

Semester 1 – Week 3 - Class 6

GOD'S LOVE REVEALED IN HELL-FIRE

In this Bible course, 30, 40 or more scripture texts are used for most every topic. You can not get all the truth on any one subject out of only one text of the Bible. Unfortunately many doctrines are built on just one text. People will often bypass an incredible weight of evidence for a certain belief and rather than see the obvious, they'll turn to one or two texts to hold up their misconceptions. That's not the way we should study the Bible.

The only way we can know truth is to compare everything that the Bible says on that topic. In order to discover its secrets we must bring texts together from many parts of the Bible—what each writer has said, finding out what Matthew said, John and what Paul said, and so on, in order to get the full picture. By comparing these assembled texts, the subject becomes clear.

This principle must be followed in studying a subject such as today's topic. The devil has caused much confusion to surround this subject of hell-fire, just as he has distorted so many other things, to the point that millions of sincere people have been led to look at God as a cruel and a terrible tyrant, that takes delight in torture.

We want to be able to see the love of God and His desire to save us no matter what subject we study. We desire to see a God of love that is working out His perfect plan.

52% of adults are certain there's a hell; 48% say it's a real place where people suffer eternal torment; 46% believe it's an anguished state of existence rather than an actual place. Most preachers are confused about hell.

QUESTION: **What is hell?**

The word Hell is used 54 times in the Bible – 41 times it means simply the “grave.”

1) The Old Testament Hebrew word is “**sheol**.” It means “the unseen state” or “the place of the dead” or “the grave” and is translated hell 31 times.

2) The New Testament Greek word is “**hades**.” It is the Greek equivalent to “sheol” meaning the grave and translated hell 10 times.

3) Another New Testament Greek word “**Gehenna**” A Greek word meaning “Valley of Hinnom,” used 12 times in the New Testament. It was “a place of burning”-- a 200 to 300 foot deep garbage dump just outside the west and south walls of ancient Jerusalem. Because of the fires that burned everything there, the Jews of Christ's time, saw gehenna as a symbol of the second death. This word “gehenna” is translated hell 9 times and hell fire 3 times.

So primarily there were those 2 different Greek words translated hell, “Hades” and “Gehenna.”

4) Greek “**tartaroo**” A Greek place name where rebellious angels are thrown and is translated hell 1 time.

Matthew 5:30 **“And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”**

Questions about Hell:

1. **When is hell?**
2. **Is it burning now in the middle of the earth?**
3. **How long is hell fire?**
4. **Can a loving God destroy those He loves?**

When does hell occur?

Matthew 13:40-42 **“As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire...”**

Matthew 13:49 **“So shall it be at the end of the world...”**

Matthew 16:27 **“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”**

2 Peter 2:9 **“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.”**

2 Thessalonians 2:8 “...whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.”

Revelation 20:5 “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Acts 24:15 “... there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”

In our last study on the Millennium the resurrection of the Just was at the beginning when Jesus comes, and the resurrection of the Unjust was at the end of the thousand years.

QUESTION: If the wicked who have died are not in hell yet, where are they?

John 5:28, 29 “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

Job 21:29, 30, 32 “Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their tokens, That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath. Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb.”

QUESTION: How many people are suffering in the flames of hell today? ZERO!

2 Peter 2:9 “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:” The lost will not be punished until the Day of Judgment.

QUESTION: Where is hellfire located?

2 Peter 3:7 “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

Revelation 20:9, 14 “And they went up in the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”

Revelation 21:8 “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

(LUKE 17:26-30 Promise not to destroy the earth a second time by a flood of water.)

Revelation 20:6 “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.”

QUESTION: How big is Hell-Fire?

#1. We have just studied that God said that hell-fire is going to burn all over this earth, and is going to burn up the earth and its increase. And then God says He's going to make a new heavens and a new earth. (Revelation 21:1)
Now how could God create a new heavens and a new earth if the fires of hell are going to burn on top of this world through the ceaseless ages of eternity? It would be impossible.

#2. God is just and fair. The Bible says that He will judge righteously. Now if it was true that the wicked burn through the ceaseless ages of eternity; let's take a moment to think it through.

Example 1) Two men born 5,000 years apart both commit exactly the same sins but one man has to burn 5,000 years longer than the other simply because he's born first?

Example 2) Two men. One man commits numerous horrendous crimes and the other commits a minor crime, both doing this not repenting or confessing them to God. And is it justice to think that both receive exactly the same punishment?

#3. Now a third and also very important reason. We've studied already that man is not naturally immortal. Isn't that right? Only those that love Jesus and are ready for His second coming will be given immortality and eternal life. But if the wicked burn through the ceaseless ages of eternity, would they not also live eternally? Think about it for a minute. The only way you can burn forever is if you live forever. Isn't that right? And the Bible says only the righteous are granted eternal life—not the wicked. Therefore man is NOT naturally immortal.

1 John 3:15 **“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”**

Romans 6:23 - If you agree with what most churches teach, then this verse would have to read as follows:

"The wages of sin is ... everlasting life in the fires of hell."

But if you understand what the Bible teaches than you read the verse as it is written:

"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The lost will be destroyed in the second death hell-fire, while only the righteous live eternally.

QUESTION: **What are the only two choices for all men?**

1 John 5:12 **“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”**

Matthew 7:13, 14 **“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”**

John 3:16 **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”**

QUESTION: **How complete is the destruction of the wicked?**

Psalms 37:9-11, 20 **“For evil doers shall be cut off, but those that wait upon the Lord shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall not be. Yea, thou shalt diligently consider their place and it shall not be ...”**
“But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs. They shall consume into smoke, into smoke shall they consume away.”

Isaiah 1:28 **“And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed.”**

Psalms 104:35 **“Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.”**

Malachi 4:1-3 **“For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” ... “And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.”**

Review of destruction of wicked:

1. Will be burned up in the future.
2. Consumed, burned up and turned to ashes.

Obadiah 16 **“... and they shall be as though they had not been.”**

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QUESTION: **Doesn't the phrase “everlasting fire” mean “unending”?**

Matthew 25:46 **“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous unto life eternal.**

Everlasting punishment **IS NOT** everlasting **punishing**, it is one punishment whose effects are everlasting. It is an eternal death and separation from from God from which there is no resurrection.

QUESTION: **What is this punishment that is everlasting?**

2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9 **“In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.**

QUESTION: **What does the Bible mean when it uses the expression “everlasting destruction” or “eternal fire”?**

The ancient prophets believed hell was total destruction.

Hebrews 6:2 **"Eternal judgment"**

**“Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”**

Hebrews 5:9 **"Eternal salvation"**

**“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”**

Hebrews 9:12 **“Eternal redemption”**

**“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”**

The results of judgment, salvation and redemption will be eternal.

Jude 7 **"Eternal fire"**

**“Even as Sodom and Gomorrha... are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”** An eternal fire is one whose effects or result are eternal.

2 Peter 2:6 **“And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.”**

An eternal fire is one whose effects or results are eternal. Everlasting punishment is one punishment whose effects or results are eternal.

Let's review the Fate of the Wicked

The wicked will die – Romans 6:23

The wicked will perish – Luke 13:3

The wicked will be burnt up – Malachi 4:1

The wicked will be utterly consumed – Psalm 37:20

The wicked will be turned to ashes – Malachi 4:3

The wicked will be as they had not been – Obadiah 16

The ancient prophets believed death was total destruction.

The death that all the wicked will suffer, the Bible calls the **Second Death**.

The first death that we die is the natural death that mortals experience as the result of living in a sinful world.

The second death is an eternal death as the result of personal rebellion against God.

**QUESTION: What about the Bible expression “unquenchable fire?”**

Jeremiah 17:27 **“But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.”**

An unquenchable fire is one that no human can put out.

Proverbs 26:20 **“Where no wood is, the fire goeth out ...”** The fire needs fuel to burn. When the people are ashes, the fire will burn out.

**QUESTION: What about the Bible use of the phrase forever and ever?**

When Revelation 20:10 says that the wicked will be tormented “forever and ever,” doesn't that indicate endless time?

**“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet [are], and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”**

Revelation 14:10, 11 **“... and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone ...” “And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night...”**

“Forever and ever” is a Biblical expression which means “until the end of the age,” not necessarily an infinite, unending length of time.

“Forever and ever” sometimes refers to a limited time.

Jonah 2:6 **“I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.”** For ever in Jonah’s case was 3 days and 3 nights.

Jonah 1:17 **“Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.**

1 Samuel 1:22, 28 **“I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever.”**

**“Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD...”** Forever was as long as the man lived.

Exodus 21:6 is about a slave who is to serve his master **“...and he shall serve him for ever.”** Forever would be as long as the slave lives.

Exodus 12:17 **“They were to keep the Passover "forever".** But it was to last only until the cross.

Also in the New Testament, Philemon 15. Philemon was to take back Onesimus “forever”.

Psalms 48:14 **“For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.”**

The word FOREVER is used **56 times in the Old Testament** in connection with things already ended.

Isaiah 47:14 **“Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.”**

Proverbs 26:20 **“Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out ...”**

Isaiah 9:19 **“Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother.”**

QUESTION: **Why would a loving God burn sinners in hell for millions of years?**

Job 4:17 **“Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?”**

Ezekiel 33:11 **“Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”**

Ezekiel 18:32 **“For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.”**

It was the theology of eternal torment that turned young Robert Ingersoll into one of the world's greatest infidels. Robert Ingersoll’s father would tell him that God had infants in hell who would burn forever. Young Ingersoll said, “If that is what God does, I hate Him!” His bright and logical mind could not conceive of such injustice! He therefore turned from a God he mistakenly believed to be a tyrant. And many others have turned into atheists as well.

## **Two Extremes**

Romans 12:19 **“Vengeance is mine; saith the Lord, I will repay.”**

Luke 12:47, 48 **“And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes...”**

QUESTION: **Why destroy sinners at all?**

In heaven, there will be: No casinos for the gambler, No heroin for the addict, No places of sinful pleasure for the lustful, No money for the greedy—no banks to rob—heaven would be a torture to the wicked.

\*\*\*Could they rejoice in the heavenly angel’s singing?

**Ezekiel 28:18, 19** [1255]

**“... I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth ... never shalt thou be any more.”**

**RICH MAN AND LAZARUS - Luke 16:19-31**

**FIGURATIVELY instead of DIRECTLY.**

Jesus tells four parables straight in a row in Luke 15 and 16.

Luke 15:4 (the 90 and 9 sheep); 15:11 (the Prodigal son); 16:1 (the rich man and the steward); 16:19 (the rich man and Lazarus).

**Luke 16:19** "There was a certain rich man. . . . Some people will say, "That's no parable. See, there was a certain rich man! He's talking about a certain rich man. And people will be very dogmatic on this point. But notice how Christ started many of His parables:

**Luke 10:30** "And Jesus answering said, A certain man. . . went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, . . . Does that sound familiar? Why that's the parable of the good Samaritan. But it starts out with "There was a certain man." Now notice another one.

**Luke 12:16** "... a certain rich man..."

**Luke 14:16** "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:" Now that's known as the parable of the great supper. Isn't that interesting? And now if that one didn't clear it up this one should. Luke 13:6

**Luke 13:6** "He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard;" and so on.

**Luke 16:1** "... a certain rich man..." Now notice in Luke 16:1, the same chapter in which we have been discussing, "And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward;" And that's the parable of the unjust steward.

**Luke 19:11, 12** "... a certain nobleman..."

**Luke 20:9** "... a certain man planted a vineyard..." Jesus used the expression "A certain man" in many parables. In fact EVERY TIME Jesus used that expression He was using a parable. Well then, the evidence would admit to the conclusion that if all the other times that Jesus used the expression, that He was using a parable, then this rich man and Lazarus too would likely be so.

Let's analyze the parable and answer some questions if this were a literal doctrine:

1) How big is Abraham's bosom? Can only Lazarus reside there? Is this the real residing place for all the righteous? Poor Abraham! Furthermore, would that really be bliss?

2) The rich man cries to Father Abraham and Lazarus. But how feasible is that under the circumstances? Firemen have to shout at each other over the noise that just one burning house makes. What about the horrendous roar of a fire big enough for all the damned? Also remember, the chasm between heaven and hell is so big nobody can cross it. The distance described in the story also poses a problem to hearing. Just the distance alone would require shouting, not to mention the roar of the flames. The Bible is very clear that those in heaven and hell are not going to talk to each other throughout all eternity.

3) Do disembodied souls have fingers, eyes and a tongue? The same people that try to make the story of the rich man and Lazarus literal also believe that what goes into hell-fire is not the body, but rather an invisible, conscious vapor entity called the soul. But here we find the rich man described as having a body parts such as eyes and a tongue which needed cooling. Hardly consistent.

4) The rich man asks for a drop of water. I would have asked for a fire truck—maybe even a bunch of them. Without exaggeration, would a drop of water survive its trip into the fires of hell? I would guess it would evaporate long before it benefited anyone. Realistic?—hardly!

5) Can a person in the process of torturous burning think rationally enough to reason and to carry on a normal conversation? Not likely!

6) Would it be really heaven to be able to look over and see people, perhaps even friends or loved ones in the agonies of hell-fire? I would think not!! That is not desirable or realistic. Common sense tells you that this story cannot be taken literally. It's a very symbolic story, a parable with a special lesson..

Let us get the parable's true meaning which is found in verses 30 and 31, "**And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.**" Jesus was about to raise a man names Lazarus from the dead, but the Pharisees would not accept it after the fact, proving Christ's parable. (see John chapter 11).

1 Peter 2:24 "**Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. The penalty has been paid.**

Matthew 25:41 **“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.**

Revelation 21:1 **“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away...**

2 Peter 3:13 **“Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.**

### **End Semester 1 – Week 3 - Class 6**

*The Next Class* - Semester 2 – Week 4 – Class 7

“The Issue that Divides the World”