

# Beyond the Grave

**Text:** Luke 16:19-26

## Introduction:

1. The Bible reveals that death is not the end of our existence. Rather, it is a doorway, a gateway, into the eternal realm. There are only two destinations – heaven or hell; the broad way leading to destruction or the narrow way leading to life eternal.
2. The account of the rich man and Lazarus is a key passage on the subject of hell. Please note that this is not a parable!
3. In this lesson we want to study what lies beyond the grave for those who die without Christ. To help us to understand this subject, we will consider four things about hell.

## I. The Definition of Hell (Vs. 23)

There are four key words translated 'hell' in our Bible

### A. The Old Testament Word

1. '**sheol**' is the O.T. Hebrew word for hell.
2. 'sheol' occurs at least 65 times in the O.T.
3. It is translated three ways
  - a. 'grave' 31 times
    - i. Gen. 37:35 *"And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the **grave** (sheol) unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him."* This is the first occurrence of the word 'sheol' in the O.T. It is interesting to note that Jacob anticipated more than the physical grave as indicated by the words "unto my son". Remember that at this point, Jacob thought Joseph had been torn in pieces by a wild beast and thus would believe that Joseph was now in the region of departed spirits.
    - ii. There are other references that simply refer to the grave but it is clear that 'sheol' is often used in reference to the afterlife.
  - b. 'pit' 3 times (e.g. Num. 16:30 & 33)
  - c. 'hell' 30 times
    - i. Deut. 32:22 *"For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the **lowest hell**, (sheol) and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains."* This is the first time 'sheol' is translated 'hell' in the O.T. A couple of things are clear from this verse. 1. There is a place of fiery torment in hell (sheol) 2.

There are divisions within hell (sheol) as this place of torment is described as the “lowest hell”

- ii. The “lowest hell” is mentioned once more in a Psalm of David where David praises God that he has been delivered from this place. Psalm 86:13 *“For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the **lowest hell.**”*
- iii. Psalm 9:17 *“The wicked shall be turned into **hell**, and all the nations that forget God.”* Another clear reference to hell (sheol) as a place of judgment for the wicked.
- iv. Psalm 55:15 *“Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into **hell**: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.”*
- v. Psalm 16:10 *“For thou wilt not leave my soul in **hell** (sheol); neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”* This is one of the Messianic Psalms that predicted the resurrection of Christ (Refer Peter’s Pentecost Sermon in Acts 2:25-32). Does this man Christ suffered in the flames of hell? Absolutely not! This will be clear as our study progresses.

## B. The New Testament words

1. **‘hades’** = this is the N.T. Greek equivalent to the O.T. word ‘sheol’. It is found 11 times in 11 verses in the N.T. and is translated 10 times as ‘hell’ and once as ‘grave’. Examples:
  - a. Matt. 16:18 *“...the gates of **hell** (hades) shall not prevail against it.”*
  - b. Luke 16:23 *“And in **hell** (hades) he lift up his eyes being in torments...”*
  - c. Acts 2:27 *“Because thou wilt not leave my soul in **hell** (hades), neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”*
2. **‘gehenna’** = found 12 times in the N.T. and always translated ‘hell’. Gehenna was a burning rubbish dump on the west side of Jerusalem in the valley of the sons of Hinnom. Examples:
  - a. Matt. 5:22 *“But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of **hell** (gehenna) fire.”*
  - b. Matthew 23:33 *“Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of **hell** (gehenna)?”*
  - c. Note: This word is only ever used in reference to the unsaved.
3. **‘tartaros’** = only occurs once in the N.T. and refers to the deepest abyss of Hades; a place where evil angels are imprisoned in torment, awaiting future judgment. 2 Peter 2:4 *“For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell (tartaros), and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;”* (See also Jude 1:6)

## II. The Divisions of Hell (Vs. 25)

### A. Hell (hades/sheol) prior to Christ's resurrection

1. There was a place of comfort (Vs. 22, 23 & 25)
  - a. Called "Abraham's bosom" (Vs. 22 & 23)
  - b. Called 'paradise' by Christ
    - i. Luke 23:43 *"And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in **paradise**."*
    - ii. Now we can make sense of the reference to Christ's soul not being left in 'hell' (Acts 2:27; Psalm 16:10). Christ went to the paradise/comfort section of Hades/Sheol.
  - c. This is the section of sheol/hades the O.T. saints would go to prior to Christ's resurrection and ascension.
2. There was a place of torment (Vs. 23-25)
  1. This is the "lowest hell" described in the O.T. (Deut. 32:22; Psalm 86:13)
  2. This was the place where the wicked would go awaiting future judgment at the Great White Throne where death and hell (hades) will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15)
  3. Therefore, hell is God's remand centre where unrepentant sinners are held while they await judgment.
  4. Note: A remand centre is a place where criminals are held awaiting the day they will appear in court before the judge (J. Ecob).

### B. Hell, since the ascension of Christ

1. Paradise has been relocated to the immediate presence of God
  - a. Paul was "caught up to the third heaven...into paradise" (2 Cor. 12:1-4)
  - b. Now as a believer in the N.T. age, "to be absent from the body" is "to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8).
2. Eph. 4:8-10 seems to indicate the time when this change took place where it refers to Christ leading "captivity captive". When Christ ascended, He took the O.T. saints into the presence of God.

## III. The Description of Hell (Vs. 24)

Consider an 8-fold description of hell

### A. Hell is a real place

1. In the N.T. 162 passages speak about unrepentant people going to hell and 70 of these were described by Jesus Christ as he warned people to avoid it. (K. Piper Answers Book)
2. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt. 25:46)

### B. Hell is eternal

1. 2 Thess. 1:8-9 *"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:*

*Who shall be punished with **everlasting destruction** from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;”*

2. Matt. 25:41 *“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.”*
3. Jude 1:7 *“...suffering the vengeance of **eternal fire**.”*
4. “There is only one thing that I know of in which heaven is like hell – it is eternal. The wrath to come, the wrath to come, the wrath to come, forever and forever spending itself and never being spent.”

### **C. Hell is a place of fiery torment (Vs. 23, 25 & 28)**

1. This was a conscious torment as the rich man in hell experienced the senses of sight (Vs. 23), taste (Vs. 24), and hearing (Vs. 29-30)
2. This was a place of fire as he makes reference to being “tormented in this flame”
  - a. Matt. 13:41-42 *“The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a **furnace of fire**: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”*
  - b. Mark 9:43-44 *“And if they 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**: Where their worm dieth not, and the **fire is not quenched**.”*

### **D. Hell is a place of memory (Vs. 25)**

1. Abraham said “son remember”
2. Think of the memories of the rejected opportunities to receive Christ

### **E. Hell is a place of separation (Vs. 26)**

1. The rich man was separated from the saints of God in a place of comfort
2. If you reject Christ, you will be separated for all eternity – separated from the light of God’s presence; separated from everything pure, holy and lovely; separated from that godly mother who prayed and wept for your salvation; separated from that friend who shared Christ with you; separated forever from God himself.

### **F. Hell is a place of no escape (Vs. 26)**

1. According to Christ, Hell (hades) has gates (Matt. 16:18) and only Christ holds the key (Rev. 1:18)
2. A great gulf (chasm) was fixed (Vs. 26) between them and paradise was “afar off” (Vs. 23)

### **G. Hell is a place of unanswered prayer (Vs. 27)**

### **H. Hell is a place for unrepentant sinners (Vs. 27-31)**

1. The rich man knew that to repentance was required to stay out of hell! (Vs. 30)
2. This is why the “no repentance” gospel being preached today is so damnable and dangerous.

#### IV. The Deliverance from Hell

A. Hell was originally prepared for the devil & angels (Matt. 25:41)

B. God does not want to send you to hell!

1. 2 Peter 3:9 *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish**, but that all should come to repentance.”*

2. 1 Tim. 2:4 *“Who will have **all men to be saved**, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”*

C. Christ died on the cross to rescue you from hell (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8)

#### Conclusion:

1. Where are you going to spend eternity? Heaven or hell? Have you been saved?
2. As believers, are we being a witness, seeking to snatch precious souls from the fire (Jude 1:23)?