

Summary of Hell is Not Endless Punishment

by Victor Torres

Using the Holy Scriptures and some citations from works concerning the doctrine of endless punishment, Mitch thoroughly demonstrates to those being given the eyes to see that this doctrine is not based on Jewish teachings or the teachings of Christ and the Apostles. He also clearly show that this doctrine was a “well developed theology among pagan cultures that significantly influenced the Jews and early Christians”.

We begin by looking back at the earliest disobedience of man and Satan, and the punishment they received. **The serpent** was “cursed above all cattle” and was told “and you shall eat dust all the days of your life” (Gen 3:14) for deceiving Eve to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. **Eve's** sorrow was greatly multiplied and was told that her desire shall be to against her husband and her husband shall rule over her (Gen 3:16). **Adam** is told “for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen 3:19). **Cain** was told he will be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth (Gen 4:12) for murdering his brother Abel. During the days of Noah, **the earth** was corrupt and filled with violence so God “destroyed every living substance” (Gen 7:23) except for Noah and they that were with him in the ark. The cities of **Sodom and Gomorrah**, whose sin was very grievous, was rained upon with brimstone and fire (Gen. 29:24). **Israel** when they forsook the law that God had given them was cursed in all their undertaking until they are destroyed (Deu 28:14 – 20). In all the examples mentioned above, the punishment are temporal in nature and eternal torment is never mentioned.

The worst crime in this world is to kill another person and in most places it is punishable by death. The bible tells us that every transgression and act of disobedience received a just penalty (Heb 2:2). Mitch poses these questions: What could man possibly do that deserves ETERNAL TORMENT? Is God not capable of teaching us to be obedient and deliver us from our evil thoughts and actions? Is He less just than the carnal men that rule this world?

We are also shown how the Hebrew word **sheol** is mistranslated as “**hell**” 31 times in the Old Testament but in all instances, it should have been properly translated to **grave**. The Jewish teachings on the afterlife were quite vague, although they do point to a future resurrection and not to eternal torment. Scriptures like Hosea 13:14, “**I will ransom them from the power of the grave**” and Isaiah 25:8, “He will swallow up death in victory; and **the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces**” are just two of the powerful verses cited to expose this false doctrine.

Moses was the most prolific OT writer and learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Act 7:22) which surely included their doctrine of eternal torment, yet he never mentioned it in all his writings to Israel. He warned though not to follow after the false gods of other nations (Deu 6:14). He did so because when they were under bondage in Egypt and even after they were set free, Israel was exposed to different pagan teachings of eternal punishment called by different names including Orcus, Tartarus and Inferna. **The belief of eternal punishment became more prevalent when Israel was under the rulership of other empires**, and because for over four centuries they did not have a prophet to rebuke them for their disobedience. Israel had **priests who were also corrupted and caused many to stumble in the law** (Mal 2:7-8) by teaching the traditions of men as doctrines (Mar 7:7). During Christ's ministry, He warned his disciples about the doctrines of these priests belonging mainly to two factions called the Pharisees and the Sadducees (Mat 16:12).

In the New Testament, we are shown how different Greek words were mistranslated. **Hades** which is the Greek equivalent of Sheol, was used by Christ to express great calamity, not the pagan doctrine of eternal punishment. Christ told us in Matthew 11:23 that Capernaum, **“who is exalted to the heaven, will be brought down to hell”** (literal Hades). We know that Christ is using the word Hades in the sense that David used it in Psalms 86:13, **“For great is Your mercy toward me; and You have delivered my soul from the lowest hell** (literal Sheol). David was delivered from great calamity, not from eternal torment.

The parable of Lazarus and the rich man in chapter 16 of Luke is discussed in detail. In this parable, the rich man, “being in torment in Hades”, begged Father Abraham to send Lazarus to provide some reprieve. Abraham's response was the gulf between them is so great that “those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us”. Many Christian ministers use this as proof that hell exists not knowing that this parable was Christ's response to the Pharisees and scribes murmuring against him: **“This man receives sinners and eats with them”** (Luk 15:2). This parable is about them and about you and me when we look down on others and their faith and when we hate them. Many Christians do not know the reason why Jesus spoke in parables: **“Because it is given to you (the few chosen) to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but it is not given to them (the many called)”**. To those few given to know the mysteries in His words, they understand that although the gulf that exists between the rich man and Lazarus is great and “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Mat 19:24), **all things are possible to God** (Mat 19:26).

Those who have been given the spirit of God understand salvation comes through judgment. They know that every man's dead works will be burned and he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved through fire (1 Co 3:15). They are not surprised at the fiery trials happening to them, but instead they rejoice in their sufferings in Christ - knowing that when His glory is revealed they “will be glad with exceeding joy” (1 Pe 4:12 – 13). They fully believe the prophecy about Christ and all that are in Him: “You will not leave My soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your holy One to see corruption” (Act 2:27, Psa 16:10). They know that **death and Hades will give up all the dead that are in them and will both be destroyed** (1 Co 15:26, 1 Co 15:54 – 55, Rev 20:13 – 14).

Gehenna, which means valley of Hinnom in Hebrew, is another one of those words mistranslated as hell. This valley, also called Tophet by Jeremiah, is where the Jews put a brazen image of an idol called Moloch to whom they offered and burned not only animal sacrifices like doves and lambs but even their own children! “And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, **to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart.**” (Jer 7:31) After these abominable practices were abolished by Josiah, the Jews used this place to burn animal carcasses and unburied bodies of executed criminals. Anything that remained was consumed by worms. Jesus Christ used Gehenna fire as a powerful symbol for complete and utter destruction - complete and utter destruction of the works of the flesh including hating a brother or calling him a fool (Mat 5:22). **What we must remember though is that God chastens those He treats as sons (Heb 12:7) and this chastening will yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Heb 12:11).**

Tartarus was a powerful symbol of judgment to the Greeks as Gehenna was to the Jews. It is a part of Greek mythology that was believed to be a dungeon of torment and suffering for the wicked. This

word is used by apostle Peter to tell us **where false prophets and those who follow them will be cast down and “will be delivered into chains of darkness”** (2 Pe 2:4). Like the other words of God, the death and darkness spoken of here are spiritual and not physical. **These false teachers and their followers are carnally minded (Rom 8:6) and continue to do evil works, awaiting the judgment to come. (Pro 4:19, Joh 3:19).**

Aion and aionios are Greek words widely mistranslated as eternal and forever and ever. They should be translated as age (or eon) and eonian (or age-abiding) respectively. If we look closely at the Scriptures that use these 2 words, we will learn that these words mean a specific period of time (they have a beginning as in Tit 1:2, and they have an end as in Mat 24:3). The aions of the aions or the age of our judgment is the most important of all the ages because it is the beginning of our salvation. This period of time is long enough to chasten us from all evil and make us like Christ. **God's judgment teaches us righteousness (Isa 26:9) and is used by Him to achieve His goal of bringing all His creation including our Lord Jesus Christ under Him so that He will be all in all (1 Co 15:28).**