

# ***HELL IS A MYTH***

“You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you can not fool all of the people all of the time” (Abraham Lincoln). Lincoln was correct: You can’t fool all of the people all of the time. However, Satan has come close to accomplishing just that. Satan is the “god of this world” (II Corinthians 4:4) who has deceived the entire world (Revelation 12:9). He’s the quintessential liar (John 8:44) who masquerades as an “angel of light” (II Corinthians 11:14), and his demons disguise themselves as “ministers of righteousness” (verse 15). In other words, most of the people, most of the time, have believed satanic lies. One such lie is the common Christian belief of a hell in which people are tormented endlessly.

## **God is love**

“God is love” (I John 4:8). Indeed, God is the embodiment of love. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). And, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9). The belief that God would consign someone to eternal torment in someplace called hell is contrary to the belief in a loving, caring, and merciful God. “By this the love of God was manifested in us: that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, *but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins*” (I John 4:9-10).

“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10-11). Indeed, salvation is God’s gift to everyone who accepts Jesus as his or her “sin offering” (Romans 8:3), and who “keeps the commandments of God and holds to the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12:17).

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). Sin is defined as the “transgression of the (God’s) law” (I John 3:4). And because everyone has sinned and fallen “short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), and the “wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), we are thus doomed without the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf. However, we’re not doomed if we accept Jesus as our atoning “sin offering.”

What, then, will happen to Muslims or Buddhists or atheists? In other words, what happens to people who don’t accept Jesus as their Savior? What will God do to the Iraqi child who dies of malnutrition or to the Algerian who grows up in an Islamic culture? They’ve never had the opportunity for salvation in their lifetimes. Does God punish them with eternal damnation? Does He consign them to “hell” fire? Is God unfair?

A recent Harris poll concluded that a majority of Americans “believe in hell and the devil, but few expect that they will go to hell themselves” (*WorldNetDaily.com*, February 27, 2003). Unwilling to accept a fiery fate for themselves, many Americans are nonetheless willing to consign (perhaps subconsciously) the Iraqi child or deluded Algerian to the so-called fires of hell.

Hell is a myth concocted by Satan. The doctrine of hell portrays God as harsh and unmerciful. However, this portrayal is incompatible with the biblical image of a loving God.

## Creeping paganism

“The divine authority of Moses and the prophets was admitted, and even established, as the firmest basis of Christianity” (Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Volume 1, pg. 451). The earliest Christians obeyed the law of God, as found in the first five books of the Bible. They observed God’s Holy Days and Festivals. They did not observe Easter and Christmas; those celebrations, which are rooted in paganism, arrived centuries later. Jesus Himself validated the Law and Holy Days of God: “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17-19).

The divergence of early Christianity from God’s laws and holy days took a long time. “The first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were all circumcised Jews; and the congregation over which they presided *united the law of Moses with the doctrine of Christ*...But when numerous and opulent societies were established in the great cities of the empire, in Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome, the reverence which Jerusalem had inspired to all the Christian colonies insensibly diminished. The Jewish converts, or as they were afterward called, the Nazarenes, who had laid the foundations of the church soon found themselves overwhelmed by the increasing multitudes, that from all the various religions of polytheism inlisted (sic) under the banner of Christ” (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 1, pg. 453, emphasis mine).

>From 66 to 70 AD, the Jewish people in Judea revolted against Roman rule. The Romans sacked Jerusalem, killing many of its inhabitants and destroying the Herodian temple in which Jews worshipped. “The ruin of the temple, of the city, and of the public religion of the Jews, was severely felt by the Nazarene” (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 1, pg. 453). In the aftermath of this revolt, the Roman Emperor renamed Jerusalem *Aelia Capitolina*, and ordered a general persecution against the Jewish religion. In order to escape persecution, the Nazarenes appointed a gentile bishop to lead them. This bishop convinced many of them to renounce Mosaic Law and God’s Holy Days and Festivals (Leviticus 23). However, some Nazarenes did not comply with this order. “The name of Nazarenes was deemed too honourable for those Christian Jews, and they soon received from the supposed poverty of their understanding, as well as of their condition, the contemptuous epithet of Ebionites. *In a few years after the return of the church of Jerusalem, it became a matter of doubt and controversy, whether a man who sincerely acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah, but who still continued to observe the law of Moses, could possibly hope for salvation*” (ibid, pg. 455, emphasis mine).

The Nazarenes (or Ebionites) melted into obscurity: “The unfortunate Ebionites, rejected from one religion as apostates, and from the other as heretics, found themselves compelled to assume a more decided character; and although some traces of that obsolete sect may be discovered as late as the fourth century, they insensibly melted away either into the church or the synagogue” (ibid, pg. 455).

The separation of Christians from God’s laws, Holy Days and Festivals was almost complete by the end of the first century. Then, in 135 AD, a false messiah named Bar Kochba led a second failed revolt against Roman rule. “The one thing that does happen in the second revolt, though, is [that] the self-consciously apocalyptic and messianic identity of Bar Kochba forces the issue for the Christian tradition. It appears that some people in the second revolt tried

to press other Jews, including Christians, into the revolt, saying, 'Come join us to fight against the Romans. You believe God is going to restore the kingdom to Israel, don't you? Join us.' But the Christians by this time are starting to say, "No, he can't be the messiah -- we already have one." And at that point we really see the full-fledged separation of Jewish tradition and Christian tradition becoming clear" (from *Jews and the Ancient World*, companion text from the PBS Frontline special, *From Jesus to Christ, a portrait of Jesus' world*.)

The earliest Christians obeyed the law of God, and observed the Holy Days and Festivals that begin with Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23). We have seen how the forces of history led later Christians to renounce Mosaic Law and God's Festivals and Holy Days. These laws (such as the seventh-day Sabbath) and Holy Days and Festivals were considered *too Jewish*, and no one wanted to be associated with the persecuted Jews in the last and first halves of the first and second centuries. Therefore, they sought replacements; hence the creation of Easter and Christmas as replacements for Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles.

The latent paganism of the gentile converts also contributed to the gradual renunciation of God's laws, Holy Days, and Festivals, as found in the Old Testament.

### **Paganism wrapped in the cloak of Christianity**

During the latter part of the first century, certain heresies began to creep into the Church. Jude condemned this trend. He warned Christians to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 3). Even the Apostle Paul decried the substitution of God's word with worldly traditions: "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the *tradition of men*, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

The men who succeeded the Church leaders of the apostolic era (31 AD to the 90s AD) grew up in a world infused with paganism and Hellenism (Greek ideas): "The innumerable deities and rites of polytheism were closely interwoven with every circumstance of business and pleasure, of public or private life; and it seemed impossible to escape the observance of them, without, at the same time, renouncing the commerce of mankind" (*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 1., pg. 460).

Because they did not want to be associated with the persecuted Jews, and because they wanted to accommodate the pagan converts, these men sought to replace God's laws, Holy Days and Festivals with pagan substitutes. For example, "The Roman Catholic Church chose December 25 as the day for the Feast of the Nativity in order to give Christian meaning to existing pagan rituals. For example, the Church replaced festivities honoring the birth of Mithra, the god of light, with festivities to commemorate the birth of Jesus, whom the Bible calls the light of the world. The Catholic Church hoped to draw pagans into its religion by allowing them to continue their revelry while simultaneously honoring the birthday of Jesus" (*MSN Encarta Encyclopedia*, web edition). The early Roman Catholic Church might have had good intentions in trying to convert the gentiles by Christianizing pagan rituals. But in doing so, they undermined the truth of God.

### **Hellenistic influences on Christianity**

Hellenism refers to "Greek culture and the diffusion of that culture" (*Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*, article on Hellenism). Greek ideas were first propagated throughout the

Mediterranean world by the conquering armies of Alexander the Great, in the fourth century BC: “The conquests of Alexander the Great spread Hellenism immediately over the Middle East and far into Asia. After his death in 323 B.C., the influence of Greek civilization continued to expand over the Mediterranean world and western Asia” (*Columbia Encyclopedia*, article on Hellenism).

The Romans adopted Greek ideas. “When we think of the conquests of Rome, we usually think of the armies which she defeated, and the lands which she subdued. But these were not the only conquests which she made. She appropriated not only foreign lands, but also foreign ideas. While she was plundering foreign temples, she was obtaining new ideas of religion and art. The educated and civilized people whom she captured in war and of whom she made slaves, often became the teachers of her children and the writers of her books. In such ways as these Rome came under the influence of foreign ideas. The most powerful of these foreign influences was that of Greece. *We might say that when Greece was conquered by Rome, Rome was civilized by Greece.* These foreign influences were seen in her new ideas of religion and philosophy, in her literature, her art, and her manners” (William Morey, *Outlines of Roman History*, chapter 18, emphasis mine).

Christianity was born in the Roman Empire, in the first century AD. By the end of the second century, it had spread throughout a Mediterranean world laden with Hellenic (Greek) ideas and philosophies. After the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Jewish revolts, the early pagan converts and their leaders began to discard Old Testament theology. But they had to replace such theology with something else. As we’ve seen in the aforementioned example of Christmas, they thus began to Christianize pagan ideas and philosophies. Many of these ideas were first taught, or made famous, by Plato.

### **The neo-Platonist church fathers**

Neo-Platonists: such a fancy title. However, this title can appropriately be affixed to many of the so-called church fathers of the second, third and fourth centuries AD.

Plato (c. 428 - 347 BC) lived in Athens and became the most celebrated philosopher in the Western world. He founded the Academy, considered by many to be the first university in Europe. His earlier works demonstrated the teachings of Socrates, and he later advanced theories on forms, ethics, knowledge, psychology, and politics. Perhaps his greatest contribution to political science was *The Republic*, a treatise on the ideal or just state that must be ruled by benign philosopher-kings. “Plato’s influence throughout the history of philosophy has been monumental.... (The Academy) continued in existence until AD 529, when it was closed by the Byzantine emperor Justinian I, who objected to its pagan teachings. Plato's impact on Jewish thought is apparent in the work of the 1st-century Alexandrian philosopher Philo Judaeus. Neoplatonism, founded by the 3rd-century philosopher Plotinus, was an important later development of Platonism. *The theologians Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and St. Augustine were early Christian exponents of a Platonic perspective. Platonic ideas have had a crucial role in the development of Christian theology* and also in medieval Islamic thought” (*MSN Encarta Encyclopedia*, article on Plato, emphasis mine). Neo-Platonists were devotees of Plato’s ideas.

Even the Catholic Encyclopedia admits Plato’s influence on early Christian theology: “Nevertheless, the great majority of the Christian philosophers down to St. Augustine were Platonists. They appreciated the uplifting influence of Plato's psychology and metaphysics, and

recognized in that influence a powerful ally of Christianity in the warfare against materialism and naturalism” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, article on Plato).

Why were many so-called church fathers (e.g. Clement, Origen & St. Augustine, perhaps the most famous and influential Christian theologian) devoted to Platonic ideas? These men were products of their time. They were pagan converts who had previously embraced Hellenic and pagan ideas. And because they discarded most Old Testament theology, they thus needed replacements. They found several replacements in the teachings of Plato.

The “Greek apologists recognized also elements of truth in Hellenic literature, especially in the Platonic and Stoic philosophy, and saw in them, as in the law and prophecies of Judaism, a preparation of the way for Christianity. Justin (Martyr) attributes all the good in heathenism to the divine Logos (Jesus), who, even before his incarnation, scattered the seeds of truth...and incited susceptible spirits to a holy walk. Thus there were Christians before Christianity; and among these he expressly reckons Socrates and Heraclitus. Besides, he supposed that Pythagoras, Plato, and other educated Greeks, in their journeys to the East, became acquainted with the Old Testament writings, and drew from the doctrine of the unity of God, and other like truths...This view of a certain affinity between the Grecian philosophy and Christianity, as an argument in favor of the new religion, was afterwards further developed by the Alexandrian fathers, Clement and Origen” (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, pg. 114). Furthermore, “even Augustine acknowledges the Platonists approach so nearly to Christian truth that with a change of some expressions and sentences, they would be true Christians” (ibid, pg. 114).

Many church leaders from the second century onward revered Plato. His *Republic* was written in the form of a dialogue between Socrates and two other men. Plato wrote in the voice of Socrates. In the last chapter entitled *Rewards Now and Hereafter*, Plato (in the voice of Socrates) discusses his idea of immortality: “Don’t you realize that our mind is immortal and never dies? I asked.” “Anyway, my recommendation would be for us to regard the soul as immortal and as capable of surviving a great deal of suffering, just as it survives all good times.”

Plato and others taught that the “soul” survives the death of the human body. “The popular belief among the ancient Greeks and Romans was that man passes after death into the Underworld, the Greek *Hades*, the Roman *Orcus*...Plato, viewing the human soul as a portion of the eternal, infinite, all pervading deity, believed in its preexistence before this present life, and thus had a strong ground of hope for its continuance after death. All the souls (according to his *Phaedon* and *Gorgias*) pass into the spirit-world, the righteous into the abodes of bliss, where they live forever in a disembodied state, the wicked into *Tartarus* for punishment and purification (which notion prepared the way for purgatory)” (*History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, pgs. 591-592).

Several influential church fathers, including the famous Augustine, were neo-Platonists who embraced Plato’s ideas about the afterlife and the immortality of the soul. They thus synthesized Platonic ideas with biblical theology. Later, the Catholic Church enforced these beliefs, and dissidents would find themselves in danger of the rack or fire. The Protestant churches that emerged from the Protestant reformation protested against papal rule and infallibility, and against priestly excesses. However, they did not object to the foundational beliefs of the Catholic Church, including the unbiblical and pagan notion of the immortality of the soul.

## Immortality of the Soul? Nonsense!

Most Christians believe they have an immortal soul. Upon their death, this soul will either ascend to heaven or descend to hell. This is false. “No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man” (John 3:13). Jesus never promised eternal life in heaven. Moreover, the Bible does not contain the words “immortal soul.” Rather, Paul stated that only Jesus has attained immortality (I Timothy 6:16).

Right now, immortality belongs only to God (I Timothy 6:16) and to spirit beings (e.g. angels, demons). Instead, our fate is the grave. God said to Adam, “By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19). And it’s “appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

God did not give us an immortal soul. Instead, He gave us a spirit in man: “But it is a *spirit in man*, and the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding” (Job 32:8). This human spirit separates us from animals. It gives us the ability to reason and discern between right and wrong. It’s also instrumental in salvation: “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself testifies with *our spirit* that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him” (Romans 8:14-16).

God’s Spirit interacts with our spirit to create a new creature in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17). We are then begotten, or conceived, by God. This is analogous to human creation. When our fathers’ sperm united with our mothers’ egg, we were conceived and born nine months later. Likewise, God’s Spirit unites with our spirit to create a new spiritual creature in Christ. We are spiritually conceived but not yet born. The nine months we spend in our mothers’ womb is analogous to the lifetime we spend nurturing this new creature in Christ. We feed it through Bible study, prayer, fasting, and obedience to God.

Although our temporal bodies decay daily, this new creature in Christ is renewed: “Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (II Corinthians 4:16-18).

Paul contrasts our fleshy bodies, which he calls “tabernacles” or “tents,” with the spiritual new creature in Christ. “For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life” (II Corinthians 5:1-4). We “groan” in our temporal bodies, forever yearning for the day when our spiritual bodies will emerge. The difference between our physical and spiritual bodies is almost indescribable. “There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an

imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body” (I Corinthians 15:40-44).

We cannot inherit the Kingdom of God in our temporal bodies. But the new creature in Christ will: “I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed -- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” (I Corinthians 15:50-52).

At the resurrection, this new creature in Christ is born. If we’re living when Jesus returns, we’ll be changed. If not, God will resurrect us, or rather, the new creature in Christ. We’ll shed our temporal bodies and be clothed with immortality. This will occur in the “twinkling of an eye.” At one moment, we’re flesh; at another, spirit beings. Jesus described the spirit body to Nicodemus: “You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:7-8).

### **The state of the dead**

According to the Bible, the dead are *asleep*. “For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who *have fallen asleep* in Christ have perished. If we have hope in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied” (I Corinthians 15:16-20). Also, Luke writes that Stephen “fell asleep” after his stoning (Acts 7:60).

We came from dust, and to dust we shall return. The dead know nothing: “For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten. Indeed their love, their hate and their zeal have already perished, and they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6). Moreover, “For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust” (Ecclesiastes 3:19-20).

God said that we’re destined to return to dust; in other words, the grave. The foregoing scriptures and sections prove that our “human spirit” (commonly referred to as “soul”) doesn’t ascend into heaven or descend into someplace called hell after death. (For a description of our fate, and of the “human spirit,” please read our articles entitled *Destination Heaven or Destination Earth?* and *Pentecost & the Meaning of Life*.) Instead, the grave awaits us after death.

### **The Old Testament “hell”**

The word “hell” in the Old Testament is translated exclusively from the Hebrew word *Sheol*. Many of the older translators (e.g. the King James Version of 1611) translated Sheol as either “hell” or the “grave.” However, these older translators were products of their time, and therefore accepted the worldly traditions that have been passed down throughout the millennia. It’s helpful to remember Paul’s advice with respect to these traditions: “See to it that no one takes

you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the *tradition of men*, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

As we’ve already seen, many early church fathers were neo-Platonists who embraced Plato’s ideas about the afterlife. Despite God’s unambiguous declaration to Adam - “for dust you are and to dust you will return” (Genesis 3:19) - these men Christianized Plato’s doctrine that immoral and amoral “souls” are tormented in the afterlife, and that good “souls” are rewarded with bliss. The older translators believed this nonsense, and unfortunately many people today blithely accept such pagan notions. The later translators, however, realized that these Old Testament scriptures referred to the “grave,” and in most places translated *Sheol* as the grave. (In a few other places, they did not translate *Sheol*. Instead, they included and italicized the Hebrew word in the translated sentence.)

### The New Testament “hell”

The word “hell” in the New Testament is translated from the following Greek words:

- a) ***Gehenna*** (occurs twelve times: Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33. Mark 9:43, 45, 47. Luke 12:5. James 3:6): This is from the transliterated Hebrew word *Gai Hinnom*, which means “Valley of Hinnom.” Anciently, this Valley of Hinnom was where human sacrifice occurred (II Kings 23:10; Isaiah 30:33; Jeremiah 7:31, 32; Jeremiah 19:11-14). “The place acquired an evil repute on account of the idolatrous practices carried on there” (*Hasting’s Dictionary of the Bible*, article on Valley of Hinnom). By the first century AD, in Jesus’ time, “perpetual fires (were) said to have been kept burning to consume the rubbish of the city (Jerusalem)” (ibid, same article). Thus, Jesus’ use of the word *Gehenna* (e.g. Matthew 5:22, etc.) evoked a place where people were once burnt alive. By using *Gehenna* in the context of God’s punishment (e.g. Matthew 10:28, 23:15, etc.), Jesus was using this place as an example of what God will do to evildoers: “Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire, says the LORD Almighty. Not a root or a branch will be left to them” (Malachi 4:1). Notice that evildoers will not burn eternally, but that they will be burnt and consumed by fire. The fire stoked by God at Jesus’ return will burn and consume the evildoers. This is the proper meaning of *Gehenna* fire (unfortunately mistranslated as “hell fire” in several older translations).
- b) ***Hades*** (occurs eleven times: Matthew 11:23; 16:18. Luke 10:15; 16:23. Acts 2:27, 31. I Corinthians 15:55. Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14): This word should be translated as the “grave.” From Appendix 131 of the Companion Bible: “As Hades is the Divine Scriptural equivalent of *Sheol*....It may be well to note that while ‘Hades’ is rendered ‘hell’ in the New Testament (except once, where the rendering ‘the grave’ could not be avoided), *Sheol*, its Hebrew equivalent, occurs 65 times, and is rendered ‘the grave’ 31 times (or 54%); ‘hell’ 31 times (4 times with margin ‘the grave,’ reducing it to 41.5%); and ‘pit’ only 3 times (or 4.5 %)...The rendering ‘the grave’....exactly expresses the meaning of both *Sheol* and *Hades*. For, as to direction, it is always down; as to place, it is in the earth; as to relation, it is always in contrast with the state of the living

(Deuteronomy 32:22-25 and I Samuel 2:6-8); as to association, it is connected with mourning (Genesis 37:34, 35), sorrow (Genesis 42:38. II Samuel 22:6. Psalms 18:5, 116:3), fright and terror (Numbers 16:27, 34), mourning (Isaiah 38:3, 10, 17, 18), silence (Psalms 6:5; 31:17; Ecclesiastes 9:10), no knowledge (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10), punishment (Numbers 16:29, 34; I Kings 2:6, 9. Job 24:19).....corruption (Psalms 16:10. Acts 2:27, 31); as to duration, resurrection is the only exit from it (Psalms 16:11. Acts 2:27, 31; 13:33-37; I Corinthians 15:55. Revelation 1:18; 20:5, 13, 14).”

- c) *Tartaroo* (or *Tarturus*) occurs only in II Peter 2:4 - “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons, to be held for judgment.” Some of the oldest manuscripts use the term “chains of darkness” in the place of “hell.” The former rendering is reminiscent of Jude’s description of demons: “And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6). Jude referred to fallen angels who, because they rebelled against God, turned into demons. These demons are reserved in “everlasting chains” until the future judgment of God. The word *Tartaroo* or *Tarturus* therefore applies only to these demons, and not to humans.

### **Hell is a myth**

Hell is fictional. Moreover, the doctrine of hell is inextricably tied to the belief in the immortality of the soul. However, the Bible clearly states that only Jesus has attained immortality (I Timothy 6:16), and that our fate is the grave (Genesis 3:19, Ecclesiastes 3:19-20). However, there’s hope after the grave.

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming” (I Corinthians 15:20-23). The first resurrection (of the dead in Christ) occurs when Jesus returns; the living saints will be changed. The second resurrection of everyone not resurrected or changed when Jesus returns will occur one thousand years later (Revelation 20:5). The “second death” awaits everyone who consciously and stubbornly rejects Jesus: “The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” (Revelation 20:13-14). This is the death from which there is no resurrection. (Send for our free audio tape entitled, "The Three Resurrections.")

God is the embodiment of love. Satan, on the other hand, is the embodiment of evil. The doctrine of hell is an evil, satanic myth designed to portray God as uncaring, mean, and unmerciful. That is not the God portrayed in the Bible. And it is not the God who “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

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