

Sermon to the saints of God at Topeka – Sunday, March 18, 2018

Let me be clear: one of God's saints will not be kept out of their eternal habitation because he or she didn't know all the details there was to glean from scripture on the subject of *hell*. It is God who imbues us with knowledge of Him; He energizes us by His Spirit to cull the scripture, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. We know, though, that:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. – 2Tim. 3:16,17

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. – Col. 1:16,17

So, if it's in the Bible, especially a topic this broad and far-reaching, we ought to know whatever we can about it. This is a subject that is particularly challenging, at least to me, as it touches so many other aspects of our beliefs, and one question will undoubtedly lead to another, and then another related one, etc. I ask that you continue to be patient with me and to remember that my goal is not to be dispositive on all matters related to this topic. Instead, I hope to parse out what it looks like we can say for sure, from those things that scriptural evidence suggests as possible explanations, to those things that we probably have no business saying or believing. There are so many differing ideas that have been presented by the most learned of Bible scholars that simply don't have very clear explanatory power, but we know that the Lord both is and is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. We ask him therefore for light. Because of the density of the subject, and because of a few extra questions I've received over this past week, I will need to take a third week to complete this investigation. So, I'd like to continue today by taking a more detailed look at: 1) Gehenna, and its time, place and role in the providence of God; 2) who and what is cast into this lake of fire (and when each occurs); and 3) a brief analysis of the bottomless pit – what is it, who and what is there, and where (perhaps) is it? Then next week, Lord willing, we will complete this current investigation with scriptural analyses of: 1) Christ's descent at his death, out of Mt. 12 and Eph. 4 (including both the disposition of the penitent thief on the cross and the concept of *paradise*, as well as the righteous souls that were in Sheol [*Abraham's bosom*] at the time of that descent *and* since); 2) the probable dual nature of Sheol/Hades (at least prior to the crucifixion of Christ) and 3) what we can and cannot say about the dispositions of Lazarus, Abraham and the rich man (as well as other righteous souls) in Sheol/Hades, both at the time that the story was preached by Christ and since.

One brief note on the diagram that I have provided at the back of the sermon outline. I have looked at several diagrams that attempt to depict, in visual form, what the scripture says about not only the current topic at hand, but several other topics as well. Clarence Larkin did many in his lifetime, and there is a lot of good stuff to be found in examining them. My problem with leaning too heavily on such visual aids usually relates to some problematic doctrinal details that I either find to be unsound (at worst) or more speculative than scripture seems to bear out (at best). The diagram that I have provided for today's investigation is not dispositive of anything. Sometimes such diagrams tend to be perceived by those who use them as having 'etched in stone' the concepts that they relate, and I in no way intend this. I look on this diagram as a malleable document that tries to depict - in the best way that we can, given the light on scripture that the Lord has allowed to this point - what we can say and therefore should believe and rightly divide about the concepts of hell (that is, Sheol, Hades, Gehenna, and all the lesser points contained therein). Some portions of it may, at some point, move or disappear, given better light. This is just a topic that, while very abstract, lends itself to visual and spatial depictions, and many of us need something to sort of keep everything straight (as straight as we can). So at a few different places in this sermon, I will ask us to look at some particular aspect of this diagram, in the hopes that some further clarity might be gained. And please keep in mind that there are aspects of this diagram that I won't be really getting into until next week, so again please be patient with me.

GEHENNA – THE FINAL 'HELL'

As scripture shows us, and we therefore concluded last week, Gehenna and Sheol are neither the same concept nor the same place. Gehenna is the lake of fire, or everlasting fire, or eternal fire – which is what I think most people mean when they say 'Hell.' It is a literal, physical place of everlasting torture to both physical bodies and souls that was created by God as a place of punishment for both all reprobate men (goats) as well as Satan and the angels that followed him in his rebellion against God.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, INTO EVERLASTING FIRE, PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS: - Mt. 25:41

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath RESERVED IN EVERLASTING CHAINS UNDER DARKNESS UNTO THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT DAY. – Jude 6

Those everlasting chains are not fully expressive of the eternal sentence itself - as they are being reserved thereby UNTO THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT DAY; nor do I believe the notion of being

'under darkness' is the same as 'outer darkness' we read of in connection with Gehenna (which, again, is the imposition and execution of the eternal sentence at the 'judgment of the great day'). To be sure, those angels are convicted and sentenced, and there are no appeals, but they have not yet begun to serve every aspect of their sentence, though they are being held (limited in their direction) while they await the full weight of that sentence. We know that Satan and his minions have been, since the garden of Eden, and continue to be heavily involved in influencing and energizing the masses to greater and greater sin. We see this quite plainly in scripture:

And when he (Christ) was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to TORTURE US BEFORE THE TIME? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told everything, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts. – Mt. 8:28-34

Before the time! That is, before the execution of the final sentence, which is the Gehenna. It is being cast into the everlasting (or eternal) lake of fire, which had not happened to them yet (at the time of this historic occurrence in scripture) and still has not happened. These demons already knew of their sentence and are intimately aware of when it will be executed! Even in their desperate wickedness, they are resigned, though snarling and braying in their malice and defiance toward God, to that awful and just fate! Antichrist, the False Prophet, the devil and his angels, plus all the reprobate from Cain to the last man (once they have been resurrected in the second resurrection – or the resurrection of the damned) all end up in Gehenna. A brief descriptor of this whole group is found in scripture:

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. – Rev. 20:15

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. – Rev. 20:14

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. – Rev. 20:10

Indeed, the casting of all the wicked into the lake of fire includes Satan, all his fallen angels, the Antichrist, the False Prophet and all reprobate men throughout time. It is the *when* for each that is at issue, and the scripture seems clear on every instance.

Antichrist beast and false prophet first into Gehenna - Looking at Rev. 19:20 not just as a 'who,' but also a 'when' bears fruit for us. It seems clear enough that the casting into the lake of fire for both the Antichrist and the False Prophet precedes any other who shares this sentence.

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. – Rev. 19:20

Prior to these two receiving the execution of their eternal sentence, the lake of fire was prepared but I believe uninhabited. The pronouncement of these two vile men being cast into the lake of fire - and its execution - precede the millennial reign of Christ. And remember, during that same thousand years Satan is relegated, not to the lake of fire yet, but to the bottomless pit, and locked therein. The imposition and execution of the Lord's final judgment against the devil and his angels, and then beginning thereafter all the risen reprobate in the Great General Judgment, will not occur until after the thousand-year reign of Christ on this earth – during which he rules the nations (reprobates) with a rod of iron. During that thousand years there will be absolutely no Satanic influence on the earth, as Satan (and I believe his angels) will be cast into the bottomless pit.

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. – Rev. 20:1-3

I think it is important to note here three things about this bottomless pit:

1. That Satan is cast into the bottomless pit implies that all his angels are cast with him. We have nowhere in scripture (that I can see) that mentions what happens to those fallen angels during the thousand years apart from Satan (we do have the notion of being "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness" at Jude 6). We do know, however, that Satan, while loosed, has dominion over those fallen angels. He is their leader, and they work under his direction to energize rebellion against God in men. But while locked up in

the bottomless pit, there is no Satanic influence over men at all (during the millennial reign of Christ). That implies that all his power and influence, including his angels and the use of them, are put away with him. On the flip side of this, I believe it is also safe to assume that when Satan is finally put down himself (cast into the lake of fire), his angels go with him. More detail on that in a bit.

2. I believe this to be the same bottomless pit that both Antichrist comes out of. Consider the scripture:

And when they (the two witnesses) shall have finished their testimony, THE BEAST THAT ASCENDETH OUT OF THE BOTTOMLESS PIT shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. – Rev. 11:7

And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. – Rev. 17:7,8

This is not *a* bottomless pit, but *the* bottomless pit, and not just *the* bottomless pit that the beast ascends out of, *as opposed to the* bottomless pit that other things happen near or at. This is simply put, here and elsewhere, as *the* bottomless pit. I believe it is accurate to infer that the bottomless pit is the deepest, darkest recesses of the realm of spiritual wickedness – that place where Satan, the Antichrist and others ascend out of and are either bound in or loosed from by he that hath the keys to the bottomless pit.

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. – Rev. 9:1

(I have placed a suggestive 'location' of this pit on the diagram – again, it is not dispositive of anything). The Antichrist is characterized as both ascending out of the bottomless pit and rising up out of the sea - and whether that means literally 'sea' or out of the great teeming sea of the wicked masses of men, it would seem to mean from the earth either way. This seems to lend some credence to the idea that the bottomless pit is under the earth.

3. The vile monstrous creatures who ascend out of the bottomless pit to torment the wicked men of the earth during the fifth trumpet ascend out of the same bottomless pit.

And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. – Rev. 9:2-6

It may not be important for us to know the location of this bottomless pit, but I think it is important for us to see that:

1. Where Satan is locked up during the millennial reign of Christ, where Antichrist ascends out of, and where the monstrous ‘locusts’ ascend out of are probably the same place.
2. This bottomless pit is most probably different from Sheol/Hades, as the abode of the souls of (at least) wicked dead prior to the second resurrection.
3. This bottomless pit is also different from Gehenna, or the everlasting lake of fire that Satan, his angels, Antichrist, the False Prophet, and all wicked men from Cain forward end up as their long home.
4. Therefore, if we don’t mix these concepts up in our minds (as all of the world and false Christians do by drawing only partially from scripture but also from myth, lore, literature and art), then we can hopefully become more clear about what is meant when any of these concepts is used in scripture (and therefore we have a better chance at understanding the other parts of that particular verse or passage from scripture, because we are not as cloudy or unsure about what these things mean). What we can know we should know.

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. - 2Ti 2:15

And this is the studying that is edifying unto us, as opposed to ‘studying’ or ‘knowing’ blurbs or stories from other sources of literature and culture, which tend to cloud, confuse and make men ‘chase their tails,’ so to speak. This much, and more is meant by this blessed verse:

And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. – Ec. 12:12

One brief note on ‘Tartarus’ – which is translated as the English word ‘hell’ once, in 2 Peter:

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; - 2Pe. 2:4

Some say this word 'answers' to Gehenna: I don't agree. If those angels that sinned (including Satan) had already been cast into Gehenna, then they would not be able to have influence on the world now. They would not have questioned Christ about the possibility of him tormenting him BEFORE THE TIME. Satan would no longer have any dominion over this world if he and the others were cast into Gehenna already. Besides which, in the very verse, those sinning angels are 'reserved unto (final) judgment – which is Gehenna. They couldn't be there already, so Tartarus can't be Gehenna. While nothing dispositive is meant here, I believe that Tartarus answers much more closely to the bottomless pit, in context and relevance, than does it Gehenna. The deepest, darkest recesses of the spiritual realm of wickedness.

Satan and his angels next into Gehenna - It looks like the Antichrist and the second beast (the false prophet) will be in the lake of fire by their lonesome for a while. The next inhabitants will be Satan and all the fallen angels who do his bidding – after he is loosed for a little season at the end of Christ's millennial reign:

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. – Rev. 20:7-10

The scripture clearly expresses that the beast and the false prophet are already in the lake of fire (and were cast in prior to Satan's imprisonment, and Christ's millennial reign). Satan doesn't get cast in until after the millennial reign and his last desperate attempt to compass the saints about. But when he does, although not explicitly stated, I believe it is implied that all the fallen angels, who had been under Satan's command since that fall, are cast in with him, just as I believe that they were cast into the bottomless pit with him during the thousand years. I don't think there is an explicit expression in scripture as to what happens to them during that thousand years, but they are his workforce - they pertain to him – they share the same spirit of rebellion. And when his influence stops, their influence stops. And when he is finally thoroughly and eternally punished, they are punished along with him at the omnipotent hand of our Avenging Christ!

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: - Mt 25:41

Prepared for the devil and his angels. The spiritual creatures who fell with him. And who did wickedly with him in the earth and heavens. And who now are cast into the lake of fire with him.

All the world's evil men next into Gehenna - The world's men are promised eternal fire for their disobedience and unthankfulness toward the God who made them and for rejecting the only way to life, which is Christ – who warned them in His mercy.

Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to BE CAST INTO EVERLASTING FIRE. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into HELL FIRE. – Mt. 18:8,9

This 'casting into' is not the merely soul being sent to Sheol – this is the final judgment of God, at that great and terrible day that the old preachers refer to as the Great General Judgment. We read about this glorious event unfolding in both Christ's prophesy at Matthew 25 and in the vision shown to John in the 20th chapter of the Revelation.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats...Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. – Mat. 25:31,32,41-46

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell

delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. – Rev. 20:11-15.

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. – Rev. 21:8

This is the gathering of all reprobate men from the graves, after the millennial reign of Christ, to come to the final judgment of God, at the end of the millennial reign of Christ, after that Great Red Dragon is loosed from the bottomless pit to energize the reprobate against Our Avenger, Messiah, Husband and his Bride still upon the earth one last time. From Cain to the last man (once they have been resurrected in the second resurrection – or the resurrection of the damned) - they all end up in Gehenna. A brief descriptor of this whole group is found in scripture:

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. – Rev. 20:15

A note worth speaking to. Many believe that this lake of fire is either under the earth, or the earth itself in the future. Because the ‘casting’ is not only into the lake of fire, but is also into ‘outer darkness,’ I believe that this lake of fire is not under the earth, or the earth itself.

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. – Mt. 25:30

Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. – Mt. 22:13

But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. – Mt. 8:12

In addition to this, we see that the earth, all its works, its elements – even the sky itself, will be dissolved and burnt up.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved,

what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? – 2Pe. 3:10-12

The lake of fire is eternal – everlasting. It will not be dissolved. It will not be burnt up. This lends more credence to the notion that this lake of fire is neither on, nor under, this present earth.

Death and hell cast into the lake of fire - Finally, death and hell themselves are cast into the lake of fire.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. – Rev. 20:13-15

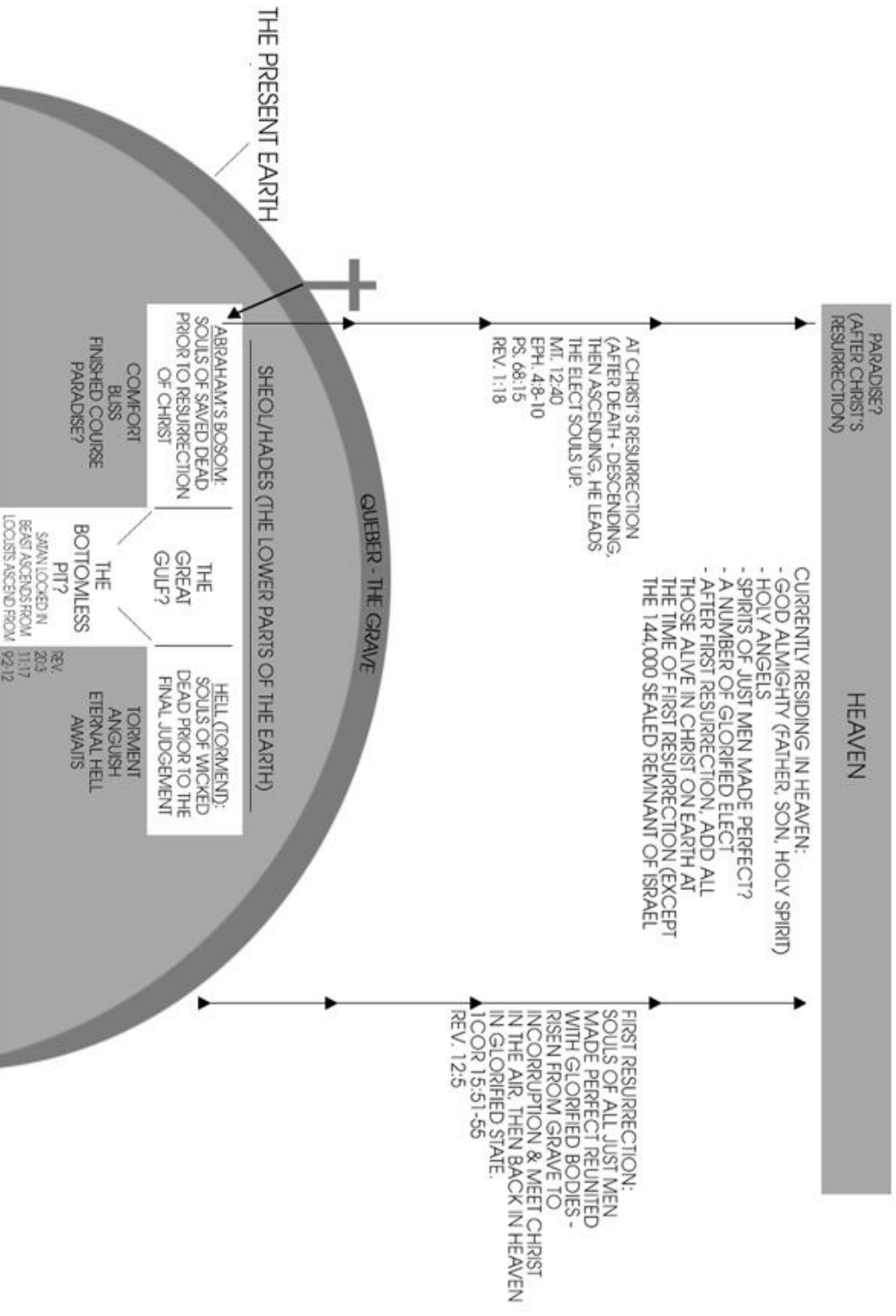
If the lake of fire and ‘hell’ both answered to Gehenna (or final hell), it would be very difficult to make any sense out of the middle sentence of this passage of scripture. Death (that is, the grave, and the powers of sin and death over men) and hell (that is Hades/Sheol – the abode of all the souls of wicked men) were cast into the lake of fire. Christ abolished death, the grave and the powers of death over men – and he emptied out and abolished Hades/Sheol itself – it simply has no more purpose, formerly being the realm of wicked men’s souls, awaiting this final judgment of eternal fire. After this pronouncement and execution, every single element of harm, destruction, every wicked way, every worker of iniquity, every thought or vain imagination which had exalted itself above Christ, every residue of the sins of man every shred of rebellion, pride, their works, their abode (both on earth and in Sheol/Hades) are finished – for all eternity.

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. – Rev. 1:17,18

O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory. – Ps. 98:1

He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. – Isa. 25:8

We will conclude, Lord willing, next Sunday.
I love you all. Amen.



PRESENTLY UNOCCUPIED
ANTI-CHRIST AND FALSE PROPHET
FIRST TO BE CAST IN
AFTER MILLENNIAL REIGN:

- SAVAN
- ALL FALLEN ANGELS
- ALL WICKED MEN WHO HAVE RECEIVED BODIES FITTED FOR ETERNAL DESTRUCTION (AT 2ND RESURRECTION) (OUTER DARKNESS)

GEHENNA - ETERNAL HELL
LAKE OF FIRE
ETERNAL/EVERLASTING FIRE