



Are Most People Really "Hellbound?" (Part I)

Genesis 18:25: (NASB) ...*Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?*

Special Guest: Kevin Miller, filmmaker, www.hellboundthemovie.com



Christianity is a faith that claims to see the mind of God through His written Word. It claims to represent a God of Love and compassion, yet a God of Justice and consequence as well. All Christians are unified in the belief that the true followers of Christ will be rewarded with immortal life in heaven, yet Christianity is amazingly fractured in its belief about what happens to everyone else - which constitutes the vast majority of all humankind. Do unbelievers suffer in merciless agony for all of eternity in the fires of Hell? Do unbelievers experience the fire of hell as a purifying fire that brings them to Christ? Do unbelievers simply experience utter destruction and cease to exist upon final proof of incorrigibility? Stay with us as we seek biblical truth on the matter!


Our premise for this subject is two-fold:

2 Timothy 3:14-17: (NASB) ¹⁴You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, ¹⁵and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶**All Scripture is inspired by God** and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

1. The Scriptures do hold that all we need to know regarding life and death, and the fact that all Scripture is inspired indicates that it is all in harmony.

Luke 24:44: (NASB) Now he said to them, These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about me in **the Law of Moses** and **the Prophets** and **the Psalms** must be fulfilled.

2. The risen Lord tells us that all three divisions of the Old Testament lead to him, meaning that the Old Testament is truly the foundation on which the New Testament is built.

 **Excerpt from Hellbound? (Documentary), Huffington Post**

In every doctrine of hell, it presupposes a view about God, for every doctrine of hell has a theology behind it. So whenever you come across a particular view of hell, the question you ask yourself is, Well what does this view of hell tell us about God? And what kind of God is it that does this?

...And I think what we're trying to say is that fundamentally to your question about hell is, Who is this God? Because if you get that wrong, everything is wrong. So I constantly go back and ask, Do I have a God who is actually less of a father than I am?





Is God a God of judgment or love?

Psalms 89:13-14: (NRSV) ¹³You have a mighty arm; strong is your hand, high your right hand. ¹⁴Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.

This tells us that the character of God includes a mighty arm of power, with righteousness and justice a foundation of his throne. Built on that is love and faithfulness.



Kevin Miller is an award-winning screenwriter, director and producer who has applied his craft to numerous documentaries, feature films and shorts. Recent projects include *Hellbound?*, *Drop Gun*, *No Saints for Sinners*, *spOiled*, *Sex+Money*, *With God On Our Side*, *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* and *After...*

In addition to his work in film, Miller has written, co-written and edited over 40 books. He lives in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada with his wife and four children.

Rick: What provoked you to do this particular documentary?

Kevin discussed the idea of examining different theological views on a topic in order to provoke informed discussion. He edited a book (*Her Gates Will Never Be Shut*) of a friend of his, Bradley Jersak, who appears in the movie. This introduced him to the concept of a post-mortem judgment and how it is treated in the Old and New Testament. He also looked at the different interpretive streams of view in the early church where some views became dominant, others recessive and vice-versa.

Kevin states: Particularly for people who are raised in an evangelical context, they are not often introduced to alternative ways of looking at things. In fact, oftentimes alternative ways of looking at things are viewed as a threat against their faith. I really wanted to make a film that made it safe to have this discussion and also to make people aware of the type of discussion throughout the history of the church.



Rick: When making the movie, did you get any negative response to what you were doing and how you were doing it?

Kevin discussed how there were some suspicions when asking people to appear in the film, as well as when finding investors. Some investors would only agree to provide funding if the conclusion was pre-determined and in agreement with their point of view. This is contrary to the core of a documentary, which is an exploration of a subject that happens on film. One does not start with a pre-determined ending and it should change the filmmaker by the end.

Rick: What was the reaction on you? Did it change your perspective or enhance your thinking?

Kevin: It really led to a wholesale re-evaluation of Christianity. Kevin went on to explain that the first time this happened to him was during the making of, *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*, about Intelligent Design beliefs of teachers in higher education.

He started the film as someone who was hoping that some form of Universalism could be true, and ended the film being quite convinced that all people must be ultimately reconciled to God and to each other.

 **Protestor from Westboro Baptist Church interviewed, 99 percent plus go to hell, *Hellbound? (Documentary)***

- *Kevin: You guys are famous for your signs that say, “God Hates Fags,” and on your website, “God Hates the World,” tell me this: What happens to people God hates?*
- *Protestor: They go to hell! What, do you think that’s a hard one?*
- *Kevin: Of all the people alive today, what percentage of people are ending up in hell?*
- *Protestor: 99.99999999 percent!*
- *Kevin: What would be the purpose of God punishing people for all eternity?*
- *Protestor: Because He wants to. Because He can. Because He set it up that way, and since you don’t like how He did it, here’s what you do now. You go create your own universe and your own beings/creatures, and you make it the way you want it. This is the way God made it.*

Rick: Obviously this is a pretty radical perspective. Tell us about that experience.

Kevin: This took place at the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks in New York City. We wanted to interview them because one of the sub-themes of the film is really not so much the beliefs that we have about hell, but how do we hold those beliefs? ...These guys are absolutely certain that they know who is right and who is wrong and it turns out most of the world is wrong and they are the only ones who are right.

It was kind of a surreal experience...they are very combative on the film...I was really having to stay on my toes just to keep up with them.



They also have a real agenda against people who are gay, lesbian, or transsexual.

I happen to have a member of my family and his partner just off camera (in that scene) who fall into that category; my wife is there as well. That was most on my mind as I was debating these folks is how they (my wife and friends) were responding to some of the hurtful things that were being said.

We already discussed how the Old Testament is the foundation for the New Testament. Now we will begin to gather the images of the Old Testament regarding what happens to the wicked at their end - does the Old Testament show us torture?

Genesis 7:21-23: (NASB) ²¹All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; ²²of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. ²³Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark.

We have a very specific description of what happened: They were blotted out, they perished, they died.

So how is that supposed to be applied from a New Testament perspective?

2 Peter 3:5-7: (NASB) ⁵For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, ⁶through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. ⁷But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Here it tells us that *the world...was destroyed*. But was the earth destroyed? No. But the world order at that time was destroyed. That was the intention of the flood. Peter is saying that the “heavens and earth” met their end by water and in the same way will meet their end by fire in the final judgment.

Rick: It’s all about judgment, isn’t it?

Kevin: The thing that is being debated is whether you believe in eternal torment, Annihilationism or Universalism, I think everybody is concerned that justice be done. What does justice look like? If you really boil this debate down, it comes down to what is the nature of punishment for the sins we commit that go unpunished on this earth. Does it last forever? Does it ultimately destroy the person or is its final purpose reconciliation? This is what is being debated ultimately.

Our perspective: When you look at justice and judgment in relation to the love of God, there is no sin that anyone commits in this life for which they will not have to answer.





Ofentimes when you say you don't believe in hell fire, the knee-jerk reaction that is that people can just do whatever they want.

Kevin: I encounter that all the time. People make that leap right away that if you question their interpretation of final things, well then you believe in nothing. There was no other possible way to look at this issue.

I don't believe I interviewed a single Universalist that didn't believe in hell in some form; in other words, a post-mortem judgment where people will have to account for everything they have done. Nobody is getting away with anything. We are all going to have to 'fess up to that and face the consequences, whatever that happens to be.

Is there a way to decipher through Scripture and history how that happens in reality? Are there literal burning flames or is there another method by which this judgment and accountability are put in place?

More imagery:

Deuteronomy 32:21-24: (NASB) ²¹*They have made me jealous with what is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation,* ²²***For a fire is kindled in My anger, and burns to the lowest part of Sheol, and consumes the earth with its yield, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.*** ²³*I will heap misfortunes on them; I will use My arrows on them.* ²⁴*They will be wasted by famine, and consumed by plague and bitter destruction; And the teeth of beasts I will send upon them, with the venom of crawling things of the dust.*

This symbolizes the fire of God's anger. (This text is later quoted in Romans 10:19-21, explaining that it relates to the Gentiles coming to favor.)

Are fear and threats God's tools?

Rick: In terms of the folks that you interviewed, those that were on the pro-hellfire side, what was their sense toward those of us on the other side of the issue in terms of where we might be heading?

Kevin interviewed Bob Larson in the film, a self-styled exorcist. Mr. Larson thought the idea of questioning eternal torment and hell is "the beginning of a slippery slope."

A slippery slope argument can also be a fallacy, because it is based on saying: "A" will always lead to "Z." It is also a very fear-based tactic to prevent people from questioning the status quo. On one side this argument is used to corral people in.

On the other side, my own questioning into the issue, once you begin to question the notion of eternal torment, you are going to go eventually and do a wholesale re-evaluation of the atonement and so many different other things. In fact, it was me really looking at alternate views of the atonement that led me to begin to reconsider the idea of eternal torment and hell.

You can't examine theological ideas in isolation. That is true. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't examine theological ideas for fear of where those examinations might lead.



 Trying to convert people on a street corner, *Ray Comfort (Evangelist, Living Waters) Hellbound? (Documentary)*

- *Ray, speaking to a person on the street: How many lies have you told in your life?*
- *Person: Probably a million billion thousand.*
- *Ray: What do you call someone who has told numerous lies?*
- *Person: A liar.*
- *Ray: Have you ever stolen something?*
- *Person: A thief...got it.*
- *Ray: So what are you?*
- *Person: A thief.*
- *Ray: A lying thief!*
- *Person: A lying thief.*
- *Ray: Have you ever used God's name in vain?*
- *Person: Yeah.*
- *Ray: That's called "blaspheming." And Jesus said whoever looks at a woman and lusts for her has committed adultery with her in his heart.*
- *Person: Guilty! So I'm a lying, thieving adulterer!*
- *Ray: No...lying, thieving, blasphemous adulterer by your own admission. And that's only the first four of the Ten Commandments...there is another six to look at! Even if God judges you by the Ten Commandments alone on Judgment Day, are you going to be innocent or guilty?*
- *Person: Probably guilty.*
- *Ray: No 'probably.'*
- *Person: Guaranteed to be guilty.*
- *Ray: Guaranteed! No thief, no blasphemer, no adulterer will inherit the kingdom of God. So if you die in your sins and God gives you justice, you'll end up in hell! Do you ever think about this? This is so important because you're gonna die!*

Rick: Tell us about this experience and your reaction to it.

Kevin: This is a guy named Ray Comfort who goes around Huntington Beach (California) every Saturday afternoon and does old-style street evangelism. He stands on a box and gets someone else to stand on a box and he tries to convince them to become a Christian or convince them to come out of whatever world view they happen to hold.



I'll say this about Ray Comfort: He is a person acting out of his conviction. Another thing I find interesting about folks like him is they are actually using a method of evangelism that you aren't going to find in the book of Acts, for example. The book of Acts is the first picture we have of the church going out and sharing the Gospel.

Kevin goes on to explain that the Apostles did not use the threat of eternal torment to convince people to convert to Christianity. Instead it was a call into something great as opposed to a fear-based call away from something.

More Old Testament imagery of what judgment happens at or after death:

Psalms 37:1-2: (NASB) *¹Do not fret because of evildoers, be not envious toward wrongdoers. ²For they will wither quickly like the grass and fade like the green herb.*

When grass withers, it dies.

Wither and fade...

Psalms 37:9-10: (NASB) *⁹For evildoers will be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land. ¹⁰Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more; and you will look carefully for his place and he will not be there.*

Be cut off, be no more...

Psalms 37:20: (NASB) *But the wicked will perish; and the enemies of the LORD will be like the glory of the pastures, they vanish—like smoke they vanish away.*

Perish, vanish like smoke...

Psalms 37:34: (NASB) *Wait for the LORD and keep His way, and He will exalt you to inherit the land; When the wicked are cut off, you will see it.*

Cut off...

Psalms 69:24-28: (NASB) *²⁴Pour out Your indignation on them, and may Your burning anger overtake them. ²⁵May their camp be desolate; May none dwell in their tents. ²⁶For they have persecuted him whom You Yourself have smitten, and they tell of the pain of those whom You have wounded. ²⁷Add iniquity to their iniquity, and may they not come into Your righteousness. ²⁸May they be blotted out of the book of life and may they not be recorded with the righteous.*

Be blotted out of the book of life... to be blotted out you had to be there to begin with!

Rick: Based on the opinions expressed in the film, where does the average person stand who may not be a believer?

Kevin explains that some believe in a form of predestination where some are destined to heaven and other people are not. That is one of the big debates in Christianity. Do all people even have the potential to be reconciled to God or is it only a select few?

Psalms 1:4-6: (NASB) *⁴The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away. ⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. ⁶For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*

Driven away like chaff on in the wind ceases to be. It perishes and is not tortured.



Psalms 68:1-2: (NASB) ¹Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered, and let those who hate Him flee before Him. ²As smoke is driven away, so drive them away; As wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish before God.

This is another poetic rendering as to how it works in relation to what God's justice brings.

We know that the Old Testament works exactly in line with what Jesus did and taught. We know that images of death and judgment were varied, but all pointed to destruction. We know there is no allusion to torture and torment in the Old Testament. If that is the case, where did the torture idea come from, or did God just not bother to tell millions of people about it? Why would He have withheld such an important piece of "truth?"

If not the Old Testament, then where did hellfire come from?



Egyptian origins of hellfire, *National Geographic*

- *By now, Seti has made it through the first and second gates, but as he approaches the third hour of his journey, he must reckon with a threat to millions of believers of many modern religions - the fires of damnation. For Seti, it's a test of purity.*
- *The Lake of Fire is this huge lake which is made of fire. If you are one of the damned, then you are consumed by the fire.*
- *It's a challenge to every common man's soul. But because the Pharaoh is merged with the sun god, he has a unique role during this hour.*

Long before Jesus, ancient Egypt had imagery of burning, tormenting fires.



A caller asks why the concept of an immortal soul was not addressed in the movie.

Kevin: This is a common discussion around the subject of hell. Are we born with an immortal soul or is immortality a gift that is only given to the righteous, so the wicked are deprived of immortality? This leads one to a view of some sort of annihilation.

If one holds the view of eternal torment of Universalism, if there are beings that live forever, you have to do something with them.

Most Christians will agree that inherent immortality is not so much a biblical idea as it is a Greek idea introduced later on.

A verse that is often invoked by people who are defending the view of eternal torment is:

Isaiah 55:8-9: ⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. ⁹As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

If somebody comes up against the idea of eternal torment and has a difficult time reconciling that with the idea of a loving God, people will say, well, God's ways are not our ways. The interesting thing is the context of that verse.



...Looking at the Scriptures before these:

Isaiah 55:6-7: *“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while He is near. ⁷Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for He will freely pardon.*”

So the context in which we are being told to submit ourselves to the wisdom of God is in the faith of His mercy to His enemies, not in the faith of His terrible wrath against His enemies.

In our own justice system, there are various purposes of justice such as retribution, public protection and others. But I think the highest purpose of our justice system is ultimately rehabilitation and reconciliation. We don't want to have justice at the expense of society and we don't want to have justice at the expense of the offender either. Hopefully we can seek a form of justice that simply reconciles. That doesn't mean that whatever you do wrong we will just forgive it, but ultimately the end game is to bring people together.

I look to God and have to believe that His justice is even higher than that.

See the Bonus Material at the end of this Rewind for more...

The original source for hell is not scriptural; it is from Egyptian and Greek mythology.

(Source: Hellfire and Its Origins, Thomas B. Thayer 1881 (1812-1886 Universalist Theologian))

It is curious to note the exactness of the copy in many particulars. The Egyptian Acherusia gives us the Greek Acheron, and perhaps Styx. The Egyptian Tartar, significant of the lamentations of relatives over the dead refused burial on account of their wicked lives, furnishes the Greek Tartarus, where the wicked are punished. The funeral boat across the lake, the ferryman, and the gold piece in the mouth of the dead, give rise to Charon, his boat, and fee, and the passage across the Styx into Hades. The cemetery beyond the lake, surrounded by trees, called by the Egyptians Elisout or Elisaeus, is the original of the Greek Elysian Fields, the abode of the blessed. The three infernal judges, Minos, Aeacus, Rhadamanthus, are borrowed from the Egyptian judges of the dead; and the heads of animals symbolizing these judges, mistaken by the Greeks, are changed into monster Gorgons, Harpies, Furies, etc.

But, as I have remarked, though the Greeks borrowed, they altered and improved. And, true to that individualism which was so marked a characteristic of that people, they are not satisfied with the Egyptian method of generalizing respecting the punishments of the wicked, but begin specifying particular sinners, and particular kinds of punishment adapted to particular offenses.... Everything must be sharp, pointed, and dramatic, to suit the lively genius of the Greek; and the terrors of the invisible world must be presented in a way to strike the imagination in the most powerful manner, and produce some direct result on the individual and on society.

The whole thing is designed for effect, to influence the multitude, to restrain their passions, and to aid the magistrate and ruler in keeping them subject to authority. It is the invention of priests and law-makers, who take this as the easiest method of governing the people....

But, without further remarks of my own, I will introduce the testimony of the heathen themselves on this point, and those the best informed among them, who will tell their own story in their own way....

1. Polybius, the historian, says: "Since the multitude is ever fickle, full of lawless desires, irrational passions and violence, there is no other way to keep them in order but by the fear and terror of the invisible world; on which account our ancestors seem to me to have acted judiciously, when they contrived to bring into the popular belief these notions of the gods, and of the infernal regions." B. vi. 56. 200-118BC



3. *Livy*, the celebrated historian, speaks of it in the same spirit; and he praises the wisdom of *Numa*, because he invented the fear of the gods, as "a most efficacious means of governing an ignorant and barbarous populace," *Hist.*, i. 19. 59BC-17AD

4. *Strabo*, the geographer, says: For it is impossible to govern the crowd of women, and all the common rabble, by philosophical reasoning, and lead them to piety, holiness and virtue - but this must be done by superstition, or the fear of the gods, by means of fables and wonders;.... These things the legislators used as scarecrows to terrify the childish multitude." *Geog.*, B. i. 64BC-24AD

When did the concept of hell creep into Jewish thinking?

Rick: When historically did the Jewish thinking get exposed to such things and what was the result?

Kevin discussed that like all people, the Jewish people lived amongst all sorts of different cultures. They got into trouble for this throughout the Old Testament, such as when they were taken into captivity in Babylon. The same thing happens today. It is natural to take theological ideas and graft them onto the culture you are in.

By the time of Christ, if one were to have taken a poll about what happens to the wicked after they die, there would have been a lot of different answers depending on which religious group you were talking to.

Rick: There are about 400 years between the Old and New Testaments. During that time, where there were no prophets on the scene, there were a lot of opportunities for wrong thinking to enter in.

Kevin: This is called the Inter-Testament Period - the time between the writings of Malachi and Matthew. This is when you start to see a lot of these ideas develop. In the Old Testament, we don't see a well-developed view of the afterlife at all.

Rick: Right - it is mostly imagery. We know from the Old Testament that we have a God of justice and judgment, but how is that carried out? That is what the New Testament clarifies for us. We will revisit the subject during Part II of this program.

(Source: *The Origin and History of the Doctrine of Endless Punishment, Chapter IV. The Jews Borrowed the Doctrine from the Heathen*, Thomas B. Thayer, 1881)

It is allowed on all hands that the Jews in our Savior's time believed the doctrine of future endless punishment; that it was a part of the common faith. Of course, as the doctrine is nowhere to be found in their Scriptures, the question arises, where did they find it? At the close of the Old Testament Scriptures they did not believe it; at the beginning of the New they did.

Between these two points of time there was an interval of some four hundred years, during which there was no prophet in Israel. *Malachi* was the last of the Hebrew prophets, and from him to Christ there stretches this waste period of four centuries, when the Jews were without any divine teacher or revelation from heaven. And all this while they were in constant and close intercourse with the heathen, especially the Egyptians, the Greeks and Romans, who held the doctrine in review as part of the national faith. From these, therefore, they must have borrowed it, for it is certain that they could not have obtained it from any inspired source, since none was open to them during this period....



The process is easily understood. About three hundred and thirty years before Christ, Alexander the Great had subjected to his rule the whole of Western Asia, including Judea, and also the kingdom of Egypt. Soon after he founded Alexandria, which speedily became a great commercial metropolis, and drew into itself a large multitude of Jews, who were always eager to improve the opportunities of traffic and trade. A few years later, *Ptolemy Soter* took Jerusalem, and carried off one hundred thousand of them into Egypt. Here, of course, they were in daily contact with Egyptians and Greeks, and gradually began to adopt their philosophical and religious opinions, or to modify their own in harmony with them.

"To what side whatsoever they turned," says a careful writer, "the Jews came in contact with Greeks and with Greek philosophy, under one modification or another, ...It insinuated itself very slowly at first; but stealing upon them from every quarter, and operating from age to age, it mingled at length in all their views, and by the year 150 before Christ, had wrought a visible change in their notions and habits of thought." (Universalist Expositor, vol. for 1834, p. 423.)

These next two Old Testament texts are perhaps the most often referred to by those who promote hellfire:

Daniel 12:1-2: (NASB) ¹*Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. ²Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.*

We will spend more time on this in Part II, but we believe this next Isaiah Scripture gives us a clue...

Isaiah 66:23-24: (NASB) ²³*And it shall be from new moon to new moon and from sabbath to sabbath, all mankind will come to bow down before Me, says the LORD. ²⁴Then they will go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched; and they will be an abhorrence to all mankind.*

Kevin discussed that the corpses are the slain enemies of God and the death of them is going to act as a deterrent. We see here a temporal judgment - something that happens at a specific point in time on this earth. There is not speculation about the afterlife; rather, it seems to be something that is stated within a poetic language talking about a judgment at that time.

This took place at a literal place on the earth, Gehenna. Jesus used that imagery in his teachings. How is that literal place being described and what does it teach us about the justice and judgment of God for mankind?

Matthew 24:1-3: (NASB) ¹*Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when his disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to him. ²And he said to them, Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down. ³As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?*

After being asked these questions, Jesus answers by first describing the events of the impending destruction of the Temple in 70AD, and then says that this is merely the beginning. There was an immediate fulfillment and then a prophetic one.

A note of caution that Christian Questions reviewed in great detail during the three-part series, *Should You NOT Be a Christian*: When we begin to put more of the basis of our belief on our own personal experience and emotions rather



than the written word of God, we can get into trouble. Our experiences are tailored to the type of person we are, the context in which we live, etc. The Bible, on the other hand, provides a consistent plan from beginning to end. Our beliefs must be consistent with the written word of God.

Gehenna

Kevin: The word that Jesus uses exclusively in the Gospels to describe the fate of the wicked is "Gehenna." It is one of many names for a valley outside of Jerusalem which has a rich but dark history.

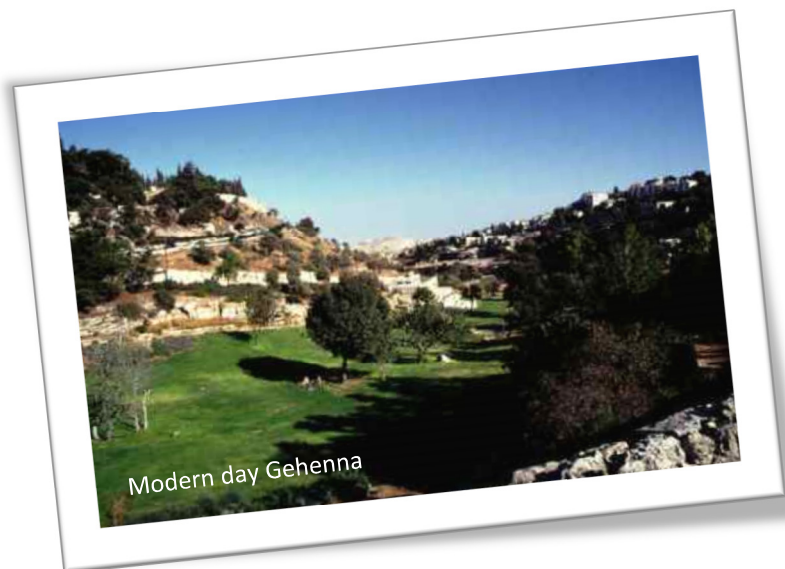
Back in the time of Jeremiah, the prophet warned that if the practices did not come to an end, it would lead to the destruction of the people.

Jesus is warning the Jews that if they continue down the path of violence, they would meet a similar fate. Just because Jesus is referencing a literal place does not mean that he isn't referring to something in the afterlife. But it is important to know that he is speaking to something rooted in their context.

Rick: Those who were listening could understand him. This valley became a garbage pit in which to throw refuse. Fires were kept burning so that everything thrown in would be completely destroyed. Nothing living was thrown in there.

Regarding Gehenna, this gives us a sense of what happened here:

Jeremiah 19:3-6: (ASV) ...Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle. ⁴Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, that they knew not, they and their fathers and the kings of Judah; and have filled this place with the blood of innocents, ⁵and have built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons in the fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal; which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind: ⁶therefore, behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that this place shall no more be called Topheth, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The Valley of Slaughter.



(Source: Bible Commentary by John Gill:) **that this place shall no more be called Tophet:** as it had been, from the beating of drums in it, that the cries and shrieks of infants burnt in the fire might not be heard by their parents: **nor the valley of the son of Hinnom;** which was its name in the times of Joshua, and long before it was called Tophet; but now it should have neither names: **but the valley of slaughter;** or, "of the slain," as the Targum; from the multitude of those that should be killed here, at the siege and taking of Jerusalem by the army of the Chaldeans; or that should be brought hither to be buried; see #Jer 19:11 and see Gill on "Jer 7:32".

Jeremiah 7:30-33: (NKJV) ³⁰For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight, says the Lord. They have set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to pollute it. ³¹And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart... ³³The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. And no one will frighten them away.



(Keep in mind, the very children whose torture and death God laments here would be those who, by definition of not knowing Christ, would be tortured eternally according to proponents of hellfire.)

Kevin: If Jesus were around today, I think maybe the analogy he would use is Ground Zero. What that would mean for us is a place of ultimate destruction.

*So are most people really "hellbound?"
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!*



*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*

More Old Testament imagery:

Genesis 19:24-25: (NASB) ²⁴Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven, ²⁵and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

Everything died!

2 Peter 2:6: (NASB) and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter;

Just as all was reduced to ashes in Sodom, so would be the result after judgment.

Jude 1:7: (NASB) just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

No torture - punishment - the punishment of death - just as in Sodom.

Psalms 2:7-9: (NASB) ⁷I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, You are My Son, today I have begotten You. ⁸Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession. ⁹You shall break them with a rod of iron, you shall shatter them like earthenware.

Breaking and shattering - rendering completely unmade...

Malachi 4:1-3: (NASB) ¹For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. ²But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. ³You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing, says the LORD of hosts.

Chaff - no root or branch, meaning no life - ashes under the soles of your feet - they are gone!



Reality is NOT the exact OPPOSITE of these pictures.

Old Testament word - Sheol- used 66 times - 31-grave, 31-hell, pit-4

Hell: Strong's #7585 she'owl (sheh-ole'); or sheol (sheh-ole'); Hades or the world of the dead (as if a subterranean retreat), including its accessories and inmates.
KJV-- grave, hell, pit.

The Hebrew word "sheol" is used 66 times in the Old Testament. In the King James Version, it is translated as "grave" 31 times, "hell" 31 times and "pit" four times.

It is interesting that whenever a "good" person died, they went to the grave, but when a "bad" person died, the translators chose to render the same word as "hell."

Evil: Psalms 9:17: (KJV) *The wicked shall be turned into **hell <7585>**, and all the nations that forget God.*

Good: Job 14:13: (KJV) *O that thou wouldest hide me in the **grave <7585>**, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!*

Evil: Psalms 55:15: (KJV) *Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into **hell <7585>**: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.*

Good: Ecclesiastes 9:10: (KJV) *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the **grave <7585>**, whither thou goest.*

Other times the same word is used:

Jonah 2:2: (KJV) *And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of **hell <7585>**cried I, and thou heardest my voice.*

Ezekiel 32:27: (KJV) *And they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to **hell <7585>**with their weapons of war: and they have laid their swords under their heads, but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.*

Hosea 13:14: (KJV) *I will ransom them from the power of the **grave <7585>**; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O **grave <7585>**, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.*

Job 14:13: (KJV) *O that thou wouldest hide me in the **grave <7585>**, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!*

Job 17:13: (KJV) *If I wait, the **grave <7585>**is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness.*

The Origin and History of the Doctrine of Endless Punishment:

Full paragraphs from Thomas B. Thayer that we excerpted:

But, as I have remarked, though the Greeks borrowed, they altered and improved. And, true to that individualism which was so marked a characteristic of that people, they are not satisfied with the Egyptian method of generalizing respecting the punishments of the wicked, but begin specifying particular sinners, and particular kinds of punishment adapted to particular offenses. Hence the fables of Ixion, Tantalus, Tityrus, etc., whose torments in the



infernal regions are mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. Everything must be sharp, pointed, and dramatic, to suit the lively genius of the Greek; and the terrors of the invisible world must be presented in a way to strike the imagination in the most powerful manner, and produce some direct result on the individual and on society.

The whole thing is designed for effect, to influence the multitude, to restrain their passions, and to aid the magistrate and ruler in keeping them subject to authority. It is the invention of priests and law-makers, who take this as the easiest method of governing the people. They claim the "right divine" to govern; claim that their laws originate with the gods, as we have shown above; and that, therefore, the gods will visit on all offenders the terrors and tortures of the damned. Hence, through the joint cunning of priest and legislator, of church and state, mutually supporting each the other, we have all the stupendous frauds and falsehoods respecting the invisible world.

But, without further remarks of my own, I will introduce the testimony of the heathen themselves on this point, and those the best informed among them, who will tell their own story in their own way. One preliminary observation, however, partly made already, I wish to repeat, and I desire the reader to have it always in mind: The rulers and magistrates, or priests, invent these terrors to keep the people, the masses, in subjection; the people religiously believe in them; while the inventors, of course, and the educated classes, the priests and the philosophers, though they teach them to the multitude, have themselves no manner of faith in them.

1. *Polybius*, the historian, says: "Since the multitude is ever fickle, full of lawless desires, irrational passions and violence, there is no other way to keep them in order but by the fear and terror of the invisible world; on which account our ancestors seem to me to have acted judiciously, when they contrived to bring into the popular belief these notions of the gods, and of the infernal regions." B. vi. 56.

200-118BC

2. *Dionysius Halicarnassus* treats the whole matter as useful, but not as true. *Antiq. Rom.*, B. ii.

3. *Livy*, the celebrated historian, speaks of it in the same spirit; and he praises the wisdom of *Numa*, because he invented the fear of the gods, as "a most efficacious means of governing an ignorant and barbarous populace," *Hist.*, i. 19.

4. *Strabo*, the geographer, says: "The multitude are restrained from vice by the punishments the gods are said to inflict upon offenders, and by those terrors and threatening which certain dreadful words and monstrous forms imprint upon their minds, For it is impossible to govern the crowd of women, and all the common rabble, by philosophical reasoning, and lead them to piety, holiness and virtue - but this must be done by superstition, or the fear of the gods, by means of fables and wonders; for the thunder, the aegis, the trident, the torches (of the Furies), the dragons. etc., are all fables, as is also all the ancient theology. These things the legislators used as scarecrows to terrify the childish multitude." *Geog.*, B. i.

(Source: *The Origin and History of the Doctrine of Endless Punishment, Chapter IV. The Jews Borrowed the Doctrine from the Heathen*, Thomas B. Thayer, 1881)

It is allowed on all hands that the Jews in our Savior's time believed the doctrine of future endless punishment; that it was a part of the common faith. Of course, as the doctrine is nowhere to be found in their Scriptures, the question arises, where did they find it? At the close of the Old Testament Scriptures they did not believe it; at the beginning of the New they did.

Between these two points of time there was an interval of some four hundred years, during which there was no prophet in Israel. Malachi was the last of the Hebrew prophets, and from him to Christ there stretches this waste period of four centuries, when the Jews were without any divine teacher or revelation from heaven. And all this while they were in constant and close intercourse with the heathen, especially the Egyptians, the Greeks and Romans, who held the doctrine in review as part of the national faith. From these, therefore, they must



have borrowed it, for it is certain that they could not have obtained it from any inspired source, since none was open to them during this period.

....when the last prophet had departed, and God had withdrawn all special guidance, the growth of corruption among them, and conformity to Pagan opinions, rapidly increased.

The process is easily understood. About three hundred and thirty years before Christ, Alexander the Great had subjected to his rule the whole of Western Asia, including Judea, and also the kingdom of Egypt. Soon after he founded Alexandria, which speedily became a great commercial metropolis, and drew into itself a large multitude of Jews, who were always eager to improve the opportunities of traffic and trade. A few years later, Ptolemy Soter took Jerusalem, and carried off one hundred thousand of them into Egypt. Here, of course, they were in daily contact with Egyptians and Greeks, and gradually began to adopt their philosophical and religious opinions, or to modify their own in harmony with them.

"To what side soever they turned," says a careful writer, "the Jews came in contact with Greeks and with Greek philosophy, under one modification or another, It was around them and among them; for small bodies of that people were scattered through their own territories, as well as through the surrounding provinces. It insinuated itself very slowly at first; but stealing upon them from every quarter, and operating from age to age, it mingled at length in all their views, and by the year 150 before Christ, had wrought a visible change in their notions and habits of thought." (Universalist Expositor, vol. for 1834, p. 423.)