

Faith in 5 – Adults Hell



1. We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. We cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or ourselves. To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him forever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell." (CCC,1033) **The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God**, from Whom man can possess true life and happiness (CCC 1035).
2. In his General Audience 1999 transcript ([source](#)), Pope St. John Paul II said, "Eternal damnation", therefore, is not attributed to God's initiative because in his merciful love he can only desire the salvation of the beings he created. In reality, it is the creature who closes himself to his love. Damnation consists precisely in definitive separation from God, freely chosen by the human person and confirmed with death that seals his choice for ever".
3. The Catechism explains our freedom has the power to make choices forever, with no turning back. If our mortal sin keeps us away from redemption by repentance and God's forgiveness, we risk exclusion from Christ's kingdom and are subject to the eternal death of hell (CCC 1861). Separation from God means the loss of that life and happiness and thus results in suffering. Sister Lucia of Fatima, in her vision, called hell a place of utter desolation and despair. There is torment, for all of eternity. "And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, ...and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Revelation 20:10).
4. In a study from 2003, about one-third of the people believed that hell was separation from God, another third believed hell to be a place of torment. "[O]ne in eight adults believe... 'hell is just a symbol of an unknown bad outcome after death' (13 percent). Other respondents were 'not sure' or said that they do not believe in an afterlife (16 percent)." ([Source](#))
5. Our Lord often referred to "hell" (Matthew 5:29,30; 10:28; 23:15; Mark 9:45,47; Luke 12:5). He warned against "the hell of fire" (Matthew 5:22; 18:9); against "the unquenchable fire" (Mark 9:43); against "the eternal fire" (Matthew 18:8; 25:41). Our Lord also spoke of "the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:42).
6. **Sheol** is a word used in the Jewish tradition to refer to the general abode of the dead; **Hades** is the Greek word that was used for Sheol. It was not necessarily a place of punishment but a realm of the dead, where both the righteous and the unrighteous abided and yet not having the beatific vision of God. **Gehenna** is used to solely describe a place of punishment for the wicked.

What we call "hell" is more accurately called "Gehenna," a place Jesus referred to in Mark 9:43. "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed than with two hands to go into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire". Gehenna is a Greek name for a valley near Jerusalem, where pagan sacrifices were made. At the time of Jesus, it was a refuse dump where garbage was continually burned. This is where hell's association of perpetual fire is drawn from. ([Source](#))

7. Prior to His resurrection, Jesus, like all men, descended into the realm of the dead. He descended there as Savior, proclaiming the Good News to the spirits imprisoned (CCC 632). The just went to a particular part of hell referred to as "Abraham's bosom" where they would be comforted until the gates of heaven were opened. The damned meanwhile, went to a place of torment. A great chasm separated these two parts of hell and no one in either part was in heaven.

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison" (1 Peter 3:19). There is evidence of a Syrian creed in the 3rd century that professed Jesus "was crucified under Pontius Pilate and departed in peace, in order to preach to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the saints concerning the end of the world and the resurrection of the dead." ([Source](#)) Jesus did not descend into hell to deliver the damned, nor to destroy the hell of damnation, but to free the just who had gone before him. (CCC 632-633). Jesus was then raised from the dead, resurrecting victoriously over sin and death.

8. At the moment of death, the soul separates from the body, is judged immediately, and enters either heaven (immediately or through purgatory) or hell. Every soul will unite with its **resurrected** body just prior to the Last Judgment ("Judgment Day") when Christ returns (CCC 998, 1039-1040). At the Lord's second coming and the general judgment, we too will share in the resurrection of the dead and be reunited with our bodies. The bodies of the faithful will be transfigured to the pattern of the risen Christ, like His own glorified body.
9. The unfortunate souls in hell will receive the condition of suffering for eternity and will not have the glorification of the Lord shared by those in heaven ([Source](#)). "For an hour is coming in which all those in their tombs shall hear His voice and come forth. Those who have done right shall rise to live; the evildoers shall rise to be damned" (John 5:28-29).
10. Limbo was originally envisioned as the place where unbaptized babies went after premature death. The state of limbo, though taught to many Catholics around the world, was never approved doctrine of the Church. In 2007, [an official document](#) from the Vatican was released, stating Limbo was not an accepted belief in the Church.

11. Nowhere in the Catechism of the Catholic Church is it stated that Satan is the ruler of hell. If the Catholic Church views heaven as communion with God, they equally view hell as permanent removal from Him. It is hard to imagine that anyone would willingly choose hell, yet the lure of sin - engaging in things attractive to this world and not of God – is a temptation some will refuse to let go of.
12. Being without God's goodness and love is a loneliness that has no end. "Separation from the source of all light and love should be terrifying. It means an eternity of being alone, away from humanity and away from all that is true, good and beautiful. Hell is the opposite of Heaven, where the blessed experience eternal communion, joy, love and friendship. The "flames" of Hell are nothing when confronted with this stark reality" ([Source](#)).
13. As well, CCC 1058 tells us: The Church prays that no one should be lost: "Lord, let me never be parted from you." In the Eucharistic liturgy and in the daily prayers of her faithful, the Church implores the mercy of God, who does not want any to perish, but all to come to repentance (CCC 1037; 2 Peter 3:9). God desires all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4).
14. It is not enough to believe in God's existence. We have to respond and accept God's free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. We cannot earn our salvation; it is only by God's grace. Jesus said, "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
Matthew 3:2**

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