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*"The Churches of God Outreach Ministries provides leadership, information, and biblical teaching in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:19-20"*

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## **Mini Study**

### **Is Hell Real?**

*And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28)*

*And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7)*

The 14th century *Dante's Inferno* firmly set in the human psyche the concept of 'hell' as a raging fiery furnace in which is confined the unsaved - tormented for all eternity. It has served to cement in the mind of many the notion of God as a callous monster. Others justify it as proper punishment for failing to accept Jesus as Saviour. If true, then the vast majority of human kind are destined for billions of years of horrendous torment. What about the billions alive today who reject Christianity or have never even heard the name *Jesus*. Or the countless men, women and children alive before his coming. Will they suffer the same awful fate? Is this what the Scriptures teach?

- first, it must be understood that for every human being who ever lived there will come a time of just judgment before the bar of God (John 5:28, 29)
- *but hell is real!* There's no escape from this teaching in the Christian Scriptures. What's unreal is the widely accepted meaning of the word. In fact, the concept is represented in Scripture by more than the one word *hell*, and in different original words
- it perhaps shocks to know that Jesus himself rested three days and nights in hell. Indeed his 'companions' there included faithful Abraham, Moses, David - and the murderer Cain - together with every individual who had died until that time (Acts 2:29-31)
- the Hebrew word for hell is *sheol*, the grave and cognates. The equivalent Greek is *hades*. It represents the resting place of all the dead
- another Greek term is *gehenna*. This word indeed refers to a fire - the final post-judgment outcome for the unrepentant. The term derives from *Ge-Hinnom* - the Valley of Hinnom, where Jerusalem's waste was burned or consumed by worms
- at the time of Jesus no human had been to Heaven (John 3:13). How come?
- in fact, the whole concept of the unsaved being consigned at death to a burning hell derives from the first ever lie. Most religious folk believe that Hell is the domain of Satan. Our first parents would have remained alive as long so they didn't sin. Satan, the father of lies - taught that even if you sin you won't ever die (Genesis 3:4)
- man was created from earth's elements (Genesis 2:7). God animated the clay model '*...and man became a living soul*'. The soul, we are told, can die (Ezekiel 18:4)
- upon death we (eventually) return to the soil (Genesis 3:19), without conscious existence (Ecclesiastes 9:5)
- at the return of Jesus all those in whom dwells God's Spirit will be resurrected to eternal life. All others will be resurrected (in a material body) to face a period of judgment. The unrepentant die and their bodies consumed by fire in *Gehenna, hell* - eternal annihilation
- "*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up*" (II Peter 3:10; Revelation 21:8)

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