

Loft Underground
What the Hell – Part One
Introduction

Hell brings to mind a certain set of images – fire, brimstone, burning sulfur, and all led by a fallen angel with horns, a pitchfork, and a pointed tail. As we will see, hell and the devil are, of course, mentioned in the Bible, but many of these images are cultural rather than Biblical.

Before we begin, make a list of words you would use to describe hell....take a few minutes...

The Beginning of Hell

Genesis 3 describes the fall of humanity away from God, and this is caused through listening to the serpent. Read Genesis 3 – in what way does hell break loose?

What attributes of the serpent would you say are devil-like?

Over the centuries some theologians have defined “hell” as the absence of God. In what way does Genesis 3 shed light on what it is to make decisions in the absence of God.

The Idea of “sheol”, the Underworld.

Hebrew uses the word “sheol” (pronounced shay-ole) to describe “the underworld.” Judaism used this concept to define a place where the unfaithful entered into nothingness, or in some cases the faithful until the Messiah comes.

How do the following verses describe the place of "sheol"?

Psalm 18: 5-7

Psalm 86: 13

Psalm 139:8

Jonah 2:2

The Idea of "Gehenna"

The word the New Testament uses for 'hell' is 'gehenna'. "Gehenna" literally means Valley of Hinnom which was a valley outside Jerusalem where residents of the city burned their trash. (If you want to smell hell, go take a whiff of your trash!)

Read Joshua 15:8 and 2 Kings 23:10 – these reference the Valley of Hinnom.

In the New Testament, hell (using the word and image of 'gehenna') becomes a much stronger concept. How do the following scriptures portray hell?

- Matthew 10:28

- Mark 9:43

Practical Thinking about Hell

After reading the verses above, how did the Bible change your thinking about hell?

How did the Bible verses confirm what you knew about hell?