

Group Discussion:

Hallelujah in Hell

What the Hell?

1. What do you think of when you think of the word “Hell?”
What do you think most people think of when they think of the word “Hell?”
The Word “Hell” shows up a lot in some Bible translations and not at all in other Bible translations. When it does show up, what do you think it means?

The word “Hell” appears:

- 54 times in the King James Version,
- 0 times in the Young’s Literal Version,
- 17 times in the New Revised Standard Version,
- 14 times in the English Standard Version,
- 13 times in the New International Version,
- 32 times in the New King James Version,
- 62 times in the Message.

It seems that most people in our culture think that “Hell” is a place of endless conscious torment.

2. When you think of “Hell,” how does it make you feel?
Do you see any problems with believing in “Hell?”
Does faith in “Hell” (endless conscious torment) generate problems in any of the following areas of Christian life and ministry? How so?

- Biblical Exegesis: The BVBBBBB’s
- Theology (a systematic understanding of God’s Word)
- Worship (glorifying God)
- Social Justice (concern for the last and least of these)
- Evangelism (communicating the Good News)
- Healing (bodies, minds, hearts, souls)
- Spiritual Warfare
- Forgiveness and Reconciliation
- Faith
- Hope
- Love

3. Do you see some problems with NOT believing in “Hell?”
What the hell is “Hell” good for? Can you think of some things?

Every time you read the word, “Hell” in an English Bible it translates another word from Greek or Hebrew. The four words listed below all get translated as “Hell” some of the time in English Bibles . . . but not all of the time . . . or sometimes, not at all.

Words translated “Hell” at least some of the time in the King James Version:

- **Sheol** (Hebrew) translates as “grave” 31 times, “hell” 31 times, and “pit” 3 times.
- **Hades** (Greek) translates as “hell” 10 times, and “grave” 1 time. (Hades was the normative greek translation of the Hebrew, Sheol).
- **Ghehennah** (Greek, from Hebrew, *ga*: “valley” and Hebrew, *hinnom*) translates as “hell” 9 times, and “hell fire...” 3 times. *Hinnom* (Hebrew) translates as Hinnom 11 times always in conjunction with *ga*.
- **Tartaroo** (Greek) translates as “cast down to hell” 1 time, literally “cast down to *Tartaros*” (*Tartaros* was a region of *Hades*)

Read the following verses from the English Standard Version and see if you can come up with some answers—What is “Hell” good for? When you read *Sheol*, *Hades*, or *Gehenna*, try saying “Hell,” for that is how these words have been translated.

- ✓ **Psalm 89:48** What man can live and never see death? Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? *Selah*
- ✓ **Psalm 139:7-8** Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!
- ✓ **Job 14:13** Oh that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until your wrath be past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me!
- ✓ **Jonah 2:1-2** Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, saying, “I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.
- ✓ **Matthew 16:18** And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell (*Hades*) shall not prevail against it.
- ✓ **1 Peter 3:18-20, 4:6** For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water... For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.
- ✓ **Ephesians 4:9-10** In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.
- ✓ **Deuteronomy 4:24** For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.
- ✓ **Deuteronomy 32:22** For a fire is kindled by my anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.
- ✓ **Matthew 18:9** 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 (*Gehenna*) of fire.
- ✓ **Revelation 20:13-14, 21:4-5** 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... He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

- ✓ **Zechariah 2:4-5** Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, because of the multitude of people and livestock in it. And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares the LORD, and I will be the glory in her midst.’ ”
- ✓ **Zephaniah 3:8-9** ... in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed. “For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord.
- ✓ **Isaiah 30:33** For a burning place [literally *Topheth*—a location in the valley of Hinnom, (2 Kings 23:10, also Jeremiah 7 and 19)] has long been prepared; indeed, for the king it is made ready, its pyre made deep and wide, with fire and wood in abundance; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of sulfur, kindles it.
- ✓ **Isaiah 66:23-24** From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the LORD. “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.”
- ✓ **Psalms 22:1, 6, 27-31** My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? ...But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people... All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For kingship belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive. Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.

So, what the hell is “Hell” (*Sheol, Hades, Gehenna, Eternal Consuming Fire*) good for?

[Hallelujah in Hell]

4. Does the idea of Hell #1, Hell #2, and Hell #3 make sense?

Hell

Sheol/Hades
FaithLESSness

-Darkness
-Death
-Lies
-Isolation
-Chaos
-The Experience
of God's Absence

-No Singing
-Temporal

Judgment

Gehenna
FaithFULLness
Destroys
FaithLESSness



Heaven

The Fire
FaithFULLness

-Light
-Life
-Truth
-Love
-Logos
-The Experience
of God's Presence

-All Singing
-Eternal

5. So what the hell is "Hell" good for?

- What is Hades/Sheol good for?
- What is Gehenna good for?
- What is Consuming Fire good for? (Or is it good for nothing just good?)

- ✓ **1 Corinthians 15:22, 53-58 (NKJV)** For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive... For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written:

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

"O Death, where is your sting?"

Hades, where is your victory?"

The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Perhaps "Hell" is good for revealing Jesus, creating faith, and shaping us into the image of God?

"Let us conclude the matter with a parable. To man there remains two ways. And the one that is crowded is still the one that leads to destruction; and many there be that find it. But at some point on that road, be it far or near, each one finds also something, or rather Someone, else. It is a figure, stooping beneath the weight of a cross. 'Lord, where are you going?' asks Everyman. And the answer comes: 'I am going to Rome, to Moscow, to New York, to be crucified afresh in your place.' And no man in the end can bear that encounter forever. For it is an encounter with a power than which there can be nothing greater, a meeting with omnipotent Love itself. This love will take no man's choice from him; for it is precisely his choice it wants. But its will to lordship is inexhaustible and ultimately unendurable: the sinner must yield. God has exposed the strong right arm by which he has declared that he will curb the nations. And, lo, it is pierced by nails, stained with blood, and riveted in

impotence. Is it to us too an offence and foolishness? Yet this is the authentic quality of love's omnipotence. 'The weakness of God is stronger than men' (I Cor. 1:25)—than any man; for 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself' (John 12:32). Christ, in Origen's old words, remains on the Cross so long as one sinner remains in hell. That is not speculation: it is a statement grounded in the very necessity of God's nature. In a universe of love there can be no heaven which tolerates a chamber of horrors, no hell for any which does not at the same time make it hell for God. He cannot endure that, for that would be the final mockery of his nature. And he will not."

- John A. T. Robinson, In the End God (Harper and Row: New York, 1968)