

“HELL” WORDS

Words translated “hell” in the King James Version

SHEOL

Sheol (Strong's #07585): A Hebrew word meaning “the grave,” or “the abode of the dead, also termed “the pit.” In the King James Translation, it is rendered “grave” - 31 times, “pit” - 3 times, and “hell” - 31 times. We will look at each Old Testament verse in which the King James translators used the word “hell” for the Hebrew “sheol.” There are other verses in which the King James translators simply translated “sheol” as “grave.” Jacob went to “sheol.” (Gen 37:35, 42:38, 44:29, 31) One assumes he did not go to “hell,” as understood by the Greeks. Job longed to hide in it. (Job 14:13) David saw it as a “resting place” but wanted to be rescued from it.

NOTE: Plato taught the Greeks that there is an immortal essence of man which continues to exist after the death of the body. As the Jews became Hellenized - this teaching influenced Jewish thought and philosophy. The Septuagint translators (300BC) used the Greek word “hades” to translate the Hebrew “sheol,” but the Greek “hades” had a vastly different meaning within Greek culture, than the Hebrew “sheol” - which simply meant “the grave” or “the abode of the dead.”

The Greeks believed that the souls of noble and good men (They weren't really sure about women.) went to live with the gods, while the souls of evil men went to the underworld.

The following verses are from the ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION.

In the first 7 verses, “sheol” obviously means simply “death.”

Psalms 139:8 “If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!”

NOTE: God is able to reach into Sheol - to resurrect.

Proverbs 5:5 “Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol;”

NOTE: In this verse and the next two, Solomon writes about the perils of adultery with an “immoral woman.” “Such action leads to death” - very true, especially when there were no treatment for venereal disease.

Proverbs 7:27 “Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.”

Proverbs 9:18 “But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.”

Proverbs 15:11 “Sheol and Abaddon (destruction) lie open before the LORD; how much more the hearts of the children of man!”

Proverbs 27:20 “Sheol and Abaddon (destruction) are never satisfied, and never satisfied are the eyes of man.”

Habakkuk 2:5 “Moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest. His greed is as wide as

Sheol; like death he has never enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples.”

The following verses may require some comment.

Deuteronomy 32:22 “For a fire is kindled by my anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, (meaning to the lowest depths) devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.”

COMPARE: II Peter 3:10 “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” (NKJ)

Psalm 9:17 “The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.”

NOTE: Agrees with our teaching that the “wicked” will be raised and judged at the Return of Christ, only to be “returned” to death.

Psalm 55:15 “Let death steal over them; let them go down to Sheol alive; for evil is in their dwelling place and in their heart.”

NOTE: For the leaders of a rebellion against Moses, the ground miraculously opened and Korah, Dathan and Abiram with their entire families “went down alive into the pit” which closed over them. The implication - that they did not long remain alive.

Proverbs 15:24 “The path of life leads upward for the prudent, that he may turn away from Sheol beneath.”

NOTE: Fits well with our teaching of “life vs death,” rather than unending torment.

Proverbs 23:14 “If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.”

NOTE: Again - does not contradict our teaching that the end, for the unrepentant - is death.

Isaiah 14:9 “Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come; it rouses the shades to greet you, all who were leaders of the earth; it raises from their thrones all who were kings of the nations.”

NOTE: This passage is a prophecy - speaking of the “king of Babylon.” He will join “leaders of the earth” and all the “kings of the nations” who have preceded him. The great, the mighty, and the small - death is no respecter of persons.

Ezekiel 31:15 “Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day the cedar went down to Sheol I caused mourning; I closed the deep over it, and restrained its rivers, and many waters were stopped. I clothed Lebanon in gloom for it, and all the trees of the field fainted because of it.”

Ezekiel 31:16 “I made the nations quake at the sound of its fall, when I cast it down to Sheol with those who go down to the pit. And all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, were comforted in the world below.”

Ezekiel 31:17 “They also went down to Sheol with it, to those who are slain by the sword; yes, those

who were its arm, who lived under its shadow among the nations.”

Ezekiel 32:21 “The mighty chiefs shall speak of them, with their helpers, out of the midst of Sheol: ‘They have come down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, slain by the sword.’”

Ezekiel 32:27 “And they do not lie with the mighty, the fallen from among the uncircumcised, who went down to Sheol with their weapons of war, whose swords were laid under their heads, and whose iniquities are upon their bones; for the terror of the mighty men was in the land of the living.”

NOTE: All of the above verses from Ezekiel 31 and 32 are from a prophecy concerning “Pharaoh and all his multitude .” “Her and the daughters of the famous nations” (v.18). And we would agree that Pharaoh, along with every other wicked leader - did die, and will die (the second death).

Amos 9:2 “If they dig into Sheol, from there shall my hand take them; if they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down.”

NOTE: The LORD is speaking to Israelites - the Northern Kingdom - sunken in idolatry. You cannot escape my wrath.

Gehenna

STRONGS: #1067 **geenna** {gheh'-en-nah}

A Greek word meaning: place of the future punishment called "**Gehenna**" or "**Gehenna of fire.**" Translated “hell” or “hell fire” in the New Testament.

Of Hebrew origin. This was originally the Valley of Hinnom, (or Valley of the Sons of Hinnom) South of Jerusalem, where the filth of the city was cast out and burned (including dead animals, and even dead criminals); a fit symbol of the wicked and their future destruction.

NOTE: Every passage is given, where Gehenna or Gehenna of fire occurs. As we read through these passages, please note that Gehenna IS a place of fire, but the texts do NOT say that the fire burns forever.

Matthew 5:22 “But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be **in danger of hell fire**(gehenna of fire).”

Matthew 5:29 “If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for **your whole body to be cast into hell** (gehenna).” (See also Matthew 18:9 and Mark 9:47.)

NOTE: Even the loss of an eye, or the right hand, is preferable to the loss of eternal life. We note especially that the lost person is case in body and all, not as a disembodied spirit.

Matthew 5:30 “And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for **your whole body to be cast into hell**

(gehenna).” (See also Mark 9:43-44.)

Matthew 10:28 "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather **fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell** (gehenna).

NOTE: Both soul AND body are destroyed in gehenna. Both are destroyed (consumed completely).

Matthew 23:15 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell (gehenna) as yourselves.”

Matthew 23:33 “Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell (gehenna)? ”

NOTE: Not given is a mention of how long gehenna will burn.

Mark 9:45-46 “And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell (gehenna), **into the fire that shall never be quenched—where ‘their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’**”
(See also Mark 9:43-44 & Mark 9:47-48.)

NOTE: Here Mark quotes Christ, who is quoting from Isaiah 66:24 - “their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.” Christ’s use of the phrase follows His very consistent pattern of quoting from the Old Testament, and His use of familiar objects.

Isaiah 66:24 “And they shall go forth and look Upon the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, And their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”

First: The fire is consuming corpses - not live people.

Second: The fire cannot be quenched - that is - it cannot be put out, until it has done its work of consuming. There is no suggestion of unending torment here - just fire consuming “garbage.”

“Gehenna” held meaning only for Jews. The word is not found in Greek literature, the Septuagint or in Josephus. The Valley of (the Sons of) Hinnom - [West/SW of Jerusalem] - was a place of pagan idolatry and human (usually child) sacrifice, especially during the reigns of kings Manasseh and Ahaz (II Chron. 33:6, II Kings 16:3 & 21:6). The place was cursed of God. Later - during the second Temple era, it was used as place for burning refuse, including the corpses of executed criminals. The fires were kept burning constantly. Over time, Gehenna came to be used as a term for the place of punishment. The name brought to mind whatever is condemned, useless, corrupt or abhorrent. During and after the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman General Titus, the Valley of Hinnom was filled with the bodies of dead Jews. Prophecy often has more than one fulfillment.

Jeremiah 7:31-33 “And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart. ‘Therefore behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, ‘when it will no more be called Tophet, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter; for they will bury in Tophet until there is no room. The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. And no one will frighten them away.’” (NKJ)
(Jeremiah 19:2-13)

Luke 12:5 "But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell (gehenna); yes, I say to you, fear Him!

NOTE: We at PVP believe that men are judged, and then finally consumed in the final "lake of fire" only AFTER the first death. The "second death" is the final death from which there is no resurrection. The question remains, "Will this second death be painful?" We do not believe so - but that is the subject for another segment of our study.

James 3:6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell (gehenna)."

NOTE: We are all very familiar with the destructive force of the "tongue." Here an evil tongue is said to be energized by Gehenna itself. This is an illustrative figure. Hell does not literally light the tongue on fire.

Tartarus

STRONGS #5020 (Tartaroo)

Only used once.

2 Peter 2:4 "For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell (tartaroo) and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;"

NOTE: This verse is NOT talking about human beings. The "angels who sinned" are spirit beings - not humans. Peter is looking for a word to represent a place of restraint - a holding place for those evil angels who "crossed the line." (The suggestion is that they appeared physically in our dimension, and engaged in sexual intercourse with human women.) Some believe that these angels will be released at the fifth trumpet - and will torment mankind, for a short period just prior to the Second Coming.