



Is the Hell of Christian Tradition Taught in the Bible? (Part II)

Luke 4:18: (NASB) *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed.*



"The end result of God's judgment upon those who do not accept Jesus is eternal fire, and torment." Such is the serious warning of many Christians of many centuries before us and of our day as well. Their studied claim is that Jesus was specific, and his words are the words of the gospel, and therefore not subject to question. While we agree with the unquestionable nature of the words of Jesus, we DO question our Christian friends' interpretation on this very serious matter. We respectfully raise these questions: What if Jesus' teachings about God's judgment did NOT point to a burning hell at all? What if that doctrine was borrowed from ancient heathen teaching (as we discussed

in Part I of this series), and illegitimately planted into what became known as the Gospel, centuries AFTER Jesus spoke? What if careful scriptural reasoning coupled with post-New Testament history could PROVE this?

The subject of hell is very controversial, as can be seen on our Facebook page facebook.com/cqbiblepodcast.

We want to be respectful of people's passion on this topic, and with equal passion we want to represent what we believe is scriptural truth.

Eric writes: Christian Questions, just maybe you could be wrong. The Bible makes some plain declarations about the eternal state of hell. The axioms of logic conclude that the truth is often the most simple answer. Maybe when the Bible uses words like "forever" and "day and



Recap Of Part 1

"WAS THE TEACHING OF AN ETERNAL HELLFIRE REVEALED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?"

- God never warned Adam of sin leading to torment – the consequence was simply death.
- Egyptian culture before Moses' time clearly had graphic written descriptions of a "netherworld."
- From the start, Jewish culture had no such thing. They only had death and burial underground in Sheol.
- God vividly demonstrated the difference between Himself and the gods of Egypt, especially in His deliverance plagues.
- God NEVER warned Israel of some future torture as a result of disobedience.
- All of the penalties of God's Law to Israel were tribulations IN THIS LIFE. There was not one word about hell!
- Greek tradition clearly had a belief in a hell far below the earth in the time of Elijah.
- Canaanite culture believed in an underworld in Elijah's time as well.
- Jeremiah's time evidenced underworld beliefs of torment as God condemned the idolatrous torture actions that took place in the valley of Ben-Hinnom.

The 400-year period after Malachi proved to be a warning ground for idolatrous traditions to seep into Jewish culture.



night" it is because it means exactly that. But to declare some "revelation" that eternal hell is "pagan" is quite contrary to traditional Christian Orthodoxy. One must be slow and careful when studying Scripture and be open to the fact that, in this case, you could be quite wrong. That is, of course, unless you have a certain narrative to push which these days generates a lot of attention to your ministry.

No, we are not trying to get attention to the ministry. We are trying to preach what we believe is the absolute word of God. We agree that we must take it slowly and carefully, and that is why we are studying this topic in three parts. We will go logically and historically, step by step.

The author for our audio clips tracks the writings of "church fathers" on the matter of the nature of the soul. His beliefs are similar to ours, and we will follow his reasoning and logic throughout the podcast.

 **No early running debate, *The History of Hell, Hellfire Debunked*, John Roller**

- I did see that there was a running debate, but it didn't start right away. What I found was 16 consecutive writers who lived from the time of Christ up until near the end of the second century; all of which believed and taught exactly as we've been saying, that souls are mortal, that when the body dies the soul dies, that nobody goes anywhere or does anything while they're dead, and that the only hope for immortality is the resurrection that's going to occur at the second coming of Christ. Sixteen consecutive writers said that before I ran into any writer who said souls are immortal and just live forever automatically.*

He brings up an interesting point about following writers after the New Testament was written.

The concept of an immortal soul ties back to the first documented lie, spoken by Lucifer.

God said:

Genesis 2:17: (KJV) for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

Satan lied to Eve by contradicting God:

Genesis 3:4: (KJV) ...you surely will not die...

Let's begin with Jesus and his teachings. Why did Jesus come to earth?

John the Baptist was clear about the purpose of Jesus:

John 1:28-29: (Rotherham)

²⁸These things, in Bethany, came to pass, beyond the Jordan, where John was, immersing. ²⁹On the morrow, he beholdeth Jesus, coming unto him, and saith - See! the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.





How did Jesus himself describe his mission? Jesus knew the Old Testament well and closely adhered to its principles.

Jesus absolutely followed that pattern as he first introduced his mission after his baptism and wilderness experiences*:

Luke 4:14-21: (NASB) ¹⁴And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through all the surrounding district. ¹⁵And he began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all. ¹⁶And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and as was his custom, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.

Jesus stood up to read these first public words after his baptism in the synagogue, so we should pay close attention.

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Reggie says: People, you delude yourself...follow Jesus or you will discover the truth of hell. Preaching falsehoods about the Word of God is very, very dangerous.

Yes, Reggie, we could not agree more that it is dangerous to preach falsehoods. Our point is to get to the truth of the word of God. Feel free to respond to the specifics of our discussion, and if you disagree, please give us your reasoning.

Jesus chose to initially introduce himself by participating in the synagogue worship:

¹⁷And the **book of the prophet Isaiah** was handed to him. And he opened the book and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸the spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, ¹⁹**to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.** ²⁰And he closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹And he began to say to them, Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

What was Jesus' message?

1. He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.
2. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives who are in the graves; the resurrection of the dead.
3. He has sent me for recovery of sight to the blind. All will see completely in the kingdom on earth when raised from the dead and instructed in God's truth.
4. He has sent me to set free those who are oppressed by sickness and death. To be set free is beyond our wildest dreams. Thy kingdom come!



His message was all about the good news that releases the captives. But what did Jesus NOT say when introducing himself by reading the specific texts in Isaiah?

* Rick's note: There are differences of opinion by several commentators on the timing of Jesus' reading of [Isaiah 61](#) while in Nazareth. Some place it in an introductory position in his ministry while others place it much later. Upon review, we think it best to de-emphasize the timing of his words while emphatically emphasizing the content of what he did and did not say.



He stopped reading mid-sentence:

Isaiah 61:2: (NASB) *To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD (Jesus stopped his reading here) and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.*

Why would Jesus leave out *the day of vengeance* in his explanation of what he came to do? Because that was not the message of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

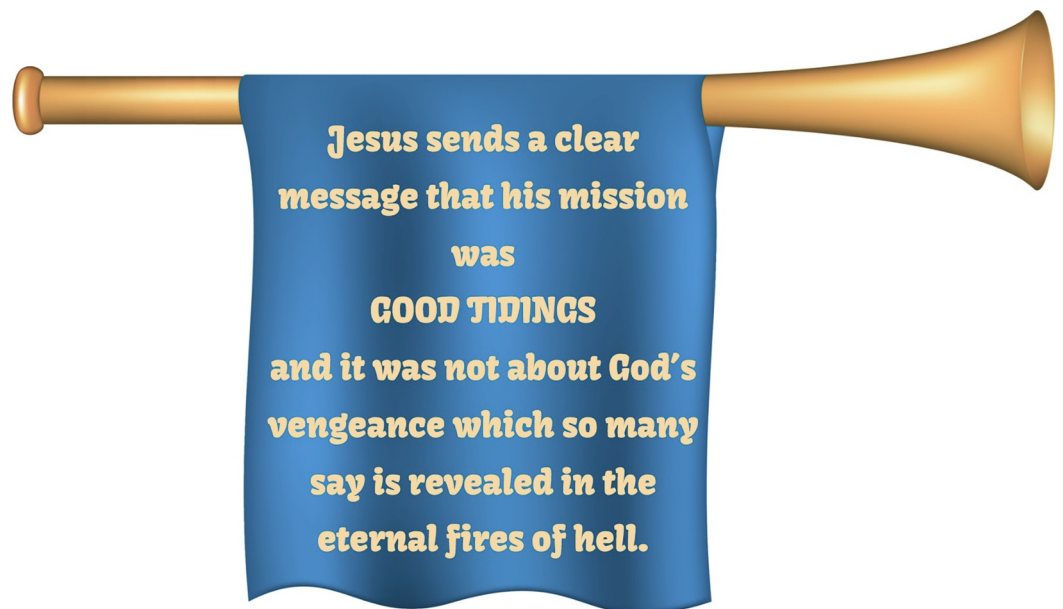
Jesus read from the book of the prophet Isaiah
but stopped and closed the book
and did not read about the day of vengeance.

Luke 4: 18-20: (NASB)

...he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. ²⁰And he closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down...

Isaiah 61:1-2: (NASB)

... The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; ²to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD And the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn...



If Jesus' message was "Good News" and salvation for all, did he ever talk about mankind's judgment?

Even though it was not his main focus, Jesus DID talk about judgment and in his teachings are several factors that many interpret as supporting hellfire. We will address some of these factors today, others in Part III, as we will also address post New Testament history of the eternal fire doctrine.



Let's return to our Facebook comments on a discussion with one of our CQ volunteers, Leah, on the topic of Gehenna.

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Dusty remarks: To deny a biblical hell takes a lot of mental gymnastics and twisting of the Scriptures. Leah asks, "Does it still exist today?" It made it to the canon for a reason, it doesn't matter if the actual burning dump is still there or not.

(We will address this comment later.)

Dusty then comments to another individual: They burned their trash there... which goes along with other descriptions of hell being a place of torture that never ends.

How does burning trash describe torture that never ends? This comment does not logically make sense to us.

We will continue to refer to Facebook conversations throughout the podcast, because they are helpful to see how different Christians think. Our object is to have a scripturally constructive conversation.

First on the agenda:

A primary historical resource:

- UNQUENCHABLE FIRE -

This phrase is not just
in the New Testament.

(Source: "The Origin and History of the Doctrine of Endless Punishment" by Thomas B. Thayer, New and enlarged edition. Boston: Universalist Publishing House. 1881)

CHAPTER V, SECTION III: ON UNQUENCHABLE FIRE: The prophet Isaiah describes the desolation of Idumea (Edom) in the following language:

The destruction of Edom:

Isaiah 34:8-10: (ASV) ⁸For Jehovah hath a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. ⁹And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. ¹⁰It shall not be **quenched** <3518> night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever; from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.

Quenched: Strong's #3518, kabah, to expire of (causatively) to extinguish (fire, light, anger): - go (put) out, quench

This had both a prophetic AND literal fulfillment.

In commenting on the phrases *unquenchable fire* and *for ever and ever*, Professor Thayer writes: This strong language is employed to set forth the destruction of a petty tribe occupying a small territory and furnishes an important illustration of the elasticity with which the phrases in review are used as symbols of temporal judgments.

In the time of Isaiah, Edom was destroyed. The text says the fire that destroyed Edom *shall not be quenched*.

IS THIS FIRE STILL BURNING TODAY? 

No, it is not. Did God not speak the truth? God also said, *the smoke thereof shall go up for ever*. Do we see the smoke of that fire today? No.



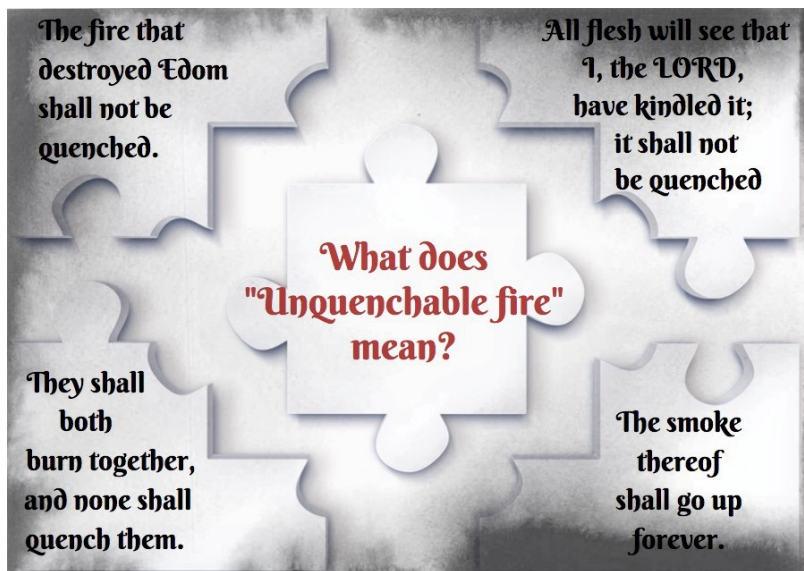
One of the points made emphatically on our Facebook page was "When it says unquenchable fire, it means unquenchable." But when the same phrase is used in Isaiah, we know that fire is no longer burning and the smoke is no longer around. What does that mean?

One more example:

The overthrow of the Jews and the laying waste of Judea, by Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans, is predicted by Ezekiel in the terms following:

Ezekiel 20:47-48: (NASB) ⁴⁷And say to the forest of the Negev, Hear the word of the LORD: thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am about to kindle a fire in you, and it will consume every green tree in you, as well as every dry tree; **the blazing flame will not be quenched** and the whole surface from south to north will be burned by it. ⁴⁸All flesh will see that I, the LORD, have kindled it; it shall not be **quenched** <3518>.

IS THIS FIRE STILL BURNING TODAY?



No, it is not! God spoke the truth, but the fire is still not burning today. What does this mean? What is the explanation?

See also Isaiah 1:31; Jeremiah 4:4, Amos 5:6. These are also *unquenchable fires* that are *not* still burning.

This phrase *unquenchable fire* appears many times in the Old Testament and in every instance, *it is not still burning*. What is God saying?

These passages are sufficient to show that the sacred writers used the phrases in review as figures of God's judgments in the earth of the calamities which He sent upon wicked nations through the agency of war, famine and desolation. In not one of the texts cited is the language employed as a figure of any judgments or sufferings, but such as belong to time and earth.

This phrase, *unquenchable fire*, has a very clear picture of judgments in the earth.

Now, if the Savior used the same phraseology used by the prophets and the Jews, he would undoubtedly employ it in the same sense if he wished or expected them to understand him.

When Jesus used the phrase *unquenchable fire*, he would have undoubtedly picked up on what the Old Testament meant.

Hence, as Hammond, an excellent commentator of the English church, says, "unquenchable fire" is simply "a fire never quenched till it has done its work," or, in other words, a thoroughly destructive fire.



That gives us an entirely different picture of *unquenchable fire*. It makes sense because there are many Old Testament phrases using that statement from God. Unless one is saying God is lying, it must have a meaning other than a fire that can never end for the rest of eternity. Every one of those fires ended! *Unquenchable fire* is a thoroughly destructive fire to cause judgment on those nations who had sinned so badly.

John the Baptist speaking of Jesus and following the symbolic language of the Old Testament:

Matthew 3:12: (NASB) *His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with **unquenchable <762> fire**.*

Unquenchable: Strong's #762, asbestos, a derivative of #4570; not extinguished; i.e., (by implication) perpetual: - not to be quenched

This refers to the destruction of Israel as the favored nation. *He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire*. It did *not* mean fire that burns forever. John the Baptist built on what was said over and over in the Old Testament.



YES, God did mean what He said! It is fire that will never be quenched until its destructive work is done.

Let's look at some of Jesus' own words regarding this *unquenchable* idea related to the language of the day:

Mark 9:43: (NASB) *If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the **unquenchable <762> fire**...*

Strabo, the celebrated geographer, speaking of the Parthenon, a temple in Athens, says: "In this was the inextinguishable or unquenchable lamp" (*asbestos <Strong's #762>*, the very word used in Matthew 3:12, Luke 3:17 and Mark 9:43). Of course, all it means is that the lamp was kept constantly or regularly burning during the period alluded to, though extinguished or quenched ages ago.

In the Greek language used outside of Scripture, "unquenchable" or "inextinguishable" meant burning and burning until it was finished burning. In other words, the fire could not be put out until it ended its cycle.

Homer uses the phrase *asbestos gelos*, "unquenchable laughter." But we can hardly suppose they are laughing now and will laugh to all eternity.



Have you ever had unquenchable thirst? After drinking enough, your thirst is eventually quenched.

We must be intellectually honest in our study of the Scriptures.

Mark 9:47-48: (NASB) ⁴⁷*If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell,* ⁴⁸*where their worm does not die, and the fire is not **quenched** <4570>.*

This uses a slightly different Greek word. <762> is a derivative of <4570> and both mean to extinguish.

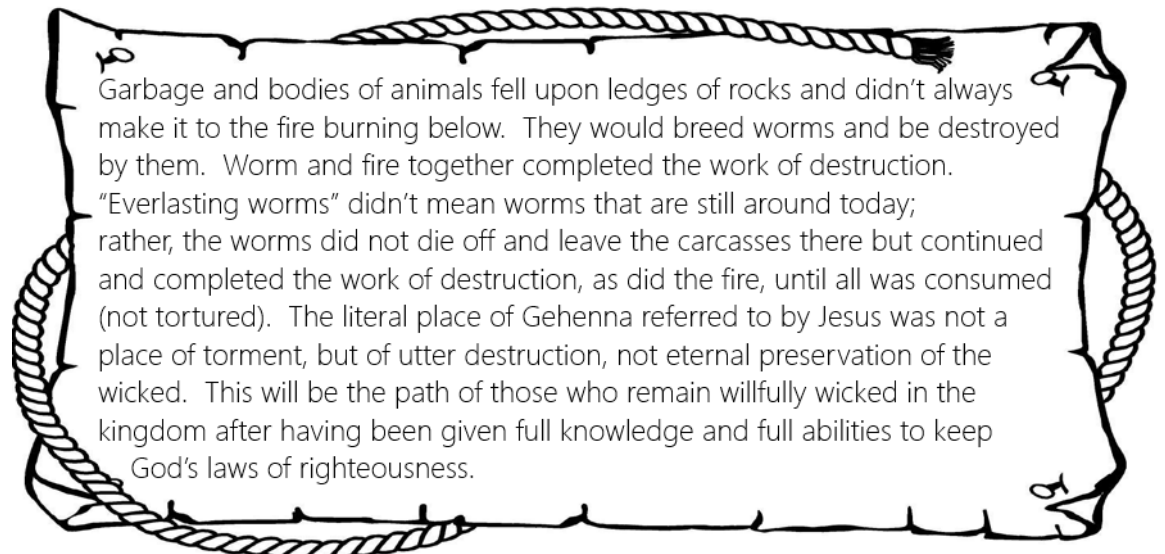
Quench: Strong's #4570, sbennumi, to extinguish (literally or figuratively): - go out, quench

In Mark 9:47-48 Jesus directly quoted from Isaiah:

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 (obviously a future time.)* ²⁴*Then 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** <3518>; and they will be an abhorrence to all mankind.*

There is no torment or torture, just a terribly sad and age-lasting reminder of the destruction of those who ultimately stand against God! Because this is a picture of future judgment, how sad that people chose second death over everlasting life. We are told not to mourn them since it was their choice.

The corpses of the men (NOT live people) are being eaten by worms and there is fire destroying them until there is nothing left to be destroyed. There is *no torture* described or implied.



Plutarch, the well-known author of the biographies familiarly known as "Plutarch's Lives," calls the sacred fire of the temple "unquenchable fire" (*pur asbeston*, the exact expression of Jesus), though he says in the very next sentence it had sometimes gone out.

Josephus, speaking of a festival of the Jews, says that everyone brought fuel for the fire of the altar, which "continued always unquenchable," (*asbeston aei*). Here we have a union of the word supposed to mean especially endless, when in the form of *aionios* (age-lasting), with the word "unquenchable," and yet both together do not convey the idea of duration without end; for the fire of which Josephus speaks had actually gone out, and the altar been destroyed, at the time he wrote! And still he calls the fire "always unquenchable."



The *evidence* (not preference, not tradition) clearly points to the Old and New Testament phrase *unquenchable fire* as meaning fire that does not go out until its destructive work is complete.

Jesus does NOT quote prophecy and suddenly, out of the context of ALL the sacred biblical writings before him, change the meaning of what was said to contradict all that was previously prophesied.

What about Gehenna, the place that Jesus speaks of in which those fires burn? What does it mean?

Here is where all of the elements of controversy seem to come together. If you define "Gehenna," which is often translated *hellfire*, for what it really is, the whole burning debate will begin to be quenched. Of course, in light of tradition and emotion this is no easy task, but we will try anyway.



CQ App comment from Samuel: For the upcoming Hell Part II, I was curious about the way that you interpret Matthew 25:31-46 (Parable of the Sheep and the Goats), especially Matthew 25:46. I also had some difficulty understanding where you guys landed on the idea of hell from Part I. I grasped the challenge against the modern concept of hell in the church but was unclear as to what you guys would imagine hell to be or if it even existed. Also, the story in Luke 16:19-31, specifically verses 22-24, refers to torment for the rich man after his death. Now I find it an interesting point that the lack of mention of hell in the Old Testament would give the idea that hell/eternal punishment (for my previous statements eternal punishment might be a better term, than hell, as it has less preconceptions attached) does not exist despite the references to it by Christ himself in the New Testament. There are actions of God's that we don't understand, but rather have to trust that God has a plan. Also, a lack of eternal punishment would undermine the sacrifice of Christ as without punishment there is no need for sacrifice.

He has several questions on Scriptures which we will not be able to thoroughly answer in this episode. This episode is to establish the words of Jesus as a base and also the history of the church after the life of Jesus and the apostles.

We will address Samuel's questions in more detail on our June 25th Episode #1027: "Is the Hell of Christian Tradition Taught in the Bible? (Part III)."



In reference to the use of language, years ago when Jimmy Carter was president, he was speaking in Poland (with use of a translator) to a large audience. He announced that he wanted to learn about the desires of the Polish. The translator translated what he said as, "I want to have sex with the Polish." The translator was fired after this. It was a close meaning but inaccurate. We need to be careful with language. We need to find the original meaning and not add or subtract from what it meant.



Second on the agenda:

What Jesus meant when he talked about **hellfire.**

The word translated **hellfire** (and sometimes **hell**) in the New Testament denotes a LITERAL PLACE.

Hell: Strong's #1067, **geena** (gheh'-en-nah); of Hebrew origin; valley of (the son of) Hinnom. **ge-henna** (or **Ge-Hinnom**), a valley of Jerusalem

Gehenna is the Valley of Hinnom - how does that help us? What happened there?

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Bob: Almost everything we know comes from Jesus himself. His own words. He said it is outer darkness, it never ends, one's memories torment him with no consolation, no sense of the presence of God EVER (the absolute worst thing about it) it never ends. Jesus said, "Don't fear those who can kill your body, rather fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell forever." Hell is so bad that John described it as a lake of fire, where the torment never ends. The good news is no one has to go there...

We believe that ALL have the opportunity to hear the words of Jesus (if not now, then in the Day of Judgment.) We appreciate the comments, but we ask if you do not agree with us on a specific point, tell us why and what your reasoning is. Go to the podcast and isolate something you think is incorrect to make for a productive conversation.



(Source: Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary) In the time of Jesus the Valley of Hinnom was used as the garbage dump of Jerusalem. Into it were thrown all the filth and garbage of the city, including the dead bodies of animals and executed criminals. To consume all this, fires burned constantly. Maggots worked in the filth.

This is an irrefutable continuation of the Jeremiah incident that happened in that valley and the fact that God did call it a cursed place.

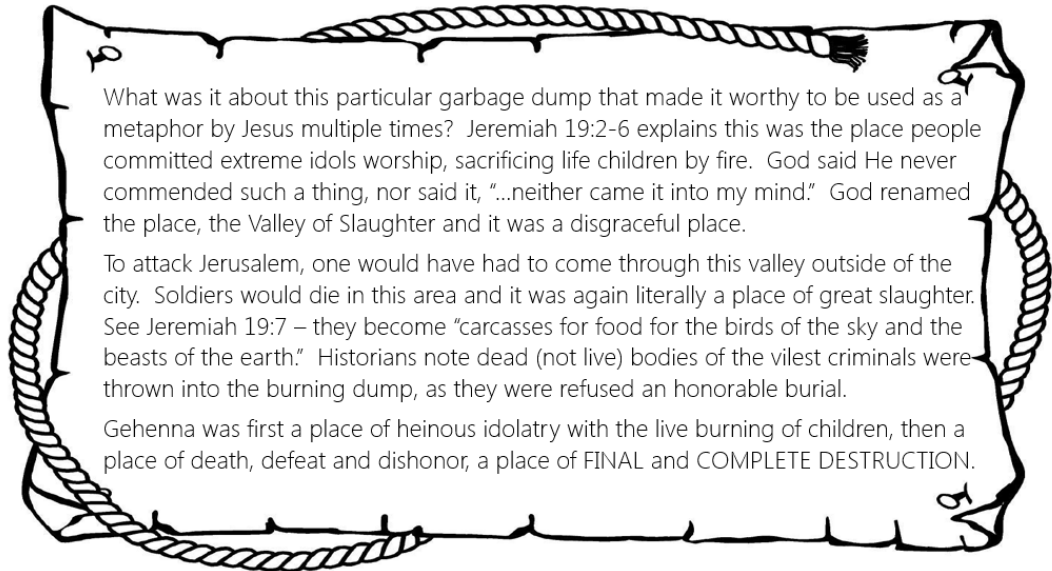
Jeremiah 19:7: (NASB) *I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hand of those who seek their life; and I will give over their carcasses as food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth.*

That was a description of the valley of the sons of Hinnom where they were sacrificing their live children to Moloch. In Jeremiah 32:35 God was angry and said it never came into His mind that they should do this abomination.



EVERY text that refers to this valley in the New Testament as a potential final judgment is referring to those who should know better (Christians) - NOT to the average sinner in society. That should be a wake-up call to Christians.

Jesus was speaking to them about an incinerator in the city dump. Nothing living was EVER thrown in. According to Jewish Law, they were not allowed to torment and torture, and they did not.



For a comprehensive look at EVERY use of Gehenna/hellfire in the New Testament, please see July 26, 2015, CQ Episode 876: "Do the Fires of Hell Come From God? (Part II)."



Jesus' first use
of the word
Gehenna

Speaking to his followers in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:29-30: (NASB) ²⁹*If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.* ³⁰*If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into **hell** <1067>.* (Also see verse 22.)

Hell: Strong's #1067 Gehenna, of Hebrew origin,
valley of (the son of) Hinnom, a valley of Jerusalem

Jesus is speaking directly to his disciples. "You have to watch out. You do not want your end to be the incinerator of utter destruction."

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Jeff comments: All I know is the rich man was burning where he was while Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom nice and comfortable. Spin how you want guys. I'm done.

There is no spin! We will be briefly touching on the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, but we will deal with it more in Part III. *We need to take things in the context and the language in which they were spoken.* We ask you to test us on this. Look up what the scholars say. We rely on their expertise to understand the language.



Third on the agenda:

Early church corruption of true biblical teachings.

Clement at end of 2nd century, *The History of Hell, Hellfire Debunked, John Roller*

- *This was a time period when they didn't have mass media like we have today. Goodness, they didn't even have printing presses, so the fact that Athenagoras had come out with this theory, everybody didn't hear about it right away. And so, we pass all the way over then to the end of the second century before we run into another writer who starts writing like that. He's in Alexandria, Egypt, which is another place, which was a great center of Greek philosophy and Greek thinking. The more I have studied the writings of Clement of Alexandria, and he wrote a lot so it's a tremendous field to study and read everything he wrote, the more it seems to me that at some point during his life he held the Conditionalist viewpoint, and then at other points he held the Naturalist viewpoint. It's unclear because we don't have actual dating on when he wrote his various books, so it's unclear whether he shifted from position A to B or position B to A.*

The Conditionalist viewpoint says you do not have immortality and the Naturalist viewpoint is that you do. Clement looked at the history of the church fathers and some of their own questions.

A quick look at how the doctrine of hellfire worked its way into the church - this corruption was not a surprise:

Acts 20:28-30: (NASB) ²⁸Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Power, greed and control! It sounds a lot like Satan's focus in the Garden. The Apostle Paul warned us to be careful, as there will be those who want the attention and a following for themselves, wanting to create "a" gospel (not THE gospel) that fits their own needs.

We believe the hellfire idea of eternal torment and torture is a corruption of Christianity.

(Source: "The Origin and History of the Doctrine of Endless Punishment" by Thomas B. Thayer, New and enlarged edition. Boston: Universalist Publishing House. 1881.) Chapter VI. The Introduction of the Doctrine into the Christian Church. A look at some "early Church Fathers" and points about the questionable nature of their writings. Some hint towards a punishment after death but none an everlasting punishment...let us note the steps of its progress and mark its growth from the first departure from the simplicity of Christ, to the full development of the monster in the time of Tertullian...

(He will bring out four points) *First. The denial of a resurrection to the wicked and unbelieving, the soul remaining in Hades as a disembodied spirit. A.D. 110, or some ten years after the death of St. John.*



John 5:28-29: (NASB) ²⁸*Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice,* ²⁹*and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a **resurrection of judgment**.*

Even the King James Version was influenced by these errors.

It incorrectly translated the Greek word *judgment* as *damnation*:

John 5:29: (KJV) *And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the **resurrection of damnation**.*

All who are in their tombs - Even if you believe in hell, a tomb is not hell; it is someplace else. Jesus is saying specifically, *an hour is coming*, in the future, *all who are in their tombs will hear my voice*. Some will come to be judged, some will be raised to life.



Observations:

- Jesus said the dead were in their tombs - not in hell or anywhere else.
- Jesus said there was an appointed future time for them to be raised. The idea of hell puts them some place already, and that is not at all what Jesus is saying.
- Jesus said sinners would be raised to a time of judgment - this indicates their judgment had not yet begun.

Ignatius (A.D. 110) Supposing the epistles ascribed to this father to be genuine, and the date given correct, we find in them nothing definite on the question in review. Speaking of those who "by wicked doctrine corrupt the faith of God," he says: "He that is thus defiled shall depart into unquenchable fire; and so also shall he that hearkens to him." Ignatius to the Ephesians. iv. (Staniforth's 16).

How many would read this and proclaim he is speaking of endless punishment? Remember what the clear meaning of *unquenchable* was back then - to do the work it was meant to do and then it was done. We have no authority to change such a meaning to get the conclusion to fit our preferential view.

How prevalent is the "Gehenna teaching" in Jesus' own words and what does that prevalence mean?

We have already mentioned that every time Jesus spoke of Gehenna, it was to those who should have known better and not to the average sinner of his day. Now let's focus on how often he spoke of Gehenna and how often the other New Testament writers taught about it as well. One of the comments on our Facebook page was that Jesus spoke of hell more than anything else. He actually did not. We will look at all the times Jesus spoke of Gehenna/hell. The first use was in Matthew 5 which we spoke about previously.



Jesus' second use
of the word
Gehenna

Speaking to his followers as he is getting "the 70" ready to go out and preach:

Matthew 10:28: (NASB) *Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to **destroy** <622> both soul and body in **hell** <1067>.*



Jesus again does not refer to torment; rather, destruction. He used the physical garbage dump as a metaphor.

Destroy: Strong's #622, *apollymi*, to destroy fully, literally or figuratively: destroy, die, lose, mar, perish

He is talking to his followers, not the general population. (If his followers are continually disobedient, they would be in danger of being destroyed in what Revelation 2:11 calls *second death*.)

Back to the creeping in of the torment doctrine into the church:

Second. The judgment after death, and the punishment of the unbelieving and wicked. A.D. 112-140.

Polycarp (A.D. 112) The only thing bearing on our inquiry in the epistle of this father is the following: "Whosoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts, and says that there shall be neither any resurrection, nor judgment, he is the first-born of Satan." (Epistle to Philippians, ii. Compare this passage with what Paul says of the same class, 1 Corinthians 15:12, and 2 Timothy 2:18.)

The punishment of the wicked is a perversion of the purpose of the resurrection as explained by Jesus in John 5:28-29 that we read previously.

The perversion of the resurrection had already begun in Apostle Paul's time: 2 Timothy 2:17-18: (NASB) *¹⁷And their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some.*

The doctrine of the resurrection was perverted early on. Why? The more dramatic the doctrine, the easier it is to take it and make something new and exciting that fits your agenda.



Jesus' third use
of the word
Gehenna

Speaking to his followers shortly after the transfiguration and regarding greatness in the kingdom:

Matthew 18:9: (NASB) *If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery **hell** <1067>.* (Also see Mark 9:43-47)

Jesus' disciples KNEW what being tossed into Gehenna meant - not only was it a symbol of humiliation, but it was also a symbol of utter destruction. They all knew that nothing alive was ever thrown there to be tormented and Jesus never told them he meant otherwise.

Third. The future torment, and final annihilation, of the souls of the wicked. A.D. 140-190.

Justin Martyr (A.D. 140-166) This celebrated personage was a Grecian philosopher... His learning and reputation gave him great influence among the Christians, though he lacked judgment, was credulous, and often exceedingly absurd in his interpretation of Scripture.... His conversion did not destroy his individuality... He retained many of his early heathen notions, and the dress and profession of a Platonic philosopher; and in some respects, his creed was a sad mixture of Pagan falsehoods with Christian truths.



We also bring baggage with us. What should be left at the door, so we can study the Scriptures? We want to look at what was meant at the time the words were spoken, not colored by tradition, misrepresentation and misinterpretation.



With regard to the subject of our inquiry, he uses the following language: "Everyone is stepping forward into everlasting misery or happiness, according to his works. Moreover, we say that the souls of the wicked, being reunited to the same bodies, shall be consigned over to eternal torments..."

These passages are strongly phrased and might be taken as evidence that Justin believed in endless punishment if there was nothing in his writings to conflict with them... Justin did not believe in endless torments, but in the final annihilation of the wicked, as the following will show: ... "Souls are not immortal," says he, ... "I do not say that *all* souls will die. Those of the pious will remain (after death) in a certain better place, and those of the unholy and wicked in a worse, all expecting the time of judgment."

Justin did not believe in endless torments. He stated souls are not immortal.



Jesus' fourth use
of the word
Gehenna

Speaking to the Pharisees giving them their final warnings:

Matthew 23:33: (NASB) *You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of **hell** <1067>?*

There is no talk of torment. Wouldn't Jesus have told them about such an important consequence? If they were going to be tortured, he would have explained it in a way they would have understood. They knew what Gehenna was for - and it was not torture - it represented utter and humiliating destruction.

In summary, Jesus spoke about Gehenna *only* four times.



Tertullian, the master of torment, *The History of Hell, Hellfire Debunked*, John Roller

- The first really clear, really thorough-going writer who holds the modern position is a guy named Tertullian of Carthage, writing right around the border between the second century and the third - right around the year 200. He's the guy who first spelled out the theory that the souls of those who are unsaved are going to burn in hellfire for ever and ever and ever, never burning up, and he specified how this process works. He wrote it right down in detail. Every single cell of their body is going to be on fire and burn until it is burned up completely, and then it's immediately replaced by a newly created cell that will start burning and burn forever. He's got a very scientific description.*

Fourth. The future endless torment of the wicked, as set forth by Tertullian. A.D. 200-220.

Tertullian (A.D. 200-220) This father was originally a Pagan; by birth... and a lawyer by profession. He seems to have believed in the strictly endless punishment of the wicked, and to have argued against the doctrine of their annihilation, or, to use his own words, against the doctrine that "the wicked would be consumed, and not punished," that is, endlessly.

(It will be observed that just in the ratio the church departs, in time, from Christ, and becomes corrupt and heathenish, just in that ratio the punishment of the wicked increases in cruelty. Compare the first doctrine and date, A.D. 110, with the fourth, A. D. 220, when the abomination is complete.)



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Fred comments: I just can't get past the verses in the book of Revelation like this one in Chapter 20 or this one in chapter 21:8: *But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and the murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: this is the second death.* You can't spiritualize that away or say it means something else. It's very straightforward about the eternal destination of the lost.

We will address this in more detail on our June 25th Episode #1027: "Is the Hell of Christian Tradition Taught in the Bible? (Part III)."

Notice in Revelation 21:8 it says, *this is the second death*. If the fire in the garbage dump was meant to destroy and *this is the second death* which is utter destruction, the picture of fire here is also meant to destroy. That is why it is called *the second death*, not life with torture.

How prevalent is the "Gehenna teaching" after Jesus' ascension in the rest of the New Testament?

The fact that Jesus only spoke about Gehenna **four times** should really be a wake-up call.



Some may say that we left out the Rich Man and Lazarus story, to which we respond that Gehenna was not even mentioned in that story. More on this in Part III. What does the rest of the New Testament say about hell?

One would think it would be a teaching of absolute necessity so everyone would be on the same page, right?

))) After Tertullian, *The History of Hell, Hellfire Debunked*, John Roller

- *Tertullian of Carthage is the guy who taught that, and even after his time there were still other writers who held the biblical position. But the sad part of it is, his influence was very pervasive and more and more from his time on, you began to see the writers holding that position, and fewer and fewer writers holding the Conditionalist position. They never go away completely. As the early church continues on right up to the end of my book, the very last writer that I covered, who was writing all the way into the 300's now, Arnobius of Sicca, he still says, "I believe that the souls die and that when they're punished they're burning up and completely destroyed, that there is no immortality for the unsaved."*

Many on Facebook have said they believe in a burning hell because it is "church tradition." But there were those all through history who were buried by the overwhelming popularity and dramatics of the doctrine. It was popular, because when you can scare people you can get them to do what you want.



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Laila: This week I listened to your podcast on hell twice, just to make sure I understood it correctly. You covered the Egyptian, Greek and Romans versions of hell. For Part II, is it possible also that you cover Islam's version of hell? This would do a lot of service to former Muslim converts; myself included. When I was a Muslim, I was so scared to die because I didn't want to end up in hell. As a Christian, I do believe in the eternal hell for those who refuse to accept Jesus as their savior. So, if I understood you correctly, the unbelievers will be judged on Judgment Day by Jesus, but no one will be sent to the eternal furnace, right? **Right!** Anyway, your argument on hell makes a lot of sense. Thank you for opening my mind's eyes. God bless!

Fourth on the agenda

Getting a New Testament perspective on the teaching of hellfire.

- Jesus' ministry was for 3 ½ years. He mentioned Gehenna four times.
- The rest of the New Testament covers over 30 years (excluding Revelation) and 22 books.
- The rest of the New Testament was written by six authors (including Revelation.)

Let us now examine *all* of the Gehenna texts by the writers of the Gospels - *there is just one:*

James 3:5-6: (NASB) ⁵*So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!* ⁶*And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell **hell <1067>**.*

James is talking to followers of Christ who should know better and reminding them the fire of destruction that the tongue sets can eviscerate others the way Gehenna utterly destroys.

Luke 16's Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus says, *that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.*

Flame does not mean "fire;" it means "blaze" as in brightness. Every time that word *flame* is used in the New Testament, it is always used in the phrase *flame of fire*, except in this parable. Jesus literally took the fire out of it to make an illustration. He says something interesting about needing a drop of water on the tongue. James says *the tongue is a fire*. In the parable, Jesus is talking about the Pharisees saying and doing things that





rejected him which led to their own rejection from God. Their words have tormented. Give me water (truth) on my tongue.

Revelation does not mention Gehenna, but it does talk about a *lake of fire* to be addressed in Part III.



Why the silence throughout all of the New Testament on Gehenna if its meaning carries such dire and eternal consequences? Because it does not exist!

Here is the Apostle Paul bidding farewell to the Ephesian elders:

Acts 20:26-30: (NASB) ²⁶Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. ²⁷For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

There are no writings of Paul telling them about hell or hellfire even though he declared to us *the whole purpose of God*.

Was Paul not being truthful? Did he forget? Next, he gave a significant warning:

²⁸Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

We see in church history, after the apostles, how that happened with this doctrine.

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Chris adds: I have examined the posting on hell. And due to the many false interpretations, translations and traditions of men, the very idea of hell has been deeply ingrained in the minds of men. This doctrine slanders the Creator's name, plan and His justice. Men have made Him into a bloodthirsty, raging pagan deity when he isn't. So, I'm commending you guys with getting people to really think about what they truly believe and understand about that particular topic.

Total destruction is the biblical end for the incorrigible - both Old and New Testaments attest to this:

Acts 3:23: (KJV) And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be **destroyed <1842>** from among the people.

Destroyed: Strong's #1842, 1. to destroy out of its place, destroy utterly, to extirpate
1a. to destroy completely: wipe out; 1b. to pull up by the root; 2. to cut out by surgery

Matthew 7:13: (KJV) Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to **destruction <684>**, and many there be which go in there at.

Destroyed: Strong's #684: apoleia; ruin or loss (physical, spiritual or eternal)

Philippians 3:19: Whose end is **destruction <684>**, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame.



One final text that certainly could have (and when you think about it, should have) been an opportunity to proclaim the torment of hell if it did exist:

Romans 8:6: (KJV) *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

Finally, notice the contrast - death versus life and peace. It is simply death and it is *not* death and torture or death and flames. It is death - the end of life!

Hellfire as a doctrine is wrong according to Scripture. Study it and if you do not agree, respond to us and we will respond back to you.

*So, is the hell of Christian tradition taught in the Bible?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on June 18, 2018:
Are Some Sins Worse than Others?

Bonus material

A few observations and much reasoning lead to error; many observations and a little reasoning to truth. — Alexis Carrel

More details of Jesus' teachings using the imagery of Gehenna:

Matthew 10:28: *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 <622>** both soul and body in **hell <1067>**.*

Luke 12:4-5: (NASB) *⁴I say to you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. ⁵But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into **hell <1067>**; yes, I tell you, fear Him!*

- Who is being spoken to? What have they done or what could they potentially do?

Again, Jesus speaks to his disciples; this time it is about courage. They are going to go out and preach and will inevitably face opposition and even hostility. Jesus is giving them a lesson on living in an eternal perspective rather than a one human lifetime perspective.

- What is the consequence of the thoughts, words and/or actions in question?



The consequence is a simple comparison between having your life taken by men and ending a temporary life or having your life taken by God and ending it eternally in a FINAL DESTRUCTION!

Does the New Testament follow the Old in teaching about destruction?

Matthew 10:28 (above) uses a particular word in describing the consequence of Gehenna - destroy - what does this particular word mean?

Destroy: Strong's #622; apollumi: to destroy fully (reflexively, to perish, or lose), literally or figuratively

If we look at other ways it is used, we can more easily figure out its meaning. Some uses:

Matthew 2:13: *And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to **destroy** <622> him.*

Obviously, the meaning here is that of the destruction - not the torment of life.

Matthew 5:29: *And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should **perish** <622>, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

Though picture language, the obvious meaning is again total destruction!

Matthew 22:7: *But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and **destroyed** <622> those murderers, and burned up their city.*

This is the parable of the marriage feast - Jesus' meaning is again the destruction of life.

Matthew 26:52: *Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall **perish** <622> with the sword.*

It is all about dying and not about torture.

All of these examples are exactly in line with the Old Testament perspective:

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.

Scattered - driven away like smoke - perish, as wax melts before a fire.

Destruction - NOT TORTURE!

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: (ASV) ⁷and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, ⁸rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: ⁹who shall suffer punishment, even eternal **destruction** <3639> from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might,

Destruction: Strong's #3639; olethros; to destroy; a prolonged form; ruin, i.e. death, punishment

1 Corinthians 5:5: (KJV) *To deliver such an one unto Satan for the **destruction** <3639> of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*



The total destruction of Gehenna - reserved only for those who after full opportunity to accept, deny God. This is just, wise, and merciful, just as God is just, wise, and merciful!

More of Old Testament imagery showing the result of destruction for the incorrigible:

Wither and fade:

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

Be cut off, be no more:

Psalms 37:9-10: (NASB) ⁹*For 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.*

Perish - vanish like smoke:

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.*

Cut off:

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.*

Be blotted out of the book of life (to be blotted out you had to be there to begin with):

Psalms 69:24-28: (NASB) ²*Pour 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.*

Driven away like chaff on in the wind - they perish:

Psalms 1:4-6: (NASB) ⁴*The 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.*

One more quote from Thomas Thayer's Book regarding the concept of "being saved:"

(Source: "The Origin and History of the Doctrine of Endless Punishment" by Thomas B. Thayer, New and enlarged edition. Boston: Universalist Publishing House. 1881.)

But there is another fact, of great weight in this inquiry, and one worthy of all remembrance. The original words translated "save" and "salvation," if I have counted rightly, occur one hundred and fifty-seven times in the New Testament. Of these, nineteen refer to the healing of bodily infirmities; as when Jairus besought Christ to lay hands upon his daughter, "that she might be *healed*" [Mark 5:23] - literally, "saved" - thirty-five of these refer to deliverance from danger or death, as when the mocking Jews said of Jesus, "He saved others; let him save himself." [Luke 23:35]

The remaining one hundred and three examples refer to spiritual or Gospel salvation. And yet in not one of these texts is it said that Christ came to save the world, or any part of it, from endless punishment, or even from "hell." But it is said repeatedly, and emphatically, that he came expressly to save us from something quite different from this. How shall we explain this, if the doctrine be true? What shall we say of those, who, speaking by the Spirit of God in exposition of Gospel salvation, never state the case as it really is, but spend all their words on matters of comparatively trifling importance?

