

Sheol and Gehenna:

Outlines:

- I. analytical word study:
 - a. Qeber: the Hebrew word for grave.
 - b. Sheol: does it mean grave or the world of the dead.
 - c. Gehenna: the Greek word for hell.
- II. Analytical study to passages the deals with the destruction of the wicked:
 - a. Rev. 22:15
 - b. Jude 12-13
 - c. John 3:36
 - d. Romans 2: 6-11
 - e. Matt. 25:46
 - f. Matthew 10:28
 - g. 2 Thess. 1:9
 - h. Romans 9: 22-23 and Phil. 3:19-20
 - i. Romans 6:21-23
- III. Answering JW arguments for the Total annihilation of the wicked:
- IV. Conclusion.

I. Let us start by studying some Biblical terms:

Qeber/taphos or menema: Taphos or Menema are the greek words used in the LXX and NT for the Hebrew word Qeber. Qeber is hebrew for grave or burial place or tomb. For example; Jacob commanded Josesh “Behold, I am about to die; in my grave (*qeber*) which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me.” Gen. 50:5. In the KJV the word was translated as grave (35x), sepulchre (25x), buryingplace (6x).¹

In the scriptures, Sheol never used to describe a tomb or a grave². But very rarely we see Qeber to assume the meaning of the “underworld.” In Psalm 88:11 we see Qeber parallel to Abaddon (literally the place of the downfall, another name to Sheol). And In Ezk. 32:22-26 describes the circular arrangement of the graves in the underworld; here the notion of grave transfered to the underworld.³

¹ <http://v3.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H6913&t=NASB>

² KJV is wrong in translating Sheol as grave. Only in Gen. 42:38; 44:29, 31 that the word Sheol can possibly means grave. However, there is no reason to assume that grave is what was in Jacob’s mind and not the unseen world of the dead.

³ Theological dictionary of the OT, Bottweck, Riggren, and Fabry editors, (Eerdmans’s Grand rapids, MI 1992-1993) V. 14 page 244

Sheol/Hades: Hades is the Greek word that is used in the LXX and the in NT which is equivalent to the Hebrew word Sheol. Sheol means “the underworld” or “the world of the dead”
Sheol isn't to be identified with Qeber⁴.

a. In Isaiah 14:9-19 the spirits of the dead who are in Sheol (v9) are celebrating the fall of the king of Babylon saying “you have been cast out of the tomb (qeber) like a rejected branch” v19. These 2 words in our passage here can't be synonymous.

b. In the LXX Qeber is never translated as Hades just as Sheol is never translated as mneema.

c. Qeber can be found in the plural form (ex. Ex. 14:11), can be purchased or owned (Gen. 23:4-20), can be in the “choicest site” (Gen. 23:6)...etc. none of that is applicable to Sheol.

Sheol is a place of Consciousness⁵:

a. Isaiah 14:9-11 ““Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come; It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth; It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones. They will all respond and say to you, ‘Even you have been made weak as we,

You have become like us. ‘Your pomp *and* the music of your harps

Have been brought down to Sheol;

Maggots are spread out *as your bed* beneath you

And worms are your covering.””

b. Ezekiel 32:21 “The strong among the mighty ones shall speak of him *and* his helpers from the midst of Sheol, ‘They have gone down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, slain by the sword.’”

c. Job 26:5 “the departed spirits twist in pains...”

d. Luke 16:23 “In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and *saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom”

Sheol is the place of disembodied spirits^{6 7}:

a. Pro. 9:18 “But he does not know that the departed spirits are there, *That* her guests are in the depths of Sheol.”

b. Job 26:5-6 ““The departed spirits tremble

Under the waters⁸ and their inhabitants. Naked is Sheol before Him,

And Abaddon has no covering”

c. Psalm 88:10-11 “Will You perform wonders for the dead?

Will the departed spirits rise *and* praise You? *Selah*. Will Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave,

⁴ http://www.faithdefenders.com/articles/theology/sheol_hades_gehenna.html

⁵ None of these scriptures would make any sense literal or metaphorical if JW teaching that Sheol is the common grave where man cease from existence.

⁶ http://www.faithdefenders.com/articles/theology/sheol_hades_gehenna.html

⁷ Note that JW teaches that the spirit of man (i.e. his energy) goes to the “memory of God.” But each one of these scriptures say that the spirit goes to Sheol. So even if Sheol would mean “the grave” (In JW minds), JW theology would still be wrong that spirit of man goes to the memory of God.

⁸ The Israelites believed that Sheol exists under the waters (cf. job 38:16-17). The path to it leads through deep water, that is why the word *bor* “water pit” is one of the most frequent names of the underworld Ps. 30:3, pro. 1:12....etc (TDNT, v 14, pages 242-243)

Your faithfulness in Abaddon?”

It seems then that the Jews believed that after death the body goes to the grave and the spirit to Sheol. That would explain how when Christ appeared to the disciples, they thought that they saw a “spirit” Luke 24:37-39.

Sheol is a place of punishment⁹:

- a. Deut 32:22 “For a fire is kindled in My anger,
And burns to the lowest part of Sheol”
- b. Psalm 116:3 “The cords of death encompassed me and the distresses of Sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow.”
- c. 2 Pet. 2:9 “the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of Judgment”

The Apostle Peter stated this in language which could not be clearer:

First, Peter says that the wicked are “kept” unto the day of judgment. This word is in the present, active, infinitive form, which means that the wicked are being held captive continuously. If the wicked merely pass into nonexistence at death, there would be nothing left to be “kept” unto the day of judgment. Obviously, Peter is grammatically picturing the wicked as being guarded like prisoners in a jail until the day of final judgment.

Second, Peter says that the wicked are “being tormented.” This word is in the present, passive, participle form and means that the wicked are continuously being tormented as an on-going activity.

If Peter wanted to teach that the wicked receive their full punishment at death by passing into nonexistence, then he would have used the aorist tense.

Instead, he uses those Greek tenses which were the only ones available to him in the Greek language to express conscious, continuous torment. The grammar of the text irrefutably establishes that the wicked are in torment while they await their final day of judgment.

Sheol is the place of the depths^{10 11}:

The Jews believed Sheol to exist underneath. One always “go down” or “descend” to Sheol ex. Job 7:9. The Bible speaks of the “lowest part of Sheol” Deut. 32:22; Psalm 86:13 and the “depths of sheol” Pro. 9:18. Contrasting the heaven and Sheol refers to the highest and lowest realms of the cosmos Psalm 139:8; Is. 7:11. That is why when the earth swallowed Dathan and Abiram, the Bible says that they “went down alive into Sheol”

Sheol is for temporary place where all the dead go¹²:

The righteous goes to Sheol Gen. 37:35, Psalm 16:10 and the wicked goes to Sheol Pro. 9:18, psalm 9:17; all men goes to Sheol Psalm 89:48 (contrary to JW that those who perished in the flood, people of Sodom and Gamorah, Adam, Eve, Cain and Judas Iscariot didn’t go to Hades but

⁹ http://www.faithdefenders.com/articles/theology/sheol_hades_gehenna.html

¹⁰ Theological dictionary of the OT, Vol. 14. edited by Botterweck and Ringgen, (Eerdmans, Grand rapids, MI) 2004, page 242

¹¹ None of these scriptures would make any sense literal or metaphorical if JW teaching that Sheol is the common grave where man cease from existence.

¹² Joachim Jeremias, The Theological dictionary of The New Testament, edited by Kittel, V. 1 page 146-147. (Eerdman’s, Grand Rapids, MI, 1969)

Straight to Hell i.e. eternal annihilation¹³) waiting their resurrection Isa. 26:19 (here we see the departed spirits that are in the earth being resurrected contrary to JW that the spirits are in the memory of God). In the Apocryphal book of Enoch chapter 22, we see all the spirits of man in Sheol that is divided to places of rest for the righteous and places of pain for the unrighteous, all awaiting the day of judgment¹⁴. This seems to be the foundation of Jesus teaching in Luke 16 in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. A similar conjunction is to be found in Josephus, a Pharisee himself. Through out the NT Hades serve only an interim purpose. Death and Hades will both cease and the evil dead in hades will be delivered to Gehenna (hell..i.e. literal lake of fire) Rev. 20: 13-14. The lake of fire will replace Hades as the final place of torment.

Hell/Gehenna: The word Gehenna is the Greek form of the aramic/Hebrew word Gehinnom. Which refers to the valley of the Son of Hinnom mentioned in (Jos. 15:8, 18; 18:16) where sacrifices were offered to Moloch in the days of Ahaz, and Manasseh (2 Kings 16:3; 21:6). The judgement uttered in the Valley (Jer. 7:32; 19:6 cf. Is. 31:9; 66:24) was the reason why this valley came to be equated with the hell of the last judgment in the apocalyptic literature from the 2nd century BC (ex. Enoch. 90:26, and 27:1; 54:1ff¹⁵) and for the eschatological fire of hell. The LXX doesn't have the word and Josephus neither mentioned the term or the matter, probably because he was a Pharisee who denied the resurrection of the ungodly.¹⁶ Gehenna only mentioned in the synoptists and John. And here is how it is described:

It is a dark place

Matthew 8:12 while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt 22: 13; 25:30)

It is a bottomless pit:

Rev. 9:1-2 "Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit."

A furnace of fire:

Matt. 13:40-42 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (cf. Matt. 13: 49-50)

It burns with Fire and sulfur:

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."

¹³ <http://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2005528#h=4:0-5:362>

¹⁴ <http://www.heaven.net.nz/writings/thebookofenoch.htm>

¹⁵ <http://www.heaven.net.nz/writings/thebookofenoch.htm>

¹⁶ TDNT; V1 page 657-658

Rev. 19:20 And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.

Rev. 20:10 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

It is a place of weeping, pain and torment:

Matt 24:49-50- the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect *him* and at an hour which he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Luke 16:23 "And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom.

Luke 16:28 for I have five brothers-- that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'

Rev. 14: 9-11 Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

It is an eternal hopeless place:

Mark 9:43 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.

Mark 9:48 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'

The New Testament references to "eternal punishment" (Matt 25:46), "eternal destruction" (2 Thess 1:9), "eternal fire" (Matt 25:41; Jude 7), and "eternal judgment" (Heb 6:2)

Gehenna pre-existent¹⁷:

Matt. 25:41 "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.

It is for those who reject God's love

Rev. 20: 14-15 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.

II. Other Scriptures that describes the punishment of the wicked:

Rev. 22:15

“Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.”

We see the unsaved eternally exist outside the new Jerusalem.

¹⁷ JW teaches that Gehenna is a figure of speech for eternal annihilation. But here we see Jesus saying that this eternal fire is “prepared.” Now if this eternal fire means “non-existence” Then what exactly did God “prepare”?

Jude 12-13

These rejecters of God's way fit various descriptions (vv. 12-13), e.g., "wandering stars," etc. For such stars (persons), the ultimate destiny is the black darkness . . . reserved forever. Reserving a state for people assumes that the people are to be consigned there, still existing, or the need for reservation is pointless¹⁸.

John 3:36:

"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

In as much as the believer will enjoy conscious bliss in the everlasting life, so the unbelievers will have eternal conscious torment. If the unbelievers will cease from existence, then there is nothing for the wrath of God to "abide" on.

Romans 2: 6-11

"who "will render to each one according to his deeds": eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God."

In comments describing the punishment, Paul utilizes four terms. He sets these forth in two pairs. The first pair of words spotlights God's anger in punishing (indignation and wrath). The last pair deals with the offenders' anguish. They feel retribution that their own sin invited God to bring on them (tribulation and anguish). In this passage Paul does not go on into detail to clarify the duration of the punishment. Among points etched clearly in Rom 2:6-10 is this. Paul expects the unsaved to bear God's indignation, a reality very different from annihilation. And in the second pair of words, Paul's concept is people's distress, not their deletion. One is free to think differently, to imagine that he has insight to modify the meaning of what Paul says in an outright fashion or to resolve Paul's words to mean something not really as natural as what the words normally call for¹⁹.

Matt. 25:46:

"These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

¹⁸ James Rosscup, Paul's concept of eternal punishment, The Master's Seminary Theological Journal, 9/2 Fall 1998 footnote 9 page 175. Also online <http://www.tms.edu/tmsj/tmsj9h.pdf>

¹⁹ Rosscup, 174-176

JW argue that Jesus pronounced judgment on the goat that they will “depart into everlasting cutting-off (Greek kolasis)” so the everlasting punishment of the goats is that they will eternally being cut-off from all life.²⁰

The context, however, opposes this understanding. As the bliss of the eternal life never ends, it is natural on the other side in the verse that the torment of the eternal punishment never terminates²¹. The Greek work for “punishment” is “kolasis” which comes from the root word “kolazao” One of the meaning of the root word is to “prune”²² The word in its classical meaning have the notion of punishment as it has reference to the correction and bettering of the offender²³ as you trim the tree for the sake of making in better. However; the word had acquired in Hellenistic Greek the meaning of punishment of severer sense, and was used simply as ‘punishment’ or ‘torment,’ with no necessary underthought of the bettering through it of him who endured it.^{24 25} That is also evident from the NT usage of the word. It was mentioned one more time in the whole NT, in 1 John 4:18 “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment (Kolasis also torment), and the one who fears is not perfected in love.” It is so clear when we look at 1 John 4:18 that the word Kolasis means and include “conscious torments.” The verb “kolasion” was mentioned twice in the NT Acts 4:21 “finding no way to punish them” and in 2 Pet. 2:9 “keep the unrighteous under punishment (kolasion) until the day of judgment.” So we see then, that unlike the JW claim, the word in the NT always involves an active, conscious torment and suffering.

Matthew 10:28:

Matthew 10:28 “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”

JW argue that Every time the word Hell is translated from Gehenna, it means everlasting destruction. (ie. You are destroyed and then you vanish eternally). Consider the words of Jesus here in Matt. 10:28 since God destroys soul and body in Gehenna, this is a conclusive proof that Gehenna is a symbol of total annihilation, and not “eternal torment.”²⁶

Let us examine that claim:

²⁰ Let God be true, 95-97

²¹ Rosscup, 170.

²² <http://v3.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G2849&t=KJV>

²³ <http://v3.blueletterbible.org/lang/trench/section.cfm?sectionID=7>

²⁴ <http://v3.blueletterbible.org/lang/trench/section.cfm?sectionID=7>

²⁵ examples in 2 Macc 4:38 and wisdom 19:4 available online <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/2-Maccabees-4-38/> and <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Wisdom-of-Solomon-19-4/>

²⁶ Ibid, 95-97

1. It is clear from the text, that unlike JW, Matthew discriminates between the mortal body and the immortal soul when he says “fear not them who which *kill the body*, but unable to *kill the soul*”
2. Matthew’s theology of martyrdom here may be a reflection of Hellenistic Judaism that only God has power over the soul and the body and thus the whole person.²⁷ “A man in his wickedness kills another, but he cannot bring back the departed spirit, nor set free the imprisoned soul” Wisdom 16:13-14²⁸ and “When he was about to die under the blows, he groaned aloud and said: “It is clear to the Lord in his holy knowledge that, though I might have been saved from death, I am enduring terrible sufferings in my body under this beating, but in my soul I am glad to suffer these things because I fear him.” 2 Macc. 6:30²⁹
3. If JW theology of total annihilation after death is correct, then Jesus point that the disciples should fear God more than man would be void. God can’t inflict more punishment than man since God’s ultimate punishment is to annihilate a person which man can also do through killing.
4. A look at the parallel passage in Luke 12:4-5 will help us understand Matthew’s message; “I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!” Luke teaches us that God has supreme power over man. Man can only kill the body, but God can kill the body and after that can cast the soul into Hell. If according to JW man ceases from existence the moment he dies, then there is nothing for God to cast into hell. Taking the phrase “cast into hell” as a figure of speech of eternal annihilation won’t make sense either because Luke speaks of casting the soul into hell as a separate and subsequent event AFTER killing the body.
5. When Jesus talked about killing the body and not being able to kill the soul, he used the word *apokteino*. But when he talked about destroying the soul and the body in hell, He used the word *apollymi*. a strengthened form of *ollumi*, signifies "to destroy utterly;" in Middle Voice, "to perish." The idea is not extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of well-being. This is clear from its use, as, e.g., of the marring of wine skins, Luk 5:37; of lost sheep, i.e., lost to the shepherd, metaphorical of spiritual destitution, Luk 15:4, 6, etc.; the lost son, Luk 15:24; of the perishing of food, Jhn 6:27; of gold, 1Pe 1:7. So of persons, Mat 2:13, "destroy;" Mat 8:25, "perish;" Mat 22:7; 27:20; of the loss of well-being in the case of the unsaved hereafter, Mat 10:28; Luk 13:3, 5; Jhn 3:16 (ver. 15 in some mss.); 10:28; 17:12; Rom 2:12; 1Cr 15:18; 2Cr 2:15, "are perishing;" 2Cr 4:3; 2Th 2:10; Jam 4:12; 2Pe 3:9.³⁰

²⁷ Word Biblical commentary, Matthew 1-13, Donald Hagner, Volume 33.A page 289 (word books, Dallas, TX 1993)

²⁸ <http://www.biblestudytools.com/rsva/wisdom/passage.aspx?q=wisdom+16:6-16>

²⁹ <http://www.biblestudytools.com/rsva/2-maccabees/6.html>

³⁰ see Vine’s dictionary of the NT <http://v3.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G622&t=K.IV>

2 Thess. 1:9:

“These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power”

Does “eternal destruction” in our scripture means “eternal annihilation” or “eternal torment”? Let us examine the evidence³¹:

1. The Context:

In his context two things stand out in sharp contrast (1:3 ff.). The first is for believers who are hurt by persecutions now (1:3-6), but God will give them eternal “rest” in their ultimate estate (1:7a, cf. vv.10-12). Then Paul’s second contrast is for the unsaved. They now have the upper hand, afflicting believers, but ultimately God will punish the afflicting ones themselves in a great turnabout. Paul writes of Christ and His angels dealing out “retribution” (*ekdiksis*). The use of *ekdiksis* is appropriate to refer to future judgment. The term means “vengeance,” but does not suggest a vindictive spirit in God, rather “righteous retribution” in a fair view of what God discerns the unsaved deserve. In context they afflicted God’s people, and this was striking against the God of these people. In 1 Thess. 4:6 Paul uses a form of the word; the Lord renders “retribution,” as in 2 Thess. 1:8. *Ekdiksis* is “just vengeance,” consistent with the “judgment” that the context shows is “righteous” in v. 5; both words come from the same word stem as does the term for God’s being “just” in v. 6

2. Word analysis:

The Greek word for “destruction” in 1 Thess. 1:9 is *Olethros*. *Olethros* has various usages. In secular Greek, it depicts “destruction” in corruption of physical death. The term also can denote a loss of money, being “wiped out” or “reduced to ruin” In the LXX the word appears in Jeremiah’s description of an army wiped out (Jeremiah 31(48):3). Then Paul uses *olethros* of destruction that overtakes those who hold out foolish hopes of peace and safety (1 Thess. 5:3). In 1 Tim 6:9, temptations and lusts catapult the indulgent into “corruption” and “ruin,” using first *olethros*, then *appollyion*. The earlier term depicts “corruption,” possibly in a shattered state of existence that is pathetic in debauchery, or else the final temporal step in corruption, physical death. In the same phrase, *appollyion* portrays “ruin.” The words together convey “complete destruction” or the derelict stage of wreckage while yet physically alive is followed by the more final, utter temporal ruin in physical death. Another possibility is that the ruin that comes in bodily death also thrusts one on to the utter, irrevocable eternal spiritual ruin (cf. Heb 9:27). The context suggests this as it refers to ultimate destiny (vv. 7, 12, 14, 17, 19).

In 1 Cor 5:5, Paul counsels the church at Corinth to deliver over to Satan an unrepentant church member guilty of sexual offense for “destruction (*olethron*) of the flesh.” Probably this refers to bodily ruin in physical death. Paul hopes that the discipline will provoke a

³¹ copied Rosscup, 180, 182, 185,186, 188, 189

remedy before death, repentance, so that the offender might turn out to be saved at the future judgment. In 1 Corinthians 5, ruin exacting its toll on a person who still exists is in view. Distinct from this, *olethros* in 2 Thessalonians 1 as “eternal destruction” is the ultimate kind of ruin. Destruction in 1 Cor 5:5 leaves an offender still existing (even when physical death occurs), but he must face a later verdict, after physical death, in “the day of Jesus Christ.” Likewise God can carry through with the destruction in 2 Thessalonians 1 though those upon whom He is executing it are continuing to exist while suffering it.

3. Exclusion from the presence of Christ:

Paul depicts that the punishment is “away from [*πρό*, *apo*] the presence [face] of the Lord and away from [second *apo*] the glory of His power.” If the apostle’s idea is annihilation, he does not use any clear term to specify a blotting from existence. Rather, his double *apo* places a marked emphasis on exemption from being in the Lord’s presence. This is not absolute, for God is everywhere present, having awareness and ability to operate there. The exclusion is rather in the sense of any possibility for acceptance, bliss, or fellowship. The picture describes rejection, being shut out (cf. Luke 13:30, the door shut), not rubbed out of existence; it is exclusion, not extinction.

The penalty for the unsaved is being barred from entrance into the blessing, not blotted out of existence. They will continue to have their being though shut out from welfare with God and with His people, rejected from the blessing that the saved share and the sphere in which they enjoy it. Paul’s phrasing is very naturally in harmony with Jesus’ descriptions of those God rejects. Access is denied them to the state of blessedness, being pictured by a door that shuts them out (Matt 8:11-12; Luke 13:23-30). It is consistent in

Matt 25:30 that a so-called but bogus servant, not genuinely saved,²⁹ cannot enter as others do into the sphere of gladness and festivity (vv. 21, 23). He, by contrast, is cast into “outer darkness.” There, rather, he undergoes distress in weeping and gnashing of teeth (25:30).

In Revelation, the saved enjoy various aspects of blessing in the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:3-7; 22:1- 5). On the other hand, the unsaved are not only excluded from such blessing, they are rather in the “lake of fire” (21:8).³⁴ Revelation 22:15, where the immediate context depicts the blessedness of the redeemed, pointedly says that the unsaved are “outside” the eternal city in which the only human heirs are Christ and all the

saved (21:7).³⁵ As with Paul’s idea of the rejected being barred from inheritance privileges, so John draws a definite distinction between these in the “lake of fire” (21:8)

and people in the New Jerusalem who are sons, overcomers, heirs (21:7).³⁶ The text represents the unsaved not as obliterated, but outside still existing but at a distance in another place suitable to them.

Romans 9: 22-23 and Phil. 3:19-20

“What if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,” Rom 9

“Whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” Phil 3

The word for destruction here is “*apolyia*” (cf. Matt. 10:28). How great is the contrast between eternal bliss of the saved and the outlook for the unsaved, whose “end” is “destruction.” In such a contrast, the picture is not that of cessation by extinction but of ruin and emptiness, void of all that gives blissful meaning to the saved³².

Romans 6:21-23

“What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In Rom 6:21-22, Paul conceives of the “end” (Greek *telos*) for the unjustified. He contrasts it with the *telos* God holds in prospect for the justified. This *telos* is the “end, goal, or final outcome.” The goal is the fitting fruition to which a given life leads. For the unsaved, Paul sees the *telos* as “death” (6:21), defined soon afterward as the wages or pay-off that sin hands out, or to which it leads (6:23). By contrast, the justified are having (present tense) fruit of their eternal life in relation to sanctification now, and the *telos* or ultimate outcome, the final goal to which justification and sanctification reaches, “eternal life” in its fuller realization. This eternal life Paul sees as God’s gift (23) as distinguished from the merited pay check that sin drafts, “death.” Setting the two in direct opposition does not suggest that the “end” or “death” for the unsaved is extinction. It suggests a destiny that is the appropriate outcome, the final, irreversible state in contrast to “eternal life” that has its ongoing duration³³.

III. Answering JW objections:

³² Rosscup, 178

³³ Rosscup 179

JW believe that Sheol is the “common grave of man” and that “hell” and “eternal lake of fire” are metaphors for “eternal annihilation.” Here is their arguments:

Objection 1:

The Hebrew word “sheol” for “hell” in Hebrew was mentioned 65 times in the OT. The KJV translates the word as “hell” 31 times, “grave” 31 times, and “pit” 3 times.³⁴ For example; Jacob lamented the death of Joseph saying “Surely I will go down to the grave “Sheol” in mourning for my son.” Gen. 37:35. Did Jacob believed that his son was in the place of torment where he is going to spend eternity? Or was Jacob simply saying that he want to die and go the grave because that is where his son it? Stop! Think! Reason!³⁵ Peter used the Greek word “Ha’des” in Acts 2:31, 32 for the Hebrew word “Sheol” which is translated “Hell” when he quoted Psalm 16:10. so we see that the Hebrew word “Sheol” is equivalent to the Greek word “Ha’des” which simply mean man’s common grave.³⁶

Answer:

Sheol isn’t Hell. The KJV translation of the Hebrew word as Hell is simply wrong. The Hebrew word “qeber” is the word translated “grave” in our English Bibles. But the word “Sheol” is best translated “the unseen world of the dead” and not grave. For example; in Gen. 37:35 Jacob said that he “will go down to his son to Sheol morning” The word “Sheol” can’t mean the grave in this verse. Joseph was torn apart by a beast, as far as Jacob knew, and he wasn’t in the grave. As we have seen, Sheol is the unseen world of the dead, where the spirits of the righteous (in rest) and unrighteous (in tourment) awaits the final ressurection.

Objecion 2:

Hell is not a permenamt place because in Revelation 20:14 we read “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” so we see that hell will come to an end when it is cast into the lake of fire which is “the second death” that is when the devil and the souls of man will vanish forever with no hope of resurrection. The devil’s “torments” in the lake of fire mean he will stay in the 2nd death forever.³⁷

Answer:

As we have seen there is a distinction in Greek between “Hades” and “Gehenna.” Here in Rev. 20:14 we read about the final judgment of all sinners. The living and the dead. The residents of Hades will be delivered to their ultimate and never-ending fate and that is the lake of fire. Death and Hades will come to an end; metaphorically, the will be thrown in the lake of fire.

³⁴ Let God be true. P89

³⁵ Ibid; 90

³⁶ Ibid, 93

³⁷ Let God be true, 94,95

JW argue that man/Saten will be “tormented” because they will remain in total annihilation forever. But doesn’t that “torment” requires that at least that they are conscious of the fact that they have been separated from the presence of God forever??? An active word like “torment” can never be linked to a passive state like “non-existence.”

Objection 3:

In Ecc. 9:10 the Bible says “Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with *all* your *might*; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going” so the Bible teaches that there is no consciousness after death.

Answer:

The theme of Ecclesiastes is the vanity of life. That theme carry on here in chapter 9.

V2-6: life is vain:

As the good man is, so is the sinner. All gonna end up with death v2 No wonder man do evil since death is the fate of all v3 Once you die, people won’t remember you no more v5 and the dead won’t be able to share anything happening “under the Sun” v 6

V 7-10: the application: you should enjoy every thing you do while you are alive. Enjoy your food and wine v7. Wear best cloths and best oil v8. Enjoy your wife v9 because that is what is to life. In Summery do every thing with passion since once you die, you can do nothing more in this life v10.

Now v 10 says there is no planning or activity or wisdom or knowledge in sheol. What does that mean? It simply means that there is no wisdom, or knowledge or planning or activity in terms of the functions he mentioned in V 7-9 hence the vanity of life. If we gonna take Solomon’s word in v 10 literally that the dead cease from excistance then we must take his words literally in v 9 “for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun” which means that there no more rewards for the righteous after death.

Objection 4:

But how about Luke 16:19-31. the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Doesn’t that teach that there is a fiery hell with conscious people in it? Not at all; for it is a parable. A parable is a symbolic and figurative statement that pictures some reality. It is unreasonable to think that someone would go to hell because they are rich, and it is ridiculous to believe that you have to be a beggar to go to heaven. If the rich man was in a literal burning hell, how could Abarham send Lazarus to cool his tongue? By this parable Jesus uttered a prophecy that was fulfilled in 1919. The rich represent the backslidden Christians who are “dead” and being tormented by the kingdom proclaimed truth. Lazarus represent the JW faithful ones “the body of Christ” who are being delivered from modern Babylon since 1919 receiving God’s favor pictured by “the bosom of Abraham”³⁸

Answer:

³⁸ Ibid, 97,98

a. The rich man didn't go to hell just because he was rich. In the whole chapter of Luke 16, Jesus is teaching about the dangers of the "unrighteous mammon" v1-12. He told the hearers that they can't serve 2 masters either God or mammon v13. And then he emphasized that to the pharisees, who are lovers of money v14, through the story of the rich man and Lazarus.

b. JW argue "If the rich man was in a literal burning hell, how could Abraham send Lazarus to cool his tongue?" But Abraham didn't send Lazarus to cool his tongue. The fact that the rich man was in a literal burning hell and Lazarus was in the "bosom of Abraham" was the reason Lazarus couldn't go to the rich man since there was a great gap between them.

c. As we discussed before in our study of the immortality of the soul; The parables/illustrations of Jesus are simple truths of everyday life that the Jews can relate to which Jesus used to explain deeper truths of the things of God. The Parables have to be factually correct to make sense to the hearers. It is just SIMPLE facts that Jesus used to convey DEEP truth. For example Jesus used a sower and lands to explain people's response to the word of God. Jesus started his parable "The sower went out to sow..." Matt 13:3. Now Jesus didn't say "the fisherman went out to sow..." That will be factually incorrect and will not help the hearers to understand the truth needing to be conveyed. Let us apply that to JW understanding of the "illustration" of the rich man and Lazarus. Jesus mentioned things like:

A. The dead will exist after they die.

B. There is torment to the souls that reject God after their death.

Now, according to JW, these are lies. So here we have Jesus using factually incorrect statements to convey the truth of God.

Even worse, these are, once again according to JW, paganistic and anti-biblical theology that souls exist after they die and that sinners will be conscious in torment. One must ask, why would Jesus borrow false demonic doctrine to illustrate the truth of God?

And to make things absolutely worse, the concept of the immortal soul of man was common among the Jews in that time³⁹. So instead of Jesus confronting his hearers of their paganistic beliefs, here he is using their anti-biblical theology to convey a metaphoric message.

d. JW argument that the Lazarus is the JW organization that is tormenting the rich man (Christendom) since 1919 is delusional and unsubstantiated. If I may do my own interpretation, I could argue that the poor man is Michael Jackson who is tormenting the rich man who is Elvis Presley since Michael Jackson stole the number 1 spot from Presley. For a mere exegetical point of view, JW exegesis ain't no better than mine.

³⁹ In The LXX we find that the soul is the seat of life, distinct from the body and that it is subject to torment. 4 Macc. 1:32 "But of the lusts, some belong to the soul, others to the body" and 10:4 "Now then, whatever instrument of vengeance ye have, apply it to my body, for ye are not able to touch, even if ye wish it, my soul" Baruch 2:17 "Open thine eyes, and behold; for the dead that are in the graves, whose souls are taken from their bodies, will give unto the Lord neither praise nor righteousness." Wisdom 16:14 "A man indeed killeth through his malice: and the spirit, when it is gone forth, returneth not; neither the soul received up cometh again." 4 Macc 13:15 "for great is the trial of soul and danger of eternal torment laid up for those who transgress the commandment of God." (scriptures taken from <http://ecmarsh.com/lxx/index.htm>) for Further discussion please read NT theological dictionary V9 pages 632-633, 3rd printing, Gerhard Friedrich editor, Eerdmans's, Grand rapids, MI 1976

IV. Conclusion: Could all the scriptures about hell be a figure of speech of the total annihilation of the wicked?

There is no way that any of these scriptures is a figure of speech or metaphoric. The Bible uses words like “tourment”, “weeping and gnashing of teeth”, “furnace of fire”, “fire that burns with sulfur and brimstone”, “fire that doesn’t quench and worm that doesn’t die.”

These words demand consciousness and sensation even if it is used in a metaphoric way. For example, if one says “my boss is tormenting me at work.” The word “tourment” here is not used in a literal way but in a metaphoric way. Nevertheless; it still expresses conscious distress. In the same way, I don’t know how any of the NT writers use “tourment” to express unconsciousness in the world of non-existence metaphorically.

Plus, if the concept of eternal conscious torment is paganistic and demonic, why would Jesus and his disciples use these demonic doctrines to convey metaphoric messages?

We have seen how the concept of conscious eternal torment was common among the Jews of the 1st century (just consider Isaiah 14, and the teaching of the book of Enoch), so JW want us to believe that Jesus used a common paganistic doctrine of His time in a metaphoric way to convey God’s truth.

Can you imagine Jesus or any of his disciples wanting to teach us how to love one another, so they say METAPHORICALLY something like this... “The God of heaven and the goddess of earth and all the junior gods got together and decided to live in harmony.” Of course not. Why? because if Jesus used paganistic polytheism metaphorically, that implies his endorsement of it. Yet JW want us to believe the same thing about Hell.

Finally; we should point that there is a total absence of the language of annihilation⁴⁰. The Greek word (exaleiph) means “to blot out” used several times it distinctly indicates a blotting out. Paul himself uses it of God canceling or blotting out the certificate of death against those who receive Christ (Col 2:14). Luke writes of Peter’s and John’s appeal to fellow Jews to repent that their sins might be “wiped away” (Acts 3:19). John uses the word three times of Christ’s promise not to “blot out” names of overcomers from His book of the saved (Rev 3:5) and of God’s wiping away every tear from the saved (7:17; 21:4). In Revelation 7, John emphasizes that certain things are no longer present with the saved in heaven-hunger, thirst, the sun’s burning heat, and any hurt from heat. In Revelation 21, the prospect that tears no longer even exist in the blessed realm accompany other things-death, mourning, crying, and pain-that are not there. Had Paul or any NT writer looked for an apt way to say that punishment of the unsaved comes to the point of their ceasing to exist, this word could express that. But no NT author uses the term to make that point.

The word, (pau), is Paul’s term for tongues ceasing (“whether there be tongues, they shall cease,” 1 Cor. 13:8). But Paul never says that punishment or the punished unsaved person ceases.

John used the word (ouk estin eti, “it is no longer,” Rev 21:1). John uses similar terminology for light from a lamp no longer being seen in Babylon after God has judged

⁴⁰ Copied Rosscup, 190-191

it (Rev 18:23). Indeed, the word eti occurs six times of things that no longer “still” exist in regard to Babylon (Rev 18:21-23). Yet John never sees fit to use such a phrase to suggest that punishing the unsaved involves their extinction.