred. Nothing is said anywhere in the entire Bible about “souls” descending beneath the earth into “hell fire,” or of torture for all eternity! Rather, the Bible shows all incorrigible human beings and their works will suffer destruction *once* for all eternity. All other teachings to the contrary have come to us from paganism!

7. Are the wicked to be reduced to *ashes* by the fire which will destroy the earth’s surface? Turn to



"THE ELEMENTS SHALL MELT WITH FERVENT HEAT" (II Pet. 3:10)—*Al Green & Associates, Ewing Galloway Photos*—The fiery surface of the sun with its solar flares (pictured above) and the white-hot molten metal pouring from an open hearth furnace (below) are vivid *types* of the prophesied "Lake of Fire."



Malachi 4:3 once again. Can *ashes* be tormented forever and ever? Of course not! The death they will have suffered will be an eternal, everlasting punishment, not an everlasting punishing by torment. There is a big difference between punishment and punishing! “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23), not eternal life in hell fire!

8. What is meant in Revelation 20:14 by the words, “death and hell were cast into the lake of fire”?

COMMENT: The original Greek word here translated “hell” is *hades*. Only unrepentant sinners—those who refuse to obey God—will still be mortal at the time of this resurrection. There will be no one else who could die. Therefore, death and the grave will both cease to exist when the lake of fire engulfs the entire surface of the earth.

9. What will Satan’s part be in this coming “hell fire”? Rev. 20:10.

COMMENT: Satan will be cast into the *same* conflagration that will destroy all incorrigible mortals. But since he is a spirit being, he will not be destroyed by the flames (see Luke 20:36).

Notice Satan himself will be in “hell fire.” He will not play the role of torturing people as he is often represented by the doctrines of this world. Revelation 20:10 shows Satan himself is to be **TORMENTED** unto the *ages of the ages*—“FOREVER AND EVER”! His torment will last forever. But not this fire. It will only last as long as combustible material remains to be consumed. Satan’s torment, however, will continue forever as a mental anguish resulting from seeing all he has striven toward, worked for, plotted for, *burned up as the earth is purified by fire!*

10. Will the “beast” and “false prophet” still be in this fire? Rev. 20:10.

COMMENT: Some Bibles use italics to show that the word “are” in this verse was *supplied* by the translators. It is not found in the Greek manuscripts. The phrase should read, “where the beast and the false prophet *were*”—the unwritten verb being understood to be in the same tense as the verb in the first half of the sentence. The Amplified Bible has it correct. These two mortal individuals will have been destroyed over 1000 years before the time Satan is put into these flames.

Hell Fire “Never Quenched”?

1. Did John the baptist ever speak of “unquenchable fire”? Matt. 3:12; Luke 3:17.

2. Did Jesus say that hell fire will never be “quenched”? Mark 9:43-48. (Recall that the Greek word for “hell” in verses 43, 45 and 47 is *gehenna*.)

COMMENT: Jesus repeated this statement five

times for emphasis. From this, people have *carelessly assumed* the “fire that never shall be quenched” (verse 43) is a fire of torture which has been in existence for centuries, and will continue to exist for eternity.

We have proved that this idea is absolutely *false*! Notice God’s own inspired explanation of *unquenchable* hell fire.

3. Did God (over 2500 years ago) warn the inhabitants of Jerusalem that He would kindle a fire in Jerusalem’s gates that would *not be quenched*? Jer. 17:27. But what would that fire do to the city’s palaces? Same verse.

COMMENT: This fire occurred a few years later, and it destroyed all the houses of Jerusalem (Jer. 52:13). Since God said this fire “shall not be quenched” and since it is *not burning today*, it obviously went out *by itself* after accomplishing its purpose—after devouring all combustible material!

4. What punishment befell the notorious cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? Gen. 19:24. Was it literal fire that destroyed human beings? Luke 17:29. What do we read in Jude 7 about this event? Is there still a fire burning in those cities which God destroyed long ago? Of course not!

COMMENT: The expression “eternal fire” used in Jude 7 means a fire whose *results* are permanent or everlasting—obviously *not* a fire that *burns forever*! Sodom and Gomorrah were utterly destroyed centuries ago—they are not burning today.

The fires which burned these cities simply died out after consuming all combustible material. These scriptures prove the “fire that shall not be quenched” will **NOT** torment people forever and ever!

Christ, as we have seen, often referred to the fires that burned in the Valley of Hinnom at the edge of Jerusalem to illustrate the final “hell fire” or *gehenna* which is to consume the wicked. But did those fires ever go out? The fact is, they were kept burning *as long as* there was refuse to burn. Then they burned themselves out!

They were *never quenched* or put out prematurely by anyone! The flames merely died out when they had nothing more to consume. Even so it will be with the **FINAL** *gehenna* fire. It will be unquenched—but it will finally burn itself out!

“Worm That Dieth Not”

A startling statement is found in Mark 9:44, 46 and 48. In these verses, Christ spoke of a *worm* that “dieth not.” Are there really *immortal* worms?

Some people think Jesus referred to *people* as worms, and that He was trying to say that these



Z. Kluger Photos

Above: "Unquenchable fire" *destroyed* the city of Jerusalem over 2500 years ago, which has since been rebuilt. Below: No one really knows where the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were located, but the desolation of the wilderness of the Negev shown here is typical of the utter desolation of both sites after their destruction by "eternal fire."



“people” never die but live on forever in agonizing torment. However, those who believe this fail to notice that what Jesus spoke of was “*their worm*.” So the wicked themselves are not *the* “worm.”

What is this mysterious “worm” that does not die? Notice what Jesus really meant.

Jesus clearly had reference, as the marginal notes of many Bibles show, to Isaiah 66:24, where a similar statement is made about “their worm”—the *worm of dead “carcasses.”* (Be sure to read this verse in your Bible.)

Now what is the “worm” of a dead, decaying carcass? If you have ever seen a putrifying carcass, the answer should be obvious. To put the matter beyond all doubt, we find that the lexicons define as *grub* or *maggot* both the Greek and the Hebrew words translated as “worm” in Mark 9:44 and Isaiah 66:24.

When a dead body occasionally lodged on one of the rocky ledges above the garbage fires of the Valley of Hinnom, it was soon infested by many *worms* or *maggots* which hatched out of eggs laid by flies. It was simply these worms to which Christ referred when He said, “their worm dieth not.”

But Jesus didn’t mean that each individual worm continued to live forever! Actually, the larvae — *maggots*—would hatch from eggs, eat the flesh, continue in the larval form only a few days, then go through *pupation* or metamorphosis and finally emerge as flies! The worms didn’t die—they *became flies*! Later, the flies *died*.

These are facts known by any student of biology! And Christ was not ignorant of them.

By contrast, the misunderstanding of Christ’s simple statement by some people should be an object lesson to always be careful to use wisdom and common sense in studying God’s Word. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of a *sound mind* (II Tim. 1:7). The Bible is one book that makes good sense! Let’s always study these perplexing scriptures carefully and not jump to hasty, erroneous, weird conclusions.

The Story of “Lazarus and the Rich Man”

Jesus’ story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31) is perhaps one of the most outstanding texts used by those who attempt to prove there is an eternal hell fire.

What lesson did Jesus intend to illustrate by this strange story? Let’s carefully study this story word by word, comparing it with other crystal-clear scriptures.

1. Did Lazarus—a poor but *righteous* beggar—

die? Luke 16:22. Was he later carried by angels to “Abraham’s bosom”? Same verse.

COMMENT: If we are Christ’s, God considers us Abraham’s “seed”—descendants or children—and we become heirs *with* Abraham to receive the promises God made to him (Gal. 3:29). Through faith we may all become “children of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7). This is an intimate relationship—a close or *bosom* relationship, spiritually speaking—with Abraham. We are to be in close contact with him in sharing the promises. This is the sense in which righteous Lazarus was taken to “Abraham’s bosom.”

When, then, will Abraham and the Lazarus of our story actually receive the fulfillment of the promises? The answer of the Bible is that Abraham and the saints—his “seed”—will inherit the promises at the *resurrection* of the just when Jesus Christ returns to earth to establish the Kingdom of God! (We will study more about the subject of the Christian’s inheritance in the next lesson.)

2. And what about the sinful rich man of Jesus’ parable? Did he also *die*? Luke 16:22. And do we next see him lifting up his eyes, indicating his having been resurrected, and calling to Abraham for a few drops of water to cool his tongue, being in *mental* torment? Luke 16:23-24.

COMMENT: The word “hell” used here is translated from the original Greek word *hades*, which we know means the “grave.” It is *not* from the Greek word *gehenna*, which represents the future lake of fire that will **DESTROY** the wicked forever. The rich man is pictured at the very moment of his *coming up out of his GRAVE* in a resurrection.

Abraham and Lazarus will have already inherited eternal life in God’s Kingdom (Matt. 25:34). They will have been immortal for over 1,000 years **BEFORE** the wicked rich man is resurrected to be burned in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:4-5, 15). Until then, the rich man will have been dead in his grave, having *no consciousness* of the passing time (Eccl. 9:5).

At his resurrection, the rich man will see the flames of the lake of fire beginning to surround him. He *knows* these flames will destroy him forever. Being in great *mental* agony, he asks for *just a little* water to cool his tongue which has become dry from his mental anguish. He does not ask for *buckets or oceans* of water to put the fire out. He knows such a request would be denied.

3. What did Abraham then answer the rich man? Luke 16:25, 26.

COMMENT: The great “gulf” between the two will be the *difference* between mortality and immortality. Those who will have been made immortal shall never die because they will have been born of God

(Rev. 20:6). Abraham and the beggar will be on the *immortal* side of this gulf—the *mortal* rich man on the other side, facing imminent eternal death by fire!

Many of the condemned, like the rich man, will want their relatives warned (Luke 16:27, 28), not realizing how much time has passed since they died and that *all* other people will *already* have had their chance to receive salvation.

The story or parable of “Lazarus and the rich man” does *not* prove eternal punishing by God in hell fire. Rather, Christ used this short illustration to picture to his listeners the **REALITY** of the *resurrection* from the dead of both the righteous and the wicked. He was picturing the resurrection to **ETERNAL LIFE** as contrasted with the ultimate fate of the wicked—the resurrection to **ETERNAL DEATH**!

God Is Love—and Justice!

Why do so many people have a false conception of “hell”? Because they fail to understand God’s *overall purpose* in putting man on this earth.

God’s purpose for man is to develop holy, righteous character which will make him *fit* to receive the precious gift of eternal life. But God created man of the dust of the ground, subject to death, so that if he failed to develop right character he could be released from his misery by death.

God has no desire to torment or to torture anyone. God is love (I John 4:8). He created us mortal for our own good. He will condemn no one because of ignorance, and will see to it that every single one will ultimately learn the truth and have a real chance for salvation. But if God granted eternal life to those who persistently rebel and fail to develop righteous character, they would simply bring misery on themselves as well as others *for all eternity*!

Certainly the kindest thing God can do, for all involved, is not to allow such a rebel to continue living. So God will simply put the incorrigibly rebellious to death—not mercilessly torture them forever!

God is also a God of justice. The obedient will be given the free *gift* of eternal life. But the disobedient must also be paid the wages *they have earned*. The final or second death—eternal death in the lake of fire—will be the penalty their own sins have incurred.

This *truth* should inspire no unreasoning terror such as the pagan, satanic doctrine of eternal hell fire has caused to so many innocent people. On the other hand, the lake of fire should stand as a **FEARFUL WARNING** to all who *know* God’s truth and still stubbornly refuse to obey it!

Is This the Only Day of
SALVATION?

Is there a "great controversy" between God and Satan —
God doing His best to get us saved — Satan trying
to keep them lost — with

**IS THERE
A REAL
HELL FIRE?**

SUPPLEMENTARY READING
To request your free copies, use the
convenient coupon and envelope found
in this lesson.

Only those who obey God—those who become and remain Christians in the true sense of the word — will inherit *eternal life* (John 3:16). All others who willfully live in *disobedience* to God will die the second death.

Those are the two alternatives God places before each of us—*eternal life* on the one hand, and everlasting *death* on the other.

The idea of an ever-burning “hell” is clearly a pagan myth and superstition. It is merely a fable that has crept into professing Christianity. But the Biblical hell fire—the one Christ spoke of—will be **VERY REAL**! It will consume the incorrigible wicked, reducing them to mere ashes.

Let’s strive to qualify for *eternal life* so we will not have to pay the penalty of *eternal death*—extinction in the lake of fire.

Answers to Quiz

1-B	5-C	9-D	13-T	17-C
2-C	6-A	10-B	14-F	18-H
3-D	7-D	11-F	15-T	19-F
4-B	8-A	12-F	16-E	20-I

Rate Yourself

19-20 correct excellent
16-18 correct good
13-15 correct fair

TEST YOUR MEMORY

This quiz is designed to help you remember the important facts you learned in the lesson. You simply circle or underline each correct answer. After you've finished, check your choices with the correct answers on page 15, and then rate yourself.

1. "Hell" is a subject **A.** nowhere mentioned in the Bible. **B.** not well understood by most people today. **C.** that was well understood by the ancient pagans. **D.** that was first introduced by Dante Alighieri.

2. Dante got his ideas about hell from **A.** Polycarp. **B.** the Bible. **C.** Plato and Virgil. **D.** attested personal experiences of some who had been there.

3. Which of the following do NOT believe that there is a place of never-ending divine torment and vengeance called "hell"? **A.** Catholics. **B.** Protestants. **C.** Mohammedans and Hindus. **D.** Christians who accept the literal interpretation of the Bible.

4. Most of this world's people **A.** are headed for an ever-burning hell. **B.** have never had a chance to receive salvation. **C.** believe in Jesus Christ. **D.** will never go to "hell"—Greek *hades*.

5. Jesus Christ spoke of **A.** a hell of eternal torment and torture. **B.** Jewish myths of a *gehenna* in order to refute them **C.** a place of fire that will never be quenched **D.** the grave as a place of fire.

6. The English word "hell" originally meant **A.** simply a grave or a hole in the ground. **B.** a garbage dump. **C.** the eternal home of wicked immortal souls. **D.** a condition of restraint for evil spirits.

7. Which of these words is NOT translated "hell" in the Authorized Version of the Bible? **A.** *Gehenna*. **B.** *Hades*. **C.** *Sheol*. **D.** *Abussos*.

8. Those who have died are now **A.** simply in their graves. **B.** in torments. **C.** disembodied spirits free to roam the universe at will. **D.** immortal worms.

9. How can you *always* know the meaning of the word "hell" when you read it in your Bible? **A.** By remembering it always means fire. **B.** By deducing it from the context. **C.** You can't ever be sure.

D. By checking it in an exhaustive concordance of the Bible such as *Strong's* or *Young's*.

10. Hell fire is to be **A.** everlasting fire in the cavernous depths of the earth. **B.** the lake of fire on the earth's surface. **C.** on the surface of the sun. **D.** on the moon.

TRUE OR FALSE

11. Jesus preached to wicked spirits in prison while He was in "hell" (*hades*—the grave). **T F**

12. Satan and his demons will be destroyed in the lake of fire along with the incorrigible wicked of humanity. **T F**

13. The fires that burned and destroyed the ancient city of Jerusalem were never "quenched." **T F**

14. The parable of Lazarus and the rich man proves there is—right now—an eternal punishing of the wicked going on. **T F**

15. The kindest thing God could do is to destroy forever anyone who *refuses* to live the way of life that is conducive to peace and happiness. **T F**

MATCHING

Draw a line from each phrase in the left-hand column to the correctly related phrase in the right-hand column.

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 16. The wicked | A. Being tormented |
| | B. Now in hell fire |
| 17. "Wages of sin" | C. "Death" |
| | D. Quenched |
| | E. To become ashes |
| 18. Lake of fire | F. Cannot burn up |
| | G. Symbolic only |
| 19. Satan | H. Earth burning |
| | I. "Immortal worms" |
| 20. Flies | J. Eternal life |