

“HELL”

- What It's Not -

compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, 2001
Scripture is from New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

If the first death is a sleep, and the second death is annihilation, then there is no need for a place called “Hell” - at least not the Hell we have all heard so much about - a place of unending conscious torment. So - let's clear away the confusion!

Your understanding of many texts will change, depending upon your understanding of the nature of man - inherently immortal (not subject to death), OR inherently mortal, which is why I placed the study dealing with death, ahead of this study about “Hell” at the website.

If there is some part of man which continues in consciousness after physical death, then it follows that God must have a place to imprison the rebellious. On the other hand, if each human being exists only in the memory of God between physical death and resurrection, then we must explain the concept of “Hell.” How did the word get into our New Testament, and what does it really mean?

I'm going to explain that the current concept of eternal continuing conscious torment in a place called “Hell” was manufactured - made up - by men who wished to exercise control based upon fear. It is a doctrine foisted by the Evil One, which has driven those seeking relief from the insanity to reject any belief in God. If you are such a seeker, I pray this study will bring you great relief.

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TRADITIONALISTS vs CONDITIONALISTS

Traditionalists believe that man was created with an “immortal soul” (two words not found linked in Scripture). They believe that because man is immortal, he must continue to live forever. Therefore, God will banish the wicked to a place of torment away from His presence, where they will suffer for eternity.

Conditionalists believe that man was created mortal - subject to death. Eternal life is given to man on condition of salvation through Christ. Without this covenant salvation - and new life from God - man is doomed to death (the second death) without hope of resurrection. The first death is an unconscious “sleep.” Those physically “dead” exist only in the memory of God. It is this memory - this essence retained by God - which He will use to resurrect, and it is this memory (of the wicked) which God will destroy - in the “lake of fire.”

SHEOL

Sheol (Strong's #07585):

A Hebrew word meaning “the grave” or “the abode of the dead.”

Rendered: “grave” - 31 times, “pit” - 3 times, and “hell” - 31 times.

We will consider each text where “Hell” was the choice of the King James translators for the Hebrew word “sheol.” There are other verses where “sheol” is simply translated as “grave.” Jacob went to “sheol” (*Gen 37:35, 42:38, 44:29, 31*). One assumes he did not go to “Hell,” as understood by the Greeks - a place of punishment and torment. Job longed to hide in it (*Job 14:13*). David saw it as a “resting place” but wanted to be rescued from it (*Psa. 16:9-10*). The righteous, the wicked and the ignorant - all went to “sheol.” They wait there - for resurrection. “Sheol” is a place of waiting.

HOW DID “SHEOL” BECOME “HELL?”

Plato taught the Greeks that there is an immortal conscious essence of man which continues to exist after the death of the body. After Alexander the Great conquered Persia, Egypt and Judea, the Jews became Hellenized (Greek influenced). In about 300BC the ancient Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek. This translation was called the Septuagint. The translators were seventy Jewish rabbis, who had been heavily influenced by Greek teaching and philosophy. They chose the Greek word “hades” to translate the Hebrew “sheol,” but the Greek “hades” had a vastly different meaning within Greek culture, than the Hebrew “sheol” - which simply meant “the grave” or “where the dead go.” The Greeks believed that the souls of noble and good men went to live with the gods, while the souls of evil men went to the underworld - to Hades.

(Hebrew OT) “**sheol**” → (Greek OT) “**Hades**” → (English) “**Hell**”

Did you see the concept change? From a place to which everyone went, “sheol” was translated into the Greek “Hades” - the underworld - to which only the souls of evil men were banished. From there it was a short step to our English “Hell” - a place of eternal torment for the damned.

HADES

(Strong’s #86) - “hades”

- Meaning: 1) the god of the lower regions, also called Pluto,
2) Orcus, the nether world, the realm of the dead
3) later use of this word: the grave, death, hell

Usage: - hell 10, grave 1; Total 11

LET’S LOOK AT EVERY PASSAGE where “Sheol” was translated as “Hades” in the Septuagint (ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament), asking the question, “Does this passage clearly tell us that Hell is a present place, to which only the wicked are sent?”

All of the verses in this section, will be shown from the ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION, because in this version the word “Sheol” appears in the text rather than the translation “Hades” or “Hell.”

Psalms 139:8 “If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!” (ESV)

NOTE: God is with us even in death. (He is certainly NOT with those who go to the Catholic or Evangelical version of “Hell”.) Remember - good, bad or indifferent - in the Old Testament, everyone went to Sheol. This is David speaking. He certainly did not expect to go to a place of torment for punishment.

Proverbs 5:5 “Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol!” ESV

NOTE: In this verse and the next two, Solomon writes about the perils of adultery with an “immoral woman.” Such action leads to death. True - especially when there were no cure for venereal disease.

Proverbs 7:27 “Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.” ESV

Proverbs 9:18 “He does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol” (ESV).

Proverbs 15:11 “Sheol and Abaddon [*death and destruction*] lie open before the LORD; how much more the hearts of the children of man!” (ESV)

Proverbs 27:20 “Sheol and Abaddon [*death and destruction*] are never satisfied, and never satisfied are the eyes of man” (ESV).

Habakkuk 2:5 “Moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest. His greed is as wide as Sheol; like death he has never enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples” (ESV).

NOTE: In these first 7 verses, “sheol” obviously means simply “death” or “the grave.”

LET'S LOOK AT OTHER VERSES,
WHERE THE MEANING IS LESS OBVIOUS.

Remember: Your understanding of many texts will change, depending upon your understanding of the nature of man - mortal or immortal.

Deuteronomy 32:22 [God speaking to Israel through Moses] “For a fire is kindled by my anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains” (ESV).

Peter wrote that “the elements will melt with fervent heat” on “the day of the Lord.” “The earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10). There’s your fire and brimstone. God’s “jealousy” will ultimately consume even death and the grave. Isn’t that what He says in Revelation 20:14. Death and “sheol” will one day be cast into the “lake of fire.” The wicked dead will then no longer exist, because “sheol” will no longer exist.

Psalms 9:17 “The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God” (ESV).

The “wicked” will be resurrected and judged at the return of Christ, only to be “returned” to Sheol, to remain until Sheol itself is later consumed in the “lake of fire” (Dan. 12:2-3, Rev. 20:14).

Psalms 55:15 “Let death steal over them; let them go down to Sheol alive; for evil is in their dwelling place and in their heart” (ESV).

NOTE: The wicked who are raised when Yeshua Messiah returns in glory - raised to be judged, and then returned to death, will be aware that they have been “cut off” from the people of God. They will know that they are facing certain eternal death. This - I believe - is what it means to “go down to Sheol alive.” When Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebelled against Moses, the ground miraculously opened up, and they “went down alive into the pit” which closed over them. The implication - that they did not long remain alive. They are a type of all those who have rebelled against Christ.

Proverbs 15:24 “The path of life leads upward for the prudent, that he may turn away from Sheol beneath” (ESV).

Sheol is simply death. Life vs death is presented.

Proverbs 23:14 “If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.”

The parent who withholds correction, may condemn his son to an early death. This verse does not contradict our teaching that the end, for the rebellious, the unwise and the unrepentant - is death.

Isaiah 14:9 “Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come; it rouses the shades to greet you, all who were leaders of the earth; it raises from their thrones all who were kings of the nations” (ESV).

This passage is a prophecy - speaking of the “king of Babylon.” He will join “leaders of the earth,” and all the “kings of the nations” who have preceded him. The great, the mighty, and the small - death is no respecter of persons. This passage is also metaphor - as when “the trees of the fields will clap their hands,” or when Abel’s “blood cried out from the ground.”

Ezekiel 31:15-17 “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘On the day the cedar [*Pharaoh*] went down to Sheol I caused mourning; I closed the deep over it, and restrained its rivers, and many waters were stopped. [*Pharaoh drowned in the Red Sea.*] I clothed Lebanon [*ally of Egypt*] in gloom for it, and all the trees of the field fainted because of it. [*Because of Pharaoh’s death, other pagan nations feared Yahweh and Israel.*] I made the nations quake at the sound of its fall, when I cast it down to Sheol with those who go down to the pit. And all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, were comforted in the world below. [*Those killed by Pharaoh were glad of his death.*] They also went down to Sheol with it [*with the Cedar*], to those who are slain by the sword; yes, those who were its arm, who lived under its shadow among the nations” (ESV). (*This is metaphor!*)

Ezekiel 32:21 “The mighty chiefs shall speak of them, with their helpers, out of the midst of Sheol: “They have come down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, slain by the sword” (ESV).

Ezekiel 32:27 “And they do not lie with the mighty, (*not in monument tombs*) the fallen from among the uncircumcised, who went down to Sheol with their weapons of war, whose swords were laid under their heads, and whose iniquities are upon their bones; for the terror of the mighty men was in the land of the living” (ESV).

NOTE: *All of the above verses from Ezekiel 31 and 32 are from a prophecy concerning “Pharaoh and all his multitude.” We would agree that Pharaoh, along with every other wicked leader - did die and will die. They died the first physical death, and they will someday die the second death - spirit death - in the lake of fire.*

Amos 9:2 “If they dig into Sheol, from there shall my hand take them; if they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down” (ESV).

In this passage the LORD is speaking to Israel - the Northern Kingdom - sunken in idolatry. You cannot escape my wrath. Even if you hide in the grave - I will just resurrect you to face me in judgment. (Obviously no one would “dig into Hell” - not intentionally.)

Conclusion: Sheol is simply “the grave.”

GEHENNA

(Strong’s #1067) - geenna, called “Gehenna” or “Gehenna of fire”

A Greek word meaning: the place of the future punishment.

Translated as “Hell” or “hell fire” in the English King James New Testament.

A word of Hebrew origin. Originally - “The Valley of Hinnom,” (Valley of the Sons of Hinnom), also called Tophet. A valley WSW of Jerusalem, where the waste of the city was cast out and burned, including dead animals, and even corpses of executed criminals. The word later came to stand for the place of punishment, or for the punishment itself.

If Gehenna (Hell) is a garbage dump, then the lost will die and their corpses will rot and/or burn, while the saved will receive eternal life with new “spiritual” bodies.

LET’S LOOK AT EVERY PASSAGE where “Gehenna” or “Gehenna of fire” occurs in the New Testament. We will find that Gehenna *is* a place of fire. We will find that the fire consumes corpses - NOT conscious people. We will find that the individual corpses do NOT continue to burn forever.

Matthew 18:8-9 “If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire (*gehenna of fire*).”

NOTE: Here we note that “the everlasting fire” is equated with “gehenna of fire.” It is a “fire” of divine origin. This “fire” has existed from eternity and will exist for eternity - but the sinner, cast into such “fire,” will be consumed. This “fire” is like “gehenna” in that it will consume every last trace of the “garbage” thrown in.

Matthew 5:22 “But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire [*gehenna of fire*].”

Matthew 5:29 “If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell [*gehenna*].” (See also Matt. 18:9 and Mark 9:47.)

Matthew 5:30 “. . . it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell [*gehenna*].”
(See also Mark 9:43-44.)

NOTE: Essentially Jesus is saying that even the loss of an eye or the right hand, is preferable to the loss of eternal life. We note especially that the physical body of the lost person will be cast into Gehenna as a “whole body,” with two hands, two feet, and two eyes - not as a disembodied spirit. Even the Greeks did not believe that the physical body went to “Hades.”

Mark 9:45-46 “And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell [*gehenna*], into the fire that shall never be quenched—where ‘their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’” (See also Mark 9:43-44 & Mark 9:47-48.)

NOTE: Here Mark quotes Christ, who is quoting from Isaiah 66:24 - “their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.” Christ’s use of the phrase follows His very consistent pattern of quoting from the Old Testament, and His use of familiar objects.

Isaiah 66:24 “And they shall go forth and look Upon the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, And their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”

First: *The fire is consuming corpses - not live people.*

Second: *The fire cannot be quenched - that is - it cannot be put out, until it has done its work of consuming. There is no suggestion of unending torment here - just fire consuming "garbage."*

"Gehenna" held meaning only for Israelites. *The word is not found in Greek literature, in the Septuagint or in Josephus. **The Valley of (the Sons of) Hinnom** - [WSW of Jerusalem] - was a place of pagan idolatry and human (usually child) sacrifice, especially during the reigns of kings Manasseh and Ahaz (2 Chr. 33:6, 2 Kings 16:3 & 21:6). **The place was cursed of God.***

Later - during the second Temple era, it was used as place for burning refuse, even the corpses of executed criminals. The fires were kept burning constantly. Over time, Gehenna came to be used as a term meaning "the place of punishment." The name "Gehenna" finally came to represent the punishment itself. The name brought to mind whatever is condemned, useless, corrupt or abhorrent. During and after the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman General Titus, the Valley of Hinnom was filled with the bodies of dead Jews.

Essentially - Christ was saying, "You will be thrown out like garbage."

Jeremiah 7:31-33 "And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart. Therefore behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'when it will no more be called Tophet, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter; for they will bury in Tophet until there is no room. The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. And no one will frighten them away.'" (See also Jeremiah 19:2-13.)

Luke 12:5 "But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell [*gehenna*]; yes, I say to you, fear Him!"

NOTE: The wicked are first "killed." Then their bodies will be left to rot or burn - in gehenna. This takes place at the "judgment of the great day" - at the Second Coming.

Matthew 10:28 "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell [*Gehenna*].

NOTE: The body AND the soul - will be destroyed by the LORD, in (or at) Gehenna. But if the soul is destroyed - meaning consumed completely, then how can it suffer for eternity?

Once again, this text has more than one level of meaning. If you believe, as I do, that God retains a memory of each person - "the spirit" - which He will use to resurrect each one (the wicked for judgment and the righteous to eternal life) - then you will understand this verse to say that God will destroy His memory of you, along with your physical body.

YOU will no longer exist. Only at this point will you be “dead” to God. This judgment, and this “death” will be the subject of another study called “Final Judgment - Lake of Fire.”

Matthew 23:15 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees - hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell [gehenna] as yourselves.”

Matthew 23:33 “Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell [gehenna]?”

James 3:6 “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell [gehenna].”

NOTE: Here an evil tongue is said to be energized by Gehenna itself. It is said to be equally as destructive. This is metaphor.

TARTARUS

(Strong’s #5020) Tartaroo. **Used only once.**

2 Peter 2:4 “For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell [tartaroo] and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;”

NOTE: This verse is NOT talking about human beings. The “angels who sinned” are spirit beings - not humans. Peter is looking for a word to represent a place of restraint - a holding place for those evil angels who “crossed the line.” Some believe that these angels will be released from “Tartarus” at the fifth trumpet - and will torment mankind, for a short period just before the Second Coming. Others believe that earth itself IS the holding place. Still others believe these evil beings will be held in a kind of prison for spirits until the final judgment.

WE HAVE LOOKED AT EVERY VERSE where a word was translated as “Hell.”

Now let’s continue our study, looking at other passages which have been used to support the doctrine of “eternal conscious torment.”

BURNED IN FIRE

John 15:5-6 “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.”

NOTE: The fire appears to be burning what is already dead. This agrees with the image of Isaiah 66:24, and Jesus’ prophecy in Mark 9:45-46. The fire will consume the corpses.

Matthew 13:49-50 “So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 13:41-42 “The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

2 Peter 3:7 “But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

NOTE: “Ungodly men” are NOT judged, or cast into the “furnace of fire” UNTIL “the day of judgment” - “at the end of the age,” when “the Son of Man will send out His angels” to gather the wheat into His barn.” They are NOT burning now. This is the Second Coming!

Luke 3:17 “His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.”

2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 “. . . WHEN the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, WHEN He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints.”

Malachi 4:1 “For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘that will leave them neither root nor branch.’”

False prophets, hypocrites, and faithless disciples along with trees producing bad fruit, branches bearing no fruit, chaff, and weeds - all are said to be thrown into the fire (Matt. 7:19, Lk. 3:19). This fire takes place “at the end of the age” when the “earth with its works is burned up” (1 Peter 3:10). IT IS A FUTURE EVENT - NOT A PRESENT PLACE of continuing conscious torment!

The fire which burned up Sodom and Gomorrah is said to be “an example” of this “fire” (Jude 1:7, 2 Peter 2:6). These cities are NOT still burning. And nowhere does Scripture say that the former inhabitants of Sodom lived on in perpetual conscious torment.

Luke 17:29 “ . . . but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be [future] in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.”

Acts 17:30-31 “ . . . because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom he has ordained.”

FIRE AND BRIMSTONE

Psalms 11:6 “Upon the wicked He will rain coals; fire and brimstone and a burning wind shall be the portion of their cup” (Genesis 19:24 - Sodom and Gomorrah).

The “fire and brimstone” may be caused by an asteroid hit, by weapons of mass destruction, by molten lava, by the sun “heated seven times hotter,” or by “the glory of the LORD.” In the study titled “Millennium,” we will look at passage after passage describing the complete and utter destruction of the earth, which will follow the Second Coming. It will remain desolate for 1000 years. But there is no suggestion that the wicked live on in conscious torment.

Luke 17:29 “ . . . but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.”

When Christ returns in glory with His army of angels, “the beast” and the “false prophet” will be “cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.” If the whole earth is on fire, and is burned up - then these human powers will indeed be consumed on that day.

“The elements will melt with fervent heat” (2 Peter 3:10). Brimstone results from the melting of elements (sulphur is specifically mentioned). This is not a place where human beings - as disembodied spirits - experience perpetual conscious torment for eternity. This is the earth - “burned up!”

QUESTIONS:

Jesus cannot take the unrepentant into His kingdom.

What will He do with them? There would be no peace - if evil persists!

When and where does “the second death” - in the “lake of fire” take place?

Will the people suffer? And if so - for how long?

We have a lot of ground to cover.....

THE WICKED WILL PERISH

Romans 1:32 “. . . knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death,” [*not eternal conscious torment*].

Psalms 37:20 “But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.”

NOTE: David lamented the apparent success of the wicked until he entered the Temple. There he saw something which caused him to understand “what would be their end” (Psa. 73:3-17). He saw the sacrifice, burning on the altar. Here David under inspiration, tells us that the wicked will be consumed in fire - “like the fat of lambs”. The wicked will consume away into smoke. Most Christians today understand that the sacrifice symbolized Christ, but not many understand that it also symbolized the death of the wicked. Those who embrace Christ as their Savior will not die this death.

NOTE: Some translations say “like the glory of the pastures.” To a Hebrew shepherd like David, that meant sheep and goats - not flowers or grass. Israelites were forbidden to “eat fat.” All fat was burned on the altar of sacrifice.

Isaiah 41:11-12 “Behold, all those who were incensed against you shall be ashamed and disgraced; They shall be as nothing, And those who strive with you shall perish. You shall seek them and not find them -- Those who contended with you. Those who war against you shall be as nothing, as a nonexistent thing.”

PERISH

(Strong's #622) apollumi {ap-ol'-loo-mee} a Greek word.

Meaning: 1) to destroy 1a) to put out of the way entirely, abolish, put an end to, ruin

1b) render useless 1c) to kill 1d) to declare that one must be put to death

1e) **metaphor - to devote or give over to eternal misery in hell**

1f) to perish, to be lost, ruined, destroyed 2) to destroy 2a) to lose.

Usage: perish 33, destroy 26, lose 22, be lost 5, lost 4, misc 2; Total 92

NOTE: Simply put - to perish means to die. And to perish without hope of resurrection means to die forever. This death would be eternal - just as the reward (life) is eternal.

NOTE: Did you notice that Strong's defines the word translated "perish" as metaphor for "eternal misery in hell." He gives this as a possible meaning because the word - as used by those who preached "eternal torment," had come to stand for "eternal torment" NOT because the word itself, in any text, can be shown to directly or clearly mean "a place of eternal conscious torment."

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PERISH ?

John 10:27-28 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand."

NOTE: The word "perish" means "to die." Obviously - both righteous and wicked die. They die physically. They die the first type of death (sometimes more than once - like Lazarus), but to God these people are just sleeping. They are not "perished." Jesus was speaking of "the second death," in the "lake of fire" - something that will happen only to the unrepentant wicked. It is the death from which there is no resurrection.

UTTERLY DESTROYED

Acts 3:23 "And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people."

NOTE: Moses had promised that God would someday send a prophet who - "like" Moses - would speak the words of the LORD to Israel. "That prophet" was Yeshua Messiah (Deut. 18:15,18,19). Those who would not hear Him would be "cut off" from the people of God.

karath (Hebrew) "cut off" → (Greek) exolethreuo → (English) "utterly destroyed"

"Karath" (#03772) is translated "cut off" in the Old Testament of the KJV. The word signifies "death." Any person so "cut off" was considered accursed of God. Their name would be blotted from the genealogical records of Israel.

"Karath" was translated as "exolethreuo" (#1842) in the Greek Septuagint, which then was rendered "utterly destroy" in the English KJV. Those who would not "hear" Christ would be "cut off" from the people of God. They will be "utterly destroyed."

Psalm 37:9 “For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the LORD, They shall inherit the earth.”

Psalm 37:34 “Wait on the LORD, And keep His way, And He shall exalt you to inherit the land; When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it.”

Wow!! The righteous will see it, when the wicked are “cut off.” They will “see it” at the Second Coming, and they will “see it” (from inside The City) at the Battle of Gog-Magog.

DIDN'T JESUS SAY THERE WILL BE
“WEEPING AND GNASHING OF TEETH” ?

Doesn't that imply real suffering for those condemned ?

Matthew 8:11-12 “And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

NOTE: “The glory of God illuminates the City, and the Lamb is its light.” There is “no night there” (Rev. 21:22-25). Outside of this Kingdom, is darkness.

Luke 13:28 “There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.”

At the Second Coming, Christ will raise the dead - both the righteous and the wicked (Dan. 12:2). The wicked are raised for judgment. They are “cut off” and condemned to death. The redeemed will be caught up to meet Christ in the sky.

When the former “sons of the kingdom” see that they are forever banished from the Kingdom of God, they will weep, and gnash their teeth. The term “sons of the kingdom” refers to Israelites (including those today who call themselves Christian) especially the hypocritical Jewish authorities of Christ' day.

Matthew 22:13-14 [In a parable] “Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Matthew 25:30 [In a parable] “And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 24:50-51 [*In a parable*] “. . . the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

NOTE: The weeping and gnashing is the response to being cast out from the Kingdom. Only those who once thought themselves included, could experience being “cast out.”

Matthew 13:41-42 “The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

NOTE: This scene will take place on the Day of Judgment, when The Son returns in glory. The earth will be burned up, and the outcasts along with it.

Matthew 13:49-50 “So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

NOTE: In Scripture, neither weeping nor gnashing of teeth is used to describe the response to physical pain. Weeping signifies deep remorse or sorrow over loss. Gnashing of teeth signifies great anger. While we today would recognize clenched teeth as a response to physical pain, in Scripture it is not used in this way.

When they realize that they are shut out from the Kingdom of God, and are consigned to death, the lost respond in two ways. Some respond with grief and a deep sense of loss or regret. They weep. Others respond with body choking anger. They gnash their teeth.

Lamentations 2:16 “All your enemies have opened their mouth against you; They hiss and gnash their teeth.” *This is anger.*

Psalms 112:10 “The wicked will see it and be grieved; He will gnash his teeth and melt away; The desire of the wicked shall perish.”

NOTE: The Hebrew word translated “grieved” is ka`ac (#03707) meaning “to be angry, vexed, indignant, or wrath.” The emotion is paired with the physical response - gnashing of teeth.

Psalms 37:12-13 “The wicked plots against the just, And gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him, For He sees that his day is coming.”

Acts 7:54 “When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him” [*at Stephen - just before stoning him to death*] (NIV)

WHAT ABOUT REVELATION 14:11?

Doesn't this verse say that the lost are tormented forever ?

Revelation 14:11 “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

THIS IS THE VERSE!

The teaching of torment without end is based upon this one verse.

Let's break it down: Revelation 14:11

1. The “beast” of Revelation 13 comes to power just before the Second Coming. So this prophecy is time specific - speaking of those who live while the “beast” rules.
2. When Christ returns in glory, the saved will be caught up from the earth (*1 Thess. 4:17*). They will go with Him, to the place He has prepared in the Father's House.
3. Those who have worshiped the “beast” will be left behind. They WILL suffer the full wrath of God, poured out without mercy as seven last plagues (*Rev. 14:10, 15:1, 16:1*). In the midst of this - they will “have no rest day or night.”
4. Finally the earth with its works will be “burned up” - and the bodies of the wicked along with it (*2 Peter 3:10*).
5. The seven last plagues wipe out all life on earth. Every element necessary for human life is gone. Jeremiah saw the earth “after the great day of the LORD,” and “it was without form and void” (*Jer. 4:23*). These are the same Hebrew words used in Genesis 1:2, describing the earth before anything was created.

6. "Its smoke shall ascend forever." John quotes from Isaiah 34:2-10, which is a prophecy about the "land of Edom" - said to be burned with unquenchable fire. The "fire" at the end of this age will be LIKE the "fire" which consumed the "land of Edom." That fire is NOT STILL BURNING today. We do not today see "smoke ascending." The words "forever and ever" mean literally "unto the age of the ages." John may simply be saying that the destruction is irreversible - just as it was for "the land of Edom."

Elements of Revelation 14:11 are quoted from Isaiah 34:2-10.

Let's read thru that passage.

It was a prophecy concerning the "land of Edom" (Esau).

It is also a prophecy of the Second Coming.

Isaiah 34:2-10 "For the indignation of the LORD is against all nations, And His fury against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to the slaughter. Also their slain shall be thrown out; Their stench shall rise from their corpses, And the mountains shall be melted with their blood. All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; All their host shall fall down As the leaf falls from the vine, And as fruit falling from a fig tree. 'For My sword shall be bathed in heaven;' . . . For it is the day of the LORD'S vengeance, The year of recompense for the cause of Zion. Its streams shall be turned into pitch, And its dust into brimstone; Its land shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night or day; Its smoke shall ascend forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; No one shall pass through it forever and ever."

When Christ returns in glory, the stars will fall from heaven, and the sky will recede "as a scroll when it is rolled up" (*Rev. 6:13-14*). These elements are included in Isaiah's prophecy. The armies of all nations will be "utterly destroyed." The land will be turned into burning pitch, and the fire will be unquenchable. And the people caught in this destruction? Their corpses will not be buried. There will be no one left to bury the dead. The wicked are left - where "vultures gather" (*Matt 24:28, Luke 17:37*). "It is the day of the LORD's vengeance." This is judgment day. This is the Second Coming!

The condemned are tormented "in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb." The angels are present to deliver the righteous - not to watch the torment of the wicked. They rescue the redeemed, just before the seven last plagues begin. As in the story of Noah, and the story of Lot - deliverance comes just in time. Lot saw the city burning, and Noah heard the cries of the doomed as the rain fell.

The condemned are tormented - yes - by the seven last plagues, and by their own grief and hatred. We agree that there will be fire, but the fire will eventually go out - after it has consumed the earth (with the wicked).

The phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth” tells us that the grief and the anger are in response to full realization of rejection, and of certain death. The “sons of the Kingdom” are “cast out.” They see others accepted (like the despised Gentiles). They see the redeemed caught up to meet their Savior in the clouds (*1 Thess. 4:17*). These things will happen at “the end of the age,” on “the day” when the Master returns.

UNQUENCHABLE FIRE

The fire which will “burn up” the earth with its works (*2 Peter 3:10*) is obviously “unquenchable.” There is no remedy or means by which to put it out (*quench it*) before the fire runs out of fuel. Jesus said He would, “burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (*Luke 3:12 & Matt. 3:12*). The point being that the “chaff” is “burned up.” It does NOT continue to burn forever.

We all understand that the book of Revelation uses a great deal of symbolism. “The smoke of their torment” ascending “forever and ever” may be the LORD’s way of saying that He will remember the pain of that day forever. The words do NOT necessarily mean that the wicked will continue in torment without end.

We cannot base a doctrine on one phrase, from a book that is full of symbolism.

PERDITION

Let’s look at another word from the King James Version of the Bible, which has been used to represent a place of continuing conscious torment.

Strong’s #684 - *apoleia* {ap-o'-li-a} - a Greek word.

Meaning: 1) destroying, utter destruction 2) a perishing, ruin, destruction

Usage in the King James: perdition 8, destruction 5, waste 2, damnable 1, to die + #1519 1, perish + #1498 + #1519 1, pernicious 1; Total 20

Do any of these passages suggest that “*apoleia*” represents eternal conscious torment?

Matthew 7:13 “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.”

Mark 14:4 “Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, ‘Why this waste of perfume?’” (NIV) (*Matthew 26:8 also calls it “waste.”*)

NOTE: Obviously the word in this context means “waste.”

John 17:12 “While I was with them [*the disciples*] in the world, I kept them in Your name [*Father*]. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, [*Judas*] that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”

Son of perdition is translated as “son of destruction” in the NIV, ESV and CJB.

Acts 8:20 “But Peter said to him, ‘Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!’”

NOTE: If “perish” in this text, is “Hell” - in the traditionalist sense - then Peter is telling the man, “Go to Hell and take your money with you.” I doubt Peter would have cursed the man in this way. The word is translated “go to ruin” in the CJB.

Acts 25:16 “To them I answered, ‘It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face, and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.’”

NOTE: “Destruction” is the same word translated as “perdition” in other passages. The Romans could not deliver anyone to a Traditionalist “Hell,” but they could execute. Here “perdition” means death by execution. In the KJV the word is translated as “to die.”

Romans 9:22 “What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,”

NOTE: The LORD endured the wicked - those prepared for destruction (perdition).

Philippians 1:28 “. . . and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.”

NOTE: The Christians were not terrified. They were calm in the face of persecution and this was a proof to their persecutors - a proof that the Christians were speaking the truth, that a day of judgment and destruction would come. The ESV, NAU, CJB all translate the word as “destruction.” The NIV uses “be destroyed.”

2 Thessalonians 2:3 “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,”

NOTE: In context, Paul is writing of Antichrist - the “man doomed to destruction” (NIV), “the son of destruction” (ESV & NAU), “the one destined for doom” (CJB).

Any suggestion of continuing or perpetual conscious torment - so far ?

NO!

2 Peter 3:7 “But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

The heavens and the earth “are reserved for fire - UNTIL the day of judgment.” That “day of judgment” will be the Second Coming of Christ in glory. The wicked will be resurrected to face the LORD for judgment, and then they will be destroyed in the seven last plagues, and the fire which will consume the earth (2 Peter 3:10). The NIV, ESV and NAU all translate the word as “destruction.”

Revelation 17:8 “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition.”

The “beast” is a religio-political system at the very end of this age, empowered by Satan. This system will be destroyed. The NIV, ESV, NAU and CJB all use “destruction.”

Revelation 17:11 “And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.”

The “beast” is “going to destruction” in the NIV and ESV, NAU, and CJB. See also Hebrews 10:39, 1 Tim. 6:9, 2 Pet. 2:1, 2 Pet. 2:2, & 2 Pet. 3:16.

We CANNOT determine, from any of these Scripture verses, that the word “perdition” points to eternal conscious torment. It simply means “destruction.”

LIFE vs DEATH

Ezekiel 18:20 “The soul who sins shall die.”

Deuteronomy 30:19 “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;”

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

“Perish” is given as the opposite of “everlasting life.” It is simply death.

John 10:27-28 “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”

Romans 6:23 “For **the wages of sin is death**, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

NOTE: The wages of sin is death - not eternal conscious torment.

TEN REASONS TO REJECT ETERNAL TORMENT

1. The teaching of eternal torment claims that the lost will continue living forever, which is contrary to the plain words of Scripture: “The soul who sins shall die” (*Ezekiel 18:20*).
2. The teaching of eternal torment robs us of our God of love whose “mercy endures forever” and substitutes a being whose wrath is never appeased (*Psalms 107:1*).
3. The teaching of eternal torment cannot be reconciled with the character of Jesus Christ presented in the Scriptures.
4. The redeemed, who will have a part in the final judgment, could never condemn fellow human beings to unending torture. Their sense of justice could never permit such an atrocity. “Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?” (*1 Corinthians 6:2*).
5. Eternal torment imposes a punishment all out of proportion to the crimes committed. Jesus said, “I judge, and my judgment is just” (*John 5:30*).
6. Eternal torment for the lost would cast a shadow forever over the happiness of the redeemed. God has promised that He “shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (*Revelation 7:17*).
7. The teaching of eternal torment demands that God preserve a place of sin and sorrow forever, where the Devil would take pleasure from tormenting the objects of God’s love. We are promised that Satan will be destroyed (*Hebrews 2:14*).
8. Eternal torment would immortalize suffering, sorrow, and pain. God’s promise is that these things will be no more. “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*).
9. The teaching of eternal torment vilifies God’s character and makes Him into a monstrous agent of Satan. God would have to sustain the lost in an aimless and endless punishment. Hence God would, in reality, become worse than Satan himself.

10. We reject the teaching of eternal torment because of the fruit it has brought forth. It has fueled the teaching of atheism. It has driven many to depression or insanity, with constant fear. It has drained the resources of families for centuries, as they give money for Masses to pray the souls of loved ones from Purgatory to Heaven. It has caused thousands of others to do unspeakable things in the name of God. Many who led out in the infamous Inquisition of Europe or the witch-hunts of early America were religious men who believed they were carrying out the will of God. These devout persecutors tortured “heretics” in order to save their souls from Hell.

SUMMARY

1. The doctrine of Hell - as a place of continuing conscious torment - resulted from poor or mistranslation of two Hebrew words - “Sheol” and “Gehenna.”
2. The dead all go to “sheol” - both righteous and wicked. It is simply a place of waiting - for the resurrection. We at Prophecy Viewpoint believe that God retains a memory of each individual. He uses this “memory” to resurrect each one, with mind and memory intact.
3. Gehenna was an ancient burning garbage dump outside of Jerusalem. Jesus used this figure to predict that the bodies of the lost would be burned like that garbage.
4. No one is in Hell now. The dead are sleeping. The wicked will be resurrected to face judgment at the Second Coming. Then they will be left to die in the plagues, and their bodies will be burned up along with the earth.
5. The Bible clearly presents a choice - life or death - not life or eternal conscious torment.
6. The Bible clearly says that the wicked will “perish.” To perish is to die.
7. Revelation 14:11 warns that those who “worship the beast and his image” will be “tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.” This will happen at the Second Coming, to those who are left behind to suffer the final plagues. Their suffering will not continue forever - because they will die.

FOR DEEPER STUDY:

1. *Immortality or Resurrection?*
“A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny,” by Samuele Bacchiocchi
2. *The Fire That Consumes*, “A Biblical and Historical Study of the Doctrine of Final Punishment, THIRD EDITION,” by Edward William Fudge

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