



THEOLOGY PUB

What the...? HELL!

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**“God gives us what we want, and if that’s hell,
we can have it.”** -Rob Bell in *Love Wins*

“Abandon every hope, who enter here.”

-sign on the gate into hell, in Dante, *Inferno*, Canto 3

Rob Bell & Love Wins

- Love Wins: A Book about Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/05/us/05bell.html>
- <http://www.gregboyd.org/blog/rob-bell-is-not-a-universalist-and-i-actually-read-love-wins/>
- Watch Rob Bell & a Newsweek editor here: <http://livestre.am/F4gw>
- Hell is STILL a touchy subject

60% of Americans believe in hell. And 92% of those who attend church every week believe in hell.

Questions for Tonight:

- What do you think of when you think of hell? Lake of fire? “Turn or Burn!” Devils & pitchforks?
- Do you think hell exists literally?
- What do you think of Christians using the concept of hell as an evangelistic tool? Questions like: If you died TONIGHT, do you know where you would go?
- If not hell...what? A hell that “loves” people into repentance? - God’s restorative justice? Annihilationism? What?
- If we *lose* hell, what do we really lose? What might we gain?
- What is the Jewish perspective on hell/afterlife?

Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms: “In Christian theology, the place of the dead after death in which the wicked endure eternal punishment and the total absence of God.”

Sheol: "a dark mysterious, murky place people go when they die." (from Rob Bell’s *Love Wins*). There isn’t any judgment or differentiation between "righteous" or "unrighteous" people in Sheol.

Gehenna: Jesus used the word Gehenna when talking about "hell." It was used 12x in the New Testament and it was actually a huge garbage dump, where it burned day & night. All throughout Jesus' sayings of hell - there is an incredible diversity of parables & metaphors used - such that logically not all could be true at the same time - we can't take these literally.

Quotes to ponder:

- Clement of Alexandria (ca. 195): "All souls are immortal, even those of the wicked. Yet it would be better for them if they were not deathless. For they are punished with the endless vengeance of quenchless fire. Since they do not die, it is impossible for them to have an end put to their misery."
- Diodore of Tarsus (320-394): "For the wicked there are punishments, not perpetual, however, lest the immortality prepared for them should be a disadvantage, but they are to be purified for a brief period according to the amount of malice in their works. They shall therefore suffer punishment for a short space, but immortal blessedness having no end awaits them...The penalties to be inflicted for their many and grave sins are very far surpassed by the magnitude of the mercy to be showed them."
- Madeleine L'Engle: "All will be redeemed in God's fullness of time, all, not just the small portion of the population who have been given the grace to know and accept Christ. All the strayed and stolen sheep. All the little lost ones."
- Peter Lombard (c. 1100): "the elect shall go forth...to see the torments of the impious, seeing which they will not be grieved, but will be satiated with joy at the sight of the unutterable calamity of the impious."
- Julie Clawson (on Rob Bell's new book *Love Wins*): "Hell is real, but it is a place we create for ourselves as we reject the gift of life God offers to us. But in the scriptures judgment is always connected to restoration. God's essence is love and that essence can never change. The gates of heaven never shut, for even as God will not abide injustice and sin in God's realm, God by nature is always desiring the reconciliation and restoration of all things. God can never stop being God which means that in the end, love has to win."
- Rob Bell: "Don't turn your speculation into dogma." Speculation is ALL we can do when it comes to talking about things like heaven & hell and the eternal destinies of other people.

Questions of Justice:

- Retributive Justice: Any form of justice that puts things right through punishment or payback: an eye for an eye. The wrong must be set right through action of some sort against the wrongdoer.
- Restorative Justice: A theory of justice that focuses on repairing a harm or offense so that the relationship between victim and offender can be restored.
- If God resorts to retributive justice as the prominent way of dealing with sinners, then the traditional views of hell make sense. But if God seeks to reconcile with sinners through restorative justice, then we must rethink our views of hell. (*Razing Hell*, by Sharon Baker)
- Some think that we need hell so that God can have justice (retributive) on God's creation.



Word Translated "Hell"	Linguistic/Cultural Origin	Definition/Explanation	Selected Scriptural References
Sheol	Hebrew Occurs 66 times in Hebrew Scriptures, but in no other Semitic languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The place of the dead" • The realm of all the dead, without regard to merit or righteousness • A region outside of the earth, but accessible to God • In visual depictions it is usually located beneath the earth. • Nowhere in the Hebrew Scriptures is Sheol regarded as a place of punishment or torment. • The concept of an infernal "hell" developed in Israel in the Hellenistic period 	Translated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "the grave" • "the pit" • "the dead" • "hell" Psalm 139:8 Job 14:13 Eccl. 9:10 Hosea 13:14
Gehenna	Greek and Latin form of "Valley of Hinnom" Occurs 12x in the New Testament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A ravine south of Jerusalem which, during the time of the monarchy, was the scene of an idolatrous cult involving the passing of children through fire • The name came to be used in a metaphorical sense, to denote a place of fiery torment reserved for the wicked either immediately after death or ultimately after the Last Judgement • Greco-Roman influence on Judaism brought in ideas about a blazing hell • Gehenna is conceived by NT writers as identical with the "lake of fire" into which Hades/Sheol will itself ultimately will be cast 	Translated as "hell" Matthew 5:22 18:9 23:33 Luke 12:5
Tartaros/ Tartarus	Greek/Latin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From classical mythology • A deep, gloomy place even below the underworld (Hades) • Used as a dungeon of torment and suffering 	ONLY in 2 Peter 2:4 – Note that only demons are cast into "hell" in this passage, not humans

Hades	Greek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greek version of the Hebrew concept of Sheol “place of the dead” • No value judgement on those who exist there, at least in Greek understanding • All dead end up in Hades • Some NT references differentiate between Hades and heaven (see Mt and Lk references in next column) 	Acts 2:27 Matthew 11:23 Luke 10:15 Rev. 1:18
Abaddon	Hebrew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Originally, poetic name for the nether world - Sheol • From the word meaning “to perish, be lost” • Perdition – Latin Vulgate version of Bible “perdition” • Later, in rabbinic literature (200-500 CE), comes to mean specifically the place of damnation and punishment, regarded as a compartment of the place of the dead reserved for the wicked (Rev reference in next column uses the word to refer to the angel or king of the Pit) 	Proverbs 15:11 Proverbs 27:20 Psalm 88:11 Rev. 9:11
Infernus	Latin	In the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible (Latin version translated from Hebrew and Greek in 5 th century CE/AD), translated into English as “hell”	Proverbs 15:11 – Hebrew uses Sheol Matthew 11:23 – Greek uses Hades