



Zechariah's Murder Cited by Our Lord, Matt 23:33-35: Gehenna Refers to the Lake of Fire; Imprecatory Prayer of Zechariah Answered, 2 Chron 24:23-24

- 32) The Lord knows their disposition, their worldview, their ideology, their theology, their rationales, and their hidden agendas. He calls them hypocrites and demonstrates that they are liars by proclaiming them the sons of those who murdered the prophets. The reason God sent the prophets was to evangelize their sorry souls and the Lord will send them again in the Church Age.
- 33) The Lord tells them they are not only unbelievers but are also of the same ilk as their forefathers who did kill the prophets. He goes on to assert that without a positive response to the prophets, the pastors, and the apostles, they will appear before the Great White Throne Judgment where they will face the ultimate crisis: **κρίσις, krisis**, the judgment, conviction, and sentence to **Γέεννα, Geenna**, Gehenna. This word references the lake of fire. Its etymology in the language of the first century A.D. is very instructive and also correlates with our study.

Kittel, Gerhard (ed.). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 1:657-58:

γέεννα, geenna. A Greek form derived from the Hebrew גֵּיהֵנּוֹם *Ga-Hinnom* [the valley of wailing children (Francis Brown, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 244)]. This name was given to the Wadi er-rababi in South Jerusalem, which later acquired a bad reputation because sacrifices were offered in it to Moloch in the days of Ahaz and Manasseh.

NOTE: We have studied Molech and learned it refers to the cultic ritual of burnt offerings. In the context of Baal worship it was animals and children. Molech does not refer to a false god but the process of burning an offering. Both Ahaz and Manasseh were involved in making their sons “pass through the fire.” (2 Kings 16:3; and 21:6 respectively.)

The threats of judgment uttered over this sinister valley [by the prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah] are the reason why the Valley of Hinnom came to be equated with the hell of the last judgment in apocalyptic literature from the 2nd century B.C. The name *ge-hinnom* thus came to be used for the eschatological fire of hell. In the 1st century A.D. the term was further extended to cover the place where the ungodly were punished in the intermediate state (**ἄδης, haidēs**), but this is not so in the New Testament.

Fundamental for an understanding of the passages in the New Testament is the sharp distinction made by the New Testament between (**ἄδης, haidēs** and **γέεννα, geenna**. This distinction is that Hades receives the ungodly only for the intervening period between death and resurrection, whereas Gehenna is their place of punishment in the last judgment; the judgment of the former is thus provisional but the torment of the latter eternal.

γέεννα, geenna is pre-existent. Those who fall victim to divine judgment at the last day will be destroyed by everlasting fire.

NOTE: The development of how Gehenna became an illustration of the eternal judgment of the Lake of Fire is discussed by two sources:

Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Bible Dictionary*. 3d ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 394:

Gehenna, a deep narrow glen to the south of Jerusalem, where the Jews offered their children to Moloch. In later times it served as a receptacle of all sorts of putrefying matter, and all that defiled the holy city, and so became the representative or image of the place of everlasting punishment, especially on account of its ever-burning fires. Gehenna is identical in meaning with “the lake of fire.” Moreover the “second death” and “the lake of fire” are identical terms. These latter Scriptural expressions describe the eternal state of the wicked as forever separated from God and consigned to the special abode of unrepentant angels and men in the eternal state.



Thayer, Joseph Henry. *The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1981), 111:

Gehenna, the name of a valley on the south and east of Jerusalem, which was so called from the cries of the little children who were thrown into the fiery arms of Moloch. The Jews so abhorred the place after these horrible sacrifices had been abolished by king Josiah, that they cast into it not only all manner of refuse, but even the dead bodies of animals and of unburied criminals who had been executed. And since fires were always needed to consume the dead bodies, that the air might not become tainted by their putrefaction, it came to pass that the place was called γέεννα τοῦ πυρός, *gehenna tou puros* [the valley of fire].

- 34) The Pharisees are so steeped in the evil of legalism that they have affiliated themselves with those who murdered the prophets in the Old Testament. They are unbelievers and are destined for Gehenna, the lake of fire, which is the punishment phase in eternity for those convicted at the Great White Throne Judgment.
- 35) Since the Chronicles are placed at the end of the Hebrew Bible, the prophet Zechariah is the last Jewish martyr named in Scripture. The Lord associates the disposition of the Pharisees with those who murdered prophets in the Old Testament. Zechariah is said by the Lord to be the son of Barachiah not the son of Jehoiada. However it was customary in ancient times to refer to the entire male line of an individual as one's father.
- 36) It is believed that Barachiah was Zechariah's father as stated by the Lord. Yet 2 Chronicles 24:20 states that Jehoiada was his father. But Jehoiada died at age 130 some 17 years before Zechariah was sent to issue a divine warning to Judah. Thus it becomes apparent that Jehoiada was not literally Zechariah's father but his grandfather and even possibly his great-grandfather.
- 37) What the writer of Chronicles wishes to make clear is that Zechariah is in the direct line of Jehoiada who protected Joash who returns the favor by having his grandson executed.
- 38) When Zechariah looked Joash in the eye while he prayed the prayer for justice he was also issuing a prophecy. Joash's failure to prohibit idolatry's return to the Southern Kingdom brought the prophets from God to warn of impending discipline if the problem was not abolished.
- 39) The murder of Zechariah was proof positive that the grace of God had again been rejected by both Joash and the people of Judah. As a result the prayer of Zechariah was answered: "May the Lord see and avenge!"

2 Chronicles 24:23 - Now it came about at the turn of the year that the army of the Arameans came up against Joash; and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, destroyed all the officials of the people from among the people, and sent all their spoil to the king of Damascus.

v. 24 - Indeed the army of the Arameans came with a small number of men; yet the Lord delivered a very great army into their hands, because they had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers. Thus they executed judgment on Joash.

- 40) One of the most fascinating things to me is the fact that reversionists just don't get it. They knowingly defy God, reject His Word, and express no interest in making any adjustment in their disposition.
- 41) Yet in their lives they encounter steadily increasing pressures that are the overwhelming ramifications of a series of bad decisions that are in direct opposition to the plan of God.



- 42) They are seemingly unable to see the connection between the difficulties they face and their deviation away from doctrinal principles. Consequently, as their suffering increases their hostility toward the truth does also.
- 43) This is extremely dangerous since it indicates locked-in negative volition. At first, negativity involves apathy or indifference, over-reaction to people testing, distractions by the details of life, or misplaced priorities.
- 44) This negative volition becomes locked-in when the failure to grow in grace results in the continuous intake of demonic viewpoint. The rejection of truth creates a vacuum, referred to in Ephesians 4:17 as **ματαιότης, mataiotēs**, translated “vanity” or “futility” of thought.
- 45) Barring injury or disease, the brain never goes into neutral. It is always being programmed by the soul with constant flow of thoughts and ideas that are given approval by volitional choices.
- 46) When a person’s free will determines to ignore, reject, or disapprove of divine viewpoint then a vacuum is created in the soul. When the soul rejects one idea then it automatically must accept another.
- 47) Rejection of the truth results in the soul accepting the lie. Acceptance of the lie may be the result of confusion, propaganda, human viewpoint, demon influence, or a combination of these.