



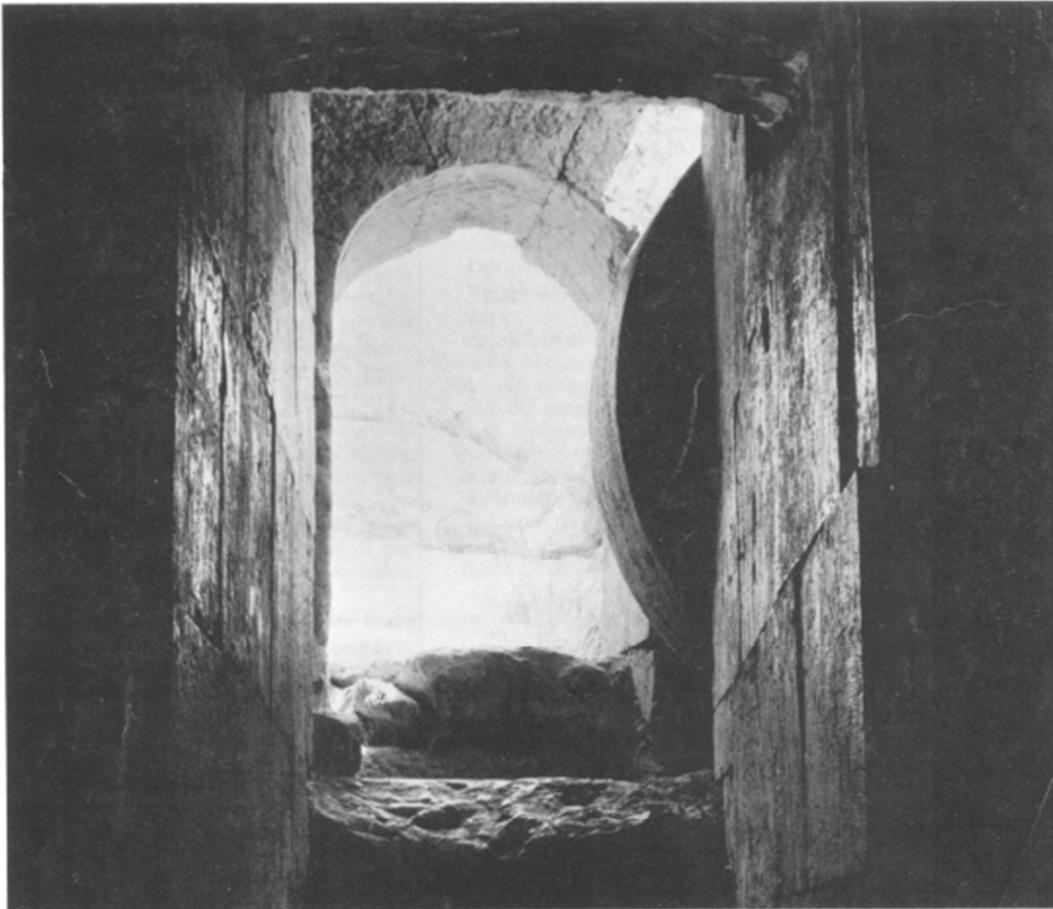
# Ambassador College

## CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

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*An International Course of Biblical Understanding*

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Inside "Hell" Looking Out

LESSON 6

### **About Our Cover ...**

This interior shot of Herod's tomb is a far cry from the traditional concepts of hell familiar

to most people. This tomb is literally a "hell" (Greek: *hades*) or *hole* in the ground! No demons with pitchforks, no burning, boiling caldrons of molten rock, no screams of the eternally condemned writhing in unbearable, inescapable pain. Will *you* go to this "traditional" hell? Has *anyone*? Or do the "infernal regions" exist only in the minds of men?

*P. Gross Photo*

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## **What OUR STUDENTS SAY**

"Last week we received the fifth lesson in the Correspondence Course. To say that we were thrilled would be a gross understatement, for as I started into the lesson, all the hodgepodge of information that I had gathered over the months on this subject began to fall perfectly into place. Once again we would like to thank you, and to tell you that we are very happy with the course. We look forward with yearning to receiving the future lessons."

- A. N., Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

"I am now on Lesson 5 of this study course. This lesson, I must say, is absolutely a shocker! All my life I've understood the soul was an immortal spirit which escaped death when the body died, but where it went to I had no idea. For all these years (and I'm 70)

I've believed that. I know now that until we have the Spirit of God, we can never become immortal on the day of Christ's second coming. I have learned far, far more through these lessons than I ever learned in my life hitherto."

- Student, Isle of Man

"I have just completed Lesson number five of the Ambassador College Correspondence Course and am so grateful for the enlightenment and knowledge received concerning an "immortal soul" which has been a real puzzler to me. I am ready for the next lesson and must say that each new revelation is a real eye-opener and a real thriller."

- E. N., Miami Beach, Florida

"I am currently enrolled in your Correspondence Course. I find it very interesting and exciting. I can hardly wait for the next lesson. I am learning so many new things, and many things which are the direct opposite of what I've always heard and learned before. I recommend your Correspondence Course to everyone."

- T. H., Little Rock, Arkansas

"I want to tell you how much I am enjoying the Correspondence Course. It is really an eye-opener! I not only enjoy studying the Bible, but read five or six chapters every night before going to bed. Reading the Bible like this would never have occurred to me, had I not heard your radio program and received your Correspondence Course."

- B. H., Haughton, Louisiana

## **WHAT IS "HELL"?**

*Even if you are a faithful, believing Christian, you may go to hell! Many of your loved ones are right now in hell! But don't be alarmed. You probably have never heard the TRUTH about what "hell" really is - and where most ideas on the subject came from. Just what does the Bible teach about "hell"?*

MILLIONS are in confusion about "hell." What is it? *Where* is it? Who really goes there? And why?

Is "hell" a literal place - a geographical location? Is it somewhere in the interior of the earth, in the heart of the sun, in remote space?

A Gallup survey in 1967 showed that 68 percent of Americans believe in

heaven, but only 54 percent are persuaded of the reality of hell.

Why the difference?

Probably because many of those who believe in a heaven simply cannot bring themselves to think that a merciful, loving God would consign anyone to a place of eternal torment!

### **Common Ideas of Hell**

A survey in New Zealand indicated that 60 percent of New Zealanders believe hell is simply a state of mind. Only 26 percent believed hell is a literal place.

In San Francisco, random passersby were asked: "How do you picture hell?" Some of the answers reveal the utter confusion surrounding this subject in the minds of the public.

First person: "Honestly, I have doubts there is such a place. I feel hell is a means of scaring people so they will lead a better life.... If there is such a place, I suppose it is craggy and filled with people feeding furnaces or breaking rocks."

Second person: "The idea of hell is one of the greatest means in the world for teaching children good. Personally, however, I think it is just a Biblical term."

Third person: "When I was young I had a clear picture of what hell is like - flames and a devil with horns and a pitchfork. But a person gets over this, just as he does with Santa Claus."

Fourth person: "I would rather not think about it."

Fifth person: "I have never thought of it except as I have seen it staged in operas or plays."

Sixth person: "I picture hell as a big, hot, uncomfortable desert. I think it does exist. Not down in the ground. But since someone put us here, then He

could easily have a place for us afterward."

Seventh person: "Hell is a place of unhappy confinement, like a prison. Not necessarily with flames. More a torment of the spirit. I believe it is an actual area, although not necessarily down any more than heaven must be up."

Here are many vague ideas about hell, but almost no real knowledge. Probably the clear majority are those who would just "rather not think about it"!

### **What the Clergy Thinks**

Many theologians today do not believe in a literal "hell." Said one: "The essence of hell is separation from God - not really torture, but torment."

Another described hell as "a condition of human existence."

One minister claimed hell is "the loss of communication, insensitivity to spiritual values, the realization of how far short of our capacities we have fallen, the memory of some of the things we have done."

What abysmal confusion!

Isn't it time we learned the TRUTH of the Bible?

### **The "Fiery Inferno"**

Most everyone assumes one of two extremes concerning "hell." One group totally denies that hell exists. Hell is passed off as an ancient superstition which has no bearing whatever on modern life.

The other group, including most so-called Bible fundamentalists, pictures hell as a terrible place of never-ending torment where the devil rules and his demons gleefully "roast" sinners like millions of wieners on a barbecue spit. There is bitter weeping and wailing, agonized cursing, shrieks and screams from those in eternal torment - according to this concept.

Here is the terse summation of this popular belief from the *Encyclopedia*

*Americana:*

"As generally understood, hell is the abode of evil spirits; the infernal regions ... whither lost and condemned souls go after death to suffer indescribable *torments* and *eternal* punishment.... Some have thought of it as the place created by the Deity, where He punishes, with inconceivable severity, and through all eternity, the souls of those who through unbelief or through the worship of false gods have angered Him. It is the place of *divine revenge*, untempered, NEVER ENDING. This has been the idea most generally held by Christians, Catholics, and Protestants alike. It is also the idea embodied in the Mohammedan's conception.... The main features of hell as conceived by Hindu, Persian, Egyptian, Grecian, and Christian theologians *are essentially the same*" (from the article on "Hell," emphasis ours throughout lesson).

But why do people believe what they believe? From where or from whom have these popular ideas come?

### **From the Pagans**

A few prominent religious leaders of the Middle Ages left writings and teachings which were so universally believed that they became the accepted doctrine of the Christian-professing world. Two of the most important of these influential writers were Augustine (345-430 A.D.), and Dante Alighieri (1265-1321 A.D.).

Augustine reasoned that there should be a temporary cleansing of imperfect souls in purgatorial fire. He, like other influential men of the Christian-professing church, were influenced by "pre-Christian doctrine" - the doctrine of the ancient pagan philosophers (see *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., article "Purgatory").

Dante wrote a tremendously popular poem, *The Divine Comedy*, in three parts - Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. "Of all poets of modern times," says a modern author, "Dante Alighieri was, perhaps, the greatest educator. He possibly had a greater influence on the course of civilization than any other man since his day ... he wrote, in incomprehensible verse, an imaginative and lurid account of a dismal hell - a long poem containing certain phrases which caught the attention of the world, such as, "all hope abandon . . . ye,

who enter here!" This had a tremendous impression and influence on the popular Christian thought and teaching. His "Inferno" was based on Virgil and Plato" (*Dante and His Inferno*).

Dante is reported to have been so fascinated and enraptured by the ideas and concepts of the pagan philosophers Plato and Virgil that he believed they were divinely inspired.

Who were Plato and Virgil?

Says the *Encyclopedia Americana*: "Virgil, pagan poet, 70-19 B.C., belonged to the national school of pagan Roman thought, influenced by the Greek writers. Christians of the Middle Ages, including Dante, believed he had received some measure of divine inspiration."

Plato, bom in Athens, Greece, 427 B.C., was a student of the renowned Socrates. Plato's famous literary work *Phaedo* taught the immortality of the soul, the foundation for Dante's doctrine of an eternal hell where wicked "souls" are supposedly punished forever.

So the world's concept of "hell" is admittedly a product of *human thinking* - of pagan speculation - as men puzzled over the eventual fate of the wicked.



**CONCEPTS OF HELL** -- Above: Medieval poet Dante Alighieri greatly influenced the world's thinking about hell through his fictitious *Divine Comedy*, from which these

illustrations are taken Below: Dante, on an imaginary tour of hell, peers into a burning  
brimstone pit. Bottom:Dante views sinners doomed to writhe eternally upside down in  
burning potholes!





### **What About the Billions of Mankind?**

Before we examine the Bible to see whether the common ideas about hell could be *true*, let us consider where this concept of hell, if true, would lead us.

On this earth there are more than three billion people. The most populous lands are China, India, and other parts of Asia. But in spite of the efforts of Western missionaries, more than half of all the people on the earth have never so much as heard the only name by which men may be saved (Acts 4:12) - the name of "Jesus Christ"!

Literally *billions* of people on this earth have lived and died without having known anything about "salvation" - without ever having seen a Bible.

Now think what that means. If all the "unsaved" go immediately to a fiery hell at death, then more than half the people who have ever lived on this

earth have been consigned to this terrible punishment without ever having had a chance to escape it!

Can you really believe that is the method an all-wise, all-merciful loving God is using to work out His purpose here below?

WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

We face these alternatives: Either the Creator *reveals* the TRUTH on this subject in His *inspired Word*, or else we must fling up our hands and confess we *just don't know*. Either we believe what the Bible says, or we must - if we are rational and honest - admit ignorance.

What *does* God say about "hell" in the Bible? You may be surprised! So be sure to read *all* of the scripture references given in this lesson, and PROVE the truth from the Bible with your own eyes.



AP News Features Photo

CONDEMNED? - Would God be fair to condemn the billions who never had a chance to be saved?

## LESSON 6

### Christ Spoke of "Hell Fire"

**1.** In His parable-like illustration, what punishment did Christ warn would ultimately befall those who refuse to quit sinning - refuse to *stop using*

(obviously not literally "cut off") various of their members to *commit sin*?  
Mark 9:43.

COMMENT: "Hell" is an English word. When Mark recorded Christ's words, he wrote them in the *Greek* language. The Greek word translated "hell," which Mark was inspired to write down, is *gehenna*. Since in this verse Christ says the sinner is "to go into hell, *into the fire*," it follows that those who go to *gehenna* will receive punishment by *fire*.

Keep in mind then that Christ associated the Greek word *gehenna* with *fire*.

**2.** What did Christ say in Mark 9:45 to emphasize what He said in verse 43?

COMMENT: Mark wrote down the *same* Greek word *gehenna* here in verse 45 that he used in verse 43. The translators of the Authorized or King James Version of the Bible of 1611 A.D. selected the English word "hell" to represent this Greek word *gehenna*. We will learn more about the real meaning of this word later.

**3.** How did Christ re-emphasize what He said about "hell fire"? Verse 47.

COMMENT: Again, the Greek word which Mark used in this verse is *gehenna*. *Gehenna* clearly refers to *fire*! But there are other words in the Bible also translated "hell."

### **English Word "Hell" Misapplied**

Let's read what *A Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by James Hastings, says about the use of the word "hell" in the Old and New Testaments. Keep in mind, as you read this, that the Old Testament was originally written in the *Hebrew* language, and that the New Testament was originally written in the *Greek* language.

Hastings says: "In our Authorized Version the word hell is unfortunately used as the rendering of *three distinct words*, with DIFFERENT IDEAS [or meanings]. It represents, **1.** the "*sheol*" of the Hebrew Old Testament, and the "*hades*" in the New Testament.... It is now an entirely misleading rendering, especially in the New Testament passages. The English revisers, therefore, have substituted "*hades*" [going back to the original Greek word]

for "hell" in the New Testament.... In the American revision the word "hell" is entirely discarded in this connection....

"The word "hell" is used **2.** as equivalent to [the Greek word] "*tartaros*" (II Peter 2:4) ... and, **3.** . . as the equivalent of [the Greek word] "*gehenna*"  
.....

So we see that the real meanings of *three different* Greek words - *hades* (equivalent to the Hebrew *sheol* of the Old Testament), *tartaros* and *gehenna* - have been *confused* with each other because translators have attempted to make the *one* English word "hell" cover the definitions of all *three* words! No wonder confusion has reigned in the minds of millions.

What do these words really mean?

The original Old Testament Hebrew word *sheol* and the New Testament Greek word *hades* mean the same thing - simply the *grave*. These original words have been translated "grave" in many places in the Bible. "Hell" is an old English word, and over 350 years ago when the Authorized Version was translated, the people of England commonly talked of "putting their potatoes in *hell* for the winter" - a good way of preserving potatoes - for the word then meant merely A HOLE IN THE GROUND which was covered up - a dark and silent place - a *grave!* But pagan teachings gaining popular acceptance have caused people to misapply the old English word "hell" to the lurid imaginations of Dante.

The second Greek word, *tartaros*, which has also been translated into the English word "hell," occurs only once in the New Testament (II Pet. 2:4) and does not refer to humans, but to the *restrained condition* of fallen angels. Its meaning, translated into English, is "darkness of the material universe," or "dark abyss," or "prison."

But what about *gehenna*? This Greek word, as all authorities admit, is derived from the name of the narrow, rocky Valley of Hinnom which lay just outside of Jerusalem. It was the place where refuse was constantly burned up. Trash, filth, and the dead bodies of animals and despised criminals were thrown into the fires of *gehenna*, or the Valley of Hinnom. Ordinarily, everything thrown into this valley was *destroyed by fire* - COMPLETELY BURNED UP. Therefore, Christ used *gehenna* to picture the terrible fate of

*unrepentant sinners!*



TWO DIFFERENT "HELLS" - The Greek word *Gehenna* - translated "hell" in the New Testament - refers to the Valley of Hinnom just outside Jerusalem where, in the days of Jesus, refuse was thrown to be burned. Below: The Greek word *hades*, also translated "hell," simply means the "grave" - a hole in the ground!



### **Two Different "Hells"**

In most of the passages of the New Testament where we see the word "hell," the original Greek word is not *gehenna*. Most often it is *hades* - which does *not* refer to *fire* at all, but to a grave - a hole in the ground. Yet the

- |                           |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>16.</b> The wicked     | <b>A.</b> Being tormented  |
|                           | <b>B.</b> Now in hell fire |
| <b>17.</b> "Wages of sin" | <b>C.</b> "Death"          |
|                           | <b>D.</b> Quenched         |
| <b>18.</b> Lake of fire   | <b>E.</b> To become ashes  |
|                           | <b>F.</b> Cannot burn up   |
| <b>19.</b> Satan          | <b>G.</b> Symbolic only    |
|                           | <b>H.</b> Earth burning    |
| <b>20.</b> Flies          | <b>I.</b> "Immortal worms" |
|                           | <b>J.</b> Eternal fire     |

### ANSWERS TO QUIZ

- |      |       |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. A  | 11. F | 16. E |
| 2. C | 7. D  | 12. F | 17. C |
| 3. D | 8. A  | 13. T | 18. H |
| 4. B | 9. D  | 14. F | 19. F |
| 5. C | 10. B | 15. T | 20. I |

### Rate Yourself

19-20 correct ----- excellent

16-18 correct ----- good

13-15 correct ----- fair