

1  **Life In the Kingdom**

2 Chronicles 28

2  **Ahaz**

- Ahaz was the grandson of Uzziah.
- He was the son of Jotham, a godly king who ordered his ways before the Lord:
- *And he [Jotham] did what was right in the eyes of the LORD according to all that his father Uzziah had done, except he did not enter the temple of the LORD. But the people still followed corrupt practices. (2Ch 27:2)*

3  **Jotham**

- Jotham in many ways took after his father Uzziah, with the key difference that he did not make the same fatal mistake.
- *So Jotham became mighty, because he ordered his ways before the LORD his God. Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars and his ways, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David, and Ahaz his son reigned in his place. (2Ch 27:6-9)*

4  **Ahaz**

- Ahaz, on the other hand, is not even a remotely godly king. He reigns for a total of 60 years, and is one of the most wicked kings that Judah ever has.
- *Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done... (2Ch 28:1)*

5  **Ahaz**

- *...but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. He even made metal images for the Baals... (2Ch 28:2)*
- Ahaz's wickedness in many ways was similar to that of their neighbors, the Israelites. But as we will see, Ahaz also took it a step further:

6  **Ahaz**

- *...and he made offerings in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom and burned his sons as an offering, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. (2Ch 28:3)*
- Ahaz is the first king mentioned to have begun/renewed this practice in the place known as Gehenna, though he is *not* the first king of Judah to commit this abomination.

7  **Solomon's Sin**

- *So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. (1Ki 11:6-7)*

8  **Molech**

- Molech was a Canaanite deity worshipped through human sacrifice – and specifically

through a form of propitiatory child sacrifice.

- This same kind of child sacrifice is specifically condemned by the Levitical law. It is included in a list of foreign religious practices in which the Israelites, as the people of God, ought not to engage.

9  **Molech**

- *You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.* (Lev 18:21)
- This was just one of the many abominations that God said would cause the land to “vomit you out” as it “vomited out the nation that was before you” (18:28).
- Any nation which despises the worth of its children is on the threshold of God’s judgment.

10  **Molech**

- This “Molech” is one of the many Canaanite Ba’als, and specifically the some Ba’al whose worship was furthered by Ahab and his house.
- Ahaz’s grandson will revive this despicable religious practice in 2 Chronicles 33:6, after Judah undergoes a brief period of revival under Hezekiah.

11  **Gehenna**

- The place where this Molech-worship and child sacrifice took place was in a valley outside of Jerusalem known by a number of different names:
  - The Valley of the Sons of Hinnom
  - Gehenna
  - Tophet/Topheth

12  **Gehenna**

- By Jesus’ time, Gehenna has become a place where the dead are buried.
- There are also questions about its use as a garbage heap in Christ’s time, but no Biblical, historical, or archeological evidence has been found to support this.
- Regardless, Gehenna’s associations with death, burning, and murder would be heavy upon the Jewish consciousness.

13  **Gehenna**

- Gehenna/Tophet is referenced as a place of misery and despair, of burning and death well before the time of Christ. Isaiah, who wrote and preached during the time of Ahaz, references it frequently.

14  **Gehenna**

- *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, like a stream of sulfur, kindles it.* (Isa 30:33, speaking of the defeat of the Assyrian armies at Gehenna)

15  **Gehenna**

- *“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.”* (Isa 66:24)
- This passage is later referenced by Jesus.

16  **Tophet**

- This valley is also often referred to as "Tophet."
- This is a Hebrew word with ties both to the Hebrew word for "drum" and the Hebrew word for "fire."
  - Drum, because drums were beat to drown out the screams of the children as they were burned alive
  - Fire, because of the burning that took place there

17  **Tophet**

- Jeremiah refers to Tophet as "the Valley of Slaughter."

18  **Tophet**

- *"For the sons of Judah have done evil in my sight, declares the LORD. They have set their detestable things in the house that is called by my name, to defile it. And they have built the high places 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, behold, the days are coming, declares 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, because there is no room elsewhere. And the dead bodies of this people will be food for the birds of the air, and for the beasts of the earth, and none will frighten them away. (Jer 7:30-34)*
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19  **Tophet**

- One possible reference to Hinnom as a place of burning, garbage, and refuse, is found in 2 Kings 23:10 –
- *And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no one might burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Molech. (2Ki 23:10)*

20  **Understanding Tophet**

- The key to understanding this theme of Gehenna found throughout the OT and NT is that Gehenna represents anguish, burning, death, loss, and ultimately, separation from God.
- But Jesus takes it a step further than this – Jesus uses the concept of Gehenna and "outer darkness" to typify life outside the Kingdom.

21  **Jesus on Gehenna**

- *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.' (Mar 9:43-48)*

22  **Jesus on Gehenna**

- Of the 12 different passages that mention Gehenna in the NT, 7 are found in the book of Matthew – the Gospel of the Kingdom.

- Beyond this, there are multiple references to “outer darkness” and “weeping and gnashing of teeth” – all of which are in contrast to “the Kingdom of Heaven.”

23  **Jesus on Gehenna**

- *And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ (Mat 25:30)*

24  **Jesus on Gehenna**

- “...while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Mat 8:12)
- “Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” (Mat 22:13)
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25  **The Kingdom vs. Gehenna**

1 The Kingdom

- 2 • Life & worship
  - Everlasting joy
  - Even persecution is a blessing
  - Full of feasting and rejoicing
  - The Word of God is open (Mark 4:11)
  - The mundane is sacrificed for the truly precious

3 Gehenna

- 4 • Death & idolatry
  - Everlasting suffering
  - Even wholeness is a curse
  - Full of darkness, hunger, separation, and dissatisfaction
  - The Word of God is hidden
  - The truly precious is sacrificed for the empty

26  **The Kingdom vs. Gehenna**

- In the most literal sense, Gehenna is the final destination of those who choose to reject the gift of Jesus Christ their entire life.
- This is the ultimate form of idolatry – this is the ultimate act of self-worship, and it is punished by the ultimate separation from God and all things that are good.

27  **The Kingdom vs. Gehenna**

- But when a believer – when a Servant of the King – engages in worship of self or others or material possessions, they create for themselves a private Gehenna all their own.
- This is because separation is always the result of idolatry.
- This is the decision that Ahaz makes, and because of it, the judgment of God comes upon him.

28  **Ahaz’s Judgment**

- *Therefore the LORD his God gave him into the hand of the king of Syria, who defeated him and took captive a great number of his people and brought them to Damascus. He was also given into the hand of the king of Israel, who struck him with great force. (2Ch 28:5)*

29  **The Question of Worship**

- 2 Chronicles and 1 & 2 Kings are more than purely historical books – many historical books existed (and are referenced) which do not make it into the Bible.
- They are a careful examination of historical facts to seek to answer a single question: Whom should we worship?

30  **Where are you living?**

- If you are a believer, then you need not fear the Lake of Fire – but you can still be living within a Gehenna of your own making.
- Are you hearing from God's Word on a regular basis?
- Are you giving up the things that are most precious in your life (relationship with Jesus, family, God's Word) to sacrifice them on the altar of your idol?