

# THE EXECUTION OF THE LOST BY FIRE

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In the New Testament Jesus Christ clearly taught the reality of the future judgement of the world resulting in the wicked being cast into hell fire. This subject has caused a lot of controversy, not just over the reality of hell but also over the nature of hell. Just what is this hell that Jesus spoke about, where is it and what is its duration? In this five part study we will discuss the meaning of what the bible means by 'unquenchable' fire, forever, and 'eternal' fire.

There are two concepts regarding the nature of Hell. The traditional view also known as 'eternal conscious torment' is the belief that hell is a place where disembodied spirits suffer and burn forever and are tormented by demons. It also teaches that God burns people throughout all eternity as punishment for one short life of sin. This belief has caused more people to hate God and turn from him in revulsion more than any other false doctrine. It comes as a surprise to most people that this idea is not taught in the bible. But comes from pagan Greek mythology.

The biblical view teaches that the fires of hell do not yet exist but are a future event, a place where Satan, his angels, and the unrepentant, are to be burned to ashes on the ground to be destroyed permanently. This future destruction of Satan and the unsaved, takes place 1000 years after the return of Christ. So if Satan and his angels are not living in hell now as commonly believed then where are they?

**Job 1:6-7** “Now the day came when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord—and Satan also arrived among them. 7 The Lord said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” And Satan answered the Lord, “From roving about on the earth, and from walking back and forth across it.” NET



After Satan and his angels were cast out of heaven they took up residence here on earth. According to his own words he is here on the earth with us. He does not live under the earth in a fiery pit as is taught in popular mythology. He is a destroyer and a tempter to commit evil. When Jesus was on the earth He was confronted by Satan in the desert wilderness of Judea.

**Matthew 4:1, 10-11** “Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ...10 Then Jesus said to him, “Go away, Satan! For it is written: ‘**You are to worship the Lord your God and serve only him.**’” 11 Then

the devil left him, and angels came and began ministering to his needs.” NET

Just after his baptism in the Jordan river, Jesus is led into in the Judean wilderness and is there confronted by Satan. His temptations were to try to persuade Jesus to sin and then to join in his rebellion against God. This plan failed and Satan was rebuked.

Satan's angels join in with him in trying to destroy the lives of people here on the earth. They are invisibly among us, as destroyers to encourage rebellion against God and to disobey God's commandments. In the New Testament we have repeated examples of Jesus being confronted by people possessed by these demons.

**Mark 1:21-27** “Then they went to Capernaum. When the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. 22 The people there were amazed by his teaching, because he taught them like one who had authority, not like the experts in the law. 23 Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, 24 “Leave us alone, Jesus the Nazarene! Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” 25 But Jesus rebuked him: “Silence! Come out of him!” 26 After throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. 27 They were all amazed so that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He even commands the unclean spirits and they obey him.” NET

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Satan's evil angels here described as 'unclean spirits' are working to destroy humanity. They recognised Christ as the Holy One of God. They are shown here as possessing the minds and bodies of people to torment and destroy them. Jesus has authority over them and they must obey him.

**1 Timothy 4: 1** “Now the Spirit explicitly says that in the later times some will desert the faith and occupy themselves with deceiving spirits and demonic teachings.” NET

Demons are cunning and deceptive liars. They are responsible for false teachings, false religion and also atheism. They try to deceive people every way they can through Spiritualism, false theology, and false science. Many people, even professed Christians, believe in and promote the teachings of devils without knowing it. If these spirit beings are so active in the world then it would be interesting to know where they live.

**2 Peter 2:4** “For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but threw them into hell [Gk:tartarus] and locked them up in chains in utter darkness, to be kept until the judgment.” NET



According to this verse Satan and his angels were cast into hell. Hell is described as chains of utter darkness with no mention of any fire being there. The word translated 'hell' in this verse is the Greek word '*tartarus*' and is only found once in the bible. Tartarus as used here by the Apostle Peter represents the place of temporary confinement of wicked angels until such time as they should be condemned in the judgement and destroyed. It should be noted that neither wicked men nor wicked angels receive their punishment until after they have been judged. Therefore tartarus is a place of detention not a place of torment. Tartarus has no connection with the grave where dead human beings are at present reserved for judgement.

**Jude 5-6** “ Now I desire to remind you (even though you have been fully informed of these facts once for all) that Jesus, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, later destroyed those who did not believe. 6 You also know that the angels who did not keep within their proper domain but abandoned their own place of residence, he has kept in eternal chains in utter darkness, locked up for the judgment of the great Day.” NET

The apostle Jude describes the place where Satan's angels have been cast and why they were cast there. Eternal chains of utter darkness as a place of detention to be held until the judgement. Notice that the "*eternal*" chains only hold these evil beings until the judgement day. These chains are not real chains but signify that God/Jesus has placed boundaries on what they can do and where they can go.

The use of the english word "hell" in the english bible is problematic. In the King James bible there are four ancient words that have unfortunately been translated into the one English word "hell". This has caused confusion on this subject as only *one* of these four words describes the punishment of the wicked in the fires of "hell". These four ancient words are:

**(1) Sheol:** (Heb:7585) the Hebrew word Sheol is always connected with death. It means 'the grave' in contrast to the Hebrew word 'qeber' which means 'a grave or burial place'. In Old Testament times Sheol meant the unseen secret resting-place of *all* the dead - not the place of torment for the wicked. It is not the permanent region of the lost. It is the intermediate state between death and the resurrection. The condition of death or the death-state. The abode of the dead where deepest darkness and silence reigns and in which there is a total absence of life in any form.

**Ecclesiastes 9:10** “Whatever you find to do with your hands, do it with all your might, because there is neither work nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom in [Heb: sheol] the grave, the place where you will eventually go.” NET

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**(2) Hades:** (Gk:86) This is the Greek equivalent of Sheol. When the Hebrew scholars translated the Hebrew bible into the Greek language they translated ‘Sheol’ into ‘Hades’. This indicates that Hebrew scholars understood that the two words have the same meaning, ie The lifeless abode of *all* the dead or ‘the’ grave. In contrast with the Greek word ‘taphos’ which means ‘a grave or a burial place’ or ‘mnema’ which means a tombstone, monument or tomb intended to preserve the memory of the dead.

**(3) Tartaros:** (Gk:5020) This word occurs only once in the New Testament in 2 Peter 2:4. The Apostle Peter is here borrowing a word from pagan Greek mythology but he does not believe those myths themselves. In this mythology *tartarus* was an subterranean abyss where demigods were punished. It is mentioned in the pseudepigraphal book of Enoch as the place where fallen angels are confined. See *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*. P 1367 Ed. Spiros Zodhiates, Th.D. AMG publishers Chattanooga TN 37422, USA.

Satan's fallen angels are confined to this world where they found a place to continue their rebellion against God after they were cast out of God's presence in heaven. The gospels contain numerous accounts of Jesus confronting satan's angels indicating that their banishment is not in any underground cavern but is here with us. Tartarus has nothing to do with the fate of wicked human beings.

**(4) Gehenna:** (Gk:1067) The fire of hell, the final destiny of the wicked. The Greek word “Gehenna” used by Jesus to describe Hell actually referred to the valley of Ben Hinnom that was outside the walls of ancient Jerusalem. The place of Gehenna was thought to be used to burn rubbish and the bodies of criminals. Dr. R. F. Weymouth says on Gehenna: “Gehenna of Fire or Hell.” The severest punishment inflicted by the Jews upon any criminal. The corpse (after the man had been stoned to death) was thrown out into the Valley of Hinnom and devoured by the worm or the flame. Hell was fiery pit that was outside ancient Jerusalem. Its origins are described below.

**2 Chronicles 33:1 & 6** “Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned for fifty-five years in Jerusalem... He passed his sons through the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom and practiced divination, omen reading, and sorcery. He set up a ritual pit to conjure up underworld spirits and appointed magicians to supervise it. He did a great amount of evil in the sight of the Lord and angered him.” NET

**Jeremiah 32:35** “They built places of worship for the god Baal in the valley of Ben Hinnom so that they could sacrifice their sons and daughters to the god Molech. Such a disgusting practice was not something I commanded them to do! It never even entered my mind to command them to do such a thing! So Judah is certainly liable for punishment.” NET

“The valley of Ben Hinnom was a narrow glen sweeping down the southwestern wall of Jerusalem and watered by the brook Kidron. Under the early Hebrew kings it was laid out in the form of pleasant gardens, groves and pools. Here the wealthy had their summer homes. At the southeastern extremity was the famed garden of Solomon with its Tophet, Royal music grove and its singers. Hinnom came to be polluted by idolatrous shrines and high places in which cruel and licentious rites of Egypt and Phoenicia were introduced, such as worship of the fire gods by king Ahaz (7 cent BC). This pollution intensified under Solomon’s successors like Mannassah in the 6th cent BC.



The hideous fires of Moloch were kindled and the shrieks of children being immolated resounded through the beautiful valley as idolatrous Jews passed their infants through the fire to Moloch.

In the 6th century BC, when Josiah came to the throne, as a part of his religious reformation the groves were burned down, the pleasant gardens laid waste, and the idolatrous shrines ground to powder. To render the valley forever unclean the bones of the dead were strewn over its surface. Thenceforth it became a vast refuse pit, into which the offal of the city was cast, and the carcasses of animals along with the dead bodies of criminals so wicked as to be judged unworthy of burial. Here worms preyed upon their putrefying

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flesh, so fires were kept burning to consume the corruption. It was a place where refuse was burned up. Whatever was worthless was cast into the fires of Ben Hinnom to be utterly consumed....

“The word Gehenna occurs 12 times in the New Testament. Eleven by Christ Himself in a solemn warning against the consequences of sin. Both Christ and the Prophet Isaiah use the burning valley of Ben Hinnom / Gehenna outside the ancient wall of Jerusalem as an illustration of the final destruction of the wicked in the unquenchable fires and judgements of God outside the New Jerusalem.” *The Conditionalist Faith of our Fathers*. Ed. Leroy Froom. Review and Herald publishing association. Washington D.C. 1966. pp165-168

### **The Twelve places in the New Testament where the word GeHenna is used**

**Matthew 5:22** “But I say to you that anyone who is angry with a brother will be subjected to judgment. And whoever insults a brother will be brought before the council, and whoever says ‘Fool’ will be sent to [fiery hell](#).” NET

**Matthew 5:29-30** “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away! It is better to lose one of your members than to have [your whole body thrown into hell](#). 30 If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away! It is better to lose one of your members than to have your [whole body go into hell](#).” NET

**Matthew 10:28** ““Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the one who is able to [destroy both soul and body in hell](#).” NET

**Matthew 18:9** “And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into [fiery hell](#).” NET

**Matthew 23:15** “Woe to you, experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You cross land and sea to make one convert, and when you get one, you make him twice as much a [child of hell](#) as yourselves!” NET

**Matthew 23:33** “You snakes, you offspring of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to [hell](#)?” NET

**Mark 9:43,45,47** If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off! It is better for you to enter into life crippled than to have two hands and [go into hell](#), to the unquenchable fire. 45 If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off! It is better to enter life lame than to have two feet and be [thrown into hell](#). 47 If your eye causes you to sin, tear it out! It is better to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be [thrown into hell](#), NET

**Luke 12:5** “But I will warn you whom you should fear: Fear the one who, after the killing, has authority to [throw you into hell](#).” NET

**James 3:6** “And the tongue is a fire! The tongue represents the world of wrongdoing among the parts of our bodies. It pollutes the entire body and sets fire to the course of human existence—and is set on fire by [hell](#).” NET

By reading these verses where Jesus talks about Gehenna – Hell we get an understanding of the nature of it. It is a place of fire where the wicked are cast into. The whole person body and soul are cast there. It is a place of the destruction of the lost from which there is no return. The wicked angels who are at present confined to tartarus will also be cast into gehenna after the judgement to be destroyed.

Jesus not only uses Gehenna to describe the destiny of the unrepentant but also uses other language and illustrations to describe hell.



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The great day of judgement has arrived 1000 years after the return of Christ to this earth. Satan is about to gather his followers to surround the city of God and to do battle with God. Their plans are stopped when God himself intervenes and destroys the army of Satan with eternal fire that rains down on them from heaven. They are reduced to ashes on the earth outside the city of God.

**Revelation 20:7-9** “Now when the thousand years are finished, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to bring them together for the battle. They are as numerous as the grains of sand in the sea. 9 They went up on the broad plain of the earth and encircled the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and devoured them completely.” NET

**Revelation 22:14-15** “Blessed are those who wash their robes so they can have access to the tree of life and can enter into the city by the gates. 15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the sexually immoral, and the murderers, and the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood!” NET

Prophesying about the death of Satan the devil, his angels and all the lost who are outside the city, the book of Revelation tells us they are to be destroyed in the lake of fire. This is the fire of Hell that Jesus preached about. The consuming fire outside the city is just like the fire of Gehenna outside the city of ancient Jerusalem. The fire from God devours the wicked it does not keep them alive. Revelation 20:10 talks about the devil being tormented day and night forever in the lake of fire. The meaning of this is discussed in part 3 “Eternal Fire” on page 2-3 of this series.

### **THE RESURRECTION OF CONDEMNATION = THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED.**

**John 5:28-29** “Do not be amazed at this, because a time is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and will come out—the ones who have done what is good to the resurrection resulting in life, and the ones who have done what is evil to the resurrection resulting in condemnation.” NET

All who are in the tombs (not in heaven or hell) will hear His voice. Christ teaches that there will be a resurrection of the dead and every person who has ever lived will live again. There will be two resurrections; one to life the other to condemnation. Those people who are resurrected to condemnation will be cast into the lake of fire to be punished, each according to his works, to be burned to ashes. The resurrection of condemnation means that after the execution the death penalty will never be revoked. Jesus implores us to travel the path that leads to life and not to travel the path that leads to destruction.



**Matthew 7:13-14** “Enter through the narrow gate, because the gate is wide and the way is spacious that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. 14 How narrow is the gate and difficult the way that leads to life, and there are few who find it!”

Christ makes it abundantly clear that the majority of humanity will be lost because of their own choice. They choose the wide gate leads to destruction. While few choose the narrow gate that leads to life. Jesus compares life with destruction. Destruction is total cessation of existence, it is not eternal life in the lake of fire.

**Matthew 23:15 & 33** “Woe to you, experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You cross land and sea to make one convert, and when you get one, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves! .... You

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snakes, you offspring of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?" NET

The religious leaders that Jesus rebuked here were men whose minds were not controlled by the Spirit of God, they cannot escape the condemnation of hell - Gehenna; the fiery pit where the wicked are consumed. These men have been agents of satan teaching false doctrines and practices. They were full of religion but not full of the Spirit of God. They rejected the narrow path that leads to life. Their choice and their characters made them unfit for eternal life.

**John 3:16** "For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." NET

God hates the fact that beings he has created are unfit for heaven and the new earth. So He went as far as to have his son Jesus become our saviour and die on the cross to rescue us from the destruction of hellfire. The contrast here is between the saved who receive everlasting life and the lost who perish. It is interesting to note that Jesus did not suffer nor endure eternal torment. He suffered and died separated from God paying the penalty for sin

**Malachi 4:1-3** "For indeed the day is coming, burning like a furnace, and all the arrogant evildoers will be chaff. The coming day will burn them up," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. "It will not leave them even a root or branch. 2 But for you who respect my name, the sun of vindication will rise with healing wings, and you will skip about like calves released from the stall. 3 You will trample on the wicked, for they will be like ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I am preparing," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies." NET

The day is coming when the wicked will be burned up like stubble. Nothing will be left. Satan the root, his followers the branches will be reduced to ashes on the ground. This is when the fire falls from God out of heaven and devours them as described in the book of Revelation 20: 7-9.



If the wicked are unconscious in their graves why do they need to be raised to life again at the second resurrection only to be destroyed forever in the lake of fire? The answer: To receive divine justice, to be punished each according to his works. The Hitlers and the Pol Pots of this world will not escape justice.

**Ezekiel 33:11** "Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but prefer that the wicked change his behavior and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil deeds! Why should you die, O house of Israel?'" NET

The act of God destroying is foreign to His character and plans for the universe but it must be done to rid the universe of sin, rebellion and evil. Thank God that He is merciful and that even though the eternal punishment of death is without end the method of execution by fire is temporary, each according to his works.

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