

Heaven, Earth, and Hell (Or, Where are we and where are we going?)

It seems to me that the easiest way to talk about the various domains of the Bible would be to discuss them by the words used in the original languages, in temporal order of creation and use. The Bible discusses two of each: heaven, earth, and hell, using various words to communicate these ideas.

Earth: Earth is the current home of all that lives in body. The earth (and everything else) was created by God the Father through the Son and with the Holy Spirit. It was created from nothing (*ex nihilo*), and it has a specific beginning point. When the Bible speaks of earth, it uses various words, sometimes interchangeably. Old Testament (Hebrew): *Ur a* ('erets) is used 2,504 times. It is generally translated, "earth" or "land (as in 'nation' or 'dirt')" and seems to be a generic word easily used the way we would use the word "land". *hmda* ('adamah) is used 225 times and seems to generally refer to dirt or a piece of property. Notice the word "Adam" in this word. This is no coincidence. The word means "man" or "red", like clay. See the connection? *rpe* ('aphar) specifically refers to dirt or mud. *MI we* ('owlam) generally means "forever" or "eternity", but is used 4 times to refer to the world, having a large, **almost** endless sense about it. These senses seem to refer to the physical earth and all in it. There are also several others which have various meanings like "dry land" or "nation" which don't really apply to the subject at hand. New Testament (Greek): *kosmos* (kosmos) . *ge* (ge) is the generic word, like *Ur a* ('erets). *aion* (aion) means much the same as *MI we* ('owlam), often translated "age", which links the world with a specific period of time. *oikoumene* (oikoumene) refers to the inhabited world.

The earth is temporary. It has a beginning and an ending: Isa 24:19-20, 51:6, Mt 24:35.

Heaven: Heaven is the place where people go when they leave earth. The body remains in the ground, but the soul goes directly to heaven ("Do not pass GO; do not collect \$200") (Lu 23:43). Heaven is the dwelling place of the Father (Joh 14:2), a place of rest for God's people (Heb 4:9), free from sin (Eph 5:5).

Sheol: *l wav sh@'owl* {sheh-ole'} or *sh@ol* {sheh-ole'}

- 1) sheol, underworld, grave, hell, pit
 - 1a) the underworld
 - 1b) Sheol - the OT designation for the abode of the dead
 - 1b1) place of no return
 - 1b2) without praise of God
 - 1b3) wicked sent there for punishment
 - 1b4) righteous not abandoned to it
 - 1b5) of the place of exile (fig)
 - 1b6) of extreme degradation in sin¹

Sheol seems to be used interchangeably for grave, Hades, and gehenna.

Occurrences: Ge 37:35 42:38 44:29,31 Nu 16:30,33 De 32:22 1Sa 2:6 2Sa 22:6 1Ki 2:6 1Ki 2:9 Job 7:9 11:8 14:13 17:13,16 21:13 24:19 26:6 33:18 Ps 6:5 Ps 9:17 16:10 18:5 30:3 31:17 49:14,15 55:15 86:13 88:3 89:48 116:3 Ps 139:8 141:7 Pr 1:12 5:5 7:27 9:18

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15:11,24 23:14 27:20 30:16 Ec 9:10 So 8:6 Isa 5:14 7:11 14:9,11,15 28:15,18 38:10,18
57:9 Eze 31:15-17 Eze 32:21,27 Ho 13:14 Am 9:2 Jon 2:2 Hab 2:5

Hades: adev

1) name Hades or Pluto, the god of the lower regions

2) Orcus, the nether world, the realm of the dead

3) later use of this word: the grave, death, hell

In Biblical Greek it is associated with Orcus, the infernal regions, a dark and dismal place in the very depths of the earth, the common receptacle of disembodied spirits. Usually Hades is just the abode of the wicked, Lu. 16:23, Rev. 20:13,14; a very uncomfortable place. TDNT.

This is the temporary "holding cell" of the damned (1Pe 3:19, 2Pet 3:9) who await the final judgment. "Hades" is often used synonymously for the power of the devil, not that Satan has control over it, but both are contrary to the desires of God. It is a place of torment and fire (Lu 16:23-24).

Hades also has an ending (Re 20:13-15) at which point all those in Hades will be cast into the second hell.

Hell (Gehenna): (geenna) Hell is the place of the future punishment called "Gehenna" or "Gehenna of fire". It is symbolized by the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the filth and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned; a fit symbol of the wicked and their future destruction.² This place was created by God at the fall of Satan and his angels, but when man fell, it became the destiny of sinners, too. (Mt 25:41)

Gehenna carries with it the idea of judgment.

It's occurrences generally imply that the one in hell has already been judged. (Mt 5:22, 23:33, Mr 9:43-47, Lu 12:5)³ This is the fiery pit/ lake of fire spoken of in the Revelation. This is a place where all suffer body and soul for eternity (except Satan and the other fallen angels have no bodies), forever separated from the love of God. There are no atheists in hell. When they die, they become fully aware of just who God is, yet death or the day of Jesus' return is the "too late" time.



New Jerusalem: On the appointed day, which no one knows but God, Jesus will again appear to the world. On that day, all living and dead Christians will be caught up in the air to be with Jesus. Everyone who ever lived (Christian or not) will rise again, not like zombies, but the same way Jesus rose. In a way, he was setting an example for us. On that day, heaven and earth (that is, all of God's creation, including the entire universe) will be remade so as to be more perfect than it was in the Garden of Eden before the fall. There, we will live, body and soul, with God for all eternity. On the same day, the devil and all

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³2Pet 2:4 uses the word tartaroo (tartaros): "the name of the subterranean region, doleful and dark, regarded by the ancient Greeks as the abode of the wicked dead, where they suffer punishment for their evil deeds; it answers to Gehenna of the Jews" —BDB

his followers — demons and non-Christians — will be cast into the second hell where they will suffer for eternity.

The new creation will be very much like the current creation, except with no sin or effects of sin. ("For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. "But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem [for] rejoicing, And her people [for] gladness. "I will also rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in My people; And there will no longer be heard in her The voice of weeping and the sound of crying. "No longer will there be in it an infant [who lives but a few] days, Or an old man who does not live out his days; For the youth will die at the age of one hundred And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred Shall be [thought] accursed. "And they shall build houses and inhabit [them;] They shall also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. "They shall not build, and another inhabit, They shall not plant, and another eat; For as the lifetime of a tree, [so shall be] the days of My people, And My chosen ones shall wear out the work of their hands. "They shall not labor in vain, Or bear [children] for calamity; For they are the offspring of those blessed by the LORD, And their descendants with them. "It will also come to pass that before they call, I



will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. "The wolf and the lamb shall graze together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain," says the LORD. (Isaiah 65:17-25, NASB.)

"The new creation consists in a new order of things. Day will be continuous with no more night, nor sun nor moon, since God and the Lamb will be the light and the lamp (Rev 21:23; 22:5; Zech 14:6-7; Is 60:19-20). Created ordinances such as marriage and government will cease (Mt 22:30; Mk 12:25; Lk 20:34-35; 1Cor 6:1-11). Finally, heaven and earth will be joined in harmony as the place of His presence. This is the point of Rev 3:12

and 21:2-3, which picture the heavenly Jerusalem coming down. Now, human beings will be in a perfect relationship with God, seeing Him as He is (1Jo 3:2)... In 'body and soul' and in everlasting joy, believers will see God as he is — which is the essence of eternal life (1Jn 3:2). When Christ returns, then God will be known perfectly and seen face to face (1Cor 13:8-12; 1Jn 3:2; Rev 22:4)."⁴

⁴Commission on Theology and Church Relations. *The End Times: A Study on Eschatology and Millennialism*. 1989.

Artwork by Rodney Matthews