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MINISTRIES

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The Life and Death Series: Part 7 – The Resurrection of the Unjust

So far, in the Life After Death series, we have covered the following:

- We are dust animated by YHWH’s spirit. Because of sin, all will return to dust at death.
- At death, we are not conscious, but waiting for a resurrection back to life.
- Those in the faith will be resurrected to eternal life, and reign with Messiah Yeshua for 1,000 years on Earth as the Torah goes out to the nations.
- At the end of the 1,000 years Heaven and Earth are made new and we live not in Heaven, but live eternally on Earth.
- Those not in the faith will also be resurrected following the 1,000 year reign. They will be resurrected unto judgment.

This part of the Life After Death Series will focus on this last group, the group that participates in the resurrection unto judgment.

Why are unbelievers resurrected as well? Do unbelievers go to a place of eternal punishment? Or are they destroyed?

The first thing we need to establish is the understanding that unbelievers are also resurrected.

Acts 24:14-15

*But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a **resurrection** of both the just **and the unjust**.*

Why are unbelievers resurrected? If the punishment of sin is death, and they are already dead, why resurrect them? Fair question right?

Unbelievers are resurrected because they need to stand judgment. It is not possible to stand for judgment when you are dead, being nothing more than dust. So, unbelievers are resurrected to stand trial

according to the Torah-based protocol of witnesses and a judge. They need a fair trial prior to their judgment of eternal death. That is what the Torah demands.

Unbelievers have not been in a place of eternal punishment prior to their judgment. It should be obvious, but it is not compatible with the Torah to prescribe punishment prior to a fair trial. YHWH does not break His Torah, but defines His own righteousness by His Torah (1 John 3:4). YHWH does not sin

We find the same resurrection of unbelievers in Daniel 12. As we covered in part three of this series in more detail, the unbelievers are resurrected to shame. They will be ashamed at the result of their judgment. We, as resurrected believers, will always hold them in everlasting contempt.

Daniel 12:2

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

The shame experienced is temporary, because the unjust are destroyed, and thus their shame ends at the second death. The contempt we feel for them is eternal, because we live eternally and are protected from the second death.

As a result of this judgment of the resurrected unjust, they will be thrown into an eternal fire.

Matthew 18:8-9

And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.

What does fire do? Fire consumes and destroys. That is what reality teaches us. The physical teaches the spiritual and the spiritual teaches the physical.

While the unjust are indeed resurrected, their bodies are not immortal. They are thrown into an eternal fire, in which they are consumed and destroyed. They will die a second death, and this death will be forever, with no more resurrections to follow. Their eternal punishment is an eternal state of non-existence. We will detail this out a little more later. For now, it is important to realize that it is the fire that is said to be eternal, not the resurrected unbelievers. That is an important distinction.

Our reward, as believers, will be eternal life at the resurrection of the just. The resurrection of the unjust will lead to the eternal punishment of eternal death. It is the exact opposite fate of our reward of eternal life.

Matthew 25:41-46

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Is not death the judgment listed in the Torah for rejecting the Word of God? Is not the judgment in the end going to be founded on the Torah? Does not God define Himself as the righteous judge based on the Torah? Is not the Torah the established foundation and protocol for righteous judgment?

We should all agree that it most certainly is. So, what does the Torah state should happen to those that reject the Word of God?

Are they:

- A) Punished by ongoing horrific torture?
- B) Sentenced to death?

Answer: They are sentenced to death.

The unjust will be resurrected to be sentenced to eternal death as their eternal punishment. The death will be the result of fire. We will discuss the possible nature of this fire a little later. But for now, we want to focus on how this fire is connected to the English word hell.

HELL

Not to be confusing, but unfortunately, there are three Greek root words in the New Testament that are often translated as "hell."

These are *hades*, *tartaroo*, and *geenna*.

Unfortunately and understandably, this has led to considerable confusion on the topic. Let's review the biblical and contextual usage of each word as a means to better define these three Greek words.

Hades, in the New Testament, most frequently refers to the grave (Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; Acts 2:27, 31; 1 Corinthians 15:55; Revelation 1:18). In fact, the Septuagint, which is the Greek version of the Old Testament written about 2nd or 3rd century BCE, mostly uses the Greek word *hades* for the Hebrew words *sheol*.

At times, it is used as a personification for the grave (Revelation 6:8; 20:13-14). Once, it is used in the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man (Luke 16:23).

In more modern English translations of the New Testament, the words *hades* is retained in its transliterated form, instead of being translated into the word *hell*.

Next, let's look in 2 Peter 2:4 at the only occurrence of a variation of the Greek verb *tartaroo*:

2 Peter 2:4

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell (*tartaroo*) and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;

Here, Peter uses the same word found in a Greek myth about the fate of the Titans, a family of giant gods descended from Uranus (heaven) and Gaea (earth). The most famous of the Titans was Cronus, who led the Titans in their war against Zeus and the Olympian gods. After being defeated by Zeus, the

Titans were imprisoned in a section of the underworld called Tartarus, which was said to be located below Hades.

The apostle Peter uses *tartaros*, a verbal form of the proper noun *Tartarus*, to explain the fate of some of the fallen angels. He states that for their sins, these angels had been *tartaros*, which Thayer says literally means to "to thrust down to *Tartarus*."

Tartarus is also known in the Bible as "the Abyss" (Luke 8:31; Revelation 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3). This is the place where some of the fallen angels are kept chained in darkness, awaiting "the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6).

Lastly, let's examine *geenna*, the Greek word most commonly translated as "hell" in English. This is the Greek word that best fits most preconceived ideas about the nature of hell.

Geenna is often associated with "fire" when it is used (Matthew 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; James 3:6).

The etymology of *geenna* is extremely important to understanding its meaning.

Geenna is a transliteration of the Hebrew גֵּי הִנּוֹם (*gey* - "valley" and *Hinnom* - "lamentation").

Gehenna (the Latin form of the name) refers to an actual place: the Valley of Hinnom (Joshua 15:8; 18:16; Nehemiah 11:30), also called the Valley of the Son of Hinnom (Joshua 15:8; 18:16; 2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; Jeremiah 7:31-32; 19:2, 6; 32:35).

This valley, which lies to the south of Jerusalem, had a poor reputation. It eventually became the Israelite place of worship for Molech (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5; 1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 32:35), an Ammonite god. A central focus of Molech worship was human sacrifice; specifically, the offering of children in fire. This place was also known as "*Tophet*" (2 Kings 23:10; Isaiah 30:33; Jeremiah 7:31-32; 19:6, 11-14). The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT) has this to say about *Tophet*:

The name "Tophet" referred to a place in the Valley of the Son(s) of Hinnom (2 Kings 23:10; Jer 7:31ff; Jer 19:6) where children were burned to death as an offering to pagan deities. More specifically, it was a "high place" (Jer 7:32), an open-air shrine, located most probably at a point outside the southern end of Jerusalem where the Hinnom Valley meets the Kidron Valley in the vicinity of Akeldama, the "Field of Blood" (Acts 1:19). . . . Jeremiah's reference to the "valley of the dead bodies and the ashes" (Jer 31:40) perhaps relates to the horrible practice of child sacrifice at Tophet. . . . The place itself was probably a deep, wide pit containing a bonfire of blazing wood (Isa 30:33) into which the hapless children were thrown. From the abbreviated name "Valley of Hinnom" (see especially Josh 15:8; Josh 18:16), Hebrew ge-hinnom, so infamous that it could also be called simply "the Valley" (Jer 2:23), came Gehenna, Greek geenna . . .

Child sacrifice among the ancient Israelites, though presumably infrequent, was nevertheless common enough to warrant its absolute prohibition in the Mosaic laws (Lev 18:21; Deut 18:10). In spite of the Lord's stern warnings, both Ahaz (2 Chr 28:3) and Manasseh (2 Kings 21:6) burned their sons as offerings. . . .

Understandably, Jeremiah inveighed against the abominable practice of child sacrifice at Tophet in the Hinnom Valley and predicted divine judgment on those involved in perpetrating it (Jer 7:31-34; Jer 19:1-15). His contemporary, good King Josiah, defiled Tophet so that no one could ever practice the rite there again (2 Kings 23:10). (p. 979, vol. II, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament)

According to one medieval source (Kimchi), after their return from the Babylonian exile, the Jews turned the Valley of Hinnom into the city dump. Garbage and everything else deemed unclean, including the bodies of dead animals and executed criminals, were incinerated there. For that reason, a fire was kept burning constantly in the Valley of Hinnom. Even though it was no longer used for evil worship, the waste and acrid smoke there made it a dreary place. However, while this idea could be accurate, there is no ancient evidence to substantiate this common claim.

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

“Why the place of torment came to have this name, the name of the valley south of Jerusalem, gê-hinnôm (Josh 18.16 LXX: Γαιεννα), now Wādi-rabābi, is uncertain. The standard view, namely, that the valley was where the city’s garbage was incinerated and that the constantly rising smoke and smell of corruption conjured up the fiery torments of the damned, is without ancient support, although it could be correct. Perhaps the abode of the wicked dead gained its name because children had there been sacrificed in fire to the god Molech (2 Chr 28.3; 33.6), or because Jeremiah, recalling its defilement by Josiah (2 Kgs 23.10; cr. 21.6), thundered against the place (Jer 7.31-2; 19.2-9; 32.35), or because it was believed that in the valley was the entrance to the underworld home of the pagan chthonian deities (cf. b. ‘Erub. 19a) (Matthew 1-7, 514-15).

Regardless, the fact does remain that in ancient times, *Tophet* was the “valley of dead bodies and ashes” where human sacrifices occurred. It paints an interesting picture, not in which the judged unbelievers will be tortured indefinitely by fire, but that they will be burned up and completely destroyed.

Interestingly, the transliteration *geenna* NEVER appears in the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint. Where this place is mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures, it is translated into Greek by the phrases "*pharaggos Onom*" and "*napes Onnam*." This indicates that *geenna* didn't come into common usage until sometime after 250 BCE, at the earliest.

Keeping in mind that Gehenna is a specific place and related to *geenna*, let's look at all the times *geenna* appears in the New Testament. We'll start with three related passages of Scripture that are pivotal to understanding the 1st century Jewish conception of "hell":

Matthew 5:29-30

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

Matthew 18:8-9

And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire.

And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the **hell** of fire.

Mark 9:43-48

And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to **hell**, to the **unquenchable fire**. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into **hell**, **‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’**

It's important to note that in the parallel passages from Matthew 18 and Mark 9, Yeshua equates "entering into life" with "entering the kingdom of God." Clearly he's speaking of the age-lasting life of the resurrection that immediately precedes the Millennial kingdom.

In all three of these passages, Yeshua uses hyperbole to make his point about the seriousness of sin. He wasn't advocating the literal removal of body parts; rather, he was highlighting the severe consequences of habitually breaking God's Law. Lawlessness is the biblical definition of sin (1 John 3:4). According to Yeshua, a lawless life will lead to being cast into the fires of *Gehenna*.

Mark's version of Yeshua's exhortation to avoid sin (Mark 9:43-48) is the most telling of all the usages of *geenna*, because it adds a detail not found in the parallel accounts in Matthew. Three times, Yeshua specifically ties the concept of punishment in "hell" with worms that don't die and fire that isn't quenched.

These statements are a quote from Isaiah 66:24, the final verse of an Old Testament prophecy about the coming kingdom of God. Let's examine the entire prophecy to see the context for Yeshua's mention of Gehenna:

Isaiah 66:15-24

“For behold, the Lord (YHWH) will come in fire,
and his chariots like the whirlwind,
to render his anger in fury,
and his rebuke with flames of fire.
For by fire will the Lord (YHWH) enter into judgment,
and by his sword, with all flesh;
and those slain by the Lord (YHWH) shall be many.

“Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go into the gardens, following one in the midst, eating pig's flesh and the abomination and mice, shall come to an end together, declares the Lord (YHWH).

“For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations. And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the Lord (YHWH), on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the Lord (YHWH), just as the

Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the Lord (YHWH). And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the Lord (YHWH).

“For as the new heavens and the new earth
that I make
shall remain before me, says the Lord (YHWH),
so shall your offspring and your name remain.
From new moon to new moon,
and from Sabbath to Sabbath,
all flesh shall come to worship before me,
declares the Lord (YHWH).

“And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me.
For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to
all flesh.”

A key principle in understanding the Bible is allowing it to interpret itself. To accurately understand what "hell" truly is, we must evaluate Yeshua's use of *geenna* in the CONTEXT of Isaiah's prophecy.

This prophecy, the final one in the book of Isaiah, describes Yeshua's return. In it, Isaiah speaks of YHWH's wrath against those who oppose God and defy His commands. He tells us that Israelites scattered all over the world will be repatriated to the Holy Land by those nations where they then dwell. Isaiah prophesies that from Sabbath to Sabbath, and at the start of every new month, ALL FLESH will worship YHWH through Messiah Yeshua.

One of the factors motivating such worship will be the public display of dead bodies of law-breakers before those worshipers who come to Jerusalem. As is clear from this prophecy, once again the Valley of Hinnom on the southern end of Jerusalem will become a garbage dump where unclean and despised things will be cast. The final verse of the prophecy speaks of the dead bodies of those transgressors that will be thrown into *Gehenna*. Their corpses will be fed upon by worms and burned by fire. It is this detail regarding those who are cast into the Valley of Hinnom that Yeshua included in his statement on the dangers of sin (Mark 9:44, 46, 48).

"Their worm" is a reference to the many worms, which will be found there feasting on the dead bodies. These worms "do not die" in the sense that they never "finish" or "complete" their task (aiding in the decomposition of the corpses). It does NOT mean that these worms are immortal, as some might imagine from the English. Figuratively speaking, there will be "no finish" for the worms in Gehenna.

Similarly, the reference to the fire not being quenched simply means that the fires in the Valley of Hinnom will not be put out before they accomplish their task of burning up and destroying all those who are cast there. It will be an unstoppable or unquenchable fire.

Matthew 3:12

His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the **chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.**”

It is an unstoppable fire that will completely consume the chaff, leaving nothing left. The chaff in this instance, are unbelievers at the time of judgment. Chaff is not burned forever, it is burned up, completely destroyed, and even the Greek word used here means “to burn up.”

Clearly, Yeshua's mention of Gehenna was a warning that all those who wished to live in the coming kingdom of God should avoid sin. Otherwise, they would find themselves judged unworthy of this reward, and instead would receive the wages of their sin, which is death (Romans 6:23).

In Matthew 7, Yeshua spoke of those who, at the time of their judgment, would be expecting to be rewarded with "eternal life" in the kingdom of God because of their perceived service to him:

Matthew 7:21-23

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

This statement by Yeshua is a warning to all those who seek to enter the millennial kingdom of God. It is not enough to talk the talk; one is also required to walk the walk.

As the Scriptures plainly state, it is NOT the hearers of the Law that will be justified in the sight of God, but rather the doers of the Law (Luke 8:21; Romans 2:13; James 1:22-25). All those who reject the Word of God will find themselves cast into Gehenna.

There is another prophecy in the book of Isaiah that speaks of the return of Yeshua and the part to be played by the Valley of Hinnom:

Isaiah 30:25-33

And on every lofty mountain and every high hill there will be brooks running with water, in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. Moreover, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day when the Lord binds up the brokenness of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.

Behold, the **name of the Lord (YHWH)** comes from afar,
burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke;
his lips are full of fury,
and his tongue is like a devouring fire;
his breath is like an overflowing stream
that reaches up to the neck;
to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction,
and to place on the jaws of the peoples a bridle that leads astray.

You shall have a song as in the night when a holy feast is kept, and gladness of heart, as when one sets out to the sound of the flute to go to the mountain of the Lord (YHWH), to the Rock of Israel. And the Lord (YHWH) will cause his majestic voice to be heard and the descending blow of his arm to be seen, in furious anger and a flame of devouring fire, with a cloudburst and storm and hailstones. The Assyrians will be terror-stricken at the voice of the Lord (YHWH), when he strikes with his rod. And every stroke of the appointed staff that the Lord (YHWH) lays on them will be to the sound of tambourines and lyres. Battling with brandished arm, he will fight with them. **For a burning place has long been prepared; indeed, for the king it is made ready, its**

pyre made deep and wide, with fire and wood in abundance; the breath of the Lord (YHWH), like a stream of sulfur, kindles it.

The "Name of the LORD (YHWH)" is used here as a title for Messiah Yeshua, as YHWH is literally a component of his name (Isaiah 60:9; Jeremiah 3:17; etc.). We see once again that the Scriptures speak of a great slaughter of God's enemies that will occur at the return of Yeshua. At the same time, salvation will come to all of Israel.

The final verse of the prophecy tells us that *Tophet* (i.e., *Gehenna*) has been prepared for "the king" (Matthew 25:41) and that the "breath of YHWH" will kindle it.

Parallel Scriptures show that this "king" is the coming Antichrist. He will be slain by "the breath of the Lord's mouth" (2 Thessalonians 2:8) in the "lake of fire" (Revelation 19:20). The "lake of fire" mentioned in Revelation appears to be a reference to the fires that will burn outside the city of Jerusalem in the Valley of Hinnom during the Millennium (and also outside the New Jerusalem after the Millennium ends).

The next two usages of *geenna* we'll examine in the NT are often used to "prove" that Gehenna is a place of everlasting torture:

Matthew 10:28

And 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 12:4-5

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

In the Bible, the "soul" is the combination of the physical body and the human spirit. The soul is the whole person; their flesh, character, personality, disposition, nature, etc. As we revealed early on in this series, Scripture plainly tells us that man does not HAVE a soul; man IS a soul:

Genesis 2:7

then the Lord (YHWH) God (Elohim) formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature (soul).

Yeshua's point in Matthew 10:28 and Luke 12:4-5 is easily understood if a person recognizes the distinction between the body and the soul. The Messiah cautioned his listeners to fear the One who could not only kill the physical body, but also destroy the soul.

Matthew 10:28

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him **who can destroy (*apolummi*) **both soul and body** in hell.**

It is worth pointing out that the Greek verb for "destroy" (*apolummi*) often means to cease to exist. It is often used to refer to physically dying.

Herod wanted to “destroy” the baby Yeshua (Matthew 2:13). And in terms of eternal life or death, in Matthew 7:13, destruction (*apoleia*) is the opposite of life.

Thus a case can be made that the wicked will perish or be destroyed in *Gehenna*, not live on forever in eternal torment, based on the meaning of the word that’s used here. This is also consistent with the historical background of Gehenna or Tophet and supports the metaphorical usage.

Newman Greek Dictionary

ἀόλλυμι (ὄλλυμι = **destroy**, ὀλεθρος) fut. ἀπολέσω and ἀπολῶ; aor. ἀπόλεσα, subj. 3 sg. ἀπολέσῃ, inf. ἀπολέσαι; pf. ptc. ἀπολωλώς; fut. midd. ἀπολοῦμαι; aor. midd. ἀπωλόμην. **destroy**; kill; lose; midd. be lost, **perish**, **be ruined**; die; pass away (He 1.11); pf. ptc. Lost

Mounce Greek Dictionary

K G660 | S G622 ἀπόλλυμι apollymi 90x
to destroy utterly; to kill, Mt. 2:13; to bring to nought, **make void**, 1 Cor. 1:19; to lose, be deprived of, Mt. 10:42; **to be destroyed, perish**, Mt. 9:17; **to be put to death, to die**, Mt. 26:52; to be lost, to stray, Mt. 10:6 → **destroy; lose; perish**.

God can (and will) resurrect the righteous so that they may live in the Messianic kingdom. Therefore, the righteous have no reason to fear death; they have the sure promise of God that they will be raised to life once again.

Not so for the wicked, however. Yeshua warned the lawless that disobedience would mean they would not be qualified to live in the coming Messianic age. Instead, they would at that time suffer the fate of those who transgress against God (Isaiah 66:24). They would be put to death during the Millennium and would not be allowed to live during that marvelous age of peace and justice. Their bodies would be cast into Gehenna as a witness to all regarding the penalty for disobedience.

Now let's look at another occurrence of *geenna* in the New Testament:

Matthew 5:21-22

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.

In this passage of Scripture, Yeshua magnifies the Law (Isaiah 42:21) and shows the true spiritual intent of the command against murder (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17). He states that one who discounts the worth of a brother and is angry with him for no reason has broken the spirit of the Law and is in danger of being punished for murder by being executed (Exodus 21:12; Leviticus 24:17) and having their body thrown into the fires burning in the Valley of Hinnom. Consequently, they would lose their opportunity at “eternal life” during the Messianic age.

In his stinging rebuke of the hypocritical Pharisees, Yeshua twice mentioned Gehenna:

Matthew 23:15

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

Matthew 23:33

You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?

The Pharisees thought that their diligent study of the TANAKH would ensure them a place in the coming kingdom of God (John 5:39). Therefore, Yeshua's claim that they would instead merit being cast into *Gehenna* must have shocked and outraged them.

In the final New Testament occurrence of *geenna*, James speaks to the "twelve tribes scattered abroad" (James 1:1) about the difficulty mankind has in controlling their words:

James 3:6

And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.

We've now examined all occurrences of *geenna* in the New Testament. In each case, the implication of the usage is that suffering everlasting punishment by being physically killed and burned up in *Gehenna* is the OPPOSITE of enjoying eternal life on Earth. The practical effect of being consigned to *Gehenna* means eternal death instead of eternal life. No other conclusion is supported by the original text or context. As believers, we are spared this "second death."

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! **Over such the second death has no power**, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

Now let's look at a few related passages that speak of reward and punishment in the age to come. We'll start by revisiting Yeshua's comments on the judgment he will bring when he comes to reign over the world from Jerusalem:

Matthew 25:31-46

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister

to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

This passage says something quite different than what most people understand. First, notice that it is "all the nations" that are gathered before King Messiah as he sits on his throne (v. 32). Next, he separates the people from these nations into two groups: sheep on the right, goats on the left. What is the criteria for this division? The prior treatment of Yeshua's brethren (vv. 40, 45). Yeshua here is speaking as the "Son of Man." Based on the context of this passage, his brethren are all those standing before him; in other words, all of humanity.

If all of humanity is standing before Yeshua, then all resurrections must have taken place, including the resurrection of the unjust, or unbelievers. The resurrection of the unjust occurs AFTER the millennial reign.

Revelation 20:5

The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.

So, the resurrection of the unjust occurs just at the close of the 7th day, or the 7,000th year. It is also at this time that the New Jerusalem appears to arrive (Revelation 21:9-22:5).

This paints an interesting picture, as it appears as though we enter into the New Jerusalem as the Bride of the Messiah.

Everyone else, meaning the unjust or unbelievers that were resurrected, are stuck outside the door, not being able to enter the New Jerusalem. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, knowing that their destruction following their judgment is imminent.

Heaven and Earth are destroyed by fire.

2 Peter 3:11-13

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, **because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!** But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

It is interesting that this description of the destruction of Heaven and Earth in 2 Peter is prefaced by a parallel to Noah's Ark.

When the eight entered into Noah's Ark, they waited seven days, and then the rains came to destroy the Earth. In this, the Earth was destroyed by water, a cleansing of water.

In the end, the Earth will be destroyed by fire, after waiting 7,000 years, or 7 days. At the end of the 7th day the fire will go forth, destroying all, just like hell, or the Greek word *geenna* that we thoroughly examined. It appears that we will be in the New Jerusalem, almost acting as a type of Noah's Ark, exiting on the 8th day.

The 8th day is of prophetic significance. There were 8 in Noah's Ark to begin with, and it was the 8 who survived the destruction of the Earth. Likewise, it will be us, as resurrected believers who will survive till the 8th day, symbolic of the Eternity to come.

As many know, the feast day Sukkot or Tabernacles, found in Leviticus 23, instructs us to tabernacle in temporary dwellings for exactly seven days. But, then there is this mysterious eight day, often called the Last Great Day by tradition. (See our teaching "[The Moedim Series: Sukkot](#)" for more information)

When the Earth is destroyed, it will be the destruction of our temporary dwelling place, where we have lived for 7,000 years, or 7 days if you will. But, on the eighth day, it is the Last Great Day. It is the day of eternity.

It will also be the time in which all chaos and sin has been destroyed. Heaven and Earth will have been made new.

Revelation 21:1-8

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. **He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.**"

And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.

Such will be our new permanent dwelling place...our heritage...no longer a temporary dwelling, but a permanent dwelling place with God Himself dwelling with us. The end is revealed from the beginning. All is restored.

Revelation 21:7

The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

But all else will be destroyed.

Revelation 21:8

"But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

Because all the unjust will be destroyed, the only ones left on the eighth day will be those who have been resurrected unto eternal life, who have had the stony heart fully cut out, and replaced with a heart for YHWH, a heart that follows the Torah, and glorifies YHWH for all eternity.

That is what circumcision represents on the eighth day. It represents a circumcision of the heart...a cutting out of the stony heart and replaced with YHWH's heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

The net result for believers is a resurrection unto eternal life, and everything is made new.

The net result for unbelievers is a resurrection unto judgment, leading to the second death, where they literally will die again. They will cease to exist forever. They will be destroyed as Heaven and Earth are destroyed, by the eternal fire of YHWH. The fire is likely the Word of God coming out of YHWH, brilliant fiery light, which will destroy all that is corrupted.

Jeremiah 23:29

Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord (YHWH), and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

2 Peter 3:7

But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

The day of judgment will be beyond anything we could comprehend. One group will be destroyed, having declared no interest in living for their created purpose, which is to glorify YHWH. The other group will joyfully live forever, glorifying YHWH in all they say and do.

SOME REMAINING DIFFICULT PASSAGES

Revelation 14:9-11

And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

People automatically assume that this passage is about people suffering in hell forever and ever. There are no holy angels in a literal hell. There is no Yeshua in a literal hell. There is no "day and night" in a literal hell...

Do we really expect that Yeshua is going to stay in hell with the holy angels to torment unbelievers for eternity?

This verse is clearly about a future event that will take place on earth as God's wrath is being poured out on those who worship the beast. Hence, the "No rest day and night." The period of God's wrath could likely go on for a number of days.

People often get caught up on "And the smoke of their torment will rise forever and ever"

Profound events of destruction often mention rising smoke as a means to forever remember what just occurred.

The text does not say that torment will go on forever. Read it very carefully. It clearly says "the smoke" will rise forever. Smoke rising forever is much different than torment going on forever.

John is using the biblical expression of “smoke rising” to describe how people then remembered an important incident. Today, because of technology, photos and videos can preserve the memory of big events, but back then the enemies of God were destroyed and it was over. There was no video to review over and over again back then. The preservation of smoke was the only way for them to remember the great event. It was the evidence or memory that it occurred, and likewise, it naturally became a Hebraic idiom.

Look how John speaks of Babylon’s destruction, “[Once more they cried out, “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”](#) (Revelation 19:3)

Does that mean that Babylon on Earth will be tormented forever? No. The destruction is a one-time event. The smoke is not going to literally go up forever and ever. It is a common Hebraic idiom to signify how the event will always be remembered. So, we suggest that we should be consistent in our means of interpretation.

One day Babylon will be destroyed and even in Heaven we will never forget God’s destruction of that city. That is what is meant by smoke rising forever. The same thing happened to Sodom and Gomorrah,

Genesis 19:28

[And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and he looked and, behold, the **smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace.**](#)

Likewise, when the unbelievers are destroyed following their resurrection, the event will be remembered.

Unbelievers that are resurrected to face judgment are not resurrected into immortal bodies. The lake of fire destroys those that are mortal. However, those that are immortal, such as the devil, end up being tortured forever. Revelation 20 helps us form understanding of the end result of both groups.

Starting in Revelation 20:7, we see how the devil, beast, and false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire. There, we are told, they are tormented forever.

Revelation 20:7-10

[And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, **and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.**](#)

Notice how when the devil, beast, and false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire, it is said that they are tormented forever and ever. There is no mention of a second death. They cannot die, despite being in the lake of fire.

Yet, it continues. In Revelation 20:11, we begin to read about the resurrected unbelievers, and when they are thrown into the lake of fire they experience a second death.

Revelation 20:11-15

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Because the devil, beast, and false prophet, along with all those not written in the book of life are thrown in the lake of fire, many mistakenly assume they all experience the same result, meaning eternal torment. However, we see that is not the case. The devil, beast, and false prophet, it is they who experience eternal torment. They do not die. Their works will die (1 John 3:8) but they do not experience an eternal death. However, Revelation 20 is clear that resurrected unbelievers do experience a death, and because this will be the second time they die, it is called the second death. They will be dead forever. Death and Hades represent death. When death and Hades are thrown into the fire, the metaphor stays consistent. The reality of death is destroyed, and eternal life prevails for all those remaining. Those remaining are us, believers in the faith, who are resurrected and have overcome death. Death...now no longer exists for anyone. Death is destroyed.

While humans will not be tortured forever, it appears that the devil and demons will not escape that reality. They even seem to know that someday this time of torment is coming:

Matthew 8:28-29

And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to **torment us before the time?**"

Another set of verses that are often confused is found in 1 Peter 3 and 1 Peter 4.

1 Peter 3:18-20

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

1 Peter 4:4-6

With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

With regard to 1 Peter 3:19 and 1 Peter 4:4-6, we would understand these words to mean that, through the voice of Noah, the same message of Messiah Yeshua, or spirit of Messiah Yeshua, was preached to that generation, whose spirits are now "in prison," that is, in Hades, or in Hebrew, *sheol*.

Remember, *sheol* simply means grave. It means being dead, turning to dust in the grave. *Sheol* is also

scripturally referred to as a prison, as we referred to earlier. And the only escape from the prison of death, or *sheol*, is a resurrection.

In other words, Peter does not say that Yeshua preached to them while they were in prison. He says they were preached to once, during the days of Noah, and now they are in prison, meaning dead in *sheol*.

This understanding makes the most sense and is likely the more natural understanding of the passage in view of what Peter said earlier about the spirit of the Messiah speaking through the prophets of old.

1 Peter 1:10-11

Concerning this salvation, **the prophets** who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time **the Spirit of Christ in them** was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

So, understanding 1 Peter 4 should be through the lens of what Peter already said in similar context just a few chapters ago. Remember, context matters.

With regard to 1 Peter 4:6, “preached to the dead” to refer to those who, after being preached to, have since died. He is not referring to preaching to them after they have died. The context suggests this kind of understanding, as J. N. D. Kelly explains:

They [the Christians] may well have been exposed to scoffing questions from pagan neighbors, and anxious ones from one another, “What is the gain of your having become Christians, since you apparently die like other men?” The writer’s answer is that, so far from being useless, the preaching of Christ and his gospel to those who have since died had precisely this end in view, that although according to human calculation they might seem to be condemned, they might in fact enjoy life eternal.” (A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude, 175)

We would say, therefore, that there is no textual basis in the New Testament for claiming that after Yeshua’s death that he was preaching to spirits imprisoned in Hades/Sheol.

So, here is the big picture. Here is the summary of everything we have covered in the Life After Death series.

When we die, we return to dust. Death, or turning to dust, is the consequence of sin, which started with Adam and Eve.

To return to something, we become the same state that we were prior to life. We return to what we were before man was made living. We return to dust, and YHWH’s Spirit in us, that gave us life, returns back to Him.

As dust, we were not self-aware nor had a consciousness before man was created, and according to YHWH, it is to that exact condition that we are told we return. Dust has no consciousness. Dust is not self-aware.

This is true for the believer and the unbeliever. Adam and Eve did not exist prior to life, and neither did we. We return back to what we were previously. Nothing. Non-life. Non-existence. We become nothing more than the dust we walk on...without a body we are not self-aware. We do not have a consciousness.

It is sin that led to this promise of death. As a solution for death, meaning a return to dust, we as believers, are promised a resurrection unto life. A resurrection is the only solution to death. A resurrection is the only solution to not returning to dust indefinitely. This is the purpose and reason for the need of a resurrection. The resurrection is the hope that we have in the faith. Without a resurrection, we have no hope for eternal life. Without a resurrection, life ceases to exist.

The upcoming resurrection was made possible by Messiah Yeshua and his sacrifice, which removed the consequence of our sin through grace.

Because at death we have no consciousness, nor are we self-aware, consequently there is no perception of time, or perception of anything really. When we die, the next thing we experience is being raised to life with all in the faith in the first resurrection with various degrees of rewards due to us as individuals. For those who are not in the faith, the next thing they experience is also a resurrection unto judgment. Those not in the faith also need to be resurrected in order to face judgment, because one has to have a form of consciousness in order to hear and understand the accusations placed before you and then receive the judgment that follows. This is the only reason unbelievers require a resurrection, that is, to face judgment.

There are two instances of resurrections, separated by a distinct Biblically prophetic unit of time of 1,000 years.

The first resurrection occurs at the return of our Messiah Yeshua. At the first resurrection, all those who are in the faith and have died will be raised back to life in a new body, and those that are in the faith but still alive will also be transformed into a new body. This “new body,” while still apparently physical in nature, appears to be different and better than our previous body. It is made to last indefinitely and work perfectly. In this new body, our nature will be to only want to follow the Torah, God’s law or will for man.

Those that participate in the first resurrection at the return of Yeshua will receive certain rewards based on the outputs of our faith in this life. We will then enter the 1,000-year Sabbath rest, in which Yeshua will reign. Many of our rewards in this time to come, will be designated to those resurrected in the faith based upon how well we practiced and taught the love-centric Torah in this life. How well did you understand and apply the Torah? How well did you defend it and teach it to others? How did you assist and support the effort for the nations to learn and apply the Torah in the faith?

We will then be moved to the promised land in our resurrected bodies.

At the time of the first resurrection, there will be some who are not of the faith, yet survived what is known as the Great Tribulation and YHWH’s wrath. While they do not participate in the resurrection, they will consist of the “nations.”

Israel, as the geocentric Kingdom of YHWH on Earth, will minister to the world YHWH’s Torah and call on all nations to hear and obey. The light, or Torah, will go forth to all nations.

During this time, those that survived the Great Tribulation and wrath and did not participate in the first resurrection because of their lack of faith, will begin to enter into the faith. While they still exist in unresurrected bodies, or bodies that have not yet been transformed, it appears that the benefits of this 1,000-year period will aid in enabling a longer life, yet death is still possible (Isaiah 65:18-25).

At the end of the 1,000-year period, when the second and final resurrection occurs, there will still be two unresurrected groups.

Group one consists of all those who are not in the faith and have died, throughout all of history, as no unbelievers have been resurrected up until this point yet, but now will be.

Group two consists of those who came into the faith after the first resurrection, but have also died. During this second and final resurrection, those in the faith but have died will be resurrected into new bodies. Those in the faith but have not died will be transformed into new bodies just as those in the first resurrection.

How it plays out for both groups in the second resurrection is quite different.

Those that are not in the faith but have died, throughout all of history, are now resurrected in the second and final resurrection. This enables them to face judgment. Using the description of the New Jerusalem, and the prophetic patterns found in the event of Noah's ark, what develops is rather astounding. After the 1,000 years, the New Jerusalem arrives. All those who are in the faith, now having been resurrected, might enter into the New Jerusalem as a type of ark. Those not in the faith are also resurrected, in the second resurrection, outside the New Jerusalem to face judgment.

Those not in the faith have judgment pronounced on them outside of the New Jerusalem. There is weeping and gnashing of teeth, a desperate plea to enter the safety of the New Jerusalem, but instead are cast into the outer darkness. The light of YHWH floods the New Jerusalem. In our glorified and pure resurrected bodies, we can withstand the fire of YHWH's pure light. The light floods out of the New Jerusalem and dissolving and destroying all corruption of Heaven and Earth outside of it in an intense heat. This would include those not in the faith that were resurrected unto a judgment of eternal death. This is called the second death. It is just like the first death, but with no possibility of a future resurrection that saves you from death. All corruption of sin is burned up and consumed by YHWH's fire. It is a purification. Heaven and Earth are destroyed.

Heaven and Earth are then made new, and forever begins in a perfect sustainable eternity.

This concludes the core teaching of the Life After Death Series. Subsequent follow-ups to this series will focus on frequently asked questions.

We pray that this teaching blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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