

Hell – Another Great Deception

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The existence of a literal place called “hell,” where sinners suffer various forms of torment forever, has been ingrained in the minds of people for centuries and, in most cases, those who hold this belief accept it without much thought or study. Religious authorities have used this doctrine to control and manipulate their adherents by instilling fear and blind obedience in them. After all, who wants to be tormented for eternity? It’s better to listen to your church’s directives than turn your back on that authority and end up in hell as a result. Although it is not always stated in exactly these terms, a religious organization can make implications to this effect and its followers will accept and believe the lie.

One of the problems associated with this false teaching is that it pictures Almighty God as an unjust and cruel tyrant who seems to enjoy seeing people suffer. In reality, it is “the god of this present evil age,” who gets satisfaction from the misfortunes of others.

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil age... (Gal. 1:3-4a; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise stated; emphasis added).

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of the age (Satan) has blinded ... (2Cor. 4:3-4; Ed. notes in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Those who see you (Satan) will gaze at you, and consider you, saying: ‘Is this this man (Satan when he is judged) who made the earth tremble (cf. Rom. 16:20; Mal. 4:3), who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities, who did not open the house

of his prisoners?’ (Isa. 14:16-17; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Satan is an abusive individual who manipulates all who are under his influence and is the author of everything that is evil (Jn. 8:44; Rev. 12:9). Because he wants the physical and spiritual world revolving around him, he has no concern for anyone else. He is the ultimate self-centered megalomaniac who wants total control of everyone and everything in existence. He created the doctrine of the immortal soul as an essential prerequisite to the false teachings about hell, and hell-fire. He lied to Eve when he told her that she would “not surely die” if she disobeyed the command of God (Gen. 3:4).

If mankind had an immortal soul and hell actually existed, then they could live forever in hell or hell-fire. If they don’t have an immortal soul, they can’t live forever. Therefore, they could not exist in a place called hell and suffer for eternity after their physical death. The truth is that mankind is mortal and will die as a result of sin (Eze. 18:4, 20; Rom. 6:23). Mankind’s only hope of living forever is based on repentance of sin, which includes acknowledging that their sin necessitated the death of Jesus Christ in their place, followed by a sincere desire to start obeying God’s every command. This is the process of salvation and it can only occur as a result of God’s Holy Spirit working with an individual. It must be emphasized that God will only grant His Holy Spirit to those who seek to obey Him (Ac. 5:32b; 1Jn. 3:24).

So the truth is that hell, and hell-fire, are figments of man’s own imagination. In fact, many of the pictures that people have in their minds about hell come from Dante’s Divine Comedy, which is a work of fiction. Granted, there are some holy scriptures that have been misunderstood and used to support a literal hell and hell-fire, but these will be explained in this study.

The word “hell” is used a number of times in the New Testament, but it is translated from three different Greek words. Therefore, it is very important to examine the meaning of each of the original Greek words in order to come to a correct understanding of what God was saying. An example of each will follow.

But I (Christ) say to you that whoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca! (empty-headed man, worthless person) shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ (morally worthless person, as in a curse) shall be in danger of hell fire (SGD 1067, Gehenna) (Mt. 5:22; cf. 5:29-30; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).



**FOR EVERYONE WILL BE SEASONED
(IMPROVED) WITH FIRE (TRAILS)...**

Mark 9:49a; Ed. notes in parentheses.

By translating the Greek word Gehenna* into the English “hell fire,” the real meaning is obscured because Christ was not speaking about a fictitious location in which dead people are going to be tormented. Instead, Christ was referring to the actual valley south of Jerusalem, originally called the Valley of the Son of Hinnom (2Chr. 28:3; 33:6; Jer. 7:31-32), where Israelite children were sacrificed in fire to the pagan god Moloch. It is also referred to as the valley of lamentation because of the cries from the children who were thrown into the arms of a statue that represented Moloch before they rolled down into the fire.

So Christ was comparing the torment associated with activities that took place in the Valley of Hinnom with the mental anguish that will take place in the lives of those who come up during the period of time referred to as the second resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6).

This will involve a process of judgement that is so unpleasant it will feel like a never-ending trial. This is why it is described metaphorically like a worm that does not die in a fire that is not quenched. Nonetheless, the purpose is to purify many of their sinful thoughts and actions; thereby restoring their relationship with Almighty God (Mk. 9:43-48).

For everyone will be seasoned (improved) with fire (trials)... (Mk. 9:49a; Ed. notes in parentheses).

And I (Christ) say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (at the time of the first resurrection).¹² But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness (death – awaiting the resurrection to judgment). (At which time) there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 8:11-12; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Christ placed responsibility for the anguish of the Valley of Hinnom with the Jewish priesthood. He connected the end result of the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees with their predecessors. Both groups were guilty of leading people to sin and its consequence, which is the anguish associated with a future judgement. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Christ used the word “child” or “son” in the following condemnation because it ties the sacrifice of children to the erroneous teachings of the religious leaders.

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 child of hell (Gr. gehenna) as yourselves (Mt. 23:15; KJV; emphasis added).

Despite the anguish associated with a future period of judgment, every sinner will have an opportunity to repent and be restored in their relationship with Almighty God, whether they

were originally a human being or an angel who sinned (2Pet. 3:9).

Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his (Christ's; cf. Jn. 5:25) voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life (1st resurrection at Christ's return), and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation (Gr. krisis – judgment at the end of the millennium; cf. Rev. 20:4-5) (Jn. 5:28-29; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).



AND THE GOD OF PEACE WILL CRUSH
SATAN UNDER YOUR FEET

SHORTLY...
Romans 16:20a

As every sinner will have an opportunity to repent in a future resurrection from the dead, why would they be in a fictitious location called "hell" after their death? Also, everyone mentioned in the verses above has died and are in the grave. They are neither in heaven, or a place called hell. Even the worst criminal and mass murderer of all time, Satan the Devil, will be changed into a flesh and blood man and die before facing his final judgment in the second resurrection (cf. Isa. 14:16-17). The Apostle Paul mentioned this truth.

And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly ... (Rom. 16:20a).

God's law cannot be compromised and as God is not a respecter of persons (Ac. 10:34) the death penalty for committing sin applies to everyone equally, whether they are sinful human beings or sinful angels (Eze. 18:4, 20; Rom. 6:23). This truth is explained numerous times in scripture.

But God will wound the head of His enemies (rebellious angelic host; cf. Gen.3:15b; Eph.

6:12), the hairy scalp (confirming the fallen host will become flesh and blood beings) of the one who still goes on in his trespasses (sins) (Ps. 68:21; Ed. notes in parentheses).

That your foot may crush them in blood (cf. Rom. 16:20a), and the tongues of your dogs may have their portion from your enemies (Ps. 68:23; Ed. note in parenthesis).

You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day (in the future) that I do this, says the Lord of hosts (Mal. 4:3; cf. Rom. 16:20a; Isa. 14:19-20; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

The enemies of mankind are the fallen host of heaven and they occupy themselves by accusing mankind on a constant basis.

For we (mankind) do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly (spiritual) places (Eph. 6:12; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Then I (John) heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God (the Father), and the power of His (son) Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren (Satan and the fallen angels), who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down (Rev. 12:10; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

The second Greek word that is translated into the English word "hell," in the King James Version of the Bible, has nothing to do with a fictitious location of torment either.

And you Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades (SGD 86; hell in the KJV) ... (Mt. 11:23a; cf. 16:18; emphasis added; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Because You (Almighty God) will not leave my (Christ's) soul (body) in Hades (hell; KJV), nor will You (Almighty God) allow your holy one (Christ) to see corruption (normal bodily decay in the grave) (Ac. 2:27; cf. 2:31; Ed. notes in parentheses).

In Matthew 11:23, Christ was referring to those who would go to the grave while still maintaining their righteousness. This grave that is sometimes translated into the English word "hell," is exactly the same place that people in England planted their potatoes during the 1600's. At planting time, it would not be strange for farm workers to mention that they were putting their seed potatoes in hell. This same hell, or the grave where dead people are buried, is mentioned in one of Christ's parables. The parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man has been taken literally when in fact it was never meant to be understood in that manner. In reality, the following scriptures use figurative language to picture events in a future resurrection from the dead. The reason that Christ introduced this parable was to address the excesses of the Pharisees (cf. Lk. 16:14-15), and reinforce the fact that they would all give account for abuses they committed during their physical lifetime (cf. Eze. 34:1-22). This judgment would take place in the future when they are resurrected from the dead. So the "rich man" symbolized the Pharisees, while Lazarus was a type of all those who experienced various abuses at the hands of the Pharisees.

There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried (Lk. 16:19-22).

It is important at this point to pause and explain the distinction between what happened to Lazarus after his death and what happened to the rich man. Again, this is figurative language that pictures events that will take place in the future. Both men died, and are now figuratively waiting for the resurrection from the dead. However, Lazarus was placed in close proximity to Abraham which pictured him in the first resurrection from the dead at Christ's return.



AND BEING IN TORMENTS IN HADES
(THE GRAVE), HE LIFTED UP HIS EYES
AND SAW ABRAHAM AFAR OFF, AND
LAZARUS IN HIS BOSOM.

Luke 16:23; Ed. note in parenthesis

And I (Christ) say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 8:11; Ed. note in parenthesis).

In contrast however, the rich man's future is not yet determined and consequently he remains asleep until the second resurrection, a time of correction followed by judgment (cf. Rev. 20:4-6, 11-15). This uncomfortable and uncertain predicament is portrayed in an analogous manner with the rich man appearing to be very anxious and even remorseful for what he had done during his lifetime.

And being in torments in Hades (the grave), he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom (Lk. 16:23; Ed. note in parenthesis).

As the dead know nothing while they are in the grave, this parable is entirely figurative showing the distinction between those who will inherit everlasting life at Christ's return and those who will have to await a resurrection of correction and judgment following death.

For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing ... (Ecc. 9:5a; cf. 9:10; see study: Do We Go To Heaven When We Die?).

In the following verse it is clear that Lazarus is indeed resurrected at Christ's return and has inherited everlasting life because the rich man acknowledges that Lazarus is no longer confined to the grave.



BELOVED, DO NOT THINK IT STRANGE
CONCERNING THE FIERY TRIAL
WHICH IS TO TRY YOU, AS THOUGH
SOME STRANGE THING HAPPENED TO
YOU.

I Peter 4:12; emphasis added

Then he (the rich man) cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame (Lk. 16:24; emphasis added; Ed. note in parenthesis).

The flame is symbolic language used to picture the judgment that the rich man knows is coming, and it is Christ who will be in charge of this process. The word translated into "torment" is primarily related to emotional stress, sorrow, anguish, or anxiety (3600 Gk. *odunáō*), which is very different from SGD 2558 (*kakouchéō*) describing actual ill treatment and abuse associated with torture (cf. Heb. 11:37), or 2553 (*kakopathéō*), to suffer trouble, bear affliction, endure hardship, the constant endurance of suffering.

I (Christ) counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich (not by physical possessions sometimes gained through sinful actions); and white garments (associated with righteous conduct), that you may be clothed

... (Rev. 3:18a; cf. Rev. 1:14; 2:18; 19:12; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

The rich man is portrayed as experiencing the purification that follows the second resurrection, which God's servants willingly experience in this life as they sacrifice in order to obey God's commands. It is described as a form of torment because of the emotional pain of facing all of one's former sins and having all evil removed through God's spiritual refinement (cf. 1Cor. 3:12-15).

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you (1Pet. 4:12; emphasis added).

Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (Heb. 12:11; emphasis added).

God uses the word fire symbolically to show that it is not comfortable changing from the way we have been conducting our lives, to a completely different way of living in accordance with His law and commandments. Even in this life, those who have repented of their sins often go through fiery trials with family members, friends, and employers when they start living a completely new life of obedience to God. This can be a very painful process, and this point is emphasized in the next section of the parable.

But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented' (Lk. 16:25).

Many of God's true servants have gone through unspeakable fiery trials and yet continued to obey Almighty God. The rich man was spared these horrible experiences during his physical lifetime but he was not grateful and did not

reciprocate by being kind or helpful to those, pictured by Lazarus, who were suffering.

Still others (of God's obedient servants) had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were slain with sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented (SGD 2558; ill treatment; very different from SGD 3600 describing the rich man's torment, which was simply distress) – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth (Heb. 11:36-38; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).



FOR IF YOU BELIEVED IN MOSES YOU
WOULD HAVE BELIEVED ME, FOR
THAT ONE WROTE CONCERNING ME.

John 5:46; RNT

There is a period of one thousand years between the time of Christ's return and the commencement of the second resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6). So although the rich man wanted to be with Abraham and Lazarus, he could not because he would have to wait in the grave until the end of Christ's millennial rule on earth. This is symbolized in the following verse by the great gulf or chasm between those who are alive and those who are dead which cannot be crossed.

And besides all this, between us (Lazarus and Abraham) and you (the rich man) there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there (in the grave awaiting the second resurrection) pass to us (who will be resurrected when Christ returns; cf. 1Cor. 15:50-54; 1Thes. 4:13-17; Heb. 11:35) (Lk. 16:26; Ed. notes in parentheses).

In the final verses of this parable, it is clear that the rich man was aware that the dead could be resurrected because he made a request that Lazarus, in his resurrected state, visit his five brothers.

Then he (the rich man) said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him (Lazarus) to my father's house, for I have five brothers that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent' (Lk. 16:27-30; Ed. notes in parentheses).

As the rich man pictured the Pharisees in their attitudes, and as they rejected Christ, it is no coincidence that this parable mentions listening to Moses and the prophets, who revealed that Christ would eventually come to fulfill the law of sacrifice and the temple system (Mt. 5:17). This would include the reinstatement of the Melchizedek priesthood (Heb. 7:11-28). This was not a popular thought amongst the Pharisees because this truth would mean their positions were in jeopardy.

The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me (Moses) from your midst, from your brethren, Him you shall hear (Dt. 18:15; cf. Ac. 3:22; 7:37; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

For if you believed in Moses you would have believed me, for that one wrote concerning me (Jn. 5:46; RNT).

And a cloud came and overshadowed them (Christ's disciples); and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved son. Hear him!' (Mk. 9:7; cf. Lk. 9:35; Ed. note in parenthesis).

The final verse in this parable shows that the religious leadership during Christ's time had no

desire whatsoever to listen to God's message, even if someone were to be resurrected from the dead.

But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead (Lk. 16:31).

Christ's statement in the verse above was fulfilled after his death and resurrection because he appeared to a number of people, but not to any of the religious leaders.

The last Greek word that has been translated into "hell" is tartaroo. In Greek mythology this was the place where demigods were punished. The apostle Peter adapted the word to describe what appears to be a specific area in the spirit realm where the angels that sinned will remain until their judgment during the second resurrection. As Satan and the fallen host were cast out of the presence of Almighty God (Isa. 14:12-15; Eze. 28:16; Rev. 12:4), this tartaroo would refer to them being constrained from further access to God's throne in heaven.

For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell (5020 Gk. tartaroo, Tartarus) and delivered them into chains (SGD 4577; from the root word SGD 4951; to draw or drag someone, as before the judge, to prison, or to punishment) of darkness, to be reserved for judgment (2Pet. 2:4; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Although the fallen host cannot have access to God's throne in heaven, they are nonetheless able to affect activities on this earth.

And when he (Christ) had come to the other side, into the country of the Gadarenes, two demon possessed men met him as they were coming out of the tombs, so very fierce that some were not able to pass through that way. ²⁹ And behold, they shouted saying, 'What to us and with you, son of God? Have you come

before the appointed time to torment us?' (Mt. 8:28-29; RNT; Ed. note in parenthesis).



BUT HE SAID TO HIM, "IF THEY DO NOT HEAR MOSES AND THE PROPHETS, NEITHER WILL THEY BE PERSUADED THOUGH ONE RISE FROM THE DEAD.

Luke 16:31

It is clear that the demons in the verse above, knew that they were going to be judged in the future by Jesus Christ. One aspect of this judgment uses the phrase "lake of fire" (Rev. 19:20; 20:10), and it has been used to claim that this is the location where sinners go after death. If this were true, they could not remain there for eternity because sinners forfeit their lives and cannot live forever (Eze. 18:4, 20; Rom. 6:23). Their only hope of living again is in a resurrection from the dead. Therefore, if anyone is thrown into a lake of fire they would already be dead, and this would be the location for disposing their bodies (Eph. 2:1).

The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades (the grave) delivered up the dead who were in them (so the dead do not go to heaven). And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death (Rev. 20:13-14; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

These events picture everyone who was not in the first resurrection that occurred approximately one thousand years earlier, when Christ returned to earth. This language is very symbolic and describes the end of everything and everyone associated with sin. Because sin is eliminated, there is no longer any need for death (cf. Rom. 6:23) and the grave (Hades), so both are figuratively destroyed in the lake of fire.

Whenever Jesus Christ used the word “fire” or “burn” in the context of punishment, it was symbolically picturing complete removal of sin, once and for all. In no way, shape, or form did Christ infer that sinners would suffer forever in some fiery torment.

Leave both to grow together (tares and wheat) until the harvest (judgment); and in the time of the harvest, I will say to the harvesters, “First gather up the weeds and bind them together into bundles and burn them; but bring together the wheat into my storehouse” (Mt. 13:30; RNT; cf. Mt. 3:10, 12; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).



...BEWARE LEST YOU ALSO FALL
FROM YOUR OWN STEADFASTNESS,
BEING LED AWAY WITH THE ERROR
OF THE WICKED.

2 Peter 3:17b

So hell is not a literal location where sinners go after death to be tormented forever. Instead, it simply refers to the grave, or a place where dead bodies are disposed and, finally, it refers symbolically to a period of judgment during the second resurrection when sinful human beings, as well as the fallen host, will have their opportunity to repent of sin (cf. Isa. 1:18-20; 2Pet. 3:9). If anyone still chooses to live in rebellion to God’s law and commandments, they will be permanently removed from God’s presence, pictured symbolically as going into “the lake of fire.”

Everyone who believes they are conducting themselves in accordance with God’s will, needs to examine whether they are actually doing what is required to be in the first resurrection. According to Christ’s own words, many who believe they are doing righteous deeds worthy of everlasting life, may find themselves coming up

in the second resurrection because they did not have a heart to obey His law and commandments during their lifetime (Jer. 31:33; cf. Mt. 7:21-23). Christ mentioned there would be “weeping and gnashing of teeth” because many who thought they would be with him when he returns, will actually be in “outer darkness” until the second resurrection. This outer darkness is a symbolic phrase that pictures being cut off from God and remaining in the grave until the second resurrection (cf. Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30).

Then you (who believe you are already “saved”) will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank before you (Christ) and you taught in our main streets;’ 27 and he will speak, saying to you, ‘I do not know where you are from; depart from me all you workers of iniquity.’ 28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being cast outside (Lk. 13:26-28; RNT; Ed. notes in parentheses).

An individual can only be thrust out if they had the potential to be in the first resurrection. This is why the Apostle Paul cautioned all the brethren in the early church.

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith (cf. Jas. 2:14-26). Prove yourselves. Do you not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you are disqualified (2Cor. 13:5; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Because this is an important issue, the Apostle Peter became a second witness to this truth.

...beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked (2Pet. 3:17b).

As no one who teaches or practices lawlessness (1Jn. 3:4; Mt. 7:21-23) can inherit the kingdom of God, why do many insist that they do not have

to obey the law and commandments of Almighty God right now, while still expecting to be with Christ at his return?

The Son of Man (Christ) will send forth his angels, and they will gather up from his kingdom all that cause to stumble, and those who perform lawlessness⁴² and will cast them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.⁴³ Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear (Mt. 13:41-43; RNT; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

* Gehenna Fire - It is often explained that the place called Gehenna was used by those living in Jerusalem at the time of Christ as a refuse dump and a fire pit for burning dead animals and criminals. However, no evidence of such a use has ever been found. The reason it became a popular belief is due to the fact that this explanation was once given by a Jewish Rabbi and has simply been repeated over the centuries.

The Fires of Gehenna: Views of Scholars “The traditional explanation for this seems to go back to Rabbi David Kimhi’s commentary on Psalm²⁷ (around 1200 C.E.). He remarked the following concerning the valley beneath Jerusalem’s walls:

Gehenna is a repugnant place, into which filth and cadavers are thrown, and in which fires perpetually burn in order to consume the filth and bones; on which account, by analogy, the judgement of the wicked is called ‘Gehenna.’

“Kimhi’s otherwise plausible suggestion, however, finds no support in literary sources or archaeological data from the intertestamental or rabbinic periods. There is no evidence that the valley was, in fact, a garbage dump, and thus his explanation is insufficient” (“Gehenna: The

Topography of Hell,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 49/3 [1986], 188-89).



AS NO ONE WHO TEACHES OR PRACTICES LAWLESSNESS CAN INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD, WHY DO MANY INSIST THAT THEY DO NOT HAVE TO OBEY THE LAW AND COMMANDMENTS OF ALMIGHTY GOD RIGHT NOW, WHILE STILL EXPECTING TO BE WITH CHRIST AT HIS RETURN?

I John 3:4; Matthew 7:21-23

About the same time, G. R. Beasley-Murray made a similar observation:

“The notion, still referred to by some commentators, that the city’s rubbish was burned in this valley, has no further basis than a statement by the Jewish Scholar Kimchi made about A.D. 1200; it is not attested in any ancient source. The valley was the scene of human sacrifices, burned in the worship of Moloch (2 Kings 16:3 and 21:6), which accounts for the prophecy of Jeremiah that it would be called the Valley of Slaughter under judgment of God (Jer. 7:32-33). This combination of abominable fires and divine judgment led to the association of the valley with a place of perpetual judgment (see Isa. 66:24) and later with a place of judgment by fire without any special connection to Jerusalem (see, for example, 1 Enoch 27:1ff., 54:1ff., 63:3-4, and 90:26ff)” (Jesus and the Kingdom of God, 376-77).

W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, in their excellent commentary on Matthew, note the lack of ancient evidence but do not entirely reject the notion of a garbage dump.

“Why the place of torment came to have this name, the name of the valley south of Jerusalem, gēhinnōm (Josh 18.16 LXX:

Γαιεννα), now Wādier-rabābi, is uncertain. The standard view, namely, that the valley was where the city's garbage was incinerated and that the constantly rising smoke and smell of corruption conjured up the fiery torments of the damned, is without ancient support, although it could be correct." (Excerpt from: <http://blog.bibleplaces.com/2011/04/fires-of-gehenna-views-of-scholars.html>)

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