

INTRODUCTION: It seems that lately I have noticed a renewed interest in what eternity may be... specifically conversations on the topics of Heaven and Hell. A lot of people seem to dismiss the possibility of life after physical death, but their interest in the prospects seem to increase as they consider more carefully their own mortality or that of someone they love. The Spiritual life of Eternity at one point or another beacons to all, but what can we realistically know of this realm? Modern science tends to dismiss the Spiritual realm in its entirety, including the reality of an all-powerful Being we call God. However, the history of humanity as chronicled by Cultural Anthropologists demonstrates a well-developed Spiritual Realm including an after-life.

In this article we will look at a number of thoughts about the afterlife primarily from the Judaeo-Christian perspective. If Heaven is the place of eternal pleasure and delight, must there be a Hell as a place of eternal torment? The Bible describes Hell as a place of separation from God, but must it be a place of “continuous conscious torment” with a soul writhing in agony for eternity? The Biblical “Lake of Fire” seems to hint at the annihilation at some point. The question revolves around whether a “Good God” would allow people to suffer forever. Wouldn’t it be more gracious for God to end their torment at some time and place? Wouldn’t a Gracious God allow for the possibility of redemption even of the damned?

A related argument rages between strict Calvinists and Armenians – strict Calvinists argue there is no free will because God’s will is utterly sovereign and all must live out their life as scripted by God. Armenian’s argue that free will is a requirement for holding individuals personally responsible for their choices and actions. Armenians concede that God knows everything that has happened or ever will happen because He knows the choices that were made because God is outside of the historical timeline. In the Armenian theology there is a continual dance between God’s Sovereignty and humanity’s free will. I think it is safe to say that there are some things that God wills to occur and other that He allows to occur. However, if there were no free will then God would be seen as creating people merely to populate Hell... and thus how can such a God be considered “GOOD.” These and other questions have raged and divided the denominations throughout the Church Age.

In this article we’ll look at a few of these considerations as expressed by noted scholars and writers and explore some of the ramifications of their thinking. As in all AD articles, bold text represents our own thinking and commentary, while quotes from other sources are presented in un-bold text with the resource noted.

1. First, the following is a cogent article on the Biblical Reasonableness of a Literal Hell with ongoing torment or the Annihilationist position by Christian Apologist Dr William Lane Craig. The link that follows takes you directly to Dr Lane’s website: https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/annihilationism?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=READ%20DR.%20CRAIG%27S%20RESPONSE&utm_campaign=Weekly%20Update%20Newsletter%3A%20June%20Wk%204

QUESTION - Hi Dr. Craig, My question for you concerns the nature of hell. I've read/listened to some of your thoughts on this, but I've never heard you attempt to give any sort of real defense on your particular stance. If I'm not mistaken, you hold the traditionalist view of eternal conscious torment rather than the conditional immortality view. However, it seems to me that scripture is much more in favor of the conditional immortality view. In the Old Testament, it seems that the "prototypes" of the final judgement (The Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, etc.) result in the destruction of the lost - not their being tortured. Moreover, in the New Testament, it seems as if Paul, Peter, and even Jesus himself teach that those who are not saved inherit death - not eternal conscious torment. Scripture says that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), those who believe in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). I'm sure you're well aware of these verses, and the other verses in the NT that seem to indicate that eternal life is only saved for those who believe in Christ. Those who do not [it would seem] will ultimately be destroyed. Moreover, this isn't an issue of translation or taking verses out of context. Without writing a novel, it actually seems that doing a language study or a context study actually supports conditional immortality as well.

I'm curious as to how you would respond to these arguments and why you personally reject conditional immortality. Thanks so much! Brantley, United States

DR. CRAIG'S RESPONSE: It seems to me that the traditional view that hell implies eternal, conscious torment is reasonably well-attested in Scripture. "These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (II Thessalonians 1.9). Denials of this doctrine spring primarily, I believe, from emotional abhorrence and noncogent philosophical objections. I wouldn't pretend that exegetical arguments are not available to the annihilationist [perspective], but I find the arguments you mention, Bentley, to be fundamentally misconceived. First, it's just bad hermeneutics to take Old Testament "*prototypes*" as the "interpretive key" to New Testament doctrine [including] on the state of the damned after death. You risk imposing some accidental feature of those stories onto New Testament teaching, which may be contrary to that feature. These Old Testament judgments of people of course involve destruction of the people concerned in the sense of the termination of their earthly lives, lest they still be around today, somehow preserved through the centuries in prison houses in Palestine! Moreover, what these prototypes essentially involve is the *death* of the persons judged, and the New Testament doctrine of everlasting torment involves exactly the same thing. That forms a nice segue to the second point. The most fundamental failing of your [Annihilationist] argument is the failure to appreciate that everlasting *existence* is not the same as everlasting *life*. The damned in hell have everlasting existence but not everlasting life. In the New Testament everlasting life is not *bios* (physical life, from which our word biology derives), but rather *zōē* (spiritual life). The damned, even if they have physical life, having been resurrected, do not have *zōē*. They are, in fact, spiritually dead and will remain so forever. So, of course, eternal life is available only through Christ and is therefore conditional

upon repentance and faith. Until annihilationist's grasp the fact that a person can exist forever and yet be spiritually dead, they will fundamentally misunderstand New Testament doctrine on immortality.

Dr Craig's logic about how we should interpret Scripture is accurate, and his explanation of existence in a spiritually dead or alive state is theologically correct. While Old Covenant theology precedes and informs New Covenant theology, many Christians make a serious mistake when they attempt to combine the two into a syntheses Scripture never intended. Additionally, Old Covenant Hebrew language is more limited than New Covenant Greek and Latin, and both are far more limited than modern day English language. From the modern perspective, the great specificity of words we take for granted was not possible for the ancients. With this in mind I see several views worth noting, and in the remainder of this article there are quotes from Zondervan's New International Dictionary of Bible Words that are shown in "Regular Type" from Zondervan articles, with the "Bold Type" representing AD thoughts.

- a. **First, regarding hell and salvation:** Most Christians have definite, though hazy, notions about heaven and hell. As Christians we are confident of our resurrection. We are sure as taught in Scripture that the just and unjust alike are ever-living persons; and that saved and unsaved will exist forever as self-conscious, aware individuals. Usually we speak of "heaven" as the place where believers go at death, and "hell" as the place where unbelievers go. But when we explore the use of these words in the Old Testament and New Testament, we discover how little is said about heaven and hell as we usually understand them.

A better view of the "Saved" is not merely as "believers" but rather people who have been rendered righteous *Justified* by Jesus' Blood, and being *Sanctified* by the inward transformational power and outworking of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Being justified and sanctified places individuals in right standing before a Holy and Righteous God. The "Unsaved" would not merely be "unbelievers" but those who have not been rendered righteous or sanctified by the applied Grace of God. Only the righteous may see God and remain in His Presence. Plus, we are rendered righteous only by the substitutionary death of Jesus... it is God's Grace through Jesus that allows a person to be "sealed by the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:30), the proof that we are saved.

- b. **Second, Old Covenant theology believed the place of the dead is Sheol [in Hebrew - S'ol]. This is the underworld place where all of the dead went:**

A look at the concordance shows that the Old Testament says little about hell. Some feel that the term *S'ol* (found 65 times in the Old Testament), transliterated *sheol* in the NASB but translated 'the grave' or 'the realm of death' in the NIV, represents the Old Testament conception of hell. However, such arguments are not completely satisfactory, and it is best to understand *s'ol* as a poetic synonym for *Qeber* [grave]. Thus, there are no references to an eternal destiny but simply to the grave as the resting place of the bodies of all people (e.g., Job 17:13-16; 24:19-20).

Deliverance from *s'ol* is rescue from impending death or future punishment (e.g., Psalm 89:48). So,

while the Old Testament does indicate a resurrection for the blessed dead, it has little to say of the destiny of the lost or of what happens to the human personality when the body dies and goes to the grave.

The Greco-Roman Culture viewed the Hebrew Sheol reality as functionally the same as their view of “Hades” as it also was the place for all of the dead. However, Pharisaic Hebrews believed in a resurrection of the dead, where the Greeks and Romans did not. They believed in an afterlife in a sort of “Shadow Lands” where color and vibrancy were muted. They believed that in this Shadow Lands if the dead had lived a “good life,” then their afterlife would be good as well. However, if they lived a “bad life,” their afterlife would be bad. Hades was a sort of a “shadow world” where you could interact with family and friends, but the savor and vigor of life would be gone.

- c. **Third, in New Covenant theology Jesus redefined what Heaven is all about. Jesus clearly taught that Heaven is an actual place:**
- i. The average Christian expects to go to Heaven at death. This popular view expresses much truth, but it is not intended or taught in the Bible's use of ‘Heaven’ (*Ouranos*). The basic concept of Heaven is rooted in the ‘heavens-and-earth’ duality of Old Testament thought. In the New Testament the ‘heavens and the earth’ remain aspects of material creation. The ‘heavens’ being the material place of the stars and constellations, whereas ‘Heaven’ is the Spiritual Realm... it is the abode or Kingdom of God, where He and His throne reside (e.g., Matthew 3:17; 5:16, 34, 45; 6:1, 9; 7:11, 21; 10:32, 33; 12:50; 16:17; 18:10, 14, 19; 23:9; Luke 11:13; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1, 5; 9:24).
 - ii. The vision of the New Testament writers corresponds with the Old Testament thought when the destiny of the ‘heavens and the earth’ are in view. One day this creation [old material world] will be swept away, and there will be ‘a new heavens and a new earth’ [meaning a new creation and material world] (2 Peter 3:10, 12; Revelation 21:1; cf. Matthew 24:35; Luke 21:33).
 - iii. However, when the New Testament writers speak of ‘Heaven’ in the Spiritual sense, there is a definite sharpening of focus. In the New Testament, Heaven is that Supernatural Realm in which God dwells and over which He exercises complete and direct control. Both Testaments view God as Sovereign and as ‘Lord of Heaven [supernatural] and earth’ [natural] (Matthew 11:25). But it is in Heaven where His will is done perfectly, that is, without sin (Matthew 6:10). On earth God’s control is indirect through His people aligned with Him, and here [also on earth] the wills of lost men and demons vigorously oppose Him. In Heaven, every redeemed [person] is joyfully subject to God's own Will.
 - iv. In Jesus, Heaven has established a bridgehead on earth. Throughout history the Supernatural has at times directly altered affairs on earth, as evidenced in the manna that ‘came down from Heaven’ (John 6:42). We see this same breakthrough in Jesus and His

miracles, each of which was ‘a sign from Heaven’ [meaning supernatural] (Matthew 16:1). In the Gospels, Jesus speaks often of the ‘Kingdom of Heaven,’ which He represented and established on earth. It is best to understand this Kingdom of Heaven as having present existence through the Church, meaning the Spirit indwelt body of believers in Christ. Although Jesus is physically resident in Heaven (Acts 1:11; Col 4:1), He is vitally and truly present in the members of His Body here on earth through the Holy Spirit. When we are responsive to His will, we represent the continuing direct breakthrough of the Spiritual Realm into the material... thus, we represent the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

- v. While ‘Heaven’ in the New Testament is outside of time it is not merely a timeless or locationless concept representing the breakthrough of Christ of the Spiritual realm into the material, ‘Heaven’ is more than this. The Spiritual Realm is the location of our true life and our hope. [Though alive on earth] we maintain our citizenship in Heaven (Philippians 3:20). It is not in the material realm of earth but in the Spiritual Realm of Heaven that our treasures lie (Matthew 6:20). It is there we will receive our rewards (Matthew 5:12; Luke 6:23); it is there that our names are inscribed (Luke 10:20; Hebrews 12:23). Our true home is not on earth but in Heaven (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 21:2). So, we look forward eagerly to that time when Jesus will come again from Heaven (Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:7). Then and only then will the material realm be remolded to be in perfect harmony with the Spiritual, when after the final judgment God will create a ‘new heavens and a new earth’ where the material and Spiritual will be perfectly joined.
 - vi. Very little in these uses of ‘Heaven’ suggest the common notion of the place we go while we await the resurrection or after the resurrection. Many theologians believe in an ‘intermediate state’ where the dead await the Resurrection. But it is clear from the New Testament that the blessed dead *do* enter the presence of God, existing with Him until the time of the Resurrection (2 Corinthians 5:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:14). It is also clear that, whatever ‘Heaven’ is like, after the final apocalyptic battle between God and the forces of evil, there will be a new creation and the enjoyment [by the faithful redeemed] of eternal life in God's presence (Revelation 21-22).
 - vii. **We at AD believe that since God and His abode in Heaven are outside of time, the linear time projections many believers place on entry into Heaven don’t apply. The thief on the cross next to Jesus said in Luke 23:42 “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Notice that in Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” No intermediate state was mentioned.**
- d. **Fourth,** The popular notion of Heaven and Hell as the abodes of the souls of the dead is more or less correct. But as we have seen, ‘Heaven’ is used in a much broader, more significant sense. How then is ‘Hell’ used?

- i. Three Greek words in the New Testament are most often used to express concepts associated with Hell. The two most significant are *Gehenna* and *Hades*. *Gehenna* occurs twelve times in the New Testament (Matthew 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6). It is always translated as 'Hell' in the NIV. The Greek word translated 'sent ... to Hell' in 2 Peter 2:4 appears only there in the New Testament; in this instance the word used is *Tartaroo*, which means 'to confine in Tartarus.' Tartarus was the Greek name for the mythological *abyss* where the most evil and rebellious were confined.
 - ii. *Hades* occurs eleven times in the New Testament (Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; 1 Corinthians 15:55; Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14). It is translated 'Hades' in the NASB and variously by 'death,' 'the grave,' and 'Hades' in the NIV. The reason for the wider scope of translations in the NIV is that this version adopts the Old Testament sense of the grave when quoting Old Testament passages that contain *s'ol* (Matthew 11:23; Luke 10:15; Acts 2:27, 31). These passages and 1 Corinthians 15:55 refer to the place where the body goes after death.
 - iii. But in other uses, *Hades* means the temporary residence of the persons awaiting final judgment. Luke 16 contains Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus. Both of these men died. The rich man found himself in *Hades*, 'where he was in torment' (v. 23; cf. v. 28). He was in 'agony' and in 'fire' (v. 24). But Lazarus was comforted and was in Abraham's very arms. Between those in *Hades* and the blessed dead [in Heaven] there is a great and uncrossable gulf (v. 26).
 - iv. Many believe that Jesus, at the time of His resurrection, released the saved of Old Testament times from Sheol [their place of waiting], causing them to go directly into God's presence (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:14). Also, in Revelation's prophetic portrayal of the end it is only those awaiting final condemnation who are in *Hades* when the 'dead [will be] judged according to what they [have] done as recorded in the books' (Revelation 20:12). In New Testament times, the rabbis used the word *Gehenna* to indicate the place of final punishment. Jesus maintained this meaning in the Gospels. In His warnings to His listeners Jesus often spoke of *Gehenna* in association with fire (Matthew 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43, 48). The phrase 'eternal fire' is also used of Hell, and human beings will be punished there in a fire prepared for 'the devil and his angels' (Matthew 25:41).
 - v. The most striking picture of eternal punishment is found in the Book of Revelation. There the state of the condemned is described in detail. They are in a 'fiery lake of burning sulfur' (19:20; cf. 20:10), a 'lake of fire' (20:14-15), where 'they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever' (20:10). [This is more of a view represented by Tartarus than Hades.]
- e. Scripture views each human being as a person with an eternal destiny. Each life is too significant [to God] to be simply snuffed out. There will be a resurrection of the saved and of the lost.

Resurrected individuals will be self-conscious, aware persons, destined for eternal existence. That endless life will be lived in the presence of God or in alienation from him. To the extent that we represent these realities by our use of 'Heaven' and 'Hell,' we correctly state the Bible's position. But as we read the New Testament we need to be careful not to read this limited, though accurate, concept into the word 'Heaven.'

- f. 'Heaven' is a significant theological term in the New Testament and does designate the destiny of the blessed. Against the background of the certainty of endless life comes the Gospel's good news. If we were left alone, we would all go to Hell. By Jesus' death, however, Christ has made perfect atonement for sin [which fundamentally separates us from God] and provided the basis to forgive all who choose to believe and follow Jesus. Anyone and everyone who turns to Him is assured of eternity in the presence of the Lord and avoids having to face condemnation.
- g. **This word study from Zondervan's New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words provides an excellent explanation of the convoluted topics of Heaven and Hell. Though theologians argue on the timing of entry into Heaven or Hell, all pretty much agree that both humanity and Angels are created *free-will* beings who are bound for one destination or the other.**
- h. **Thus, the idea of a literal Hell is well validated by Scripture, which pretty much dismisses an Annihilationism perspective. The question is left open as to what is meant by a "lake of fire" and "being in agony?" Are these literal concepts or are they more symbolic and metaphorical? Some quick thoughts:**
 - i. **In the Ancient Near East, the term "lake" was always a body of water which conveyed ideas of refreshment, comfort, a food source, etc. Lakes were uniformly seen as a good and blessed place, being a blessing from God. In contrast, a lake of fire would be the opposite. It would be a cursed place, a place of misery, torment, and futility. While many conclude that it would be a lava lake in which you would burn forever without it destroying you, it is likely to be more symbolic... meaning a place of separation from God and the attendant misery of that separation, the just result from a life poorly lived.**
 - ii. **Also, the term "Agony" may be either physical or emotional-relational. The agony mentioned may well be knowing the blessing you could have had and being denied it because of your own poor choices and actions. Essentially this may be seen as being in a "barren wasteland" rather than a "land of milk and honey" as the consequence of a life of rebellion against God. Therefore, if a person keeps refusing God and His will and purpose, God allows them to go their own way. Another aspect of the misery of Hell is being trapped for eternity in your unredeemed mental state. In essence God says to those who refuse Him, "You want your own way, you may have it," even if it means being trapped in your own fallen state for eternity. God is both gracious and forgiving, and He is persistent in pursuing us. However, Scripture demonstrates that He will not force Himself upon us.**

- iii. In the AD article on Theological Basics, basic Christian theology is presented and explained [<http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%206.6%20-%20Basic%20Doctrine%20&%20Theology.pdf>]. Many Christians and non-Christians make the mistake of what may be termed “anthropomorphic projection.” In other words, we impose upon God our own notions of humanity’s right and wrong and balance. For example, when humanity judges something, our sense of right and wrong is often confused by our anger or our kindness. Humanity has a hard time judging issues in a balanced sense of justice versus goodness, kindness, clarity, understanding, etc. God however, judges everything in perfect balance... His sense of Justice is perfectly balanced by his Character which is defined as one of Goodness, Grace, kindness; as well as just, jealous, etc. As my seminary professor Dr Louie often said, “When we face God for judgment in eternity, no one will be able to tell God He was unfair... we may not like the outcome, but it will be fair and we’ll agree with His conclusion.” My own perspective on God’s judgement, is that when I look into God’s Face of Perfection, my failures and inadequacy will be completely clear to me... essentially, I will judge myself.
 - iv. Another problem stemming from this conflict is how can we really trust God? How do we know God is Loving and Good? Though the Bible demonstrates God’s goodness, love and kindness, if you have never experienced His Gracious Love and unmerited Grace, can you really know Him as GOOD? Scripture challenges the individual to experience God – first in Psalm 34:8 – Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Then also in Psalm 119:103 - How sweet are your words [Scripture] to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! **Knowing God is a combination of discovering who He says He is in Scripture and having personal experience where God has demonstrated His love and faithfulness to you personally.** Once you have such a close encounter experience of God, it is really hard to doubt His love and Goodness. This is a major problem for non-Christians who have not personally experienced God’s love and Grace. Once you have experienced it, it’s hard to doubt Him. If you have never experienced it, you’ll always doubt Him. The Good News of the Gospel is that God wants to be known and wants to bless humanity... but on His terms.
2. Scripture seems to support the notion of there being levels of Heaven and Hell, which the early church supported. The highest layer of Heaven was the Seventh Level... where the throne of God resided. The lowest layer of Hell was the Seventh Level... the Lake of Fire [or Tartarus] where Satan resided.
- a. First, Paul wrote of an experience of the “Third Heaven” or third level of heaven in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 – I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the *third heaven*. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. **Though**

somewhat vague, this is obviously a Scriptural reference to support the idea of there being different levels in Heaven. It stands to reason that the same would apply in reverse to Hell. In this line of thought the worst of the worst would be confined to the seventh level Lake of Fire [Gehenna or Tartarus] in Hell.

- b. Second, the author, William Blake, wrote The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, and in response CS Lewis wrote The Great Divorce... a fictional story of a bus ride from the highest level of hell to the lowest level of Heaven. Lewis' perspective was that hell was fundamentally too insubstantial for its denizen's to long remain in the glaring substantiality of even the outskirts of Heaven. Lewis saw Heaven as "too REAL and substantial," and being caught up in it was obviously the ultimate Good. Alternatively, he saw Hell as too false and insubstantial, and being caught up in it was the ultimate misery. Hell was thus too insubstantial to provide any threat whatsoever to the substantiality of Heaven. As you get carried along in Lewis' story you see that the characters of the Fallen in their unredeemed state are uncomfortable in even the very periphery of Heaven. They are encouraged to stay and become more substantial, but their choices in life become a pattern that clings to them in death, and they return to their own place in Hell by their own choice. But to those who do respond even then to God's invitation are given the opportunity to stay. Lewis as an Apologist of the past generation of faith, still saw an opportunity for hope to break through and set the captives free. Even after death, in Lewis' view, Jesus is always calling... and those who answer may yet be saved.
- c. Third, my seminary theology professor, Dr Jeff Louie, saw the rebellious choices of wanting my own way instead of submitting to God as the decision that bound you to hell. God in essence says, "You want your own way, okay... welcome to yourself." Being trapped in one's own mind seems to me as the essence of Hell. Dr Louie saw humanity's refusal of God's Grace as what separated you from God. Separation from God is the nature of hell, and I suppose the depth of that separation and opposition determines the level in which you reside. Thus, rebellion against God is the unfortunate heart of Hell, while submission to God's love is the fortunate heart of Heaven.

3. CONCLUSION – Heaven and Hell are revealed in Scripture as real places and all of humanity, angelic and demonic beings are bound for one destination of the other. The choice of where we reside is in our exercise of free will. Included below is a copy of a Cultural and Historical Note from Zondervan's New International Version Archaeological Study Bible, one of my favorite resources:

- a. The Hebrew word for "depths" is Sheol (Psalm 139:8), and many translations leave the word untranslated. Sheol in the Old Testament was essentially the place beneath the earth to which the dead were thought to go. Thus, Sheol can refer both to the literal grave and to the netherworld [the home of the dead]. As the netherworld, it is similar to the Greek word Hades, the dark and sorrowful domain of the dead (as seen in Homer's Odyssey, book 11); in fact, it is usually translated

as “Hades” in the Septuagint [the early Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament]. Thus, in a single verse Sheol can refer to both the gated kingdom of the netherworld and to the dusty grave (Job 17:16). In Greek mythology, Hades was one of the Gods [king of the underworld which was named after him]. The Bible sometimes portrays Sheol as a beast with gaping jaws [insatiably hungry for the living] (Isaiah 5:14, 14:9; Habakkuk 2:5) in each case in referring to “the grave.”

- b. Visions of Sheol as a fearsome place appear in prophetic judgments and warnings. Ezekiel 31-32 includes elaborate depictions of the hordes confined in Sheol, and this vision serves as a warning to Egypt. Similarly, Jesus recounted the parable of the rich man in Hades/Hell [depending upon translation] in Luke 16:19-31 as a warning to His audience to repent.
- c. The range of meanings the word Sheol carries explains what seem to be inconsistencies in the text. On the one hand, no one praises God in Sheol (Psalm 6:5); one who is in the grave cannot testify to God’s Glory before the assembly of Israel at the Temple (Psalm 51:14). On the other hand, God is present even in Sheol (Psalm 139:8). Thus, even the dead in the netherworld are not beyond God’s Power and Presence. It is significant to note that Sheol in the Old Testament refers simply to the habitation of the dead not specifically to Hell as the place of punishment of the wicked dead. [The lack of such clarity indicates it serves both purposes depending upon the individual].
- d. In the New Testament, [there is much clarification about both Heaven and Hell] in citing the Old Testament. Yet again, Hades refers either to the grave or to the netherworld of the dead (Acts 2:27, 31 which states that Jesus was not left in the grave/Hades. In Revelation 20:13 Hades is the Netherworld, which yields up the dead to God’s judgment. Another New Testament term, the *abyss*, can refer to the dead (Romans 10:7) but usually describes a locale [e.g. Tartarus] reserved for imprisoned demonic powers (Luke 8:31; Revelation 9:1-2; 20:1). In classical Greek, *abyss* connotes unfathomable depths [where there is no escape].
- e. A New Testament term with Jewish roots is Gehenna, named for the Hinnom Valley south of Jerusalem... a place where Canaanites practiced child sacrifice [making it particularly vile to God] (see 2 Kings 16:3) that was desecrated by King Josiah (2 Kings 23:10). Jeremiah 7:32 declared that God would judge Judah there, and thus during the intertestamental period, the term came to be used for the domain where the wicked would receive eternal punishment (Matthew 5:22; 10:28; 18:9). Jesus often spoke of Gehenna as a place of fiery punishment (Matthew 5:22; 10:28; 18:9), also indicating that Gehenna’s intended purpose was as the site of punishment for demons, although wicked humans would also be consigned there (Matthew 25:41 NIV “eternal fire”). A similar word, a verb that means “to cast into Tartarus” appears in 2 Peter 2:4 NIV “sent to hell”) to describe the place where wicked angels [demons] are punished [who knew God and deliberately rebelled against God and His purposes]. Tartarus in Greek literature is the deepest part of Hades and locale of eternal punishment.
- f. **In closing, Biblical Scripture expresses God’s enduring Truth revealed to humanity within the context of redemptive history. The redemptive work of Grace we understand as Jesus’**

substitutionary death on the Cross to secure the forgiveness of Sin and eternal life for Jesus followers is unique to the Bible. The Bible's revelation of a Spiritual war ensuing between forces of evil arrayed against the forces of Good and of evil is very clear, note Ephesians 6:10-13:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.