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Is ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων in the Gospels a Funerary Formula?

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Introduction

In two recent articles,[1] Prof. Rodney K. Duke proposes that the words "weeping and gnashing of teeth" in the Gospels communicate "that the judgment received is death" for those condemned at the eschatological judgment, and "suggests that our clause was a cultural expression for a typical funerary mourning ritual undertaken by the living on behalf of the dead or dying."[2] The earlier article devotes a two-page section to this clause within a broader essay defending an annihilationist reading of eschatological punishment in the New Testament, while the later article is largely concerned with this clause and its context.

This essay interacts with Duke's exegesis and argues that the usual reading of this textual unit—namely, that it vividly expresses the emotions of those consigned to the place of eschatological punishment—makes better sense of the syntax and context. Space does not allow us to address the full breadth of texts and concepts discussed by Duke in his two articles. The focus will be limited to the clause or "formula"[3] under

[1] Rodney K. Duke, "The Idiom of 'Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth' in the Gospels: A Funerary Formula," *PRSt* 47 (2020): 283–298; Rodney K. Duke, "Eternal Torment or Destruction? Interpreting Final Judgment Texts," *EvQ* 88 (2016/2017): 237–258.

[2] Duke, "Idiom," 297–298.

[3] We will refer to this nine-word textual unit as our "formula," in the sense of a set

debate and related eschatological language and imagery in Matthew and Luke, interpreted against their biblical and Second Temple Jewish background. Moreover, this article is exegetical in scope and does not seek to draw theological conclusions.

Before summarising Duke's argument, let us outline the exegetical problem at hand. Seven sayings of Jesus in the canonical Gospels contain the nine-word unit ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων (Matt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28). The text reads identically in every instance (including word order) and NA28 notes no textual variants in any instance. The words are always spoken in connection with a dominical saying about future punishment. Duke's goal is "to reconstruct how a first-century Palestinian Jewish audience probably would have understood" these words.[4]

Summarising Duke's Argument

Duke proposes that the nine-word saying above can be translated into English literally as, "There will be (the) weeping and (the) gnashing of (the) teeth."[5] He acknowledges the scholarly consensus that these two actions express a response by the wicked to a state of eternal punishment.[6] He maintains, however, that this interpretation rests "on presuppositions that would have been foreign to a first-century Jewish/Christian audience," offering instead this thesis: the NT formula of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" is a funerary phrase of mourning and not an action performed by the wicked who are condemned.

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form of words *within the Gospels*, without wishing to imply that it existed as such prior to these Jesus traditions.

[4] Duke, "Idiom," 283.

[5] Duke, "Idiom," 283.

[6] A list of references to standard commentaries is not provided here as such a list can be found in Duke, "Idiom," 283 n. 2.

He classifies the expression as an "idiom" and proposes that it "goes back to a ritual practice of mourning when death was expected or had taken place." Therefore, in the Gospels it does not describe suffering of the condemned but "simply speaks of the presence of death."[7] While acknowledging that this thesis cannot be proven conclusively, he avers that it is logical, contextually appropriate, and "the simplest interpretive move."[8]

Before arguing his case, Duke asks the reader to suspend three popular presuppositions regarding the afterlife. The first is a sequence of eschatological events whereby a person dies, receives judgment, then goes to heaven or hell. Duke proposes that, instead, the sequence consistently presupposed by the NT writers is that a person dies, rests in a holding state, is resurrected at the Parousia, then receives final judgment. The second presupposition is a Hellenistic anthropology in which immortal souls temporarily inhabit human bodies. Duke insists that biblical anthropology presents humans as "holistic mortal beings, not immortal, bodiless souls."[9] The third presupposition is that Gehenna and Hades are synonymous "places." For Duke, the NT writers distinguish between the two "place images," with Hades being a "holding-place image" and Gehenna a "final-judgment image."[10] He further asserts that Gehenna in the Gospels is to be understood as "a place for dead bodies ... a dumping ground for corpses."[11] Duke argues these three points across several pages before turning to exegesis of the "weeping and gnashing" texts.

This response will largely bracket out the three presuppositional concerns raised by Duke. None of these presuppositions is determinative for the meaning of the formula.[12] Furthermore, it seems best to let each

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[7] Duke, "Idiom," 284.

[8] Duke, "Idiom," 284.

[9] Duke, "Idiom," 284.

[10] Duke, "Idiom," 289.

[11] Duke, "Idiom," 291.

[12] The meaning of the formula can be investigated apart from the timing or anthropology of the events. The former might as easily inform the latter as the reverse.

Gospel speak for itself and not impose a theological framework upon "the NT writers."[13] Hades/Sheol and Gehenna may be different places for some writers, but for Luke, at least, they seem not to differ in any meaningful way.[14]

Having briefly summarised the narrative context of the seven occurrences of the formula, Duke offers some exegetical observations. He begins by making

> an obvious [point] ... that the reader should not take these texts literally. Although they teach theological truths, they do so in narrative form, employing language that is visionary and graphic. All of them are eschatological projections about the coming kingdom of God or the end of the age; and, all but Matt 8:12 are cast in the form of parables or parable-like illustrations. That is to say that our phrase uses the language of analogy and not literal language.[15]

Hence, in Duke's opinion, the reader should not try to harmonise Matthew's depictions of eschatological punishment such as outer darkness or a furnace of fire or being cut into pieces.

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[13] This is especially important given that scholars have noted differences between Matthew and Luke specifically on the timing of eschatological punishment (see, e.g., Chaim Milikowsky, "Which Gehenna? Retribution and Eschatology in the Synoptic Gospels and in Early Jewish Texts," *NTS* 34 [1988]: 238–249). Communicating a precise eschatological itinerary does not seem to be a preoccupation for either evangelist.

[14] Luke mentions Gehenna only once, as a place into which God can throw a person after death (Luke 12:4–5). He likewise depicts Hades as a place of postmortem punishment—specifically fiery torment—in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:23). This narrative occurs prior to the eschaton (Lazarus, while in "Abraham's bosom," has not yet been resurrected, per 16:31). However, the scene strikingly parallels the eschatological banquet picture of Luke 13:28–29 (see below), so the apparent discrepancy in timing may not be important for Luke. Given that—assuming common authorship of Luke-Acts—the same writer appears to assume that Jesus went to Hades temporarily (Acts 2:31), Luke may envision Hades as having multiple compartments (cp. the "four hollows" of 1 En 22). One should also observe that Sheol (usually translated ᾅδης in the LXX) becomes the place of eschatological punishment in 1 En 103 (George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001], 524–525).

[15] Duke, "Idiom," 293.

Duke continues by arguing that "one must examine the two actions of weeping and gnashing together as part of an idiom."[16] Because they occur together in a fixed formula in the Gospels, they likely reflect "some tradition known to the original intended audience."[17] They therefore must be examined as a whole and one should "not study them as separate actions."[18] He adds that, in Matthew, the formula functions structurally as "a concluding statement that follows an action of judgment taken against the wicked."[19] He speculates that, because Luke does not use the formula in the same way, its author may have been unfamiliar with the regional, Palestinian background to the idiom.

Next, Duke emphasises that the formula is an independent clause, and should not be translated as a subordinate clause, as in the NRSV ("... *where* there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"). It should instead be translated, "There will be weeping and gnashing ..." and the phrase "there will be" "should be taken generically and not as a reference to a specific, real place."[20]

Turning to the identity of those who weep and gnash, Duke observes that the texts never identify the subjects of these actions. He notes that in Luke 13:27–28 the clause falls within a longer saying addressed to a second-person-plural "you," while in Matt 24:51 the weeping and gnashing follows on a servant being cut in pieces. Duke's inference: "the judged person ... cannot wail and gnash teeth, because he is already dead! He has been cut in two."[21] He adds that all of the places mentioned in connection with weeping and gnashing (outer darkness; fiery furnace) should be understood as "symbolic of death."[22]

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[16] Duke, "Idiom," 293.
[17] Duke, "Idiom," 293.
[18] Duke, "Idiom," 293.
[19] Duke, "Idiom," 294.
[20] Duke, "Idiom," 295.
[21] Duke, "Idiom," 295.
[22] Duke, "Idiom," 296.

Finally, Duke offers a positive case for his thesis that the "weeping and gnashing" formula was "a Palestinian funerary expression," albeit one for which we "lack much outside corroborating evidence."[23] He adduces two second-millennium Ugaritic texts in support of this claim. Duke tells us that in the *Epic of Kirta*, Kirta's children "weep and gnash their teeth" when they think he is dying. Elsewhere, a liturgical text denoted KTU 1.161, "a newly crowned king in a symbolic rituation was required apparently to weep and gnash his teeth on behalf of the recently deceased king."[24] Duke points out that in ancient Near Eastern cultures, including that of Jesus, mourning was not merely a matter of personal grief, but "an obligation with cultural rituals, such as playing dirges, singing laments, beating one's breast, putting on sackcloth and ashes, and even employing professional mourners,"[25] to which list he would add weeping and gnashing of teeth. Duke stresses that the texts do not imply that ritual mourning will actually occur alongside eschatological judgment. Rather, the formula "appears to have functioned as a cultural signal that the judgment received was death," and therefore in its eschatological use in the Gospels it means simply that "some people will die."[26]

Responding to Duke's Argument

Is the Language Literal, Analogical, or Both?

Duke regards it as obvious that "our phrase uses the language of analogy and not literal language."[27] One should not, however, dichotomise. Indeed, it would arguably be impossible in principle to describe transcen-

[23] Duke, "Idiom," 297.
[24] Duke, "Idiom," 297.
[25] Duke, "Idiom," 298.
[26] Duke, "Idiom," 298.
[27] Duke, "Idiom," 293.

dent, eschatological realities that are without any this-worldly equivalent, except by analogy. Thus, while the evangelists may understand their images to be analogical, they may nevertheless regard their literal content as the nearest available approximation to the transcendent realities being depicted. Moreover, modern exegetes may read such language figuratively because they find it objectionable or unrealistic, which ancient readers may not have. One example relevant to this study is the master's "cutting in two" (lemma: διχοτομέω) of the wicked servant in Matt 24:51. Recent scholarship has criticised a tendency to interpret this verb metaphorically, an "exegetical fantasy" borne of "modern sensitivities" about punishment.[28] Another example is the parable Luke 16:19–31, which some scholars insist teaches nothing about the afterlife or even parodies popular ancient beliefs about the afterlife.[29] Some recent scholarship has pushed back: the parable's "description of the otherworldly conditions is believable according to the parameters of [Luke's] cultural world";[30] in it "Luke speaks clearly about the final des-

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[28] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew* (trans. James E. Crouch; 3 vols.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 3:225; David C. Sim, "The Dissection of the Wicked Servant in Matthew 24:51," *HTS Theological Studies* 58 (2002): 172–184.

[29] Tony Wright, "Death, the Dead and the Underworld in Biblical Theology: Part 2," *Churchman* 122 (2008): 114, for instance, avers, "In this parable Jesus no more provides information about the intermediate state than, in other parables, does he provide instruction on correct agricultural practices or investing tips." Richard Bauckham, "The Rich Man and Lazarus: The Parable and the Parallels," *NTS* 37 (1991): 246, concludes that by having Abraham refuse the rich man's request, the parable directs "attention away from an apocalyptic revelation of the afterlife back to the inexcusable injustice of the coexistence of rich and poor." For Kim G. Papaioannou, *The Geography of Hell in the Teaching of Jesus* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013), 134, the first part of the parable "serves to attract attention through the use of peculiar and unreal elements that begin to set it apart from other tales [of revelations from the dead] with their supposed depictions of the afterlife."

[30] Outi Lehtipuu, *The Afterlife Imagery in Luke's Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus* (NovTSup, 123; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 299.

tiny of the individual after death."[31] Given the prominence of reversals of fortune in Lucan eschatology (e.g., Luke 6:20–26; 9:24; 13:28–30), and the similarity in afterlife imagery between this parable and Luke 13:28–29 (see below), one cannot but agree.

Returning to our formula, *pace* Duke it is not usually used in a parabolic fashion. In Matt 8:12 (par. Luke 13:28), the depiction of the eschatological banquet with the patriarchs is neither parabolic nor symbolic. In Matt 13:42, 50, our formula occurs not within parables but in the allegorical interpretations thereof. Only in three texts (Matt 22:13; 24:51; 25:30) does the formula occur within a parabolic narrative, but as it concludes the parable in all three cases, and fits awkwardly into those narratives, it may be an eschatological postscript appended by Matthew.[32]

Finally, while Duke asserts that one should not try to combine different images such as "outer darkness" and "furnace of fire," such images are combined in contemporaneous Jewish literature. The Community Rule, for instance, speaks of the punishment of "an object of wrath licked by eternal flame, surrounded by utter darkness" (1QS 2 7–8) and of "a shameful extinction in the fire of Hell's outer darkness" (1QS 4 13).[33] Similarly, Parables of Enoch speaks of souls "descending into the flame of the torment of Sheol. And after that their faces will be filled with darkness and shame" (1 En 63:10–11).[34] While fire and darkness might appear to modern readers as contradictory images, such a combination was well-established in Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic.

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[31] Alexey Somov, *Representations of the Afterlife in Luke-Acts* (LNTS, 556; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 224.

[32] This is most evident from comparing Matt 24:51 with Luke 12:46: "It is generally agreed that the Q material finishes" with the servant being assigned his lot "and that Matthew has appended a favourite expression," namely our formula (Sim, "Dissection," 173).

[33] Translations are from Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader* (6 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1:5; 4:273.

[34] George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, trans., *1 Enoch 2* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 255.

Is the Formula an Idiom?

Duke avers that our formula is an idiom. *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar* defines an idiom as "a string of (more or less) fixed words having a meaning that is not deducible from the meanings of the individual words,"[35] giving English examples such as "over the moon" and "under the weather."[36] Yet Duke assigns to the actions of "weeping" and "gnashing of teeth" their natural meanings ("physical expressions ... of distress"),[37] even in the formula. It might therefore be more accurate to characterise the formula, under Duke's interpretation, as a fixed expression or collocation rather than as an idiom.

The Syntax of the Formula

Duke insists that ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων is an independent clause. In this he is correct: ἐκεῖ is not a relative adverb like ὅπου. Hence, the NRSV rendering of Matt 8:12 ("... while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, *where* there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth") is not formally correct. However, Duke's proposed translation of the formula, "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,"[38] is even more problematic: ἐκεῖ has been lost in translation! In English, "there" can function as a locative adverb (e.g., "I'll be there shortly") but also—particularly when it begins a clause—as a "there-existential"[39] (e.g., "there will be enough money"). A there-existential proposes that something exists but conveys no information about

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[35] Bas Aarts, Sylvia Chalker, and Edmund Weiner, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 204.

[36] For a good Matthaean example of an idiom, see Matt 6:3: "Let not your left hand know what your right does."

[37] Duke, "Idiom," 293.

[38] Duke, "Idiom," 294. The NRSV translation of Luke 13:28 has the same problem: "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrown out."

[39] Aarts, Chalker, Weiner, *Dictionary*, 147–148.

location. ἐκεῖ is strictly an adverb of place, however, and is not translated by a there-existential.[40] Thus, while a translation of our formula ought to include a there-existential (since the formula proposes the existence of something), it must also include a locative adverb or adverbial expression that translates ἐκεῖ (for example, "*In that place* there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt 8:12b ESV; "There will be weeping *there*, and gnashing of teeth," Luke 13:28a NIV).

This point carries great exegetical significance. The loss-in-translation of ἐκεῖ facilitates Duke's incorrect inference "that the phrase 'there will be' should be taken generically and not as a reference to a specific, real place."[41]

Who Weeps and Gnashes?

Duke correctly observes that our formula does not explicitly identify who weeps and gnashes. The actions are described using nouns, so the person, number, and gender of the subject are not expressed. Should the

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[40] ἐκεῖ is used "in reference to a position in the immediate vicinity, there, in that place" or "in reference to a position relatively distant, there, to that place" (*BDAG*, 301). For examples of other NT independent clauses beginning with ἐκεῖ, see Mark 16:7 par. Matt 28:7 ("he goes ahead of you to Galilee; *there* you will see him"); Luke 22:12 ("That man will show you a large, furnished upper room; *there* make the preparations"). Ancient Greek, of course, has no word equivalent to a there-existential; an existential proposition typically consists only of εἰμὶ + predicate nominative.

[41] Duke, "Idiom," 293. Duke also explores occurrences of the exact collocation ἐκεῖ ἔσται in the LXX and NT (2 Kgdms 15:21; Eccl 11:3; Isa 35:8; Matt 6:21) and infers that "'there will be' is an idiom for an indefinite place." This is another misuse of the category "idiom." ἐκεῖ ἔσται is not a fixed string that means something other than the sum of its parts; it is a string of two common words whose meaning is the sum of its parts. The "definiteness" of the place depends on the context, not the string ἐκεῖ ἔσται. Had Duke widened his search to include ἔσται ἐκεῖ, for instance (not to mention texts where ἐκεῖ modifies ἔσται but there are intervening words), he would have observed instances where it refers to a specific place: the land of Goshen (Exod 8:22[18]); beside the ark of the covenant (Deut 31:26); the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:25).

actions therefore be ascribed to a merely generic or proverbial subject, or to persons mentioned in the immediate context?

In Matthew, the main clues concerning who does the weeping and gnashing pertain to *where* it happens. As highlighted above, the formula uses ἐκεῖ to situate the weeping and gnashing in some *place*. But what is this place, according to the context? Three of the Matthaean texts describe the place as "the outer darkness" (τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον, Matt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30), a location into which the condemned have been thrown that is outside the eschatological banquet (Matt 8:11; 22:9–10) or has no share in the master's joy (25:21, 23).[42] Two other texts describe the place as "the furnace of fire" (τὴν κάμινον τοῦ πυρός, Matt 13:42, 50), a place into which the condemned have likewise been thrown after rounding them up "from out of the kingdom" (ἐκ τῆς βασιλείας, 13:41). Matthew 24:51 describes the place obliquely as "with the hypocrites" (μετὰ τῶν ὑποκριτῶν). Yet Matthew elsewhere gives other names and descriptions of this place. The furnace of fire must be identical with "the Gehenna of fire" (τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός, 5:22; cf. 5:29–30; 10:28; 23:15, 33), which is in turn identified with "the eternal fire" (τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον, 18:8–9). The latter is a transcendent place, "prepared for the Devil and his angels" (25:41). This connection in turn impels the reader to identify it as the place of "torture" (lemma: βασανίζω) dreaded by the demons (Matt 8:29), and thus as the prison

[42] Darkness also characterises the place of punishment in 2 Pet 2:17 and Jude 13, namely "the gloom of darkness" (ὁ ζόφος τοῦ σκότους) that has been "reserved" (cf. "prepared," Matt 25:41) for the wicked ("forever," in Jude's case). The place of punishment is also characterised as outside the eschatological place of reward in Revelation. After the final description of the New Jerusalem in all its glory, the divine speaker adds, "Outside (ἔξω, adverb of place) are the dogs, sorcerers, unchaste, murderers, idolaters, and all who love to practice falsehood" (Rev 22:15). Alan E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 260, comments that "evil remains to the very end of the tour of the new Jerusalem. ... Evil is not annihilated but contained."

where the Father will hand over unforgiving people "to the torturers" (τοῖς βασανισταῖς) until they have paid their debt (Matt 18:34–35; cf. 5:25–26).[43]

The only beings that Matthew states or implies are in the place of punishment are those consigned to it (men and angels/demons)[44] and those who administer it (angels/"torturers"). Since the weeping and gnashing of teeth are always located ἐκεῖ, and since Matthew elsewhere depicts it as a place of banishment, confinement, and torture, the natural conclusion is that the inmates are the weepers and gnashers.[45] There is no textual or contextual basis for positing weeping and gnashing by onlookers, real or proverbial.

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[43] Some scholars regard "Amen, I say to you, you will not be released [from prison] until you have paid the last penny" (Matt 5:25–26) as a warning about an eschatological punishment of imprisonment (e.g., Marius Reiser, *Jesus and Judgment: The Eschatological Proclamation in Its Jewish Context* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997], 305–308). The use of the ἀμήν formula seems to assign to this saying an importance and a solemnity beyond what is fitting for a remark merely about avoiding this-worldly penalties. ἀμήν, for Matthew, "almost always introduces an eschatological, last-judgment statement" (Luz, *Matthew*, 1:241). The Lucan version of the saying (12:58–59) lacks ἀμήν, but Luke "places the logion in the midst of a block of eschatological material that runs from 12:35 to 13:9" (Llewellyn Howes, "'You Will Not Get Out of There!': Reconsidering the Placement of Q 12:58–59," *NeoT* 52 [2018]: 142). A similar saying in *Didache* 1.5 also seems to warn about eschatological punishment (Aaron E. Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, & Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50–70 C.E.* [New York: Newman, 2003], 331).

[44] Matt 8:28–29, 12:24–29, and 25:41, read together, suggest to this author that Matthew equated demons with the devil's angels. For a different view, see Dale Basil Martin, "When Did Angels Become Demons?", *JBL* 129 (2010): 657–677.

[45] Those condemned at the day of judgment are said to "weep consciously forever" (κλαύσονται ἐν αἰσθήσει ἕως αἰῶνος) in Jud 16:17, which—like Gehenna in Mark—represents a development of the image in Isa 66:24. Similarly, 1 En 108:5–6 describes a place of punishment for "the spirits of sinners" with "flames of fire that are burning and the sound of weeping and crying and groaning and severe pain" (Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 551).

Luke shows less interest than Matthew in the "where" of eschatological punishment. The terms Gehenna and Hades are used once each for a place of postmortem punishment (*supra* note 14),[46] but Luke 13:28 merely refers to "that place" (ἐκεῖ) without naming it. The scene in Luke 13:28–29 strikingly parallels that of Hades in Luke 16:22–23. In the former, the condemned *see* Abraham and others reclining at a banquet in the kingdom of God. In the latter, the rich man *sees* Lazarus reclining at a banquet beside Abraham.[47] Thus, the place from which the condemned see Abraham can only be Hades or its final-judgment equivalent. Calling the place simply ἐκεῖ is probably a euphemism, similar to Judas going to "his own place" (τὸν τόπον τὸν ἴδιον, Acts 1:25). The Greek version of 1 En 22:11 also denotes the place of eschatological punishment merely as ἐκεῖ.[48] Thus, Luke 13:28 locates the weeping and gnashing of teeth in the place of eschatological punishment—a punishment that is subsequent to physical death (μετὰ τὸ ἀποκτεῖναι, Luke 12:4–5) and is characterised by fiery torment (16:24–28). Luke also gives the time of the weeping and gnashing: *when* (ὅταν) the condemned see Abraham et al. and themselves thrown out.[49] Those seeing

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[46] Hades perhaps also in Luke 10:15, though this may be a metaphorical description of a city's humiliation drawn from Isa 14:13–15 LXX.

[47] The phrase "the bosom of Abraham" alludes to the banqueting custom of reclining diagonally on triclinia; the head of one diner would be adjacent to the bosom of the next (cf. John 13:23–25). The image of righteous and sinners seeing each other's fates is also found in 1 En 108:14–15.

[48] Contrasting the place of temporary confinement (which he shows Enoch) with that of eternal judgment, Raphael says, "Here their spirits are separated for this great torment, until the great day of judgment, of scourges and tortures of the cursed forever, that there might be a recompense for their spirits. There (ἐκεῖ) he will bind them forever" (Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 300). Nickelsburg comments, "The identity of the place of this eternal punishment, designated as 'there,' is less than certain" (308).

[49] Notice that, although our formula in Luke 13:28 is an independent clause (as discussed previously), unlike the Matthaean occurrences it is in hypotactic relation with two subordinate clauses: "In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see (ὅταν ὄψησθε) Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the

the reward of the righteous and their own consignment to "that place" are thus the most natural subjects of the weeping and gnashing.

This reading of Luke 13:28 is further corroborated by other evidence concerning the actions of weeping and gnashing themselves. Luke makes one other mention of eschatological weeping in the woes of Luke 6:24–26, where Jesus warns, "Woe, you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep" (κλαύσετε, Luke 6:25). This is part of a symmetrical reversal-of-fortunes motif, since conversely those who weep now shall laugh (6:21), a reference to a heavenly reward (6:23). Luke 13:28 thus reads as a detailed description of the eschatological reversal of 6:20–26; this implies that it is the condemned who weep in 13:28. Furthermore, Luke 13:28 closely parallels two psalms in which sinners see or watch the righteous and gnash their teeth:

> But the meek shall inherit land and take delight in an abundance of peace. The sinner will closely watch the righteous and gnash his teeth at him. (Ps 36:11–12 LXX)
>
> Happy the man who fears the Lord ... his righteousness endures forever and ever; his horn will be exalted in glory. A sinner will see it and be angered; he will gnash his teeth and melt away (Ps 111:1, 9–10 LXX)[50]

These psalms have probably influenced Luke's depiction of the condemned "seeing" the righteous in the kingdom, and therefore also support interpreting the condemned as the subjects of gnashing in Luke 13:28.

Collectively, the evidence from Matthew and Luke and their literary contexts makes it virtually certain that, for both evangelists, it is the

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kingdom of God, but (see) yourselves thrown outside (ὑμᾶς δὲ ἐκβαλλομένους ἔξω)." The implication is that the weeping and gnashing occur precisely when they see these things.

[50] Albert Pietersma, "Psalms," in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, ed. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 564–565, 604. In both instances the Greek phrase for gnashing of teeth is βρύξει τοὺς ὀδόντας αὐτοῦ (word order varies), βρύχω being the verbal cognate of the noun βρυγμός.

condemned who weep and gnash their teeth and they do so in the place of punishment. But what about Duke's claim that Matt 24:51 cannot envision the condemned weeping and gnashing because they are already dead, having been cut in half? In this instance, ἐκεῖ can only refer to "with the hypocrites" (μετὰ τῶν ὑποκριτῶν) or to the "share" assigned to them, if μέρος is understood spatially.[51] And again, it is *there* that Matthew locates the weeping and gnashing, so it cannot simply be a place for unconscious corpses.

A difficulty arises only if one assumes, as Duke seems to do, that being killed terminates one's existence.[52] The title of Duke's earlier article, "Eternal Torment or Destruction," implies that torment and destruction are mutually exclusive fates. For Duke, eschatological destruction, perishing, and death in the NT are synonymous with "absolute nonexistence," which for him is the definitive meaning of eschatological punishment.[53] Matthew and Luke do indeed use language of destruction and perishing for the eschatological fate of the wicked (Matt 7:13; 10:28; Luke 13:1–5), but it does not seem to entail absolute nonexistence. Indeed, Matt 10:28 implicitly negates that being destroyed (lemma: ἀπόλλυμι) is equivalent to being killed (lemma: ἀποκτείνω) and that the eschatological punishment involves only the body. Likewise, in Luke 12:46, being assigned a share with the unbelievers must correspond to the punishment of Gehenna, which is explicitly said to occur after death (Luke 12:4–5). While it is semantically possible that ἀπολέσαι ἐν γεέννῃ in Matt 10:28 entails eventual annihilation, Matthew nowhere speaks explicitly of annihilation.[54] It is therefore more

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[51] Notice the parallel with Rev 21:8, where some receive their μέρος "in the lake of fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

[52] Sim notes that, in the context of Jewish apocalyptic traditions, "That Matthew could envisage both dissection and further torment in Gehenna is not problematical" (Sim, "Dissection," 181).

[53] Duke, "Idiom," 288.

[54] Significantly, while Matthew frequently uses the image of fire in connection with eschatological punishment, he uses the verb κατακαίω ("burn up") only in parabolic

likely that ἀπόλλυμι in Matt 10:28 refers to the same ruined and miserable existence described elsewhere in terms of "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Besides Matt 10:28/Luke 12:4–5, there are other texts in these two Gospels that depict the eschatological punishment as worse than nonexistence or than a violent death. Matthew has Jesus saying of his betrayer, "It would have been good for that man if he had never been born" (Matt 26:24).[55] Elsewhere, Jesus warns concerning anyone who cause the little ones to sin, "it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt 18:6 par. Luke 17:2). This saying is not musing about the relative horrors of different execution methods. Rather, it communicates that the punishment of Gehenna—mentioned immediately thereafter, in Matthew (18:8–9)—is qualitatively of a different order than any bodily execution, no matter how terrible.

Observe also that other Second Temple Jewish texts speak of the wicked "perishing" and yet continuing to exist. For example, in the Parables of Enoch, it is foretold that "the kings and the mighty will perish ... their life will be at an end" (1 En 38:5–6).[56] However, that "no one will seek mercy for them" suggests that they still exist, and indeed, later in the text they beg for respite from the Lord of Spirits and are refused (63:1–12). Similarly, 4 Ezra 8:55–59 says concerning "the multitude of those who perish" and are "destroyed" that "the thirst and torment which are prepared (await them),"[57] while Judith 16:17 takes the

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images about plant matter (Matt 3:12; 13:30, 40), and never mentions the inhabitants of Gehenna being burned up. Luke, likewise, refers to chaff being burned up (Luke 3:17), whereas the flames of eschatological punishment torment without consuming (Luke 16:24–28).

[55] This language has early Jewish and Christian parallels in 1 En 38:2, 4; Ezra 7:65–69; 1 Clem 46:8 (which also has the "millstone" saying), and *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Visions 4.2.6.

[56] Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 95.

[57] Michael Edward Stone, *A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia;

image of ever-burning, ever-decaying *corpses* from Isa 66:24 and foretells that "they will weep consciously (κλαύσονται ἐν αἰσθήσει) forever."

Evidence for An Association with Ritual Mourning

Finally, let us evaluate Duke's positive evidence for interpreting our clause as a funerary formula. First, the sixfold occurrence of the formula in Matthew, verbatim, does not imply that it had a life outside the Jesus tradition. Perhaps the formula originated in the Q saying behind Matt 8:12/Luke 13:28, and Matthew has "made this expression his own," using it as a "refrain" at strategic points in his Gospel.[58] Positing that the Jesus tradition drew this formula from Palestinian Jewish culture is mere conjecture.

Duke cites two Ugaritic texts as evidence for his suggestion that our clause is a funerary formula. However, these texts pre-date Jesus by *more than a millennium*. Moreover, the meaning "gnash [teeth]" for the Ugaritic verb is conjectural and disputed in both cases. As Duke acknowledges concerning the verb *ʿdm* in KTU 1.161 line 17, "different translators render the text differently as they draw on Arabic cognates for help with the Ugaritic consonantal text."[59] Duke does not acknowl-

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Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 277. Stone offers an excursus on "The Concept of Death in 4 Ezra" in which he states that "4 Ezra uses the language of death in two major fashions. The first is of physical death. ... The second ... is more general, less precisely defined. In it death appears as the equivalent of perdition or damnation and in opposition not just to life but to eternal life ... in 8:31 death is simply the equivalent of eternal punishment" (65–67). Concerning references to "destruction" and "perdition" in 4 Ezra 10:10, Stone writes, "'Destruction' here may go back to Greek ἀπώλεια and Hebrew אבדון, a technical term for the underworld, parallel to 'Sheol' and 'Mawet' in the Hebrew Bible. Note, therefore, the parallelism of 'corruption'/'ways of death'/'paths of perdition' in 7:48. Consequently, the term 'perdition' does not necessarily imply annihilation but death, which is regarded in 4 Ezra either negatively or neutrally" (322).

[58] Thus W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–1997), 2:31, 430.

[59] Duke, "Idiom," 283. Other suggested translations of the threefold *ʿdmt w ʿdmt*

edge uncertainty about the meaning of the verb *šnn* in the *Kirta Epic* (KTU 1.16 I.12–13, II.97), but scholarly suggestions include "sharpened (his tongue)," "hollered," and "weeps bitterly."[60] Given the remoteness of these texts from Jesus and the Gospel writers and the lack of a clear reference to gnashing of teeth, this evidence is of almost no value for understanding our Gospel clause.

There is, moreover, evidence *against* our clause being a funerary formula. Firstly, if the uniformity of the clause across its seven Gospel occurrences is evidence for its fixity, this applies to the entire nine-word clause. The formula is "*In that place there will be* weeping and gnashing of teeth," not just "weeping and gnashing of teeth." It is arbitrary to select part of the clause and propose that only this part is a cultural formula. If a funerary *Sitz im Leben* cannot account for the formula's opening words, ἐκεῖ ἔσται, this is probably because it is not a funerary formula.

Secondly, the phrase ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων is not well-suited to a funerary context, because elsewhere in biblical literature this action usually expresses hostility or rage, not grief. In the LXX, βρυγμός is used of

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'dmt include "Desolation, and [more] desolation; [total] desolation!" (Baruch A. Levine and Jean-Michel de Tarragon, "Dead Kings and Rephaim: The Patrons of the Ugaritic Dynasty," *JAOS* 104 [1984]: 650), "... in misery: Indeed, in misery upon misery!", or a threefold repetition of "how long?" (Mark S. Smith, *Poetic Heroes: The Literary Commemorations of Warriors and Warrior Culture in the Early Biblical World* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014], 155, 458 n. 116).

[60] The relevant lines are *ybky wyšnn* (KTU 1.16 II.97) and *tbky wtšnn* (KTU 1.16 I.12–13). J. C. L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978), 95 n. 2, translates the lines respectively as "he wept and gnashed his teeth" and "She wept and gnashed her teeth," but states in a footnote to the first line that "gnashed his teeth" is "the appropriate Eng[lish] metaphor," the literal meaning being "sharpened (his tongue)." Mayer I. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Studia Pohl, 12/II; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980], 428–429 n. 2, translates the two lines, "He (She) wails, and he (she) hollers" and mentions another suggested translation, "he (she) weeps bitterly." He also mentions "the lack of evidence for a denominative verb שנן 'gnash the teeth' in any Sem[itic] language" and "the lack of evidence that 'gnash the teeth' was a gestus of grief anywhere in the ANE."

a lion's roar (Prov 19:12) and of being devoured by an enemy (Sir 51:3).[61] The cognate verb βρύχω occurs five times in the LXX (two of them quoted earlier), always with ὀδόντας as its direct object, and always as an expression of hostility or anger directed at another person (Ps 34:16; 36:12; 111:10; Job 16:9; Lam 2:16). In the NT, βρυγμός occurs only in our formula, but—especially important for interpreting Luke 13:28—βρύχω occurs in Acts 7:54, where Sanhedrin members gnash their teeth in fury at Stephen before stoning him. In other Greek literature, gnashing of teeth can express the savagery of a beast,[62] or physical or mental pain (including grief),[63] but it does not seem to have any association with ritual mourning. One cannot be too precise about what emotion ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων expresses in the Gospels, but it is likely to be hostility, anger, or disappointment (directed toward the righteous) in Luke 13:28, and may be physical pain or mental anguish in Matthew (where it is linked explicitly to the fiery furnace).[64]

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[61] J. Lust, E. Eynikel, and K. Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (2 vols.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1992), 1:85, give the meanings "roaring" and "biting" respectively for βρυγμός in these two passages, and "to gnash, to grind (the teeth)" for βρύχω in the LXX.

[62] For example, the wild boar depicted in *AnthLyrGraec* 15.51.

[63] For example, in Hippocrates, *Mul.* 1, it is listed as a symptom of certain gynaecological afflictions, while in Babrius, *Fables* 95, a lion gnashes its mouth (στόμα) in hunger and grief after failing to catch a stag.

[64] Terms used by commentators to describe the emotion expressed by gnashing of teeth in this formula include despair, torment, distress, rage, pain, anger, disappointment, vexation (David Abernathy, *An Exegetical Summary of Matthew 1–16* [Dallas: SIL International, 2013], 285–286); also "l'effroi" (Daniel Marguerat, *Le Jugement dans l'Évangile de Matthieu* [Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1995], 23), "révolte" (François Bovon, *L'Évangile selon Saint Luc* [4 vols.; CNT, III; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2011], 2:386), "Aggressivität" (Michael Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium* [HNT, 5, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], 493), "self-reproach" (Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew* [2 vols.; WBC; Dallas: Word, 1993], 1:205–206), and "remorse" (J. D. Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13: A Study in Redaction-Criticism* [London: SPCK, 1969], 108; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* [2 vols.; BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996], 2:1238–1239). Luz, *Matthew*, 2:11, argues "One can gnash one's teeth on different

Conclusion

This article interacts with Duke's novel interpretation of the formula ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων that occurs six times in Matthew and once in Luke. Without attempting to address these evangelists' eschatology or anthropology broadly, we have evaluated Duke's proposal that the clause refers generically to ritual mourning and does *not* denote an action undertaken by eschatologically condemned persons.

We first addressed Duke's claim that the language is analogical and not literal, noting that eschatological language is necessarily analogical, but that the texts in which our formula occurs nonetheless attempt to convey eschatological realities in terms of this-worldly realities familiar to the reader. We added that, while some of Matthew's and Luke's imagery about eschatological punishment may strike modern readers as strange or even offensive, this would not necessarily have been the case for their ancient readers.

Secondly, we questioned whether the "weeping and gnashing" formula can be characterised as an idiom, even under Duke's interpretation. Thirdly, whilst agreeing with Duke that our formula is an independent clause, we observed that his proposed translation is misleading because it omits any locative adverb corresponding to ἐκεῖ. Correctly understood, ἐκεῖ explicitly locates the weeping and gnashing actions in the place of eschatological punishment.

Fourthly, we addressed the question of who does the weeping and gnashing. In Matthew, the various descriptions of the place of eschatological punishment coalesce into a picture of a place of banishment, confinement, and torture for wicked angels and humans. It follows that the inhabitants of the place would be conscious and capable of weeping and gnashing, which the unbearable conditions would warrant. In Luke,

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occasions," but that it must be interpreted in the context of κλαυθμός and therefore refers to "horrible pain."

the location of the weeping and gnashing is denoted, perhaps euphemistically, merely as ἐκεῖ. However, parallels in afterlife imagery with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus allow the location to be identified as the place of eschatological punishment. Parallels with another Lucan saying about eschatological weeping and with psalms in which the wicked gnash their teeth confirm that, for Luke too, it is the condemned who do the weeping and gnashing. A reference in Matthew 24:51 to bodily execution prior to the weeping and gnashing does not conflict with this finding. Matthew and Luke both distinguish the eschatological punishment from physical killing and emphasise that it is a fate worse than death or (or nonexistence, in Matthew's case).

Fifthly, we evaluated Duke's positive evidence for understanding our formula as a funerary formula drawn from Palestinian Jewish ritual mourning practices. Duke's argument was deemed unpersuasive for several reasons. The two Ugaritic texts cited in support both predate the Gospels by more than a millennium, and neither clearly refers to gnashing of teeth. Duke's argument arbitrarily omits the formula's two opening words (ἐκεῖ ἔσται) from the putative "idiom" despite their inclusion in all seven Gospel occurrences of the formula. Finally, in the biblical literature, gnashing of teeth expresses anger or hostility, which is uncharacteristic of a funerary setting.

Perhaps the overall finding of this study is rather bland: the conventional view of the "weeping and gnashing" formula in the Gospels, as expressing the emotions of those in Gehenna, turns out to be correct. However, while this may have previously functioned as an unchallenged assumption, we have Professor Duke to thank for challenging it, that it might be substantiated. Hopefully, along the way some additional insights into Matthaean and Lucan ideas about eschatological punishment have been provided.