HELL

The term “hell” as used in the King James Version of the Bible is the English translation of four words in the original biblical languages: Hebrew sheol and Greek hades, geenna (Heb. gehenna), and a noun implied in the verb tartar. These terms generally signify the abode of all the dead, whether righteous or disobedient, although geenna and tartarō were associated with a place of punishment. The derivation and literal meaning of sheol are unknown, but words in Hebrew derived from it bear the idea of “hollowness.”

Latter-day scriptures describe at least three senses of hell: (1) that condition of misery which may attend a person in mortality due to disobedience to divine law; (2) the miserable, but temporary, state of disobedient spirits in the Spirit World awaiting the resurrection; (3) the permanent habitation of the sons of perdition, who suffer the second spiritual death and remain in hell even after the resurrection.

Persons experiencing the first type of hell can be rescued from suffering through repentance and obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ because of the atonement of Jesus Christ. The Savior suffered so that he could deliver everyone from hell (Alma 7:11–13; 33:23). Those who do not repent, however, may experience the pains of hell in this life as well as in the next (D&C 76:104; 1 Ne. 16:2; Alma 40:14). The Prophet Joseph Smith described the true nature of hell: “A man is his own tormentor and his own condemnor. Hence the saying, They shall go into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. The torment of disappointment in the mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone” (TPJS, p. 357). Thus, hell is both a place, a part of the world of spirits where suffering and sorrow occur, and a state of mind associated with remorseful realization of one’s own sins (Mosiah 2:38; Alma 36:12–16).

A second type, a temporary hell of the post-mortual spirit world, is also spoken of as a spirit prison. Here, in preparation for the Resurrection, unrepentant spirits are cleansed through suffering that would have been obviated by the atonement of Christ had they repented during mortality (D&C 19:15–20; Alma 40:13–14). At the last resurrection this hell will give up its captive spirits. Many of these spirits will enter into the celestial kingdom in their resurrected state (2 Ne. 9:10–12;