

Biblical Definition's

Pit

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/pit/>

The Old Testament. "Pit" denotes a large hole in the ground. Pits were used to catch wild animals ([Eze 19:1-8](#)) or to collect water for drinking ("cisterns," [Deut 6:11](#)). Sometimes they were used as dungeons or prisons ([Gen 37:24](#) ; [Exod 12:29](#) ; [Jer 38:6](#)).

Very often, however, "pit" is used figuratively. For example, enemies seek to harm the psalmist by "digging a pit" for his life ([Psalm 35:7](#)). Commonly it is a metaphor for Sheol ("the grave," [Psalm 16:10](#)) or death ([Psalm 30:9](#)). Since God did not reveal the hope of resurrection and the glories of heaven until late in Old Testament times, many expressions are quite negative. Everyone dies, so no one can avoid the pit ([Psalm 49:9](#)). It is a place of destruction ([Isa 38:17](#)), a dark and deep place where the dead are without strength, forsaken by the living, and forgotten by God ([Psalm 88:3-6](#)). There is no thanksgiving, praise, or hope there ([Psalm 38:1-8](#)).

The New Testament. In the New Testament "pit" is used literally of a place into which an animal ([Matt 12:11](#) ; [Luke 14:5](#)) or the blind ([Matt 15:14](#) ; [Luke 6:39](#)) might fall (the latter is also a figure for the spiritually blind Pharisees). In addition, it is used metaphorically for an underworld dungeon: a gloomy prison for the fallen angels ([2 Peter 2:4](#)) or a bottomless abyss for Satan during the millennium ([Rev 20:1-3](#)).

William B. Nelson, Jr

Hell

Place of God's final retributive punishment. Scripture progressively develops this destiny of the wicked: the Old Testament outlines the framework, while the New Testament elaborates on it. Jesus, however, is most responsible for defining hell.

The Old Testament. In the Old Testament *Sheol* denotes the abode of the dead; conscious souls face a shadowy existence in this "land of oblivion" ([Job 10:21](#) ; [Psalm 88:12](#) ; [Eccl 9:10](#) ; [Isa 14:10](#)). Since death is not a natural occurrence but issues from the fall, the Old Testament confidently awaits God's demonstration of his lordship over Sheol by raising the righteous to life (Gen. 2-3; [Psalm 16:10](#) ; [49:15](#) ; [Isa 25:8](#) ; [Hosea 13:14](#)). While God's kingship also has implications for the wicked, here the Old Testament is more reserved. The Old Testament infrequently suggests a bodily resurrection for the wicked ([Dan 12:2](#)), a final judgment and retribution for evil deeds ([Psalm 21:10](#) ; [140:10](#) ; [Mal 4:1-2](#)). Nevertheless, the contemptible and horrible destiny of the wicked, irretrievably isolated from the righteous, is clear ([Psalm 9:17](#) ; [34:15-16](#)).

The Intertestamental Period. The intertestamental literature constructed divergent scenarios for the wicked dead, including annihilation (4 Ezra 7:61; 2 Apoc Bar 82:3ff.; 1 Enoch 48:9; 99:12; 1QS iv. 11-14) and endless torment (Jub 36:11; 1 Enoch 27:1-3; 103:8; T Gad 7:5). Sheol frequently became an interim location for the dead, distinguished from the place of final punishment (1 Enoch 18:9-16; 51:1). This final punishment was usually located in a valley south of Jerusalem, known in Hebrew as *Gen Hinnom* or the Valley of Hinnom (2 Apoc Bar 59:10; 4 Ezra 7:36), and in Greek as *gehenna* [[gevenna](#)] (2 Esdr 2:29). This valley had a long history as a place of infamy. Notorious for the child sacrifices offered to Molech during the reigns of Ahaz and Manasseh ([2 Kings 16:3](#) ; [2 Chron 28:3](#) ; [33:6](#) ; [Jer 7:31-34](#) ; [19:6](#)), this valley was further desecrated when Josiah used it as Jerusalem's refuse dump ([2 Kings 23:10](#)) and it was prophesied as the place of God's future fiery judgment ([Isa 30:33](#) ; [66:24](#) ; [Jer 7:31-32](#)). While some intertestamental writings equate hell with the "lake of fire" in this "accursed valley" of Hinnom (1 Enoch 90:26, 27; 54:1, 2), others use it to denote a place in the underworld (Sib Or 4:1184-86).

In addition, the respective scenarios for the wicked, whether annihilation or eternal torment, shaped images of God's judgment. For instance, at times fire consumes the wicked (1 Enoch 99:12); in other texts fire and worms torment their victim to a useless existence (Judith 16:17).

The New Testament. In the New Testament hell is where the reprobate exist after the resurrection from *Hades* and the final judgment. In this lake of fire God punishes the wicked, along with Satan and his henchmen ([Matt 25:41](#)), bringing an end to evil's free ways.

Gehenna [[gevenna](#)] is the standard term for hell in the New Testament. Related phrases include "punishment of eternal fire" (Jude 7), "lake of fire" (Rev 19:29 ; [20:14-15](#)), and "judgment." English versions occasionally translate *hades* (esp. [Luke 16:23](#)) and *tartaroo* [[tartarovw](#)] ([2 Pe 2:4](#)) as hell. However, these terms appear to denote the intermediate state, not the final destiny of the wicked.

Jesus says more about hell than any other biblical figure. His warnings of the eschatological judgment are liberally colored with the imagery of hell ([Matt 5:22](#) ; [7:19](#) ; [8:12](#) ; par. [Luke 13:28-30](#) ; [Matthew 10:15](#) [Matthew 10:28](#) ; [Matthew 11:22](#) [Matthew 11:24](#) ; [18:8-9](#) ; par. [Mark 9:43-49](#) ; [Luke 17:26-29](#) ; [John 15:6](#)). He portrays this future judgment through pictures of Sodom's destruction ([Luke 17:29-30](#)): fire, burning sulfur, and a fiery furnace ([Gen 19:24-25](#)). These images of God's judgment were well established in the Old Testament and intertestamental literature. Important portrayals of hell are also present in Jesus' parables, including the tares ([Matt 13:40-42](#)), the net ([Matt 13:50](#)); the great supper ([Matt 22:13](#)), the good servant and the wicked servant ([Matt 24:51](#) ; par. [Luke 12:46-47](#)), the talents ([Matt 25:30](#)), and the last judgment ([Matt 25:46](#)). Here "weeping and gnashing of teeth" ([Matt 13:50](#) ; [24:51](#) ; [25:30](#)) and "darkness" ([Matt 22:13](#) ; [25:30](#)) are key descriptive phrases.

The New Testament conception of hell does not exceed Jesus' description. The following headings outline its essential features.

1. *Sinners will occupy hell.* While God created us for a loving relation with himself, at the fall humankind rebelled. God's judgment falls on all sinners, unless they have faith in Jesus. After the provisional state of Hades and the final judgment, God's wrath culminates in hell. According to the New Testament, the objects of God's wrath range from the pious hypocrites ([Matt 23:33](#)) and those failing to help the poor ([Matt 25:31-46](#) ; [Luke 16:19-31](#)) to the vile and murderers ([Rev 21:8](#)).

Some argue that only an explicit repudiation of Jesus attracts God's eternal wrath, referencing Luke 12:8-9. However, Jesus says "the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" ([Luke 19:10](#)). In other words, he came offering grace to a world that was "condemned already" ([John 3:17-18](#)).

Since hell is not a natural fixture of creation but results from the fall and is destiny of the wicked, the New Testament occasionally personifies hell as the demonic forces behind sin. The sinful tongue is itself aroused and "set on fire by hell" ([James 3:6](#)). Similarly, Jesus labels the Pharisees "sons of hell," identifying the root of their hypocrisy ([Matt 23:15](#)).

2. *Hell exists for the requital and retribution of evil deeds.* Hell is the place of God's final judgment. Here God, our King and Supreme Judge, finally rectifies wrongs through his retributive wrath. Here the damned will be paid back for the harm they have done ([Matt 16:27](#) ; [Luke 12:47-48](#) ; [2 Peter 2:13](#) ; Jude 15 [Rev 14:9-11](#)). Wrath is not the natural consequence of evil choices in a moral universe or the sinner's misconstrual of God's love. Rather, as Paul's use of *orge* shows, wrath is an emotion or feeling in the Godhead, and thus God's personal action ([Rom 1:18-32](#)). By extrinsically imposing penal conditions on the sinner, God rectifies wrongs and reestablishes his righteous rule ([Matt 25:31-46](#) ; [Rom 12:19](#) ; [1 Cor 15:24-25](#) ; [2 Col 5:10](#)).

3. *Hell is a final place of bondage and isolation from the righteous.* After the resurrection and the final judgment, the wicked and even Hades are thrown into hell. The New Testament describes hell as a place: a furnace ([Matthew 13:42](#) [Matthew 13:50](#)), a lake of fire ([Rev 19:20](#) ; [20:14-15](#) ; [21:8](#)), and a prison ([Rev 20:7](#)). The wicked are imprisoned here so they cannot harm God's people ([Matt 5:25-26](#) ; [Matthew 13:42](#) [Matthew 13:50](#) ; [18:34](#) ; Jude 6 [Rev 20:14-15](#)).

While the parable of Lazarus and the rich man **occurs in Hades, the intermediate state, and not Gehenna**, it does foreshadow the latter. Jesus says an unbridgeable spatial chasm separates these two so no one can "cross over from there" ([Luke 16:26](#)). John's vision in Revelation 21 of the new city on a high mountain confirms this separation between the blessed and the damned after the day of judgment. Consequently, Scripture provides no warrant for those speculative images of the righteous rejoicing in the torture of the damned. The prophecy in Isaiah 66:24, which has been so used, does not refer to this eschatological event, for the resurrection of the body has not occurred.

4. *Sinners suffer penalties in hell.* Jesus repeatedly accentuates hell's dreadfulness and horror: "if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out It is better to enter life with one eye than to be thrown into the fire of hell" ([Matt 18:9](#)). While Scripture remains reticent on the specific torments for the impenitent, certain dimensions are clear.

At the final judgment, God will declare, "I don't know you Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire" ([Matthew 25:12](#) [Matthew 25:41](#)). The wicked in hell are excluded from God's loving presence and the "life" for which humans were originally created ([John 5:29](#)). The damned are "thrown outside, into the darkness" ([Matt 8:12](#) ; [22:13](#)). Consequently this "second death" ([Rev 21:8](#)) is a useless and ruined existence ([Matt 25:30](#) ; [Luke 9:25](#) ; [John 3:16-18](#) ; [2 Thess 1:9](#) ; [2 Peter 2:12](#) ; [Jude 12](#) ; [Rev 21:8](#)). Sin has thoroughly effaced every virtue. The reprobate have become obstinate in their rebellion against God, like "unreasoning animals" ([Jude 1:10](#) [Jude 1:13](#) ; [2 Peter 2:12-22](#)). Consequently, the doors of hell can be locked from the inside, as C. S. Lewis observes.

In hell, the damned receive their due for "things done while in the body" ([2 Col 5:10](#) ; [2 Peter 2:13](#) ; Jude 15 [Rev 14:9-11](#)). The "undying worm" has often been interpreted as the soul's internal torment, coveting and grieving what has been lost ([Mark 9:48](#)). This regret is compounded since the reprobate are not penitent but locked into their rebellion. But the grave's worms and darkness are also common images of a contemptible fate. Scripture suggests that there are degrees of punishment in hell. The one "who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows." More severe is the punishment due to the disobedient who were "entrusted with much" ([Mark 12:40](#) ; [Luke 12:48](#)).

Annihilationsim and the Extent of Hell. The extent of hell has occasioned much debate in recent scholarship. There are three major points of contention.

Some annihilationists have argued that the biblical imagery of a consuming fire, destruction, and perishing implies the cessation of life (Stott). However, Jesus' pictures of hell are not literal descriptions but metaphors. They are mutually exclusive, if taken literally, for the fires of hell conflict with its "utter darkness." In the intertestamental literature the metaphorical image of a fire could suggest annihilation or everlasting punishment, showing the inconclusiveness of this argument.

Some annihilationists have argued that when the Greek adjective for eternal, *aionios* [[aijwvnio](#)], is used with nouns of action, it refers to an occurrence with eternal results, not an eternal process (Fudge). "Eternal punishment, " it is argued, denotes a punishment that occurs once with eternal results. However, counterfactuals dispute this argument. The eternal sin ([Mark 3:29](#)), for example, is not just one sin, but an action that irretrievably debilitates so one only sins. Similarly, everlasting salvation (*aionios* [[aijwvnio](#)] *soteria* [[swthriwa](#)]) does not refer solely to Christ's work long ago, and thus preclude his sustaining and preserving presence.

For Scripture describes believers, even in the age to come, as existing "in Christ" ([Rom 8:1](#) ; [Eph 1:13](#) ; [Col 2:6-7](#) ; [2 Tim 2:10](#)). So *aionios soteria* [[aijwvnio](#)"swthriva"] refers to Christ's eternal (*aionios* [[aijwvnio](#)"]) salvation of the blessed, an action that is everlasting as well as final.

In Matthew 25:46 Jesus differentiates the two futures of eternal life and eternal punishment, using the same adjective for each, *aionios* [[aijwvnio](#)"]. In Jesus' mind, it appears, the extent of each future is identical. If the existence of the righteous is endless, so also is the existence of the wicked. Other statements suggest the same conclusion. Jesus teaches that "whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him" ([John 3:36](#)). As long as God's wrath abides on them, the damned must exist. Jesus' picture of hell as a place where "their worm *does not die*, and the fire is not quenched" ([Mark 9:48](#)) indicates that this manifestation of God's wrath is unending. Other passages in the New Testament reiterate Jesus' dreadful warning, by describing hell as "everlasting torment." Even annihilationists admit the difficulty of such texts for their position.

Objections to Hell. Hell is a dreadful reality. Just as Christ wept over Jerusalem, believers are similarly troubled and anguished by this destiny of the lost. Some have raised serious challenges to the reality of hell.

One perennial difficulty concerns the relationship between God's love and holiness: How could a loving God reject *forever* the creature he loves? This question assumes that the creature is the highest intrinsic good, even for God. But the highest good for the God of Scripture is not humanity. Humanity was created for God, and cannot be defined in terms of itself; we exist to glorify God ([Psalm 73:24-26](#); [Rom 11:36](#); [1 Cor 10:31](#); [Col 1:16](#)). That is why Jesus insists it is idolatrous to enlist God as humanity's servant ([Luke 17:7-10](#)). Certainly God loves the creature; creation itself reflects God's free love. But since God's love is complete in himself, even before creation, the creature cannot be presumed as his one and only end. Nor can the character of God's love be decided a priori, but only by revelation. Consequently, Jesus' warning of the wrath to come ([Matt 25:31,41,46](#)) must be accepted as an inherent possibility of God's love.

Some acknowledge retribution, but question why the wicked are eternally kept in existence to suffer. At issue is the punishment due sin. Since pride conceals the sinner's true debt to God the Judge, again this question should be answered by examining Christ's priestly work of propitiation. At the cross God in Christ became our substitute to bear the punishment for our sins, so as "to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus" ([Rom 3:26](#); cf. [2 Col 5:21](#); [1 Peter 2:24](#)). The God-man propitiated our sin. This fact, that God the Judge, the "Lord of glory" himself ([1 Cor 2:8](#)), accepted the punishment due us, suggests that the penalty for sin against the Infinite is infinite.

Questions will remain. But believers personally know God's love in Jesus Christ. And their response to a lost world will parallel that of their Lord, who humbled himself to our condition, suffered, and died for the wicked.

Timothy R. Phillips

Death, Mortality

Death is the absence or withdrawal of breath and the life force that makes movement, metabolism, and interrelation with others possible.

The Old Testament. The Nature of Death. Life and death are totally under Yahweh's sovereignty. God is the source of all life ([Psalm 36:9](#)). There are no organisms anywhere who have not received their life force from him: "In his hand is the life of every creature, and the breath of all mankind" ([Job 12:10](#)). The number of the days of our life is written in God's book before one of them comes to be ([Job 14:5](#) ; [Psalm 139:16](#)).

The Hebrew verb *gawa* [[:w"G], which means "expire, breathe one's last, " is used twenty-three times to describe death. Psalm 104:29b says, "when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust." "If it were his intention and he withdrew his spirit and breath, all mankind would perish" ([Job 34:14-15](#)).

In the Bible, death is more than the cessation of all physiological processes. By divine command ([Psalm 90:3](#)), the body returns to dust and the spirit goes back to God who gave it ([Gen 2:7](#) ; [Eccl 12:7](#)). Those who die are said to be gathered to their people ([Gen 25:8](#) ; [35:29](#) ; [49:33](#)).

This gathering is often seen as a reference to the central repository of the family tomb where eventually everyone's bones were thrown. Abraham's people, however, were buried around Haran ([Genesis 24:4](#) [Genesis 24:10](#)). Only he and Sarah were buried in Canaan ([Gen 23:19](#) ; [25:9](#)). Jacob is gathered to his people at death, but not buried until at least seven weeks later ([49:33](#) ; [Genesis 50:3](#) [Genesis 50:10](#)).

When Jacob says he is "going down" to Joseph ([Gen 37:35](#)), he cannot be referring to a common burial since no one knew where Joseph's body was. Deceased Samuel told Saul he and his sons would be with him the next day ([1 Sam 28:19](#)). He could not have meant they would all be buried together the next day since Saul's headless body was buried in Jabesh Gilead some time after his death ([1 Sam 31:9-11](#)). David said of his dead son, "I will go to him, but he will not return to me" ([2 Sam 12:23](#)).

Samuel was buried in his house at Ramah ([1 Sam 25:1](#)); but in 28:13, 15, he comes up from the earth to Saul at Endor protesting that he has been disturbed. The intense emotional reaction of Saul and the medium, as well as their remarks about Samuel, indicate that they believed they had actually seen his departed spirit. Had this been some sort of demonic delusion, the narrator would certainly have been obligated to call this to the attention of his audience.

It is difficult to avoid the fact that in the Old Testament people believed a person's physical remains were interred in one place, and that part of the person capable of consciousness and personality went to another location. The gathering to one's people was an event taking place before burial at the time of death.

The Origin of Death. Unlike the ancient Mesopotamian concept, death was not originally built into human constitution. People were created for life, not for death. They had access to both the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They were told they would certainly die if they ate from the latter ([Gen 2:17](#)). Humankind was not tricked out of eternal life as in the Adapa myth, nor was it stolen from them as in the Gilgamesh epic. They partook of the forbidden tree with full awareness of the consequences. Apparently from close observation of the plant and animal kingdom they would have been able to know what death was.

Mortality. In the Old Testament death is an unavoidable reality. From a human point of view death was just as final as spilled water ([2 Sam 14:14](#)) and a pot broken at the well ([Eccl 12:6](#)). Death is so ominous and powerful it can be compared to a fortified city with gates and bars ([Psalm 9:13](#) ; [107:18](#)).

Our days are numbered ([Gen 6:3](#) ; [Psalm 90:10](#)). They pass swiftly like the life of a flower ([Psalm 90:6](#) ; [Isa 40:6](#)). Thus the psalmist prays that we might number our days so as to live our lives carefully and wisely ([Psalm 90:12](#)).

Life in the biblical world was very fragile. There was the constant fear that one might not survive until tomorrow. Death stalked on all sides ([Psalm 91:5-7](#)). Pestilence, malnutrition, an accidental fall, famine, war, ambush by enemies, being denounced by an enemy to a ruler, complications in childbirth, and even minor infections could all prove fatal. Death indeed, like fire, seemed never to be satisfied ([Prov 30:16](#)). It seemed as though it had cords and snares that could pull a person down to the grave ([Psalm 18:5](#)).

Responses to Mortality. Israelites were not helpless pawns at the mercy of a capricious fate. They could respond to their own mortality with God-given resources. They knew God made the steps of a righteous man firm ([Psalm 37:23](#)). Unlike most of the ancient Near Eastern peoples, they did not have to worry that they might bring death down on themselves by unknowingly offending some minor deity. God had written a law telling clearly what pleased him. They knew if they meditated on this law day and night, they could be like a luxuriant

tree ([Psalm 1](#)). Sages wrote inspired proverbs telling the people how to escape dangerous situations. They could even find emotional and spiritual release by writing laments to God.

Sometimes people seemed to respond rather pessimistically to death. Old Testament saints saw through a glass darkly. They could see mainly what happened to the physical body. Thus they could not see any productive activity beyond this life. The living know that they will die, but the dead do not know anything ([Ecclesiastes 9:5](#) [Ecclesiastes 9:10](#)). Men like Hezekiah could reason with God that they should go on living because no one worships God in death ([Isa 28:18-19](#)).

The Preacher even extols the advantages of death ([Eccl 4:2](#) ; cf. [Job 3:13-19](#)). He is not, however, as negative in his stance as is commonly supposed. Since death is quick and inevitable, mortals should live life intensely to the fullest, enjoying every minute of everything they do ([Eccl 9:10](#)). God has given them gifts of accepting their portion and finding satisfaction in their work ([Eccl 3:13](#) ; [5:17-18](#) ; [9:7](#)). Since material things perish, we can best respond by orienting ourselves to the significant others God has given us ([Eccl 9:9](#)).

Fatalism is never a response to mortality. A live dog is better than a dead lion ([Eccl 9:4](#)). Taking one's life is never recommended. Even in the Book of Job it is never taken up as an option. The only victims of suicide in the Old Testament were men (Ahithophel and Saul) who were faced with imminent, unavoidable death anyway. These men believed they were choosing a better manner of death than their enemies would select for them ([1 Sam 31:1-6](#) ; [2 Sam 17:23](#)).

Victory over Death. The ancient Israelites knew they could find refuge in times of natural disaster under the wings of the Almighty ([Psalm 91:1](#)). They knew the valley of the shadow of death was unavoidable, but they also knew that in the end the Shepherd would walk it with them ([Psalm 23:4](#)). They knew that something about the day of death was better than the day of birth ([Eccl 7:1](#)).

Even though God has set limits on human life, it is still valuable and sacred to him. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" ([Psalm 116:15](#)). Murderers are to receive the sentence of capital punishment ([Gen 9:5-6](#)) because we are made in the image of God. God takes no pleasure even in the death of the wicked ([Eze 18:32](#)).

There is evidence that in the Old Testament death is not as final as is sometimes supposed. True there was no price even a rich man could pay to avoid it ([Psalm 49:7-8](#)). Death comes like a shepherd to lead us into the grave. But the psalmist affirms in faith that God will himself pay the redemption price for release from the power of death ([Psalm 49:15](#)). In Psalm 73 the singer believes that though his frail flesh and heart may fail, God will be his portion forever and receive him to glory ([Psalms 73:24](#) [Psalms 73:26](#)).

For God death is not an insurmountable obstacle. The death, indecision, barrenness, old age, and confusion of Genesis 11 actually becomes the stage on which God begins to play out his drama of redemption. Out of all this hopelessness and despair comes the life-giving blessing of Genesis 12:1-3.

Isaiah looks forward to a day when the death shroud will be removed, and death will be permanently swallowed up ([25:7-8](#)). A day will come when deadly forces that hurt and destroy will not exist in God's holy mountain ([11:6-9](#)).

The New Testament. Figurative Meanings. The New Testament broadens the term "death" to include various figurative meanings. But the widow who lives for pleasure, says Paul, "is dead even while she lives" ([1 Tim 5:6](#)). People who are alive physically may be dead in trespasses and sins ([Eph 2:1](#)). Even weak Christians may be considered dead ([Rev 3:1](#)).

In a positive sense believers may be said to be "dead to sin" ([Rom 6:1](#)) and crucified with Christ ([Gal 2:20](#)). Even becoming a disciple requires a new radical reorientation to death and a taking up of the cross daily ([Matt 16:24](#)). In the New Testament way of thinking death is necessary for life and fruitfulness ([John 12:24](#)).

The Origin of Death. The New Testament enlarges our understanding of the origin of death. Death passed on all men because of one man's disobedience so that in Adam all die ([Rom 5:12-17](#) ; [1 Col 15:22](#)). The wages of sin is death ([Rom 6:23](#)). Even the mind set on the flesh is death ([Rom 8:6](#)). The letter of the law kills by giving knowledge about sin ([Rom 7:7-12](#)). Thus the law is considered the ministry of death ([2 Cor 3:6-7](#)).

The Second Death. The New Testament delineates a deeper, more sombre meaning to death. Death is appointed to all men, but after that comes judgment ([2 Col 5:10](#) ; [Heb 9:27](#)). In death people do not live in a sort of nebulous twilight zone. The righteous are comforted, and the wicked are tormented ([Luke 16:22-25](#)). The final destiny of death and Hades is to be cast into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death ([Rev 20:14-15](#)). Jesus said that we are not to fear those who can kill the body but those who can kill both body and soul in hell ([Matt 10:28](#)). The second death is a metaphorical term for eternal separation from the presence and glory of God ([2 Thess 1:7-10](#) ; [Rev 2:11](#) ; [Revelation 20:6](#) [Revelation 20:14-15](#)).

Triumph over Death. While the New Testament makes the agony of death more intense and fearsome, it shows a greater triumph over it. It is not the second death but the death of Christ that occupies the center of attention. Through death he destroyed the devil, who had the power over death, and emptied death of its fear ([Heb 2:14-15](#)). By dying Christ destroyed death and brought immortality to light ([2 Tim 1:10](#)). In this event we are reconciled and brought to God ([Rom 5:10](#)).

Even at the beginning of Christ's ministry light shone in the valley of the shadow of death ([Matt 4:16](#)). Now being himself loosed from the pains of death ([Acts 2:24](#)) and crowned with glory and honor ([Heb 2:9](#)), he has the keys of death and hell ([Rev 1:18](#)).

Christians still die but their death is gain because they are now with Christ ([2 Col 5:6](#) ; [Php 1:20-21](#)). Even death cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus ([Rom 8:38-39](#)). In death Christians are given comfort, rest, and assurance ([Luke 16:22-25](#) ; [Rev 6:9-11](#)).

The dead are in Christ, asleep ([1 Thess 4:14](#)), waiting for a day when death will be completely swallowed up by life ([2 Cor 5:4](#)). Then mortality will put on immortality ([1 Cor 15:53](#)). Death, the last enemy, will itself be destroyed ([1 Cor 15:26](#)). There will be no more death or sorrow, and God will wipe all tears from all faces ([Rev 21:4](#)).

For those who overcome and attain to the resurrection of Christ, the second death has no power ([Rev 2:11](#) ; [20:6](#)). Those who believe in Christ will not see death ([John 8:51-52](#)).

Paul Ferguson