

Eschatology ABF Series
Eternity (Hell)
December 15th

Review

Questions to Be Answered

1. What do we know about eternity?
2. What words are used for Hell?
3. What is Hell like?
4. Will people in Hell remember their past life?

1. What do we know about eternity?

Everyone will exist eternally either in heaven or hell.

Daniel 12:2 *“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”*

Matthew 25:46 *“And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

John 5:28-29 *“Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”*

Everyone has only one life in which to determine his/her destiny.

Hebrews 9:27 *“And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,”*

Heaven or hell is determined by whether a person puts his/her trust in Christ.

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”*

John 3:36 *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”*

2. What words are used for Hell?

Note: Jesus spoke about hell more than anyone else in Scripture.

Sheol/Grave

The common word for hell in the Old Testament is “Sheol” which means “the grave” where people go when they die. In the King James Version, Sheol is translated “hell” thirty-one times and “pit” three times.

When both saved and unsaved died, they were said to go to Sheol, the place of the departed dead. The Hebrew word “Sheol” was translated into Greek as hades. Hades or Sheol is the place the Old Testament unsaved went.

Psalm 86:13 “For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.”

Psalm 16:10 “For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.”

Hades (the place of the unrighteous dead)

Matthew 16:18 “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Revelation 1:17-18 “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.’”

Revelation 6:8a “And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him.”

Revelation 20:13-14 “And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.”

The rich man went to hades at death and was tormented in flames.

Luke 16:22-23 “The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.”

The rich man could look across “a great gulf fixed” (Luke 16:26) and see where the saved were located. However, the Scripture is silent whether the saved could see the torment of the unsaved. The one thing the rich man could not do was escape his torment. He could not even send a warning to his family.

Gehenna

This word appears only twelve times in the New Testament and is translated “hell.” The Lord Jesus used this term eleven times. The name is probably related to the Valley of

Hinnom. During the reign of Ahaz, Israel participated in the worship of the false god Molech.

In his attempt to please Molech, Ahaz actually engaged in human sacrifice, sacrificing his own son to the fiery god (II Chronicles 28:1-4). Archaeologists have learned that Molech was represented by a golden calf, being the religion of Canaan.

The idol had the head of a bull, with outstretched arms. A fire burned in his hollow stomach and a child was sacrificed on the arms.

This practice was stopped during the reforms of Josiah (II Kings 23:10), then the valley became a dumping ground for the city of Jerusalem. In Jesus' day, it was a place burning with constant fires to consume the waste that was thrown there. The material burned there included everything from household trash to animal carcasses to convicted criminals (Jeremiah 7:31-33). Needless to say, the Jews considered Gehenna a cursed place of impurity and uncleanness.

Hence, the Lord used the word gehenna to describe the place of eternal punishment because it was a place of filth and stench, a place of smoke and pain, a place of fire and death.

Matthew 5:22 *"But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the **hell of fire**."*

Matthew 18:8-9 *"And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the **eternal fire**. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the **hell of fire**."*

Matthew 23:33 *"You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to **hell**?"*

Tartarus (ταρταρω)

In Greek mythology, Tartarus was both a primordial deity and a place. The only use of the word in the KJV is in:

II Peter 2:4 *"For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into **hell** and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;"*

This is sort of a Greek equivalent to Gehenna, in that it is a place of torment, although the Greeks didn't have the burning trash pit to reference so fire isn't a necessary part of the equation.

Tartarus for the Greeks was deep below Hades and was a place of torment for the worst of the worst—especially those who posed a threat to the gods, although the idea of it also changed across time and the Greek and Roman ideas about it differed slightly.

Lake of Fire

John refers to hell in terms of a “lake of fire”. Some have suggested this is nothing more than a metaphor to describe a place of suffering, but since the Bible uses flames to describe its torment, there is no reason to think the cause of suffering will be otherwise.

Revelation 20:15 *“And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”*

Also, human language limits a perfect identification of the horrors of hell, as it also does when we seek to describe the glories of heaven. Only in this aspect can the “lake of fire” be considered a metaphor.

It is as if John were saying, *“Hell is so horrible I cannot completely describe it. Hell is like a vast sea covered in flames and that is only the beginning of the pain and suffering I saw there.”*

Second Death

The lake of fire is also called the “second death”.

Revelation 20:14 *“Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.”*

Revelation 21:8 *“But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”*

In the Bible, death always speaks of separation, not cessation of existence. The idea behind death is not annihilation but rather the concept of eternal separation from God. Physical death is the first, where a person suffers because he is separated from his loved ones. The second death is the separation of a person from God.

3. What is Hell like?

Hell was designed originally for Satan and his demons.

Matthew 25:41 *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”*

Hell is conscious torment.

Matthew 13:49-50 *“So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

Mark 9:47-49 *“And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’ For everyone will be salted with fire.”*

Isaiah 66:24 *“And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”*

Revelation 14:9-11 *“And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, ‘If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.’”*

Hell will be eternal & irreversible.

Matthew 25:46 *“And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

Luke 16:26 *“And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and **none may cross from there to us.**”*

Revelation 20:14-15 *“Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”*

Eternity is incomprehensible as it confronts the human mind. We cannot comprehend limitless time, but hell will last as long as heaven, for the Scriptures describe these opposite concepts as “everlasting punishment” and “life eternal”.

“Everlasting punishment” is used throughout the Bible to identify “duration without end.” Eternal retribution would be horrible if we only thought of it as lasting a million years, but because it is eternal, a million years of time could be removed from its duration without in any way affecting the time of its duration. The worst part of hell is that its inhabitants know it will never end.

“Eternal” is described by the Hebrew word *olam* in the Old Testament and the Greek word *anion* in the New. Both words are linked to God; he is called the “eternal God.” Therefore hell lasts as long as the duration of God.

Eternity is beginningless and endless; it cannot be measured. It has no past, no future, no parts. Eternity is an infinite circle; we are born in the center of the circle and will die physically in the center of the circle, but remain there forever.

Hell is the punishment for sin and of rejecting Christ.

Romans 2:8 (NIV) *“But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.”*

Acts 13:46 (NIV) *“Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: ‘We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.’”*

Matthew 13:41-42 *“The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

Revelation 21:8 *“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”*

4. Will people in Hell remember their past life?

Only passage that might speak to that is:

Luke 16:25, 27-28 *“But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish’ ... And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’”*

Challenge

1. Share the Gospel as often as you have opportunity!

Isn't the possibility of a little embarrassment worth more than someone spending eternity apart from Christ?

2. Live your lives in such a way as to prompt curiosity in others.

I Peter 3:15 “... *but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,*”