

***EVERLASTING
LIFE
IS
GOD'S GIFT***

***Central Highlands
Congregation of God***

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But now, having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and in the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is everlasting life in the Anointed Jeshua, our Lord.

Romans 6:22-23

For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not be destroyed, but have everlasting life.

John 3:16

Behold, I tell you a mystery: Not all of us shall sleep, but we shall all be transformed; suddenly, like the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For it will sound, and the dead will rise without corruption, and we shall all be transformed. For this destructible is going to wear indestructibility, and that which dies will wear immortality. And when this destructible puts on indestructibility, and that which dies, immortality, then these written words will come to pass: "Death is swallowed by victory."

1 Corinthians 15:51 to 54

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IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?

Reports of near-death “out of body” experiences make exciting reading. People who claim that the spirits of the dead can speak through them are sought out as mid-day TV show guests. Others claim that they can remember their past lives. Even if some of these people genuinely believe these things are true, is that sufficient proof of their claims? Could they be mistaken? Is there any way we can know what really happens after death?

From ancient times people have wondered what happens to us after death. Does part of us live on after death? Can we still feel pain or bliss? Will we remember our former life? Can we be reborn and have another lifetime on this earth? What is the present state of people who have died? Is it possible to communicate with the dead? Do we have everlasting life now or will we receive everlasting life after death or at a later resurrection? Will we, or someone we love, suffer in Hell for eternity? Where does the teaching of “immortality of the human soul” come from? Is there anything we can do to receive everlasting life if we do not already have it?

God’s revelations to mankind, recorded for us in the Bible, hold the answer to these questions.

Popular Concepts of the ‘Afterlife’

Believing that there is a conscious part of man that cannot die and thus lives on after our body dies is a common element in virtually all religions. Most religions derive their power by claiming influence over a person’s fate after death. They usually offer a choice between an eternal holiday of endless pleasures for the faithful or everlasting suffering in some type of hell for those who break that particular religions’ rules. Sometimes there is an intermediate place such as Purgatory. (The Roman Catholic religion teaches that Purgatory is where ‘small-scale’ sinners stay until their suffering purifies them sufficiently to earn their entrance into heaven. This period can

supposedly be shortened by payments and prayers by their surviving relatives¹). Several Eastern religions feel that living on earth is sufficient punishment and teach reincarnation for those who were not spiritual enough to be rewarded with bliss. However, little or no evidence is given to support their contentions, and the Bible does not teach it.

As we will show, the Bible is unique in its teachings about the afterlife, which differ radically from the myths listed above. The Bible is also distinctive in its verifiable accuracy. The history given in the Bible has, time and again, been proven to be true as more information becomes available to archaeologists. It is also unique in that it commits itself to detailed prophecies. Many of these prophecies have come to pass over the centuries exactly as foretold. It leaves us with no doubt that its Author is in full control, and that the remaining prophecies will also come to pass when their time is ripe. As God says through His prophet Isaiah:

Remember the former things of eternity, for I am God, and there is no other God. There is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from the past things which were not yet done, saying, 'My purpose shall stand, and I will do all My desire,' Isaiah 46:9 & 10

It is this total mastery of time and events that gives us confidence that this particular book is God's word and is thus the only truly reliable source of knowledge about the past, the present and our future, both on earth and in the 'spirit' realm.

The first topic we need to explore is the question of immortality. Side issues such as near-death experiences, communication with the

¹ They have recently modified this heresy, which was widely reported as the abolishing of Purgatory. However, all they have actually done is make the location of Purgatory more ambiguous so it appears more acceptable to non-Catholics.

dead and details about hell are covered in appendixes at the end of this article. These issues can only be understood within the context of Biblical teachings about the soul and the nature of man.

Is the Soul Immortal?

Many Christians believe that the everlasting torment myth is true. They have accepted the concept of the “immortality of the soul” which underlies all systems of eternal punishment. For example, the *Baltimore Catechism* (Revised Edition No. 3), page 396, asks this question: “How can we prove that the soul is immortal?” Their answer, which is the official position of the Roman Catholic Church, is this:

We can prove that the soul of man is immortal because man’s acts of intelligence are spiritual; therefore, his soul must be a spiritual being, not dependent on matter, and hence not subject to decay or death.

No Bible passages are quoted to support their position. The Roman Catholic Church relies on human reasoning and their own self-declared authority instead of the Bible to teach this doctrine.

Most Protestant denominations submit to their doctrine, and also teach that the soul is immortal.

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines the soul as the “spiritual or immaterial part of man, held to survive death (*the immortality of the soul*).” But is this what God teaches in His Word?

The origin of this doctrine is ancient. Idol worshipping pagans, centuries before Christ, taught the ‘immortality of the soul.’ Egypt is reputed to be the mother of this concept. According to Herodotus, who was born about 484 BCE and is honoured as the first historian: “The Egyptians were the first to accept the doctrine that the soul of man is immortal.” Note that Herodotus wrote this nearly 500 years before Christ.

The ancient Greek philosophers also knew this concept. Socrates and Plato believed that death was the separation of the immortal soul from the body as shown in *Phaedo*. (included in *Five Great Dialogues of Plato* by Walter Black, Inc). These men taught philosophy between 400 and 500 BCE.

By 343 BCE, Aristotle, a student of Plato, was teaching these ideas to Alexander, son of Philip of Macedon. He is known to us as Alexander the Great, the man responsible for establishing the massive Greek Empire. Thus the doctrine was spread far and wide by the Greeks.

Many Protestants and Catholics pay tribute to Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430 CE) Prior to his conversion to Christianity, Augustine had studied the Greek philosophy of Plato. After his conversion, he brought some of this philosophy into the Christian teachings. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, under the heading of Augustinism, says:

Augustinism as a philosophy, has been regarded by some as a Christianized Platonism, an attempt to bring Plato into the stream of Christian thought . . .

In this way the Egyptian philosophies entered into the early Christian church after the death of the apostles. This was just as the apostle Paul had warned them:

“For I know this, that after I go, powerful wolves will come in among you and *they* will have no pity on the flock. And some of your own people will rise up, men speaking perversions, to turn the disciples *so they* come after them.” Acts 20:29 & 30

Beware, lest anyone rob you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the teachings of men, according to the principles of the world, and not according to the Anointed. Colossians 2:8

With Paul's warning in mind, let's see what the Bible says about the human soul and life after death.

The Bible Viewpoint

God makes sure we know how He made us. Right from the start of Genesis we are taught about souls. His first reference to souls may surprise you:

Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living souls, and let flying creatures fly above the earth across the face of the expanse of the heavens."

God created great sea dragons and every living soul that moves, which the waters swarmed with, according to their kind, and every winged flying creature according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:20 & 21

The word *soul* is translated from the Hebrew word *nephesh* נֶפֶשׁ. *Nephesh* signifies breath, as in a breathing creature. These verses show that God says that all living animals are also living souls. Only a few verses later, God also talks of man as being a living soul:

And Jehovah God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living soul. Genesis 2:7

Again soul is translated from the same Hebrew word *nephesh*. And again God emphasises that we, like the animals, were created with *living souls*. In these passages God does not say that our souls, or those of the animals, are everlasting. Indeed the word 'living' used in these passages is correctly translated from the Hebrew word *chay* חַי. If there are living souls, there may also be dead souls.

Genesis 2:7 suggests this: Until God breathed life into the man, he was both a dead body and a dead soul. If the soul (*nephesh*) is an integral part of the person or animal, and if souls can die, we should be able to find scripture texts to support these ideas. Consider the following:

After Abraham had recovered a number of people and their possessions captured in battle, he paid tithes to Melchizedek, king of Salem. Then as he and the king of Sodom were dividing the spoils of battle:

Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the souls and take the goods for yourself.” Genesis 14:21

The context makes it obvious that the King of Sodom wanted his people returned to him, not invisible souls that had been separated from the bodies of those who had died in battle.

When gathering manna in the wilderness, the Lord commanded the Hebrews to harvest it according to the number of their *souls*:

“This is the thing which Jehovah has commanded. Gather it, each one according to the mouths he must feed, one omer per head, according to the number of souls; each man take for those who are in his tent.” Exodus 16:16

Note that this scripture uses the words *mouths*, *head* and *souls* interchangeably, showing that a soul is not just an immaterial essence.

Speaking about eating a sacrifice improperly, Leviticus 7:18 says in part, “the **soul** who **eats** of it shall bear his iniquity.” So, the soul

can and does eat. Verse 27 confirms that the soul eats, as does this quote from Jeshua the Messiah:²

“Because of this I say to you, you should not worry about your soul, what you will eat and what you will drink; nor about what you will wear on your body. Is not the soul more than food and the body *more* than clothing?” Matthew 6:25

Scripture does not present the soul as an airy essence separate from our body. When Joshua recorded how the wicked city of Hazor was destroyed, he said the souls of that city were struck with the sword, destroyed, and not left to breathe:

And they struck every soul who *was* in it with the sword’s edge. He destroyed *them*. He did not leave anyone breathing, and he burned Hazor with fire. Joshua (Jehoshua) 11:11

Obviously, Joshua was speaking of the **people** living in the city when he called them souls (*nepshesh*).

There are also numerous places in the Bible where dead souls are referred to:

‘All the days that he separates himself to Jehovah he shall not go near a dead soul.’ Numbers 6:6

² Jeshua ܝܫܘܥ is the actual Aramaic name of Jesus, which means “Jehovah Saves”. It is written as Jeshua throughout the Aramaic Peshitta, which forms the basis for the New Covenant in our CHCoG translation. The Greek translation of Jeshua is Ἰησοῦς, Iesous, which is commonly translated into English as Jesus. In a similar manner, Messiah (ܡܫܝܚܐ *msheecha*) is the Aramaic title of Jeshua. Christos Χριστός is the Greek translation of Messiah, which both mean “The Anointed” in English. *Christos* is commonly transliterated into English as Christ.

The word *soul* here also comes from the Hebrew word *nephesh* and refers to a corpse. Likewise, Numbers 5:2, 6:11 and 9:6,7&10 are a few of the places where soul refers to a dead body and *nephesh* is translated as such in the King James Version.

Yet God reveals even more than the examples above have shown.

The Bible tells us that the soul and body can be separated from each other, though the result is very different from what is taught by those who believe in the ‘immortality of the soul’. Jeshua’s words teach us much in this connection:

“For how is a person profited if they gain the whole world, and lose their *own* soul? Or what will a person give in exchange for their soul?” Matthew 16:26

“And you should not be afraid of those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul. But rather be afraid of Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in Gehenna.” Matthew 10:28

Thus we see that rather than being an *immortal* soul, we can *lose* our soul. God can totally and permanently destroy us—both our body and our soul if He decides it is necessary. Man can only “kill” our souls temporarily. Understanding that our existence depends totally on God is the beginning of true wisdom, which leads us to loving and obeying God. As scripture clearly states:

The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever. Psalm 111:10

Praise Jah! Blessed is the man who fears Jehovah, who delights greatly in His commandments. Psalm 112:1

Jeshua said to him, ““You shall love Jehovah your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind.” Matthew 22:37

For there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear is suspicious. And he who fears is immature in love. 1 John 4:18

No person who carefully reads and studies the Bible can prove the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; instead, they will prove to themselves that the soul is subject to death and is **not** immortal.

Not only does the Bible omit saying the soul is immortal—it denies it:

The word of Jehovah came to me again, saying, “What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’?”

“As I live,” says Lord Jehovah, “you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel.

“Behold, all the souls are Mine; as the soul of the father *is, so* also the soul of the son. They are Mine. **The soul that sins, it shall die.**

“But if a man is just and does righteous judgements; . . . if he has walked in My statutes and kept My judgements faithfully; he is just; he shall surely live!” says Lord Jehovah.

“If he begets a son who is a robber or a shedder of blood, who does any of these . . . abominations, he shall surely die; His blood shall be upon him.

“If, however, he begets a son who sees all the sins which his father has done, and considers but does not do likewise; . . . and has executed My judgements and

walked in My statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father; he shall surely live! . . .

The soul that sins, it shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

“But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does righteous judgements, he shall surely live; he shall not die. Ezekiel 18:1-21

Are Our Spirits Immortal?

After seeing proof that the Bible says the soul that sins can and indeed will die, some argue that it must be the spirit that is immortal. The text most often turned to for such proof is Ecclesiastes 12:7:

Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.

However, a careful reading shows that the text does not say the spirit, once it leaves the dead body, is a conscious being. In fact, the word *spirit* is from the Hebrew word *ruwach* רוח which can also mean breath. In other words, and merely at the physical level, God gives us the breath of life at birth and receives it back at death. At the higher level, God creates our spirit at conception and takes it back when we die.

Another text that uses the word *ruwach* is Psalms 146:3 & 4, where the Psalmist is speaking of the death of a person:

Do not put your trust in princes, *nor* in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. His spirit goes out, he returns to the earth; in that day his thoughts perish.

This text proves that when a man dies, his conscious existence is suspended.

Psalm 115:17 also speaks of the dead:

The dead do not praise Jah, nor do all who go down into silence.

King Solomon agrees when he writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

For the living know that they will die; but the dead, they do not know anything, and *there* is not a reward for them anymore, for the memory of them is forgotten.
Ecclesiastes 9:5

There are many scriptures which show that man is in an unconscious state after death. Sincere Christians should investigate the “immortal soul” doctrine for themselves. Accepting the orthodox stance may allow you to be deceived. Our article “*Spirit, Soul and Body*” provides a deeper look at this aspect of our existence.

As E. E. Franke said in his book, *Future Of Death*:

The terms ‘immortality of the soul’ and ‘never-dying soul’ and ‘deathless spirit’ are used so frequently in pulpits, and in Christian hymns, that we are [required] to inquire if such terms are Biblical. Soul is used in the Bible 858 times; 753 times in the Old Testament [from *nephesh*], and 105 times in the New Testament [from *psuche*]. IT IS NOT CALLED AN ‘IMMORTAL SOUL’ OR ‘NEVER-DYING SOUL’ EVEN ONCE IN ALL THE 858 TIMES THAT IT IS USED. Spirit is used in the Bible 763 times; in the Old Testament 378 times [from *ruwach*], and in the New Testament 385 times

[from *pneuma*]; yet in all the 763 times that we find spirit used in the Bible, IT IS NEVER ONCE SPOKEN OF AS A ‘DEATHLESS SPIRIT’ OR A ‘NEVER-DYING SPIRIT.’

People in the Bible

Now let’s take a few specific Bible characters and see how they are spoken of in death. We will start with an event that took place while Jeshua was on earth, recorded in John 11:11 to 14:

Lazar, Our Friend

Jeshua said these things, and after that said to them, “Lazar,³ our friend, is sleeping, but I am going to wake him.”

Then His disciples said to Him, “Our Lord, if he sleeps, he will become whole.”

However, Jeshua spoke about his death, but they thought that He was speaking about the sleep of tiredness.

Then Jeshua said to them openly, “Lazar has died.

Jeshua spoke of death and sleep in synonymous terms. Just as we wake from a deep sleep not knowing what has happened while we slept, so it is with death.

Lazar said nothing of any conscious existence anywhere while he was dead. So we ask the question: if he was in a place of constant torment, as some preachers suggest, why did Jeshua bring an end to divine justice? If he was in heaven with the angels, as others argue, why would Jeshua bring him back from his reward of bliss to suffer and die a second time? It seems more reasonable to assume that he was in an unconscious state, as the Bible shows the dead to be, and

³ As in the Aramaic, it is *Lazarus* in the Greek manuscripts.

that Jeshua was demonstrating His power over death by bringing Lazar back to life.

Where is David?

Peter said:

“Men *and* brethren, it is permitted to speak boldly⁴ to you of the patriarch David, who died and he was also buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.” Acts 2:29

Had Peter said no more, we might think the pagans were right, that the immortal soul had separated from the body and gone on to heaven as most Christians believe. But Peter plainly says,

“For David has not ascended into heaven, but he says: ‘Jehovah said to my Lord, “You sit at My right, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’” Acts 2:34 & 35

Where is the Patriarch Job?

By his own words, Job looked forward to remaining in the grave until brought back to life upon the earth in the latter day.

“Who will grant *that* You would hide me in Sheol, that You would conceal me until Your wrath turns back, that You would appoint a limit for me, and remember me!

If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my battles I will wait, until my change comes. You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall long *for* the work of Your hands.” Job 14:13-15

⁴ The Aramaic is literally “*with open eyes*”, an idiom that means boldly, and implies openly and truthfully.

“For I know *that* my Redeemer lives, and at last He shall rise on the earth; Even after they destroy my skin, yet this *remains*,—in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! Job 19:25-27

Job’s hope was to see God not as a disembodied spirit, but in the flesh at the resurrection.

A long list of faithful and godly people is given to us in Hebrews 11 including Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Speaking of these great men, the writer to the Hebrews says:

And all of them, about whom there is a testimony by their faith, have not received the promise, because God foresaw that for our benefit, they should not be perfected without us. Hebrews 11:39 and 40

This passage is made clearer by a quote from Thessalonians, which shows that these men are now dead, but will be raised to life at the time of Christ’s Return:

For this we say to you by the word of our Lord, that we who have life which remains until the coming of our Lord will not overtake those who are asleep. For our Lord, with a command and with the voice of the head angel and with the blast of the trumpet of God, will descend from heaven. And those who died and are in the Messiah will rise first.

And then we who remain *and* who have life, we will be carried away with them, as one in the clouds, to meet with our Lord in the air. And in this way we will always be with our Lord.

Therefore, comfort one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:15 to 18

Who Has Immortality?

If the Bible does not teach *immortal* human souls, what does it have to say about immortality? The scriptures are very specific on this subject. The words immortal and immortality only occur six times in the New King James Bible. Paul writes,

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. 1 Timothy 1:17 (NKJV)

And from the Aramaic CHCoG version:

Now to the King of eternity, to Him who is indestructible and invisible, *the* One God, be honour and glory for eternities of eternity. Amen. 1 Timothy 1:17 (Aramaic CHCoG version)

If God is indestructible, it seems reasonable that he must be immortal, perhaps even eternal. Let us look at some scriptures which teach this:

Jehovah, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting and to everlasting, You are God. Psalm 90:1&2

For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose Name is Sacred: "I dwell in the high and sacred *place*, with him *who* has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the crushed. Isaiah 57:15

The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; He will thrust out the enemy from before you, and will say, 'Destroy!' Deuteronomy 33:27

And when the beasts give glory and honour and thanks for grace to Him who sits on the Throne, and to Him who truly lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the Throne and worship the Living One who truly lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the Throne, saying: "You are worthy, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honour and power; for You created all things, and by Your pleasure they exist and were created." Revelation 4:9-11

These scriptures show that Jehovah God is the **only one with true immortality, in the sense of being eternal**. He alone has always existed, exists now and will continue to exist forever (Rev 1:8). All the rest of us have a point at which God brings us into being. But if Jehovah God is the only one who is truly immortal, what is the focus of the other immortality passages?

The Goal of Man and God's Gift to Believers

All of the other immortality passages show that humans are **seeking** immortality, or in our case, it is really life that will continue forever. **None** of these scriptures state that we already have everlasting life. Everlasting life is something man must pursue, not something that he has always had. The Word of God makes the attainment of everlasting life **conditional** upon how we respond to God's Good News. Some choose to refuse His offer of forgiveness and shall face God's wrath and be destroyed. Those who believe

God, repent and become obedient to Him will receive everlasting life and glory:

Or are you against the riches of His kindness and against the patience of His Spirit and against the place that He gave to you? Do you not know that the kindness of God is bringing you to repentance? But because of the hardness of your unrepentant heart, you lay up a treasure of wrath for yourself for the day of the revelation and the righteous judgement of God.

He will pay every person according to his works: to those who patiently do good works and are seeking glory and honour and indestructibility, He gives everlasting life; but those who resist and will not obey the truth, but obey evil, He will pay them with anger *and* wrath.
Romans 2:4 to 8

The most convincing scripture showing man's present mortality and the conditional gift of a future immortality when Christ returns is in the 'resurrection' chapter of your Bible:

Behold, I tell you a mystery: Not all of us shall sleep, but we shall all be transformed; suddenly, like the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For *it* will sound, and the dead will rise without corruption, and we shall all be transformed.

For this destructible is going to wear indestructibility, and that which dies will wear immortality. And when this destructible puts on indestructibility, and that which dies, immortality, then these written words will come to pass: "Death is swallowed by victory." 1 Corinthians 15:51 to 54

The time for this event is “at the last trumpet”. The following verse and 1 Thessalonians 4:15 to 18, already quoted above, show that this wonderful event occurs at the time of Christ’s return:

But each person in his order: the Firstfruit was the Messiah, afterwards those who are the Messiah’s at His Coming. 1 Corinthians 15:23

The second century Christians heartily agreed with the Bible. They taught that everlasting life was not naturally inherent in man, but was a future GIFT from God. While their writings are not part of the inspired Word of God, they show what many Christians of the generation following the apostles believed.

Clement of Rome, a companion of Paul, believed immortality to be a gift to Christians. He wrote:

How blessed and wonderful, beloved, are the GIFTS of God! Life in IMMORTALITY, splendour in righteousness, truth in perfect confidence, faith in assurance, self-control in holiness! . . . Let us therefore earnestly strive to be found in the number of those that wait for Him, in order that we may share in His promised GIFTS.” (The First Epistles of Clement to the Corinthians. Chapter XXXV. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. New York: Scribners, 1899. Vol.1, p.14)

Ignatius, a friend of Polycarp (a disciple of John), was martyred in 107 A.D. Before his death he wrote:

Be sober as an athlete of God: the PRIZE set before thee is IMMORTALITY and everlasting life, of which thou art also persuaded.” (Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp. Chapter 11. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol.1, p. 94)

Similar quotations may be found from Theophilus of Antioch who died about 181 A.D. and Justin Martyr who was beheaded about 166 A.D. Irenaeus looked forward to the premillennial return of Christ and taught that everlasting life was conditional upon accepting Christ. (See *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1 & 11).

Numerous Protestant writers from the sixteenth century down to the modern day have also written and preached that everlasting life is the future hope only for those with whom God is well pleased.

The variety of backgrounds is apparent in that some of them were from Germany, others from Switzerland, England, America, etc. Some authors were Hebrew and/or Greek scholars. The scholars include William Whiston, translator of *The Works of Josephus*; Charles Fred Hudson, compiler of *Hudson's Greek-English Concordance*; Ethelbert W. Bullinger, producer of a Greek Lexicon and *The Companion Bible* and Dr. Richard Francis Weymouth, New Testament translator.

The Real Origin of “Endless Punishment”

As we have seen, the Egyptian philosophy of the immortal soul was not widely accepted by Christians until after the second century. Before then, it was discredited by many ancient writers who are openly acknowledged as Christians. The following quotes from *The Origin and History of the Doctrine of Endless Punishment* by Thomas Thayer (1881), show that the entire idea of everyone already having immortality was actually part of a pagan mythology designed to terrify the ignorant common people into obeying their rulers:

Among the ancient pagans, the belief in a hell of some sort was very general, if not universal. It was known by various names, as *Orcus*, *Erebus*, *Tartarus* and *Infernus* or *Inferna*, whence our expression “infernal regions,” &c. . .

Some idea of the natives of the country may be gathered from the following description, taken from the *Aeneid* of Virgil, Book vi [published about 19 BCE by Emperor Augustus—this book was popular throughout the Roman Empire in the time of Jeshua’s ministry. Pitt’s translation is used here.]:

“At Hell’s dread mouth a thousand monsters wait;—
 Grief weeps, and Vengeance bellows in the gate;
 Base Want, low Fear, and Famine’s lawless rage.
 And pale Disease, and slow, repining Age:
 Fierce, formidable Fiends the portals keep,
 With Pain, Toil, Death, and Death’s half-brother
 Sleep.

There Joys, embittered by Remorse, appear.
 Daughters of Guilt; here storms destructive War.
 Mad Discord there her snaky tresses tore;
 Here stretched on iron beds the Furies roar;
 And close by Lerna’s hissing monster stands
 Briareus dreadful with a hundred hands;
 There stern Geryon raged; and all around
 Fierce Harpies screamed, and direful Gorgons
 frowned.”

(This harmonises very well with the ‘Christian’ view on this head; for, beside the devil and countless legions of demons as inhabitants, we have, according to an Orthodox poet,

“Pale phantoms, hideous spectres, shapes which scare
 The damned themselves, and terrify despair.
 ‘Gorgons and Harpies, and Chimeras dire,’
 And swarms of twisted serpents, hissing fire.”
 And Erasmus speaks of “spiritual lions and bears,”
 “scorpions, snakes and dragons, to wit, spirits who creep

round and look continually on the damned fire-brands of hell.”)

The gate of Hell was guarded by the dog Cerberus, of three heads (Hesiod says fifty), who prevented all egress from the infernal regions. Once in, there was no escape. To make it still more sure, the horrid prison of hell was surrounded by a *river of fire*, called Phlegethon; within which was another security in the shape of a triple *wall*.

Hence Virgil says :

“Here rolls the roaring, flaming tide of hell,
And thundering rocks the fiery torrent swell.”

(This also is copied by the Christian delineator:

“Fires spout in cataracts, or in *rivers* flow—
In bubbling eddies rolls the *fiery tide*.
And sulphurous surges on each other ride.”

—Dr. Trapp.

“Suddenly before my eye
A *wall* of fiery adamant sprung up—
Wall mountainous, tremendous, flaming high
Above all flight of hope.”

—Pollock.)

3. *Of the Punishments.* Virgil gives us a brief account of these in the book already quoted from:

“And now wild shouts, and wailings dire.
And shrieking *infants** swell the dreadful choir.
Here sits in bloody robes the Fury fell.
By night and day to watch the gates of hell.
Here you begin terrific groans to hear,
And sounding lashes rise upon the ear.
On every side the damned their fetters grate.

And curse, ‘mid *clanking chains*, their wretched fate.”#

* (Here, too, both Catholic and Protestant strike hands with the heathen, and borrow from them the detestable dogma of infant damnation, which, as seen above, is older than Calvinism or Catholicism. “The condemnation of children dying without having been baptized,” says the Catholic Bossuet, “is an article of firm faith of the church. They are guilty, since they die in the wrath of God, and in the powers of darkness. Children of wrath by nature, objects of hatred and aversion, cast into hell with the other damned, they remain there everlastingly subject to the horrible vengeance of the devil.”⁵ Thus the learned Denis Peteau has decided, as well as the most eminent Bellarmin, the Council of Lyons, the Council of Florence, and the council of Trent.”

“How comes it to pass that the fall of Adam, *without remedy*, should involve so many nations, with their *infant children*, in eternal death, but because of the will of God? It is a horrible decree, I confess!”—Calvin’s Institutes, Book iii., c. 28, 7).

(So the Christian poets describe their hell, employing the same language as Drs. Trapp and Young below:

“The *clank of chains*,
The clang of *lashing whips*, shrill *shrieks* and *groans*,

⁵ This disgusting idea results in infants who die before they are baptised being refused burial in Catholic cemeteries. The Bible indicates that everyone who dies as a fetus, infant or child will be resurrected during the Millennium of Peace, raised in loving families and given an opportunity to know and accept Jeshua’s salvation as adults (Isa 54:1-14, Gal 4:27).

Loud, ceaseless howlings, cries and piercing moans.”

“Where *shrieks*, the roaring *flame*, the *rattling chain*,
And all the dreadful eloquence of pain.”)

The correspondences which I have italicized, and the theft, are equally obvious.

A few examples of individual torments will better illustrate the subject, and reveal at the same time how inherent in them is the idea of perpetual duration.

Ixion . . is bound to a wheel of fire, which is ever in continual motion, in swift revolution of torment.

Tantalus . . was tortured with endless hunger and thirst...

Tityrus . . for his crimes, was chained to a rock, while a vulture fed upon his heart and entrails, which were ever renewed as fast as devoured.)

For those readers who wish to read more details on many aspects of these things, Thayer’s book is available on our website.⁶ He also demonstrates how both pagans and supposed Christians attempt to use these fictitious hells to instil obedience in their followers. But at what great cost: those believing in a cruel and malicious God tend to emulate him, as proven by the demonic atrocities of the Roman Catholic Inquisitions and crusades.⁷

⁶ His book is at https://chcpublications.net/Endless_Punishment.pdf Though an excellent refutation of endless punishment, Thayer is a Universalist, which means he believes that in the end *everyone* will be saved and given everlasting life. Our edited version of his book also looks at the Biblical problems with this view, which—like endless punishing—is the opposite extreme which comes from believing that all people have, and will always have, immortal souls and spirits.

⁷ Fox’s *Book of Martyrs* details some of this. But also note carefully that Jehovah is a God who has the courage to judge sin. He does not merely allow those who continually refuse to repent of their sins and embrace the

Mankind's True Hope

The real hope for humanity is salvation through Jeshua the Messiah and His promise of resurrection from death. Those who are asleep in death will be raised when Christ returns and not before that time, as this passage confirms:

But I want you to know, my brethren, that you should not be sorrowing for those who sleep like the rest of mankind who have no hope. For if we believe that Jeshua died and rose up, even so God will bring those who have fallen asleep in Jeshua with Him. For this we say to you by the word of our Lord, that we who have life which remains until the coming of our Lord will not overtake those who are asleep.

For our Lord, with a command and with the voice of the head angel and with the blast of the trumpet of God, will descend from heaven. And those who died and are in the Messiah will rise first. And then we who remain and who have life, we will be carried away with them, as one in the clouds, to meet with our Lord in the air. And in this way we will always be with our Lord.

Therefore, comfort one another with these words. 1
Thessalonians 4:13 to 18

forgiveness and new life He offers to them through the death of His own Son to quietly die. They are—every one of them—resurrected to a public judgement where they will admit to their sinfulness and acknowledge God's righteousness. Then they must wait in line to be annihilated in the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:14-15). It will indeed be a time of wailing and gnashing of teeth.—But their actual death will be both rapid and total—there will be absolutely nothing left to ever be resurrected from this divine fire.

Christians living at the time of His return to this earth will be instantly changed from mortal to immortal. But what will this change be like?

And there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of a star; and one star is greater than another star in glory. So also is life for those who die. They are sown in corruption, they are raised without corruption. They are sown in dishonour, they are raised with glory. They are sown in weakness, they are raised in power. They are sown as the physical body, it is raised as the spiritual body. For there is a physical body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, "The first man Adam was a living soul." And the last Adam *is* the life-giving Spirit.

But the spiritual was not first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the dust of the earth; the second Man *is* Lord Jah from heaven.

So just as he was a being from dust, so also are those of dust; and just as He is a being from heaven, so also are the heavenly. And as we have worn the image of him from the dust, thus we shall also wear the image of Him from heaven.

Now this I say, my brethren, flesh and blood are not able to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven; nor can corruption inherit indestructibility. 1 Corinthians 15:41-50

Our new life in our new god-like bodies will not be an eternity of meaningless inactivity. God has planned fulfilling and interesting work for each of us. He wants us to continue our development as His children, using the gifts He blesses us with.

Initially we will work with our Messiah upon the earth during the one thousand years that Satan is bound in the bottomless pit. We will restore most of the earth to the Paradise that God originally created:

Now when He (*Jeshua*) had received the scroll, the four Beasts and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, and every one of them had a stringed instrument, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints, who sing a new hymn of praise, and they said: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to loose its seals; for You were slain, and You have redeemed us to God by Your blood from every tribe and nation and people, and You have made them a Kingdom and priests and kings to our God; and they shall reign over the earth." Revelation 5:8 to 10

And I saw another angel from Heaven, who had with him the key to the depth and a great chain in his hand. And he seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the depth, and shut and sealed the top of it, that he would not seduce all the nations again. After these years it is allowed to release him for a little time.

And I saw seats, and they sat on them, and judgement was given to them and the souls of those who were cut off for the testimony of *Jeshua* and for the word of God, and because they had not worshipped the beast nor its image, nor received the mark between their eyes nor on their hands. They lived and reigned with Messiah for one thousand years. Revelation 20:1 to 4

The Bible clearly shows us that our work during the Thousand Years is only the mere beginning of what God has in store for us. We are told in 1 Corinthians 2:9 and 10 that:

But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has come into the heart of man anything which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

It is only after the end of the Thousand Years, after all that is evil and corrupt has been totally destroyed, that the fullness of the joys and challenges that God has in store for us will be revealed. A brief account of some of these things are given in Revelation chapters 21 and 22.

But surely our greatest joy will come from being friends and companions of Jeshua the Messiah and His Father Jehovah.

If we find that our personal beliefs disagree with the Bible, but we desire to be true Christians we have only one course to follow: Our personal beliefs must be sacrificed in order to accept God’s Truth. Let God be true even if it means every man on earth must be a liar. If these words sound harsh, note that the originator was the Apostle Paul:

But what if some of them did not believe? Can their lack of belief destroy the faithfulness of God?

Certainly not! For God is true and every person lies, as it is written, “You are righteous in Your words, and You will be vindicated when they judge You.” Romans 3:3 & 4

Everlasting life is the gift of God through Jeshua the Messiah to those who believe in Him. This gift is not bestowed on those who refuse Him and prefer to continue in sin. Sin pays wages—death! True Christians receive the fabulous gift of everlasting life in Paradise, completely the opposite of death.

For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God is everlasting life in the Anointed Jeshua, our Lord.
Romans 6:23

Most historians believe that the immortal soul doctrine began in Egypt. However, the idea of disobedient humans continuing to live forever, instead of dying as God says they will, comes directly from Satan himself.

The first couple were at peace with their Creator in the garden of Eden when the serpent, representing Satan, spoke. Note his reply when Eve told him they would die if they ate from the tree of good and evil:

And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of Paradise; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of Paradise, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

And the serpent said to the woman, “Dying, you will not die.” Genesis 3:2 to 4

This is the **only place in the Bible** where intentionally rebellious men and women are promised they won’t die. It is Satan’s promise, and God tells us it is a lie. Satan has promoted it in nearly every pagan religion and in many Christian denominations. Satan is the father of the lie.

When speaking to the false teachers of His day, Jeshua said:

“You are from your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you want to do. He was a murderer of men from the beginning, and he does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from himself, for he is a liar and he is even its father.” John 8:44

We must trust the words of Jeshua. He said, “And you will know the truth, and that truth will set you free.” (John 8:32) The truth sets us free from Satan’s lies and assures us that God alone can give us everlasting life. It also shows us that God does not keep His enemies alive so He can torture them for eternity. God’s pleasure is in giving us unending life, not in inflicting unending agony. (If you still think this may be so, please read the appendixes at the end of the article which deal with scriptures that some claim show such a fate for the unrepentant).

Do not think that you can live your life without God and escape Judgement. God makes it clear that everyone will one day have to stand before him and be judged. If you have not repented, you will be taken away and executed. It is not a fate to be taken lightly:

“The Son of Mankind will send His angels, and they will pluck out of His Kingdom all the stumbling blocks, and all the evil workers, and they will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

“Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” Matthew 13:41 to 43

Man’s Choice Today

God will not force you to serve Him against your will. He patiently leaves the choice up to you just as He did with His servants long ago. We are free to choose. It is actually our wrong choices that are responsible for most of the evil in this world. Satan encourages us to choose badly, and also encourages us to blame God for the results of our poor choices. Sadly, many of us continue to disobey God despite the horrible results that our decisions have on our own lives and the lives of those around us.

When the people of Israel went to their ageing leader Jehoshua (Joshua), just before his death in the Promised Land, he gave them this inspired advice:

“And if *it seems* evil in your eyes to serve Jehovah, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, whose land you dwell in. But as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.” . . .

“When you forsake Jehovah and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do evil to you and consume you, after He has done good to you.”

And the people said to Jehoshua, “No, but we will serve Jehovah!”

So Jehoshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen Jehovah for yourselves, to serve Him.”

And they said, “*We are* witnesses.”

“And now turn away from the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart to Jehovah, the God of Israel.”

And the people said to Jehoshua, “Jehovah our God we will serve, and we will listen to His voice.”

So Jehoshua made a covenant with the people on that day, and set for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. Joshua 24:15, 24:20 to 25

You too can make a covenant with Jehovah. God does not require you to have lived a sinless life before He will accept you. In fact, he knows that you have sinned. This is why His Son, Jeshua the Messiah, had to die. He, the only sinless man, suffered and died in our place so we could be given everlasting life. If you think your sins are so horrible that God could not possibly forgive you, remember that Saul devoted his life to capturing, torturing and

executing Christians before his conversion. He then became one of Christ's greatest servants (See Acts 22:3 to 21). Conversely, if you think you are without sin, you need to study God's Word to learn what sin really is.

I John 3:4 tells us that "sin is wholly evil". We doubt that even one reader could claim to have always kept all of the Ten Commandments, the basics of God's Law, faultlessly, so we are all sinners. Please let these scriptures illustrate the point:

Therefore why are we held to be greater? Because we have precedence? We have already determined that the Judeans and the Aramaeans are all under sin, just as it is written: "There is not one righteous, not even one; nor one who understands; nor one who seeks God. All of them have turned aside as one and they have been rejected. There is not one who does good, not even one."

"Their throats are open tombs; their tongues are deceitful and the venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness and their feet are swift to shed blood; adversity and misery are in their ways; and they have not known the way of peace." The fear of God is not before their eyes."

But we know that all the things the Instructions say, they say to those who are in the Instructions, that every mouth may be shut, and the entire universe may be guilty before God. Because by the works of the Instructions no flesh will be justified before Him, for through the Instructions sin is made known. But now the righteousness of God is revealed apart from the Instructions, and the Instructions and the Prophets are testifying to this, for the righteousness of God is through the faith of Jeshua the Anointed to everyone and upon everyone who believes in Him. For there is no difference, because they have all sinned and they were deprived of the glory of God, but they are freely justified

by grace and the redemption which exists in the Anointed Jeshua.

God chose this One beforehand as the Atonement through faith in His blood, because of our sins which we have already sinned, to display His righteousness at the present time, for He is being just and is the justifier of the one who has the faith of our Lord Jeshua the Anointed. Romans 3:9 to 26

For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not be destroyed but have everlasting life. John 3:16

For the Instructions were weak because of the infirmity of the flesh. God sent His Son in the form of sinful flesh, because of sin, to condemn sin in His flesh, that the righteousness of the Instructions would be fulfilled in us, that we would not walk in the flesh but in the Spirit.

For those who are in the flesh are governed by that flesh and those who are of the Spirit are governed by that Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death, and the mind of the Spirit *is* life and peace. Romans 8:3 to 6

Jeshua promises us that He shall teach us, comfort us and give us satisfying, wholesome work:

“Come to Me, all you who labour and carry burdens, and I will give you rest. Take on My yoke and learn from Me, because I am peaceful and humble in My heart, and you will find peace for your souls. For My yoke is pleasant and My burden is light.” Matthew 11:28 to 30

However, Jeshua also warns us that there is a cost in becoming His disciple. Perhaps the greatest cost is where it can really hurt:

your friends and family may turn their backs on you, you may be despised and hated for speaking the truth in a world that loves a lie:

And great crowds were travelling with Him. He turned and said to them, “He who comes to Me and does not hate his father and his mother and his brothers and his sisters and his wife and his children, and even his own soul, is not able to be My disciple. And he who does not take up his stake and come after Me is not able to be My disciple. For who among you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and think about the cost, whether he has enough to complete it; lest he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, *and* all who see it will be mocking him, and they will say, ‘This man began to build and is not able to finish it.’

“Or what king, going to fight a war with a neighbouring king, does not first consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet those who come against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is far away from him, he sends a delegation and asks for peace.

“Thus, every one of you who does not leave all his possessions is not able to be My disciple. Salt is good; but if even the salt becomes bland, how will it be seasoned? It is not fit for the soil nor for *making* compost, but they throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” Luke 14:25 to 35

You must **choose** to accept the terms of the new covenant to gain forgiveness and everlasting life. If you haven’t already done so, accept Jeshua the Messiah as your Saviour and as your Lord. That means you will accept and obey His teachings even when they disagree with men, with no regard to whether it is popular or not. Like the Berean disciples, you must search the Scriptures daily, to learn which things are true (Acts 17:11). As Christians, our present

joy is in the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit, our constant companion and helper. It links us with every other Christian who has truly died to sin and been reborn through baptism (John 16:5-16, Romans 6:1 to 14). Scripture warns us not to rely on church traditions (like infant baptism or confirmation) as substitutes for the saving blood of Christ (Mark 7:6 to 13; Colossians 2:18 to 23).

Jehovah God wants us to serve Him because of gratitude for our salvation and because we truly love Him. His Word declares that we either accept His offer of salvation or perish.

Jeshua made this prayer for His followers, recorded in John 17:17:

“Father, sanctify them in Your Truth, for Your Word is the Truth.”

God wants people to know the truth. Knowing His truth and being filled with His Spirit sets us apart by leading us to righteous behaviour. We are not to be physically separated from the world but to be a light in its midst.

May God help you in your search for truth and may you walk forever in Jehovah's Way.

APPENDIX I

Scriptures That Appear to Support Everlasting Torment:

What Do They *Really* Say?

Following are the main scriptures that are quoted to ‘prove’ that God is intending to endlessly torment all those who have not received salvation through Jeshua the Messiah.

Everlasting Separation

Some people claim that the torment of the damned consists of their endless sorrow at being separated from God for eternity. The following scripture is usually said to support this belief:

and if it is righteous, for God to reward those who trouble you with suffering, and He shall save you who are tormented with us when our Anointed Lord Jeshua is revealed, who *will* come from heaven with armies of His angels, when He takes vengeance with blazing fire on those who do not know God, and on those who do not acknowledge the Good News of our Anointed Lord Jeshua.

These will be paid with the judgement of everlasting destruction from the face of our Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints and will show His wonders in His believers in that Day, because you believed our witness to you. 2
Thessalonians 1:6 to 10

Some modern translations have modified this passage to make it more supportive of the ‘everlasting separation’ concept by departing from a literal rendering of the Greek. Our translation, given above, flows directly from the Aramaic, the original language of Jeshua and his apostles. The passage clearly shows that unrepentant sinners will receive ‘*everlasting destruction*’ from God, which truly is a terrible fate. There is not one word that conveys the idea that they will be condemned to endless agony over their foolish decision. Instead, the passage openly states that their penalty will be destruction—forever! Their agony will be great, but it will be confined to the time between

their resurrection for judgement and their final (second) death in the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:11-15).

If you doubt that the above is a valid translation, please consider I John 3:15, which says: “For every person who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer can have everlasting life abiding in him.”—Now if he does not have everlasting life, you know that he cannot be tormented for eternity.

Lazar and the Rich Man

“Now there was a certain rich man who wore a purple robe and fine linen, and he would rejoice in luxury every day. And there was a certain poor man named Lazar, and he would lay at the gate of the rich man, afflicted with sores, and he would long to fill his belly with the crumbs that fell from that rich man’s table. But just the dogs came and would lick his sores.

“So it happened that the poor man died, and he was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. And that rich man also died and was buried. And while he was in torment in Sheol, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off, and Lazar on his bosom.

“Then he cried out in a loud voice and said, ‘My father Abraham, have compassion on me, and send Lazar that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and moisten my tongue; for behold, I am tormented in this flame.’

“Abraham said to him, ‘My son, remember that you received your good things during your lifetime, and Lazar his bad things. Behold, now he is comforted here and you are tormented. Beside all these things, there is a great chasm placed between us and you, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those over there pass over to us.’

“He said to him, ‘If so, I ask you, my father, that you send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers.

Let him testify to them, that they do not also come to this place of torment.’

“Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’

“But he said, ‘No, my father Abraham; but if a man from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’

“Abraham said to him, ‘If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, why would they believe a man who rises from the dead?’” Luke 16:19 to 31

This passage is intended as a warning to the rich, especially the Pharisees who were mocking Christ, as reading verse 14 will show. Jeshua used it to graphically illustrate the folly of self-gratification coupled with mercilessness. There are two time settings in this account: the first during their lives, and the second time setting is when they have both been resurrected: Lazar in the resurrection of the righteous and the rich man in the resurrection of the condemned. At this point the rich man is so close to the lake of fire that he is already suffering from the heat radiating from it and is tormented by the realisation that he is about to be cast into it. He also realises that Lazar is with Abraham and has been granted everlasting life. This difference—life or death—is the great chasm between them. But the man still has not fully understood that this is the time of judgement and his brothers will also have made their final choices already. Examine this passage carefully, and you will see that it does **not** state—nor even suggest—that the rich man will be tormented for eternity. However, God **does** say there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth in the day of His Judgement:

“And He will say, ‘I do not know you or where you are from. Depart from Me, workers of falsehoods.’

“Then 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 are cast outside.” Luke 13:27 to 28

God says that the wicked will be totally burned up. He does not say that He will keep them burning in agony forever:

Then Jeshua left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples drew near to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares and of the field."

Then He answered and said to them: "He who sowed the good seed is the Son of Mankind, and the field is the world, and the good seed are the descendants of the Kingdom, but the tares are the descendants of the evil one. And the enemy who sowed them is Satan, and the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.

"Therefore as the tares are plucked and consumed in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Mankind will send His angels, and they will pluck out of His Kingdom all the stumbling blocks, and all the evil workers, and they will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! Matthew 13:36 to 43

Then you shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him who serves God and him who does not serve Him.

"For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace, and all the arrogant, all who do wickedness will be chaff. And the day which is coming shall set them ablaze," says Jehovah of Hosts, "which will not leave them either root or branch."

"But to you who fear My name shall arise the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and frisk like stall-fed calves."

“And you shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,” says Jehovah of Hosts.” Malachi 3:18 to 4:3

The Lazar account also foreshadowed the coming refusal of most of the Pharisees to accept the witness of a man that Jeshua would raise from the dead with the very same name Jeshua used in this parable: Lazar! Nor would they accept the word of one who would soon be returning from the dead—our Anointed Lord Jeshua (Lord Jeshua the Messiah).⁸

As we read above, the teaching of everlasting punishing of the wicked came from the pagan Egyptian rulers and was perpetuated in Greece and Rome as a way to terrify the common people into submitting to their authority. Later both Judaism and apostate Christianity also adopted these myths.

The Worm That Does Not Die

“For as the new heavens and the new earth which I shall make stand before Me,” says Jehovah, “So shall your seed and your name stand. And it shall be that from New Moon to New Moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says Jehovah.

“And they shall go out and see the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be put out, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.” Isaiah 66:22 to 24

This scripture clearly designates the bodies inhabited by the worms as corpses. There is not even a hint that the corpses are aware of anything. The sense of horror belongs not to the corpses, but to

⁸ Ernest Martin presents a different, but thought-provoking, interpretation of Lazarus and Rich Man at https://chcpublications.net/Real_Meaning_of_Lazarus.pdf

the living people who view them. It does not support the concept of everlasting punishing.

Nor does it state that the corpses will be on view forever, an idea dealt with under “HELL”. Saying that the ‘worm does not die’ may simply mean that the corpses will be left unburnt long enough for the maggots to develop into flies and leave the corpse. Logically, after the maggots have finished their work, the remains of the corpses will be completely consumed by fire. The fire itself is separate from the corpses and does not require a continuous supply of corpses to keep burning.

Jeshua refers to the ‘worm that does not die and the fire that is not quenched’ in Mark 9:42-48. He urges us to do everything possible to turn from our sins and warns us clearly of the horrible end of those who continue in sin. He also calls this place Gehenna, which is discussed in detail in Appendix IV. These corpses will be put on view in such a graphic and repugnant manner to highlight the folly of rejecting righteousness through Christ’s sacrifice.

Finally, note that it is people in the flesh who are worshipping God at the time this is happening. This restricts the time to the Millennium, likely the first few months while the corpses of those who fought against Jeshua at His Return are being disposed of (Ezekiel 39:1-21). After the Great White Throne Judgement is completed, everyone will have bodies made from spirit, not flesh, and all will be righteous.

The Smoke of Their Torment

And another, a third angel, followed them, saying in a great voice, “Whoever worships the beast and its image, and receives its mark between his eyes, he will also drink of the wine of the passion of Lord Jah, which is mixed full strength in the cup of His wrath. And he will be tormented by fire and brimstone before the holy angels and before the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever *and* ever. And there is no rest, day and

night, for those who worship the beast and its image, and him who takes the mark of its name.”

Here is the patience of the saints; those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jeshua. Revelation 14:9 to 12

Note that it is the smoke that rises forever (ie. out of sight) while they are being tormented. Compare Revelation 19:3, which describes the smoke from the burning of ‘Babylon the Great’ rising ‘forever and ever’. The passage does **not** say that their torment continues forever, but merely the smoke from their destruction. What does continue both day and night is the constant knowledge of God’s curse taking away the peace of those who submit to the beast until they are judged.⁹ God leaves no doubt that He intends to punish those who refuse to obey Him, and His punishment is just. Studying these verses in their context shows that this time of punishment occurs during the period of miraculous events leading up to Christ’s Return and the setting up of the Kingdom of God. We believe that the torment “day and night” could actually refer to Revelation 9:5 & 6:

And they were not permitted to kill them, but they suffer torment *for* five months. And their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it attacks a man. In those days the children of men will seek death and they will not find it; and they will want to die, and death will flee from them.

⁹ Our article *God’s Calendar and the Sign of Jonah*, at <https://chcpublications.net/GodCal-SgnJnh.pdf> gives more information on the Mark of God and the Mark of the Beast, as well as explaining how Jeshua kept the Sign of Jonah.

The Lake of Fire

And when the thousand years have ended, Satan will be released from his imprisonment and he will go out to seduce all the nations in the four ends of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them to war, whose number is as the sand of the sea. And they went to war over the expanse of the earth and surrounded the city of the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from heaven from God and devoured them.

And the devil, their seducer, was cast into the Lake of Fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *were cast*, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Revelation 20:7 to 10

Note that this passage combined with Revelation 16:13 & 14 make it clear that it is the Devil and his unclean demons who will be tormented for ever and ever.¹⁰ Verse 20:9 states plainly that all the humans who followed Satan in his final battle were destroyed by the fire from God.

The White Throne Judgement recounted in Revelation 20:13-15 also confirms that for all others, being cast into the Lake of Fire is the second death, from which there is no resurrection. As Jeshua says:

“And you should not be afraid of those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul. But rather be afraid of Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in Gehenna.” Matthew 10:28

¹⁰ Note that there are several places in scripture where ‘forever and ever’ has the meaning of ‘a long and indefinite time’, rather than meaning ‘for eternity’. We believe that Satan will be punished in the lake of fire for every sin, every injury and every death he has caused, then he will be killed, death—already in the lake of fire—will be destroyed and the lake of fire shut down. Remember that only God has immortality (1 Tim 6:16).

Please read our free article *The Beasts of Daniel and Revelation* for further details of these events.

We believe that a careful study of these verses and their context will verify our position that the God of the Bible is a god of Mercy and Justice, who has no intention of torturing billions of people for eternity. Only those who steadfastly refuse to accept His offers of forgiveness which lead to everlasting life will be destroyed, and this will be done with great sadness.

Please recall that we have already clearly shown that the Bible teaches that only Jehovah God and His Son, Jeshua the Messiah, presently have eternal life.

APPENDIX II

You Shall Be with Me in Paradise!

Luke 23:43 is frequently quoted to “prove” that Christians go straight to heaven when they die. However, the Greek manuscripts contained no punctuation and all the Greek letters were capitals. Punctuation and capitalization have been added by translators in a manner that is consistent with their beliefs. We feel that the matters brought to light in this article, make it plain that the following is the correct treatment:

And Jeshua said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you today; You shall be with me in Paradise.

This translation is confirmed by the Aramaic Peshitta and by recalling that Jeshua spent the next three days and three nights dead

in a tomb.¹¹ He could not have been in Paradise with the ex-thief the day after their impalements.

The Resurrection of Life and the Resurrection of Judgement

Some people have suggested that although mankind is mortal now, at the time of their resurrection all people will be given everlasting life, and then judged to decide where they will spend the rest of eternity. ie.- many people will be given everlasting life so they can be tormented forever. Is this concept supported by scripture?

The Bible clearly tells us that there are many separate resurrections. Quite a few resurrections have already occurred. In this context we wish to remind you of the raising of the widow's son through Elijah (I Kings 17:17-24) and the raising of the Shunammite's child through Elisha (2 Kings 4:18-37). Jeshua also raised several people from the dead before his impalement/crucifixion, as recorded in Luke 7:11-17, Luke 8:40-56, and John 11:1-44). After Christ's resurrection, Eutychus was resurrected from the dead through the Apostle Paul (Acts 20:7-12). However, Jeshua's resurrection in 31 CE was unique. Jeshua became the first 'man' to be given immortality. In each of the other resurrections we have listed so far, the person was simply given back their physical life, so they could complete their natural life cycle. There was no reason to believe that they would not age and die in the normal manner after their resurrections.

¹¹ As prophesied by Jesus in Matthew 12:38-40. Showing how Jesus kept this Sign is the central topic of our *God's Calendar and the Sign of Jonah* article.

The Bible tells us that two massive resurrections are yet to come. The first one has been referred to in the main body of this article. It is the resurrection of God's servants, as shown in this passage:

And I saw seats, and they sat on them, and judgement was given to them and the souls of those who were cut off for the testimony of Jeshua and for the word of God, and because they had not worshipped the beast nor its image, nor received the mark between their eyes nor on their hands. They lived and reigned with Messiah for one thousand years.

And this is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are they who have their part in the first resurrection, and the second death has no authority over them, for they will be priests of God and of the Messiah, and they will reign with Him for one thousand years. Revelation 20:4 to 6

This is the resurrection referred to in 1 Corinthians 15:35 to 50, where we are told that our resurrected bodies will be incorruptible, glorified, powerful, spiritual and heavenly. Verses 50 to 58 make it clear that this transformation from mortal to immortal is **only** for those who are the brethren of Christ. John 5:9 tells us those who have done good are called to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgement. The details of this resurrection to judgement is given in Revelation 20:11 to 15. Verse 15 states that those not found in the Book of Life will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. Verse 14 tells us that the Lake of Fire is the Second Death. It offers no hope of any sort of everlasting life for those not in the Book of Life, not even the horrendous possibility of a life of everlasting agony.

APPENDIX III**Near-Death Experiences**

The vital point about near-death experiences (NDE) is that they occur when a person is dying, not when they are dead. There is a period of several minutes between the stopping of someone's heart and the point at which all of their brain functions have fully ceased. It is only after this point that they are truly dead. No doctors have succeeded in reviving anyone after this time, so there are no true after death experiences related to us, despite the reports often being called this. Only God can perform a resurrection.

The NDE generally conforms to the individual's personal beliefs about what the afterlife may be like. Thus those that go to 'heaven' usually find it much like they expected it to be, although there is an enormous variation in actual details. One ardent horse rider discovered heaven was just like the Wild West! Of course Jehovah God can use a NDE to teach a person a valuable lesson. But God is not the source of NDEs which confirm pagan or unBiblical beliefs. Many scientific researchers feel that NDEs are a type of hallucination produced by the stresses of dying and help to distract the person from their pain. There is no evidence that these experiences last beyond the point of total organic death, which is in complete accord with the Bible.

Communication with the Dead

The main article in this publication has made it clear that we become totally unconscious when we die. The only power that can recall us from that state is God, who does it by resurrection. I Corinthians 15:35-58 details how He will restore His servants completely, but into an incredible new body, soul and spirit, not as wavering bodiless ghosts. Revelation 20:11-15 outlines the resurrection of those who didn't believe. These people will be raised

just as they were in this life, so they can be judged. The timing of both these resurrections is given in the Bible and is very specific.

It is clear that “channelers” cannot have the spirits or souls of the dead speaking through them. This leaves us with only two possibilities.

The first possibility, and probably the most common, is that the medium (the traditional name for a channeler) is a fake. There are many people who desperately miss a deceased loved one and are willing to pay generously for another chance to speak with them. Unfortunately, there are also many people who desperately want to become rich and are willing to lie to do so.

The second possibility is far more sinister. There are invisible spirit beings that are willing to communicate through mediums. These spirits are not our friends, however, nor God’s.

These beings were angels who have heeded Satan’s voice and turned against God (See Revelation 12:7-12). They have become like their master—full of lies and hate. Like him, they are devious and delight in causing pain and suffering. A medium who is being used by one of these demons—to give them their real name—may be able to reveal details that no human knows. The demons can even imitate the voice of a dead loved one. These things are possible because the demon may have carefully watched the deceased while they were alive so they could deceive their loved ones after their death. Their deception is designed to lure you into everlasting destruction and if possible to make you suffer immensely along the way.

These are the beings that work Ouija boards, that fake telepathy, that take control of people and stay in them against their will. They are not a joke nor an idle amusement. Hear what God says about these things:

‘Give no regard to necromancers and wizards; do not seek after them, to become unclean by them. I am Jehovah your God.’ Leviticus 19:31

‘And the soul who turns after necromancers and wizards, to fornicate with them himself, I will set My face against that soul and cut him off from his people. Therefore sanctify yourselves, and be sacred, for I am Jehovah your God.’ Leviticus 20:6&7

‘A man or a woman who is a necromancer or a wizard shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them.’ Leviticus 20:27

“There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who conjures spells, or a magician, or an observer of omens, or one who makes charms, or a necromancer or a wizard, or one who calls up the dead.

“For all who do these things are detestable to Jehovah, and because of these abominations Jehovah your God drives them out from before you.” Deuteronomy 18:10 to 12

Despite the clear testimony of these passages, some claim that an account of King Saul attempting to consult with the prophet Samuel after his death shows that mediums can contact the dead. Reading the entire episode in I Samuel shows the absurdity of this idea. I Samuel chap 15 details how Saul and Samuel parted ways long before Samuel’s death, and how Samuel refused to speak to Saul again. As this was the case when Samuel was alive, even if it had been possible for a medium to bring him back to consciousness, the probability of Samuel then conducting a conversation with Saul is virtually zero. Not only that, we have already been told in verses 5 and 6 that even when Saul tried to inquire from Jehovah by the accepted means of dreams, the Urim and His Prophets, Jehovah refused to answer him. When one remembers God’s condemnation of mediums, and recalls that Samuel was God’s prophet, the

probability that God would respond in this way becomes absolutely zero.

As we mentioned above, the truth is that the medium was speaking with an evil spirit who was impersonating Samuel to deceive Saul. The first thing the evil spirit did was warn the medium that the man before her was Saul, who had once killed mediums like her. This is not a warning that Samuel would give. And even though Saul was warned of his impending death due to his disobedience, he still refused to repent and begin obeying God's Laws again (I Samuel 28).

One would do well to follow God's own directive in this matter:

And when they say to you, "Seek those who are necromancers and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should a people not seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?

To the Instructions and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Isaiah 8:19 and 20

APPENDIX IV

Where and What is Hell?

One curious result of the everlasting punishing concept is this: If you become one of God's children, do you think your stay in paradise could be perfect if you knew that while you were basking in joy, the God you were serving was torturing your mother or father or spouse or child, and was going to continue torturing them forever?

Obviously there could be no deep joy in such an existence. Thankfully scripture clearly denies such a state of affairs.

As we have pointed out above, the popular notions of Hell have been created to cast doubt on God's claim to be a God of love and mercy. The knowledge that God's gift is Everlasting life and His punishment is Everlasting Nothingness is surely enough to convince any thinking person to seriously consider His offer.

The misinformation about hell is so pervasive that we have decided to use transliterations of the Hebrew and Greek words commonly translated as 'hell'. Thus our translation uses Sheol in the Old Covenant and Hades and Gehenna in the New Covenant. (Our new translation, based on the Aramaic New Covenant, only has Sheol and Gehenna in it, as Hades is not used in the Aramaic. We are retaining these comments as many people use Greek based New Covenants, so they can see that even the Greek does not support everlasting punishing.)

A look at these words in their context in scripture will reveal some of the half-truths these doctrines are based on and expose other aspects of the 'hell' teachings as total fabrications.

Sheol

Sheol is the Hebrew name for what we might call hell. Sheol, like hell, is shown as a place to which evil people are sent, as shown in Psalm 9:17:

The wicked shall be turned into Sheol, and all the nations that forget God.

It can also be a place that people can be cast into while alive, and that exists below the earth's surface:

So they and all those with them went down alive into Sheol. The earth closed over them, and they perished from among the congregation. Numbers 16:33

However, the differences are vast. Hell is usually presented as a place to which only the evil are sent. In contrast, the God-loving Hebrews believed that **all** people went to Sheol when they died, as these passages show:

When Jacob was told that his son Joseph had died, he mourned:

And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into Sheol to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him. Genesis 37:35

Jacob clearly expected to be in Sheol with Joseph when he died. Job's prayer to God was:

Who will grant *that* You would hide me in Sheol, that
You would conceal me until Your wrath turns back, that
You would appoint a limit for me, and remember me!
Job 14:13

Not only did Job expect to be sent to Sheol, he also expected to remain there until God decided to resurrect him!

Please note that Numbers 16:33 also says the people cast alive into Sheol *perished*. This statement is confirmed by Psalm 6:5 which states:

For in death there is no remembrance of You. In Sheol
who will give You thanks?

Yet another difference is brought out in 1 Samuel 2:6:

Jehovah kills and makes alive; He brings down to
Sheol and brings up.

Thus we see that although Sheol is pictured as a place below the ground where the dead go, it is a place where **all** the dead go, where

there is no consciousness while they are there, and from which God will eventually bring them back again. It is really equivalent to the *Grave*, not a place of everlasting tormenting.

Hades

Hades is the Greek equivalent of Sheol. The following passages show some further insights into Hades, as taught in the Greek Bible manuscripts rather than Greek mythology:

The first passage is spoken by the Apostle Peter, who is clarifying a prophecy given by King David:

Foreseeing *this*, he spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. God has raised up this Jeshua, of which we are all witnesses. Acts 2:31 and 32

This shows that even Jeshua the Messiah's soul went to Hades when he died! It is definitely not just a place for the sinful! We see that Jeshua's soul was also brought out of Hades when the time was fulfilled, just as God had promised. The following passage shows that at the end of the Thousand Year Reign of Christ, **everyone** will be brought out of Hades:

And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to their works. Revelation 20:13

The New Covenant even reveals that Death and Hades itself will then be destroyed. Not only is one's time in Hades not everlasting, even Hades itself has only a very limited time span!

Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And if anyone was not

found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:14 and 15

Gehenna

Gehenna comes closer to the conventional concepts of Hell, and even has definite links to the lake of fire mentioned above. Gehenna is the Greek version of *Geh Hinnom*, the Hebrew name for the Valley of Hinnom. This valley, south of Jerusalem, had been used by corrupt Israelites to offer human sacrifices to pagan idols centuries before Christ (2 Chronicles 28 onwards). To stop this practice, the valley had been converted into a rubbish dump where sulphur was used to assist in burning the garbage tipped there. It was also where the bodies of criminals were dumped, to be consumed by maggots and the fire. It was an appropriate symbol for the lake of fire where unrepentant sinners would be consumed at the end of this age.

Unlike Hades, Christ makes it clear that Gehenna is a place reserved for the guilty; a place that everyone should strive to keep out of. As Jeshua said:

Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the judgement of Gehenna? Matthew 23:33

And you should not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear the One who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Matthew 10:28

Gehenna is truly a place to fear. It is here that God will destroy those who oppose him, consuming both body and soul. And it is here that the difference between Gehenna and Hell is made clear. Gehenna is the place where unrepentant sinners are cast while still alive and fully conscious. But it is not the beginning of everlasting torment. It is the second death, a person's final and total end.

But do not think that this will be an easy death. Before Gehenna comes the Judgement. Everyone will have to stand before God. Even those who rejected Jeshua as their Saviour will at last know and acknowledge who He is and understand that in rejecting Him they have also rejected everlasting life in paradise:

...For we are all going to stand before the judgement seat of the Anointed. As it is written: "As I live, says Jehovah, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall swear to Me."

So then, every one of us will give an account of his soul to God. Romans 14:10 to 12

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jeshua every knee should bow, of those in the highest heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jeshua the Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9 to 11

The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all that offends, and those who practice lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 13:41 and 42

But know that God loves you and does not want you to perish:

"Again, when a wicked *man* turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he keeps his soul alive.

"Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

“Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ O house of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair?”

“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways,” says Lord Jehovah. “Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin.

“Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?”

“For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says Lord Jehovah. “Therefore turn and live!” Ezekiel 18:27 to 32

And I saw the new heavens and a new earth, for the former heavens and the former earth had departed and there was no sea anymore.

I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem,¹² coming down from Heaven, from beside God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice from heaven that said, “Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with the children of men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and this same God will be with them and be their God.

“And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall be no death from now on, nor grieving, nor trauma, nor shall there be diseases again, for His sake.” Revelation 21:1-4

“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life.” Deuteronomy 30:19

¹² 1Ki 11:36, 2Ch 33:4

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