

Dear Jill,

Thank you once again for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You asked if Judas and Saul went to hell since they each committed suicide.

Yes they did since "hell" in both the Old and New Testaments actually means the grave. The word for "hell" in the Old Testament is "sheol" and it appears 66 times. It is translated as "grave" 31 times, "hell" 31 times, and "pit" 4 times. To the Jews of the Old Testament, "sheol" was the end result for everyone. No distinction was made between the good and the bad. But, we find when reading scriptures that pertain to evil, translators have imposed the word "hell." For example, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." (Psalms 9:17 KJV) Conversely, translators have used the word "grave" to describe the ending that awaits the good. Such an example is found in Job 14:13 KJV. "O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!" We ask, "Can the same word sheol have two different meanings?" No. The answer is that Job is talking about being hidden in death until the wrath of God is past and he is again remembered in resurrection. If the word "oblivion" were substituted for both "hell" in the first scripture and "grave" in the second scripture, it would impart the correct meaning. Therefore, based on the definition of the word "sheol" and on its uses applying to both good and bad people, the conclusion is reached that there is no fire attached to its meaning, only death and destruction.

But what about hell the New Testament? Was a hell of torment taught in the New Testament? The answer is no. In the New Testament the Greek word "hades" is used for "sheol." This can be proven by an example found in I Corinthians 15: 54-55, "When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that it is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?'" Paul is referring to Isaiah 25:8, "he will swallow up death forever" and to Hosea 13:14, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; ... Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction?" We can see from these scriptures that there is a very clear transition from "hell" in the Old Testament to "hades" in the New. Neither word represents a place of eternal torment.

When we look into the Scriptures to discover the character of God, we not only find a God of love, justice, wisdom and power, but we encounter a God who has an incredible plan for the redemption of all mankind and where eternal torture has no part in that plan. When Jesus died, he paid the ransom price once for all. God has a place for everyone in either his heavenly or earthly kingdoms and Jesus' sacrifice included all of mankind, regardless of when a person lived, whether he was good or evil, or whether he accepted Jesus as his Savior now or not. "This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men -- the testimony given at its proper time. (1 Timothy 2:3-6) This scripture tells us that Jesus came to provide a ransom for Adam and all his progeny,

some now, who are following Jesus and sacrificing their wills, and some later. Those who are sacrificing now have been called by God and have received the Holy Spirit. They look forward to a heavenly reward mentioned in John 13:33-36, 14:1-4, and 17:24. But, the vast majority of mankind will be awakened on earth to a period of judgment, or decision, in which they will have an opportunity to willingly follow God's laws of righteousness and perfect their characters as they walk up the "highway of holiness" (Isaiah 35:8). Although this will be a time of pruning, it will also be a time of great joy, in which everyone will understand God's plan. (See Isaiah 11:1-9; 35:5-10; 9:6-7; 65:21-25, Jeremiah 31:34, and Revelation 11:15; 21:1-4.) God does not wish to destroy those who have sinned in this present life, but to destroy sin and evil and bring everyone to salvation. Would Jesus instruct us to pray for a kingdom to come on earth if there wasn't going to be one? (Matthew 6:6-13)

Therefore, Saul and even Judas, since he had not received the Holy Spirit, will be awakened from the sleep of death unto a period of judgment where they will have the opportunity to learn righteousness and allow God's laws to be written on the hearts. And after the judgment period, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Revelation 21:4)

We hope we have answered your question.

Sincerely,

Christian Questions Radio