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Hell and the Devil: In the Bible, the Apocrypha and the Dead Sea Scrolls



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Acworth, Georgia
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Christian Theology and History Adult Sunday School Courses

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I've always been a strong believer in adult Sunday School classes and Bible studies in our churches. And many churches have quality, Biblically-based adult-focused programs. Unfortunately, just as many churches tend to downplay adult education, focusing on children's education (not a bad thing in itself), or focusing on the needs of the "unchurched", where topics such as church history and theology are often purposely ignored.

Yet there is a strong need for adult education focused on both the Bible and the basic tenets and history of the Faith. Among the reasons:

- Not all adults come from a strong childhood background in the church – adult Sunday School classes/Bible studies may be their first serious introduction to what Christianity is all about
- Christianity (and especially Evangelical Christianity) is under constant attack from the media and popular culture (movies, music, etc.). We need to give fellow Christians the tools to defend the Faith against attack (or to provide a "ready defense" as Peter says in 1 Peter 3:15)
- Even adult Christians that have a strong Biblical background often know little about the origins and history of their Faith

To better meet the needs of adult Christians (both those mature in their Faith, and those just starting out in the "School of Christ"), I've written a series of courses that focus on the history of the Christian Church (including the Jewish roots), as well as the development of doctrine in the Church. The topics represented in these courses are intended to both further the participant's walk in the Faith, as well as serve as a starting point for Christian apologetics.

While the primary purpose of these courses is for use in churches, they also may be useful for High School and College projects, especially the courses focused primarily on historical aspects.

One note: these courses are primarily written from an Evangelical Protestant viewpoint (I come from a Reformed Church background), but I hope I've given ample time to other points of view throughout the various courses.

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"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." - Apostle Paul (Eph 6:11-12, NIV)

Introduction

Perhaps one of the least understood aspects of the Bible is its teachings on Hell and the Devil. There are a number of reasons for this:

- Some people find the topic disturbing, so they'd rather not discuss it!
- To understand what the Bible says about these topics, one must have a good Concordance (and possibly a good Commentary), as the information is quite dispersed all throughout the Bible
- Much of our somewhat hazy knowledge of these topics comes from non-Biblical sources, such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, or Dante's *Inferno*
- Some Christians claim that Satan and Hell aren't real - that somehow they are just metaphors for evil. (The New Testament seems pretty clear that both are real!)

This course attempts to examine and categorize the Biblical references on the topic of Hell and the Devil. To round out the discussion (and fill in the blanks from the inter-Testamental period) I've also included references to:

- The **Dead Sea Scrolls**, which refer often to an ultimate battle between the "sons of light" and the "sons of darkness". The latter forces are led by *Belial*, one of the New Testament names for Satan.
- The **Apocrypha** – the set of 12-16 books, most of which appeared in the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint, but not in Hebrew versions of the Old Testament. Today, they appear in some Bibles (Roman Catholic, NRSV, Orthodox, etc.) but not all (NIV, KJV, etc.).
- **1 Enoch** - 1 Enoch is a 1st or 2nd B.C. Jewish work whose relative importance has been raised in recent years because at least 20 fragmentary copies of 1 Enoch have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. 1 Enoch does *not* appear in the Septuagint, and is not generally considered to be part of the collection of books known as the Apocrypha.
- **Christian Apocrypha** – There were many apocryphal Acts, Gospels, and Apocalypses written in the first three centuries A.D. Some people refer to these as the *Christian Apocrypha* – non-Gnostic works that didn't make the New Testament canon. And while we shouldn't view them as divinely inspired or authoritative, they do help us trace the development of Christian thought on the subject of hell. I refer to two of them in this course – the *Revelation of Peter*, and the *Apocalypse of Paul*.

While no Divine inspiration is claimed for the non-Biblical sources quoted herein, they *are* useful to trace the development of Jewish and early Christian thought on the topics of "Hell and the Devil".

Quiz on Hell and the Devil

1. T/F The name "Lucifer" is a common synonym in the Bible for Satan
2. T/F The Bible describes in detail the various levels of Hell
3. T/F The Bible gives the proper names of fallen angels other than Satan
4. T/F "Hell" is a Hebrew word for "abode of the dead"
5. T/F The Old Testament word used to describe the abode of the dead is "sheol"
6. T/F Nowhere in the Bible is Satan specifically equated with a serpent

7. What archangel does Satan and his minions fight, as described in Revelation?
8. T/F The word "antichrist" is used in the Book of Revelation
9. T/F The New Testament doesn't differentiate between physical illness and demonic possession
10. What is the only name given by a demon(s) in the New Testament?
11. T/F Exorcisms in the Gospels succeed because of a special magical ritual designed by Christ
12. T/F There are no "second chances" once one is assigned to Hell
13. T/F The Hebrew word for "Satan" can also be translated as "accuser", "adversary", or "opponent"
14. T/F There are no exorcisms described in the Apocrypha or the Dead Sea Scrolls
15. There are references in the Dead Sea Scrolls that refer to hell as a place for the damned

Satan

We begin this course with a look at the Devil – Satan. We'll examine his various names, his fall from heaven, his characteristics, and ultimate demise. We also tackle the question of whether Satan appears in the Old Testament.

Names of Satan

"Satan" is a Hebrew word meaning accuser, adversary, or opponent. While the name Satan appears 53 times in the scriptures (NIV), Satan is also referred to under a number of other names, such as "devil", "evil one", "the destroyer", etc. The table below lists many of the names of Satan.



Name	Sample Reference	Notes
Satan	Zec 3:1	Adversary or accuser
Beelzebub	Mat 12:24	"Lord of the flies"; Jewish nickname for Satan
Devil	Rev 12:9	Gr. "diabolos" - "Slanderer"
Abaddon, Apollyon	Rev 9:11	"Destruction" or "Destroyer"
Angel of the Abyss	Rev 9:11	
Evil One	John 17:15, Eph 6:16	
Accuser	Rev 12:10	Will be hurled down
Great Dragon	Rev 12:9	
Red Dragon	Rev 12:3	
Ancient serpent	Rev 12:9	See Genesis 3
Belial	2 Cor 6:15, Nahum 1:15	Heb.. "useless", "worthless", "wicked"
Ruler of the kingdom of the air	Eph 2:2	
Prince of demons	Mat 9:34	
Prince of this world	John 12:31	
Father of lies	John 8:44	
God of this age	2 Cor 4:4	

Name	Sample Reference	Notes
Lucifer	Isa 14:12 (KJV)	Latin trans. of Hebrew word for "morning star"

The Dead Sea Scrolls often refer to Satan as Belial (see also 2 Cor 6:15), which means "useless", "worthless", or "wicked". The followers of Belial are often referred to as the "sons of darkness":

"At the beginning of the undertaking of the sons of light, they shall start against the lot of the sons of darkness, the army of Belial...so that wickedness shall be laid low without any remnant; and there shall be no survivor of the sons of darkness." (*The War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness*, translation from Burrows)

The Dead Sea Scrolls also occasionally refer to Satan as *Melkiresha*, which means "my king is wickedness". Geza Vermes views that this is in distinction to Melkizedek, which means "my king is justice".

1 Enoch refers to Satan as Azazyel or Azazyel.

Characteristics and character of Satan

The Bible contains a number of descriptions of the character, capabilities and limitations of Satan. Satan is described as the great deceiver, and the great tempter of mankind. Christ triumphed over Satan through the cross.

Reference	Notes
Characteristics of Satan	
Mat 4:1-11	Satan is a tempter - Christ is tempted by Satan, but remains sinless
Mat 17:14-18	Can bring sickness to mankind
1 John 5:19	Ruler of this world
Rev 13, 16:14	Satan can control politicians
1 John 3:8	Christ appeared to destroy the Devil's work
Col 2:15	Christ triumphs over the Devil through the cross
1 Cor 10:13, James 4:7, 1 Pet 5:8-9	Satan can tempt, but believers have the power to resist
Mat 16:23, John 13:2, John 13:27, 1 Thes 2:18	Satan can affect even the Apostles
2 Cor 11:14	Satan masquerades as an angel of light
2 Cor 12:7	Satan can be used by God for good
John 12:31-33, Heb 2:14-15	Christ's death and resurrection is the beginning of the end for Satan
Rev 16:12-14	Satan and the demons perform miraculous signs

A book of the Dead Sea Scrolls entitled *Curses of Belial* describes Belial and his followers:

“...council of the Community shall all say together, Amen, amen. Afterwards [they] shall damn Belial and all his guilty lot. They shall answer and say, Cursed be [B]elial in his hostile design, and damned in his guilty dominion. Cursed be all the spirits of his [lo]t in their wicked design, and damned in their thoughts of unclean impurity. For they are the lot of darkness and their visitation is for eternal destruction.”
(Curses of Belial, 4Q286, translation by Vermes)

The Dead Sea Scrolls’ *Manual of Discipline* (a.k.a. *Community Rule*) lists characteristics of Satan and his followers:

“But to the spirit of error belong greediness, slackness of hands in the service of righteousness, wickedness and falsehood, pride and haughtiness, lying and deceit, cruelty and great impiety, quickness to anger and abundance of folly and proud jealousy, abominable works in a spirit of fornication and ways of defilement in the service of uncleanness, and a blasphemous tongue, blindness of eyes and dullness of ears, stiffness of neck and hardness of heart, walking in all the ways of darkness and evil cunning.” *(Manual of Discipline, Burrows translation)*

The Fall

The Bible contains several references to the Fall of Satan and his angels from heaven. However, the time and reason for the Fall is not absolutely clear. Did the Fall occur before Adam & Eve, or after?



Many commentaries and theologians view that the Fall is described in Isaiah 14:12-20 and Ezekiel 28:12-19. Others view that neither set of verses concerns Satan or the Fall. If we assume that the passages do indeed describe Satan and the Fall, then we learn that Satan (or the “morning star”, translated as Lucifer in KJV) had a special place of honor guarding the throne of God. Because of his pride, Satan tries to set himself up as higher than God, and is cast out of heaven (to earth) as a result.

Revelation 12, which describes a war between Satan and the Archangel Michael, may indicate that a third of the angels in heaven were ejected along with Satan.

Reference	Notes
The Fall of Satan and the Angels	
Isaiah 14:12-20	"Morning star" is translated as "Lucifer" in KJV
Ezekiel 28:12-19	Satan once had a special place of honor guarding the throne of God
Luke 10:18	"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."
2 Peter 2:4	Angels that sinned are placed in hell, awaiting judgment
Jude 1:6	Fallen angels are held in darkness for Judgment Day
Revelation 12:4	May indicate that Satan took a third of the angels with him

Reference	Notes
Revelation 12:7-12	War in heaven between Archangel Michael and Satan

1 Enoch gives a somewhat different view of the cause of the Fall, amplifying on Genesis 6:1-4, which states:

¹When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, ²the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. ³Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years." ⁴The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown." (NIV, Gen 6:1-4)

1 Enoch describes it this way:

"It happened after the sons of men had multiplied in those days, that daughters were born to them, elegant and beautiful. And when the angels, the sons of heaven, beheld them, they became enamored of them, saying to each other: Come, let us select for ourselves wives from the progeny of men, and let us beget children...Then they took wives, each choosing for himself; whom they began to approach, and with whom they cohabited; teaching them sorcery, incantation, and the dividing of roots and trees. And they conceiving brought forth giants..." (1 Enoch, Chapter 7, Laurence translation)

1 Enoch further goes on to identify one particular angel that holds all the blame:

"All the earth has been corrupted by the teaching of the work of Azazyel. To him therefore ascribe the whole crime." (1 Enoch 10:12, Laurence)

1 Enoch (Chapter 87), like Revelation 12, also discusses the Fall of the angels in terms of stars falling from heaven.

The end of Satan

The Bible is clear about the ultimate disposition of Satan and his minions. Matthew 25:41 tells us that an "eternal fire" has been prepared for Satan and his angels. In Revelation 20:10, Satan is thrown into a lake of burning sulfur – forever.

Reference	Notes
Mat 25:41	"Eternal fire" was prepared for Satan and his angels
Rom 16:20	God will crush Satan under the feet of the Church
Rev 20:1-3	Satan thrown into the abyss for 1000 years
Rev 20:10	Satan thrown into lake of burning sulfur forever

In the Apocrypha, 2 Esdras describes what will happen to the evil, after a final judgment day:

³⁶The pit of torment shall appear, and opposite it shall be the place of rest; and the furnace of hell shall be disclosed, and opposite it the paradise of delight. ³⁷Then the Most High will say to the nations that

have been raised from the dead, 'Look now, and understand whom you have denied, whom you have not served, whose commandments you have despised. ³⁸Look on this side and on that; here are delight and rest, and there are fire and torments.' Thus he will speak to them on the day of judgment..." (2 Esdras 7:36-38, NRSV)

The Dead Sea Scrolls describe a similar fate for all who follow the "spirit of error":

"...the spirit of error...And the visitation of all who walk by it is for abundance of afflictions by all destroying angels, to eternal perdition in the fury of the God of vengeance, to eternal trembling and everlasting dishonor, with destroying disgrace in the fire of dark places. And all their periods to their generations will be in sorrowful mourning and bitter calamity, in dark disasters until they are destroyed, having no remnant or any that escape." (*Manual of Discipline*, Burrows translation)

1 Enoch describes the final disposition of Satan...

"Bind Azazyel hand and foot; cast him into darkness..." (1 Enoch, 10:6, Laurence translation)

...and what will happen to his followers:

"...bind them for seventy generations underneath the earth, even to the day of judgment, and of consummation, until the judgment, the effect of which will last forever..." (1 Enoch, 10:15, Laurence translation)

Satan in the Old Testament

One last bit before we let Satan go. Some Bible scholars state that Satan doesn't appear in the Old Testament – he only appears in the New. This interpretation is based on the fact the Hebrew word for Satan can be interpreted either as a name ("Satan"), or to mean "accuser", "adversary", or "opponent". For example, some translations translate "satan" in Job as "The Adversary". However, in 3 books of the Bible, Satan is usually translated as a proper name:

Reference	Notes
1 Chr 21:1	"Satan rose up against Israel"
Job 1-2	Satan is clearly represented as a being, not a concept; "roaming through the earth"
Zec 3:1-2	"The LORD rebuke you, Satan!" - Satan as an accuser and adversary of God

Revelation 12:9 also identifies Satan as being the "ancient serpent" in Genesis (3:15).

Allies of Satan

Fallen Angels

As noted earlier, Revelation 12:4 may indicate that a third of the angels in heaven "fell" with Satan. 1 Enoch gives several lists of the names of these fallen angels. Note that Satan is referred to as Azazyel or Azazel in 1 Enoch.

⁹. These are the names of their chiefs: Samyaza, who was their leader, Urakabameel, Akibeel, Tamiel, Ramuel, Danel, Azkeel, Sarakuyal, Asael, Armers, Batraal, Anane, Zavebe, Samsaveel, Ertael, Turel, Yomyael, Arazyal. These were the prefects of the two hundred angels, and the remainder were all with them.” (1 Enoch 7:9)

¹. Moreover Azazyel taught men to make swords, knives, shields, breastplates, made them see that which was behind them and the workmanship of bracelets and ornaments, the use of paint, the beautifying of the eyebrows, the use of stones of every valuable and select kind, and of all sorts of dyes, so that the world became altered.

². Impiety increased; fornication multiplied; and they transgressed and corrupted all their ways.

³. Amazarak taught all the sorcerers, and dividers of roots;

⁴. Armers taught the solution of sorcery;

⁵. Barkayal taught the observers of the stars;

⁶. Akibeel taught signs;

⁷. Tamiel taught astronomy;

⁸. And Asaredel taught the motion of the moon.” (1 Enoch 8:1-8)

². Behold the names of those angels. These are their names. The first of them is Samyaza; the second, Arstikapha; the third, Armen; the fourth, Kakabael; the fifth, Turel; the sixth, Romyel; the seventh, Danyal; the eighth, Kael; the ninth, Barakel; the tenth, Azazel; the eleventh, Armers the twelfth, Bataryal; the thirteenth, Basasael; the fourteenth, Ananel; the fifteenth, Turyal; the sixteenth, Simapiseel; the seventeenth, Yetarel; the eighteenth, Turmael; the nineteenth, Tarel; the twentieth, Rumel; the twenty-first, Azazel.

³. These are the chiefs of their angels, and the names of the leaders of their hundreds, and the leaders of their fifties, and the leaders of their tens. ⁴. The name of the first is Yekun: he it was who seduced all the sons of the holy angels; and causing them to descend on earth, led astray the offspring of men. The name of the second is Kesabel, who pointed out evil counsel to the sons of the holy angels, and induced them to corrupt their bodies by generating mankind. ⁶. The name of the third is Cadrel, he discovered every stroke of death to the children of men. ⁷. He seduced Eve; and discovered to the children of men the instruments of death, the coat of mail, the shield, and the sword for slaughter; every instrument of death to the children of men. ⁸. From his hand were these things derived to them who dwell upon earth, from that period for ever. ⁹. The name of the fourth is Penemue: he discovered to the children of men bitterness and sweetness; ¹⁰. And pointed out to them every secret of their wisdom. ¹¹. He taught men to understanding writing, and the use of ink and paper...¹⁷. The name of the fifth is Kasyade: he discovered to the children of men every wicked stroke of spirits and of demons...” (1 Enoch 68)

Antichrist(s)

The concept of the antichrist seems to be primarily a Christian concept, originating in the New Testament (although “the abomination that causes desolation” in Daniel may be an antichrist figure). The *word* "antichrist" appears in the Bible only four times, all in the letters of John. In all four cases, it refers to individuals (especially false prophets) that oppose God:

Reference	Notes
1 John 2: 18-19	Apostate Christians
1 John 2: 22	Deniers of Christ's Divinity
1 John 4:2-3	Spirits that deny Christ's Divinity
2 John 7	Deceivers who deny Christ

While the *word* antichrist only appears four times in the Bible, later Christian theology identifies the *concept* in many more places in the Bible. Generally, these identifications fit into one of two categories:

- A king, kingdom, or political ruler that will arise (possibly in the end times) to oppose God's work; a human ally of Satan
- Individuals (especially false prophets) that oppose God; a specific individual that will arise (possibly during the end times) to oppose God's work; a human ally of Satan

Some examples of the former are in the table below. The most famous examples – the *abomination that causes desolation* in Daniel and the *beast from the sea* in Revelation. Some people believe that the abomination that causes desolation is patterned after Antiochus Epiphanes IV, the Selucid ruler that desecrated the Jerusalem Temple in 2nd century B.C.



Reference	Notes
Dan 7:7, 19-27	"Fourth Kingdom on earth", war against the saints
Dan 8:23-25	Will destroy the holy people
Dan 11:31-32	Desecration of the temple
Dan 11:36-39	Sets himself above God
Dan 9:27, 11:31; Mat 24:15	Abomination that causes desolation
Rev 13:1-10	Beast from the sea; power invested by the dragon

Regarding the latter interpretation above, the false prophet is usually viewed as some sort of religious or spiritual leader. The most famous example – the beast from the earth, with a human number of 666.

Reference	Notes
1 John 2:18-19,22; 1 John 4:3, 2 John 7	Apostates, deniers of Christ's Divinity
2 Thes 2:1-12	Man of Lawlessness - "doomed to destruction"
Mat 24:23-26, Mark 13:21-23	Beware of false Messiahs and prophets
Rev 13:11-18	Beast of the earth, with a human number (666)

The mark of the beast - 666 - has long fascinated readers. The text in Revelation tells us only that it is man's number. Various theories as to the meaning include:

- Each digit one less than perfect (7)

- "Primal Chaos" in Hebrew (letters in Hebrew have numeric equivalents)
- "Nero Caesar" in poor Hebrew
- "The Latin Kingdom" in Greek

Demons

The New Testament and the Apocrypha also refer to demons, or lower level minions of Satan that control individual personalities. Whether demons and fallen angels are to be considered synonymous is undefined.

Demons will eventually be assigned to the abyss, as will Satan. Demons can be driven away through faith in God and Jesus Christ.

Some modern day commentators equate Biblical demonic possession with various physical illnesses, such as epilepsy or stroke. However, the New Testament is very careful to differentiate between physical illness and possession (Matt 8:16-17).

"...people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them." (Matt 4:24, NIV)

Characteristics of Demons

Reference	Notes
Luke 8:2	Multiple demons can infest one person (Mary Magdalene)
Mark 5:7, Mark 1:24, Luke 8:28	Demons know Jesus is the Son of God, even before the Apostles
Mark 5:9	Name of the demons - "Legion"
Luke 8:31	Demons can be assigned to the Abyss, as Satan eventually will be
Mark 16:17, Mat 10:8	The Apostles are given the power to expel demons

Characteristics of Demon Possession

Reference	Notes
Mark 5:1-13	Self-inflicted pain, screaming, great strength
Luke 9:39	Screaming, foaming at the mouth
Mark 9: 14-29	Deafness, dumbness, foaming at the mouth, convulsions
Mat 12:22-28	Blindness and dumbness
Mat 8:28	Ferocity/violence

Tobit in the Apocrypha refers to a demon named Asmodeus, who is terrorizing a beautiful girl named Sarah:

⁷On the same day, at Ecbatana in Media, it also happened that Sarah, the daughter of Raguel, was reproached by one of her father's maids. ⁸For she had been married to seven husbands, and the wicked

demon Asmodeus had killed each of them before they had been with her as is customary for wives. (Tobit 3:7-8, NRSV)

An interesting passage in the Dead Sea Scrolls lists some of the minions of Satan, although not all descriptors are identifiable today:

“And I, the Master, proclaim the majesty of his beauty to frighten and ter[rify] all the spirits of the destroying angels and the spirits of the bastards, the demons, Lilith, the howlers (?) and [the yelpers...] they who strike suddenly to lead astray the spirit of understanding and to appall their heart and their...in the age of the domination of wickedness...” (*Songs of the Sage*, 4Q510, Geza Vermes translation)

The Exorcisms

The New Testament describes several exorcisms. They succeed because of belief in the power of Christ - not through some sort of magical rites or special incantations.



Reference	Notes
Mark 9:19,23-26	All is possible for one who believes
Mat 8:30-32, Mark 5:11-13	Demons enter into pigs
Mark 1:25	"Come out of him"
Luke 9:37-42	Disciples failed to exorcise the demon
Luke 4:41	Did not allow them to speak

In Tobit, though, the demon Asmodeus is driven out because of the smell of a foul concoction of fish liver and heart, and incense. It should be pointed out, though, that parts of Tobit are presented somewhat tongue-in-cheek.

⁸He [the angel Raphael] replied, “As for the fish’s liver and heart, you must burn them to make a smoke in the presence of a man or woman afflicted by a demon or evil spirit, and every affliction will flee away and never remain with that person any longer.” (Tobit 6:8, NRSV)

“When you enter the bridal chamber, take some of the fish’s liver and heart, and put them on the embers of the incense. An odor will be given off; ¹⁸the demon will smell it and flee, and will never be seen near her any more. Now when you are about to go to bed with her, both of you must first stand up and pray, imploring the Lord of heaven that mercy and safety may be granted to you...” (Tobit 6:17-18, NRSV)

¹When they had finished eating and drinking they wanted to retire; so they took the young man and brought him into the bedroom. ²Then Tobias remembered the words of Raphael, and he took the fish’s liver and heart out of the bag where he had them and put them on the embers of the incense. ³The odor of the fish so repelled the demon that he fled to the remotest parts of Egypt. But Raphael followed him, and at once bound him there hand and foot.” (Tobit 8:1-2)

With the completion of our discussion of the “Allies of Satan”, we’ll leave our broader discussion of Satan, and move on to the final abode of Satan and his followers – Hell.

Hell in the Old Testament

The concept of Hell was not as defined in Old Testament Hebrew thought as it later would be in Christian thought. The predominant Old Testament view was that people were rewarded or punished for their deeds in *this* life (hence, the lack of sympathy shown towards Job's plight, by his "friends").

Sheol

When the Old Testament refers to a place people go after they die, it is almost always referred to as *sheol*, or the abode of the dead. In most references, *sheol* is an abode for all the dead - evil or righteous. Sometimes it used as a metaphor for death; sometimes it seems to refer to a specific place.

H7585

שְׁאוֹל שְׁאוֹל

sh^e'ôl sh^e'ôl

sheh-ole', sheh-ole'

From H7592; *hades* or the world of the dead (as if a subterranean *retreat*), including its accessories and inmates:—grave, hell, pit. (*Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*)

Depending on your Bible translation, sheol is translated as "the pit", "grave", "hell", or transliterated as "Sheol".

"Sheol" appears 66 times in Old Testament, and 17 times in Psalms.

Characteristics of Sheol:

Reference	Notes
Job 30:23	"place appointed for all the living."
Psa 88:3-6	"those who go down to the pit"
Ezek 26:20	"dwell in the earth below"
Psa 30:9, Job 17:16	Place of dust
Job 10:21	"place of no return"
Psa 88:10-12	"land of oblivion"
Eccl 9:10	No knowledge or wisdom in the grave
Psa 31:17, 94:17	Silence in death
Psa 139:8	God is still with people in Sheol
Psa 49:15	God can raise people from the grave

The concept of resurrection of the dead, and a final judgment occurs only infrequently in the Old Testament (Psalms 49:15, Daniel 12:2,13), although it would blossom in the inter-Testamental period. As the concept matured, the idea of separate abodes for the evil and the righteous became an important facet of the resurrection of the dead/final judgment theology. It would become an important part of Christian theology in the New Testament.

Hell in the New Testament

Hell as we know it as modern Christians – a place of punishment for evildoers, and place of fire and sulfur – became much more defined in the New Testament (building on inter-Testamental views of hell, which we will discuss later).

"Hell" is an Anglo-Saxon word used to translate three different Greek words in the New Testament:

- **Hades** – abode of the dead (Gr. Equivalent of “sheol”)
- **Gehenna** – valley of lamentation; a place of burning
- **Tartaroo** – cast down to hell

Hell is also referred to by other descriptors in the New Testament, including the fiery furnace, the Abyss, and the lake of fire/sulfur. Hell is the final destination for Satan and his followers.

Characteristics of Hell

Reference	Notes
Mat 5:22, Mat 18:8-9, Mat 25:41, Mark 9:43; Mark 9:47-50, Luke 3:17	Fire of Hell
Mat 22:13	Darkness
Mat 10:28	Both soul and body are destroyed in hell
Mat 13:37-43, Mat 13:49-50	Fiery furnace, "weeping and gnashing of teeth"
Mat 16:18	Power of hell can't overcome the church
Mat 23:33, Mat 25:46	Hell is a place where the condemned are sent for eternal punishment
Luke 16:23-26	No second chances; no passing between heaven and hell
2 Thes 1:9	Everlasting destruction; separation from God
2 Pet 2:4	Angels that sinned sent to "gloomy dungeons" in hell
Jude 1:6	Angels that sinned kept bound in darkness
Rev 1:18	Christ holds power over death and hell
Rev 6:8	Death - and Hades followed behind him
Rev 9:1-2	The Abyss - smoke from a gigantic furnace
Rev 11:7	The beast (antichrist) comes from the Abyss
Rev 14:9-11	"Tormented with burning sulfur"
Rev 19:20, Rev 20:10, Rev 20:14, Rev 21:8	Lake of fire/sulfur

Reference	Notes
Rev 20:13	Eventually, hell will give up its dead for Judgment

Hell in the Apocrypha

The jump from the vaguely-defined *sheol* in the Old Testament to the well defined hell of the New Testament can be a bit jarring, unless we examine the theology of the writings of the inter-Testamental period, which lasted from roughly 430 B.C. (the last book written in the Old Testament) to about 70 A.D. (the destruction of the Temple).

In the Wisdom of Solomon and in Baruch, hell/hades is referred to in almost the same terms as *sheol* in the Old Testament – a shadowy place that all people go to when they die.

“For they reasoned unsoundly, saying to themselves,
 “Short and sorrowful is our life,
 and there is no remedy when a life comes to its end,
 and no one has been known to return from Hades.”” (Wisdom of Solomon 2:1, NRSV)

²⁷Who will sing praises to the Most High in Hades
 in place of the living who give thanks?

²⁸From the dead, as from one who does not exist, thanksgiving has ceased;
 those who are alive and well sing the Lord’s praises” (Wisdom of Solomon 17:27-28, NRSV)

¹⁷...open your eyes, O Lord, and see, for the dead who are in Hades, whose spirit has been taken from their bodies, will not ascribe glory or justice to the Lord; ¹⁸but the person who is deeply grieved, who walks bowed and feeble, with failing eyes and famished soul, will declare your glory and righteousness, O Lord.” (Baruch 2:17-18, NRSV)

In Sirach, though, we start to see Hades described as the end destination for sinners:

¹⁰The way of sinners is paved with smooth stones,
 but at its end is the pit of Hades.” (Sirach 21:10)”

In the later apocryphal works, 2 Esdras and 1 Enoch, the view of hell/hades as a place of fire and torment for the wicked becomes much more prominent. The idea of a final judgment becomes strongly connected with the idea of hell.

³⁶The pit of torment shall appear, and opposite it shall be the place of rest; and the furnace of hell shall be disclosed, and opposite it the paradise of delight. ³⁷Then the Most High will say to the nations that have been raised from the dead, ‘Look now, and understand whom you have denied, whom you have not served, whose commandments you have despised. ³⁸Look on this side and on that; here are delight and rest, and there are fire and torments.’ Thus he will speak to them on the day of judgment...” (2 Esdras 7:36-38, NRSV)

¹ From thence I proceeded to another spot, where I saw on the west a great and lofty mountain, a strong rock, and four delightful places...³. Then Raphael, one of the holy angels who were with me, answered and said: These are the delightful places where the spirits, the souls of the dead, will be collected; for them were they formed; and here will be collected all the souls of the sons of men. ⁴. These places, in which they dwell, shall they occupy until the day of judgment, and until their appointed period... ⁹. ...Why is one separated from another? He answered: Three separations have been made between the spirits of the

dead, and thus have the spirits of the righteous been separated.¹⁰ Namely, by a chasm, by water, and by light above it.¹¹ And in the same way likewise are sinners separated when they die, and are buried in the earth; judgment not overtaking them in their lifetime.¹² Here their souls are separated. Moreover abundant is their suffering until the time of the great judgment, the castigation, and the torment of those who eternally execrate, whose souls are punished and bounded there forever.” (1 Enoch 22)

In one 1 Enoch passage, hell is described in terms especially familiar to later Christians:

“And they shall confine those angels who disclosed impiety...And when all this was effected, from the fluid mass of fire, and the perturbation which troubled them in that place, there arose a strong smell of sulphur, which became mixed with the waters; and the valley of the angels, who had been guilty of seduction, burned underneath its soil.” (1 Enoch 66:4,6, Laurence)

Hell in the Dead Sea Scrolls

The Dead Sea Scrolls, so vivid in their description of Satan (Belial) and his followers, is no less vivid in describing the ultimate destination of Belial and his followers:

“Be cursed without mercy because of the darkness of your deeds! Be damned in the shadowy place of everlasting fire!” (*Community Rule*, 1QS, Geza Vermes translation)

“And the visitation of all who walk in this spirit shall be a multitude of plagues by the hand of all the destroying angels, everlasting damnation by the avenging wrath of the fury of God, eternal torment and endless disgrace together with shameful extinction in the fire of the dark regions. The times of all their generations shall be spent in sorrowful mourning and in bitter misery and in calamities of darkness until they are destroyed without remnant or survivor.” (*Community Rule*, 1QS, Geza Vermes translation)

“Rise up, rise up, O God of Gods,
raise Thyself in mig{ht, King of Kings}! (4Q491)
May all the Sons of Darkness [scatter before Thee]
The light of Thy greatness [shall shine forth]
[on ‘go]ds’ and men.
It shall be like a fire burning
In the dark places of perdition;
It shall burn the sinners in the perdition of hell,
In an eternal blaze
...in all the eternal seasons” (*War Scroll*, Geza Vermes translation)

“And the gates [of Hell] shall open
[on all] the works of Vanity;
and the doors of the Pit shall close
on the conceivers of wickedness;
and the everlasting bars shall be bolted
on all the spirits of Naught” (*Thanksgiving Hymn*, Geza Vermes translation)

“...from your correction and you will establish yourselves to pronounce judgment ov[er...] and to see the faults of all the sinners of the ages...[to be cast] into the fire and the oceans and into all the cavities for...in the generations of truth.” (*Testament of Qahat*, 4Q542, Geza Vermes translation)

“...[and all the Sons] of Darkness will be dark. [For all the Sons of Light]...and by all their knowledge they will...and the Sons of Darkness will be burnt...For all folly and wicked[ness are dar]k, and all [pea]ce and truth are brigh[t].” (*Testament of Amram*, Geza Vermes translation)

Hell in the Christian Apocrypha

For those modern day readers who have read Medieval works such as Dante's *Inferno*, with their detailed descriptions of the horrors of hell, a fair question may be "were the descriptions of the agony of hell described in *Inferno* all literary license, or are there any early Christian or Jewish era documents that could have served as a model"? Sure, the passages we've quoted from the New Testament, the Apocrypha, and the Dead Sea Scrolls describe hell as a very uncomfortable place to be, but in terms much less graphic than the Medieval writers.

It turns out that there *were* early Christian era documents that described hell in much more graphic terms. Some people refer to these as the *Christian Apocrypha* – non-Gnostic works that didn't make the New Testament canon. And while we shouldn't view them as divinely inspired or authoritative, they do help us trace the development of Christian thought on the subject of hell.

The most interesting one is the *Revelation of Peter*, a work that appeared on an early list of proposed canonical New Testament works - the Muratori Canon, a fragmentary list (85 lines) dated to c. 200 A.D., named after its 18th century discoverer, Lodovico Muratori. It was quoted from by several of the Early Church Fathers, including Clement of Alexandria.



The *Revelation of Peter* was lost until 1886 when a French archaeological mission found fragments of it in Egypt. Most scholars view that the *Revelation of Peter* was written in the second century, thus, it could not have been written by Peter. However, it does seem to have some stylistic similarities with II Peter.

The first part of the *Revelation of Peter* describes a tour of heaven given to the apostles by two angels. After this encounter, the tone of the *Revelation of Peter* turns decidedly darker, as the abode of the unrighteous – and the inhabitants thereof - is described in painful detail.

“20. And over against that place I saw another, squalid, and it was the place of punishment; and those who were punished there and the punishing angels had their raiment dark like the air of the place.

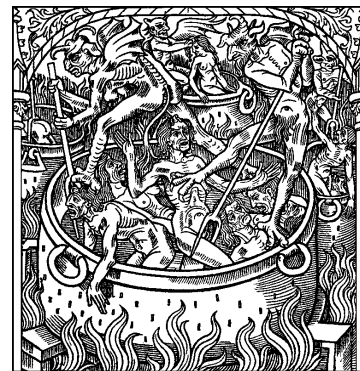
21. And there were certain there hanging by the tongue: and these were the **blasphemers** of the way of righteousness; and under them lay fire, burning and punishing them.

22. And there was a great lake, full of flaming mire, in which were certain men that pervert righteousness, and tormenting angels afflicted them.

23. And there were also others, women, hanged by their hair over that mire that bubbled up: and these were they who adorned themselves for **adultery**; and the men who mingled with them in the defilement of adultery, were hanging by the feet and their heads in that mire. And I said: I did not believe that I should come into this place.

24. And I saw the **murderers** and those who conspired with them, cast into a certain strait place, full of evil snakes, and smitten by those beasts, and thus turning to and fro in that punishment; and worms, as it were clouds of darkness, afflicted them. And the souls of the murdered stood and looked upon the punishment of those murderers and said: O God, thy judgment is just...

26. And other men and women were burning up to the middle and were cast into a dark place and were beaten by evil spirits, and their inwards were eaten by restless worms: and these were **they who persecuted the righteous** and delivered them up.



27. And near those there were again women and men gnawing their own lips, and being punished and receiving a red-hot iron in their eyes: and these were **they who blasphemed** and slandered the way of righteousness.

28. And over against these again other men and women gnawing their tongues and having flaming fire in their mouths: and these were the **false witnesses**.

29. And in a certain other place there were pebbles sharper than swords or any spit, red-hot, and women and men in tattered and filthy raiment rolled about on them in punishment: and **these were the rich who trusted in their riches and had no pity for orphans and widows**, and despised the commandment of God.

30. And in another great lake, full of pitch and blood and mire bubbling up, there stood men and women up to their knees: and these were the *usurers* and those who take interest on interest...

32. And alongside of that cliff there was a place full of much fire, and there stood **men who with their own hands had made for themselves carven images instead of God**. And alongside of these were other men and women, having rods and striking each other and never ceasing from such punishment..." (*Revelation of Peter*, "The Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 10", Edited by A. Roberts and J Donaldson, emphasis added)

The second work is the *Apocalypse of Paul*, which purportedly describes Paul's adventures in the "third heaven". With its emphasis on a well-defined church leadership hierarchy (deacons, bishops, presbyters), we can guess a no-earlier than 2nd or 3rd century date for authorship.

As part of his tour, Paul is shown the punishment of sinners in hell. Among those singled out for eternal punishment – adulterers, "thieves, and slanderers, and flatterers", wayward presbyters, bishops and deacons, and assorted heretics.

"And he [the angel] said to me: Follow me, that I may show thee where the souls of the impious and the sinners are. And he took me to the setting of the sun, and where the beginning of the heaven had been founded upon the river of the ocean. And I saw beyond the river, and there was no light there, but darkness, and grief, and groaning; and I saw a bubbling river, and a great multitude both of men and women who had been cast into it, some up to the knees, others up to the navel, and many even up to the crown of the head. And I asked: Who are these? And he said to me: These are **they who lived unrepenting in fornications and adulteries**.



And I saw at the southwest of the river another river, where there flowed a river of fire, and there was there a multitude of many souls.

And I asked the angel: Who are these, my Lord? And he said to me: These are the **thieves, and slanderers, and flatterers**, who did not set up God as their help, but hoped in the vanity of their riches. And I said to him: What is the depth of this river? And he said to me: Its depth has no measure, but it is immeasurable. And I groaned and wept because of mankind. And the angel said to me: Why weepest thou? Art thou more merciful than God? for, being holy, God, repenting over men, waits for their conversion and repentance; but they, deceived by their own will, come here, and are eternally punished.

And I looked into the fiery river, and saw an old man dragged along by two, and they pulled him in up to the knee. And the angel Temeluch coming, laid hold of an iron with his hand, and with it drew up the entrails of that old man through his mouth. And I asked the angel: My Lord, who is this that suffers this punishment? And he said to me: This old man whom thou seest was a **presbyter; and when he had eaten and drunk, then he performed the service of God**. And I saw there another old man carried in haste by four angels; and they threw him into the fiery river up to the girdle, and he was frightfully burnt by the lightnings. And I said to the angel: Who is this, my Lord? And he said to me: This whom thou seest was a

bishop, and that name indeed he was well pleased to have; but in the goodness of God he did not walk, righteous judgment he did not judge, the widow and the orphan he did not pity, he was neither affectionate nor hospitable; but now he has been recompensed according to his works.

And I looked, and saw in the middle of the river another man up to the navel, having his hands all bloody, and worms were coming up through his mouth. And I asked the angel: Who is this, my Lord? And he said to me: This whom thou seest was **a deacon, who ate and drank, and ministered to God.** And I looked to another place where there was a brazen wall in flames, and within it men and women eating up their own tongues, dreadfully judged. And I asked the angel: Who are these, my Lord? And he said to me: These are **they who in the church speak against their neighbors, and do not attend to the word of God...**

And the angel took me up from these torments, and set me above a well, which had seven seals upon its mouth. And the angel who was with me said to the angel at the well of that place: Open the well, that Paul the beloved of God may see, because there has been given to him authority to see the torments. And the angel of the place said to me: Stand afar off, until I open the seals. And when he had opened them, there came forth a stench which it was impossible to bear. And having come near the place, I saw that well filled with darkness and gloom, and great narrowness of space in it. And the angel who was with me said to me: This place of the well which thou seest is cast off from the glory of God, and none of the angels is importunate in behalf of them; and as many as have professed that the holy Mary is not the mother of God, and that the Lord did not become man out of her, and that the bread of the thanksgiving and the cup of blessing are not His flesh and blood, are cast into this well: and as I said before no angel is importunate in their behalf. And I saw towards the setting of the sun, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, many men and women there tormented. And I said to the angel: Who are these, my Lord? And he said to me: These are they who say that there is no resurrection of the dead; and to them mercy never comes." (*Revelation of Paul, "Apocrypha of the New Testament", Translated By Alexander Walker, Esq., One Of Her Majesty's Inspectors Of Schools For Scotland, emphasis added*)

Summary

The concepts of Hell and the Devil – vaguely formed in the Old Testament – would solidify in the inter-Testamental period in the writings of the Apocrypha and the Dead Sea Scrolls. By the time of the New Testament, those concepts would become an integral part of Christian theology, which describes a final victory by Christ over Satan and his minions. And after that final victory, a final judgment will eternally consign Satan and his followers to Hell.



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About the Author

Robert C. Jones grew up in the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area. He made his living as a hotel lounge band leader/musician from 1974-1981. In 1981, he moved to the Atlanta, Georgia area, where he received a B.S. in Computer Science at DeVry Institute of Technology. Since 1984, Robert has worked for Hewlett-Packard as a computer consultant.



Robert is an ordained elder in the Presbyterian Church. He has written and taught numerous adult Sunday School courses (see front inside cover). He has also been active in choir ministries over the years, and has taught the *Disciples* Bible Study five times.

Robert is also President of the Kennesaw Historical Society, for whom he has written several books, including "The Law Heard 'Round the World - An Examination of the Kennesaw Gun Law and Its Effects on the Community", "Retracing the Route of the General - Following in the Footsteps of the Andrews Raid", and "Kennesaw (Big Shanty) in the 19th Century". A new book, "Images of America: Kennesaw", was published by Arcadia in 2006.

Robert has also written several books on ghost towns in the Southwest, including in Death Valley, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, and Mojave National Preserve.

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