

# The Afterlife: The Doctrine of Hell

(Lesson #1)

## I. Introduction

## II. The Concept of Judgment in the Old Testament

### A. The Primary *Temporal* Judgment Passages

1. *The Garden of Eden* - God warned Adam and Eve that disobedience to His commands would result in certain death. They disobeyed and immediately died spiritually. This was evidenced by their hiding from God and physically dying.
  - a. Gen. 2:17  
17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.”
  - b. Gen. 3:8; 5:5  
“ 8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.  
. . . 5 So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.”
2. *The Noahic Flood* - The spiritual condition of the human race continued to devolve until God determined to judge the whole world and start the human race over through His elect line of Noah and his sons. (Notice the terminology of judgment)
  - a. Gen. 6:5-6  
5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.
  - b. Gen. 6:13, 17  
13 Then God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.  
. . . 17 “And behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish.

c. Gen. 7:22-23

22 of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. 23 Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark.

3. *The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* - God's attitude toward the judgment and punishment of sin can be further evidenced by this cataclysmic event. Again, notice the terminology.

a. Gen. 19:24

24 Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven,

b. Gen. 18:20

20 And the LORD said, "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave.

c. Gen. 19:25, 29

25 and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

... 29 Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived.

d. Gen. 19:28

28 and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace.

4. *The Plagues of Egypt and Crossing of the Red Sea* - This series of events illustrates that God frequently accomplishes a dual purpose of judging sin and the enemies of God's people and bringing salvation and protection to God's people.

a. Ex. 12:29-30

29 Now it came about at midnight that the LORD struck all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle. 30 And Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead.

b. Ex. 14:27-28

27 So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. 28 And the waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh's entire army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained.

- c. Ex. 15:1, 3-4, 6-7, 11-12  
 “1 Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and said, . . .  
 “I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted; .. The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea.  
 . . . 3 “The LORD is a warrior; The LORD is His name. 4 “Pharaoh’s chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; And the choicest of his officers are drowned in the Red Sea.  
 . . . 6 “Thy right hand, O LORD, is majestic in power, Thy right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. 7 “And in the greatness of Thine excellence Thou dost overthrow those who rise up against Thee; Thou dost send forth Thy burning anger, {and} it consumes them as chaff.  
 . . . 11 “Who is like Thee among the gods, O LORD? Who is like Thee, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders? 12 “Thou didst stretch out Thy right hand, The earth swallowed them.”

5. *The Assyrian and Babylonian Captivities of Israel* - there again we see God’s attitude towards sin even among His “chosen” people (not all of whom were actually saved, I Cor. 10:1-5). The judgments of Israel by Assyria and of Judah by the Babylonians were required because of gross wickedness and evil as well as for purification of God’s chosen people.

- a. II Kings 17:7, 11-12; 18:12  
 “7 Now {this} came about, because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods  
 . . . 11 and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations {did} which the LORD had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking the LORD. 12 And they served idols, concerning which the LORD had said to them, “You shall not do this thing.”  
 . . . 12 because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed His covenant, even all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded; they would neither listen, nor do {it.}”
- b. Jer. 52:3  
 “3 For through the anger of the LORD {this} came about in Jerusalem and Judah until He cast them out from His presence. And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.”

## B. Passages suggesting *Eternal* Punishment (in the Old Testament)

1. In these key O.T. passages Isaiah contrasts the bliss and joy of the faithful over God’s accomplishments to the destruction and devastation brought upon the wicked. There appear to be hints of something more expansive than just temporal bliss and temporal judgment.

- a. Isa. 66:22-24  
 “22 “For just as the new heavens and the new earth Which I make will endure before Me,” declares the LORD, “So your offspring and your name will endure. 23 “And it shall be from new moon to new moon And from sabbath to sabbath, All mankind will come to bow down before Me,” says the LORD. 24 “Then they shall go forth and look On the corpses of the men Who have

transgressed against Me. For their worm shall not die, And their fire shall not be quenched; And they shall be an abhorrence to all mankind.”

b. Isa. 65:17-18

“17 “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. 18 “But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem {for} rejoicing, And her people {for} gladness.”

c. Isa. 66:15-16

“15 For behold, the LORD will come in fire And His chariots like the whirlwind, To render His anger with fury, And His rebuke with flames of fire. 16 For the LORD will execute judgment by fire And by His sword on all flesh, And those slain by the LORD will be many.”

2. Daniel seems to clearly anticipate a final judgment to come upon the wicked dead at the end of time.

a. Dan. 12:1-2

“1 Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands {guard} over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. 2 “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace {and} everlasting contempt.”

b. Note the parallel use of the terms “everlasting life” and “everlasting contempt” (the Hebrew for “contempt” occurs only here and in Isa. 66:24 where it is rendered “abhorrence”)

### III. The Concept of Sheol in the Old Testament

#### A. The Hebrew word “Sheol”

1. Occurs 65 times in the Heb. Old Testament and refers generally to the “abode of the dead”.

a. “The underworld . . . whither man descends at death” (Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, BDB)

b. “netherworld realm of the dead, Hades” (Hebrew/English Dictionary of the Old Testament, Langenscheidt)

c. “the unseen world, the state or abode of the dead, and is equivalent of the Greek: Hades” (the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia)

## 2. Various translations of Bible Versions

- a. KJV translates it “grave” (31X), and “pit” (3X).
- b. RSV and NASB simply transliterate it as “Sheol”.
- c. NIV usually translates it as “grave” and occasionally as “death”, with a footnote “Sheol”.

## B. Sheol and its Inhabitants

### 1. Sheol is said to have “gates” and “bars” which would keep one in

#### a. Job 17:14-16

14 If I call to the pit, ‘You are my father’; To the worm, ‘my mother and my sister’; 15 Where now is my hope? And who regards my hope? 16 “Will it go down with me to Sheol? Shall we together go down into the dust?”

#### b. Isa. 38:9-11

9 A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, after his illness and recovery: 10 I said, “In the middle of my life I am to enter the gates of Sheol; I am to be deprived of the rest of my years.” 11 I said, “I shall not see the LORD, The LORD in the land of the living; I shall look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world.

### 2. Sheol is a shadowy place or place of darkness

#### a. Job 10:20-22

20 “Would He not let my few days alone? Withdraw from me that I may have a little cheer 21 Before I go —and I shall not return — To the land of darkness and deep shadow; 22 The land of utter gloom as darkness {itself,} Of deep shadow without order, And which shines as the darkness.”

#### b. Psa. 143:3

3 For the enemy has persecuted my soul; He has crushed my life to the ground; He has made me dwell in dark places, like those who have long been dead.

### 3. It is viewed as being “down”, “beneath the earth” or in the “lower parts of the earth”

#### a. Job 11:8

7 “Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty? 8 “ {They are} high as the heavens, what can you do? Deeper than Sheol, what can you know?

#### b. Isa. 44:23; 57:9

23 Shout for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done {it!} Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth; Break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it; For the LORD has redeemed Jacob And in Israel He shows forth His glory.

57:9 “And you have journeyed to the king with oil And increased your perfumes; You have sent your envoys a great distance, And made {them} go down to Sheol.

- c. Ezek. 26:19-21  
 19 For thus says the Lord GOD, “When I shall make you a desolate city, like the cities which are not inhabited, when I shall bring up the deep over you, and the great waters will cover you, 20 then I shall bring you down with those who go down to the pit, to the people of old, and I shall make you dwell in the lower parts of the earth, like the ancient waste places, with those who go down to the pit, so that you will not be inhabited; but I shall set glory in the land of the living. 21 “I shall bring terrors on you, and you will be no more; though you will be sought, you will never be found again,” declares the Lord GOD.
- d. Amos 9:2  
 2 “Though they dig into Sheol, From there shall My hand take them; And though they ascend to heaven, From there will I bring them down.
4. It is a place where one can reunite with one’s ancestors, tribe, or people
- a. Gen. 15:15; 25:8  
 15 “And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.  
 25:8 And Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied {with life;} and he was gathered to his people.
- b. Num. 20:24  
 24 “Aaron shall be gathered to his people; for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the sons of Israel, because you rebelled against My command at the waters of Meribah.
- c. Deut. 32:50  
 50 “Then die on the mountain where you ascend, and be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people,
- d. II Sam. 12:23  
 22 And he said, “While the child was {still} alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, ‘Who knows, the LORD may be gracious to me, that the child may live.’ 23 “But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.”
5. There is a possible “hint” of different “sections” or “partitions” (cf. “lowest” or “highest” part)
- a. Deut. 32:22  
 22 For a fire is kindled in My anger, And burns to the lowest part of Sheol, And consumes the earth with its yield, And sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.
- b. Later Jewish rabbinic writers clearly taught that Sheol had two sections. The righteous were in bliss and the wicked were in torment.
6. The condition of those in Sheol is described in the following ways:
- a. At death a man is said to become a “ghost” or “disembodied spirit” (Job 26:5, Ps. 88:10, Prov. 2:18, Isa. 14:9)

- b. There is a suggestion that those in Sheol converse with one another (Isa. 14:9-20;; 44:23; Ezek. 32:21)
- c. There is a limitation of one's activities that were once considered normal on earth (Ps. 6:5; Eccl. 9:10)
- d. Some in Sheol experience God's "anger" (Deut. 32:22), "distress (Ps. 116:3), they "writhe in pain" (Job 26:5).

7. In the Old Testament the righteous as well as the wicked are said to go to Sheol.

a. Gen. 37:34-35

34 So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days. 35 Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, "Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son." So his father wept for him.

b. Psa. 49:14-15

14 As sheep they are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd; And the upright shall rule over them in the morning; And their form shall be for Sheol to consume, So that they have no habitation. 15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol; For He will receive me. Selah.

**N.B.** In the Old Testament the righteous did not have a clear idea of what to expect in the afterlife (i.e. they went to death many times with mixed emotions). In the New Testament we can view death as "gain (Phil. 1:21) because it means being untied with Christ.

# The Afterlife: The Doctrine of Hell: Pt. II

## (Lesson #2)

### I. Introduction

### II. The Concept of Hades and Gehenna in the New Testament

#### A. The Greek word “Hades”

1. The Greek “Hades” forms a bridge which takes us from the Old Testament (Hebrew) idea of the afterlife referred to as “Sheol” to the New Testament idea of Hades.
2. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) Hades is the translation of Sheol 64 (out of a total of 71 times).
3. Hades then is the rough equivalent of Sheol
  - a. “the underworld. . .the place of the dead” (A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament, BAGD)
  - b. “Modern Hebrew and Greek scholars . . . unite with near unanimity in maintaining that these words (Sheol and Hades) never on a single occasion in the Bible mean either “hell” or “the grave”, but always and only the invisible spirit world” (Evangelical Theology, A.A. Hodge)

N.B. When examining the idea of Hades in the N.T. we must keep in mind the principle of progressive revelation.

#### B. Hades and its inhabitants

1. The illustration by Jesus of the rich man and Lazarus appears to highlight some previously unclear details concerning the nature of Hades.
  - a. Luke 16:19-31  
19 “Now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, gaily living in splendor every day. 20 “And a certain poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, 21 and longing to be fed with the {crumbs} which were falling from the rich man’s table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. 22 “Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. 23 “And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 “And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.’ 25 “But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. 26 ‘And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and {that} none may cross over from there to us.’ 27 “And he said, ‘Then I beg you, Father, that you send him to my father’s house — 28 for I have five brothers — that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ 29 “But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ 30 “But he said, ‘No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ 31 “But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.’”

2. *Before* Christ’s ascension, believers and unbelievers went to Sheol or Hades. This abode of the dead was divided into two compartments:
  - a. Hades *proper* was the temporary abode of the wicked dead. It was a holding place of torment prior to the lost of all ages being cast into the Lake of Fire which is Hell (cf. Luke 16:23; Rev. 20:14).
  - b. Abraham’s Bosom (Luke 16:22) or Paradise (Luke 23:43) was the abode of the righteous dead being a temporary place of comfort and bliss prior to their being taken by Christ at his ascension into heaven itself.
  
3. *After* Christ’s ascension the New Testament is clear that believers go immediately to be with Christ.
  - a. Phil. 1:23  
“23 But I am hard-pressed from both {directions,} having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for {that} is very much better,”
  - b. II Cor. 5:6-8  
“6 Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord — 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight — 8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.”
  - c. Rev. 6:9-11  
“9 And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; 10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” 11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until {the number of} their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also.
  
4. It is helpful to compare several passages to clarify that “paradise” is not always the equivalent of Heaven

- a. Note first Jesus' words to the thief on the cross on the *Friday* of His crucifixion (Luke 23:42-43)  
42 And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" 43 And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."
- b. Note then Jesus' words to Mary outside the tomb on *Sunday morning* (John 20:16-17)  
16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'"
- c. These are easily harmonized by understanding that Paradise was the pre-ascension equivalent of Abraham's Bosom while later becoming known as the equivalent of Heaven (II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7)

### III. The Concept of Hell in the New Testament

#### A. The Greek word "Gehenna"

- 1. It is to be distinguished from "Hades"
  - a. "Hades" is the temporary abode of the wicked prior to their being cast into "hell" following the Great White Throne judgment of the end of history ( cf. Rev. 20:11-15).
  - b. "Gehenna" is the permanent abode of the wicked once they have been judged at the GWT Judgment. It is synonymous with the "Lake of Fire" (Rev. 20:15).
- 2. The meaning of "Gehenna"
  - a. It is the Greek equivalent of "the valley of Hinnom (Joshua 15:8; Neh. 11:30) and occurs 12X in the N.T.
  - b. It was the place where idolatrous Jews gave human sacrifices to pagan deities (II Kings 23:10; II Chron. 28:3, 33:6).
  - c. In Jesus' day the valley of Hinnom had become the town dump for all the garbage of Jerusalem to be thrown. This included unclean corpses. The refuse burned constantly and the worms never stopped eating the rotting corpses.

### IV. The Teaching of Jesus on Hell

#### A. Hell is a "real" place

1. Being condemned to the fire of Hell is depicted as the opposite of entering the Kingdom of Heaven
  - a. Matt. 5:20-22  
 20 “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses {that} of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. 21 “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ 22 “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty {enough to go} into the fiery hell.
  
2. A person’s present behavior profoundly influences where they will spend eternity
  - a. Matt. 5:27-30  
 27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’; 28 but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. 29 “And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 “And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell.
  
3. Even the leaders of Israel were in danger of being condemned to Hell.
  - a. Matt. 23:15, 33  
 15 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.  
 .33 “You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell?

B. Hell is ruled by God

1. The worst experiences of human existence cannot compare to the destruction that awaits the wicked.
  - a. Matt. 10:28  
 28 “And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
  - b. The word “destroy” (Gr. *apollumi*) means the forfeiture (i.e., “destruction”) of all that is worthwhile in human existence. That

Jesus is not speaking of “annihilation” is clear from the parallel verse in Luke 12:5

Luke 12:5

“5 But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

2. Hell was created by God for the devil and his angels and will be the abode of all who are judged by God and sent away to eternal punishment.

a. Matt. 25:41,46

41 “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

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

b. Note the parallel usage of “eternal” in this passage

“Is it not folly to assume that eternal punishment signifies a fire lasting a long time, while believing that eternal life is life without end? For Christ, in the very same passage, included both punishment and life in one and the same sentence when he said, “So those people will go into eternal punishment, while the righteous will go into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46). If both are “eternal”, it follows necessarily that either both are to be taken as long-lasting but finite, or both as endless and perpetual. The phrases “eternal punishment” and “eternal life” are parallel and it would be absurd to use them in one and the same sentence to mean: “Eternal life will be infinite, while eternal punishment will have an end.” Hence, because the eternal life of the saints will be endless, the eternal punishment also, for those condemned to it, will assuredly have no end.”

(Augustine, *The City of God*, 21.23-24)

C. Hell involves rejection

1. Note the contrast between “says” and “does” in verse 21 as the basis for what Jesus says in verse 23, “Depart from Me. . .”

a. Matt. 7:21-23

“21 Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. 22 “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23 “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’”

2. Only “true faith”, showing itself in obedience to the Father’s will, is the way to avoid being rejected by God in the last day.

a. Matt. 8:11-12

“11 And I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline {at the table} with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; 12 but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

b. Matt. 25:30

“30 And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

D. Hell involves pain

1. The doom of the ungodly is contrasted sharply with the bliss of the righteous.

a. Matt. 13:30, 40-43

30 ‘Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”’”

. . . 40 “Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. 41 “The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 “Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

2. The “weeping and gnashing of teeth” of the wicked speaks of exceeding grief and agony of those who finally realize that it is too late.

a. Matt. 13:49-50

“49 So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous, 50 and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

3. The loss of a limb or an eye is nothing to be compared to the loss suffered by the wicked in hell forever.

a. Matt. 18:6-9

“6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 “Woe to the world because of {its} stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes! 8 “And if your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the eternal fire. 9 “And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out, and

throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into the fiery hell.”

4. The parable of the faithful & unfaithful servants shows that people should be “ready” for the coming of Christ because He will return unexpectedly and will severely judge all those who treated others with malice and acted hypocritically in this life.

- a. Matt. 24:51

“. . . 51 and shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth.”

E. Jesus seems to support the idea of levels of punishment in Hell.

NB: Note that in both of these passages Jesus ties the level of punishment to the amount of light received and rejected.

1. Jesus rebukes the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida (and later Capernaum) for their unbelief and for their failure and refusal to repent. He then says that it will be *worse* for them than for the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon (and later Sodom) in the day of judgment. (i.e., Jesus speaks of the concept of “more tolerable” and “less tolerable” treatment in the day of judgment)

- a. Matt. 11:20-24

“20 Then He began to reproach the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. 21 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 “Nevertheless I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you. 23 “And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. 24 “Nevertheless I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.”

2. Similarly, in Luke 12 Jesus contrasts 2 kinds of servants—those who knew the master’s will and did not obey, and those who did not know the will of the master and did not obey—because they *did not know* the will of the master. Jesus indicates that the former will be beaten with *many* blows and the latter with *fewer* blows.

- a. Luke 12:42-48

“42 And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and sensible steward . . . ?”  
“47 “And that slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes, 48 but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.”

F. For further study of Jesus' teachings about Hell

1. Hell and demons (Mark 1:24, 3:11, 5:7)
2. Hell and eternity (Mark 9:42-28)
3. Hell and scripture (Luke 16:19-31)
4. Hell and the present (John 3:16-21, 3:36)
5. Hell and the future (John 5:28-29, 8:21, 24)

F. Reflections on Jesus' teaching on Hell

Q: Why is Jesus so negative in His preaching on sin and eternal judgment?

1. He is the "Savior" of the world
2. It is a reflection of the greatness of His love for sinners
3. He desires to alert His hearers of the coming wrath so that people might turn and be saved.
- 4.
- 5.

V. The Teaching of the Apostles on Hell

A. The Apostle Paul

1. Paul speaks of the wicked "storing up wrath" for themselves on the day of judgment, meaning the God is not overlooking their wickedness. A day will come when every wicked person's life will constitute a cumulative record against them as they stand before God and are cast away from His presence.

a. God's wrath : Rom. 2:3-8

3 And do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things and do the same {yourself,} that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? 5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who WILL RENDER TO EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: 7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; 8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

2. Paul speaks of “punishment” for the wicked and a “paying back” of the wicked for their wickedness committed against God’s people.

a. God’s Justice : II Thess. 1:5-10

5 {This is} a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

6 For after all it is {only} just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and {to give} relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed —for our testimony to you was believed.

N.B. Paul’s statements remind us that God’s judgment upon the wicked is necessary and good. It is necessary because God’s holiness requires an appropriate short term *and* long term response to the actions of wicked people. It is good because His response to evil represents an ultimate balancing of the scales and a revelation of His glory as He acts in perfect justice to set all things right.

B. The writer of Hebrews

1. Note that the writer of Hebrews considered the subject of “eternal punishment” as a “foundational” and an “elementary” teaching.

a. The importance of the doctrine of Hell : Hebrews 6:1-3

1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And this we shall do, if God permits.

C. Jude

1. Jude teaches that the eternal punishment of the lost is consistent with God’s habit of punishing wickedness in the past: 1) the destruction of the disobedient Israelites who came out of Egypt 2) the judgment upon the “angels” who sinned grievously (likely referring to Gen. 6:1-4 and II Pet. 2:4), and 3) the judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

a. Jude 7

7 Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example, in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

2. In denouncing false teachers Jude highlights the appropriateness of their judgment saying that the “blackness of darkness” has been “reserved” for them.

a. Jude 13

“. . . 13 wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

N. B. Jude was the half-brother of Christ and you can hear echoes of Jesus’ terminology on Hell. Jude speaks of Hell as an “eternal fire” and as a “punishment” (cf. Matt. 25:41, 46). Jude’s description of Hell being “the black darkness” reminds us of Jesus’ descriptions also (cf. Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30)

#### D. The Apostle John

1. Revelation 14 speaks of the eternal suffering of the lost: “the smoke of their suffering goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night. . .”

a. God’s Wrath: Rev. 14:9-11

“9 And another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, 10 he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

b. Note the vivid descriptions of God’s wrath finally coming due on the wicked. John seems to borrow his terminology from Isaiah and Genesis:

Isaiah 51:17

“17 Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself! Arise, O Jerusalem, You who have drunk from the LORD’S hand the cup of His anger; The chalice of reeling you have drained to the dregs.”

Genesis 19:24

“24 Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven,. . .”

3. The Beast and the False Prophet are the first to enter the Lake of Fire(Rev. 19:20). Satan is next as God casts him into the Lake of Fire following his brief rebellion after the Millennium (Rev. 20:10).

a. The Lake of Fire: Rev. 20:10,

“10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

4. At the Great White Throne Judgment all of the lost of every age are judged “according to their deeds” (Rev. 20:13) and are cast into the Lake of Fire which is described also as the “second death” (“physical” death is the first death).
  - a. The Second Death Rev.20:14-15
 

... 14 And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.
  
5. After a vivid description of the bliss of Heaven and the relief from all suffering associated with life on Earth, John describes the wickedness of the lost to show the appropriateness of their doom (cf. “. . . their part will be the Lake of Fire . . .”, Rev. 21:8)
  - a. The character of the lost: Rev. 21:8
 

“8 But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part {will be} in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”
  
6. Again, John speaks of the contrast between the righteous and the wicked. The righteous experience the joys of eternal life in its fullness (Rev. 22:14) while the wicked finally receive the object of their wicked desires (cf. “. . . outside. . . everyone who loves and practices falsehood”, Rev. 22:15)
  - a. Banishment from the City of God: Rev. 22:11-15
 

“11 Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and let the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and let the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.” 12 “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward {is} with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. 13 “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” 14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. 15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.”
  - b. Note the appeal of Jesus, the Spirit, and the Church (Rev. 22:16):
 

16 “I, Jesus. . . And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.”

Notes based on:

*Hell on Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment*, Robert A. Peterson  
and *Death and the Afterlife*, Robert A. Morey