

EVERLASTING PUNISHING IS TAUGHT BY JESUS IN THE GOSPELS

Lots of Christians surmise that Jesus was such a wonderful guy that he would not have even countenanced teaching a doctrine like that about sinners going to be left in agony forever. If they mutilate the gospel doctrine that he did teach this then they are left with a Jesus they have made up and not one that can be called the real Jesus in any real sense. If you throw away the gospels you have to throw their Christ away as well.

In John 5:29, Jesus informs us regarding his conviction that the dead sinners will rise again to judgment and condemnation. God would not resurrect them just to destroy them or to air their dirty laundry before the saints for he could do this without bringing them back from the dead. He must plan to torment them. When he raises them to make them suffer it is clear that he wants to punish every sin. He cannot annihilate them as long as they wallow in rebelling which will be forever for them.

Jesus stressed the need to repent fast and warned about the judgment. Would he have done these things if he had not had a Hell for sinners forever in mind to warn us about? If the world was going to suffer repentance would not save you from it so he was on about something that was waiting for us after death. It was something that repentance could not save us from. If you went to Hell and could get out by saying sorry there would be no need for the sense of urgency that circulates all through the teaching of Jesus. Jesus risked his life to preach which proves that he did believe in Hell. The liberal Christian fantasy of a Jesus who did not preach everlasting condemnation is just that: a fantasy.

Jesus told parables to illustrate his doctrine that anybody who was not prepared to meet him would be cast away from his presence and that their pain and loneliness would be intense. He spoke of the foolish virgins who went to the dealers to buy oil so that they could watch for the master for their lamps were going out and who came back to find they were closed out of the wedding for not being ready. They all cry and weep but he ignores them instead of telling them to repent showing that they can no longer repent and end their sorrow (Matthew 25). If they could repent some of them at least would do it. And why cry and weep so much if you can escape the pain? It can be argued that they did repent when they went off to the dealers but God had decreed that it was too late. He also declared that anybody who did not develop his power to love God would be cast out into darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 24:50, 51). The miserable souls cannot repent of the sin that excuses them from God for if they could they would. God must have done something to them so that they cannot do it. It only takes a minute of such sorrow to show people how much they need God but when these are said to be in such pain it shows that God is no longer interested in restoring them to his friendship. This shows that their despair will never ever lighten. Eternal punishment includes eternal despair.

In the story of the sheep and the goats, in Matthew 25, Jesus says he will send the goats to Hell for not clothing the naked so it is not hateful obnoxious monstrous people he is talking about. You don't have to be totally bad to get sent off to everlasting punishment. Remember why he chose sheep and goats to illustrate the point. Sheep and goats are closely related and similar. The goats are ordinary people.

Jesus predicted that on judgement day all those goats, those who were not kind enough to others for nobody can be completely unkind, would go into “never-ending punishment [kolasin aioonion]” (Matthew 25:46 – my version). The Greek word, derived from kolasis which is translated punishment does not mean annihilation though some say it does. It appears in 1 John 4:18 which says that “fear makes you restrained [or punished]” (my version) and cannot mean annihilation here – note the present tense. Earlier in the same sentence, Jesus spoke of “never-ending life [zoozeen aioonion]” meaning everlasting happiness in Heaven. If the punishment ends so does the life of Heaven so we ought to take the word never-ending (aioonion) literally. Annihilation is not a punishment but a kind of reward for there is nothing to dread about ceasing to exist so it is crazy to suppose that the punishment is cessation of existence. Annihilation means treating the worst sinner the same as the not-so-bads.

Jesus will say to the unjust, “Begone from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41). The fire puts out of existence or it torments or both. God would not keep the fire lit after it has destroyed the wicked and eradicated evil for the saved cannot sin for they are too happy to and don't need the reminder. God does not need a fire to destroy the wicked. So when Jesus said the fire is everlasting it must be maintained for the purpose of tormenting sinners. This sentence was uttered at a most solemn moment so it is absurd to say that Jesus is speaking in symbols. Can you imagine a judge sentencing a man to death and saying that he meant he wanted the man put in jail only which he considers to be a living death?

Surely if God does not need a fire to destroy the wicked he does not need a fire to torment them with either! Yes he would if he intends to use the fire as a form of torture! It's up to him.

Jesus called them cursed. Cursed by whom? He is cursing them. He is wishing evil on them. If people are so bad that they have to be destroyed then you are not getting your own back on them but doing the right thing. You wouldn't curse them or declare them cursed. You would if you are consigning them to everlasting punishment. Curse is very strong and Jesus says "be gone from me. They go to a torment prepared for Satan and his angels. There is no room in any of this for a Hell that for some at least is just as bad as an eternal mild toothache.

Some say there is a contrast between everlasting life and everlasting punishment meaning that the latter must represent death. But then as now people who had a hard time of it were said to have no life. That could be the meaning of the contrast and it probably is for it is more natural to use the word death than punishment when you mean annihilation. Jesus said this punishment is fire meant for the Devil and his angels. When God needs a fire though he can destroy without it we see a hint that the fire is not just for destruction but for tormenting. Since some think the fire was prepared for the Devil and his angels at the end of the world it is said that it was because that is the time they will be put out of existence. But the Devil and his angels don't have bodies so the fire must be for tormenting them. It is not fire as we know it but a magic fire and therefore one that could torment forever. Jesus never said the fire would be made at the end of the world.

When the fire is prepared for the Devil and his angels though it was known that there would be plenty of human sinners to go there it implies something. It infers that its purpose is tormenting punishment. How do we know? The fire was made before the world began for the Devil and his angels were around then. The Devil and his angels for whom it was prepared were thrown in then. It was made for them at the start. There were no people made yet which does not exclude God intending to throw any people who were as bad in later. But since Satan and his angels are alive now according to the gospels it follows that the fire is for torturing for they are still alive in it.

The Christians who say that we exclude ourselves from God's presence if we go to Hell are lying. They know from their Bibles how Jesus said that God and the bridegroom meaning himself would have them locked out and excluded. It is not a matter of poor God wanting to be with them and being unable to influence them to re-consider their rejection of him.

Jesus told the Jews that whoever blasphemed the Holy Spirit would not be saved in this world or pardoned or in the world to come but has committed an eternal sin. This implies Hell. He told the Jews they committed this blasphemy for the gospel says that was the reason he spoke up about the eternal sin. This is a sin you commit continuously forever.

Jesus said, "We must work the works of Him Who sent Me and be busy with His business while it is daylight; night is coming on, when no man can work" (John 9:4). Then he said he was the light of the world. He said this to his disciples on the occasion when they met a blind man. Some use this verse to show that Jesus did not really believe in an afterlife. But maybe Jesus just meant that those who had died without God could do nothing for God anymore like in Hell. If he meant that then he was saying that for those who died alienated from God it was too late - the rupture was final and that the saved could not merit or work for God anymore.

It may be objected that Jesus included himself when he said we so he did not mean all this because as God he couldn't stop undeserving and working. But the biblical Christ never claimed to be God but said he was not God and so sin was possible for him. But sometimes people mean you lot by we but Jesus had to choose his words carefully and we have no reason to think he had this habit.

Some, contradicting the other gospels, claim that the whole world will go over to Satan when Jesus leaves and that was what he meant.

Some surmise that Jesus meant that now is the time for miracles which will not happen once Jesus departs which is improbable for early tradition attributed miraculous powers to the apostles after Jesus ascended even though the apostles could do things that were not evidently supernatural – unless you want to believe the apostles were apostates and faked their miracles. The first interpretation which speaks of everlasting punishment is the right one or the most probable one to say the least.

The "Bible" religions which claim that the Bible teaches that the wicked will simply permanently pop out of existence at death are silly for how could Judas have been better off if he had never been born (Mark 14:21) if his death was the end or if he would rise again to be burned to death instantly or have a second chance? It is better to live and abuse a life than never to have lived at all. God must be ready to give him life beyond the grave to torment him. When he will do this he will do the same with everybody. God will make sure Judas does not repent to keep him in sin if he raises him and if he raises him and he himself says that punishing a person is not as bad as this for there is nothing worse a person can do to themselves than sin (Mark 9). When he does that he would and will punish Judas from everlasting to everlasting. When sin is supposed to be so terrible though it is often fun for us that implies that our happiness is lowest in the scale of what God cares about in our regard. You couldn't expect anything but a Hell from the likes of him if you die in sin.

The Christ of the gospels preached the existence of everlasting torture for the wicked. It is dishonest to ignore this and still

call him infallible for the gospels are the only grounds for taking him seriously at all.

DIVES AND LAZARUS

Jesus told a story about a rich man who neglected a poor man and who went to Hell to be punished for it forever. The rich man looked up and saw the poor man in Paradise. His tongue was in grave agony in the flame. He asked for a drop of water to soothe it and if the poor man could be miraculously sent to put it on his tongue. His request was refused as it was impossible for anybody to cross from Paradise to Hell. He asked then that the poor man be sent to his living brothers to warn them about Hell by rising from the dead. This was refused as well on the grounds that they would not listen anyway. This suggests that they didn't believe in Hell but that would not stop them being damned when they die.

There is no hint in the story that it is a parable. Jesus meant it literally. To say otherwise is to read our modern ideas back into a superstitious and foolish age. It was intended to show that the fires of Hell are extremely tormenting and are so bad that you would do anything even for a seconds relief on the pain on your tongue. It was intended to show that you can go there for forgetting the poor. It was intended to show that the damned do indeed have concerns about others and stopping them going to Hell. It shows there is no escape. The rich man did not that he be raised to warn his brothers. This illustrates the point.

Objections to the story being intended as a true story do not work. For example, the rich man's tongue being in such agony is thought to be strange for his sin was neglect of the poor. But the narrative doesn't say it was the only sin he was damned for. It is said that the rich man having a body when his brothers were alive on earth cannot be explained. But God could give the damned a makeshift body to suffer. Another possibility is that the rich man wanted the poor man to go back in time to warn the brothers. Even if that were impossible that would not stop him being told that there was no point for they would not listen. So we could be talking about the rich man and the poor man after the resurrection.

Christians want to pretend that we make our own Hell and God has nothing to do with it. It's a little stupid fad of theirs. If that is true then why do they believe in the resurrection of the damned? Surely then God is making bodies just for the sake of tormenting them physically?

THE MEANING OF HELL AND SHEOL

Hell or Hades may refer to the grave at times in the Bible but at other times they denote a place of punishment. In Psalm 16 the author expresses his belief that God will not leave his soul in Hell meaning the grave. What Hell or Hades mean in the Bible is determined by the context.

Jesus said the gates of Hades would not destroy his Church in Matthew 16. But if you substitute death for Hades it still makes sense and means that the powers of death will not kill the Church off. Hades gave up its dead in Revelation 20:13 but that could mean that the dead were raised from the grave.

Psalm 116:3 says that the distressing circumstances of Sheol disturb the psalmist. Psalm 55:15 is a prayer for people to go to Sheol alive. Psalm 49 says you can be rescued from Sheol. But none of these references need refer to a place. They still make perfect sense if you substitute the word death for Sheol. Sheol then is the grave for there is no need to go any further.

Tartarus was the horrible place where many dead went after death. It was a dark and forbidding prison. It is mentioned in 2 Peter 2:4. One thing is for sure Tartarus is not a symbol for death. You would not use Heaven as a symbol for life in a new book when everybody else means a nice place after death by the word. The word proves that the early Christians did believe in a literal Hell contrary to the likes of Jehovah's Witnesses who just casually brush the reference off.

In Revelation 1:18 Jesus says he has the keys of Hell and death. This is thought to prove that Hell is not everlasting punishment when Jesus has the keys for when death and Hell are already locked he must only keep the keys to open them. But Jesus can have the keys and not use them to open.

It shows that Hell is not death. The only alternative is that it is a place of torment.

DEGREES OF PUNISHMENT IN HELL

According to the Church, there are degrees of punishment in Hell. Not all the souls there are punished to the same extent.

That is all the Church says. Perhaps the best person in Hell suffers a tiny bit less than the Devil meaning that practically speaking there is no real difference. It means the Christian has no right to protest if one sees Hell as extreme or near-extreme torment for everybody for the Church says you are only bound to believe what God has revealed and he has revealed nothing about the severity of the punishment.

The people in Hell are supposed to have chosen it and turn their backs on God and so have everlasting torment inflicted on themselves. If they are to blame for this endless evil then they must deserve extreme torment. They must get it too for Hell is where you go when you have to face your just reward.

NO SECOND PROBATION

The Bible denies that there is a second chance. Your final destiny, Heaven or Hell, is settled at death.

The most important verse on this is Hebrews 9:27. It tells us that just as Jesus died once to remove sins and save (save means judge a person to be fit for Heaven here) so we die once and are then judged on sins.

John 8:21, 24 plainly say that if you die in sin it is too late for you.

1 John 5:16, 17 says that it is important not to pray for those who commit the sin that leads to everlasting punishment – the sin of impenitence on one's deathbed. This must be the sin that is meant for the Bible commands prayer for those who can repent but this sin makes repentance and salvation impossible for them.

Luke 16:19-31 makes it likely that the final choice for damnation or salvation is made at death for the rich man is in Hell and sick of it and mad for relief while his brothers are still alive on earth.

Romans 6:7 says that when a man dies he is finished with sin in the sense that he is delivered from it. This implies that there is no probation or testing after death. The context is about deliverance from sin by the work of Jesus and is about those who have accepted this. So it is those true Christians who die who are finished with sin when they die. If you want to include the damned then the verse is saying that they do not sin after death but are frozen in whatever evil they are carrying when they die.

The Catholic Church believes that once you die rejecting God it is too late (page 112, The Life of All Living).

Hell is about punishment not about reform. But even if it is not about reform it has to keep the door open so that the person can reform if they want to. A God that does not leave that door open is pure evil. The doctrine denies that he leaves the door open. Thus Hell leaves us adoring an evil God and condoning and celebrating his evil.

CONCLUSION

The Bible speaks of Hell as torment by eternal fire. Nothing indicates that this fire is a symbol. The notion that it is a symbol is just us reading our modern ideas back into the Bible writings.

The Bible teaches that Hell is everlasting torment and that those who die separated from God will be lost forever and undergo unspeakable torment.