

The concept and description of hell in the iliad, a poem by homer

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



Hell has been described as a residence for souls after death has long been a topic of discussion and debate. This notion intrigues man. It is a concept that man cannot know about except through direct experience, which, once obtained, cannot be shared. Yet this does not prevent man from envisioning its form. Since the earliest Greek Epics, such as Homer's *The Iliad*, society has imagined an underworld, a place beneath the Earth that houses souls. Though our expectations about such a place have changed over the centuries, many of the ideas about the underworld represented in Greek and Latin poems are still believed today.

Homer believed in an underworld called tartarus. Some call it Hades Because a God called Hades, rules tartarus. He believed it was a prison for the gods but later on it was a dungeon for spirits. There is only one afterlife according to Homer. It does not matter if everyone tries to be good man eventually sins at one point, so everyone gets punished. The spirits punishment is torture. But only some of the spirits get punished, the ones who offended the gods. Hades is described as an ill-defined place. it is said that Achilles would rather " slave on earth for another man than rule down here over the breathless dead" (the *Iliad*). Tantalus and Sisyphus are some of the many suffering. But this torture is only for offended the gods not fellow men. Another of the many poets has a similar view to Homer's.

Virgil believed that people have spirits inside themselves, and when you die your spirit goes to the underworld. Like Homer, Virgil believed in the afterlife, where everyone gets punished. There are different types of punishments, like birds pecking the spirits. He called his hell the underworld. Virgil's hell is

a kingdom with fields of mourning and blessedness. This view has a resemblance to the Christian afterlife as it does to the one conceived by Homer. Dante's journey through hell in the *Inferno* is largely based on Virgil's *Dis*. Although Virgil's view is similar to Dante's there are still stark differences.

Dante believed in a place called hell, where the ungodly go for their punishment. He believed that if man did not accept Christ they went to hell. A man's punishment is decided on what that man did while alive. There are ten circles in hell each one contains a different punishment depending on what that man did. The different circles hold hypocrites, falsifiers, sorcery and thieves. Dante believed that "The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in times of great moral crisis maintain their neutrality" (*Dante inferno*). These are a few famous writer's beliefs of hell but now we come to the true version of hell the biblical view.

Hell, in the Bible is described as a "Burning fiery furnace" (*Daniel 3: 6* new international version). It is a place completely without God. It is filled with people who did not accept Christ. Everyone deserves to die, but Jesus gives mercy to whoever believes in Him. Those in hell have to burn forever. A good metaphor is that "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell" (*Matthew 5: 29*). Hell is a punishment for the wicked dead. The Bible states that when the time comes, the earth will be destroyed and God will throw Satan and his followers into the "Lake of fire that burns with sulfur" (*Revelation 19: 20*). As much as the Bible describes

hell, we will not know everything about it. Only God knows everything about it.

It is clear that the views of the underworlds envisioned in the *Odessa*, *The Aeneid*, *The Inferno* and the Bible similar. Virgil presents a Hell based on his society's beliefs about the afterlife. In Virgil's underworld, everyone suffers his due. his belief that no man acts perfectly during life requires this. Once a soul's suffering is complete, and he is cleansed, he may live the rest of the thousand years with others that have been similarly cleansed. Dante takes many of these ideas and augments them with the beliefs of his time, creating a Hell that is specific to his society's ethics and beliefs. For Dante, sin was any number of well-defined acts that could be repented while a person is still alive. Once he dies, a person is doomed to suffer eternally for his sins. This is the Christian belief about the afterlife, and the Church's influence on Dante is clear. The transition from Virgil's to Dante's view of the underworld really shows you how misled they were.