

Jesus' Teaching on Judgement

Life is Found in Jesus Christ Alone

the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Genesis 2v7

We are made in the image of God but this is distinct from having immortality. We had the capacity for immortality but otherwise we share the same process of life as the animals... becoming a living soul (nephesh) produced by the breathing in of the Spirit (ruach) to a body made by God. The same combination of terms ruach and nephesh is used of the animals in Genesis [Gen 2:19](#), [Gen 6.17](#), [Gen 9:10](#),

but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." Genesis 2v17

"By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."he must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live for ever." He placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. Genesis 3v19,22,24.

In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honour and might forever. Amen. 1Timothy 6v14-16

Christ in us in our hope of Immortality

[Col 1:27](#) *to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*

But the Serpent suggested that God wasn't telling the truth. 'Surely you won't die'. The effects of this lie are devastating to humans and to the Goodness of God who is now tarnished with an image of torturing people forever.



COMPASSION AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN JUDGEMENT

So what about someone like Hitler. Does Jesus words about some being beaten with many stripes and some with few apply if they are all going to disappear?

Totally! Everyone actually recognises that the worst punishment is death. It is the only legal form of punishment which is disbarred by many countries. Because it is final. Jesus made it plain however that there will be a significant difference between those who sin grievously and those who are indifferent. Both are worthy of death and will be raised to face and recognise their sins and the judgement of death. The second death will be effected more quickly for some than others.

The term which Jesus used for hell, the place of final judgement, was Gehenna, which was the rubbish dump outside of Jerusalem where fires burned continuously for the purposes of destruction. Not unlike the incinerators of our day. It was not a place of survival but destruction. The use of the adjectives unquenchable and eternal are thus descriptive of the permanency of that destruction. They are not intended to describe an eternal continuance of what is put into the fire. That would be to turn the overwhelming clarity of the concept in scripture on its head, making what is meant to indicate the last word in destruction the exact opposite.

Altering the biblical ideas of judgement to merely allegorical 'tortures of the mind' is the approach of C S Lewis and FF Bruce. Shrinking from the logical implications of their position and the incredible conclusion as Richard Dawkins says of a 'sado masochistic' God they alter the physical realities to mere figures. They fall into the trap of 'dualism' separating the physical and the spiritual, a mark of paganism, which the scriptures never do, except for the recognition of sin.

The suffering of Jesus on the Cross was that He 'suffered death'. It is not the amount of sins that He took on himself which is important but that He became sin for us. No one else was perfect and had Life in themselves as Jesus had being the God/Man. He alone was able to overcome the judgement of non-existence effected by death because of his own immortality.

Understanding the nature of the judgment as being consistent with the very first warning and definition of death in Genesis, is essential to retain the integrity of scripture. It is also critical for the integrity of God's character and salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jesus and the Book of Revelation

Matthew 13:41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42 They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

49 This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous 50 and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Twice the NIV adds in a 'where' to the scriptures not present in the original Greek. They do so because the translators assume the continuance of 'life' in the blazing furnace because of believing that we have an immortal soul which cannot die.

TORMENT

Revelation 14v10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

And death and hell (hades) were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

These words, make no mistake, are inspired by the Spirit of Christ and Jesus confirms these words by clear statements in the gospel as above.

How are we to understand them?

Torment is a Greek word and its meaning is framed by the Greek philosophical position of Plato who believed in the immortality of the soul.

What is the biblical meaning of the word? In other words how is it used in the New Testament and is that usage consistent with the rest of scripture Old and New?

The equivalent word in the Old Testament is used of disappearance. Like a garment eaten by a moth which disintegrates. Isaiah 50v10-51v8. John the writer of Revelation uses it in the same way in chapter 18 of his letter. Speaking of the judgment and torment of Babylon whose fate we are urged to avoid he speaks of the removal of function, abilities and eventually of being:

"Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again. Revelation 18v21

When John speaks earlier in Revelation of a torment which does not result in death it is the exception. Rev 9 speaks of the power to hurt but not to kill. That is always seen as the greatest torment. Complete destruction from the presence of God. There is no life apart from God.

MISTAKE

Often mistaken in scripture when it sometimes alludes to dead people as if they are alive is the function of redemption. Jesus said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell". It is the misinterpretation of the centrality of fact of the death and resurrection of Jesus and the processes of redemptive history which gives rise to false ideas of immortality.

The 'REST' of Scripture

But what about that awful part : "no rest day or night" Surely that points to the continued conscious survival of people in hell?

The complete opposite. Remember the Bible is a self interpreting book. The ideas and words used are defined within it. In Hebrews we are warned to make sure that we enter the 'rest' of God.

That rest relates to the seventh day of Creation when God upheld his creation by the power of His word. He sustains us in existence and his blessings, "*but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. Hebrews 1v2,3*

That rest for the Israelites in the desert was to enter the Promised Land which is the foretaste and foreshadowing of the Heavenly promise of the new earth and heaven. When they have no rest day and night for ever and ever it is because they will never have the life promised but be a carcass like those who died in the wilderness.

The phrase "day and night" in the context of judgement is meant to represent the total inability at any time, in any way, to come back to life. The words day and night are first used biblically in Genesis 1:3 at the beginning of creation. It was the first result of the creation from nothingness. The imagery is that they will be denied rest, life or existence, a return to nothingness, by God's first act of creation. The new heaven and new earth is a place where "mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." [Rev 21:4]