

Gehenna = The Hell of Fire

Note: The word "Hell" only appears twelve times in the Bible (NT) translating the Greek word "Gehenna" (a burning garbage dump, a place of final punishment), and once translating the Greek word "Tartarus" (a waiting prison for demons, similar to the concept of Sheol).

Matthew 5:21-22, 29-30 ("hell" = "gehenna" = "the hell of fire")

21 "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' 22 But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire.

29 If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

Matthew 18:8-9 ("hell of fire" = "eternal fire")

8 "If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire. 9 And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the hell of fire.

Mark 9:43-48 ("hell" = "gehenna" = "unquenchable fire")

43 If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. 45 And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. 47 And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, 48 where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

Matthew 10:28 ("hell" = "gehenna" = a place of complete destruction)

28 Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Luke 12:4 ("hell" = "gehenna" = a final destination after earthly punishment)

4 "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more. 5 But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell.

Matthew 23: 15 ("child of hell" = a personal identity)

15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cross sea and land to make a single convert, and you make the new convert twice as much a child of hell as yourselves. 31 Thus you testify against yourselves that you are descendants of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your ancestors. 33 You snakes, you brood of vipers! How can you escape being sentenced to hell?

James 3:5-6 ("hell" = "gehenna" = punishment for evil words)

5 How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell.

Compare These Texts to the Following Passage of Scripture:

2 Peter 2:4 ("hell" = "tartarus" = a temporary prison to hold demons)

4 For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of deepest darkness to be kept until the judgment ...

The Outer Darkness

Note: The “Outer Darkness” is a phrase used by Jesus, referring to the punishment of the wicked. He uses it most often, in the context of parables, and describes it a place where there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” This reference is used most often when describing the punishment of the “hypocrites” - i.e. those who claimed to have faith, but didn’t act like it.*

Matthew 8:11-12 (Gentiles will inherit the kingdom, while some Israelites may not)

11 I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12 while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Luke 13:26-30 (some who claim to be Christians will be “thrown out”)

26 Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’ 27 But he will say, ‘I do not know where you come from; go away from me, all you evildoers!’ 28 There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrown out. 29 Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God. 30 Indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

Matthew 24:48-51 (the place of hypocrites = weeping and gnashing of teeth)

48 But if that wicked slave says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ 49 and he begins to beat his fellow slaves, and eats and drinks with drunkards, 50 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know. 51 He will cut him in pieces* and put him with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (* or: “cut him off”)

Matthew 22:11-14 (A man not suited for the king’s banquet is thrown out)

11 “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, 12 and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ 14 For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Matthew 25:29-30 (the servant who did not do the master’s will is thrown out)

29 For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 30 As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Compare These Texts to the Following Passage from Scripture:

Matthew 13:40-42, 49-50 (the final judgment is being “burned up with fire”)

40 Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, 42 and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ...

49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous 50 and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

** The phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth” seems to imply a combination of anger and sadness, as you might experience in envy or jealousy at the sight of someone else receiving what you yourself will never enjoy. For example, in Psalm 112: 10: “The wicked see it and are angry; they gnash their teeth and melt away; the desire of the wicked comes to nothing.”*

