

A STUDY ON HELL

A recent survey by Barna Research Group showed that less than 1/3 of adults in America believe that Hell is an actual place. That sentiment seems to be shared by Pope John Paul II, who noted recently that hell was "the state of those who freely and definitely separate themselves from God, the source of all life and death." Arguing that the Bible "uses a symbolical language," he added, hell is "not a place of punishment imposed externally by God." Hell "is not a place but a state, a person's state of being, in which a person suffers from the deprivation of God."



Several large religions (for example, Mormonism and the Jehovah's Witnesses) do not believe in Hell as historically taught by the Christian Church. In recent decades, the percentage of people who believe in Hell and Satan has declined sharply. This study notes what the Bible says about Hell.

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
Revised Standard Version	0	12	12
New Revised Standard Version	0	12	12
New Century Version	0	12	12
Young's Literal Translation (1891)	0	0	0

* The KJV and the NKJV are the only translations in the list above to use the term "hell" in the Old Testament.

Key Facts About Eternity

- Everyone will exist eternally either in heaven or hell (Dan. 12:2,3; Matt. 25:46; John 5:28).
- Everyone has only one life in which to determine their destiny (Hebrews 9:27).
- Spending eternity in heaven or hell is determined by one's goodness or good works or bad deeds. Those who will be granted eternal life in heaven are those who believe in Jesus, confess their sins to Jesus, and strive to live for Jesus (John 3:16, 36; Rom, 10:9-10; Eph. 2:8-10, Rom. 5:8-10). Those who choose not to do the above choose to go to hell.

Where is hell?

The Bible does not ascribe an exact location for Hell. In figurative language, Hell is described as being in the earth, in the foundation of the mountains, under the earth (Deuteronomy 32:22), deep underground (Job 11:8), down (Psa. 55:15, Ezek.32:21,27), low (Psa. 86:13), and beneath us (Prov. 15:24, Isa. 14:9).

Key Passages About Hell

Hell was designed originally for Satan and his demons (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10)..

Hell is a place of conscious torment

- In Matthew 13:50, Hell is described as a “furnace of fire” where there will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
- In Mark 9:48, Hell is described as a place “where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.”
- In Revelation 14:10, Hell is the place where Satan and his followers “will be tormented with fire and brimstone.”

Hell is eternal and irreversible

- In Revelation 14:11, we read that “the smoke of their torment [in Hell] **goes up forever...**”
- In Revelation 20:10, we read that “...The devil...and the false prophet” will be cast into “the lake of burning sulfur” and “be tormented day and night **forever and ever.**”

Erroneous Views of Hell

- **The second chance view:** Some believe that after death, there will be an opportunity to turn to God and escape hell. However, Scripture states: *“It is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27). *Our eternal destiny is determined by the choices we make in this life, not after death.*

- **Universalism:** Some believe that God is only love, **all** are eternally saved, and there is no Hell.

However, this view negates the truth that God is a God of righteousness and justice. At great cost, God has made a provision for our pardon and, through Christ, made a way for sinners to be redeemed and clothed in His righteousness. But sinners must believe and ask to receive redemption from the Lord, without which our sins remain unforgiven, and we stand before the Lord, the great Judge, guilty and ineligible to enter His Kingdom.

- **Annihilationism:** This position holds that Hell does not exist and that after death, those who are deemed unworthy to enter heaven will simply cease to exist. This view is not supported in Scripture.

The biblical terms for Hell

Sheol - a Hebrew term describing “the grave” or “death” – Does not refer to “hell” specifically. Sheol occurs sixty-four times and is translated hell thirty-two times, pit three times, and grave twenty-nine times. Often, Sheol signifies the state of the dead in general, without regard to the goodness or badness of the persons, their happiness or misery." *In Isa. 38:18, Sheol is translated, ‘grave.’ Job desired to go there. In Isa. 14:13, Sheol is associated with a place of judgment.*

Hades - A Greek translation of the word Sheol (Cf. the Septuagint). In the Hellenized world, Hades had ties to mythology and was associated with a place of torment (Luke 10:15; 16:23, etc.). Hades occurs eleven times in the New Testament, and is translated as Hell ten times,

Gehenna - A Greek term referring to a place of torment (Matthew 5:30; 23:33). The valley of Hinnom (located outside Jerusalem) was a dump site (where preputial fires burned the waste). It was also the former site of the main temple to Moloch and child sacrifice. Centuries before the birth of Christ, this temple was destroyed and desecrated (turned into a dump) by king Josiah. The word Gehenna is derived from the Hebrew word Gehinnom, which in Greek is Gehenna.

Tartarus: "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to *Hell (Tartarus)*, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (II Peter 2:4). Tartarus is the "fabled place of punishment in the lower world" according to the ideas of Homeric writings.

"Lake of fire" - The final abode of unbelievers after they are resurrected (Revelation 20:14,15). Jude 1:7 presents hell as an "eternal" fire. Matt. 25:41 presents hell as an "everlasting fire."

Brimstone and fire: Hell is associated with Brimstone and fire (Luke 17:29; Revelation 14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8).

A place of weeping and gnashing of teeth: Hell is associated with pain and anguish (Matthew 8:12,13:42, 50, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30; Luke 13:28).

Unquenchable: Hell is an eternal state of regret and anguish: (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).

Hell is not God's choice for us, or our only option

- *God has provided a way of salvation to all (John 3:16,17; 2 Cor. 5:14,15; 1 Tim.2:6; 4:10; John 1:12)*
- *Those who haven't heard of Christ still have the light of God revealed to them (Titus 2:11; Rom. 1:20)*
- *God has communicated His plan of redemption via the prophets, His Word, and His Son. He has even "written His word in our hearts." Those who reject the truth and the invitation of God to be saved, choose their eternal fate in hell. (Rom. 2:4, 3:22-24, 4:7,8, 5:8,9).*

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." (John 3:16-18)