

Is the Hell of Christian Tradition Taught in the Bible? (Part 1)

Deuteronomy 32:22: (KJV) For a fire is kindled in Mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.



It is called Hellfire. For many centuries the churches have taught that when sinners die they face a punishment of eternal torment and torture. Reading some of the descriptions of how this intense and endless torture works will make your skin crawl and your stomach turn. Yet, those who adhere to such teachings are firm in their belief that it is thoroughly biblical, and therefore entirely in line with God and His plan. But is it? Could God have contrived such a diabolical and heinous place, where screams of agony and relentless pain are the order of the day, now and forever? What if this teaching is NOT of God but rather

of Satan? What if, by understanding well-established facts and by keeping Bible Scriptures in context, it could be proven that what many churches have taught for centuries is one of the greatest misrepresentations of God the world has ever seen?

<u>History tends to repeat itself</u> unless, of course, we decide to learn from it. Today, we will lay out some history and primarily Old Testament texts in an attempt to show the origins and pathway of the hellfire teachings Christianity adopted.

Real and eternal, HELL: The Teaching of the Church Affirms the Existence of Hell and its Eternity, Father J. Corapi

• I have an obligation, you have an obligation to teach and live the truth faithfully. Hell is part of reality. Because we don't like the concept, we can't cavalierly dismiss it and pretend that it's not a reality. It is a reality. The teaching of the church (this is paragraph 1035 from The Catechism of the Catholic Church, a sure norm for teaching the faith, by the way, as the Holy Father says.) Paragraph 1035: "The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity."

We firmly agree with his statement, "Just because we don't like the concept, we can't cavalierly dismiss it..." We want to look at Scriptures with reason, logic and history, slowly building a case to present what we believe the Bible (not tradition or what we think) teaches.

God's first command and consequence:

Genesis 2:16-17: (Young's Literal Translation) ¹⁶And Jehovah God layeth a charge on the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden eating thou dost eat; ¹⁷and of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou dost not eat of it, for in the day of thine eating of it—dying thou dost die.

<u>Romans 6:23</u>: (NASB) For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.



Just as in Genesis, even 4,000 years later what God said is what He meant!



If God had an eternal torture plan in place for sinners, then why didn't He tell Adam? Hell is a fate worse than death. God would have been unjust and unloving to not warn Adam. Why no explanation of consequences beyond death?

Genesis 3:4-5: (KJV) ⁴And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: ⁵For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Satan directly contradicts God's consequence. He lies and says death will NOT be a consequence. The lie of "not dying" has taken hold of mankind. A hell of torment, in our respectful opinion, is a direct outgrowth of that lie.

We want to build a scriptural reasoning from the beginning forward. God built a foundation Jesus looked back on and believed in. If we find the foundation Jesus followed, we can get an understanding of Jesus' own teachings.

(Source: The Hell of Ancient Egypt by John Watson, touregypt.net) ... The principal sources for our knowledge of the Egyptian concept of hell are the Books of the Netherworld which are found inscribed on the walls of the royal tombs of the New Kingdom in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes, and then later on papyrus and other funerary objects belonging to commoners...

Ancient history proves Egyptian belief in the netherworld. This has a lot to do with the hell doctrine, as we will see.

Location and description, Duat - The Ancient Egyptian Underworld, Experience Ancient Egypt

 The ancient Egyptian religion was not standardized, and the different texts that explained different beliefs and practices were not considered absolute. They mixed and changed. Some were evolutions of older ones, and some just



(Source: Wikipedia) The Papyrus of Ani is a papyrus manuscript with cursive hieroglyphs and color illustrations created c. 1250 BCE, in the 19th dynasty of the New Kingdom of ancient Egypt. Egyptians compiled an individualized book for certain people upon their death, called the Book of Going Forth by Day, more commonly known as the Book of the Dead, typically containing declarations and spells to help the deceased in their afterlife. The Papyrus of Ani is the manuscript compiled for the Theban scribe Ani.

went in and out of popularity. And so, it was the same with the concept of the underworld. But for the sake of simplicity, let's take a look at the most prevalent belief about Duat. In ancient Egyptian cosmology, the earth was thought to be flat and oval-shaped and surrounded by oceans. Underneath it lay the vast expanse of the underworld, with the primordial waters of Nun running through it. Nun was the state of chaos that existed before creation. The landscape of Duat was similar to that of earth's but with a more malevolent flavor. There were trees and mountains and rivers, but also lakes of fires, dark caverns, evil spirits and serpents. The Papyrus of Ani has some very interesting depictions of it.



These writings are dated somewhere during the 18th Dynasty of Egypt which began when Moses was a young man, before he brought Israel out of Egypt. Such beliefs were probably in existence long before this.



Israel developed from a family to a nation in Egypt. They would have been familiar with Egyptian customs and beliefs, as they were there for hundreds of years. Once God led them out after the plagues, they were given - for the first time - a written Law clearly establishing their allegiance to God only.

How much of the Egyptian beliefs did the Israelites accept? We do not know, but we know they did build a golden calf (<u>Exodus 32</u>) - where would they have gotten that idea? Not from God. They would have been surrounded by the well-defined Egyptian thought process of an underworld.

How did God specifically teach His people the truths of life and death when surrounded by paganism?

Once this question is answered, it will give us a real understanding of how to read Scripture on these issues. Let's start by remembering that God delivered Israel from Egypt through ten plagues. Interestingly, these plagues were directed at many of the gods of Egypt. It seems that God was showing His people that HE was God and these other things were mere idolatry.

- Eternal and fiery, HELL: The Teaching of the Church Affirms the Existence of Hell and its Eternity, Father J. Corapi
 - Every now and then some well-meaning theologian, as he gets older, comes up with the conclusion that hell isn't eternal, that God could never do that. This is doctrinal: there is a hell, and it's forever. Immediately after death, the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell eternal fire. The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.

(Source: The Hell of Ancient Egypt by John Watson, touregypt.net, continued) The concept of hell in the ancient Egyptian religion is very similar to those of our modern religions. Those who were judged unfavorably faced a very similar fate to our modern concept of hell, and perhaps even more specifically to the more Middle Age concept of it as a specific region beneath the earth. For the damned, the entire, uncontrollable rage of the deity was directed against those who were condemned through their evils. They were tortured in every imaginable way and "destroyed", thus being consigned to nonexistence. They were deprived of their sense organs, were required to walk on their heads and eat their own excrement. They were burned in ovens and cauldrons and were forced to swim in their own blood, which Shezmu, the god of the wine press, squeezed out of them.



(1) The Calf Path Part 1, Sam Walter Foss

One day through the primeval wood, A calf walked home, as good calves should; But made a trail all bent askew, A crooked trail as all calves do. Since then three hundred years have fled, And, I infer, the calf is dead. But still he left behind his trail, And thereby hangs my moral tale. The trail was taken up next day, By a lone dog that passed that way. And then a wise bellwether sheep, Pursued the trail o'er vale and steep; And drew the flock behind him too, As good bellwethers always do.



(Source: Marion Webster Online Dictionary) Bellwether - one who takes the lead or initiative; leader



"cqbiblepodcast" Joshua wrote on our Facebook page: "I love your show, discovered it last week. I was listening to all your different archives on hell..."

Richard wrote: So this site "Christian Questions" is actually run by nonbelievers? So who runs it? Atheist, Muslims, what?

We are definitely believers, but those with a different opinion than the mainstream on this topic after text-by-text Bible study without preconceived notions.

With the Egyptian thinking in mind, we go to the first text of the Old Testament that some interpret as a reference to hellfire.

The following text was written between 1400-1500 BC:

Deuteronomy 32:21-22: (KJV) ²¹They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

This text quoted is in Romans 10:19-21 relating to the Gentiles coming to favor. This had fulfillment a long time after Moses wrote it.

²²For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell <7585>, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.

A fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell - but what will that fire do? Consume the earth. Reading further in Deuteronomy, there is no human torture described as going on below the earth.

Sheol: Strongs #7585 sheol, underworld, grave, hell, pit

The King James Version translates this word "grave" 31 times, "hell" 31 times and "pit" 3 times



The New Testament quoting of this text relates to the casting off of Israel (See <u>Matthew 23:38</u> and <u>Luke 13:35</u> - *your house is left unto you desolate*), and therefore may be pointing to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 - the final act of casting Israel off from favor. (Although note, God prophesied Israel would return to favor in our time and it has.)

Does *Sheol* refer to the netherworld of pagan belief? In the Old Testament, consequences were pronounced in *this* life, not after people died.

No, and proof lies in the further context of the text (see the Bonus Material) and also how the word was used elsewhere:

Numbers 16:31-33: (NASB) ³¹As he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open; ³²and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with their possessions. ³³So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.

<u>Numbers 16:33</u>: (KJV) They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

Notice the New American Standard Version for <u>verse 33</u> does not translate *Sheol* into English. The King James Version says they *went down alive into the pit...they perished* - the consequence of their rebellion was death, not eternal torment. The earth opened up, they fell into the pit, the earth closed and they died.

Was Job talking about the same pit?

<u>Job 14:13</u>: (NASB) ¹³Oh that You would hide me in Sheol, that You would conceal me until Your wrath returns to You, that You would set a limit for me and remember me!

What is Job asking for? To go into the grave, to die. Did he want to be hid in a burning hell? Remember, this is the same word, *Sheol*, as was used in <u>Deuteronomy 32:22</u>. This Hebrew word means to "cover over."

Job's writings were around 1600-1700 BC; before Moses.



"cqbiblepodcast" Steven wrote: The "no hell" idea is typically a Jehovah's Witness idea...After a Catholic upbringing and 30+ years

an Evangelical, I finally realized it was the hell idea that infected most all of Christendom. It causes enormous spiritual and psychological trauma and is the common factor in the surfacing of atheism and agnosticism in Western Civilization...hell creates logical barriers to a God whose nature is love and forces a maelstrom of circular reasoning in Protestantism's attempts to reconcile love and "free" salvation. Pastors, preachers and teachers just don't see the illogical traps they're using to get around hell...

Today is a discussion in taking Scriptures in context and understanding history. We are *not* Jehovah's Witnesses. One of the primary sources for history was a book by a well-respected Bible commentator named Thomas Thayer, written in 1881. (The Jehovah's Witnesses did not come into being until 1931.)



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

SECTION I: DESCRIPTION OF THE HEATHEN HELL: Among the ancient pagans, the belief in a hell of some sort was very general, if not universal. It was known by various names, as *Orcus*, *Erebus*, *Tartarus*, and *Infernus* or *Inferna*, whence our expression "infernal regions," etc. The views current respecting it were different at different periods, and among different nations, according to the degree of civilization and the genius of the people. What I shall offer on this point will have respect mostly to the Romans, Greeks and Egyptians.

<u>Its location</u>: It was supposed to be as far below the earth (or as deep down in it), as the heavens are above it, Hesiod, the Greek poet, who lived 850 BC, (around the time of Elijah) is very precise in his statement, and says a mass of iron would be nine days falling from heaven to earth, and nine more in falling from earth to hell. So say also Apollodorus, Virgil and others.



Observations:

- God never warned Adam of sin leading to torment the consequence was simply death.
- Egyptian culture (and others) before Moses' time clearly had graphic written descriptions of a "netherworld."
- At its beginning, 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.
 Not one word about hell!

Did God add to or change what He told Israel about life and death as time went on?

Our last historical reference was to a Greek poet who lived around 850 BC. This moves us forward in time over 600 years from the previous references. While Israel did not have much to do with Greek culture, they were by this time steeped in the mire of Canaanite culture and fighting what seemed to be a never-ending battle against idolatry.

This is a key to understanding biblical truth. What was Israel fighting against? How did God support them in that fight? Did they fall? Did they stand? What did the prophets say? What were the consequences? We must ask all of these questions (and more!) if we want to find biblical truth.

To just take a verse out of context and assume it means one thing is not correct. Put history and biblical truth next to each other both inside and outside of Judaism.



Rewind (1)) The Calf Path Part 2, Sam Walter Foss

And from that day, o'er hill and glade. Through those old woods a path was made. And many men wound in and out, And dodged, and turned, and bent about; And uttered words of righteous wrath, Because 'twas such a crooked path. But still they followed - do not laugh -The first migrations of that calf. And through this winding wood-way stalked, Because he wobbled when he walked. This forest path became a lane, That bent, and turned, and turned again. This crooked lane became a road. Where many a poor horse with his load, Toiled on beneath the burning sun. And traveled some three miles in one. And thus, a century and a half, They trod the footsteps of that calf.



While Greeks were dropping iron anvils down to the netherworld, Elijah was challenging the ascendency of Baal in Israel at the hands of Ahab and Jezebel.

(Source: gotquestions.org) Who was Baal? According to Canaanite mythology, Baal was the son of El, the chief god, and Asherah, the goddess of the sea. Baal was considered the most powerful of all gods, eclipsing El, who was seen as rather weak and ineffective. In various battles Baal defeated Yamm, the god of the sea, and Mot, the god of death and the underworld. Baal's sisters/consorts were Ashtoreth, a fertility goddess associated with the stars, and Anath, a goddess of love and war. The Canaanites worshiped Baal as the sun god and as the storm god — he is usually depicted holding a lightning bolt — who defeated enemies and produced crops.



How did God address the Baal issue?

- There was no rain for several years. Baal was a storm god, yet they had no rain, showing Baal's weakness.
- Rain only came again when Elijah said it would, showing God's ascendancy.
- God sent fire down from heaven to consume Elijah's sacrifice when Baal, the lightning bolt bearer, could do nothing, showing God's miraculous and unmatched power.

God continued to address other gods by showing His power in areas where they claimed power.

God showed Israel He was different from all the other "gods."

Their belief system was different than all people around them. We believe this belief in torment that was in all of these pagan worlds, Canaanites included - had an "underworld" belief as well. Israel did not have such a belief.



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

SECTION II: THE HEATHEN INVENTED THE DOCTRINE OF ENDLESS PUNISHMENT - SHOWN BY THEIR OWN CONFESSIONS. ...all the early lawgivers claim to have had communications with the gods, who aided them in the preparation of their codes. Zoroaster claimed to have received his laws from a divine source; Lycurgus obtained his from Apollo, Minos of Crete from Jupiter, Numa of Rome from Egeria, Zaleucus from Minerva, etc. The object of this sacred fraud was to impress the minds of the multitude with religious awe and command a more ready obedience on their part.

Pagan history claimed to receive beliefs from divine sources, which made the people afraid and submissive. Fear drives obedience. Zoroastrianism arose in the eastern region of the ancient Persian Empire, when the religious philosopher Zoroaster simplified the pantheon of early Iranian gods into two opposing forces, in the 7th century BCE, around the time of Jeremiah.

One of the great tragedies of life is adopting the bad and even evil habits of others simply because they produce results. Israel was an island with one benevolent God. They were surrounded by restless seas of multi-god traditions, superstitions and sensation that whipped people into shape. God, however, would continue to keep high and just standards. This is why Israel was constantly told to be separate and have nothing to do with the pagans.

- Two roads, HELL: The Teaching of the Church Affirms the Existence of Hell and its Eternity, Father J. Corapi
 - There is no absolute happiness and peace until we achieve our supernatural end, which is heaven. That's all there is to it. There is one reason we are placed on the face of the earth heaven, beatitude, eternal salvation, but the bottom line is this: at the end when it's over, we're going to go down any number of roads, but they're all going to converge on one or two roads. At the end of one road is the beautiful, merciful face of Christ. At the end of the other road is the horrific face of Satan, and at either destination you will hear these words, "Mine. All mine."

Here is a horrible but necessary example to prove how different God was (and is) from pagan deities:

<u>Jeremiah 19:1-7</u>: (NASB) ¹Thus says the LORD, Go and buy a potter's earthenware jar, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests. ²Then go out to the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is by the entrance of the potsherd gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you, ³and say, Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold I am about to bring a calamity upon this place, at which the ears of everyone that hears of it will tingle.

Israel had again walked away from God and would experience His wrath.

⁴Because they have forsaken Me and have made this an alien place and have burned sacrifices in it to other gods, that neither they nor their forefathers nor the kings of Judah had ever known, and because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent ⁵and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter My mind;

Israel was sacrificing their live children to Baal. How much more inhumane can you get than to sacrifice your children by burning them alive?



⁶therefore, behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather 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; (Targum = spoken paraphrases or explanations of the Jewish Scriptures a rabbi would give in the common language of the listeners) 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 Jeremiah 19:11.

It became a burial place. How was God's deep anger expressed at those who mercilessly took innocent lives for the sake of an idol? They were punished and eventually cast off for their idolatry.

He prophesies their eventual downfall after their rejection of Jesus in AD 70:

⁷I 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.

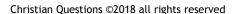
The calamity was in this life; God never told them an afterlife would involve punishment.



- God DID bring them shame and mark the place of this sin as one to remember.
- God DID bring them the severity of punishment specifically stated in the context of THIS life, not an afterlife.
- God did NOT even hint at any afterlife punishment.
- God DID, once again, maintain His ascendency over heathen gods by never even considering what those gods were attributed to doing.



The same "Valley of Slaughter" was the place Jesus called "Gehenna" in the New Testament. Some who believe in everlasting torment point to this and say it is the place where God will torture people. But this was the place where God said, "No more!" because of what had happened here. Is it reasonable to assume Jesus took a Godproclaimed symbol of utter destruction and shame and relabeled it God-sanctioned torture? God Himself said such burning alive never entered His mind! Jesus talked about the Valley of Hinnom because of its history. History shows us that God was not a God of eternal torment.





God is consistent in His character. Does the Old Testament back up that character?

We often hear about those who see the Bible as a tale of two gods and to a degree we can understand why. The Old Testament is far harsher with its accounts of wars and pestilences than the New Testament. That being said, would you not think the message of hell's torment would be a front-and-center Old Testament warning? The fact it is not should cause us to question the validity of the teaching.

Overlaying history with the Bible shows us what was happening both inside and outside of Israel and what happened when those separate beliefs collided. When God dealt with that collision, the consequences were always in this life.

The Calf Path Part 3, Sam Walter Foss

The years passed on in swiftness fleet, The road became a village street; And this, before men were aware, A city's crowded thoroughfare; And soon the central street was this, Of a renowned metropolis; And men two centuries and a half, Trod in the footsteps of that calf. Each day a hundred thousand rout, Followed the zigzag calf about; And o'er his crooked journey went, The traffic of a continent. A hundred thousand men were led, By one calf near three centuries dead. They followed still his crooked way, And lost one hundred years a day; For thus such reverence is lent. To well-established precedent.



We do believe in hell, meaning the grave, death. We do not see where the Bible supports the meaning of a burning place of eternal torment. We reviewed the Hebrew and Greek words from texts that could be perceived as a burning hell in our three-part series, "Do the Fires of Hell Come from God?" Search our website for Episodes 869, 876 and 881.

A few more Old Testament Scriptures that could potentially get stretched to fit into hell's teaching:

<u>Isaiah 34:8-10</u>: (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 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.

Here is another prophecy; this time it is pointed to the future Day of Judgment. Notice how the imagery has nothing to do with a netherworld place that collects souls for torment. Rather, it has to do with a <u>specific time</u> set aside for a <u>specific judgment</u>. This contradicts the notion that when a person dies they go to hell and suffer. A day of vengeance - a specific future time.



For more on this topic, please see May 8, 2017, CQ Episode 969: "Will God's Vengeance Squash Us Like Bugs?"

Revelation quotes this Isaiah text:

Isaiah 34:10 (ASV)	Revelation 14:11 (ASV)
"the smoke	"the smoke of
thereof shall go	their torment
up for ever"	goeth up for
	ever and ever"

We can understand the Revelation text more clearly by understanding its source. (The memory of evil, sin and death will be an eternal reminder of unrighteousness.)

<u>Isaiah 66:22-24</u>: (NASB) ²²For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me, declares the LORD, So your offspring and your name will endure. ²³And 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.) 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.

Corpses - There is no torment or torture here, just a terribly sad and agelasting reminder of the destruction of those who ultimately stand against God.

<u>Isaiah 38:17-19</u>: (NASB) ¹⁷Lo, for my own welfare I had great bitterness; It is You who has kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back. ¹⁸For Sheol cannot thank You, death cannot praise You; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your faithfulness. ¹⁹It is the living who give thanks to You, as I do today; a father tells his sons about Your faithfulness.

There is still no mention of torment as a warning; the only reference is to silence.

Romans 6:23: (KJV) For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Death - Life. This gives us no sense of anything in between.

The Old Testament covered the history of mankind from creation to 400 years before Christ, about a 4,000-year span of time. In those 4,000 years of Bible history, the idea of a burning hell is simply NEVER addressed! The New Testament covers less than 100 years of history.



Is it reasonable to assume that God withheld such an important eternal "truth" from His creation for 4,000 years?



We do not believe it is reasonable to assume that God would allow paganism to more clearly understand His plan for life and death than His own people. Would God have withheld the "true" consequence of sin from Adam? Noah? Moses? Isaiah? Jeremiah? All of the prophets? What God said in the Old Testament to those who sinned against Him (mainly Israel) was that consequences would come in their lifetimes on earth. Paganism tells a totally different story.

The Old Testament is utterly silent on the teaching of hellfire. The next place we need to go in history is the 400 years between the Old and New Testaments that has no biblical history. Here lie HUGE keys to understanding.

(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 IV. The Jews Borrowed the Doctrine from the Heathen: 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.

We can predict what is going to happen: Every time Israel became idolatrous, God stood up against idolatry and that particular "god," showing His dominance. They would be punished, then or through subsequent generations. They kept falling away from godliness - human nature.

What condition did the 400 years of prophetic silence before the New Testament leave Israel in?



This period of time ends up being incredibly important when we examine the growth of the hellfire doctrine. We have already seen that teaching to be prevalent and widespread outside of Jewish thinking, and we have seen God's countermeasures whenever it got close. The problem is, whenever there is no prophet in the land the people tend to get lazy and draw away from God.



(1) The Calf Path Part 4, Sam Walter Foss

A moral lesson this might teach, Were I ordained and called to preach; For men are prone to go it blind, Along the calf-paths of the mind; And work away from sun to sun, To do what other men have done. They follow in the beaten track, And out and in, and forth and back, And still their devious course pursue, To keep the path that others do. They keep the path a sacred groove, Along which all their lives they move. But how the wise old wood gods laugh, Who saw the first primeval calf! Ah! many things this tale might teach -But I am not ordained to preach.



We can get stuck in tradition that brings us to a certain conclusion.



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Richard wrote: No hell? Well, that's a lie from Satan himself. What denomination is the group that oversees Christian Questions?

We would answer, it is important to look at pagan history and line it up against Old Testament history to see the dramatic differences. In those 4,000 years, God never explained to His chosen people that eternal torment was the destiny for sinners, but the pagans knew all about it. How could that be so?

Christian Questions is non-denominational. We try to adhere closely and carefully to the word of God. We try very hard to be scriptural and honest in our study.

One verse of the prophecy of Malachi:

<u>Malachi 4:4</u>: (NASB) ⁴Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.

Remember the law of Moses My servant - there would be a quiet time of silence coming for 400 years - they needed to hold on to what they were taught.



Joshua asks: I was reading <u>2 Peter 2:4</u>, "God threw the angels that rebelled into hell," but the Greek word is not hades, it is tartarus, which is lower than hades. What does this mean?

We are going to cover this in Part 2 when we deal specifically with the New Testament.



Joshua also asks: I'm wondering about the furnace that the tares among the wheat will be thrown into, is this the same as the judgment of God?

Furnace of fire has nothing to do with hellfire. Jesus in <u>Matthew 13:42</u> is quoting from <u>Isaiah 21:8-9</u>. See the Bonus Material for more on this.





"cqbiblepodcast"

Why does Christ refer so much to hell, then? It is mentioned far more times than heaven. I struggle with the concept of predestination and election, but I accept it as truth.

Jesus did not talk about hell more than he did about heaven. It is easy to look up all the times Jesus used the word *heaven* and the phrase *kingdom of heaven*. His references to *hell* have to be separated into categories, because all the "hells" he was referring to were not the same thing. Part 2 of this podcast will deal with this question in great detail.

For more on the topic of predestination, please see November 11, 2011, CQ Episode 683: "Who Gets Elected? - By the Spirit, That Is!"

(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 IV. The Jews Borrowed the Doctrine from the Heathen, continued: ...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.

During this time, we can note the great detail with which this hellfire teaching was explained, as the Greek culture of knowledge was rising:

Polybius was a Greek historian of the Hellenistic Period noted for his work, *The Histories*, which covered the period of 264-146 BC in detail.



<u>Polybius</u>: 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."

Here is the last chapter of the last book of the Old Testament - notice the graphic warning:

<u>Malachi 4:1:</u> (NASB) For 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.

A FUTURE day of judgment, using a *furnace of fire* (not the underworld) as a SYMBOL of judgment. See the Bonus Material for more on this point. Jesus would later use this picture language in <u>Matthew 13:42</u>. Once again, God delivers judgment within a timeframe and NOT for eternity.



Publius Vergilius Maro (October 15, 70 BC - September 21, 19 BC), usually called Virgil or Vergil in English, was an ancient Roman poet of the Augustan period. He is known for three major works of Latin literature, the *Eclogues* (or

Bucolics), the Georgics, and the epic Aeneid. A number of minor poems, collected in the Appendix Vergiliana, are sometimes attributed to him.

Of the Punishments: Virgil (B.C. Time frame) Brief account of these in the book already quoted from [Aeneid]: "And now wild shouts, and wailings dire, and shrieking infants swell the dreadful choir."

Virgil: "Here sits in bloody robes the Fury fell, by night and day to watch the gates of hell. Here you begin terrific groans to hear, and sounding lashes rise upon the ear, on every side the damned their fetters grate, and curse, 'mid clanking chains, their wretched fate."

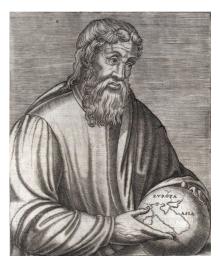
Malachi 4:2-3: (NASB) ²But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. ³You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing, says the LORD of hosts.

Next, a SYMBOL of Jesus - *sun of righteousness* - right will inevitably win this battle.

Your choice, HELL: The Teaching of the Church Affirms the Existence of Hell and its Eternity, Father J. Corapi

• God is a merciful Savior. Satan is the master terrorist from whence all horrors come. One of two roads. All roads, 10,000 times of 10,000 roads, they all lead to one or two roads: heaven - hell. And it's your choice. Now that may sound like old time preaching, and it is, but it is old time truth, and it has not changed since the beginning. That's the way that it is. The affirmations of sacred Scripture, sacred tradition and magisterial teaching are 100 percent certain on these very, very simple matters of faith. There is judgment, there is purgatory, there is heaven and there is hell.

This next example is just before John the Baptist and Jesus appear on the scene:



Strabo (64/63 BC - c. AD 24), a Greek geographer, philosopher and historian.

<u>Strabo</u>: 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."



Seems hard to believe that Israel could swallow such heresy. Just look around us now and ask how much anti-biblical morality we accept as "normal" and "excusable" without even thinking!

...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.

Malachi 4:5-6: (NASB) ⁵Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. ⁶He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.

History HAS repeated itself! Just as in the time of Elijah when the people of Israel were EMBRACING the heinous rituals of Baal worship, so too when John the Baptist was to come on the scene, the people were AGAIN embracing the heinous rituals of pagan mythology. We believe that has happened to a lot of Christianity today.

It is about being honest about the integrity of Scripture and the honesty of looking at history. Put them together and we can see a clear story that hellfire is not in the Bible.

Part II will cover:

- Jesus' teachings IN LIGHT of what we have established relating to the Old Testament.
- Historical references to the post-apostolic era showing that the hellfire doctrine WAS NOT a part of the ORIGINAL Gospel message.
- Tracing the entrance of hellfire into Christianity.

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 May 21, 2018: As a Christian, Should You Just "Be Yourself"?



BONUS MATERIAL

Some say that the Old Testament does have reference to hell because of the book of Maccabees. I am not familiar with the book, so I cannot speak about its contents with authority. However, because it is NOT held to be part of the Holy Bible, (though some denominations claim it to be) we do not consider it on par with the Holy writings. One interesting side note - Maccabees was written during the 400 years of prophetic silence. I find it interesting that its origin is precisely during the time when history tells us that Jewish thinking and theology was severely corrupted.

(Source: Wikipedia) Maccabees is a book of the Bible written in Hebrew by a Jewish author after the restoration of an independent Jewish kingdom by the Hasmonean dynasty, about the latter part of the 2nd century BC. The original Hebrew is lost and the most important surviving version is the Greek translation contained in the Septuagint. The book is held as canonical scripture by the Catholic, Orthodox, and Oriental Orthodox churches (except for the Orthodox Tewahedo), but not by Anglican and Protestant denominations. Such Protestants consider it to be an apocryphal book (see also Deuterocanon). In modern-day Judaism, the book is often of great historical interest, but has no official religious status.

One more quote from Thayer:

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

Egypt has been called the "Mother of Superstitions," and her whole religious history shows the propriety of the appellation. Greeks and Romans, Lawgivers and Philosophers, acknowledge their indebtedness to her in this respect, and freely credit her with the original invention of the fables and terrors of the invisible world; though it must be allowed that they have improved somewhat upon the hints given, and shown a wonderful inventive faculty of their own.

A little comparative thinking between the Old and New Testaments

The New Testament word for hell is hades, Strongs #86. We can see that the word was translated from the Old Testament by confirm that the same word was chosen.

Old Testament sheol (hell/grave/pit - covered over) = New Testament hades (hell)

These examples are undeniable links between sheol and hades:



<u>Psalm 16:10</u>: (NIV) because you will not abandon me to the <u>grave <7585</u>, <u>sheol</u>>, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

Acts 2:27: (NIV) because you will not abandon me to the grave <86, hades>, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

Sheol/hades has no connotation of torture. It literally means the grave, being buried.

This shows who the whole death experience will be put to death by God in His coming peaceable kingdom on earth:

<u>Isaiah 25:8</u>: (NIV) He will swallow up <u>death <4194></u> forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; He will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.



Hosea 13:14: (NIV) I will ransom them from the power of the grave <7585, sheol>; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, <7585, sheol>, is your destruction? I will have no compassion.

1 Corinthians 15:54-55: (NIV) ⁵⁴When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: Death has been swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death <86, hades>, is your sting?

Remember the Jeremiah Scriptures we reviewed where children were being sacrificed? That same allocation comes up in Jesus' teaching:

Matthew 5:29-30: (NASB) ²⁹If 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 <1067>. ³⁰If 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>.

Hell: Strongs #1067, geenna (gheh'-en-nah); of Hebrew origin; valley of (the son of) Hinnom

(Source: Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary) What is "Gehenna" - The Valley of Hinnom: 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. When the wind blew from that direction over the city, its awfulness was quite evident.

If God could not ever consider the torture from Jeremiah's day, what would make us think that Jesus is using that very place to depict torment?

Romans 6:23: (KJV) For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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

Destroyed: Strongs #1842, to destroy out of its place, destroy utterly, to extirpate

extirpate:

1a. to destroy completely: wipe out

1b. to pull up by the root;

2. to cut out by surgery

Parable of the Wheat and the Tares - this parable adds another dimension:

<u>Matthew 13:37-43:</u> (KJV) ³⁷He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; ³⁸The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; ³⁹The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. ⁴⁰As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. ⁴¹The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; ⁴²And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

What is this *furnace of fire*? It is the great time of trouble described in Daniel 12:1.

Here is how we know:

<u>Psalms 21:8-9</u>: (NASB) ⁸Your hand will find out all your enemies; Your right hand will find out those who hate you. ⁹You will make them as a fiery oven in the time of your anger; the LORD will swallow them up in His wrath, and fire will devour them.



Malachi 4:1: (NASB) For 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.

This parable is specifically an end of the age picture as shown by <u>verse 40</u> and the furnace of fire:

- Refers to separating out the false Christian systems at the end of the Gospel Age.
- The *tares* (false systems) are DESTROYED in fire not tortured.
- This is the furnace of fire of the great time of trouble, not Gehenna, which is the second death.
- The weeping, etc. refers to the anger and lamenting at being exposed as false.
- Pre-Judgment Day (see <u>verse 43</u>) and no allusion to eternal torment just destruction.

More context on the first text we spoke about regarding the idea of hellfire:

Notice how God's retribution is all on the earth and in this life - no thoughts or descriptions of any netherworld at all:

Deuteronomy 32:15-33: (NASB) ¹⁵But Jeshurun (Israel) grew fat and kicked— You are grown fat, thick, and sleek- Then he forsook God who made him and scorned the Rock of his salvation. ¹⁶They made Him jealous with strange gods; with abominations they provoked Him to anger. ¹⁷They sacrificed to demons who were not God, to gods whom they have not known, new gods who came lately, whom your fathers did not dread. ¹⁸You neglected the Rock who begot you, and forgot the God who gave you birth. ¹⁹The LORD saw this, and spurned them because of the provocation of His sons and daughters. ²⁰Then He said, I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be; for they are a perverse generation, sons in whom is no faithfulness. ²¹They 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, ²²For 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. ²³I will heap misfortunes on them; I will use My arrows on them. ²⁴They 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. ²⁵Outside the sword will bereave, and inside terror—Both young man and virgin, the nursling with the man of gray hair, ²⁶I would have said, I will cut them to pieces, I will remove the memory of them from men, ²⁷Had I not feared the provocation by the enemy, that their adversaries would misjudge, that they would say, Our hand is triumphant, and the LORD has not done all this. ²⁸For they are a nation lacking in counsel, and there is no understanding in them. ²⁹Would that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would discern their future! ³⁰How could one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had given them up? ³¹Indeed their rock is not like our Rock, even our enemies themselves judge this. ³²For their vine is from the vine of Sodom, and from the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of poison, their clusters, bitter. ³³Their wine is the venom of serpents, and the deadly poison of cobras.



The 10 Plagues - Jehovah Versus the Gods of Egypt

	PLAGUE	GODS OF EGYPT	INTERESTING NOTES
1	WATER TURNED TO BLOOD Exodus 7:14-25	Khnum - Guardian of river's source. Hapi - Spirit of the Nile. Osiris - Nile was his bloodstream.	Duplicated by the Egyptians. Occurs in Goshen where Israelites lived. Dead fish — putrid smell
2	FROGS Exodus 8:1-15	Hapi Heqt Both related to fertility	Duplicated by the Egyptians Occurs in Goshen where Israelites lived.
3	LICE Exodus 8:16-19	Not duplicated by the Egyptians Occurs in Goshen where Israelites lived. Attributed to the "finger of God."	
4	FLIES Exodus 8:20-32	God now makes a separation between the Egyptians and the Israelites. No more plagues will come upon the Israelites.	
5	DISEASE ON CATTLE Exodus 9:1-7	Ptah • Mnevis • Hathor • Amon	
6	BOILS Exodus 9:8-12	Sekhmet - Egyptian goddess of Epidemics Serapis Imhotep Egyptian gods of healing.	Affects physical bodies. Pharaoh's magicians cannot even appear in court.
7	HAIL Exodus 9:13-35	Nut - Egyptian sky goddess. Isis & Seth - Egyptian agriculture deities. Shu - Egyptian god of the atmosphere.	Historical uniqueness for such a storm in Egypt. Pharaoh confesses his sin but later changes his mind.
8	LOCUSTS Exodus 10:1-20	Serapia - Egyptian deity protector from Locusts Pharaoh offers a compromise. The compromise is rejected. Pharaoh again confesses his sin.	
9	DARKNESS Exodus 10:21-29	Pe • Amon-re • Aten • Atum • Horus Thoth - Egyptian moon god. Begyptian sun gods. • Dark in Egypt at midday. • Apparently light was still provided for the Israelites in Goshen.	
10	DEATH OF FIRSTBORN Exodus 12:29-36	This plague was a judgment on all of Egypt's gods, including Pharaoh himself. In Exodus 1, Pharaoh had killed the sons of Israel. Now the Lord kills the firstborn sons of the Egyptians (Exodus 11-12). Pharaoh will now let Israel go. He will later loose his army to death in the Red Sea (Exodus 14:4-31).	



The Plagues and the Gods of Egypt

PLAGUE	REFERENCE	POSSIBLE EGYPTIAN DEITY DIRECTED AGAINST	
NILE TURNED TO BLOOD	7:14-25	 Khnum: guardian of the Nile Hapi: spirit of the Nile Osiris: Nile was bloodstream 	
FROGS	8:1-15	Heqt: form of frog; god of resurrection	
LICE	8:16-19	Uncertain; perhaps attack on Egyptian priests	
FLIES	8:20-32	Uatchit: a god who manifested himself as a fly	
MURRAIN (DISEASE ON THE CATTLE)	9:1-7	 Hathor: mother-goddess; form of cow Apis: bull of god Ptah; symbol of fertility Mnevis: sacred bull of Heliopolis 	
BOILS	9:8-12	Imhotep: god of medicine	
HAIL	9:13-35	 Nut: sky goddess Isis: goddess of life Seth: protector of crops 	
LOCUSTS	10:1-20	 Isis: goddess of life Seth: protector of crops 	
DARKNESS	10:21-29	Re, Aten, Atum, Horus: all sun gods of sorts	
DEATH OF FIRST BORN	11:1-12:36	The deity of Pharaoh: Osiris, the giver of life	

