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## What Happens After You Die?

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In this study, the proper, sacred name Yahweh will be used in the commentary for the deity. However, the various versions of the Bible will be quoted as written.

This article does not claim to show all truth or to be an official messenger of Yahweh. The intention of this article is to inspire **you** to investigate and learn what truth is. Learn what the Bible says and what history tells you, then decide what to do with it.

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Perhaps one of the most important questions ever asked is “what happens after we die?” There have been many attempts to answer this question by various religions and secular groups alike. Even though there are commonly held answers to this question from most biblical religions, such as “going to heaven” and “going to hell” immediately upon death, however, many of these perspectives have been influenced by non-biblical traditions and belief systems. This study will attempt to answer this question based solely on what the bible says on the subject. Let’s begin at the very beginning.

## Death

After Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, He and Eve, as well as all of their offspring, entered a world of sin and death (Rom. 5:12-14). Since that time, it is appointed to all mankind to die at least once (Heb. 9:27), but what happens after death? One of the popular beliefs is that upon death your immortal soul immediately departs your body and heads off toward either heaven or hell, where it is to spend the rest of eternity in the reward of infinite bliss or in the punishment of infinite torment. However, is this really what the bible says? The Bible speaks of a place called “*Sheol*” in Hebrew. (Hebrew is the underlying language that most Old Testament Bibles are translated from.) *Sheol* is connected to where a person goes after death. Let’s use scriptures to uncover what and where this place is.

In the verses below, the underlying word when bolded is *Sheol*.

*So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father, and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy’s life, sees that the boy isn’t there, he will die. Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to **the grave** in sorrow. (NIV, Gen. 44:30-31)*

The sons of Jacob believed that if their father died, he would go “down to *Sheol*.”

*Then Moses said, "This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: If these men die a natural death and suffer the fate of all mankind, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into **the realm of the dead**, then you will know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt." As soon as he finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, and all those associated with Korah, together with their possessions. They went down alive into **the realm of the dead**, with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community. (NIV, Num. 16:28-33)*

In this verse, something "totally new" happened and people that were alive went into *Sheol*. Therefore, this seems to indicate that those who go to *Sheol* are normally dead. Also, because the "earth closed over them", implies that *Sheol* is in the ground.

*The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to **the grave** and raises up. (NIV, 1Sam. 2:6)*

In this verse, the bringing of death is equated with sending to *Sheol* and the giving of life is equated with raising others up.

*Her house is a highway to **the grave**, leading down to the chambers of death. (NIV, Prov. 7:27)*

Here *Sheol* is equated to "the chambers of death."

*Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in **the realm of the dead**, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom. (NIV, Eccles. 9:9-10)*

Apparently, there is no "work, planning, knowledge, or wisdom in *Sheol*."

*But you are brought down to **the realm of the dead**, to the depths of the pit. (NIV, Isa. 14:15)*

*You, LORD, brought me up from **the realm of the dead**; you spared me from going down to the pit. (NIV, Ps. 30:3)*

*Sheol* is said to be in a deep pit that you can be brought "down to" as well as brought "up from."

In the Strong's Lexicon the definition of *Sheol* under 1,B is the following:

*Sheol - the OT (Old Testament) designation for the abode of the dead (SEC #7585)*

The scriptures and Strong's definition above seem to indicate the following:

- *Sheol* is a place you go when you die.
- *Sheol* is in the ground or in a deep pit.
- *Sheol* is a place where there is no work, planning, knowledge, or wisdom.
- *Sheol* is a place where a person can be brought down to or up out of.
- *Sheol* is called the chamber, abode or realm of the dead.

## The Messiah and *Sheol*

In the following verse, a psalm written by David, prophecies about the death and resurrection of the Messiah.

*because you will not abandon me to **the realm of the dead**, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.* (NIV, Ps. 16:10)

The proof for this verse being about the Messiah is found in Acts:

*Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to **the realm of the dead**, nor did his body see decay.* (NIV, Acts 2:31)

These verses examined together are very telling. Notice that in Acts 2:31 *Sheol* is equated with “the realm of the dead” and that he, Messiah, was not abandoned to *Sheol* or the realm of the dead but was there for three days and three nights and then was resurrected before undergoing any fleshly decay.

So far, these verses have shed a little light on what happens immediately after death. Scripture seems to indicate that all mankind upon death enters a place called *Sheol* where there is no consciousness, where no work can be done, where no knowledge or wisdom exists, a place in the ground or a deep pit, a place we can be brought down to or brought up out of, a place that is described as the abode, chamber, or realm of the dead. The evidence shows that *Sheol* is merely the place where the dead go, where thought and consciousness does not exist. Its connection to a pit or place in the ground makes sense because the dead are normally buried in the ground to decay and become the very substance in which they were made from, earth.

For some, the idea that one does not either go immediately “up to heaven” or “down to hell” might be shocking, we will discuss the matter of heaven and hell later in this study, for now let us move on with the understanding that at least for a period of time after death, one will be in *Sheol*. To further understand the state mankind enters after death, let’s look to the New Testament.

## Sleep

In a poetic, yet, descriptive way the New Testament likens death to sleep.

*After he had said this, he went on to tell them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.” His disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.” Jesus*

*had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. (NIV, John 11:11-13)*

Lazarus was not asleep, but had died. The Messiah did not merely wake him, but brought him back to life.

Again, death is associated with sleep:

*he said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him. (NIV, Matt. 9:24)*

*and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. (NIV, Matt. 27:52)*

*Now when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed. (NIV, Acts 13:36)*

*After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. (NIV, 1Cor. 15:6)*

There is a good reason why death is being compared to sleep and resurrection is being compared to being woken up. It is because they are a similar experience from the perspective of the one going through it. In the same way you lose consciousness and all track of time during sleep, in death you will be unconscious, completely unaware of the existing world. Similarly, when one is resurrected, it is like being awakened from a deep sleep. The dead will be unaware of time and events that have passed while in *Sheol*.

One might argue that a small amount of time is spent in *Sheol*, then the soul goes to heaven or hell soon after. However, this is not what the bible seems to indicate.

In regard to some of the holy patriarchs (famous people living by faith) – such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Issac, Jacob and Sarah – Paul writes:

*All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. (NIV, Heb. 11:13)*

And again:

*These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, (NIV, Heb. 11:39)*

And what is the thing that had been promised?

*And this is what he promised us—eternal life. (NIV, 1 John 2:25)*

Some claim that Enoch and Elijah did in fact go to heaven where they now live eternally, but if you notice above, Enoch is listed as one of those who died and did not receive the promise of eternal life, at

least not at the time that the book of Hebrews was written. In the case of Elijah, many misinterpret the story in 2 Kings, specifically in verse 2:11, which says he “went up to heaven.” The source of confusion is that the word “heaven” is not only used to describe the realm where Yahweh resides, but also our atmosphere here on Earth. Elijah was taken that day, into the sky where he was delivered to a different location. Even the prophets of that time, who by divine revelation understood that Elijah was going to be taken away (2 Kings 2:3,5), looked for him later hoping to find him, believing he had been transported somewhere else. The idea that Elijah was taken to the place where Yahweh dwells, as we shall see below, contradicts the words of the Messiah.

The following verses provide evidence that no one, except the Messiah, had been to Heaven and seen the Father, at least during the Messiahs time on Earth, which was long after Elijah’s time.

*No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. (NIV, John 3:13)*

*No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. (NIV, John 6:46)*

The evidence from scriptures so far indicates that upon death mankind enters a sleep-like state in a place called *Sheol* where consciousness does not exist, and that non have been to heaven or seen the Father, nor received the promise of eternal life, at least at the time the New Testament was written. So, What’s the next step? how do we get there? As we shall see, there is a process.

## Resurrection

*For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. (NIV, John 5:26-29)*

As indicated from the passage above there will be, at some point in time, a great resurrection where "all who are in their graves" will be resurrected at the call of the Messiah. Notice that this includes "those who have done what is good" and " those who have done what is evil." This resurrection excludes the Messiah, who is already resurrected (Mark 16:5-7), and is the one who will be resurrecting the people.

Again, a resurrection of both good and evil people is mentioned in Acts:

*and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. (NIV, Acts 24:15)*

It is apparent that all people, good or bad, will be resurrected. But when does this resurrection take place? Has the resurrection already happened? At the time Paul wrote to Timothy, it had not:

*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. (NIV, 2 Tim 2:15-18)*

So, if the resurrection mentioned in the books of John and Acts has not happened yet, when will it happen? Let's look at the following verses for a clue.

*I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. (NIV, Rev. 20:4-6)*

The above passage, from the book of Revelation, describes part of John's vision while on the Island of Patmos. His vision contained things that are to take place in the future from his time. For example, the above passage speaks of the "souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus" and that "They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years." It calls this event "the first resurrection." Although there is debate about the timing of the events in the book of Revelation, at the very least we can see that this "first resurrection" has not happened yet. Also, it is clear that the first resurrection is not the resurrection of all mankind, as it only consists of those who were "beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus." Rather, it says that those of the first resurrection will reign "with Christ a thousand years" and that "The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended."

Using the first resurrection as a marking point, we can deduce that the resurrection of all mankind is set for an event still far in the future, specifically at the end of the 1,000-year reign of the Messiah and those of the first resurrection.

Another important concept mentioned in the above passage is the "second death":

*Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them... (NIV, Rev. 20:6)*

For there to be a second death, there must be a second life (through resurrection). This second death is said to have no power over those of the first resurrection. However, no such guarantee is made for those who will rise in the resurrection of all mankind. But what is the second death and who will be affected by it? We will explore this as we continue, but first we must talk about what comes before it.

## Judgment

A "judgment" event is mentioned multiple times in the Bible. As we shall see below, this is an event where all people will be judged according to their deeds, whether good or bad. But when does the judgment take place? How long does it last? Let's explore scriptures to find these answers.

*Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment (NIV, Heb. 9:27)*

At the very least from the verse above, we know that judgment happens after one's death. We also know that a resurrection of humankind will take place at the end of the 1000-year reign of the Messiah and those of the first resurrection. That leaves two possibilities so far, the judgment either occurs after one's death and before the resurrection, or after the resurrection.

*As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you." (NIV, Acts 24:25)*

Notice in the above passage that Paul was talking about "the judgment to come." In other words, at the very least, there is a judgment event that had not yet taken place at that time and was an event set for the future. Let's look at the following Passage to help shed a little light on this event.

*The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. (NKJV, Matt. 12:41f)*

In this verse, the Messiah claims that the men of Nineveh as well as the queen of the south will "rise up" in "the judgment" with the generation of the Messiah's time and condemn them. The fact that peoples from different periods in time will rise together in the same judgment is telling. Also, important to note is that the Greek word for "rise up" here is "*anistēmi*" and is closely related to the Greek word "*anastasis*", which means "a raising up", and is most often translated as "resurrection."

What this tells us is that "the judgment" happens after the resurrection, as a group event where all people from every time period will be judged for their deeds. However, there are still questions left, for instance:

- Why does mankind need to be brought back to life to be judged?
- How long is the judgment period?
- Where do you draw the line on who makes it or not?
- What about people, past and present, that never heard of the Bible or Christ? Are they condemned?

To answer these questions, we must keep adding pieces of truth to our puzzle. Let us start with the question of what qualifies us to obtain salvation and eternal life, or maybe, more importantly, what disqualifies us. According to the Messiah there is only one sin that cannot be forgiven.

*And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. (NIV, Matt. 12:31f)*

According to the messiah, the only sin that is unforgivable is blasphemy against the holy spirit. But what exactly is blasphemy against the holy spirit?

The Greek word for blasphemy is the word *blasphémia*. The Strong's Concordance defines *blasphémia* as "Slander."

But is slander really all there is to blasphemy? Let's look at the Hebrew thought on blasphemy.

The Hebrew word translated as blasphemy is *ně'atsah*. The Strong's Concordance defines *ně'atsah* as "contempt."

The Hebrew word translated as blaspheme is *na'ats*. The Strong's Concordance defines *na'ats* as "to spurn, treat with contempt."

We now see that to blaspheme not only means to speak against something but to treat it with disdain or contempt, in other words, to consider something worthless. The picture being painted here is one of utter rejection. Below, in a letter to the Hebrews, there is further description of what it means to commit the unforgivable sin.

*It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. (NIV, Heb. 6:4-6)*

What we see above are the requirements for the ultimate disqualification, a point of no return, as well as a clear definition for what it takes to become unforgivable and eligible to suffer the ultimate consequence.

In a nutshell, the following things must happen before one is held ultimately accountable and no longer has the option to repent. One must:

- Become enlightened
- Taste the heavenly gift
- Become a sharer of the holy spirit
- Taste the good word of Yahweh



- Taste the powers of the age to come

Therefore, in order to blaspheme the holy spirit, one must first receive it (along with the things mentioned above) and then reject it. But, for those who do not commit the unforgivable sin, repentance and forgiveness are still possible.

So far, the evidence indicates that judgment takes place after the general resurrection of all mankind, and that to become eligible to suffer the ultimate consequence one must commit the unforgivable sin - blasphemy of the holy spirit - in which case one receives the spirit and then rejects it.

One of the more obscure topics is the length of the period called "Judgment" or, more significantly, the "day of judgment." Concerning the length, purpose and outcome of Judgment, Peter writes:

*But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (NIV, 2 Pet. 3:5-9)*

In this passage Peter talks about the future "day of judgement," likening it to the time of Noah when the wicked were destroyed by water, only this time the wicked will be destroyed by fire. However, many overlook the profound statement made here concerning the length of the judgment day. Peter clues us in when he states, "a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day." The concept of a thousand-year long judgement day is widely absent from modern biblical beliefs and may come as a shock, but Peter gives us the purpose of this extensive period of time, saying, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." We see now that the purpose of this thousand-year period, called the judgement day, is that Yahweh is being patient with us, working towards our repentance in the hopes that we should all be saved. Yahweh does not take pleasure in the destruction of his creation and gives us a gracious amount of time to repent. Furthermore, if the day of Judgment were a literal 24-hour day, where all mankind is to be judged solely on the deeds of their previous lives, and are either rewarded or punished as a result, what need would there be for repentance? And what about those who never even heard of the Bible, are they to be condemned? Fortunately, the bible paints a picture of a process that is fair and just.

Let's now focus on the end of judgment and what will happen to those that blaspheme the holy spirit.

In the quote above Peter states:

*But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was*

*deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (NIV, 2 Pet. 3:5-9)*

Peter makes a connection between the way the world of old was destroyed - that is, by flood - and the way the world will be destroyed in the future, including the wicked in it - by fire. It is a little known and unpopular truth that Father Yahweh and his kingdom of heaven will actually come to Earth. It is this event that causes the fiery process that destroys the Earth and the wicked people at that time. In fact, Yahweh IS this fire. We shall see from the verses below that scriptures support these concepts.

*Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (NKJV, Matt. 6:10)*

Notice how the kingdom is coming to the earth, what happens next may seem destructive but, as we shall see, it is also a transformation.

*for our God is a consuming fire. (NKJV, Heb. 12:29)*

*Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. (NKJV, Rev. 21:1)*

*But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief; on that day the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, the elements will burn and be dissolved, and the earth and the works on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, it is clear what sort of people you should be in holy conduct and godliness as you wait for and earnestly desire the coming of the day of God. The heavens will be on fire and be dissolved because of it, and the elements will melt with the heat. But based on His promise, we wait for the new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will dwell. Therefore, dear friends, while you wait for these things, make every effort to be found at peace with Him without spot or blemish. (NKJV, 2 Pet. 3:10-14)*

It is pretty clear from the above scriptures that there will be a day when Yahweh comes to the earth. He is said to be an all-consuming fire and, on his arrival, the earth and heavens are burned away along with those who have committed blasphemy against the holy spirit. As we continue on, we shall see that this same fire does not hurt the righteous, but heals them, and transforms the Earth into something new.

But before we talk more about what happens to the righteous and the new Heaven and Earth, let's continue on with the subject of those who reject salvation. It is widely believed by many that there is a place reserved for the wicked, a place of eternal torment and suffering, a place called Hell.

## Hell

Is "hell" in the Bible? Well the answer is yes and no.

The word "hell" is in fact written in most English translations of the Bible but the concept of a place of eternal torture is not. What you should ask yourself is, "What did the bible mean by 'hell'?" Let's start by looking at the original words that were translated in to English as "Hell."

The word "hell" appears 31 times in the Old Testament of the King James Bible.

In the Old Testament every time you see the word hell, the underlying Hebrew word is "*sheol*." *Sheol* occurs 65 times in the King James Old Testament. This means that the translator of the King James Bible chose to translate *sheol* as "hell" 31 times but translated *sheol* as something else the other 34 times. As talked about in the beginning of this study, *Sheol* is more accurately translated as "grave" or "realm of the dead" and it is where the dead remain in a state of unconsciousness, not a place of eternal punishment.

In the King James New Testament, the word "hell" appears 23 times. The underlying Greek words which are translated as "hell" in the New Testament are: "*Hades*" (10 times), "*Tartaróō*" (1 time) and "*Gehenna*" (12 times). Let's look at these underlying Greek words.

The Strong's Concordance defines the Greek word *Hades* as:

*Hades - the "unseen place," referring to the (invisible) realm in which all the dead reside, i.e. the present dwelling place of all the departed (deceased) (SEC #86)*

As we see from the Strong's Concordance, *Hades* has a similar definition to *sheol*. This is no coincidence, as we shall see below, *Hades* is the Greek equivalent of the word *sheol* in the New Testament. This is proven when the Apostle Paul quotes the book of Hosea.

In 1 Corinthians 15:54-55 we read:

*So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O **Hades**, where is your victory?" (NKJV, 1 Cor. 15:54-55)*

In this passage, Paul is quoting Hosea 13:14:

*I will deliver this people from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O **grave**, is your destruction? (NIV, Hos. 13:14)*

Where 1st Corinthians uses *Hades*, Hosea uses *sheol*, which is translated as "grave."

Another proof that the word *hades* is just the Greek equivalent of *sheol* is in the verses we already mentioned above.

*Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to **the realm of the dead**, nor did his body see decay. (NIV, Acts 2:31)*

And in the Hebrew:

*because you will not abandon me to **the realm of the dead**, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. (NIV, Ps. 16:10)*

Two quotes for “the realm of the dead”, one is *hades*, the other is *sheol*.

The Strong's Concordance defines *Tartaróō*, another Greek word translated as “hell,” as:

*send to Tartarus("Tartaros"). The NT uses G5020 (tartaróō) for the netherworld – the place of punishment fit only for demons. Later, Tartaros came to represent eternal punishment for wicked people.*

*[In Greek mythology, Tartarus was a "place of punishment under the earth, to which, for example, the Titans were sent" (Souter).] (SEC #5020)*

The word “*Tartaroo*” was used only once in 2 Peter 2:4 and was a Greek translation of the Hebrew that Peter would have written in. This word is translated as “hell” in the verse below.

*For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to **hell**, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment (NIV, 2 Pet. 2:4)*

Although a Greek mythological place, *Tartaros* was used in the bible to describe the place where sinning angels were sent to await judgment, not where humans are sent.

*Gehenna*, another Greek word translated as “hell”, according to Strong’s Concordance:

*Hell is the place of the future punishment called "Gehenna" or "Gehenna of fire." This was originally the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the filth and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned; a fit symbol of the wicked and their future destruction. (SEC #1067)*

As you can see from the definition, *Gehenna* was an actual place as well as an allegory for the fate of wicked humans. It was at one time a place where ancient pagan worshippers would cause their children to pass through fire. Because of the terrible acts committed there, it was later desecrated and became a place "where the filth and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned." (c.f., Lev. 18:21 & 2 Kings 23:10)

The allegory of *Gehenna* was used often in the New Testament as a warning to those who may be in danger of experiencing it in the future. Here are a few examples:

*But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of **hell**. (NIV, Matt. 5:22)*

*If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into **hell**. (NIV, Matt. 5:29)*

*You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to **hell**? (NIV, Matt. 23:33)*

*But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into **hell**. Yes, I tell you, fear him. (NIV, Luke 12:5)*

So, *Gehenna* is indeed a future place of punishment for those condemned. But is *Gehenna* a place of eternal punishment? This next verse sheds a little light on the question.

*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in **hell**. (NIV, Matt. 10:28)*

In this verse, *Gehenna* is described as a place where your body and soul is killed. The word soul in this verse is translated from the Greek word "*psuché*."

Strongs Concordance defines *psuché* as:

*(a) the vital breath, breath of life, (b) the human soul, (c) the soul as the seat of affections and will, (d) the self, (e) a human person, an individual. (SEC #5590)*

So, therefore, *Gehenna* is not only a place where the body dies but also the entire self, after which resurrection is no longer possible. This is called the second death.

## **The Second Death**

The following scriptures speak about a "Second Death":

*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death. (NKJV, Rev. 2:11)*

*Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (NKJV, Rev. 20:6)*

*Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And anyone not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. (NKJV, Rev. 20:14f)*

*But the cowards, unbelievers, vile, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars — their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.* (NKJV, Rev. 21:8)

The last two of the above verses connect the "second death" with the "lake of fire." The lake of fire being the "consuming fire" that is caused by the arrival of Father Yahweh to this world. (c.f., Heb. 12:29 above) As eternal life is the ultimate reward for those who become and remain righteous at Father Yahweh's arrival, the second death is the ultimate consequence for wicked humans.

The reason it is called the second death is clear, it is a death that happens after the first death and resurrection of mankind. It is appointed to all mankind to die at least once (Heb. 9:27), however not all will die twice. Unlike the first death, there is no resurrection after the second death. Therefore, the fate of those that do not qualify for eternal life, as promised to those who love the Messiah, is to suffer the exact opposite; eternal death.

## **A New Heaven and Earth**

In the latter sections of this study we have talked about a great fire at the arrival of Yahweh that will consume the world and the wicked in it. Let's now turn our attention to what will also happen to the world, the heavens and those who endure in righteousness until the end.

*I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.* (NIV, Matt. 3:11)

Notice here that John the Baptist talks about a baptism of fire. This is something very different than the water baptism that was happening frequently with John the Baptist and the early Christians, and only the apostles could possibly claim a baptism of spirit.

*Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act," says the LORD Almighty.* (NIV, Mal. 4:1-3)

The above verse shows that although the evildoers will be consumed by fire at the end of judgment, those who revere his name (Yahweh) will be healed by the "sun of righteousness", this same fire.

*The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.* (NIV, Matt. 13:41-43)

Again, this verse demonstrates that even though the evildoers are destroyed by being thrown into the "the blazing furnace" the righteous will not be hurt by this fire, rather they will "shine like the sun."

*And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God. (NIV, Rev. 15:2)*

In the event of the Earth being completely engulfed in fire you could imagine there would be epic, physical transformation happening to the elements. In John's vision in the book of Revelation, he sees "what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire" (Rev., 15:2), a fitting description for a molten world, melted by the immense power of Yahweh almighty. Once again, the good people who have overcome Satan's temptation are not hurt by this fire. However, this molten world is just the transformation of the old into something new. In the quote below the apostle Peter talks about this new world.

*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. (NIV, 2 Pet. 3:10-13)*

And finally, in the passage below from the book of Revelation, John describes seeing the world to come.

*Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. (NIV, Rev. 21:1-7)*

The passage above describes the new world after the arrival of Yahweh as no longer having death, pain or sorrow. It is therefore a fantastic world, unimaginable to our current state. It also mentions that all those present will be given the "water of life." To further identify what this water is let's look at this next passage from John. Answering the Samaritan woman at the well, the Messiah says:

*"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (NIV, John 4:13f)*

Therefore the "water of life" gives eternal life, and those who follow the ways of Yahweh until the end of the judgment period, and do not blaspheme the holy spirit, will be given eternal life without pain or sorrow in a new world unimaginably perfect.

## Summary

Upon death, a state of unconsciousness similar to sleep, all mankind will enter *sheol*. They will stay there until the resurrection of all mankind, the only exception being those who rise in the first resurrection. This general resurrection happens after the Messiah's millennial reign. This resurrection begins judgment, a thousand-year period which Yahweh has given us to repent and come to righteousness. All will be given full knowledge of the truth as well as the holy spirit and gifts of the age to come and will be capable of committing the unforgivable sin, blasphemy of the holy spirit. Those who commit the unforgivable sin are condemned to experience the second death, an event that happens at the coming of Father Yahweh. When Father Yahweh arrives on Earth, at the end of the millennial judgment period, the Earth will be engulfed in fire and the wicked will be destroyed and the Earth will be transformed. The righteous on the other hand will be baptized by this same fire and enter eternal life, a promise given to all who obey Yahweh and endure in keeping his word until the end of the judgment period. This event is not the result of a deity that desires destruction and the eternal torment of wicked humans but is the action of transforming the imperfect and evil world of this age into the perfect world of the age to come. All the things and people who are found not suitable to be a part of Yahweh's plan are simply excluded from that plan and cease to exist. From that point on all pain, hatred and sorrow will be a thing of the past. Love, joy and humankind's amazing purpose will find fulfillment from that point on and forever.