

# WHAT IS HELL?

PART 1 OF 2  
"GEHENNA" AND "HADES"

Sat, 9/5/2009 at 5:00 ♥ Sun, 9/6/2009 at 8:15 & 10:45

**Sermon Theme:** "Hell" – you've heard the term, *maybe even used the term*, but what is hell – according to God's Holy Word?

**Introduction:** Dear friends, what do you know about life, death, heaven and hell, judgment, and eternity?

- Life – soul and body are *united*.
- Death – soul and body are *separated*.
- Heaven and hell – whenever a soul is separated from a body, it goes to *heaven or to hell*. That soul then remains in that place *until the return of Christ*.
- Judgment – the final judgment will take place when Christ returns. ALL human bodies will be raised, ALL souls will be reunited to ALL bodies, and ALL people will be judged to be *in Christ or not in Christ*.
- Eternity – all who ***die in Christ*** will ***praise God forever***, while all who *die without Christ* will *suffer forever*.

The Bible refers to the place of suffering by these *various names*: ✦ Gehenna/Hell, ✦ Hades/Sheol, the grave, ✦ the Abyss, and ✦ the Lake of Fire.

Some say those names refer to *multiple* locations – ✦one for dead bodies, ✦another for souls who died without Christ, and ✦still another for united bodies and souls after the return of Christ. Lenski summarized those names with this phrase: **They “all mean hell.”**<sup>1</sup> In other words, all who die without Christ will be in a most terrible state forevermore – *in hell, so what is hell?* Today is *part 1* of the answer:

1. **Gehenna** (γέενναν): A ravine south of Jerusalem where ✦garbage, ✦bodies of dead animals, and ✦bodies of executed criminals were dumped and burned. *That description helps us to visualize the place of fire for the punishment of the wicked* (Mt 5:22, 29f; 23:15; Mk 9:45, 47; Js 3:6) (Gingrich, Greek NT Lexicon, 38). In the NT *Gehenna* is translated *hell*.
  - a. Jesus explained some various ways to break the fifth commandment: <sup>NAS</sup> **Matthew 5:22** “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca [empty-headed fool],’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough to go into the fiery hell.*” We have ALL been angry – *broken the fifth commandment*, thus we ALL deserve “**the fiery hell.**” *No one can save himself; we ALL need Jesus Christ!*
  - b. Jesus described sin as a most serious matter: <sup>NAS</sup> **Matthew 5:29** “...if your right eye makes you stumble [sin], tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish,

---

<sup>1</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Revelation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), 611.

than for your whole body to be thrown into **hell**.” It’s a **terrible place** – one **to be avoided at all cost**, but a place which **will receive all who are *unrepentant*** (*without sorrow for sin and without faith in Jesus Christ*)!

- c. Jesus said in reference to Himself: <sup>NAS</sup> **Matthew 10:28** “...fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in **hell**.” Jesus, *the God-Man*, †loves us, †lived for us, and †died for us, *but He will destroy in hell the bodies and souls of those who reject Him!*
- d. Jesus called the “...scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites...” [then He referred to them and their followers as sons] **of hell...** (NAS Matthew 23:15) The place where all people will dwell who ✦continue to trust in their own goodness, thus ✦reject Jesus as their Savior!
- e. Peter makes a comparison between *sinful angels* and *unrighteous* (sinful, unrepentant) *people*: <sup>NAS</sup> **2 Peter 2:4, 9** “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into **hell** and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;... *then the Lord knows how...to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment...*” Can you imagine being in a *pit of darkness*, knowing ✦you rejected Christ and ✦the final judgment was fast approaching? **HELL IS A TERRIBLE REALITY!**

2. **Hades** (ᾍδου): A dark (Job 10:21) and dismal place in the very depths of the earth (Job 11:8; Isa. 57:9; Amos 9:2), the common receptacle of disembodied spirits (Luke 16:23) (Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the NT). In the OT *Hades* is normally translated *Sheol* or *the grave*.

- a. Jesus addressed the *location* of Hades: <sup>NAS</sup> **Matthew 11:23** “And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to **Hades**; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day.” Jesus said: “You shall DESCEND to **Hades...**” **But why?** The Bible says: “Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, **because they did not repent.**” (Matt. 11:20 NIV)
- b. Jesus described the *great torment* of those in Hades: <sup>NAS</sup> **Luke 16:23-24** “...in **Hades** [the rich man] lifted up his eyes, being in torment,... ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for **I am in agony in this flame.**’” *Can you imagine being in flames, but never being destroyed?* (candle, torch)
- c. Jesus is the *one way* for all people to *escape Hades*: <sup>NAS</sup> **Revelation 1:18** “...I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of **Hades.**” *JESUS is God; JESUS lived for us; JESUS died for us; JESUS is alive forevermore; and JESUS has the keys, thus HE controls the domain of Hades!*

**Conclusion:** Hell is a *most terrible place*, created for the devil and his angels (Mt. 25:41)! Though we ALL deserve it, *heaven is open to ALL people* – but ONLY THROUGH JESUS! Let us ever give thanks for **Jesus’ victory** over sin, death, and hell! *Amen!*

**This Week’s Memory Verse:** <sup>NAS</sup> **Matthew 10:28** “...fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”