



Heaven & Hell

Part One: Hell

Opening: Video Clip

Rowan Atkinson's A Warm Welcome video (found on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rC6UrMTC73A>)

This is a comedy sketch that pokes a bit of fun at the concept of hell, but sets up the discussion with some lightheartedness and should free students to share their own perceptions of what hell is.

What is Hell?

Invite teens to share their impressions, whether learned through parents, church or media, of what hell is. Make sure to watch your time in this section, as you want to make certain that there is ample time for the meat of this lesson.

Scriptures

Have several students volunteer to read the following Scriptures aloud.

Matthew 13.40-42; 25.41; Mark 9.47-48; Matthew 5.30

Engage students in discussion by asking what can we learn about hell from these passages?

- ✓ **Hell is real.** It is not just some ethereal concept, but real.
- ✓ **Hell is not pleasant.** There is torture, pain, crying.
- ✓ **Hell is reserved for those who do not accept Christ.** Simple.

Explanation

Did you know that the word hell doesn't appear in the Bible? Not once. It is a translated form of 4 different words. Each one means relatively the same idea as the rest, but is a little different.

Sheol (used 31 times)

Sheol is Hebrew. You will find it mostly in the Old Testament. It means essentially grave, or community grave. When it is used it usually refers to people going down beneath the earth to a place that is gated off and locked away from the rest of the world. It's inhabitants are tied up, awaiting rescue, but the grave doesn't want to give its inhabitants up. It is a

place that is the furthest one can get from heaven, and it is not a place that people return from.

Passages that use Sheol: Genesis 37.36; Isaiah 7.11; Proverbs 9.18; Job 11.8

Hades (used 10 times)

Hades is Greek, and focuses on death, but more on the spiritual side of things. It refers to the realm of conscious, departed spirits. It is a place of torment, or punishment and pain. It is a place of shadows and darkness, away from the light of the sun. There seem to be two compartments to Hades, where everyone goes and the lower compartment is reserved for those who are being punished, but this is only shown in one parable, which shouldn't be taken literally. Think of it as a spiritual grave, if it helps you to understand.

Passages that use Hades: Acts 2.31; 1 Corinthians 15.55; Revelation 6.8; Revelation 20.14

Gehenna (used 12 times)

Gehenna is Greek, and actually referred to a valley outside of Jerusalem. It is also referred to throughout Scripture as the Valley of Hinnom. It is the site where Ba'al worshippers sacrificed their children by fire to Moloch, and later became a burning garbage dump where the bodies of dead animals and garbage were thrown to burn. Jewish lore said that Gehenna had a gate that led down into Sheol. When Jesus uses Gehenna, He is not stating that people will just go to the garbage dump, but giving them a picture of what they can look forward to if they do not receive Him.

Passages that use Gehenna (as hell): Matthew 5.22,29,30; Mark 9.43,45,47; Luke 12.5

Passages that use Gehenna (as place): Joshua 15.8; 2 Chronicles 28.3; Isaiah 30.33; Jeremiah 7.31,32

Tartarus (used 1 time)

Tartarus is Greek, and only shows up once in all of Scripture. In 2 Peter we are shown Tartarus as a place that is reserved specifically for a group of fallen angels are being held until judgment day. It is not a place for humans.

Passages that use Tartarus: 2 Peter 2.4

Application

This is a lot to take in, isn't it?

What does all this mean for us today as Christians? We look at hell as hell. A place of fire, full of suffering souls and pain. People crying for all eternity.

It's quite simple. I already told you what we can learn from all of this, that hasn't changed.

We need to look at hell as what it is. It is not a place we want to go. It is a place we want to avoid at all costs. Jesus told us that if we do not follow Him, this is where we will end up.

Period. There is not a second chance when we get there to ask forgiveness and get out. It is our last stop, away from Him, full of pain and suffering.

I hate using Hell to convince people that they should follow God. It reeks of scare-tactic evangelism. But the truth is that Jesus wants to save you from this torture, and save you into a full life that starts now. That is what you should want. Look at hell as the opposite of what God is offering you. Hell is pain, suffering, torment. Not as civilized as the video we started out with. Hell shows us what life without Christ is like. If we don't put Him in charge of our lives and follow after Him, this is where we will end up. Don't get scared into a relationship with God, but look at this and see what it would be like without Him.

I want to end with one more passage of Scripture from the book of Luke. It is a parable that looks at hell, and serves as a perfect ending for our discussion tonight, as well as sets us up beautifully for next week.

Close by reading the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man, found in Luke 16.19-32