

## THE STORY OF MAN'S DESTINY #10

### WHAT IS HELL #2

#### 1. INTRODUCTION.

In our previous lesson we presented quotes from messages and books that proponents of eternal torture have expressed. We did this for several reasons. We wanted you to see or read for yourself the “explanations, descriptions and thinking” that is used to promote the theory of eternal torture of the wicked. Rather than for me to characterize their beliefs in my own words, I felt that it would be more convincing for you to be able to analyze their exact statements for yourself. After reading and reflecting on the likes of Mary Baxter’s “vision of a visit to hell”, and Jonathan Edwards’ diatribe of hate and venom toward the ungodly, I can’t help but believe that you are repulsed by such flagrant theories and unbiblical interpretations of the subject.

Another point I want to make regarding the teaching of this subject by the advocates of eternal torture is the fact of the utter failure to thoroughly address all of the pertinent scriptures of the issue. I could understand it if I could see any effort to at least thoroughly analyze the various scriptures, both O.T. and N.T., that have a bearing on the outcome. It just never happens. Sure, they have read all of them, but they don’t analyze them in an effort to be as nearly complete on the subject as possible. The word “hell” is found more in the O.T. than it is in the N.T.; 31 to 23 times. But you never hear a proponent of torture mention, let alone analyze the O.T. verses on the subject. In addition, even in the N.T., a vast majority of the messages ever preached on the subject, draw all of their thoughts from the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Lk. 16. Even there, they never address all of the pertinent facts of this story. Moreover, the countless scriptures, examples and facts throughout the Bible that identify and explain sin and death and its consequences, are generally, totally overlooked. Why is all of this exclusion of very pertinent truth and why is it that the exclusions are, so far as I have ever seen in over 50 years, virtually universal among preachers of eternal torture? Are they afraid of the other scriptures that have a definite bearing on the interpretation? Surely someone must realize that drawing such eternal conclusions from such an overwhelming minority of pertinent scriptures is totally unacceptable exegesis of any subject, especially one that is as controversial as “hell”. Maybe their argument is that, “getting it right in a single scripture will not be refuted by others”. But that is just the point. You cannot get it right in a single scripture until you have given it a fair comparison with others that have a direct bearing on the interpretation of the whole. With the word hell found over 50 times in the KJV of the Bible, plus a multitude of other scriptures on the subject of the nature and destiny of man throughout the Bible, it is simply unacceptable and shallow to use only a select few passages at the expense of ignoring all of the others. It is a scripturally ordained (I Cor. 2:13) and time tested rule to compare scripture with scripture in order to find the truth of a matter.

#### 2. WHAT IS HELL IN THE O.T. ?

You have probably heard the expression: “the O.T. is the N.T. concealed, and the N.T. is the O.T. revealed. Bible scholars have long offered this as a way of expressing the correlation between the two testaments. I certainly agree with this. I have inserted it here because, when rightly interpreted, the O.T. is a foundation for the N.T. And if eternal torture is, in fact, taught in the N.T., then the O.T. must concur with this as well as form the foundation for it. It should seem strange, therefore, to the thoughtful inquirer, that you have, in all likelihood, never heard a message on eternal torture using the O.T. scriptures and events for it. And with good reason; it just isn’t there. Take a quick glance at Adam, antediluvians, Sodom and Gomorrah, Egyptians and all the generations from Adam to the time of the N.T., and you will be hard pressed to find in these venues a suitable text for eternal torture. And I can almost hear some torture advocate responding by declaring that people of the O.T. just didn’t have as much light on the subject as N.T. writers did. But this will not fly, as we shall see. Notwithstanding this, inquire of N.T. writers, with the idea that they are more enlightened. The truth is that they got all of their scriptural enlightenment from O.T. scriptures, there being no N. T. written at the time. Paul should be a good example since he wrote over one half of the entire N.T.

Paul never mentioned hell or eternal torture. Not once! I think we should take a look to see just what the O.T. does have to say about hell. And what is the meaning of the texts and context on the subject of hell in the O.T.?

### 3. HELL --- WHAT IS IT --- WHERE IS IT -- IN THE O.T.?

First, as we have noted, the word hell is found 31 times in the O.T. (in the KJV) ; almost one third more times than in the N.T. So it should command our attention. Each and every time the word hell is found in the O.T., it is translated from the Hebrew word “SHEOL”. With only slight, insignificant variations this word SHEOL means: the place of the dead; grave; burying place. Bible scholars of every persuasion know this.

With this in mind let me call your attention to the enclosed chart showing “*DIFFERENT RENDERINGS OF THE WORD HELL FROM DIFFERENT VERSIONS*”. Listed in the extreme left column are all of the scriptures where the word hell occurs in the O.T., in the KJV. In the second column the word SHEOL appears as the original Hebrew word from which our English word hell is translated. In the 3rd column, you have the word hell, representing the word the KJV translators used in the KJV translation (only in a certain part of the instances where the word sheol appeared). The next 4 columns represent the New International Version; The Revised Standard Version; The New English Bible, and The Amplified Bible. The significant fact of these last 4 translations is that the word hell never appears in them in the O.T. I am not trying to argue the use of one version of the Bible above another. I am just pointing out that Biblical scholars translating these other versions, after looking at the text and context, felt it better to simply retain the original word sheol, or, in the case of the New International Version, to translate to a different word altogether, expressing the view that it would treat the text more accurately. Let me add that I have no problem with the KJV translation of the word sheol into the word hell. I just have a problem with the subsequent interpretation of hell. At this point let us make a simple review of the chart to be sure that we have a fair and equitable approach to the O.T. verses using the word sheol, translated into hell. See the chart below.

#### **4. READ AND ANALYZE VERSES ON HELL IN THE O.T.**

Following is a list of all 31 verses of the O.T. that contains the word hell as translated from “sheol”. A short explanatory comment is offered for each one and is shown in italics.

**Det. 32:22.** For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. *Figurative language depicting the fire of anger. No torture mentioned.*

*NOTE: It will be found that on many occasions the word hell will be used in just such a similar figurative fashion. Eternal torture advocates will probably express rage and indignation at the idea of saying that some of the uses of the word are figurative. Nevertheless, it is true, their rage notwithstanding.*

**II Sam. 22:6.** The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me: *It denotes a despondent condition. No torture mentioned.*

**Job 11:8.** It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? *This is an expression of opposites reflecting a vast difference in a matter. No mention of torment.*

**Job 26:6.** Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering. *God’s all seeing providence. No mention of torture.*

**Ps. 9:17.** The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all nations that forget God. *No doubt about it. It means destruction and overthrow. No mention of torture.*

**Ps. 16:10.** For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. *David in hell?? Holy one in hell?? This destroys the torture theory and shows hell to be the grave. See Acts 2:25-31. No mention of torture.*

**Ps. 18:15.** The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. *Same as II Sam. 22:6 above. No mention of torture.*

**Ps. 55:15.** Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them. *Let the grave swallow them up for their wickedness. No mention of torture.*

**Ps. 86:13.** For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou has delivered my soul from the lowest hell. *David delivered from hell?? Figurative showing a low place in his life. No torture.*

**Ps. 116:3.** The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me. I found trouble and sorrow. *Same as II Sam. 22:6 & Ps. 18:15. No torture.*

**Ps. 139:8.** If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. *Is God in hell?? Shows God’s omnipresence. No torture.*

**Pr. 5:5.** Her feet go down to death: her steps take hold on hell. *Wickedness leads to the grave and destruction. No mention of torture.*

**Pr. 7:27.** Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death. *Clearly shows hell to be the grave. No mention of torture.*

**Pr. 9:18.** But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell. *The dead (not the living) are there; the grave. No torture.*

**Prov. 15:11 & 24.** Hell and destruction are before the Lord; how much more then the hearts of the children of men? *God sees our end. The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath. The wise man seeks the way of life and not the way of death. No mention of torture.*

**Pr. 23:14.** Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. *Deliver from sorrows and eventually from the grave. Shows the redeeming value of discipline. No mention of torture.*

Pr. 27:20. Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied. *Life ends in death and the grave. Never ends or fills up. No mention of torture.*

Is. 5:14. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it. *Figurative, denoting the increase of pride and the accompanying increase in destruction and the grave. No torture.*

Is. 14:9. Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. *A description of the overthrow of Babylon. No torture.*

Is. 14:15. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. *Same as 14:9. The pride of Babylon to be humbled in destruction and overthrow. No torture.*

Is. 28:15 & 18. Because ye have said, we have made a covenant with death and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves ..... 18.. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. *Jerusalem felt they had made a covenant with death and hell to avoid her judgments, but they would not. Destruction and the grave would still come to them. No torture mentioned.*

Is. 57:9. And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell. *Figurative, showing how low Israel had sunken in idolatry. No torture.*

Ez. 31:16 - 17. I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit: and all the trees of Eden the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth... They also went down to hell with him unto them that be slain with the sword; and they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen. *The down fall of Assyria. No torture.*

Ez. 32:21 & 27. The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword. And they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war: and they have laid their swords under their heads, but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. *The down fall of Egypt. No mention of torture.*

Am. 9:2. Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down. *How do you dig into hell if it isn't the grave; or how do you climb up to heaven? No torture mentioned.*

Jon. 2:2. And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I and thou heardest my voice. *This hell was the fish's belly. In water. No torture.*

Hab. 2:5. Yea also because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people. *Figurative showing the enlargement of a person's evil desire like the grave. No torture.*

##### 5. OTHER TRANSLATIONS OF SHEOL.

In the O.T., there are other words into which the word "sheol" are translated. Two notable ones are: GRAVE, 30 times; and PIT, 3 times. This brings the total times the word sheol is found in the original Hebrew text of the O.T. to at least 64 times, only 31 of which were translated into the word hell. This should cause us to question the interpretation of "hell", at least in the O.T.

Following is a list of many of these verses where sheol is translated into grave or pit. I have listed all of the verses for reference, but then have only transcribed about half of them. (GRAVE) Genesis: 37:35; 42:38; 44:29; 44:31; I Sam. 2:6; I Kgs. 2:6; 2:9; Job 7:9; 14:13; 17:13; 21:13; 24:19; Ps. 6:5; 30:3; 31:17; 49:14, 15; 88:3; 89:48; Prov. 1:12; 30:16; Ecc. 9:10; Song/Sol. 8:6; Is. 14:11; 38:10; 38:18; Eze. 31:15; Hos. 13:14. (PIT) Num. 16:30-33; Job 17:16.

Gen. 44:29, 31. And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us,

that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. *Judah beseeching Joseph not to keep Benjamin because it will bring him and his father Jacob to the grave in sorrow.*

I Sam. 2:6. The Lord killeth and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. *Grave here represents the ending of life. No torture.*

Job. 7:9. As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. *The grave is the end of man without God's salvation.*

Job. 17:13. If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness. *The end of a man's days is to go to the grave; that will be his final dwelling place.*

Ps. 6:5. For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? *The utter extinction of death, with no voice, feeling or thoughts.*

Ps. 49:14-15. Like sheep they are laid in the grave: death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning: and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah. *We die and are buried like the sheep; but the upright will be redeemed from the power of the grave in the resurrection.*

Ecc. 9:10. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. *The grave here is shown as a place of silence and as man's resting place.*

Is. 38:18. For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. *No life in the grave.*

Hos. 13:14. I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues: O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes. *It is out of the grave that God's children will be ransomed; not from a city in the sky. By the power of the resurrection, God will destroy death and eliminate the grave.*

**PIT.** Num. 16:30 - 33. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit (sheol): then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses and all the men that appertained unto Korah and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. *The rebellion of Korah and his band against Moses was met with a fate that all preachers have preached about some time. The earth opened up and became a pit, grave, sheol, burying place for them, thus ending their rebellion forever.*

## **6. OTHER O.T. OBSERVATIONS.**

In conclusion of this lesson on the word (and subject) of hell in the O.T., let us make a few more applicable observations relating to the final destiny of man as shown in this portion of scripture.

a. In all of the verses we have looked at, none of them suggest anything resembling torture in an eternally burning fire some place.

b. In the account of the creation in the first 3 chapters of Genesis, there is no mention of a lake of fire that has been created for evil people to go to.

c. The Lord specifically told Adam that he was taken from the dust and would return to the dust again. He lived 930 years and he died.

d. The wicked in Noah's day, perished in the waters of the flood. Who can say that they then went to a fire to be tortured forever? It didn't happen.

e. The wicked of Sodom and Gomorrah, were destroyed by fire that reduced them and the cities to ashes condemning them with an overthrow. It is interesting to note, in Jude 1:7, what the Bible says about this. "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 eternal fire". No one is going to try to advocate that these cities are somewhere burning now; they burned up and went out. Their judgment was "eternal" in the sense that it could never be reversed, neither for time or eternity.

f. The Egyptians, following after Moses and the children of Israel fleeing Egypt, were drowned in

the Red Sea. The Bible says of them that they will be seen no more forever. Pretty final isn't it?

g. The unbelieving Israelites, who would not believe the good report of the promised land of Canaan, all perished in the wilderness during their 40 years journey there: over a million of them. Where did they go when they died?

h. Why does the O.T. (and the N.T.) speak of Godly men like Moses, Abraham and David, and also the Lord Jesus himself, as being in hell?

i. Jonah cried unto the Lord out of the belly of hell! He was in the belly of the whale, surrounded by the fluids and water of the whale when he thus cried out to God.

j. The wicked gentile nations, who fought against God for centuries and God finally overthrew them, where did their inhabitants go to? Take Babylon for example that became an absolute wasteland unto this day. What happened to them? Is. 14:4-19, talks about the judgments upon Babylon. It talks about them going down to the grave, the pit, and to hell. Is there any sound argument to suggest that this once great city with its kings and people are today burning in a place of literal fiery torture? In Jer. 51:37-58, Jeremiah said that Babylon would sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake.

k. In Obadiah 1:15-16, the Lord declares that all heathen shall be as though they had not been. How do you fit eternal existence in torture in this?

Finally, in an earlier lesson about the soul, we pointed out, conclusively we believe, that there was no invisible part of man that left his body at death and went anywhere. Without this, as we also noted, the idea of eternal torture in a fire some place remote from this earth is an utter impossibility. There is no soul immortality and therefore when we die, we go to the grave, sometimes translated as hell, and there we corrupt away until the Lord returns and resurrects those that are his.

Let me ask once again: Have you ever heard an advocate of eternal torture take the scriptures used in this lesson, all of them, and deal with them in a manner satisfactory to the theory of torture for the wicked? If not, why not?