

# Bible Mini-course

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## ***Lesson 15 — Hell***

Does the Bible teach that a merciful Father in heaven will torture the ignorant or even the rebellious in an eternity of unspeakable agony — to roast alive forever in horrendous pain from sulfurous flames of hellfire with no possibility of relief and no hope for parole? Where did this teaching originate and what does the Bible really say about the fate of the wicked?

(The answers to the questions below are on the reverse.)

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1. What was the first lie ever told in the Scriptures?
  - a. Cain denied killing his brother Abel.
  - b. Sarai laughed and said she was not pregnant with Isaac.
  - c. Satan told Eve that she would never die if she ate the forbidden fruit.
  - d. None of the above.
2. Immortal in the Bible refers to man's soul.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. Death means
  - a. to die.
  - b. only the body dies, but the soul is conscious and continues in total awareness.
  - c. an unconscious sleep.
  - d. a and c.
4. Hell is an underground of Satan where white-hot flames from sulfurous rocks horrifically torture sinners forever.
  - a. True
  - b. False
5. The four Hebrew and Greek words translated hell are:
  - a. sheol, gehenna, hades, tartaroo
  - b. ashen, agonia, acheo, pyro
  - c. pariah, suffra, legion, sulphus
  - d. None of the above
6. The lake of fire spoken of in Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15, and 21:8 is
  - a. adjacent to the sea of glass.
  - b. just another description of Satan's abode.
  - c. the destiny of the demons only.
  - d. the final punishment of total incineration of the lawless.
7. Yahshua's account of Lazarus and the rich man proves that eternal suffering in flames is the destiny of the wicked.
  - a. True
  - b. False
8. Other biblical references to everlasting fire show that hell-fire will endlessly torture the wicked.
  - a. True
  - b. False



# Score Yourself

1. c. The first lie recorded in the Bible is Satan's in Gen. 3:4. Yahweh's promise of a death penalty for sin took effect after our original parents disobeyed Him — the death process was set in motion and Adam and Eve ultimately died. Before this they had the potential to continue living indefinitely.
2. b. The word immortal occurs only once in Scripture, 1Timothy 1:17, and refers only to Almighty Yahweh (1Tim. 6:16), and which He gave to His Son. "Immortality" must be "put on," as we naturally lack it, 1Cor. 15:53; Matt. 19:29. Yahshua said those who believe in Him would never die, contrasting with the unbeliever who will die, John 11:26. Nowhere are the words "immortal" and "soul" found together in the Scriptures. The word "immortality" is found in three other passages and refers either to Yahweh Himself or to a state man must seek, not a condition he already possesses (Rom. 2:7; 1Cor. 15:54; 2Tim. 1:10). Soul derives from the Hebrew *nephesh* and means the living, breathing being. Yahweh says the soul that sins shall die, Ezek. 18:20.
3. d. "Death" and "die" derive from the Hebrew *muwth* and mean to die, kill, have one executed. No nuance of *muwth* means to continue living, to exist in some other form, or to retain conscious awareness. The Scriptures sometimes talk of death as a sleep, as in John 11:11-14 where Yahshua raised the "sleeping" Lazarus from the dead. Also Dan. 12:2; 1Thess. 4:13-16. In sleep one is unaware of anything. The same is true of death and the Bible makes no distinction between the good and bad individual—both sleep in death, 2Kings 21:17-18; Psalm 146:4; Dan. 12:3; John 11:11; 1Thes. 4:13-16. All sleep in the grave, Deut. 31:16; Psalm 9:17; 139:8; John 5:28-29; Acts 2:34; Heb. 9:27; Revelation 20:13. The resurrection is of those asleep in graves, not those alive in heaven or hell, Hosea 13:14; 1Cor. 15:51-52.
4. b. The universal concept of hell is a mixture of misconstrued Scriptures, Teutonic mythology, and pagan Greek belief about immortality. Helping to formulate the modern notion of hell was Dante Alighieri's 13<sup>th</sup> century epic poem, **The Divine Comedy**, in which Dante advances Teutonic legends of hell as a place where the damned suffer endlessly in a variety of ways. The actual root of our word hell is *kel*, meaning to cover, conceal, save. From *kel* came *Hel*, an Old Norse name of the underworld goddess of the dead who was in charge of torture and punishment. She was the daughter of *Loki*, an evil god of fire. The belief that hell is a place of fiery torture was strengthened by the Hebrew *Gehenna*, which was the name of a valley (Ge-hinnom) near Jerusalem where apostate Israel once sacrificed children to the Canaanite sun god Moloch (1Ki. 11:7) and later where city garbage was incinerated. Translators rendered *Gehenna* "hell" in the KJV and others. Thus the idea of burning flames became associated with notions about eternal torture in hellfire. In fact, *Gehenna* is the ultimate punishment of total annihilation of the wicked and is the lake of fire spoken of in Rev. 20. Hell, on the other hand, is simply a concealed place, a covered pit or grave. The stomach of the great fish that swallowed Jonah is even called hell (*sheol*), Jonah 2:2.
5. a. Translators did a great disservice by using one word—hell—for three different biblical concepts. The word translated hell in the Old Testament is the Hebrew *sheol* and means pit or grave. In the King James it is translated grave 31 times, hell 31 times, and pit 3 times. The Greek word from which hell is derived in the New Testament is *hades*, which has the same meaning as *sheol*. The other words translated hell are *gehenna* (see question 4) and *tartaroo*, a term found only once, 2Pet. 2:4, and means a place of restraint for fallen angels. None of these words refers to a place or condition of eternal, torturous agony for wicked humans. In the grave (hell) all awareness ceases: "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave [*sheol*] whither you go," Eccl. 9:10.
6. d. The lake of fire is called the second death. Into it the beast and his worshipers (Rev. 14:9) and the false prophet will be thrown, Rev. 19:20, and Satan as well, Rev. 20:10, 15. Others sharing this fate will be the lawless who are not written in the book of life, Rev. 20:14, a description of whom is found in Rev. 21:8. The word "tormented" in Rev. 20:10 (Gk. *Basanizo*) is linked to the Greek *marturion* in Luke 9:5, according to **Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament**. *Marturion* means testimony or witness. The smoke of their destruction rises forever as a permanent witness to their rebellion against Yahweh. Those thrown into the lake of fire are destroyed, 2Thes. 1:8-9 ("everlasting destruction"); the wicked are reduced to ashes, Mal 4:1-3 (wicked will be "stubble," "burned up," "ashes"). Psalm 37:20 says, "But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of Yahweh shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away." The fat refers to the fat that was completely consumed by fire on the sacrificial altar.
7. b. This parable in Luke 16 is employed to teach a greater lesson and therefore is symbolic in meaning: that the arrogant and selfish rich man (i.e. Pharisees) was aghast to realize he had missed out on the first resurrection. From his dry mouth we see his distress. If he were engulfed in hellfire he would beg for a lot more water than a wetted fingertip to cool his tongue! "Tormented" is the Greek *odunamai* and means grief, sorrow, distress. "Flame" derives from *phlox* which refers to a flame's brightness or flash, not the fire itself (which would be *puros*). His past life is now revealed in the light (*phlox*) of truth. The "gulf between" refers to his rejection from the kingdom (Pharisees had no promise of everlasting life, Matt. 5:20). He asks (figuratively) that Abraham, who is dead (Heb. 11:13) send Lazarus "from the dead" to warn his five brothers to repent. Far from teaching eternal hellfire, Yahshua was warning the Jewish leadership who lived the high life and disdained others not to shut out the Gentiles from truth by their actions and traditions, as they themselves were shut out.
8. b. Passages like Matt.18:8 and 25:41 are understood in the context of Isa. 33:12 and 14, showing that the wicked will be destroyed by fire, not just tortured. In Matt. 18:8-9 everlasting fire and hellfire refer to *gehenna* fire that will completely consume. Matt. 25:41 shows that everlasting fire is prepared for the devil and his angels, which will be a fire that destroys them, Ezek. 28:18; Mal. 4:1; Heb. 2:14; Rom. 16:20 (where bruise means to utterly crush). Matt. 25:46 refers to everlasting punishment, not punishing, and is the Greek *kolasis* meaning a cutting off. (Notice the wicked "go away" into everlasting punishment.) In Jude 1:7 we learn that Sodom and Gomorrah also suffered the vengeance of "eternal fire," but they are not still burning today. It is the results that are eternal, not the fire (in Matt. 25:41, 46 everlasting means enduring. **TCNT**). When the Bible speaks of an "unquenchable" fire it means a fire that will not be extinguished before it consumes what it burns. In Jer. 17:27 Yahweh promises that unless Israel obeys Him, the palaces of Jerusalem shall be destroyed with a fire that "shall not be quenched." This was fulfilled in Jer. 52:13, when all the homes were destroyed in fire. Yet that fire is not still burning. An unquenchable fire will also completely burn up the wicked, Mal. 4:1.