

Study Guide for the Week of January 15, 2006

The Bible and The After Life—A Biblical Study of Hell

This study guide is designed to help you to become more familiar with the Bible. Study these passages on your own, with a friend, or with a group. If you or someone you know needs a Bible, please take one from under a chair in the Worship Center. They are there for you to take home and use! Sermon manuscripts are available at www.saintpauls-umc.com.

This week's study guide will focus on the Bible's teaching regarding hell.

Monday – The Old Testament speaks of the realm of the dead as Sheol, the Pit, the Depths or the Grave. Most of the references to these terms mean simply “death” but on occasion they point toward retribution or punishment for wickedness after death. Let's look at a few of these today. These verses address people who turned from God and did what was evil in God's sight. **Read Ezekiel 26:19-21 and Ezekiel 33:10-11.** What does this last passage tell us about God's heart regarding the punishment of the wicked? In the following passage, we read of God's desire to keep people from the Pit. In these verses we hear a foreshadowing of Jesus' words that he would give his life as a “ransom for many.” **Read Job 33:15-30.** What do these verses teach us about God's salvation and will for humanity?

Tuesday – Let's turn to Jesus' words today about hell in the Sermon on the Mount. **Read Matthew 5:17-30.** What role does hell play in these passages? How does Jesus describe hell? What is God's Word to you from these passages? **Read Luke 16:19-31** in which Jesus tells a parable about the afterlife. What was Jesus' point in telling this parable?

Wednesday – We turn to two of Jesus' parables of judgment today. **Read Matthew 24:36-51.** What is the point Jesus wants us to understand from this passage? What do you picture when you think of “weeping and gnashing of teeth”? Should the Master of the House return today are you ready? **Read Matthew 22:1-14.** Look over your sermon notes from this last Sunday. What do we learn about God's heart, and about those who choose hell, from this passage? Next Sunday we'll learn the meaning of the improperly clothed individual who came to the wedding. What does the parable tell us about hell?

Thursday – Today we'll turn to the writings of the apostles regarding hell. **Read Romans 2:1-11.** How does Paul describe hell and, according to Paul, who goes there? **Read II Peter 2:1-22.** What does Peter teach about hell in verse 4 and verse 17? Who is hell reserved for? How are we saved from it?

Friday – Today we'll conclude our study of hell by turning to the Book of Revelation. Revelation paints pictures with words of the judgment of God and the final victory of the Lord over all that is evil. **Read Revelation 1:17-18** – what does it mean that Jesus holds the keys of hell and death? **Read Revelation 9:1-11 and Revelation 20:7-15.** What does this passage teach us about hell?

The aim of the Bible's teaching about hell is to warn people, and to encourage them to walk with God, living in the grace of God, and to accept God's invitation to the wedding banquet. Whether hell is eternal death, or eternal punishment, or simply living for eternity in the darkness outside the kingdom of God, it is a place none need go, nor one that God wishes any to go. We'll consider this in more detail this Sunday in our sermon on the Last Judgment.