

Auxiliary Sense Files | Senses of the Word "Hell"

An Auxiliary End Time File of the Website *Jesus and the End Time*

Both the Old and New Testaments of the KJV Bible use the word "hell" in a number of different senses. These different senses are described in respective headings below and followed by examples of Bible verses that illustrate their use in these senses. In order to keep this file to a reasonable size, the writer will usually include after each sense heading only two or three examples of verses from each Testament that use "hell" in that sense --- if there are that many. In cases in which the intended sense is not clear from a single verse, a few adjacent verses will be included to show the verse in its actual context. Because these verses have been chosen on the basis of their ability to illustrate the senses in which they use the word "hell", and not on the basis of their association with the End Time, these verses may or may not appear among those shown in the Auxiliary End Time Text Files.

The task of clearly understanding what the Bible says about hell is complicated by the fact that this word is an Anglo-Saxon word which the KJV Bible uses to translate a number of different Hebrew and Greek words. In the Old Testament, "hell" is often used to translate the Hebrew word which, when transliterated into English, reads "sheol", a word that is generally synonymous with the Greek word that is often transliterated into English as "Hades". In the New Testament, on the other hand, "hell" is sometimes used to translate the Greek word that is often transliterated into English as "Gehenna" and sometimes used to translate the Greek word that is transliterated into English as "Hades". In one case (2Pet. 2:4) "hell" is even used to translate the Greek word that is transliterated into English as "Tartarus". Those who wish to learn more about this subject should consult the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, which often uses the words "Sheol", "Gehenna" and "Hades" where the KJV Bible uses the word "hell".

The senses in which the KJV Bible uses the word "hell" may be summarized as follows:

1.) The Place(s) Below the Earth Sense: That sense of the word "hell" in which refers to a place or places that are located below the surface of the earth, just as terms like "heaven" and "the heavens" refer to a place or places that are located above the surface of the earth. When used in this sense "hell" can often be regarded as a synonym for terms like "the deep", "the deeps" or "the deep places of the earth". Examples of verses that use "hell" in this sense are shown below.

(A.) Examples from the Old Testament:

Deut. 32:22: For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.

Job 11:7-8: 7 Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? 8 It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?

Ps. 86:13: For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.

Ps. 139:7-8: 7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? 8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

(B.) Examples from the New Testament:

While the New Testament includes many verses which use the word "hell", it includes only a few verses which seem to use "hell" in a sense in which it refers simply to a place that is located below the surface of the earth. In spite of the fact that these verses are not good examples of the use of "hell" in the present sense, they are presented below for the sake of completeness.

Matt. 11:23: And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

Luke 10:15: And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.

Rom. 10:6-7: 6 But the righteousness ... speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above) 7 Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

2.) The Grave or Pit Sense: That sense of the word "hell" in which it is a synonym for or otherwise closely associated with terms like "the grave" and "the pit" that refer to the place(s) below the surface of the earth where the bodies of the dead lie, undergo corruption (decomposition), are consumed by worms, etc. Examples of verses that use "hell" in this sense are included below.

(A.) Examples from the Old Testament:

Ps. 16:9-10: 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. 10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Is. 14:13-15: 13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: 14 I will ascend above the heights of

the clouds; I will be like the most High. 15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

Ezek. 31:16: I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit: and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth.

(B.) Examples from the New Testament:

Acts 2:26-27: 26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: 27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Acts 2:31-32: 31 He [David] seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

Rev. 20:13: And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

3.) The Death or Destruction Sense: That sense of the word "hell" in which it is a synonym for or used interchangeably with words like "death" and "destruction". Examples of verses that use "hell" in this sense are included below.

(A.) Examples from the Old Testament:

Job 26:6: Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering.

Ps. 116:3: The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.

Is. 28:18: And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

Hab. 2:5: Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and ... all people:

(B.) Examples from the New Testament:

Matt. 10:28: And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Rev. 1:18: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Rev. 20:13: And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

4.) The Place or Habitation of the Dead Sense: That sense of the word "hell" in which it refers to a place under the earth which is the habitation of the dead, a place where they continue to exist, but only as shadowy remnants of their former selves. When the Bible uses "hell" in this sense it refers to a place similar to the one that ancient Gentiles called Hades, the underworld, the land of the dead, etc. Unfortunately, for present purposes, this similarity is obscured by the fact that, while the Bible often uses "the land of the living" (Ps. 52:5), it does not use it's opposite "the land of the dead" and instead uses euphemisms like "the land of darkness" (Job 10:21-22) and "the land of forgetfulness" (Ps. 88:12). Similarly, the Bible does not refer to the dead using Gentile terms like shades or images (eidolon), and instead refers to them simply as the dead or as those who "sleep in the dust" (Dan. 12:2) or "dwell in darkness" (Ps. 143:3). Examples of KJV Bible verses that use the word "hell" in this sense, or that imply a reference to it without using the word "hell" as such, are included below.

(A.) Examples from the Old Testament:

1Sam. 28:13-15: 13 And the king [Saul] said unto her [the woman of Endor], Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. 14 And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. 15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more....

Prov. 7:25-27: 25 Let not thine heart decline to her [an harlot] ways, go not astray in her paths. 26 For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. 27 Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

Is. 14:9: Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

Ezek. 32:21+27: 21 The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword. ... 27 And they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war: and they have laid their swords under

their heads, but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though they were the terror of ... the land of the living.

(B.) Examples from the New Testament:

Surprisingly, there are only a few verses in the New Testament which use the word "hell" as such in the above-described sense. These verses are included below.

Matt. 16:18: And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Acts 2:31: He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

Rom. 10:6-7: 6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above) 7 Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

5.) The Place Where the Dead are Confined Sense: A variant sense of the word "hell" as a place or habitation of the dead which stresses the fact that the dead are confined there and cannot ever escape that confinement. The Bible often conveys this stress by coupling the word "hell", or a word or phrase synonymous with it, with words like bars, gates, keys, chains or prison that are associated with the idea of confinement. Examples of verses of this kind are shown below.

(A.) Examples from the Old Testament:

Job. 17:13-16: 13 If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness. 14 I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou are my mother, and my sister. 15 And where is now my hope? as for my hope, who shall see it? 16 They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when our rest together is in the dust.

Job 38:17: Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?

Ps. 107:18-20: 18 Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. 19 Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. 20 He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

Is. 38:10-11: 10 I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years. 11 I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living:

(B.) Examples from the New Testament:

Matt. 16:18: And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

1Pet. 3:18-19: 18 For Christ also ... suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: 19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

2Pet. 2:4: For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

Rev. 1:18: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

6.) The Habitation, Kingdom or Domain of Superhuman Evil Beings Sense: That sense of the word "hell" in which it refers to the place that is the habitation, kingdom, domain, etc. of superhuman beings of the kind the Bible refers to using terms like the devil, devils, evil angels and evil spirits, among others. Examples of verses that use the word "hell" or some obvious synonym for it in this sense are included below.

(A.) Examples from the Old Testament:

Although the Old Testament uses the word "hell" as such over thirty times, it does not include any verses that use it in the above-described sense. It also does not include any verses that use other words or phrases to refer to a place of this kind. The absence of such verses may, however, only indicate that, with the possible exception of the "sons of God" mentioned in v. 2 and 4 of Gen. 6:1-13, no Old Testament text describes any superhuman being as "fallen" or as rebelling against or otherwise willfully disobeying God. This, in turn, makes sense if a person takes into account that the fall of the fallen angels of popular Christian belief is not described in the Old Testament, but rather in books, now often called "the Enoch literature", which describe angels who rebelled against God and were cast out of heaven into a burning valley beneath the earth. Those who wish to learn more about this subject should read one of the English translations of these books that are now available both in print and online. Of special interest in this connection are the books now commonly referred to as "1Enoch", "The Book of Watchers" and "The Similitudes (or Parables) of Enoch".

(B.) Examples from the New Testament:

Unlike the Old Testament, the New Testament includes many verses which mention a place that is or will be the habitation or kingdom of superhuman being(s) like the devil, devils, evil angels and evil spirits. In some cases these texts

explicitly refer to this place as "hell". In most cases, however, they use phrases that clearly have a place of this kind in mind, but do not use the word "hell" as such. Examples of such phrases include "his [Satan's] kingdom", "the bottomless pit" and "the lake of fire". For the sake of completeness, the writer will include examples of verses of all of these kinds.

Matt. 12:26: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

Matt. 25:40-41: 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. 41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

2Pet. 2:3-4: 3 And through covetousness shall they [false prophets and teachers] with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. 4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

Rev. 20: 1-3+7: 1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. ... 7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

7.) The Place of Punishment Sense: That sense of the word "hell" in which refers to a place where unrepentant sinners, evildoers, the unrighteous, etc. will be punished after they die. Although both the Old and New Testaments include many verses that describe God using fire to punish evildoers, the Old Testament typically describes God using fire to punish them *with death*, while the New Testament also describes God using fire to punish them *after death*. Surprisingly, this is true even in the case of verses that describe the fire as one that will burn forever, never be extinguished, etc. While this difference manifests itself here only as differences in the wordings of the Old and New Testament verses shown below, the writer considers this difference to be important enough that he has included a separate file titled "Notes on Everlasting Fire and Everlasting Punishment" that discusses this subject at length.

(A.) Examples from the Old Testament:

The Old Testament does not include any texts which clearly use the word "hell" in the above described sense. In spite of this, the writer will include below several examples of Old Testament verses which describe God using fire to express the anger he feels toward evildoers and other enemies. Among these, Deut. 32:22 is of special interest because it is the only Old Testament verse that uses the words "fire" and "hell" in the same verse. In addition, Is. 66:15-16 and 16:22-24 are of special interest because v. 44, 46 and 48 of Mark 9:41-48 seems to describe Jesus quoting therefrom. Finally, Is. 33:10-14 is of special interest because it sheds light on the relationship between terms like "devouring fire" and "everlasting burnings".

Deut. 32:22: For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.

Ps. 97:1-3: 1 The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. 2 Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. 3 A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.

Is. 33:10-14: 10 Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself. 11 Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you. 12 And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire. 13 Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might. 14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

Is. 66:15-16 + 22-24: 15 For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. 16 For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many. ... 22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. 23 And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. 24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

(B.) Examples from the New Testament:

Matt. 23:14-15 + 33: 14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. 15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. ... 33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

Matt. 25:41+ 46: 41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting

fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: ... 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Mark 9:43 + 47-48: 43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: ... 47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: 48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Luke 16:22-24: 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

Rev. 14:10-11: 10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: 11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

8.) The Personified Entity Sense: That sense of the word "hell" in which it refers to hell as if it were a living person. Since human beings do not usually speak about things as persons, it may be that texts which use hell in this way are using it in a figurative sense like the one they use when they refer to the United States or its government as "Uncle Sam", or like the one that they use when giving a name like "the Queen Mary" to an ocean liner. Examples of verses that use hell in this sense are included below.

(A.) Examples from the Old Testament:

Is. 28:18: And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

Is. 5:14: Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.

Hab. 2:5: Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and ... all people:

(B.) Examples from the New Testament:

Matt. 23:15: Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

Rev. 6:8: And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

Rev. 20:14: And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.