

What Does the Bible Teach About Hell?

Does the Bible teach the idea commonly held concerning hell? Does the hell of the Bible denote a place of burning torment, a condition of suffering without end, which begins at death? What is the hell of the Bible? The only way to arrive at the correct answer is to trace the words translated 'hell' from the beginning to the end of the Bible, and by their connections ascertain exactly what the divine Word teaches on this important subject.

Before we look into the definitions of hell, think about this fact. The word "heaven" appears in the Bible over **550 times**. If "hell" is the fate of those who do not accept Jesus as their Lord, how often do you think God should put it in the Bible Scriptures warning all the people of the world the consequences of failing to accept Jesus as their Savior? Thousands of times? At least as many times as the word "heaven"? At least once in each book in the Bible? The **facts** may shock you.

Number of times "Hell" appears in the text in English Bible Translations

Bible Translations	Old Testament	New Testament	Total
"Authorized" King James Version *	31	23	54
New King James Version *	19	13	32
New International Version	0	14	14
American Standard Version	0	13	13
New American Standard Bible	0	13	13
Revised English Bible	0	13	13
New Living Translation	0	13	13
Amplified	0	13	13
Revised Standard Version	0	12	12
New Revised Standard Version	0	12	12
Darby	0	12	12
New Century Version	0	12	12
Young's Literal Translation (1891)	0	0	0
Rotherham's Emphasized Bible (reprinted, 1902)	0	0	0

Fenton's Holy Bible in Modern English (1903)	0	0	0
New American Bible (1970)	0	0	0
Restoration of Original Sacred Name Bible (1976)	0	0	0
Christian Bible (1991)	0	0	0
World English Bible (in progress)	0	0	0
Original Bible Project (Dr. James Tabor, still in translation)	0	0	0
Wesley's New Testament (1755)	-	0	0
Scarlett's New Testament (1798)	-	0	0
The New Testament in Greek and English (Kneeland, 1823)	-	0	0
Twentieth Century New Testament (1900)	-	0	0
Weymouth's New Testament in Modern Speech (1903)	-	0	0
Panin's Numeric English New Testament (1914)	-	0	0
The People's New Covenant (Overbury, 1925)	-	0	0
Hanson's New Covenant (1884)	-	0	0
Western New Testament (1926)	-	0	0
New Testament of our Lord and Savior Anointed (Tomanek, 1958)	-	0	0
Concordant Literal New Testament (1983)	-	0	0
The New Testament, A Translation (Clementson, 1938)	-	0	0
Emphatic Diaglott, Greek/English Interlinear (Wilson, 1942)	-	0	0
The New Testament, A New Translation (Greber, 1980)	-	0	0
Orthodox Jewish Brit Chadasha [New Testament only]	-	0	0
Zondervan Parallel New Testament in Greek and English (1975)**	-	0	0
Interlinear NASB-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English (1993)**	-	0	0
Interlinear Greek-English New Testament (Berry, 1897)**	-	0	0
Jewish Publication Society Bible Old Testament (1917)	0	-	0

Tanakh, The Holy Scriptures, Old Testament (1985)	0	-	0
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* The KJV and the NKJV are the only two translations in the list above to use "hell" in the Old Testament. Even the NKJV, which was only supposed to modernize the English words of the traditional "Authorized Version," took many "hell" references out. The use of the word "hell" is decreasing. The NKJV, RSV, ASV, NRSV, and NASB are all technically revisions of the original KJV. From 54 times to 32 and then to 12 or 13 times--who knows--maybe the next revision will bring it in line with the many Bibles which have eliminated the **pagan word Hell** all together.

** A note about the Parallel Interlinears. I am referring to the word-for-word translations beneath the Greek in these works, NOT the English versions which are also in these reference works. Obviously the versions in these books (NIV, NASB, and KJV) contain the word Hell as many times as they normally would.

Definitions of Hell

In the **King James Bible**, the term "hell" is used 54 times; 31 times in the Old Testament, and 23 times in the New Testament. What is the meaning of the word "hell" in the bible? In the Old Testament, it is translated from one word, *Sheol*. In the New Testament, "hell" is translated from three words, *tartaroo*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna*. Let us look at their meanings.

1) Tartaroo [Greek New Testament]:

"Hell" is translated only one time from *tartaroo*, which is from the root *Tartaros*, which means "the deepest abyss of Hades" (2 Peter 2:4). Apparently, Peter was not writing about a place of flames and torment because "the angels that sinned" are there "to be reserved unto judgment." **It would not make sense that angels would be burning in hell before judgment is pronounced on them.** If angels are being reserved for judgment, it means they haven't been judged yet. After all, an accused murderer wouldn't serve 25 years and then be judged to see if he belongs there or not. **If the wicked were to live in a burning hell, they'd have eternal life, just as the righteous, differing only in its quality.** The penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23), not eternal life.

2) Sheol (Hebrew Old Testament) / Hades (Greek New Testament):

What is the meaning of the word "hell" in the Old Testament? "Hell" is always translated from the Hebrew word *Sheol* (which is used 65 times in the Old Testament) and means simply "the world of the dead". There is no hint of a place of fire (Jonah 2:1-2). *Sheol* is translated as "grave" 31 times, "hell" 31 times, and "pit" 3 times. "Sheol" is translated as "grave" in Psa.89:48, Job 17:13, where **both Job** (a godly man) and the wicked go to *Sheol* (hell). *Sheol* is described in terms of overwhelming floods, water, or waves (Jonah 2:2-6). Sometimes, *Sheol*

is pictured as a hunter setting snares for its victim, binding them with cords, snatching them from the land of the living (2 Sam. 22:6; Job 24:19; Ps. 116:3). *Sheol* is a prison with bars, a place of no return (Job 7:9; 10:21; 16:22; 21:13; Ps.49:14; Isa.38:10). People could go to *Sheol* alive (Num.16:30,33; Ps.55:15; Prov.1:12).

It does not teach a place of the conscious souls. The Greek Septuagint, which our Lord used when he read or quoted from the Old Testament, gives *Hades* as the exact equivalent of the Hebrew *Sheol*, and when the Savior, or his apostles, used the word, they meant the same as is meant in the Old Testament. Thus, the New Testament usage agrees exactly with the Old Testament. Literally, *Hades* means "death" or the "grave"; and figuratively, it means "destruction".

Hades is used 11 times in the New Testament. It is translated 10 times as "hell", and 1 time as "grave." *Hades* means "the place (state) of departed souls, grave, hell." In Acts 2:27,31, apparently, both the righteous and the wicked go to *Hades*, the same as they both go to *Sheol* in the Old Testament, for Christ went to hell when He died. In quoting the Old Testament prophecy regarding Christ, the New Testament writer uses *Hades*. Compare Acts 2:27 with Psalm 16:10. It seems more logical to think of Christ in the grave instead of in a burning hell.

1 Corinthians 15:55 illustrates that "grave" is a proper reading for *Hades*. This verse is quoted from Hosea 13:14 in the Old Testament where we find the equivalent word *Sheol* (grave).

Hades is also used in Matthew 11:23; 16:18, Luke 10:23, and Revelation 1:18; 6:8. In Revelation 20:13-14, if one thinks of "hell" as death represented by the grave, it makes sense for hell to be cast into the lake of fire. After all, **if "hell" itself is really a lake of fire, how can it be thrown into itself?** This does not make any sense. Notice in 1 Corinthians 15:26 that death will be destroyed. What is represented by death? The grave!

3) Hinnom (Hebrew Old Testament) / Gehenna (Greek New Testament):

"Hell is translated twelve times from *Gehenna* (or, as it is sometimes transliterated, *Geenna*). This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *Hinnom*, which is the name of a valley outside Jerusalem where garbage and the carcasses of animals were cast into and consumed by fire constantly kept burning. Thus, ***Gehenna* is the only one of those words translated as "hell" in the Bible, that has any idea of fire or torment resident in it.** Look at Matthew 5:22,29-30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15,33 and Mark 9:43,45,47. It is apparent from these texts that the whole physical body is cast into Hell, and not just the soul. *Gehenna* is also used in Luke 12:5 and James 3:6.

"*Gehenna* was a well-known valley, near Jerusalem, in which the Jews in their idolatrous days had sacrificed their children to the idol Moloch, in consequence of which it was condemned to receive the offal and refuse and sewage of the city, and into which the bodies of malefactors were cast and where to destroy the odor and pestilential influences, continual fires were kept burning. Here fire, smoke, worms bred by the corruption, and other repulsive features, rendered the place a horrible one, in the eyes of the Jews. It was a locality with which they were as well acquainted. But in process of time *Gehenna* came to be an emblem of the consequences of sin, and to be employed figuratively by the Jews, to denote those consequences. But always in this world. **The Jews never used it to mean torment after death**, until long after Christ. **The word had not the meaning of post-mortem torment when our Savior used it.**" (*J.W. Hanson's, Bible Threatenings Explained*).

Also note, not one single time in the entire Old Testament was this word "Ge-Hinnom" translated as "hell." See Leviticus 18:21; 20:2; Joshua 15:8; 18:16; 2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; Nehemiah 11:30; Jeremiah 7:30-33; 19:2, 6; 32:35.

Every Bible reference using the word "hell" is addressed to this world. It was also employed in the time of Christ as a symbol of moral corruption and wickedness; but more especially as a figure of the terrible judgment of God on the rebellious and sinful nation of the Jews. It was a place fit only for waste.

Should a Jew, God's chosen people, ever be given a burial in "Gehenna," it would be the most humiliating thing that could ever happen to him. It would be like saying to a Pharisee, that his life, his religious works, his devotion to God were completely worthless, fit only for the dump.

Read the prophecy concerning the apostate Israel in Jeremiah 7:30-34:

Jeremiah 7:30 For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it.

Jeremiah 7:31 And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom (Greek = *Gehenna*), to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart.

Jeremiah 7:32 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom (Greek = *Gehenna*), but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place.

Jeremiah 7:33 And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away. (See Matthew 24:28).

Jeremiah 7:34 Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate. (See Revelation 18:23).

This passage undoubtedly refers to **the literal destruction that would befall the Jewish nation in 70 A.D.**, when many Jews experienced literally the condemnation of *Gehenna*, by perishing miserably by fire and sword. Every Bible reference about hell is to this world. **Only Jesus and James ever used the term *Gehenna***. Neither Paul, John, Peter nor Jude ever employed it. Would they not have warned sinners concerning it, if there were a *Gehenna* of torment after death? **Neither Christ nor His apostles ever used the term *Gehenna* to Gentiles, but only to Jews, which proves it is a locality known only to Jews, whereas, if it were a place of punishment after death for sinners, it would have been preached to the Gentiles as well as to Jews.**

The Book of Acts contains the record of the apostolic preaching, and the history of the first planting of the church among the Jews and Gentiles, and embraces a period of thirty years from the ascension of Christ. In all this history, in all this preaching of the disciples and apostles of Jesus, **there is no mention of *Gehenna***. In thirty years of missionary effort, these men of God, addressing people of all characters and nations, **never, under any circumstances, threaten them with the torments of *Gehenna***, or allude to it in the most distant manner! In the face of such a fact as this, can any man believe that *Gehenna* signifies endless punishment; and that this is a part of divine revelation, a part of the gospel message to the world?

Now, if endless punishment awaits millions of the human race, and if it is denoted by this word, is it possible that only David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Malachi use the word to define punishment, in all less than a dozen times, while Job, Moses, Joshua, Ruth, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Solomon, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Hahum, Habbakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai and Zachariah NEVER employed it thus? **Such silence is criminal**, on the popular hypothesis. These holy men should and would have made every sentence bristle with the word, and thus have borne the awful message to the soul with an emphasis that could neither be resisted or disputed. **The fact that the word is so seldom, and by so few, applied to punishment, and never in the Old Testament to punishment beyond death, demonstrates that it cannot mean endless.**

The Apocrypha, B.C.150-500, Philo Judaeus, A.D.40, and Josephus, A.D.70-100, all refer to future punishment, but **none of them use *Gehenna* to describe it**, which they would have done, being Jews, had the word been then in use with that meaning. Were it the name of a place of future torment then, can anyone doubt that it would be found repeatedly in their writings? And does not the fact

that it is **never** found in their writings demonstrate that it had **no such use** then, and if so, does it not follow that **Christ used it in no such sense?**

The first Christian writer who calls Hell *Gehenna* is Justin Martyr A.D., 140-166..

Tertullian, A.D. 200-220, was originally a Pagan; by birth, an African, and a lawyer by profession. He seems to have believed in the strictly endless punishment of the wicked, and to have argued against the doctrine of their annihilation, or, to use his own words, against the doctrine that "the wicked would be consumed, and not punished," that is, endlessly. He is the first, as far as can be ascertained, who expressly affirmed, and argued the question, that the torments of the damned would be equal in duration to the happiness of the blessed.

What I find very interesting is that Jesus and James only mentioned it.

Doesn't it seem absurd that Jesus and James speaking of "hell" to the believers in Matthew 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 9:42-47; 12:5 and James 3:6? Do they mean it literally? Seems to me when they speak of "hell", it is just figurative. It means a greater judgment while on earth, both the elect and the non-elect.

Where will the wicked be punished?

Proverbs 11:31, "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed **in the earth**: much more the wicked and the sinner."

The Scripture shows that both the righteous and the wicked are to be recompensed in the same place.

Isaiah 24:21, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth **upon the earth**."

Here is a plain statement that punishment is to be administered "upon the earth" at some time.

Where is hell located?

Since "hell" means "the grave," scripture should describe hell as it would the grave. And in fact, this is what we find!

Hell is described as being in the earth, and in the foundation of the mountains - the foundations being under the earth (Deuteronomy 32:22). Hell is deep - underground (Job 11:8). The direction of hell is down (Psalms 55:15, Ezekiel

32:21,27). Hell is low (Psalms 86:13). Hell is beneath us (Proverbs 15:24, Isaiah 14:9). Hell is a pit (Isaiah 14:15, Ezekiel 31:16). We must dig into hell (Amos 9:2). Hell (the grave) follows death (Revelation 6:8).

Men and Women cannot Live in Fire, it will Burn Them Up

Psalms 92:7, "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be **destroyed** for ever:"

Philippians 3:18-19, "...they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is **destruction...**"

Psalms 37:20, "But the wicked shall **perish**, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall **consume**; into smoke shall they **consume away**."

When referring to Psalms 37:20, Adam Clarke's Commentary says: "If we follow the Hebrew, it intimates that they shall consume as the fat of lambs. That is, as the fat is wholly consumed in sacrifices by the fire on the altar, so shall they consume away in the fire of God's wrath."

Psalms 104:35, "Let the sinners be **consumed** out of the earth, and let the **wicked be no more**."

Malachi 4:1, "For, behold, the day cometh, that **shall burn as an oven**; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be **stubble**: and the day that cometh shall **burn them up**, saith the LORD of hosts, that **it shall leave them neither root nor branch**."

Matthew 13:40, "As therefore the tares are gathered and **burned** in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world."

John 15:6, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are **burned**."

Isaiah 66:24, "And they shall go forth, and look upon the **carcasses** of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."

In Isaiah 66:24, observe that the objects to suffer the effects of the unquenchable fire and the work of the undying worms are "**the carcasses of men**." All must know that the "carcasses of men" are dead men . Living men are not called "carcasses."

When speaking of the coming destruction of Jerusalem in Jeremiah 17:27, "...then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall **not be quenched** ." In A.D. 70, the time came when this fearful prophecy was fulfilled. Titus intended to save the Temple, but a soldier thrust a firebrand into it, set it on fire, and it was burnt with an unquenchable fire .

Is Jerusalem still burning now? Certainly not. But the fire was unquenchable . Suppose a building takes fire, and the fire is declared to be unquenchable , would any one understand that the fire would **burn eternally**? An unquenchable fire must necessarily burn up whatever comes within its reach, or else not produce any effect upon the object. But the wicked are compared with " tares, " " thorns , " " stubble ," etc. and never with anything that would resist fire.

Other terms to describe Hell

Brimstone and fire: these verses always speak of brimstone and fire coming from **heaven**, not hell; and this brimstone and fire is always on the **earth**, and never in "hell". Genesis 19:24; Deuteronomy 29:23; 2 Kings 1:12,14, Job 1:16; 18:15; Psalm 11:6; 18:13, Isaiah 30:33; 34:9; Ezekiel 38:22; Luke 17:29; Revelation 14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8

Weeping and gnashing of teeth: This is always speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem when their kingdom was cast out, not in "hell". Matthew 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28.

Unquenchable: is used in Leviticus 6:12-13; 2 King 22:17; 2 Chronicles 34:25; Isaiah 34:10; 42:3; 43:3; 66:24; Jeremiah 4:4; 7:20; 17:27; 21:12; Ezekiel 20:47; Matthew 12:20; Mark 9:43-48

The apparent meaning of "shall not be quenched" is: when the Lord pronounces a judgment of fire on something, that fire cannot be put out by man until it has burned everything up, leaving only ashes. Obviously, the fire at Jerusalem did go out (Jer.17:27; 52:12-13, 2 Chron.36:19-21) and Jerusalem was rebuilt seventy years later. What sinners will be unable to deliver themselves from (Isa.47:14) is the unquenchable, eternal, everlasting fire. The fire will continue to consume everything that is wicked until it is completely destroyed and turned to ashes.

Jude 1:7 clearly states an example of "eternal" fire. This is the same Greek word that is used for "everlasting" fire and "everlasting" punishment as used in Matthew 18:8 and Matthew 25:41,46 (Notice hell is "everlasting punishment", and not "everlasting punishing". **The punishment is eternal in its results, not in its duration.**

Also, in Matthew 25:41, the "everlasting fire" is prepared for the devil and his angles, and not prepared by the devil and his angels). The fire and brimstone destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, and turned them into ashes (Gen.19:24). Sodom and Gomorrah was an example of what would happen to the wicked (Luke 17:29-30, 2 Peter 2:6, Jude 1:7). We know that God did not remove Sodom and Gomorrah to burn them somewhere else because Abraham could see the smoke going up "as the smoke of a furnace" (Genesis 19:28). The cities are not burning today because when everything was burned and turned into ashes, the fire, having no fuel left, went out. Another example of "everlasting destruction" (2 Thes.1:9) is; once a match is burned, it is destroyed forever, but is not being forever destroyed. The phrase "eternal torment" does not appear in the Bible.

Hanson wrote, "Many suppose that the words "**unquenchable** fire" mean a fire of endless duration, whereas, it is a fire that cannot be quenched until its purpose is accomplished. The meaning is, not that the fire was endless, but that it was not quenched.--it continued to burn--until all the material was destroyed. So the judgments of God on the Jews were effectually done -- the nation was completely devastated and destroyed. They were like chaff of the summer threshing floor in the consuming fire of God's judgment."

Josephus says, [Jewish War, B. ii, ch. xvii:6.] speaking of a fire that used to burn in the temple--though at the time he wrote [A.D.80] it had gone out, and the temple was destroyed--"Every one was accustomed to bring wood for the altar, that fuel might never be needed for the fire, for it continued always **unquenchable**."

Strabo, (A.D. 70) described the "**unquenchable** lamp" that used to burn in the Parthenon, though it has long since ceased to burn. [Lib. ix: p. 606.]

Plutarch, (A.D. 110) in Numa, [p. 262] speaks of places in Delphi and Athens, "where there is a fire **unquenchable**," (asbeston) though in the same breath he describes it as having ceased to burn.

Eusebius, [A.D 325, Eccl. Hist. Lib. vi, chap. 41] in his account of the martyrdom of Cronon and Julian, at Alexandria, says they were "consumed in **unquenchable** fire, asbesto puri," though it burned only long enough to destroy their bodies.

Isaiah 66:24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

Where do they look for the unquenchable fire in the above verses? On **earth** or in "**hell**"? Very clearly it is on earth, and it occurred in 70 AD.

Furnace (of fire or smoke): is used in Genesis 19:28; Exodus 19:18; Psalm 21:9; Malachi 4:1; Matthew 13:42, 50; Revelation 9:2

How about this passage in Malachi?

Malachi 4:1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven (See Matthew 13:42); and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. (See Jude 12-13).

Malachi 4:2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

Malachi 4:3 And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.

Malachi 4:4 Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

Malachi 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet (John the Baptist) before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD (*parousia* of Christ):

Malachi 4:6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth (land - destruction of Jerusalem) with a curse.

Clearly, this occurred in the first century when Jerusalem was destroyed. It is nowhere said that God has a furnace in eternity, in which to burn souls.

For ever and everlasting: Does "forever" always mean never ending? No. **In the Bible, "for ever" is used where it has the meaning of lasting only as long as the duration of the event or as long as the man lives.** Jonah calls "three days and three nights", "forever" (Jonah 1:17; 2:6). Hannah clearly explains what she means by the term "forever" when she says in verse 28, "as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord" (1 Sam. 1:22,28). Here "forever" is "ten generations" (Deut. 23:3). "Forever" obviously is as long as David lived (1 Chron. 28:4). Leprosy lasted for Gehazi as long as he lived (2 Kings 5:27). **It's apparent that the meaning of the word is determined by the context in which it is used** (Exo. 21:5-6, Deut. 15:16-17, Philem. 1:10,11,15). Revelation 20:10 can agree with Ezekiel 28:18 by interpreting "for ever" as meaning "as long as they last in the fire or until the fire has burned them up completely." This is a good example of letting scripture interpret itself.

More Studies on Forever and Everlasting

Aion (Greek New Testament) / *Oham* = Hebrew (Hebrew Old Testament) [most Bibles put "forever" or "everlasting"]:

First we need to check the background of these words:

Before the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek (200-300 B.C., according to Prideaux, or during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, 285-247 B. C., say other authorities) this word *aionion* was in common use by the Greeks. Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, Pindar, Sophocles, Aristotle, Hippocrates, Empedocles, Euripedes, Philoctetes, and Plato, all use the word, **but never once does one of them give it the sense of eternity**.

Aristotle: "The entire heaven is one and eternal (*aidios*) having neither beginning nor end of an entire *aion*." And still more to the purpose is this quotation concerning God's existence: "Life and 'an *aion* continuous and eternal, *zoe kai aion sunekes kai aidios*.'" Here the word *aidios*, (eternal) is employed to qualify *aion* and impart to it what it had not of itself, the sense of eternal. Aristotle could be guilty of no such language as "an eternal eternity." Had the word *aion* contained the idea of eternity in his time, or in his mind, he would not have added *aidios*.

Josephus and Philo, Jewish Greeks, who wrote between the Old and New Testaments, use the word *aionion* with the meaning of **temporal duration**, always.

Alluding to the Pharisees, Josephus says: "They believe that the wicked are detained in an everlasting prison (*eirgmon aidion*) subject to eternal punishment" (*aidios timoria*) and the Essenes (another, Jewish sect) "Allotted to bad souls a dark, tempestuous place, full of never-ceasing punishment (*timoria adialeipton*) where they suffer a deathless punishment, (*athanaton timorian*)."

Philo, who was contemporary with Christ, generally used *aidion* to denote endless, and always used *aionion* to describe temporary duration. Dr. Mangey, in his edition of Philo, says he **never** used *aionion* for interminable duration. He uses the exact phraseology of Matthew 25:46, precisely as Christ used it. "It is better not to promise than not to give prompt assistance, for no blame follows in the former case, but in the latter there is dissatisfaction from the weaker class, and a deep hatred and everlasting punishment (*kolasis aionios*) from such as are more powerful."

Here we have the exact terms employed by our word, to show that *aionion* did not mean endless but did mean limited duration in the time of Christ.

You may point to Jude 6. "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in **everlasting** chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

Hanson wrote, "The word here rendered "everlasting" is not *aionios*, temporary duration, but *aidios*, whose intrinsic meaning is endless. It is found in one other place in the New Testament, Romans 1:20, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his **eternal** power and Godhead."

Now it must be admitted that this word among the Greeks had the sense of eternal, and should be understood as having that meaning wherever found, unless by express limitation it is shorn of its proper meaning. It is further admitted that had *aidios* occurred where *aionios* does, there would be no escape from the conclusion that the New Testament teaches Endless Punishment. It is further admitted that the word is here used in the exact sense of *aionios*, as is seen in the succeeding verse: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of *aionian* fire." That is to say, the "*aidios* chains" in verse 6 are "even as" durable as the "*aionion* fire" in verse 7. Which word modifies the other?

1) The construction of the language shows that the latter word limits the former. The *aidios* chains are even as the *aionion* fire. As if one should say "I have been infinitely troubled, I have been vexed for an hour," or "He is an endless talker, he can talk five yours on a stretch." Now while "infinitely" and "endless" usually convey the sense of unlimited, they are here limited by what follows, as *aidios*, eternal, is limited by *aionios*, indefinitely long.

2) That this is the correct exegesis is evident from still another limitation of the word. "The angels...he hath reserved in **everlasting** chains unto the judgment of the great day." Had Jude said that the angels are held in *aidios* chains, and stopped there, not limiting the word, it might be claimed that he taught their eternal imprisonment. But when he limits the duration by *aionios* and then expressly states that it is only unto a certain date, it follows that the imprisonment will **terminate**, even though we find applied to it a word that intrinsically signifies eternal duration, and that was used by the Greeks to convey the idea of eternity, and was attached to punishment by the Greek Jews of our Savior's times, to describe endless punishment, in which they were believers.

But observe, while this word *aidios* was in universal use among the Greek Jews of our Savior's day, to convey the idea of eternal duration, and was used by them to teach endless punishment, Jesus never allowed himself to use it in connection with punishment, nor did any of his disciples but one, and he but once, and then carefully and expressly limited its meaning. Can demonstration go further than this to show that Jesus carefully avoided the phraseology by which his contemporaries described the doctrine of endless punishment?"

And as for the attributes of God it is quite simple. God is before the ages, he created the ages, he himself wasn't created, he's the King of the Ages, he spoke

the ages into being, he has no beginning, he has no end, he is the self-existent one, etc. Therefore "*olam*" and "*aionion*" when applied to God (and His kingdom) denote "infinity" or "eternality" because of the object in view.

There are too many scriptures to mention them all using the term "forever" or "everlasting." Here are just a few as examples:

"We see the word "everlasting" applied to God's covenant with the Jews; to the priesthood of Aaron; to the statutes of Moses; to the time the Jews were to possess the land of Canaan; to the mountains and hills; and to the doors of the Jewish temple. We see the word forever applied to the duration of a man's earthly existence; to the time a child was to abide in the temple; to the continuance of Gehazi's leprosy; to the duration of the life of David; to the duration of a king's life; to the duration of the earth; to the time the Jews were to possess the land of Canaan; to the time they were to dwell in Jerusalem; to the time a servant was to abide with his master; to the time Jerusalem was to remain a city; to the duration of the Jewish temple; to the laws and ordinances of Moses; to the time David was to be king over Israel; to the throne of Solomon; to the stones that were set up at Jordan; to the time the righteous were to inhabit the earth; and to the time Jonah was in the fish's belly.

"We find the phrase forever and ever applied to the hosts of heaven, or the sun, moon, and stars; to a writing contained in a book; to the smoke that went up from the burning land of Idumea; and to the time the Jews were to dwell in Judea. We find the word never applied to the time the fire was to burn on the Jewish altar; to the time the sword was to remain in the house of David; to God's covenant with the Jews; to the time the Jews should not experience shame; to the time the house of David was to reign over Israel; to the time the Jews were not to open their mouths because of their shame; to the time those who fell by death should remain in their fallen state; and to the time judgment was not executed.

"But the law covenant is abolished; the priesthood of Aaron and his sons has ceased; the ordinances, and laws, and statutes of Moses are abrogated; the Jews have long since been dispossessed of the land of Canaan, have been driven from Judea, and God has brought upon them a reproach and a shame; the man to the duration of whose life the word forever was applied is dead; David is dead, and has ceased to reign over Israel; the throne of Solomon no longer exists; the Jewish temple is demolished, and Jerusalem has been overthrown, so that there is not left "one stone upon another;" the servants of the Jews have been freed from their masters; Gehazi is dead, and no one believes he carried his leprosy with him into the future world; the stones that were set up at Jordan have been removed, and the smoke that went up from the burning land of Idumea has ceased to ascend; the righteous do not inherit the earth endlessly, and no one believes that the mountains and hills, as such, are indestructible; the fire that burnt on the Jewish altar has long since ceased to burn; judgment has

been executed; and no Christian believes that those who fall by death will never be awakened from their slumbers.

"Now, as these words are used in this limited sense in the Scriptures, why should it be supposed that they express endless duration when applied to punishment?" (Thomas B. Thayer - The Origin and History of the Doctrine of Endless Punishment). See Everlasting. - Gen. 17:7, 8, 13; 48:4; 49:26; Exod. 40:15; LeV 16:34; Numb. 25:13; Ps. 24:7; Hab. 3:6. Forever. - Deut. 15:17; 1 Sam. 1:22; 27:12; Lev 25:46; 2 Kings 5:27; Job 41:4; 1 Kings 1:31; Neh. 2:3; Dan. 2:4; Exod. 14:13; Eccl 1:4; Ps. 104:5; 78:69; Ezek. 37:25; Gen. 13:15; Exod. 32:13; Josh. 14:9; 1 Chron. 23:25; Jer. 17:25; Ps. 48:8; Jer. 31:40; 1 Kings 8:13; Numb. 10:8; 18:23; 1 Chron. 28:4; 1 Kings 9:5; Josh. 4:7; Jonah 2:6; Ps. 37:29. Forever and ever. - Ps. 148:5, 6; Isa. 30:8; 34:10; Jer. 7:7; 25:5. Never. - LeV 6:13; 2 Sam. 12:10; Judges 2:1; Joel 2:26, 27; Jer. 33:17; Ezek. 16:63; Amos 8:14; Hab. 1:4.

Hanson wrote, "All these and numerous other eternal, everlasting things -- things that were to last forever, and to which the various *aionion* words are applied-- have now ended, and if these hundreds of instances must denote limited duration why should the few times in which punishments are spoken of have any other meaning? Even if endless duration were the intrinsic meaning of the word, all intelligent readers of the Bible would perceive that the word must be employed to denote limited duration in the passages above cited. And surely in the very few times in which it is connected with punishment it must have a similar meaning."

These following words and passages are applied to the kind of life we have:

Heb. 7:15-16, "And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless (*akatalutos*, imperishable) life."

1 Pet. 1:3-4, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, (*aphtharton*) and undefiled, and that fadeth not (*amaranton*) away."

1 Pet. 5:4, "and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not (*amarantinos*) away."

1 Tim. 1:17, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal (*aphtharto*), invisible, the only wise God be honor and glory forever and ever, Amen."

Rom. 1:23, "And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man."

Rom. 2:7, "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality (*aphtharsain*) eternal life."

1 Cor. 9:25, "Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."

1 Cor. 15:42, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption (*aphtharsian*)." See also verse 50.

1 Cor. 15:51-54, "Behold I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, (*aphthartoi*) and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, (*aphtharsian*) and this mortal must put on immortality (*athanasian*) So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, (*aphtharsian*) and this mortal shall have put on immortality, (*athanasian*) then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

2 Tim. 1:10, "Hath brought life and immortality (*aphtharisan*) to light, through the gospel."

1 Tim. 6:16, "Who only hath immortality (*athanasian*)."

Now these words are applied to God and the soul's happiness. They are words that in the Bible are never applied to punishment or anything perishable. They would have been affixed to punishment had the Bible intended to teach endless punishment. And certainly they show the error of those who declare that the indefinite word *aionion* is all the word, or the strongest one in the Bible, declarative of the endlessness of life beyond the grave.

Aren't those who do not hear or accept the Gospel doomed by God?

In the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), when the younger son demanded his inheritance and left home to indulge in riotous living, he was not stopped by his father. His father did not chase him away yelling, "You good-for-nothing impudent, rebellious ass of a boy! You'll burn in hell!" Not at all. Not even remotely. The father did not threaten the boy with hell-fire and damnation -- why should he? He knew that the boy was going to create this for himself all on his own. Instead, he let the boy go in peace with the freedom to think, feel, and act as he pleased, without recrimination.

What do you imagine the boy would have thought some time later, when he had lost everything -- money, friends, and self-respect -- if, when in the depths of

desperation, he called to mind his father, and heard echoing through his head, "You no-good-for-nothing impudent, rebellious ass of a boy! You'll burn in hell!" Think about it for a moment. And then ask yourself the question: What was it that made the boy want to return home in the story that Jesus told? Was it the picture of a father breathing hell and damnation or of a sorrowful man who loved him enough to give him his freedom to do as he pleased?

We are not in the position of passing ultimate judgment on any man. We do not know how God will judge a man or woman in the eternities because we lack those omniscient, omnipotent, all-loving keys of love. To be sure we are called to make some local judgments of individuals that affect the welfare of the Body (Church), our families, and our countries, but we have never been given the mandate to pass judgment on any individual in his relationship to eternity. Never! And I challenge anyone to show me in the scripture where we have been given that mandate.

That Prodigal Son would never have come home had the last picture of his father been of a vengeful, condemning ogre. Once he had realized his stupidity, his egotism, his selfishness, his rudeness -- yes, his rebelliousness and his being an "ass-head" for himself -- he had only one picture to fall on that would entice him home into loving care -- the picture of a sorrowful but loving father.

It is a serious mistake to conclude that a man is lost just because he rejects our preaching. Have we suddenly become gods whose message cannot be refused on pain of everlasting destruction? We do not know the background of anyone fully. We do not, in truth, know the path any single soul has walked within himself. Only God knows that. There are times and seasons when a soul is receptive to the Word, times and seasons which God alone knows. Anyone who calls him- or herself a Christian must be sensitive to these things to be any use to either man or God.

There are ways to warn people of the consequences of sin that will endear them to God and cause them to repent, and there are ways that will turn them off Him altogether and encourage them to rebel all the more -- because they simply can't see the love in the inadequate human visions of eternity. God's chief purpose is to reveal His love to us -- to "draw" us to Him, not to "compel" us to Him. The god of the whip has another name.

It is not for us to judge men whether they are fit for heaven or hell. That is none of our business, and I would even venture to suggest that those who act as God in this way run the risk of finding themselves in that place they are so busily condemning others to. It is our duty to warn them not to do it and to protect innocent people from them. God will convict people of sin in His own way that will lead to genuine and not plastic repentance. Our job is to point people to the Saviour and His Law and invite them to receive, of their own free will and desire, the Gospel of Salvation themselves.

It should be comforting to us, knowing that nobody will have a consciousness after death. The thought of my loved ones looking down on me, and seeing the things I do wrong while they are totally helpless to do anything or even give advice, is comforting. To have a loving mother be conscious of her loving son, while her son she loved so much is burning in hell forever, is not a comforting thought. To me, that would be a living hell for her.

In conclusion, there is no conclusive or explicit proof in scripture that says people will have a consciousness after death. In addition, Only God Himself will determine what happens to us after we die. Opinions about what may or may not happen to us, or to others, after death, is just that...opinions. For nobody really knows what will happen except God Himself.
