

# DO I HAVE TO BELIEVE IN HELL?

## *Open and Honest Questions About A Seriously Troubling Contradiction*

Concentric Circles - Free to Think and ask Questions

"In order to understand the parable in detail and as a whole, it is essential to recognize the first part derives from a well-known folk-material . . . This is the Egyptian folk-tale of the journey of Osiris, the son of Setme Chamois to the under-world . . . Alexandrian Jews brought this story to Palestine, where it became very popular as the story of the poor scholar and the rich publican Bar Ma'Jan." - J.Jeremias, Parables p. 183

Numerous versions of this story are found in the ancient world, including the one in the synoptic tradition: the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

Luke 16.14—The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him.

Matthew 5.44—But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you . . .

Psalms 30.5—For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor [love, mercy] lasts forever.

Isaiah 54.8—In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you.

Lamentations 3.31-33—For people are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to any human being.

1John 4.8— . . . God is love.

Revelation 21.4—There will be no more mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

Luke 16.19-31—There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, "Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire." But Abraham replied, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us" He answered, "Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment." Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them." "No, father Abraham," he said, "but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent." He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."\*

Luke 6.20-24—Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God . . . But woe to you who are rich."

Jacob and Leah: Judah & Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, and Zebulun.

### The Old Testament Paradigm

#### Pharisee's "Aidious Timoria"

Josephus, The Wars of the Jews: Vol. II, Chapter 8, Paragraph 14—They [the Pharisees] say that all souls are imperishable, but that the souls of good men only pass into other bodies while the souls of evil men are subject to eternal [aidious] punishment [timorial].

Aidious—"Pertaining to an unlimited duration of time." (Louw & Nida Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains.)

That the world might be healed . . . – John 3.17

\*All texts quoted from the TNIV unless otherwise noted.

**Timoria**—“To punish, with the implication of causing people to suffer what they deserve.” (Louw & Nida Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains.) “Penal and has reference to the satisfaction of him who inflicts.” (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament)

**Jesus Challenged Aidious Timoria by using Two Very Different Words** (But we’ll look at that in a moment.)

**Jesus, Jeremiah and Gehenna:**

**Matthew 3.7**—But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? [70 A.D. ]

**Matthew 5.2**— But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca, ’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of **Gehenna**. [KJV - Hell]

**Matthew 5.29-30**—If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into **Gehenna**. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into **Gehenna**. (Matthew 18.9 as well)

**Matthew 23.15**—“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and then you make that convert twice as much a child of **Gehenna** as you are.

**Matthew 23.33**—“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to **Gehenna**?”

**2Chronicles 28.3**—And he [Ahaz, King of Judah] made offerings in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and made his sons pass through fire, according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. [Since his legitimate son by the daughter of the High Priest Hezekiah succeeded him as king, this is assumed to mean children by unrecorded pagan wives or concubines.]

**2Chronicles 33.6**—He [Manasseh, Ahaz’ grandson] made his son pass through fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom, practiced soothsaying and augury and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He

**The valley of Hinnom:** South of Jerusalem, once celebrated for the horrid worship of Moloch, and afterwards polluted with every species of filth, as well as the carcasses of animals, and dead bodies of malefactors; and to consume constant fires were kept burning.

That the world might be healed . . . — John 3.17

\*All texts quoted from the TNIV unless otherwise noted.

did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

**Jeremiah 7.31-32**—And they go on building the high place of **TOPHETH**, which is in **THE VALLEY OF THE SON OF HINNOM**, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire—which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind. Therefore, the days are surely coming, says the LORD, when it will no more be called **TOPHETH**, or **THE VALLEY OF THE SON OF HINNOM**, but **THE VALLEY OF SLAUGHTER**: for they will bury in **TOPHETH** until there is no more room.

**Jeremiah 19.2-6**—And go out to **THE VALLEY OF THE SON OF HINNOM** at the entry of the Potsherd Gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you. You shall say: Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I am going to bring such disaster upon this place that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. Because the people have forsaken me, and have profaned this place by making offerings in it to other gods whom neither they nor their ancestors nor the kings of Judah have known; and because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent, and gone on building the high places of Baal to burn their children in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or decree, nor did it enter my mind. Therefore *the days are surely coming*, says the LORD, when this place shall no more be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but **THE VALLEY OF SLAUGHTER**. [Emphasis Added.] (See also Jeremiah 19.11-15)

**Mark 9.43-47**—If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into **Gehenna, INTO THE UNQUENCHABLE FIRE**. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into **Gehenna**. And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter **The Kingdom of God** with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into **Gehenna**. where “**their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.**” Everyone will be salted with fire.

**Isaiah 34.9,10**—Edom’s streams will be turned into pitch, her dust into burning sulfur; her land will become blazing pitch! **IT WILL NOT BE QUENCHED NIGHT OR DAY**; its smoke will rise **FOREVER**. From generation to generation it will lie desolate; no one will ever pass through it again.

**Jeremiah 17.27**—But if you do not obey me to keep the Sabbath day holy by not carrying any load as you come through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle an **UNQUENCHABLE FIRE** in the gates of Jerusalem that will consume her fortresses.

That the world might be healed . . . — John 3.17

\*All texts quoted from the TNIV unless otherwise noted.

Isaiah 30.31-33—The Assyrian will be terror-stricken at the voice of the LORD, when he strikes with his rod. And every stroke of the staff of punishment that the LORD lays upon him will be to the sound of timbrels and lyres; battling with brandished arm he will fight with him. For his **TOPHETH** has long been prepared; truly it is made ready for the king, its pyre made deep and wide, with fire and wood in abundance; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of sulfur, kindles it.

Isaiah 66.22-24—And they shall go out and look at the dead bodies of the people 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.

Jude 1:7—In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of **ETERNAL FIRE**.

Isaiah 33.14—The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: “Who of us can dwell with the **CONSUMING** fire? Who of us can dwell with **THE EVERLASTING BURNING?**” Those who walk *righteously* and speak what is right, who reject gain from extortion and keep their hands from accepting bribes, who stop their ears against plots of murder and shut their eyes against contemplating evil.” (emphasis added.)

Matthew 7.12,13—So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

Luke 19.41-44—As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come on you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

Matthew 10.28—Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in **Gehenna**.

Luke 12.4-7(WEB)—“I tell you, my friends, don’t be afraid of those [Romans] who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom you should fear. Fear him [a Militaristic Messiah], who after he has killed [idea of slaughter, bloodshed], has power to cast you into **Gehenna**. Yes, I tell you, fear him. Aren’t five sparrows sold for two assaria coins? Not one of them is forgotten by God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore don’t be afraid. You are of

(2 Peter 2:6— ... reducing them to ashes ...)

Isaiah 43.2—When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and **the flame shall not consume you**.

4 Maccabees 13.14-15— Let us not fear him who thinks he is killing us, for great is the struggle of the soul and the danger of eternal torment lying before those who transgress the commandment of God.

Militaristic Violence vs Nonviolent Noncooperation

That the world might be healed . . . — John 3.17

\*All texts quoted from the TNIV unless otherwise noted.

more value than many sparrows.

**Matthew 13.36-43**—Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of THE KINGDOM. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is THE END OF THE AGE, and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be AT THE END OF THE AGE. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his KINGDOM everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into THE FURNACE OF FIRE, where there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**. Then the righteous will shine like the sun IN THE KINGDOM of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

**Matthew 13.44-50**—“The KINGDOM of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the KINGDOM of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. Once again, the KINGDOM of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be AT THE END OF THE AGE. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into THE FURNACE OF FIRE, where there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.

**Matthew 25.26**—“His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. ‘Take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For those who have will be given more, and they will have an abundance. As for those who do not have, even what they have will be taken from them. And throw that worthless SERVANT into the OUTER DARKNESS, where there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.’

**Acts 7.54**—When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and **GNASHED THEIR TEETH** at him.

**Job 16.9**—He has torn me in his wrath, and hated me; he has **GNASHED HIS TEETH** at me; my adversary sharpens his eyes against me.

**Psalms 112.10**—The wicked see it and are angry; they **GNASH THEIR TEETH** and melt away; the desire of the wicked comes to nothing.

That the world might be healed . . . — John 3.17

\*All texts quoted from the TNIV unless otherwise noted.

Luke 15.28—His father came OUT and began to PLEAD with him.

Matthew 25.31—“WHEN THE SON OF MAN [the Bar Enasha] COMES in his [its] glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ALL THE NATIONS will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats . . . [How You Treat Others] Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the **ETERNAL FIRE** . . . these will go away into **ETERNAL** [Aionion] **PUNISHMENT** [Kolasis], but the righteous into **eternal** [aionion] **life**.”

Aionion—“Indeterminate as to duration.” (Mounce Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament). “Gives prominence to the immeasurableness of eternity.”(Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament)

Philo—“It is better not to promise than not to give prompt assistance, for no blame follows in the former case, but in the latter there is dissatisfaction from the weaker class, and a deep hatred and eternal [aionion] chastisement [kolasis] from such as are more powerful.” (Fragments by Philo)

Jude 1:7—In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of **ETERNAL** [aionion] **FIRE**.

Kolasis—“The noted definition of Aristotle, which distinguishes kolasis from timoria is that [kolasis] is disciplinary and has reference to him who suffers, while the latter [timoria] is penal and has reference to the satisfaction of him who inflicts.” (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament)

Plato—“If you will think, Socrates, of the nature of punishment, you will see at once that in the opinion of mankind virtue may be acquired; no one punishes [kolasis] the evil-doer under the notion, or for the reason, that he has done wrong,—only the unreasonable fury of a beast acts in that manner. But he who desires to inflict rational punishment [kolasis] does not retaliate for a past wrong which cannot be undone; he has regard to the future, and is desirous that the man who is punished [kolosis], and he who sees him punished, may be deterred from doing wrong again. He punishes for the sake of prevention, thereby clearly implying that virtue is capable of being taught.” (Protagoras by Plato)

Pharisees’ Eternal Punishment—  
“Aidious Timoria”

Jesus’ Eternal Punishment—  
“Aionion Kolasis”

Philo was born 25 years before Christ. He was learned in Greek philosophy, and especially revered Plato. His use of Greek is of the highest credibility.

*Greenfield*, “Chastisement, punishment.”  
*Hedericus*, “The trimming of the luzuriant branches of a tree or vine to improve it and make it fruitful.”

*Donnegan*, “The act of clipping or pruning -restriction, restraint, reproof, check, chastisement.”

*Grotius*, “The kind of punishment which tends to the improvement of the criminal, is what the Greek philosophers called kolasis or chastisement.”

*Liddell*, “Pruning, checking, punishment, chastisement, correction.”

*Max Muller*, “Do we want to know what was uppermost in the minds of those who formed the word for punishment, the Latin pœna or punio, to punish, the root pu in Sanscrit, which means to cleanse, to purify, tells us that the Latin derivation was originally formed, not to express mere striking or torture, but cleansing, correcting, delivering from the stain of sin.”

That the world might be healed . . . — John 3.17

\*All texts quoted from the TNIV unless otherwise noted.

## THE METAPHOR OF FIRE

Matthew 3:7-12—But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and **FIRE**.

Luke 12.49—I have come to bring **FIRE** on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!

Hebrews 12.29—For our “God is a **CONSUMING FIRE**.”

Jeremiah 31.3—The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: “I have loved you with an **EVERLASTING** love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.”

Song 8.6-7—Set me as a seal on your heart, as a seal on your arm; for **LOVE** is strong as death. Jealousy is as cruel as Sheol; Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of Yahweh. Many waters **CANNOT QUENCH** love, neither can floods drown it. If a man would give all the wealth of his house for love, he would be utterly scorned.

Romans 12.20—On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”

1 Corinthians 3.11-15—For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—the work of each builder will become visible, for **THE DAY** will **DISCLOSE** it, because it will be revealed with **FIRE**, and the fire will **TEST** what sort of work each has done. If what has been built on the foundation **SURVIVES**, the builder will receive a reward. If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through **FIRE**.

Ezekiel 18.32—For I have no pleasure [Hapes- desire, fulfillment, or satisfaction] in the death of anyone, says the Lord **GOD**. Turn, then, and live.

2 Peter 3.10-13—But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements [stoicheion, Ephesians 6.12 cf. 2.2] will be **dissolved** with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be **disclosed**. Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where justice is at home.

That the world might be healed . . . — John 3.17

\*All texts quoted from the TNIV unless otherwise noted.

# THE OLD TESTAMENT PARADIGM

*Poverty of Descriptions Concerning Postmortem, Eternal Torment among the Hebrews*

**Psalms 37.10**—A little while, and the wicked will be **no more**; though you look for them, they will **not be found**.

**Psalms 37.20**—But the wicked will **perish**: Though the LORD's enemies are like the flowers of the field, they will be **consumed**, they will **go up in smoke**.

**Psalms 68.2**—May you blow them away **like smoke**—as wax melts before the fire, may the wicked **perish** before God.

**Psalms 104.35**—But may sinners **vanish** from the earth and the wicked **be no more**.

**Malachi 4:1-3**—Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the LORD Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be **ashes under the soles of your feet** on the day when I act,” says the LORD Almighty.

**Isaiah 66.24**—And they will go out and look on the **dead bodies (corpses** - NASB) of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to the whole human race. (Note that the wicked are not alive in this unquenchable fire.)

**Ezekiel 28:13-14,18-19 (ASV)**—(Tyre / Satan) You were in Eden, the garden of God . . . You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you there . . . Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to **ashes** upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.

**Obadiah 16**— . . . they will drink and drink and **be as if they had never been**.

## *A Word about Sheol In the Old Testament:*

**Psalms 16.10 KJV**—For thou wilt not leave my soul in [sheol / Hell]; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption. [KJV - translates this as “hell.”]

**Genesis 42.38 NASB**— But Jacob said, “My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.”