

# **The Traditional Concept of HELL ... is a Myth**

Compiled by

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The traditional concept of Hell has sinners tortured with fire for eternity. They are assumed to feel searing pain, yet are not consumed. It is illogical, not scriptural, and the concept is a myth.

But few question why the sinners are not burnt to ashes, or why eternal life, which is promised only to the faithful, is seemingly given to sinners ... to be tortured?

Most are surprised to learn that fire is NOT mentioned in 78% of the verses where Hell appears in the *King James Version* (KJV) bible. In the remaining verses where fire and sinners are associated, the result it is clearly not torture, but ANNIHILATION.

The traditional concept of Hell does NOT come from the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. It is a pagan myth adapted in the Third Century by church authorities. Then as now, innocents are taught the concept of Hell by trusted authority figures. That trust deterred questions, so for generations the myth has perpetuated. That is changing as can be seen in Table A.

This article is a compilation of out-of-print publications from Ambassador College and other sources which are identified herein. Bold fonts, all capital letters, italics, versions, and sacred names, etc., are the author's.

## **Anomalies in the words translated as Hell**

The word Hell occurs in a total of fifty-three verses in the KJV; thirty-one times in the Old Testament, and twenty-two times in the New Testament. This article will show that:

FOUR separate words from Hebrew and Greek were translated into the ONE English word Hell.

TWO words, one Hebrew and one Greek, mean the SAME THING. Fire is NOT associated with FORTY-TWO occurrences of these words.

One Greek word for Hell occurs just once. Fire is NOT associated with it, neither are HUMANS.

One Greek word is used ELEVEN times; FIRE is associated with EVERY occurrence.

Anyone can easily find the definition of the four Hebrew and Greek words translated Hell, and the context in which they are used. Only two common study aids are required. Most people already have them. Other publications referenced herein can be easily obtained through a public library.

## STUDY AIDS

The study aids to verify that the traditional concept of Hell is a myth are: the KJV bible, and a KJV based Concordance. Examples are: *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible - with Brief Dictionaries of the Hebrew and Greek Words of the Original with References to the English Words*, or *Young's Concordance*. Strong's Concordance is used herein.

### Strong's Concordance

Strong's Concordance was published near the mid-1900s after 35 years of effort. It is a compilation of non-common words, in alphabetical order, from all passages in the KJV. The words are listed in biblical order by book, chapter, and verse. A short passage from the verse containing the word being studied, is shown.

Appended to the end of each passage may be one or more symbols, but always a number.

Strong's Concordance contains a paragraph titled: Directions and Explanations, which should be read. The following synopsis relates to those instructions:

Where the asterisk (\*) symbol is appended to a verse, it indicates a change in the leading word of the passage from the Revised Standard Version (RSV) translation of the bible. Similarly, the symbol obelisk (+) is a leading word change by the British revisers only, and a double obelisk is a word change by American revisers.

An appended number of UPRIGHT Arabic characters indicates a Hebrew or Chaldean word in the original scriptures, commonly of the Old Testament. The meaning of the word can be found by sequentially looking up the appended number in the Hebrew Dictionary which follows the concordance section.

An appended number of *SLOPING Italic* Arabic characters indicates a Greek word in the original scriptures, commonly of the New Testament. The meaning of the word can be found by sequentially looking up the appended number in the Greek Dictionary.

If a passage contains a word which is *italicized*, it means that it DID NOT appear in the original scriptures, but is an **insertion** by a translator.

Insertions are usually a translator's attempt to make text read smoother or be more understandable. **However, occasionally error is introduced.** An example of an error critical to correctly understanding a verse about the traditional concept of Hell, is identified in this article.

## THE MEANING OF THE FOUR WORDS

The four words which have been translated 'Hell' in the KJV, and the meaning(s) of those words, are obtained by first alphabetically looking up the word Hell in the concordance.

Next, look up the number appended to each verse in the Hebrew and Greek Dictionary. Start with the Old Testament shown at the top of the list.

## **OLD TESTAMENT**

Notice in the Old Testament that for *all* thirty-one verses where the word Hell appears, the appended number is 7585.

### **Sheol**

Look up number 7585 in the Hebrew Dictionary. It is the Hebrew word Sheol. The meaning of Sheol is essentially 'a pit in the earth where dead people are placed' (i.e., a grave).

The meaning may not be initially clear in Deuteronomy 32:22. However, reading verses 31:19 to 32:24, reveals that it is the range of anger - from the depths (bottom of a grave) to the whole surface of the earth, which is being described (i.e., NOT physical fire).

Read all remaining passages in the Old Testament list, but mentally substitute the word GRAVE for Hell. Grave is the clear common sense understanding. Notice that fire is NOT mentioned in the thirty-one passages where the word Hell occurs. The traditional concept of sinners tortured in a 'fiery hell' is not connoted in the scriptures of the ENTIRE Old Testament.

## **NEW TESTAMENT**

Three Greek words are translated Hell in the New Testament. Examine the meaning of each of the words by looking up the appended number in the Greek Dictionary.

### **Hades**

Ten passages have number 86 appended. Looking up number 86 shows it to be Hades. The word essentially means 'an unseen place for dead people,' (i.e., a grave). A grave is the clear common sense understanding of every instance of Hades. Hades is synonymous with Sheol, both mean GRAVE.

As with Sheol, fire is NOT mentioned in the ten verses where Hades is translated as Hell. Again, there is no connotation of the traditional concept of sinners being tortured in a 'fiery hell.'

### **Tartaroo**

Word number 5020 'Tartaroo'(Tartarus) is mentioned one time. It essentially means 'a deep dark abyss, a place of restraint, or incarceration.' It refers to the place where Satan will be confined for a thousand years near the end of the age:

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and he cast him into the bottomless pit (Tartaroo), and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while”... (Revelation 20:1)

Notice that fire is NOT mentioned in the only passage where Tartaroo is translated as Hell.

Other scripture mentions the incarceration of spirits too, however the place is NOT Tartaroo, nor is fire mentioned. For example:

“for Yeshua died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to Yahweh. He was put to death in the body but made alive in spirit through which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago”...(1 Peter 3:18-20, *The Scriptures Bible*). .”

Word ‘prison’ is Strong’s 5438 and means (im-)prison(-ment). The pre-Genesis earth is described as ‘dark and void’ when the Archangel Michael cast the defeated Lucifer and his fallen angels down to *Earth* (Isa.14:12-14). Earth is still their ‘prison.’ Logically, Yeshua would have preached to the fallen spirits *then*, when he was also a spirit, *before he was begotten as a mortal*.

Yeshua the Anointed became mortal, died, and was placed in the sepulture. There is NO scripture which says while there, he ‘descended’ into the traditional concept of ‘Hell’ as the so-called Apostles Creed infers. Yeshua prophesied he would be entombed: “in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.” He did not lie!

The spirits in 1 Peter 3:18-20 above, are identified in

“...and the angels (spirits) who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home - these he [Yeshua] has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains [confined on Earth] for judgement on the great day.” (Jude 1:6, *The Scriptures Bible*).

### **Gehenna**

Word number 1067 ‘Gehenna’ appears eleven times. The word refers to the Valley of Hinnon (i.e., Ge-Hinnon = Gehenna). It means a ‘steep sided gorge or valley.’ It is mentioned in Nehemiah 11:30, II Kings 23:10, etc.

Some hold that Kings Ahaz and Manasseh made their children “pass through the fire” to the pagan god Molech, in this valley. The rites were celebrated in a place called Torphet (II Kings 23:10) the “place of abhorrence,” one of the chief groves there. King Josiah put an end to these abominations as described in II Kings 23:10.

And further, that Aceldama, the 'field of blood,' purchased with the money Judas received for the betrayal of Yeshua (Matt. 27:8), is also a part of the valley of Hinnon. The valley of Hinnon is still shown on maps in an area South of Jerusalem.

Notice that in **EVERY** passage with 'Gehenna,' fire **IS** mentioned.

In latter biblical times 'Gehenna' was a trash dump where refuse, dead animals, executed criminals, etc., were thrown and burned (Jeremiah 19:6).

Fire requires fuel, oxygen, and a kindling temperature. All three are commonly present in most trash dumps. Objects exposed to the fire in 'Gehenna' were burnt to *ashes*. As with present day trash dumps, Gehenna undoubtedly smoldered and burned continuously. At night the glow from the fires in Gehenna would have appeared as 'a lake of fire' from Jerusalem and areas near by.

When the Gehenna was mentioned in parables by Yeshua the Anointed, the listener would have had a vivid picture of what would happen to a living creature thrown into 'Gehenna.' Obviously, that the creature would be burnt to ashes (i.e., annihilated). Annihilation, not torture, is still a Hebrew teaching.

The fire referred to by Yeshua the Anointed, however is that described in the book of Revelation. That lake of fire and brimstone (burning sulphur) will exist at the end of the age and will be infinitely hotter than any trash dump.

In Mark 9:24 it says that the people are going to "look upon the carcasses of men that have transgressed against me." "They will be burned up like fat on a stove" (Psalm 37:20).

### **IMMORTAL WORMS?**

There is a passage in Mark 9:44-48 in which Yeshua the Anointed spoke of worms that "dieth not" (KJV). Some have thought this was a reference to Satan as a serpent living in flames. Others thought it referred to wicked people. But it is THEIR (i.e., the victim's) worms that were being referred to.

Look up word 4663 in Strong's Greek Dictionary. It describes the kind of worm. In Isaiah 66:24 as in Mark 9:48, it is a *maggot*, the larvae of the common fly.

A fly lays 200 to 400 eggs at a time. A few days afterward the eggs grow into maggots and cover their food. Shortly afterward they pupate into flies. The cycle is repeated frequently because decaying material and flies are common in trash dumps.

Dead bodies thrown into Gehenna would initially have a high content of water. Accordingly, the flesh would not burn immediately. It would decay and eventually be consumed either by maggots, or fire when the tissue dried. To the casual observer the ever present maggots would appear to be immortal, apparently living in fire without evidence of dying.

## **WILL THE BEAST AND FALSE PROPHET BE TORMENTED FOREVER?**

The passage in Revelation 20:10 of the KJV says:

"and the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

Note that the word '*are*' is in ITALICS. As noted above, this word was **NOT** in the original Greek. It was inserted by a translator.

The inference is that the beast and false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire at the beginning of the millennium (Rev.19:20) and tortured eternally in accordance with the traditional concept of 'Hell.'

But clearly, if the beast and the false prophet are living creatures, and cast into fire, they will 'cease to exist.' having been annihilated, burnt to ashes previously. Metaphorically death and the grave will 'cease to exist' because the faithful will have been given eternal life; none other remain to die and be buried.

The common sense understanding of Revelation 20:10 requires the verse to be translated as:

"where the beast and false prophet *were*."

## **LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN - WAS THE LATTER IN FIRE?**

Luke 16 is commonly used by those who advocate the traditional concept that sinners will suffer eternal torture by 'hell fire.' But this was a **PARABLE**, spoken by Yeshua the Anointed to teach MERCY.

In the parable the rich man died and was buried. All the events which follow are from his being in 'Hell'(i.e., hades) correctly, the grave.

The word translated as Hell in the parable is the same word used by Peter in Acts 2:31:

"He [David] seeing this before, spoke of the resurrection of Yeshua, that his (Yeshua's) soul (being) was not left in Hell (hades = grave), neither his flesh did see corruption."

The word translated as 'soul' throughout the KJV is word number 5315. In the Hebrew Dictionary it is 'nephesh' which means 'a living breathing creature, animal or human, i.e., a being, a life.' The meaning of nephesh must not to be confused with the meaning of the word 'spirit.'

The book of Ezekiel 18:4 states Yahweh's word:

"Behold, all souls (beings - living breathing creatures) are mine, as the soul (being) of the father, so also the soul (being) of the son is mine: The soul (being) that sinneth, it shall die." (*KJV*)

Where in the bible does it say that spirits die?

In the **PARABLE** of Lazarus and the Rich man, the rich man opens his eyes and sees the flames of the lake of fire which are about to ANNIHILATE him. He is horrified and his tongue goes dry from grief. He asks for a few drops of water for his tongue, obviously an insufficient amount to cool his entire body if he were THEN immersed in searing flames.

The rich man is tormented by the **thought** of the flames. Word #3600 translated 'tormented,' is the Greek word 'odoo' (strong's). The meaning of the word is: 'to grieve - sorrow, [mental] torment, by extension from word number 3601: grief as dejection.'

The inference in the PARABLE is that the rich man has knowledge of Ezekiel 18:4 (i.e., "the soul that sinneth, it shall die"). He knows he is guilty and is going to face terrible retribution. His punishment is death by fire, annihilation for all eternity (i.e., eternal punishment).

If we sin willfully after that we have received the Good News:

"there remains no more sacrifice for sins but a fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation, which will devour (annihilate) the adversaries" (Hebrews 10:26-27).

### **THE FATE OF THOSE WHO WORSHIP THE BEAST AND HIS IMAGE**

The passage in Revelation 14:11 refers to any man who worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark. That man shall be exposed to fire and brimstone in the presence of the Lamb (Yeshua the Anointed). Perhaps the fire and brimstone will be the same as RAINED down on Sodom and Gomorrah, which may have been divinely directed meteorites of sulphur ignited by friction when entering the atmosphere. Extensive amounts of sulphur balls are found there today.

The inference is that those who are a part of the 'government system of Babylon' and who receive the mark of the beast, will have no rest day or night as long as they *remain* in the land falling under Yahweh's wrath. They will either have to flee to receive mercy, or be tormented by sulphurous fumes until they die.

### **WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH?**

What happens after we die? Most of us are placed in a grave and we decompose into a small amount of elements and compounds. We cannot reckon time when asleep, are unconscious, or DEAD. At the second coming of Yeshua the Anointed, the Elect who have died will be resurrected as **spirit beings** and will meet him in the air. Accordingly, none will know if they had been dead

one day or thousands of years.

Those of his Elect which are alive at his coming will also be changed into spirit beings and also meet him in the air. The Elect are the 'First Fruits' of the harvest, Yeshua the Anointed being the First of the First Fruits at his resurrection and ascension. The Elect will likely be assigned ministerial duties as part of Yeshua the Anointed's sovereign government.

After the millennium, all others who have died will be resurrected as human beings, not spirit beings. The inference is that this will occur even though their bodily remains have dispersed. Those who remain will have the Good News preached to them by the Two Witnesses (Archangels Michael and Gabriel now mortal) for three and one-half years. During this same period Satan will be loosed from Tartaroo. There will be some who will accept the Good News then, and some who will not.

Then comes the great 'White Throne' judgement when Yeshua the Anointed opens "the Book of Life" as described in Revelation 20:12.

Those whose name is "not written in the book of life " will receive eternal punishment. They will be thrown into the lake of fire "which is the second death from which there is no resurrection" (Revelation 21:8). Malachi 4:3 says: "... the ashes of the wicked will finally be under the feet of the righteous."

Plainly, those who are thrown into the 'lake of fire' will be ANNIHILATED. Their eternal punishment is not being in the presence of Yahweh, and his son Yeshua the Anointed, for eternity.

### **DOES ANYONE IMMEDIATELY GO TO HEAVEN OR HELL AT THEIR DEATH?**

Peter gives the answer to this question when he talks about David in Acts 2:29 and 2:34.

"He is both dead and buried and his sepulcher is with us unto this day..."

Even David, whose entire life, with one exception, was pleasing to Yahweh:

"is not ascended to the heavens."

Neither do the scriptures identify any sinful person who died and descended to the traditional concept of Hell.

Most people believe that when a person dies, they immediately go to the traditional concept of either 'Heaven' or 'Hell.' Plain common sense begs the question: If this were true, none of the elect would be on earth to be 'raised from the dead' at the second coming of Yeshua the Anointed.



## **WHO WILL BE TORMENTED ETERNALLY IN FIRE?**

The scriptures say that at the end of the age *Satan and his legions* will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where they will be tormented for all eternity. Though not explained, the inference is that even as spirit beings, they will experience eternal punish**ING** (torment) in the lake of fire, not a one time punish**MENT** (annihilation).

Satan and his legions already know their fate. The scriptures gives an example of this where a demon addresses Yeshua the Anointed saying:

"art thou come hither to torment us before our appointed time?" (Matthew 8:29)  
(*KJV*)

It is not generally understood that Satan and his legions are NOT trying to win people over to 'their side.' Satan cares nothing about people. He is only interested in luring away as many as possible from obtaining the reward of eternal life, worshiping Almighty Yahweh and his son Yeshua the Anointed.

## **WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD THE GOOD NEWS?**

In Revelation 20:1 "But after these things he [Satan] must be released for a little while. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished"...

Those who have *never* heard the Good News will have it preached to them. The inference is that this will be done by the Two Witnesses. Some will accept the Good News then, and some will not.

## **WHERE DID THE TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF HELL ORIGINATE?**

As has been established, nowhere in the 53 passages of the Old and New Testament where Hell is used in the KJV, is there support for the idea of TORMENT (punish**ING**) of PEOPLE by a merciful creator. Instead, the scriptures repeatedly support a reward of eternal life, *OR* death, (punishment) a one time event. The wages of sin is death (by annihilation), not torture in 'hell fire'.

Where did the concept of eternal torment (punish**ING**) come from? It is believed to have originated in early teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. From the Encyclopedia Americana:

"The main features of hell as conceived by Hindu, Persian, Egyptian, Grecian, and Christian theologians are essentially the same. The Western religions from Roman times through the Middle Ages borrowed the doctrine of eternal torture from the pagan philosophers. Certain writers of the Middle Ages had such tremendous influence on the Christian-professing world, that their writings and teachings came to be generally accepted and believed, until it became the doctrine of the Christian-professing world. Among these influential writers were

## Augustine and Dante Alighieri”

The Italian renaissance poet Dante Alighieri (1265 to 1321) wrote the then popular fictional narrative *THE (DIVINE) COMEDY - Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise*. Thomas Nelson Page describes in his 1923 book “*Dante and His Influence*” that Dante was not the first to conceive of a journey into the Infernal regions:

“Homer and Virgil had both pictured in immortal verse such an experience and other poets had done the same”...”But he [Dante] was the first to make such a journey the central thread on which to hang in epic form the whole of Human Life together with the conditions that brought it into being,”...

“All the preaching of the time was of a material or physical Inferno and Purgatory. None doubted the existence, or even within limits the location of such places of punishment. Many Ages have passed since then without substantial change of this fundamental idea, and up to a generation or two ago, it may be said to have been generally accepted, and even now is distinctly taught by a great portion of the body of the Church”

Dante’s ‘*Inferno*’ was based on Virgil and Plato who were PAGANS. Dante is said to have thought their ideas and philosophies were inspired.

Again from the Encyclopedia Americana:

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

Plato was a pagan Greek philosopher, born in Athens, 427 B.C., a student of Socrates. He wrote the famous book *Phaedo*, on the ‘Immortality of the soul’, and this book is the real origin of the modern religious belief in the immortality of the soul. The traditional concept of sinners tormented for all eternity in a fiery hell is clearly from the imaginations of PAGANS.

Regardless, over the centuries the myth has been perpetuated by sincere well meaning people of various religions backgrounds. Had they studied the scriptures themselves, instead of preferring to be spoon-fed a myth, they would have realized that annihilation of sinners, not torturing them, is the clear Hebraic teaching in the Old or New Testament. It still is.

## CONCLUSION

The KJV and Table A was used herein to illustrate the necessity of studying more than one bible version to accurately understand scripture. The same is true of Concordances, Interlinear Bibles, Lexicons, and Bible Dictionaries.

We should: ‘Know what we believe, and why.’ Will you continue to believe the traditional pagan

myth concept of Hell ... or the scriptural truth?

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TABLE - A

Trend in the occurrence of the word Hell in various bible versions -

As can be seen in the table below, compared to the KJV, modern bible versions tend not to perpetuate the catch-all word Hell, but use a more accurate term such as 'grave' or 'Gehenna.' Note the decrease in the total number of occurrences of the word Hell, especially in the Old Testament:

Hell -	Total	Old Testament	New Testament
King James Version	54	31	23
New King James Version	32	19	13
American Standard Version	13	0	13
New American Standard Version	13	0	13
Revised Standard Version	13	0	13
New Revised Standard Version	13	0	13
New International Version	12	0	12
Revised English Bible	13	0	13
Derby Translation	12	0	12
Amplified Bible	13	0	13
New Century Version	12	0	12
New Living Translation	13	0	13
Rotherham Emphasized	0	0	0
New American Bible (1986)	0	0	0
World English Bible	0	0	0
J.B. Philips	1	0	1
Young's Literal NT	0	0	0
John Wesley's NT	0	0	0
New Covenant (1884)	0	0	0
Western NT (1959)	0	0	0
NT of Our Lord and Savior anointed (1958)	0		
Concordance Literal NT (1983)		0	
Christian Bible (1991)		0	

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