

## THE SECOND PROBATION - DO YOU GET A SECOND CHANCE IF YOU CHOOSE DAMNATION AT DEATH?

Believers in everlasting punishing disagree about whether it is those who die in their sins who undergo it or those who die in their sins and fail to use their second chance to get into Heaven.

Some say the second chance is only for those who never heard the Gospel of Jesus.

For those who consider the Book of Wisdom to be scripture chapter 5 verses 13-17 should prove interesting. Here it is said that there is no hope for the wicked who die for unlike them the just will live forever.

Believers in the Second Probation appeal to Ezekiel 16:48-63. Ezekiel only promises that God will exalt the sinful places like Sodom to shame Judah. He says nothing about a second chance for salvation. The prophecy of exaltation is more like irony than something to be literally fulfilled. Its like saying, "I will bless your evil brother instead of you", while not intending to do that at all but just getting across the idea that you are worse than your brother.

They argue that God would not make Jesus the only Saviour and the only way to God (John 14:6) if those who did not hear the gospel would have no chance of salvation. They say since God wants all to believe he would give all the chance to learn about his son. But God could do that right now instead of waiting until after death. He could send an angel to every person on earth. When he won't he is perfectly capable of letting a person die without knowing Jesus. Moreover, if a person is sincere but pagan Jesus should save him though the Bible denies it. The person who senses that there is some saving being can be saved by that being without knowing much about him. This person has implicit faith in Jesus and the Bible says that faith is absolutely essential for salvation (Hebrews 11:6). But the Bible is a bigoted book and denigrates this faith.

Here are the texts that are twisted to make them teach the theory of a second probation.

Mark 6:11 and Matthew 10:15, 11:22, 24 says that any town that will not repent and believe the kingdom of God is at hand will be worse off than Sodom on judgment day. There is no trace of the notion that Sodom will get a second chance in this. In fact the implication is that Sodom will get the lesser punishment. Jesus is saying that Sodom did not expect the disaster that destroyed it but the other towns are being warned and will ignore the warning. He is evidently saying that the kingdom of God will bring destruction with it. The urgency of the message shows that he was expecting it soon. You don't say that towns that have plenty of time to repent will be worse off than Sodom.

Romans 11:25-32 is supposed to promise that the Jews who rejected Jesus and who belonged to his time will get a second chance to convert. But that does not prove that the second chance will come after the resurrection like the second probation believers believe. Paul wrote that one day all Israel will be saved. This evidently means the good members of Israel who responded to Jesus for God will destroy those who don't so that Israel will consist only of good people. It does not say that it means the then generation of Israel.

Ephesians 4:8, 9 says that Jesus descended into the earth before he ascended. This does not prove that he went to the realm of the dead to convert them.

1 Corinthians 15:24-28 says that all will be saved and that Jesus will have no enemies to bother him after his second coming. All means all the qualified. Paul who wrote this said that some would not inherit the kingdom so it is all the qualified. People who believe in everlasting punishing hold that Jesus will not be troubled by his enemies for he will have put them in their place.

Philippians 2:9-11 says that every knee will bow before Jesus and every tongue confess that he is Lord. This seems to say that all will be saved and converted to Jesus. It does not however. The knee can be bent unwillingly and Jesus grudgingly confessed as Lord. The damned do the will of Jesus by being in Hell and have to submit.

The all who will embrace God and his love in Colossians 1:19,20 are all who are fit for salvation. In Romans 5:18, Paul said all will be made spiritually alive in Christ though it is obvious he did not mean literally all. He said that Jesus was believed in by the world which does not mean all. He meant all who want to be made alive in Jesus will be.

In 1 Peter 3:19 we read that Jesus preached to the spirits in prison after he died. But it is not said he saved them or meant to or gave them the gospel. In 1 Peter 4:6 we read that the gospel was proclaimed to the dead to save them. It may mean that this was done for them in their lifetime.

If Jesus did preach to the dead spirits to save them that does not mean he will still do it today. He could have gone to preach to the Old Testament Prophets to rescue them for they were special.

There is no evidence for the notion that people can die without Jesus and get another chance to accept him.

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. It does not mean that men are judged at death the first of many times after death for there is a parallel between saved and judged and Jesus saved us once and for all on the cross so there is finality in both (Hebrews 10:10). The parallel excludes the idea of more than one judgment. It may not mean that men die and are not judged to the last day. The judgment at death and the final judgment may be two events in time but they are the same judgment. To God all events and judgements happen at once for he is outside time. So the decision is made. The verse does not have to mean that the next thing after death is the final judgment on the last day. The verse has an important judgment in mind because an unimportant one that can be reversed is not worth mentioning and comparing to the salvation work of Christ that judges a person to be good. The judgement in it cannot be changed.

Hebrews 2:1-3 warns that we must heed the revelations from Heaven in case we should let anything go amiss for obedience brings rewards and we cannot escape if we neglect such a great salvation. This clearly warns that all this is urgent and we could lose the chance salvation if we are not quick on the mark. We are to convert now and not tomorrow. The urgency clearly proves that there is no hope if you die and in some cases before that.

Hebrews 10:26 says you can sin in such a way that no sacrifice for sin even Jesus' will be able to help you and there is nothing to look forward to but divine judgement. This is spoken to the living. It is spoken to those who get the grace to believe in Jesus and who spurn it by sinning instead of repenting. When they are cut off in life from any possibility of changing then the rest of us will receive or eternal destiny, be it everlasting joy or everlasting misery at death and there will be nothing we can do after death to make a difference.

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.

Ecclesiastes 11:3 says that where a tree falls there it will lie. This is supposed to prove that when a man dies his fate cannot be altered. But if tree means man then the verse may mean that where a man dies he will lie. It does not mean that he will lie on the spot forever for even the tree can be moved. It just means that when a man dies on earth he will lie on it, above or below the ground, forever.

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*).

## FURTHER READING

APOLOGETICS AND CATHOLIC DOCTRINE, Most Rev M Sheehan DD, M H Gill & Son, Dublin, 1954

APOLOGETICS FOR THE PULPIT, Aloysius Roche, Burns Oates & Washbourne LTD, London, 1950

ENCHIRIDION SYMBOLORUM ET DEFINITIONUM, Heinrich Joseph Denzinger, Edited by A Schonmetzer, Barcelona, 1963

'GOD, THAT'S NOT FAIR!' Dick Dowsett, [OMF Books, Overseas Missionary Fellowship, Belmont, The Vine, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3TZ] Kent, 1982

HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS, Peter Kreeft & Ronald Tacelli, Monarch, East Sussex, 1994

HAVE WE TO FEAR A DEVIL? Fred Pearce, The Christadelphian Office, Birmingham  
HEAVEN AND HELL Dudley Fifield, Christadelphian Publishing Office, Birmingham  
HELL – WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT IT, John R Rice, Sword of the Lord, Murfreesboro, 1945  
JEHOVAH OF THE WATCH-TOWER, Walter Martin and Norman Klann, Bethany House, Minnesota, 1974  
LIFE IN CHRIST, PART 3, Fergal McGrath SJ, MH Gill and Son Ltd, Dublin, 1960  
RADIO REPLIES VOL 1, Frs Rumble and Carty, Radio Replies Press, St Paul, Minnesota, 1938  
REASON AND BELIEF, Bland Blanshard, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1974  
THE BIBLE TELLS US SO, R B Kuiper, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1978  
THE DEVIL, THE GREAT DECEIVER Peter Watkins, The Christadelphian Birmingham, 1992  
THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF BIBLE DIFFICULTIES, Gleason W Archer, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982  
THE FOUR MAJOR CULTS, AA Hoekema, Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1992  
THE KINDNESS OF GOD, EJ Cuskelly MSC, Mercier Press, Cork, 1965  
THE LIFE OF ALL LIVING, Fulton J Sheen, Image Books, New York, 1979  
THE REAL DEVIL, Alan Hayward, Christadelphian Bible Mission, Birmingham  
THE REALITY OF HELL, St Alphonsus Liguori, Augustine Publishing Company, Devon, 1988  
THE SERMONS OF ST ALPHONSUS LIGOURI, St Alphonsus Ligouri, TAN, Illinois, 1982  
THE TRUTH ABOUT HELL, Dawn Bible Students, East Rutherford, NJ  
WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT HELL? Radio Bible Class, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1986  
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO HEAVEN?, Dave Hunt, Harvest House, Eugene, Oregon, 1988  
WHY DOES GOD? Domenico Grasso SJ, St Paul Publications, Bucks, 1970