

THE BIBLICAL MEANING OF THE TERM GEHENNA

by

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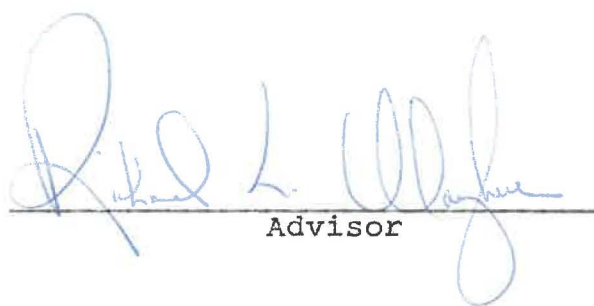
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The reality of hell has been increasingly denied in recent centuries. Even those who confess to believe in such a place often misunderstand its nature and characteristics. This is due to a lack of understanding the Biblical data pertaining to this important subject. The term $\gamma\epsilon\epsilon\nu\nu\alpha$, more than any other single New Testament term, corresponds to the English word hell. Therefore, a study of this term, and those terms often associated with it, will aid a student in gaining a truly Biblical perspective of what hell really is.

$\gamma\epsilon\epsilon\nu\nu\alpha$ is the Greek transliteration of the Aramaic and Hebrew $\text{בְּאֵי תַּלְמֵי הַיְּמִינִים}$, Valley of Hinnom. The Old Testament continually characterizes this valley outside of Jerusalem as the location of certain idolatrous practices including the offering of children as burnt offerings to Molech. In response to this Josiah defiled $\text{בְּאֵי תַּלְמֵי הַיְּמִינִים}$ and God later declared it the sight of future calamity upon faithless Israel.

In light of the New Testament Scriptures, $\gamma\epsilon\epsilon\nu\nu\alpha$ is the actual place of eternal conscious torment for the ungodly following their temporary confinement in Sheol-Hades. This is the conclusion which has been based on an examination of all New Testament references to $\gamma\epsilon\epsilon\nu\nu\alpha$ along with a study of related terms such as everlasting destruction, everlasting punishment, lake of fire, etc.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent centuries "the denial of hell has gone hand in hand with the denial of the infallibility of the Scriptures."¹ Although hell may not be a particularly interesting subject to many today, if God's Word is true, a Biblical understanding of hell is extremely relevant. Who will go there? How long will it last? What will it be like? Upon what basis will people be sent there? These are all crucial questions and will be dealt with in this present study γέεννα , Gehenna. More than any other single term used in Scripture, Gehenna answers these questions.

When Jesus Christ used this word he was either incorrect in his understanding of eternal punishment or he was trying to deceive people or he was correct and trying to warn them. In light of God's Word, Gehenna is the actual place of eternal conscious torment for the ungodly following their temporary confinement in Sheol-Hades. Before stating the actual characteristics of Gehenna, its etymology, use and related terms will be examined.

¹Harry Buis, The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1957), p. 127.

CHAPTER I

ETYMOLOGY

חִנּוֹם

The Hebrew term חִנּוֹם, meaning Valley (אֵל) of Hinnom (חִנּוֹם), is the proper name for the ravine on the southwest side of Jerusalem presently known as Wady-er-Rababi.¹ The phrase חִנּוֹם-בֶּן-חִנּוֹם, Valley of the son of Hinnom, also appears in the Old Testament to identify this ravine. The origin of the word חִנּוֹם remains unsure; however, two suggestions have been offered. Drs. Brown, Driver and Briggs call "dubious" and "doubtful" the suggested meaning of "wailing," noting it is improbable that חִנּוֹם came from the Arabic word for the cries of children (فَيْ), as some have claimed.² A second suggestion is that the valley was named after a man, a former landowner. Although this is possible, there is no documentation to be used as conclusive evidence.³

¹Joachim Jeremias, "χέννα," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. I, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 657.

²Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 244.

³C. F. Keil, and F. Delizsch, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I and II Samuel, Vol. II, trans. by James Martin Commentary on the Old Testament, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), p. 154.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that this word's origin remains uncertain it will become evident that this word's etymology has no perceivable bearing on its Biblical usage.

In the past, נַחַל רַבִּי has been identified with the Tyropeon Valley, south of Jerusalem, and the Kidron Valley, west of the city. However, "the majority of experts in the topography of Jerusalem identify the lower part of the W. er-Rababi with the Biblical Valley of Hinnom or Gehenna, . . ."¹ This, in part, is due to the root meaning of נָחַל, "hollow, glen, ravine."² George Smith lists the following reasons for his identification of Wady-er-Rababi and the Valley of Hinnom: (1) the Valley of Hinnom "is never described in the Old Testament as a nahal (נַחַל), a valley with a winter-brook, but always as a gai (גַּי), a valley without such a brook"; (2) "the Kidron Valley is never called Gai but Nahal"; (3) "the gate which Nehemiah calls the Gate of the Gai lay not on the east of the City over Kidron, but on the west . . ."; (4) the Tyropeon Valley could not be identified with the Biblical Valley of Hinnom because Tyropeon was within the city walls of Jerusalem and human sacrifices never took place within the walls of a city (Jer. 19:2-6).³ A study of how נַחַל רַבִּי is used in the Old Testament is presented in chapter two.

¹George Adam Smith, Jerusalem, Vol. I, (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc. 1972), p. 170.

²Ibid., p. 171.

³Ibid., pp. 171,175.

Γ'ΕΕΝΝΑ

Γ'ΕΕΝΝΑ is the Greek transliteration of the Aramaic and Hebrew עֲנַנִּיָּא.¹ This is the word's only real etymology. The concepts which γ'ΕΕΝΝΑ related during New Testament times were those ideas which עֲנַנִּיָּא began to express in the Old Testament and γ'ΕΕΝΝΑ conveyed in the inter-testamental period.² This term's New Testament use is examined in the next chapter.

¹Jeremias, "γ'ΕΕΝΝΑ," p. 657; William Arndt and F. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, (hereinafter referred to as Lexicon), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 152.

²This study's Appendix discusses the inter-testamental doctrine of eternal punishment. Γ'ΕΕΝΝΑ does not appear in the Septuagint, Philo or Josephus. Jeremias, "γ'ΕΕΝΝΑ," p. 658.

CHAPTER II

THE BIBLICAL USE OF GEHENNA

Principles of Interpretation

From the outset of this study it is imperative to have a proper understanding of how Biblical terms are used. This fact necessitates the setting forth of appropriate hermeneutical principles. To begin with, the literal method of interpretation has been accepted by this writer due to its many significant advantages over all other systems of interpretation.¹ This system is based on the grammatical-historical-contextual-cultural method of interpretation; thus, forcing one to deal with what the text really says. However, to hold to this system does not mean one denies figures of speech within the Scripture. "To interpret 'literally' means to explain the original sense of the speaker or writer according to the normal, customary, and proper usages of words and language."² For example, Jesus called himself a

¹Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), pp. 62,63.; J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), pp. 11,12.

²Paul Lee Tan, The Interpretation of Prophecy, (Winona Lake, Indiana: BMH Books, 1974), p. 29.

"door" (Jn. 10:7,9), which is an acceptable figure of speech designating our Lord as the one through whom men gain access to the sheepfold. Notice this is not alien to the concept of a door as a "means of access, admittance, participation, or enjoyment."¹ Thus, true Biblical hermeneutics demand that "the literal meaning . . . must become the base for the figurative meanings."² Further, "to say that certain language is figurative does not mean that the event is unreal."³ This is very important. Referring back to Jesus' declaration that he is a door does not relinquish the concept of him as a means of access but all the more strengthens it. Figurative language is used to make a literal concept more graphic and more understandable. Thus, it is recognized that "figures of speech are used as a means of revealing literal truth."⁴

This becomes important in the examination of Gehenna, for it too is used as a figure of speech intended to convey a literal idea. To understand Christ to be a rectangular piece of wood or metal on hinges is to misunderstand the

¹Philip Babcock Grove, ed., Webster's Third New International Dictionary of The English Language Unabridged, (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. and C. Merriam Company, 1966), p. 674.

²A. Berkeley Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), p. 304.; cf. Tan, The Interpretation of Prophecy, p. 137.

³Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible, p. 307.

⁴Pentecost, Things To Come, p. 12.

figure of the "door." Likewise, to interpret Gehenna as Christ used it, as the valley outside of Jerusalem, is to misunderstand that figure. "God disclosed his truths in language taken from the life experiences of the Hebrews and early Christians to describe for them that which far transcended all that they ever knew."¹ Therefore, it becomes evident that "figurative language is indispensable in conveying to us realities beyond empirical experience."² Fortunately for the Biblical interpreter there is help in understanding figures, Tan states:

. . . the key to determining the figurative from the non-figurative lies in ascertaining whether a given word or act is at variance with the essential nature of the subject being discussed. If a word or act, taken in the literal sense, fails to harmonize with either the flow of the thought of the text or context or with the analogy of the Scripture, it is to be understood as figurative. Otherwise it is non-figurative.³

In the present study of Gehenna it will be shown that the Old Testament uses גֵּהֶנְנָא in the strict literal sense of the valley southwest of Jerusalem, but due to the events performed there and Jeremiah's prophecy regarding it, Gehenna came to have a theological sense as well as a literal geographical sense. This theological use of the term is seen in inter-testamental and New Testament literature and is naturally figurative.

¹Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible, pp. 307,308.

²Ibid., p. 321.

³Tan, The Interpretation of Prophecy, p. 138.

Old Testament Use of בִּנְיָן

The following is a brief chronological examination of all occurrences of בִּנְיָן in the Old Testament.

Joshua 15:8; 18:16

Then the border (of the lot of the sons of Judah) went up the valley of Ben-hinnom to the slope of the Jebusite on the south (that is, Jerusalem); and the border went up to the top of the mountain which is before the valley of Hinnom to the west, which is at the end of the valley Rephaim toward the north.¹

And the border (of the lot of the tribe of Benjamin) which is in the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is in the vale of Rephaim northward; and it went down to the valley of Hinnom, to the slope of the Jebusite southward, and went down to En-rogel.

When Joshua divided the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel, the Valley of Hinnom became the boundary between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. This is the first mention of בִּנְיָן in the Scriptures.

2 Chronicles 28:3

Moreover, he (Ahaz) burned incense in the valley of Ben-Hinnom, and burned his sons in fire, according to the abomination of the nations whom the Lord had driven out before the sons of Israel.

2 Kings 16:3,4 provides further insight into these deeds of Ahaz.

But he (Ahaz) walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and even made his son pass through the fire, according

¹New American Standard Bible, (Glendale, California: Gospel Light Publications, 1973). All Scripture quotations herein will be from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise designated.

to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had driven out from before the sons of Israel. And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.

With these references, Ahaz (c. 735-715 B.C.) becomes the first king in Judah known to offer human sacrifices. These idolatrous practices of Ahaz were performed in connection with the worship of Molech, a false Canaanitish idol (cf. 2 Ki. 23:10). Describing the nature of Molech worship, Nicol first notes the lack of details given in the Scriptures but then continues on to provide this commonly proclaimed description of this pagan religion:

The victims offered to the divinity were not burned alive, but were killed as sacrifices, and then presented as burnt offerings. "To pass through the fire" has been taken to mean a lustration or purification of the child by fire, not involving death. But the prophets clearly speak of slaughter and sacrifice, and of high places built to burn the children in the fire as burnt offerings (Jeremiah 10:5; Ezekiel 16:20,21).¹

Thus, the Valley of Hinnom becomes intimately associated with fire, death and the failure to worship and obey Jehovah.

2 Chronicles 33:6

And he (Manasseh) made his sons pass through the fire in the valley of Ben-hinnom; and he practiced witchcraft, used divination, practiced sorcery, and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him to anger.

¹T. Nicol, "Molech, Moloch," International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Vol. III, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 2075; cf. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Pentateuch, Vol. I, trans. by James Martin Commentary on the Old Testament, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), p. 417.; Theodore Laetsch, Jeremiah, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1952), p. 104.

Rejecting the religion of his father Hezekiah, Manasseh (c. 697-642) reverted back to the abominable practices of the heathen. Following Ahaz's example, he too made תֹּפֶת a place for those who rebell against God and intimately associated this location with fire and human suffering.

2 Kings 23:10

He (Josiah) also defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire for Molech.

In connection with his reforms, Josiah (c. 640-609) attempted to abolish everything associated with the false religious practices of former kings. In so doing he defiled, i.e. made unclean and unfit for use, Topheth in תֹּפֶת.¹ Topheth, as will be seen in the next chapter, was the location in תֹּפֶת where Molech was worshipped and sacrifices made. "Molech was an old Canaanitish idol, called by the Phoenicians and Carthaginians Melkarth, Baal-melech, Malcom, and other such names, and related to Baal, . . . by the sacrifice of children" (cf. Jer. 32:35).² According to 1 Kings 11:5,7, Molech (Milcom) was the national diety of the Ammonities and inspite of stern prohibitions in the Levitical

¹Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 379.

²C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Pentateuch, Vol. I, p. 416.

ordinances against Molech worship (Lev. 18:21; 20:25), this false religion was practiced in Israel.¹ Even Solomon, under the influence of his idolatrous wives, became involved with Molech worship (1 Ki. 11:5-9). Unfortunately, Josiah's reformation failed to totally eliminate this pagan worship from Israel for it later revived and was denounced by the prophets (Jer. 32:35, also cf. Ezek. 16:20-22; 20:26,31; - 23:37).²

This verse has the added importance of directly associating the Valley of Hinnom, Topheth, Molech worship and passing through the fire, all of which were intimately related to each other in the Jewish mind. When added together they spelled out sin and promised divine judgment.

Jeremiah 7:31,32

And they (the sons of Judah) have built the high places of Topheth, 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, and it did not come into My mind. Therefore, behold, days are coming, declare the Lord, when it will no more be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of the Slaughter; for they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place.

Following the denunciation of Israel's sin, Jeremiah declares תֹּפֶת will have its name changed to valley of Slaughter (תֹּפֶת שְׁחָטָה) and become the location for those

¹Nichol, "Molech, Moloch," p. 2074.

²Laetsch, Jeremiah, p. 172.

who were slain during God's judgment on Jerusalem (cf. Jer. 19:2-6).

Jeremiah 19:2-6; 32:35

Then go out to the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is by the entrance of the potsherd gate; and proclaim there the words that I shall tell you, and say, 'Hear the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, "Behold I am about to bring a calamity upon this place, at which the ears of everyone that hears of it will tingle. Because they have forgotten Me and have made this an alien place and have burned sacrifices in it to other gods that neither they nor their forefathers nor the kings of Judah had ever known, and because they have filled this place with blood of the innocent and have built high places to Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter My mind; therefore, behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather the valley of Slaughter.

And they built the high places of Baal that are in the valley of Ben-hinnom to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I had not commanded them nor had it entered My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

In a bold prophecy of judgment, Jeremiah records God's words to him concerning the sins that Israel committed in בֶּן־הִנּוֹם. He then, once again, declares that the name of the valley shall be changed to the valley of Slaughter. It seems quite evident from this passage that (1) the valley of Ben-hinnom had been the location of certain idolatrous practices including the sacrifice of sons as burnt offerings; (2) these idolatrous practices were not required or performed in association with the worship of Jehovah; and (3) God

plainly declared he would bring calamity to this valley. This reference to calamity and slaughter are in perfect harmony with Jeremiah's prophecies concerning the capture of Jerusalem by Babylon.¹ Furthermore, it turns out to be almost a prefigure of God's terrible judgment upon the wicked in Gehenna according to Christ's use of the term.

In 2 Kings 23:10, King Josiah was named as having defiled Topheth in $\square \square \square \lambda$. Many commentators understand this to refer to Josiah's making the valley, or part of it, into a city garbage dump which was presumably kept constantly burning with fire, "with the result that $\gamma \epsilon \epsilon \nu \nu \alpha$ ($\square \square \square \lambda$) was the symbolical name for the everlasting place of punishment of the lost."² Although there are non-Biblical references to this there is no solid Scriptural support for it. However, Jeremiah 19:2 does name the Potsherd Gate as opening into the valley. Former suggestions identifying this with the "East or Sun Gate" seem to have been dropped in favor of recognizing this gate as the "Potter's or Potsherd Gate."³ Noting that the Targum identifies it with the (postexilic)

¹Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, Commentary on the Whole Bible, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d., p. 606.

²Norval Geldenhuys, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, ed. by F. F. Bruce, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), p. 351.

³Laetsch, Jeremiah, pp. 172,173; cf. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, pp. 357,360.

Dung Gate at the southwest of the city, Laetsch states this gate "may have been a small gate, otherwise unknown, through which the rubbish of the city was conveyed to the dumping ground in the Valley of Hinnom."¹ J. Barton Payne concurs stating it was "a city gate on the south side of preexilic Jerusalem. Mentioned only in Jeremiah 19:2, it opened onto the Hinnom Valley and is probably the same as the (post-exilic) Dung Gate."² Hence, Jeremiah 19:2 may be the Scriptural support some were looking for to give credence to the claim that Josiah's defiling the valley actually included making it into a refuse dump.

Nehemiah 11:30

(Some of the sons of Judah lived in) Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages, Lachish and its fields, Azekah and its towns. So they encamped from Beersheba as far as the valley of Hinnom.

Following the return of the captives from the Babylonian exile, Nehemiah mentions צִיְחֵן as the northern limit of the area occupied by the tribe of Judah.

Summary

The eleven appearances of צִיְחֵן in the Old Testament can be divided into two classifications, topographical and

¹Laetsch, Jeremiah, p. 173.

²J. Barton Payne, "Potsherd Gate," Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. IV, edited by Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), p. 824.

religious. Topographically, it is mentioned three times as a boundry (Josh. 15:8; 18:6; Neh. 11:30). Religiously, it is mentioned as the location of certain idolatrous practices (2 Chr. 28:3; 33:6 Jer. 32:35) which led Josiah to defile it (2 Ki. 23:10) and God to declare it the sight of future calamity upon faithless Israel (Jer. 7:31,32; 19:2-6).

New Testament Use of Γέεννα

Without a doubt an individual's convictions concerning the reality of eternal punishment and the New Testament use of Gehenna will depend upon that individual's convictions regarding the inspiration of Scripture and the person of Jesus Christ. If Christ is divine and if the Scriptures are inspired and inerrant, then Christ's teaching on eternal punishment is divine truth.¹

Gehenna appears twelve times in the New Testament; eleven times it is used by Christ himself, once by James. All twelve of these occurances are examined below; however, before they are it should be remembered that Christ neither invented this term nor did he inherit it directly out of its Old Testament context.

It is an inescapable fact that Jesus, without going to the grotesque extremes to which some of the apocalyptic writers went, places the stamp of his approval upon the general Gehenna concept which had developed during the inter-testamental period. He does not oppose the idea of punishment beyond death,

¹This is so affirmed by this writer in addition to the consecutive logical inference that all Scripture is true in its teaching on eternal punishment.

he is not silent on the subject; rather again and again he uses the popular language describing Gehenna to warn men concerning the terrible consequences of sin!¹

Matthew 5:22

But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be guilty (enough to go) into the hell (ΓΕΕΝΝΑ) of fire.

Admittedly, at first glance this is not an easy verse to comprehend, but Lenski, agreeing with Zahn, proposes the most acceptable solution.

Jesus is satirizing the casuistic method of the scribes and Pharisees. . . . The purpose of this satire is to demolish the entire Jewish treatment of this commandment (cf. 5:21) as a mere civil law. Civil courts cannot possibly consider the infractions that start in the heart and break out in ugly names. . . . By saying that anger is equal to murder and worthy of the death penalty and an angry epithet likewise Jesus shows how God judges these sins; and when for a similar epithet he decrees hell-fire, he shows that in the judgment of God hell is the penalty for all these sins, beginning with anger and on through to murder.²

Therefore, with respect to Gehenna Jesus is (a) affirming it as a place of punishment;³ (b) describing it

¹Buis, The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment, p. 42; cf. Appendix.

²R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), pp. 218, 219.

³Alfred Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary On The Gospel According To Saint Matthew, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 79 (f.n. 3).

as characterized by fire (genitive of description);¹ and (c) associating guilt of wrong doing and attitude with it.² Certainly Christ's use of this term surpasses the thought of Gehenna as simply a ravine near Jerusalem.

Matthew 5:29,30; 18:9; Mark 9:43,45,47

Matthew 18:9 and Mark 9:43,45,47 represent parallel passages to Matthew 5:29,30 and teach the cutting off of eyes, hands or feet if they cause one to stumble. Matthew 18:9 declares:

And if your eye causes you to stumble pluck it out, and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into the hell (γέεννα) of fire.

An examination of these verses and their contexts will quickly reveal the seriousness with which Christ views sin. In making these statements, Christ wanted his listeners to understand that "the real source of sin lies not in the physical organ but in the heart."³ No one's eye, hand or foot has ever caused them to sin; it has been their own obedience to their sinful nature. Christ here declares that to live according to your sinful nature and its desires

¹Archibald Thomas Robertson, Word Pictures In The New Testament, Vol. I, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930). p. 44.

²Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon, p. 267.

³Homer A. Kent Jr., "Matthew," The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, ed. by Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), p. 938.

is to be deserving of hell (γέενναν).

"The positive 'to enter into life' (Mt. 18:9; Mk. 9:43,45) explains the previous negative 'not to be thrown into Gehenna'" (Mt. 5:29,30).¹ In these verses 'life' (ζωή) is the eternal life that Jesus often talked about (e.g. Jn. 3:16), and is contrasted with being cast into Gehenna. Mark 9:47 states "it is better to enter into the Kingdom of God" rather than "enter into life." Actually, in essence, there is not much difference in these statements for only those who possess eternal life, i.e. are born again, will enter into the Kingdom of God (cf. Jn. 3:2-7).

Matthew 18:8 parallels these other Scriptures and warns of being "cast into eternal fire" instead of "hell fire or the fire of hell" (τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός). In the mind of Christ they are synonymous; in fact, he states in Mark 9:43, cf. verse 48, that this fire is unquenchable.² This, then, is like no fire that is known today, an eternal unquenchable fire.

Interestingly, with reference to entering Gehenna, both Matthew and Mark record two different verbs, βάλλω

¹Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel, p. 690.

²Lenski suggests, "Mark's second phrase ('into the fire, the unquenchable') defines the first ('into the Gehenna') for his non-Jewish readers, telling them that Gehenna means the unquenchable fire, i.e. hell." R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 225. This may be correct or these may be the actual words of Christ. In either case they are divinely inspired and true (cf. Mk. 9:48; Mt. 18:8).

(Mt. 5:29; 18:8,9; Mk. 9:45,47) and ἀπερχομαι (Mt. 5:30; 9:43). While many commentators ignore this change some do not. Hiebert, for example, simply says βάλλω (cast, throw, place) is a stronger term and "indicates a forced entry into Gehenna."¹ Lenski, however, sees more in this change of verbs, stating that ἐπέλθειν (to go away, depart) "pictures the sinner's own action; he literally by his own doings goes to hell. But . . . βληθῆναι, . . . pictures the divine judgment on the sinner," when at Christ's command he is consigned to Gehenna.² The essence of what Lenski states is true but to insist upon it on the basis of this change of verbs is questionable. There is no problem, grammatically or Scripturally, with accepting Hiebert's statement. Once again it should be re-emphasized that Christ's use of Gehenna proves that it means more than a mere valley. The suffering incurred by tearing out your own eye, foot and hand is preferred to entering into Gehenna.

Matthew 10:28

And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (γέεννῃ).

¹D. Edmond Hiebert, Mark, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 233.

²Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel, pp. 252,253.

The meaning of this verse in its context is brought to light by Allen's paraphrase when he states: "In your work of making My teaching public you will meet with persecution. Fear not physical death. But fear the wrath of God . . . for He can destroy soul and body together in Gehenna."¹ Here Christ implies greater loss in the ruin of soul and body in Gehenna than physical death.

The reference to destroying body and soul has been misunderstood by some to mean annihilation of the person, extinction of being. This, however, cannot be the proper understanding. The term used here for destroy (ἀπόλλυμι) is also used in Luke 15:24 in reference to the lost (ἀπολωλὼς) son who was found and in Matthew 26:8 for the perfume that was poured on Christ which Judas called a waste (ἀπώλεια). This is not an extinction of existence. Thayer lists "destroy, perish, abolish, ruin, kill, give over to eternal misery, to be lost" as meanings for this word.² It has already been seen that Christ taught that Gehenna was eternal. An eternal hell (Gehenna) would be senseless if those cast into it were annihilated soon afterwards. A simple reading of this verse conveys its correct

¹Willoughby C. Allen, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew, in the International Critical Commentary, ed. by Alfred Plummer, et al. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), p. 109.

²Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, (New York: American Book Company, 1889), p. 64.

meaning. Whatever happens to the soul in Gehenna also happens to the body; they are both ruined, i.e. made unfit for that which they were originally designed.

In light of Matthew 5:29 and other Scripture in which Christ referred to one's body going into Gehenna, ἐν γέεννῃ should be understood as a locative of place indicating the spatial limits into which the body is cast. Therefore, Gehenna is not solely "spiritual" and non-corporal, it confines both body and soul. The only one who is able to send an individual to such a destiny is the triune God (cf. Lk. 12:5).

Matthew 23:15

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel on the sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell (γέεννης) as yourselves.

Within a series of seven woes upon the scribes and Pharisees Jesus comes to this one. The intent of the verse is to condemn the Pharisees not for making Jewish proselytes but proselytes of their own partisan perversion within Judaism.¹ Both Allen and Edersheim mention the Rabbinical use of "children of Gehenna" in association with persons believed to be destined there, i.e. Gentiles and especially

¹Robertson, Word Pictures In The New Testament, Vol. I, pp. 182,183.

sinful Jews.¹ Jesus, knowing this, uses this genitive of quality to describe the character and actions of these Pharisees.² Thus, Gehenna can be used to describe a person's character and behavior as "hellish."

Matthew 23:33

You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell (γεέννης)?

Again Jesus denounced the Pharisees and scribes. Having cited their guilt, Jesus asked them how they expected to escape the just punishment they deserved. "The question has no answer; it is implied that they cannot escape this judgment."³ Τῆς κρίσεως τῆς γεέννης is "the judgment condemning one to Gehenna."⁴ Christ was serious, and the charges laid to the scribes and Pharisees were serious and so was their judgment. Jesus was not merely going along with what some have called the contemporary "false" concept that Gehenna was the place of eternal punishment for the ungodly. To do this would mean either

¹Allen, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew, p. 49; Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, (n.p.: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.), pp. 253, 533.

²Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel, p. 905.

³Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary On The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, p. 321.

⁴Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 362.

he was deceived or took part in the deception.¹ Jesus constantly affirmed Gehenna was a literal place of eternal punishment and warned against it.

Luke 12:5

But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell (γέενναν); yes, I tell you, fear Him.

This verse is similar to Matthew 10:28 except for the use of ἐξουσίαν , "power of authority and right," "power of judicial decision,"² instead of δυνάμενον which usually carries more of an idea of capability and power. Admittedly, the words are close in meaning but the difference seems to suggest that not only does God have the necessary power and capability to cast someone into Gehenna (Mt. 10:28) but He, and He alone has the authority to do so (Lk. 12:5). These verses also point to the impossibility of understanding Christ's use of Gehenna as an ordinary ravine outside of Jerusalem.

James 3:16

And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course

¹Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary On The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, p. 250.

²Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 225.

of our life, and is set on fire by hell (γέεννης).

James 3:6 is not only the last Biblical mention of Gehenna but it is also the only mention of the word by anyone in the New Testament other than Christ himself. In this verse James provided a description of the uncontrolled wicked tongue.¹ He viewed the tongue as a defiling member of the whole body. Christ, himself, carried the wickedness of the tongue back one further step to the heart, "For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart," Matthew 12:34 (cf. Mt. 15:19). Once again Gehenna is associated with the wickedness of the heart, as it is manifested by the tongue, and with fire. See notes on Matthew 18:9. However, James uses the word "fire" as a figure of that which brings about the ruin of an individual due to his uncontrolled tongue. To this he added the concept of defilement, cf. Matthew 15:19.² It appears that James was using Gehenna in a similar way as Christ did in Matthew 23:15, to describe the character and behavior of those who do not control their wickedness.

¹R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of James, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 605.

²Lenski notes here "the fires of Gehenna are full of defilement," and associates these three ideas of fire, defilement, and Gehenna. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of James, p. 606.

Summary

The general conclusions which could be drawn from the preceding will appear in chapter four, after additional insight is gained in the next chapter. Nevertheless, the general usage of Gehenna should not be overlooked now. As previously mentioned, Christ used Gehenna eleven of the twelve times it occurs in the New Testament. Christ, then, must not be viewed as denying or ignoring the fact of future punishment for the ungodly for he himself warns of it in the most vivid and urgent terms. Of the eleven times Gehenna occurs in the Gospels, it occurs in Matthew seven times. This is not surprising for that Gospel was written especially to Jews who had a knowledge of the contemporary meaning of Gehenna as a place of eternal torment. Mark used Gehenna in only one passage and there its meaning is very plain by the context. James, the Lord's brother, was the only New Testament writer to use the term, yet he too writes to Jews who were likely to be familiar with the term. Quite noticeably, neither Paul nor John mentioned Gehenna but this does not prove their disbelief in a future punishment for as the following chapter will show, they used other terms to relate this truth; terms which were more helpful to convey this truth to their readers.

CHAPTER III

BIBLICAL TERMS OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH GEHENNA

The following terms are often used in direct relation with Gehenna and eternal punishment; some are used as synonyms. The purpose of this chapter is to examine why and how these terms are related to Gehenna.

Abyss

Originally, *ἄβυσσος* was an adjective meaning bottomless or unfathomable and was used in reference to the depth of the oceans, uncountable riches, etc., then it began to be used as a noun signifying a deep place.¹ Its Scriptural use, according to Jeremias, is that of a "description of the underworld as a. the 'place of imprisonment for disobedient spirits' (Lk. 8:31; Rev. 9:1,2,11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1,3) and b. the 'realm of the dead' (Rom. 10:7)."² Arndt and Gingrich described it as "the abode of the dead Rom. 10:7; and of demons Lk. 8:31; dungeon where the devil is

¹Walter L. Liefeld, "Abyss," Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. I, ed. by Merrill C. Tenny (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), pp. 30,31.

²Joachim Jeremias, "*ἄβυσσος*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. I, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 9.

kept Rev. 20:3; abode of the Antichrist 11:7; 17:8, . . ."¹
 Its Scriptural use has thus led many authors to view the
 Abyss (*ἄβυσσος*) and Hades as synonymous.² Some authors,
 however, while recognizing a definite connection between
 the two terms, view Hades as being limited to confining
 only disembodied human spirits and being a compartment of
 the larger Abyss which is more comprehensive and includes
 demons.³ Very few would equate the Abyss with Gehenna.⁴
 Lewis states, "There is some support in identifying *ἄβυσσος*
 and *γέεννα*, but all of it is extra-Biblical. The apocryphal
 writers alone make this equation."⁵

An examination of its New Testament occurrences
 reveals the Abyss to be the place where demons are confined

¹Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon, p. 2.

²Herman A. Hoyt, The End Times, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), p. 37; Alfred Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke, in the International Critical Commentary, 5th ed., edited by Alfred Plummer, et al. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1928), p. 231; Archibald Thomas Robertson, Word Pictures In The New Testament, Vol. VI, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), p. 361.

³Ford C. Ottman, The Unfolding of the Ages, (New York: The Baker and Taylor Company, 1905), p. 216.

⁴R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel, (Minneapolis: Ausburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 473.

⁵William G. Lewis, "The Abyss," (Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, 1977), Unpublished Master of Divinity thesis, p. 78.

(Lk. 8:31; Rev. 9:1,2,11);¹ Christ visited (Rom. 10:7);² the Antichrist will temporarily abide (Rev. 11:7, 17:8); and Satan will be bound during the Millennium (Rev. 20:1,3). Never is the Abyss called an eternal dwelling for anyone. By identifying it with Sheol-Hades, Scripture implies all who remain there, after the 'first resurrection' is completed, will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10-15; Mt. 25:41).

In general it can be concluded that the Abyss is presently a prison house for disembodied spirits and demons. It has a genuine association with Sheol-Hades, if indeed it is not synonymous with it, but is not synonymous with γέεννα and eternal punishment.

Eternal Destruction

These two words are used together in Scripture only in 2 Thessalonians 1:9:

And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction
(ἀλεθρον ἀώνιον), away from the presence of the
Lord and from the glory of His power,

¹Luke 8:28 implies these demons are tormented there. Although the word does not appear in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6, it is generally understood.

²Dunn and others point to Ephesians 4:9 as speaking of this same event. David L. Dunn, "The Meaning of 'He Descended into the Lower Parts of the Earth' in Ephesians 4:9 and its Relation to the Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hades," (Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, 1976), Unpublished Master of Divinity thesis, p. 36.

Those who will be subjected to eternal destruction are mentioned in verse 8. "The two articles (of 2 Thessalonians 1:8) point to two classes: 'those who do not know God' (pagans without contact with the gospel) - 'those who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus' (Jews and pagans who reject the gospel)."¹ These two classes are said to be recipients of retribution dealt out (διδόντος ἐκδίκησιν) by angels, verses 7 and 8. This retribution is further described by ὀλεθρος αἰώνιον in verse 9.

Thayer states the meaning of ὀλεθρος as "ruin, destruction, death: . . . the loss of a life of blessedness after death, future misery."² Moulton and Milligan observe "in Biblical usage (ὀλεθρος) implies 'ruin,' the loss of all that gives worth to existence."³ Scripture never

¹R. C. H. Lenski The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Titus and to Philemon, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), pp. 387, 388. Green saw in this "two distinct classes, incurring different degrees of punishment." Samuel G. Green, Handbook to the Grammar of the Greek Testament, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1912), p. 199.

²Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 443.

³James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), p. 445. This term occurs four times in the New Testament, 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Th. 5:3; 2 Th. 1:9; 1 Tim. 6:9. W. R. Moulton and A. S. Geden, A Concordance to the Greek Testament, 4th ed., (Edinburg: T. and T. Clark, 1963), p. 691.

gives this word the meaning of annihilation. Furthermore, this ruin or destruction is declared to be everlasting, αἰώνιον. Although the root word, αἰών, could mean age long or eternal, Thayer gives the meaning of αἰώνιος as "1. without beginning or end, . . . 2. without beginning: . . . 3. without end, never to cease, everlasting."¹ Vine observes "αἰώνιος describes duration, either undefined but not endless, as in Romans 16:25, 2 Timothy 1:19, Titus 1:12, or undefined because endless as in Romans 16:26 and the other 66 places in the N.T."² Matthew 25:46 states that the eternal life of the righteous is the same duration as the eternal punishment of the ungodly, "And these will go away into eternal (αἰώνιον) punishment, but the righteous into eternal (αἰώνιον) life."

2 Thessalonians 1:9 also mentions the separation from the Lord of those who will suffer eternal destruction. Despite the other uses of ἀπό, namely its temporal and causal uses, its root meaning, separation, is generally acknowledged in 2 Thessalonians 1:9.³ This in itself implies the ungodly are confined to a place for eternal

¹Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 20.

²W. E. Vine, Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, (McLean, Virginia: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 43.

³Robertson, Word Pictures, Vol. VI, p. 44.

punishment. This is in harmony with Christ's teaching on Gehenna. The teachings of Paul and his Savior continue to concur concerning the eternality of suffering and ruin to be experienced by the ungodly. Without using the word, Paul accurately describes Gehenna in 2 Thessalonians 1:9.

Everlasting Fire

The phrase, meaning everlasting fire (τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον), has been previously discussed in connection with Matthew 18:8,9 where it was there understood to be synonymous with Gehenna. Again appearing in Matthew 25:41, the goat nations are to be sent there at the dawn of the Millennium. These nations will be cast into this torment, following their judgment on earth, without prior confinement to Hades.¹ Therefore, although this verse declares everlasting fire "has been prepared (τὸ ἡτοίμασμένον) for the devil and his angels," nevertheless, the Son of God condemns men to this fire also.²

The perfect passive participle τὸ ἡτοίμασμένον informs the reader that the everlasting fire, Gehenna, has already been created and prepared for use by God. "The

¹See "Sheol-Hades" below. The Antichrist and False Prophet receive the same fate.

²Rev. 20:10 states that the devil will be cast into the lake of fire following the Millennium. From this it can be deduced that Gehenna and the eternal fire and the lake of fire are one in the same.

perfect tense is the tense of complete action. Its basal significance is the progress of an act or state to a point of culmination and the existence of its finished results."¹ Arndt and Gingrich list the meaning of ἐτοιμάζω as to "put or keep in readiness, prepare."² Even though Gehenna does presently exist, the Scripture is not explicit concerning where it is. The intent of the Scripture is not to tell where Gehenna is, but to warn what it is; a place of eternal torment by a fire.

Everlasting Punishment

Jesus gave a further description of the suffering awaiting those who are sent to the eternal fire, Gehenna, when he said in Matthew 25:46 "And these will go away into eternal punishment (κόλασιν αἰώνιον), but the righteous into eternal life." Arndt and Gingrich cite κόλασιν in Matthew 25:46 as a reference to divine retribution and eternal punishment. They also note uses of κόλασις as meaning "undergo punishment", "long continual torture" and "injury."³ Moulton and Milligan concur and cite apocryphal

¹H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, (Toronto: The Mac-Millian Company, 1955), p. 200.

²Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon, p. 316.

³Ibid., p. 441.

references as meaning "hell."¹ Once again Jesus proved himself not to be limited to the term Gehenna in speaking of that place and its suffering.²

The Lake of Fire

As previously indicated there is a direct connection between the lake of fire (τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς) and Gehenna. The connection is readily realized in the plight of the devil. In Matthew 25:41 the eternal fire is said to be prepared for him and in Revelation 20:10 he is said to be cast into the lake of fire to be tormented day and night forever. Thus, that which God planned and purposed for Satan will be accomplished completely.

The first reference to the lake of fire is Revelation 19:20 which declares that the beast, i.e. Antichrist, and false prophet will be "thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone" following the second coming of Christ. "By comparison with other scriptures, it seems that the beast and false prophet are the first to inhabit the lake of fire. Unsaved who died prior to this time are cast into Hades, a place of torment, but not into the lake

¹Moulton and Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, p. 352.

²See notes on Matt. 18:9 for the contrast between eternal punishment in Gehenna and eternal life.

of fire, which is reserved for those who have been finally judged as unworthy of eternal life."¹ Interestingly, the second reference to the lake of fire, Revelation 20:10, explains that the beast and false prophet are still there and shall be tormented with the devil forever. Commenting on this verse, Walvoord suggests:

The text should be understood as teaching that both the beast and the false prophet are still in the lake of fire when Satan joins them, a thousand years after being cast into it. It is most significant that the verb basaisthesontai is in the third person plural, indication that the verb should be understood as having for its subjects not only Satan but also the beast and false prophet. . . . Thus the Word of God plainly declares that death is not annihilation and that the wicked exist forever, though in torment. There would be no way possible in the Greek language to state more emphatically the everlasting punishment of the lost than is used here in mentioning both day and night and the expression "forever and ever". . . The lake of fire prepared for the devil and wicked² angels is also the destiny of all who follow Satan.

Revelation 20 continues on to tell of the Great White Throne judgment. According to Revelation 20:14,15, death and Hades are said to be cast into the lake of fire which is the second death. It is necessary to recall at this point that the first resurrection is past; therefore, the only people who are still dead and not resurrected are those whose names are not written in the book of life, the

¹ John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), p. 280.

² Ibid., pp. 304,305.

wicked (Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:5,6,15; cf. Dan. 12:2; Jn. 5:24-29). It is this group of people who will stand before the Great White Throne, without excuse, to be sentenced to eternal torment in the lake of fire. Thus, at the Great White Throne their destiny is not decided for that has been determined since the time of their death. The mere fact of their presence at this judgment serves notice that they are lost and bound for the lake of fire. At this judgment they will be judged "according to their deeds," Revelation 20:12,13. As these men's deeds have not been the same during their lifetime; likewise, their suffering shall not be the same throughout eternity, even though they will all be sentenced the Gehenna, the eternal fire, the lake of fire.¹

The mention of "death and hades," Revelation 20:13, most likely is a reference to the material bodies (death) in graves, etc. and immaterial soul-spirits bound in Hades, the intermediate state's realm of the dead.² This is the resurrection of the wicked unto condemnation (cf. Jn. 5:24-29; Acts 24:15).

The Second Death

The second death (τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ δευτέρου) is plainly associated with the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14; 21:8).

¹See "suffering" in chapter four.

²Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, pp. 307,308. Also see "Sheol-Hades" in this chapter.

There has been much debate whether this "second death" referred to a second physical death, i.e. separation of body and spirit, or perhaps even the annihilation of the physical body, leaving only the disembodied spirits of the wicked to suffer in Gehenna.¹ First of all, this seems rather unnecessary and illogical since God had just resurrected their physical bodies and reunited them with their soul-spirits. Secondly, the Scripture teaches that whatever happens to the physical body in Gehenna also happens to the soul-spirit (Mt. 10:28). Thus, to insist that the body ceases from existence implies the soul-spirit would also, but this is contradictory to Scripture as has already been seen. If, therefore, Gehenna includes both physical and "spiritual" suffering and the second death is not a second separation of body and spirit or annihilation of the body, what is it?² The majority of those who reject the erroneous theories mentioned above believe the second death is a confirmation and continuance of spiritual death, i.e.

¹Also note the goat nations (Mt. 13), the false prophet, and Satan are never said to experience a "first" death, but they are cast into the lake of fire which is the second death.

²1 Cor. 15:26 "The last enemy that will be abolished is death," could be understood to imply that after death is abolished there will be no separation of bodies from their soul-spirits.

separation of the body and spirit from God.¹ However, to this Olszewski adds "The term 'second death' is used synonymously with the second resurrection of the unsaved before the great white throne."² Both of these statements represent a true appraisal of this end time event, but do they both actually correspond to the Scriptural phrase 'the second death'? Admittedly, this is a difficult question and is beyond the realm of this study. Both assertions are in harmony with Revelation 2:11 and 20:6 which declares that the overcomers and the participants of the first resurrection will not experience the second death. With or without Olszewski's added proposal, Gehenna is undoubtedly associated with the second death.

Sheol-Hades

These two terms are identical in meaning.³ In the Old Testament Sheol (שְׁאוֹל), refers to the realm of the dead or place of departed spirits just as Hades (ᾍδης) does

¹David S. Black, "'This Is The Second Death' Revelation 20:14,15," (Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, 1973), Unpublished Master of Divinity thesis, p. 67; R. E. Davies, "Death," Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. II, ed. by Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), p. 71.

²Walter Olszewski, "The Bodily Resurrection of the Unsaved," (Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, 1978), Unpublished Master of Divinity thesis, pp. 38,39.

³Hoyt, The End Times, p. 37.

in the New Testament. These terms refer to the intermediate state in which souls exist between death and resurrection.

Sheol is viewed in the Old Testament as the inevitable place where all men go after death, whether righteous or wicked (Gen. 37:35; Ps. 9:17; Isa. 38:10). For the righteous it is a place of "imperfect happiness - a place to be delivered from" (cf. Ps. 16:10; 1 Sam. 2:6; Ps. 49:15; Hos. 13:14).¹ Nevertheless, for the wicked it is a place of torment and ruin (cf. Lk. 16:19-31; Dt. 32:22; Job 26:6). This fact, along with several Scriptural statements, implies that Sheol-Hades is made up of two separate compartments; one for the righteous called Paradise and one for the wicked (cf. Lk. 16:19-31; 23:43; Dt. 32:22; Isa. 14:15). During Christ's death he descended into Hades to proclaim the good news to them; then at his resurrection he delivered the righteous and finally took all of Paradise with him to heaven at his ascension (1 Pet. 3:18-20; Rom. 10:7; Eph. 4:8,9; Acts 2:27,31; 13:35-37; 2 Cor. 12:1-4). Now, therefore, for the believer to be absent from the body in death is to be with the Lord in heaven, 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23.

¹E. R. Craven, "Excursus on Hades," in the Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Revelation, ed. by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), p. 364.

Sheol-Hades will give up those whom it confines at the Great White Throne when the soul-spirits are joined together with their resurrected bodies and then cast into the lake of fire eternally (Rev. 20:11-15). Thus, Sheol-Hades is only a temporary place of confinement for soul-spirits between death and the resurrection. Some have objected to the declaration that there are no physical bodies in Hades on the basis of Luke 16:19-31. Buswell adequately answers this charge by suggesting this passage uses "figurative moods of expression, to help our understanding," since "the fact that eyes, voice, and tongue are referred to no more signify corporeal existence than references to the hand, arm, eyes and ears of God signify that God is corporeal."¹ It should be noted that this passage alone speaks of physical suffering in Hades and if one denies the use of figurative language here he is forced to accept the intermediate body theory which stands on questionable Scriptural support.

In summing up the relationship between Sheol-Hades and Gehenna the following may be presented. Prior to Christ's ascension, physical bodies went to the grave and decayed; their soul-spirits went to Sheol-Hades. Since the ascension, the soul-spirits of the righteous go to be with the Lord in

¹James Oliver Buswell, A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion, Vol. II, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), p. 307.

heaven, while the soul-spirits of the wicked still go to lower Sheol-Hades to suffer until they are reunited with their bodies and cast into Gehenna, i.e. the lake of fire.

Tartarus

This word only occurs once in the New Testament, 2 Peter 2:4, and should be transliterated Tartarus, "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell (Tartarus) and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment." Actually, ταρταρώσας is a verb, first aorist active participle denoting these angels were tartarized, i.e. sent to Tartarus. The noun form of this word occurs in Enoch 20:2 as the place of punishment of the fallen angels.¹ Arndt and Gingrich note: "Tartarus (was) thought of by the Greeks as a subterranean place lower than Hades where divine punishment was meted out, . . ."² Thayer considered it "the name of a subterranean region, doleful and dark, regarded by the ancient Greeks as the abode of the wicked dead, where they suffer punishment for their evil deeds"; and then he adds, "it answers to the Gehenna of the Jews, . . ."³ The above remarks are widely

¹Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol. VI, p. 162.

²Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon, p. 813.

³Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 615.

regarded as correct with the exception of Thayer's final association of Gehenna and Tartarus. Biblically, Gehenna is the final eternal abode of all the wicked, both men and angels. Tartarus, however, seems to be a temporary prison-house for those angels awaiting judgment (cf. Jude 6). Thus, Tartarus is closer associated with the Abyss and Sheol-Hades which are temporary (cf. Rev. 20:13). Assuming Tartarus is in the very depths of Hades, it too will be cast into the lake of fire, giving up its occupants, evil angels, to the place God had prepared for them (Mt. 25:41).

Topheth

Topheth (תֹּפֶת) is very closely associated with תַּבַּחַת in the Old Testament (cf. 2 Ki. 23:10). "The meaning of this name is uncertain. Many modern interpreters follow W. Rob. Smith, who connects the word with the Aramaic t'fala, hearth, fireplace. Others on the basis of Job 17:6, derive it from תִּפַּח, 'to spit', a root that does not occur in Hebrew literature, but in related dialects, . . . The parallelism demands a word denoting ridicule, contempt."¹ The term usually occurs as a location in the Valley of Hinnom where burnt offerings were sacrificed. This term in itself has no eschatological significance in association

¹Laetsch, Jeremiah, p. 104; cf. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 1075.

with Gehenna. Topheth, like the actual Valley of Hinnom, became a place of contempt because of the idolatry practiced there which included the burning of children by disobedient Jews.

The Weeping And Gnashing Of Teeth

This phrase occurs seven times in the New Testament, six times in Matthew and once in Luke. It is generally used to describe the place where evildoers will be cast, whether Jews or Gentiles.¹ Commenting on this phrase, "the weeping and gnashing of teeth," Edersheim remarks, "In Rabbinic thought the former ('weeping') was connected with sorrow, the latter almost always with anger - not, as generally supposed, with anguish."² If it is assumed Jesus used this phrase as the rabbis did, the anger may well imply a state of unrepentance on the part of those who are characterized by this phrase.

The same texts which use the phrase "the weeping and gnashing of teeth," also describe the place where this occurs as a "furnace of fire" (Mt. 13:42,50); "outer darkness" (Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30); and a place of hypocrites and severe scourging (Mt. 24:51). Surely, it is a place to

¹Kent, "Matthew," p. 975.

²Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, p. 253.

be dreaded and feared and if at all possible avoided. Interestingly, the phrase often occurs within the context of kingdom parables or Christ's discourses on the kingdom. Within these passages "weeping and gnashing of teeth" describe the place where unbelieving wicked Jews and Gentiles will be cast at Christ's second coming (Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; Lk. 13:28).¹ In his discussion of Matthew 22:13, Kent plainly and rightly states, "the darkness and the 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' are clearly indicative of the torments of Gehenna (13:42; 25:30,46)."²

Conclusion

This study of related terms harmonizes with the New Testament use of Gehenna, chapter two, to portray Gehenna as a place of conscious eternal torment for the ungodly. Chapter four will draw together these two chapters to present the Biblical characteristics of this place.

¹Cf. comments on Matthew 25:41 under "Everlasting Fire" in this chapter.

²Kent, "Matthew," p. 968.

CHAPTER IV

THE BIBLICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF GEHENNA

An Actual Place

Louis Berkhof has observed that:

In modern liberal theology the word "hell" is generally regarded as a figurative designation of a purely subjective condition, in which men find themselves even while on earth, and which may become permanent in the future. But these interpretations certainly do not do justice to the data of the Scripture. There can be no reasonable doubt as to the fact that the Bible teaches the continued existence of the wicked, Matthew 24:5; 25:30,46, . . .¹

It may be added that this existence will be physical, eternal and painful. Matthew 25:41 declares that God has already prepared (ἡτοιμασμένον) a place for the wicked.² Even though its location is unknown this does not deny its reality. The intent of the Scripture is not to satisfy one's intellectual curiosity regarding the location of hell, i.e. Gehenna, but to earnestly warn of it.

The fact of Gehenna's physical reality is evident from a number of Scriptures. First, during the Great White Throne judgment, the physical bodies of the unrighteous

¹L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, 4th ed., (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1941), p. 735.

²See notes under "Everlasting Fire" in chapter three.

will be resurrected and then cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15; cf. Acts 24:15). This necessitates the understanding that the lake of fire, a synonym for Gehenna, is a physical place since physical bodies are cast there.¹ Secondly, Matthew 10:28 asserts similar punishment for both body and soul. They are both ruined, made unfit for that which they were originally designed. Thirdly, according to Revelation 19:20 and 20:10, the Antichrist and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire at the second coming of Christ and are still there 1000 years later at the end of the Millennium. This concurs with the argument that it is logical that if God will resurrect the bodies of the unsaved dead in the first place and bodies will be in Gehenna, then God will in some way provide that their bodies will not cease from existing but will eternally suffer the torments of Gehenna.² In addition, 2 Thessalonians 1:9 which states that those suffering eternal ruin will do so away from (ἀπὸ) the Lord. This also, along with Matthew 25:41,46, suggests that the wicked go somewhere, implying a place.³ Thus,

¹This is true even though "the lake of fire" may be a figure of speech referring to something far worse. cf. Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible, p. 321.

²Pentecost, Things To Come, p. 561.

³John W. Reed, "'Everlasting Destruction' 2 Thessalonians 1:9," (Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, 1954), Unpublished Master of Divinity Critical Monograph, pp. 25,39.

it is accurate to say that Gehenna is an actual physical place.

A. Place of Suffering

Gehenna is characterized throughout the New Testament as a place of suffering and torment. Although sometimes this suffering is described in figurative language it is still real.¹ Mickelsen provides some helpful insight into the use of figurative language when he states it is "indispensable in conveying to us realities beyond empirical experience" and "such realities demand the use of combinations of figurative and literal language to give us every possible insight."² Nevertheless, the language and truth of the end times were not given to satisfy our scientific knowledge but to assure us as to our future.

Regarding the Scriptural declarations about the torments of the unrighteous in Gehenna, Matthew 5:29,30; 18:8,9 and Mark 9:43-48 record Christ's statements explaining it would be better to tear out one's own eye, hand and foot than be cast into Gehenna. Matthew 25:46 states the wicked will go into everlasting punishment (κόλασιν) and

¹Weeping and gnashing of teeth, furnace of fire, outer darkness and lake of fire are all generally accepted as carefully chosen figures to provide some glimpses into the awfulness of Gehenna, but the actual reality defies explicit description. See Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible, p. 321.

²Ibid., p. 322.

Revelation 20:10 describes the lake of fire as a place where men are "tormented day and night forever and ever." Furthermore, the phrase "weeping and gnashing of teeth" is used numerous times to describe Gehenna as a place of sorrow and anger. This, however, should not lead one to believe all who are confined to Gehenna suffer equally. The Scriptures teach that all the unsaved will be cast into Gehenna to be inflicted and suffer according to the sins they committed and the amount of divine truth they possessed.¹

Revelation 20:12,13 clearly assert that judgment for those entering the lake of fire will be according to works. Christ's teaching complements this by acknowledging degrees of punishment will vary with sins committed and "light" received (Lk. 10:14; 12:46-48; 20:45-47; Rev. 2:23). Paul and Peter also taught this doctrine in Romans 2:5,6 and 2 Peter 2:20-22 (cf. Heb. 10:29,30).

Some have asked why there will be punishment in hell and what its purpose is. Shedd observed that,

Early was the question raised, whether the suffering to which Christ sentences the wicked is for the purpose of correcting and educating the transgressor, or of vindicating and satisfying the law he has broken: a question which is the key to the whole (restoration) controversy.²

¹See John C. Whitcomb Jr., "Christian Theology: Biblical Eschatology," (Hereinafter referred to as "Eschatology"), (Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, 1978), Unpublished class syllabus, p. 139.

²William G. T. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, Vol. II, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888), p. 669.

The objection that a suffering not intended to reform, but to satisfy justice, is cruel and unworthy of God is refuted by the question of St. Paul: 'Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? God forbid: for how then shall God judge the world? Rom. 3:5,6. It is impossible either to found or administer a government, in heaven or upon earth, unless the power to punish crime is conceded.¹

Shedd does view eternal punishment as retribution and states the three elements required for punishment are: (1) consciousness of pain; (2) a sense that the pain is deserved; and (3) knowledge that the pain is inflicted because it is deserved.² Berkhof provides the following description of the state of existence for those in Gehenna.

- (a) a total absence of the favor of God;
- (b) an endless duration of life as a result of the complete domination of sin;
- (c) positive pains and suffering in body and soul; and
- (d) such subjective punishments as pangs of conscience, anguish, despair, weeping, and gnashing of teeth Mt. 8:12; 13:50; Mk. 9:43-48; . . .³

God has already declared, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay. . . , Hebrew 10:30.

Eternal

The Biblical Doctrine

The eternality of punishment in Gehenna is usually not denied on the basis of exegesis of Scripture but in

¹Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, Vol. II, p. 722.

²Ibid., pp. 691, 716.

³L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 736.

spite of it. Whitcomb quotes John W. Chadwick as saying "I believe that Jesus Christ meant to teach eternal punishment, but I do not accept it, even on his authority."¹ S. Lewis Johnson wrote "It is doubtful that there is a doctrine in the Bible easier to prove than that of eternal punishment."² Matthew 25:41,46 describe Gehenna as the place of "eternal (αἰώνιον) fire" and "eternal (αἰώνιον) punishment." Mark 9:43-49 announces Gehenna is "unquenchable (ἄσβεστον) fire, . . . where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched (οὐ σβέννυται)." Likewise, Paul contends the unrighteous will "pay the penalty of eternal (αἰώνιον) destruction," 2 Thessalonians 1:9. In addition, Revelation 19:20 and 20:10 describe the plight of the Antichrist and false prophet as being cast alive into the lake of fire and still being tormented there 1000 years later "day and night forever and ever (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων)." This implies the same experience for all the unrighteous for they will all be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).

In their attempt to deny eternal punishment some men have held that αἰώνιος does not mean endless but

¹Whitcomb, "Eschatology," p. 137.

²S. Lewis Johnson, "God Gave Them Up," Bibliotheca Sacra, 129:514 (April-June, 1972), 124-133.

"age long." Joseph replies that whenever Christ used this word he referred to either eternal life or eternal punishment.¹ Insisting that "usage must settle meaning," Whitcomb observes God is eternal (Rom. 16:26); salvation is eternal (Heb. 5:9); redemption is eternal (Heb. 9:12); everlasting life is eternal (Jn. 3:16); Christ is the eternal God and eternal life (1 Jn. 5:11,20).² All these verses use the very same word, αἰώνιος . "If the word aionios is used of things that we count eternal or never-ending, then when the same word is applied to punishment it must mean the same thing."³ Similarly, εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων (Rev. 14:11; 19:3; 20:10) is used by Christ to describe himself as alive forever and ever (Rev. 1:18; cf. 4:10) and used by John to describe those who abide with Christ as reigning forever and ever (Rev. 22:5). Therefore, "If Christ lives forever and ever, then the believer will also. And if the saints live forever, then sinners will suffer forever."⁴

Even in spite of the clear Scriptural teaching on eternal punishment men object to this doctrine. Shedd notes

¹Chacko A. Joseph, "The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment," (Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, 1968), Unpublished Post-Graduate Seminar Paper in New Testament Theology, p. 8.

²Whitcomb, "Eschatology," p. 135.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 137.

Schleiermacher's four main objections:

"(a) Christ's words in Matt. 25:46; Mk. 9:44; John 5:29, are figurative. (b) The passage I Cor. 15:25,26 teaches that all evil shall be overcome. (c) Misery cannot increase, but must decrease. (This is true, he contends, because if there is physical suffering men will learn to endure it, therefore; they would suffer less and less and if it is mental suffering they will become more remorseful and become better men in hell than on earth.) (d) The sympathy which the saved have with their former companions, who are in hell, will prevent the happiness of the saved." (Thus, the whole universe will be in misery.)¹

To this it may be replied that: (a) Although the Scripture does use figurative language to describe hell, that does not mean hell is not real, cf. chapter two of this study, "Principles of Interpretation." (b) 1 Corinthians declares all Christ's enemies are overcome, including death. Furthermore, the presence of wicked men in "hell" does not necessitate their being allowed to practice their wickedness. (c) Divine judgment is able to inflict suffering which lasts as long as God desires, forever.² (d) The joys of eternal life with Christ, the Lamb slain for the sins of the world, are immeasurable. "And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying or pain"; for those who possess "eternal life," Revelation 21:4.

¹Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, Vol. II, pp. 671-672.

²As previously asserted, "weeping and gnashing of teeth" may imply a sorrow for one's present state while still being angered and unrepentant.

Within his defense of the doctrine of eternal punishment, Shedd observes several facts. (1) "Had Christ intended to teach that future punishment is remedial and temporary, he would have compared it to a dying worm, and not an undying worm; to a fire that is quenched, and not to an unquenchable fire."¹ (2) *Αἰώνιος* means eternal in reference to everlasting punishment.² (3) As guilt is eternal so is the punishment.³ (4) "The doctrine of Christ's vicarious atonement, logically, stands or falls with that of endless punishment."⁴

Opposing Theories

In opposition to the Biblical doctrine of eternal punishment stands two major erroneous theories, universalism and annihilationism.

Universalism

Within this doctrine there are a number of divergent views. "But all differing views can be reduced to one common proposition: namely, that there is hope for the wicked beyond the grave; that someday the doors of hell will

¹Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, Vol. II, p. 681.

²Ibid., pp. 682-689.

³Ibid., pp. 722-724.

⁴Ibid., pp. 741.

be opened and all or some of its occupants will be received into heaven."¹ There appears to be four basic arguments used to support this position: 1) Apparent Scriptural Proof: (a) Psalm 103:8,9 "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. He will not always strive with us; nor will He keep His anger forever." (b) John 12:31 "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." (c) Philippians 2:10,11 "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. . . ." (d) 2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." 2) A just God would not give infinite punishment for finite sin. 3) A good and loving God would not send men to hell. 4) Christ died for the sins of all men.

These arguments can be completely refuted by the clear teaching of God's Word. In regard to 1) "Scriptural Proof" for universalism, it is evident that this is a misinterpretation of Scripture. Psalm 103:8,9 and 2 Peter 3:9 are taken out of their context, where they apply to God's people, and applied to the wicked. John 12:32 does not

¹Hoyt, The End Times, p. 234.

state what Christ will do to the men whom he draws to himself, but many commentators believe these men will be drawn to judgment. Concerning Philippians 2:10,11, this is a forced acknowledgment of Christ's authority, not a volitional act leading to salvation. Furthermore,

Universalists have no right to lay strong weight upon proof texts because, almost to a man, they do not believe in the infallibility of Scripture. If they are honest they will admit that their position is based on human reasoning (and sympathy), not on divine revelation.¹

2) To deny that God would sentence men to infinite punishment simply shows that God views sin much more seriously than man. In addition, who has the right to put themselves in a position of judging whether God is fair in his actions? God could have determined to sentence the whole human race to eternity in hell, yet through his grace, love and mercy he offers forgiveness and eternal life to those who repent of their sin and accept Christ as their personal Savior.

3) Although it may be true that a good and loving man may not punish another man forever, God is not a man! God is perfectly holy and just. This fact demands payment for sin. Either an individual has accepted Christ's sacrificial death on the cross as personal payment for his own sin before God, or he himself will spend eternity paying for his sin. 4)

While it is true 'Christ died for the sins of the whole

¹Buis, The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment, p. 115.

world,' this speaks of the universal provision made "available for all, but efficacious only for those who believe."¹

Louis Berkhof suggests:

The following considerations can be urged against this theory: (a) Scripture represents the state of unbelievers after death as a fixed state. The most important passage that comes into consideration here is Luke 16:19-31. Other passages are Eccl. 11:3 (of uncertain interpretation); John 8:21,24; II Pet. 2:4,9; Jude 7-13 (comp. I Pet. 3:19). (b) It also invariably represents the coming final judgment as determined by the things that were done in the flesh, and never speaks of this as dependent in any way on what occurred in the intermediate state, Matt. 7:22,23; 10:32,33; 25:34-46; Luke 12:47,48; II Cor. 5:9,10; Gal. 6:7,8; II Thess. 1:8; Heb. 9:27. (c) The fundamental principle of this theory, that only the conscious rejection of Christ and His gospel, causes men to perish, is un-Scriptural. Man is lost by nature, and even original sin, as well as all actual sins, makes him worthy of condemnation. The rejection of Christ is undoubtedly a great sin, but is never represented as the only sin that leads to destruction. (d) Scripture teaches us that the Gentiles perish, Rom. 1:32; 2:12; Rev. 21:8. There is no Scripture evidence on which we can base the hope that adult Gentiles, or even Gentile children that have not yet come to years of discretion, will be saved. (e) The theory of a future probation is also calculated to extinguish all missionary zeal. If the Gentiles can decide as to the acceptance of Christ in the future, it can only bring a speedier and increased judgment upon many, if they are placed before the choice now.² Why not leave them in ignorance as long as possible?

Annihilationism

Within this doctrine there are two primary positions. The "Second Chance Theory" contends if the unrighteous

¹Whitcomb, "Eschatology," p. 125.

²Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 693.

reject the second chance to accept Christ after the resurrection, they will then be annihilated. The "Prolonged Punishment Theory" proclaims the soul will suffer a prolonged period of punishment in payment for one's sins and then be annihilated. This doctrine rests on five false arguments. (1) Death ends existence. (2) "Destroy" means end of being. (3) *Αἰώνιος* means age long and not everlasting. (4) Life and existence are synonymous. (5) Immortality means endless existence.

Since the first three of these concepts previously have been proven false, only the last two will be dealt with here. Arguing that without eternal life there can be no eternal existence, the annihilationist sees support for saying those without eternal life must be annihilated. This, however, is to misunderstand the Biblical usage of "life." Human beings can "exist" without "life," cf. John 6:53; 1 John 5:11,12; 1 Timothy 5:6. "'Life' (as the Bible uses it) is a particular mode of existence. Death is another mode of existence."¹ If death ends existence and brings about annihilation, cf. their argument #1, then the Bible speaks of people not existing while they live and being annihilated twice (1 Tim. 5:6; Rev. 20:14).

¹Whitcomb, "Eschatology," p. 130.

A man can exist without having life in the Biblical use of the term. If he can exist, he can also suffer without having life. If he can suffer in the present world without having life, why not in the next world?¹

In response to their fifth argument, it may be noted that God alone has innate immortality. All men will continually, consciously exist regardless if they have what the Bible calls immortality or not. Men get what the Bible calls immortality only from God by faith in Christ. The confusion comes when annihilationists confuse how the word immortality is used Biblically with how it is used philosophically.²

In conclusion:

The doctrine of conditional immortality (annihilationism) is plainly contradicted by Scripture where it teaches: (1) that sinners as well as saints will continue to exist forever, Eccl. 12:7; Matt. 25:46; Rom. 2:8-10; Rev. 14:11; 20:10; (2) that the wicked will suffer eternal punishment, which means that they will be forever conscious of a pain which they will recognize as their just desert, and therefore will not be annihilated, cf. the passages just mentioned, and (3) that there will be degrees in the punishment of the wicked, while extinction of being or consciousness admits of no degrees, but constitutes a punishment that is alike for all, Luke 12:47,48; Rom. 2:12.³

A Place For The Ungodly

The Scripture is not vague when it comes to telling who will suffer eternal punishment in Gehenna and who will

¹Whitcomb, "Eschatology," p. 130.

²Ibid.

³Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 691.

not. John 3:16-18 plainly state that those who place their trust in Christ for salvation shall neither perish nor be condemned but have eternal life. Likewise, Acts 4:12 declares that salvation is only in Jesus Christ; thus, all who escape the torments of Gehenna do so on the basis of their salvation in Christ (cf. Jn. 14:6).

Conversly, the Bible also explains who will be sent into Gehenna for eternal punishment. Those who are specifically stated to participate in this fate are the Antichrist, false prophet, goat nations, devil and the devil's angels (Rev. 20:10; Mt. 25:41). More generally, however, Revelation 20:15 declares all who do not have their name written in the Lamb's book of life shall be cast into the lake of fire. According to 2 Thessalonians 1:8, this group could be divided into two classes; those who have not heard the gospel and those who have rejected it.¹

¹Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Titus and Philemon, pp. 387, 388.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing study it has been demonstrated that Gehenna (γέεννα) is the actual place of conscious torment for the ungodly following their temporary confinement in Sheol-Hades. By comparing Scripture with Scripture it can be maintained that Gehenna is synonymous with several other words and phrases as generally used in the New Testament, such as "lake of fire," "everlasting fire," "everlasting punishment" and "everlasting destruction."

Christ's use of Gehenna as a figure for eternal punishment was not original with him. During the inter-testamental period this word was used in a similar manner. Having been generally characterized in the Old Testament as a place of suffering, death and fire at the hands of disobedient Jews, the Valley of Hinnom became a place of utter abhorrence in the Jewish mind and theology. Gehenna, likewise, as portrayed in the New Testament, will be a place of fire and of suffering for the unrighteous.

APPENDIX

THE INTER-TESTAMENTAL DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

Admittedly there is not a large amount of Old Testament Scripture directly relating to the doctrine of eternal punishment. However, this doctrine was known and held during Old Testament times (cf. Dan. 12:1,2; Isa. 66:24). From this Old Testament revelation the inter-testamental writers laid their base for further development of the doctrine.

Generally, for the inter-testamental writer, Gehenna became the technical designation for the place of final punishment for the enemies of God from about the second century B.C.¹ Combining the Scriptural teachings on גֵּהֶנְנָא as a place of abhorance, fire and pain, and the certainty of God's judgment (Eccl. 12:14); the association of fire with judgment (Isa. 66:24); and the endlessness of punishment (Dan. 12:2), the inter-testamental writers conceived

¹R. E. Davies, "Gehenna," The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. II, ed. by Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), pp. 670-672.

of Gehenna as the horrible place of eternal torment and pain for God's enemies.¹ However, a study of the literature of this period dealing with eternal punishment quickly reveals that these writers, especially of Apocalyptic literature, often "went far beyond a legitimate extension of Old Testament principles, and included detailed sensuous descriptions of the punishment of the wicked."²

R. H. Charles notes the following stages in the development of this doctrine pertaining specifically to Gehenna within Apocryphal literature. Gehenna was first taught to be a place of corporal and spiritual punishment for apostate Jews, then later, a place of spiritual but not corporal punishment for apostate Jews and finally, a place of spiritual and corporal punishment for all the wicked.³

By the time of Christ, the doctrine that Gehenna was a place of eternal punishment for the wicked was firmly established.⁴ The two leading Rabbinical schools, Shammai

¹Buis, The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment, p. 21; Geerhardus Vos, "Gehenna," The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. II, ed. By James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 1183.

²Ibid.

³R. H. Charles, "Gehenna," A Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. II, ed. By James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), p. 120.

⁴Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, p. 533; cf. Appendix 19.

and Hillel, both held that a certain group of sinners would suffer in Gehenna permanently, even though they both also allowed for a group who would suffer there only temporarily.¹

¹Ibid. Buis, The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment,
p. 25.

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