

“HELL”

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A PRESENT PLACE *or* A FUTURE EVENT/s ?

Remember: 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. If there is some part of man which continues in consciousness after physical death (an immortal soul), then God must have a place to imprison the rebellious. If the first death is a sleep, and the second death is annihilation, then there is no need for a place called “Hell.” Before reading through this study - please carefully read the study at this web site titled, “Where Are the Dead?” It is foundational.

SHEOL

Sheol (Strong's #07585): A Hebrew word

Meaning: “the grave,” - “the abode of the dead,” - “the pit.”

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

We will look at each Old Testament verse 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)

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). The Septuagint translators were Jewish rabbis, who had been heavily influenced by this Greek teaching and philosophy (300BC). 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.” 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 OT) Hell

HADES

Strong's #86 ᾍδης hades {hah'-dace}

Meaning: 1) name Hades or Pluto, the god of the lower regions

2) Orcus, the nether world, the realm of the dead

3) later use of this word: the grave, death, hell

Usage: AV - hell 10, grave 1; Total 11

LET'S LOOK AT EVERY PASSAGE where "Sheol" was translated as "Hades" in the Septuagint, (Greek 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 first 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."

(Hebrew OT) Sheol → (Greek OT) Hades → (English OT) Hell

Psalms 139:8 "If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!"

NOTE: God is with us even in death. He is able to reach into Sheol - to resurrect.

Proverbs 5:5 "Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol;"

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

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

Proverbs 9:18 "But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol."

Proverbs 15:11 "Sheol and Abaddon (death and destruction) lie open before the LORD; how much more the hearts of the children of man!"

Proverbs 27:20 "Sheol and Abaddon (death and destruction) are never satisfied, and never satisfied are the eyes of man."

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."

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."

NOTE: 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. There will be no more death, and the grave will not longer exist. It will be consumed.

COMPARE: II Peter 3:10 On the “day of the Lord” “the elements will melt with fervent heat.” There’s your fire and brimstone. “The earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”

Psalm 9:17 “The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.”

NOTE: Agrees with our teaching that the “wicked” will be raised and judged at the return of Christ, only to be “returned” to the grave. (Daniel 12:2-3)

Psalm 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.”

NOTE: The wicked who are raised when Jesus Christ returns in glory - raised to be judged, and then returned to death, will be aware that they have been cut off from 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, with their entire families “went down alive into the pit” which closed over them. The implication - that they did not long remain alive.

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

NOTE: Fits well with our teaching of “life vs death,” rather than unending torment.

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

NOTE: Again - does not contradict our teaching that the end, for 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.”

NOTE: 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 went down to Sheol I caused mourning; I closed the deep over it, and restrained its rivers, and many waters were stopped. I clothed Lebanon in gloom for it, and all the trees of the field fainted because of it. 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. They also went down to Sheol with it, to those who are slain by the sword; yes, those who were its arm, who lived under its shadow among the nations.’” *(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.’” **Ezekiel 32:27** “And they do not lie with the mighty, (not in 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.”

NOTE: *All of the above verses from Ezekiel 31 and 32 are from a prophecy concerning “Pharaoh and all his multitude.” “Her and the daughters of the famous nations” (v.18). And we would agree that Pharaoh, along with every other wicked leader - did die the first physical death, and will someday die (the second death).*

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.”

NOTE: *The LORD is speaking to Israelites - 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.*

Conclusion: Sheol is simply “the grave.”

GEHENNA

Remember: Your understanding of many texts will change, depending upon your understanding of the nature of man - inherently “immortal soul,” or inherently mortal, subject to death.

STRONGS: #1067 - geenna {gheh'-en-nah}

A Greek word meaning: place of the future punishment. Called "**Gehenna**" or "**Gehenna of fire.**" Translated “hell” or “hell fire” in the English King James New Testament.

Of Hebrew origin. Originally the Valley of Hinnom, (or Valley of the Sons of Hinnom) WSW of Jerusalem, where the filth of the city was cast out and burned (including dead animals, and even corpses of executed criminals). The word came to stand for the place of punishment.

NOTE: *Every passage is given, where Gehenna or Gehenna of fire occurs. As we read through these passages, please note that Gehenna IS a place of fire, but the texts do NOT say that the fire will burn forever.*

Valley of Hinnom (also called Tophet) → **Gehenna** → Hell

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 Matthew 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.)

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. 9 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.” (NKJ)

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

NOTE: “Hell fire” (Gehenna of fire) is equated with “the everlasting fire” or “eternal fire.” This wording implies the “fire” is not of this age, but of the age to come and is associated with the Divine, rather than natural forces. This fire has existed from eternity and will exist for eternity - but the sinner, cast into such fire, will be consumed. And this gives us a clue to the nature of “the lake of fire” which will finally consume the rebellious. That “fire” is God Himself. Many passages speak of God as “a consuming fire.” He obviously is eternal.

We have here a dual prophecy - something we will cover in detail - later in our studies.

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, 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 (II Chron. 33:6, II 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 for the place of punishment. 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 Son 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)

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: Both soul and body will be destroyed by the LORD, in (or at) Gehenna. Even Greek philosophy said the body was left behind and only the soul went to Gehenna. But if the soul is destroyed - meaning consumed completely, then how can it suffer for eternity??

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

Once again, this text has more than one level of meaning. If you believe, as we do, that God retains a memory of each person, an essence (unconscious of course) which He will use to resurrect each one (the wicked for judgment and the righteous to eternal life) then you would understand this verse to say that God will destroy His memory of you, along with your physical body, so that 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 a later study called “Final Judgment - Lake of Fire.”

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 will be killed by the plagues, and by His glory at the return of Christ. Then their bodies will be left for the vultures - like garbage. After the 1000 years - at the final judgment (Rev. 20:11-15) the wicked will all be dead (an unconscious state) when God destroys His memory of them in the final lake of fire. There is no third resurrection. It is HIS memory of them - the essence which He retains at death, which will be destroyed completely in the lake of fire. We cannot say the same for the evil angels. They may go alive into that fire which “was prepared for” them (Matt. 25:41). How long do they last? We cannot say. But even angels are not immortal. Only God has immortality (I Timothy 6:13-16).

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)? ”

NOTE: Not given is a mention of how long Gehenna will burn.

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: We are all very familiar with the destructive force of the “tongue.” Here an evil tongue is said to be energized by Gehenna itself. This is metaphor. Hell does not literally light the tongue on fire.

Tartarus

STRONGS #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 at the fifth trumpet - and will torment mankind, for a short period just prior to the Second Coming.

WE HAVE LOOKED AT EVERY VERSE WHERE A WORD WAS TRANSLATED AS “HELL.”
NOW LET’S CONTINUE THROUGH OTHER PASSAGES WHICH ARE 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 would agree with the image of Isa. 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.”

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.”

II 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.”

II 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.”

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.”

*NOTE: False prophets, hypocrites, and faithless disciples along with trees producing bad fruit, (Matt. 7:19, Lk 3:19,) branches bearing no fruit, chaff, and weeds - all are said to be thrown into the fire. But this fire takes place “at the end of the age” when the “earth with its works is burned up” (I Peter 3:10). **It is an event - not a place of continuing conscious torment!** The fire which burned up Sodom and Gomorrah is said to be “an example” (Jude 1:7, II 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 **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”

Psalm 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 meteor showers, by an asteroid hit, by weapons of mass destruction, by molten lava flooding the earth, or by the sun “heated seven times hotter.” In the study titled “Millennium,” we looked at passage after passage describing the complete and utter destruction of the earth. 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” are “cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.” (Remember it is a fire of their own making.) If the whole earth is on fire, and is burned up - then these human powers would 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 experience continuing conscious torment for eternity. It is the earth - “burned up.”

QUESTIONS:

JESUS CANNOT TAKE THE UNREPENTANT INTO HIS KINGDOM - SO WHAT WILL HE DO WITH THEM? THERE WILL 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 “who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death,” (*Not eternal conscious torment.*)

Psalm 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: Here David, under inspiration, tells us that the wicked will be consumed in fire - just like the fat of lambs, burned on the alter of sacrifice. They will consume away into smoke.

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. 12 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.”

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 Jesus Christ. (Deut. 18:15,18,19).

karath (Hebrew - “cut off”) → exolethreuo (Greek) → “Utterly destroyed” (English)
(#03772) (#1842)

“Karath” is translated “cut off” in the Old Testament of the KJV. The word signifies “death penalty.” Any person so “cut off” was considered accursed of God. Their name would be blotted from the genealogical records of Israel. Karath became exolethreuo in the Greek Septuagint, which became “utterly destroy” in the English KJV. We may understand that those who would not “hear” Christ will be “cut off” from the people of God. They will be destroyed.

**WE UNDERSTAND THAT “ETERNAL LIFE” MEANS LIFE WITHOUT END -
BUT 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.” (NKJ)

NOTE: Obviously - both righteous and wicked die. They die physically. They die the first type of death (sometimes more than once - like Lazarus). Jesus was speaking of the second death, in the “lake of fire” - something that will happen only to the unrepentant wicked. This death is permanent. It is death from

which there is no resurrection.

PERISH

Strong's #622 - ἀπολλύμι 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) **metaph. 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: AV - 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 tells us that the word translated "perish" is a **metaphor** for "eternal misery in hell." He gives this as a possible meaning because the word - as used by those who preached "eternal torment," came 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."*

CONDITIONALISTS vs TRADITIONALISTS

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 burning torment, to suffer for eternity.

Conditionalists believe that man is mortal. The first death is unconscious "sleep" - and only God's memory of the man exists after his death. It is this memory - this essence, which God uses to resurrect. Immortality, or immortal life is given to man on condition of salvation in Christ. Without this salvation, this life from God - man is doomed to death, the second death, without hope of resurrection.

BUT DIDN'T JESUS SAY THAT 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 [the self-righteous, hypocritical Jews] will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

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."

Matthew 22:13-14 [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.' 14 For many are called, but few are chosen."

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

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

Matthew 24:50-51 [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.”

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.

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, weeping signifies deep remorse or sorrow over loss. It is not used to describe the response to physical pain. While we would recognize clenched teeth as a response to physical pain, in Scripture it signifies anger. 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 - thinking of what they might have chosen. Others respond with body choking anger. They clench their teeth.

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

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.” (NKJ)

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

Acts 7:54 “When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth.” (NKJ)

NOTE: Stephen’s last words so angered the crowd that they stoned him to death.

BUT 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.” (NKJ)

THIS IS THE VERSE. The teaching of torment without end is based upon this one verse.

Those who “worship the beast and his image” - that’s right down at the end of this age. They have no rest day or night - from what? From the last plagues. The earth with its works will be “burned up” - and the wicked along with it. (II Peter 3:10) 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.” (Jeremiah 4:23) Those are the same Hebrew words used in Genesis 1:2 - before anything was created.

John was quoting from Isaiah 34:2-10 so I want to quote parts of that passage here. The land of Edom-said to be burned with unquenchable fire, is not still burning today. We do not today see smoke ascending.

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. 3 Also their slain shall be thrown out; Their stench shall rise from their corpses, And the mountains shall be melted with their blood. 4 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. 5 ‘For My sword shall be bathed in heaven; .. 8 For it is the day of the LORD'S vengeance, The year of recompense for the cause of Zion. 9 Its streams shall be turned into pitch, And its dust into brimstone; Its land shall become burning pitch. 10 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 Jesus returns in glory, there WILL be a judgment day. He will raise the dead - both righteous and wicked. (Daniel 12:1-3) The wicked will see the righteous, glorified and caught up to meet Him in the clouds. (1 Thess. 4:17), and they will weep and gnash their teeth. The wicked are left - where “vultures gather.” (Matt 24:28, Luke 17:37) They are tormented - yes - by the 7 last plagues, and by their own grief and hatred. We agree that there will be fire, but the fire will eventually go out.

The verses given above, which contain the phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth” all imply that the anger and the grief are in response to full realization - of rejection, and of certain death. The “sons of the Kingdom” are “cast out” and they see others accepted (like the despised Gentiles). These things will happen at “the end of the age” on “the day” when the Master returns.

When the earth with all its works is “burned up,” the bodies of the wicked will be consumed. This terrible destruction takes place “in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.” Yes - because they return to deliver the righteous (just before the asteroid impact, which begins the seven last plagues). As in the story of Noah, and the story of Lot - deliverance comes just in time. Lot saw the city of Sodom burning, and Noah heard the cries of the doomed as the rain began to fall.

But seriously - if someone came to warn you that an asteroid was about to impact earth, and to offer you a way out, wouldn't you thank them. Jesus is the way out.

UNQUENCHABLE FIRE

The fire which will “burn up” the earth with its works (II 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” could 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 conscious torment without end.

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

PERDITION - another word from the King James Version which has substituted for “Hell.”

Strong’s #684 ἀπ?λεια apoleia {ap-o'-li-a}

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

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

LET’S LOOK AT SOME PASSAGES WHICH INCLUDE THIS GREEK WORD.

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, perfume doesn’t go to Hell, as per traditionalist definition.

John 17:12 “While I was with them (His disciples) in the world, I kept them in Your name. 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.” [*Translated “son of destruction” in 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: Translated “go to ruin” in the CJB. If “perish” is Hell, in the traditionalist sense, then Peter is telling the man, “Go to Hell and take your money with you.” (I don’t think so)

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: Translated “to die” in KJV. The Romans could not deliver anyone to “Hell,” but they could execute. You see that the word sometimes translated perdition, was NOT a substitute for “Hell.”

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: In context, Paul is writing of the saved vs the lost - eternal life vs destruction (death).

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: ESV, NAU, CJB all say “destruction.” NIV says “be destroyed.”

Philippians 3:19 “... whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame-- who set their mind on earthly things.”

NOTE: Paul is speaking of “the enemies of the cross of Christ.”

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.” (NKJ)

NOTE: The NIV uses “the man doomed to destruction.” ESV and NAU use “the son of destruction.” CJB uses “the one destined for doom.” This verse is speaking of Antichrist. He is the “abomination that causes desolation.”

2 Peter 2:3 “By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.”

NOTE: KJV uses “damnation.”

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: NIV, ESV and NAU use “destruction.” CJB uses “the Day of Judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed.”

The heavens and the earth “are reserved for fire - UNTIL the day of judgment.” We believe 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 fire which will consume the earth. (II Peter 3:10)

Revelation 17:8 “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition.” *NOTE: NIV, ESV, NAU and CJB 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.” (NKJ)

NOTE: Translated as “destruction” in NIV and ESV, NAU, and CJB.

NOTE: See also Hebrews 10:39, 1 Tim. 6:9, 2 Pet. 2:1, 2 Pet. 2:2, 2 Pet. 3:16,

CONCLUSION:

We CANNOT determine, from any of these Scripture verses, that the word “perdition” points to eternal

conscious torment in a place called “Hell.” It simply means “destruction.” In future studies we will answer questions regarding the Gog-Magog battle, and the Lake of Fire after the great judgment of Revelation 20. These are separate events.

DEATH vs ETERNAL LIFE

Genesis 2:17 “... but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

NOTE: The Lord was not saying that Adam and Eve would die on that very day, but that they would begin to die. They would begin a process, that would end in death. A more correct rendering of the Hebrew would be “dying you 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;”

James 1:14-15 “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

John 3:15-16 “... that whoever believes in Him should **not perish but have eternal life**. 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**.”

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 torment.

Romans 8:13 “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

Romans 5:21 “...so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

1 John 5:11-12 “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

1 John 3:15 “ ... no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”

James 4:12 “There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.”

NOTE: Saved vs destroyed - not saved vs eternally tormented.

Galatians 6:8 “For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”

TEN REASONS TO REJECT ETERNAL TORMENT

1. We reject the teaching of eternal torment because it claims that the lost will continue living forever which is contrary to Scripture’s plainest testimony: The soul who sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18:20).
2. We reject the teaching of eternal torment because it robs us of our God of love and substitutes a being whose wrath is never appeased. “His mercy endures forever” (Psalm 107:1).
3. We reject the teaching of eternal torment because it cannot be reconciled with the character of Christ presented in the Scriptures.
4. The redeemed, who will have a part in the final judgment, could never condemn fellow human beings, or their loved ones, to unending torture. Their sense of justice could never permit such an atrocity. “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? (I Corinthians 6:2).
5. Eternal torment imposes a punishment all out of proportion to the crimes committed. The Father has committed all judgment is to the Son (Jn 5:22). “I judge, and my judgment is just” (Jn 5:30).
6. Eternal torment for the lost would cast a shadow forever over the happiness of the redeemed. “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Revelation. 7:17).
7. We reject the teaching of eternal torment because it demands that God preserve a place of sin and sorrow forever, where the Devil would take pleasure from tormenting objects of God’s love. We are promised that Satan will be destroyed. “Through death He (Christ) might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14).
8. Eternal torment would immortalize sin, 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 by 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 lives of 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 here on earth. It fueled the teaching of atheism. It has driven many to depression, or insanity, with constant fear. 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 eternal damnation in the flames of hell.

In Scripture -
The wicked will perish.

God alone possesses immortality.

Immortality is always presented as God's gift to the redeemed.

The immortal are always portrayed as whole embodied persons - never disembodied spirits.

May we be drawn closer to our Savior as we understand more clearly His character of love. Shalom