

THE ISSUES OF DEATH AND ETERNAL JUDGEMENT.

I apologise to God and to the readers of my earlier studies on Revelation, for not previously examining the subject of eternal judgement in sufficient depth, and with the necessary clarity. I hope and pray that this study will rectify this in some measure.

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1. WHAT IS A SOUL? WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A PERSON DIES?

What is a person's soul? The Scriptures often refer to a person as a "soul," however, they are not just a soul, for in 1Thes.5v23., they are said to be a tripartite being composed of body, soul and spirit. A person's soul is certainly differentiated from their body and spirit in many places in the Scriptures. Is.57v15,16. Eccles.12v7. Numb.16v30,33. Lk.12v5. Mt.10v28. 1Kings.17v21. 1Cor.2v10,11. In Heb.4v12., we read that there is a division between soul and spirit. People are called "souls," because it describes their essential being and personality. When a farmer says that he has 200 head of sheep, we do not think that his sheep consist only of heads. When a captain says that he has 50 hands on board, we do not think that 50 hands float about his ship doing the work. In the same way, when we describe people as "souls," we do not mean that they have no body or spirit, we are just speaking of their essential being and personality. Our body enables us to contact earth; our spirit enables us to contact and communicate with God, Heaven, and spiritual realities; it is the organ of spiritual perception and spiritual activity. 1Cor.1v10,11. 14v1,2,14-16. Paul declares in Rom.1v9., that he served God with his spirit. The Hebrew word for "soul," "nephesh," means "a breathing creature, a living organism," it is used over 770 times in the Old Testament, but it is never said to be put into a "qeber," a grave. Its Greek equivalent, "psyche," occurs 105 times in the New Testament. Both words are used to speak of a person's essential personality, self and being, and also of the life of the lower animals.

What happens when a person dies? When a person dies their body goes to the grave, whether they are a Christian or an unbeliever. At death the soul of the unbeliever goes to Hades, and his spirit goes back to God who gave it. Eccles.12v7. Whereas, when a Christian dies they do not lose their spirit, their soul and spirit are not separated, and they go to God together. The Old Testament teaches that before Jesus died for us, the souls of all mankind went down to "Sheol," the Hebrew name for the New Testament "Hades." However, at the coming of Jesus things were greatly altered, Christ brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel, He said that those who believed in Him would never die, and the gates of Hades would not prevail against His Church. 2Tim.1v10. Mt.16v18. At death, believers in Jesus go right into the bliss of Heaven. Lk.23v43. Jn.6v39,40,44,54. with 8v50-52. 11v21-26. Acts.7v55-60. Heb.12v22-24. Rev.6v9-11. 14v13. 16v7. Paul writes in Phil.1v21-23., that he was joyfully anticipating being present with the Lord, which he said is far, far, far better {Lightfoot says it is a triple far in the Greek}. See 2Cor.5v6-8. So we can see the death and atonement of Christ, and His descent into Hades, completely transformed the function of Hades, from a place where both unbelievers and believers went to at death, to a place only for unbelievers.

The Old Testament speaks of people "giving up the spirit," at death. Gen.25v8,17. 35v29. 49v33. Job.14v10. Eccl.12v7.

Jesus gave His spirit back to the Father, His body went into the tomb, and His soul was made an offering for our sin, and endured the pains of Hades for us. Mt.27v50. Lk.23v46,50-53. Acts.2v23-31. Is.53v10. Jesus took the judgement of our sins upon Himself. Ananias and Sapphira, and Herod, in sharp contrast, gave up their spirits through an act of divine judgement. Acts.5v5,10.12v23. Eccles.3v21. 8v8. The spirit of the wicked is dead to God while they are still alive. Lk.15v32. 1Tim.5v6. Heb.6v1. 9v14. Rev.3v1.

The Old Testament also uses the phrase "he slept with his fathers," to speak of the death of the body.

See Deut.31v16. 2Sam.7v12. 1King.1v21. 2v10. 11v43. 14v20,31. 15v8,24. 16v6,28. 22v40,50. 2Kings.8v24. 10v35. 13v9,13. etc. The New Testament also speaks of people "falling asleep," though the expression is only used of believers, this sleeping is clearly seen to be referring to bodies and not souls. Jn.11v11-14. Acts.7v60. 13v36. 1Cor.11v30. 15v6,18,20,51. 1Thes.4v13-17. 2Pet.3v4. We read in Mt.27v50-52., that many bodies of the saints which slept arose and after Christ's resurrection and went into Jerusalem and appeared to many. In 1Thes.4v13-17., Paul informs us that the souls of Christians who die are with Christ when their bodies are asleep in the grave. The word "slept" clearly only applies to the body, this is why we still call burial grounds, "cemeteries," which means "sleeping places."

The Old Testament uses the phrase "gathered to his people" of the death of the righteous.

It is used of Abraham, Gen.25v8.; of Ishmael, Gen.25v17.; of Isaac, Gen.35v29.; of Jacob, Gen.49v29,33.; of Aaron, Numb.20v24,26.; of Moses, Numb.27v13. 31v2. Deut.32v50.. This shows that even under the old covenant the righteous dead were gathered to their godly relatives; a lovely and thoughtful divine decree from a loving God. His thoughts have always been kind to His children, even before our redemption was accomplished in Christ Jesus.

IS "SHEOL-HADES" THE GRAVE?

In the Old Testament all who died went to the place which is called in the Hebrew, "Sheol," and in the Greek "Hades." However, now only unbelievers go to "Hades," its gates have no power over Christians, they are with their Lord in Heaven. Mt.16v18. Rev.1v18. 2Cor.5v1,6-8. Phil.1v21-23. That the dead consciously exist is seen

in many of the Scriptures we have already quoted, and by the following Scriptures. Is.14v9-11. Ez.32v21. Ps.16v10. Lk.16v22-25.

"Hades" occurs more than 100 times in the Septuagint Greek Old Testament, nearly always to translate the Hebrew "Sheol." "Hades" occurs 11 times in the New Testament, Mt.11v23. 16v18. Lk.10v15. 16v23. Acts.2v27,31. Rev.1v18. 6v8. 20v13,14. In 1Cor.15v55., the Critical Texts read "thanatos," "death," instead of the Majority Text "Hades," which the Authorised Version wrongly translates as "grave."

The English word "Hell," comes from the Saxon "helan," to cover; it originally meant, "a covered or invisible place." However, in many people's eyes, the word "Hell," has come to mean, "the place of the future eternal punishment of the wicked." It no longer conveys the idea of "Sheol" or "Hades." It is, therefore, unfortunate that "Sheol," "Hades," "Gehenna," and "Tartarus" are all translated by the word "Hell" in the Authorised Version of the Bible. {Tartarus," is the place in the Abyss where evil angels are confined. 2Pet.2v4.}

That the Jews were confused and unscriptural in some of their theology about "Sheol," can be seen from the comment on "Hades" in Edward Robinson's, "Greek and English Lexicon." "According to the notions of the Hebrews, 'Hades' was a vast subterranean receptacle, where the souls of the dead existed in a separate state until the resurrection of their bodies. The region of the blessed during this interval, or the inferior Paradise, they supposed to be in the upper part of this receptacle; while beneath was the Abyss or Gehenna, Tartarus, in which the souls of the wicked were subjected to punishment." End of quote.

If Robinson's synopsis of the beliefs of the Jews about Hades is correct, the Jews were certainly unscriptural in their ideas about life after death. It is certainly true to say that Hades is a vast subterranean receptacle, which was divided into two separate parts for the wicked and righteous. However, to say that Gehenna is part of Hades is definitely wrong; Gehenna is the lake of fire, the place of eternal punishment, into which Hades is cast after the Millennium. Rev.20v14. No one is cast into the lake of fire until the return of Christ. Mt.25v41.

It is also very strange and unscriptural to call Sheol-Hades by the name of "the inferior Paradise," for "paradeisos," speaks of a park or garden, and of the ultimate in blessedness. The Septuagint translators use "paradeisos," when speaking of the garden of Eden in Gen.2v8. and Ezek.31v8,9.. "Paradeisos," is used in 2Cor.12v1-4. and Rev.2v7., to speak of God's incredibly beautiful garden in Heaven. In Lk.16v23-25., Jesus tells us that the Old Testament saints did receive comfort from God, but they were anticipating anything but Paradise. Gesenius says "Sheol" is, "a subterranean place full of thick darkness. Job.10v21,22." Godly Job said that when he died, he was going to "a place where the light is as darkness." Job.10v20-22. Hades was a dark and awful place, even for godly saints, and was certainly no Paradise, and they were in bondage all their lives through fear of death and going to Hades. Heb.2v15.

The translation of Lk.23v43. should be, "I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in paradise." Jesus told the thief that his faith had saved him THAT DAY, and that he need not wait until His kingdom was established to be assured of a place in it. Jesus did not go to Paradise that day, He went to "Hades," and to the bad side where the wicked were, for He died in the sinners place. 2Cor.5v21. When Jesus told the parable of Lk.16v19-31., He knew that to redeem us He would have to go and be imprisoned in the bad part of Hades like the selfish, greedy and evil rich man in the parable.

"Hades" and "Sheol" are both speaking of the same place, and Ps.16v10. and Acts.2v27., confirm this.

They refer to the unseen subterranean place of departed souls and are quite distinct from the Hebrew "qeber," and the Greek "mnaymion," which are translated as grave, sepulchre, or tomb. The Authorised Version never translates "qeber" and "mnaymion" as "Hell," however, it incorrectly translates "Sheol" as "grave" 31 times out of the 65 which it occurs in the Old Testament, probably because the translators have avoided the use of "Hell" when the reference was to godly people, obviously feeling that there was some slight in using "Hell" in connection with them. Gen.37v35. 42v38. 44v29-31. 1Sam.2v6. 1Kings.2v6-9. Job.7v9. 14v13. 17v13. 21v13. 24v19. Ps.6v5. 30v3. 31v17. 49v14,15. 88v3. 141v7. Prov.1v12.30v16. Eccles.9v10. Song.8v6. Is.14v11. 38v10,18. Ezek.31v15. Hosea.13v14.

In the Authorised Version "Sheol" is translated as "pit" 3 times, in Num.16v30,33. Job.17v16.; and as "Hell" 32 times, in Deut.32v22. 2Sam.22v6. Job.11v8. 26v6. Ps.9v17. 16v10. 18v5. 55v15. 86v13. 116v3. 139v8. Prov.5v5. 7v27. 9v18. 15v11. 23v14. 27v20. Is.5v14. 14v9. 15v28. 15v18. 57v9. Ezek.31v16,17. 32v21,17. Amos.9v2. Jonah.2v2. Hab.2v5. "Abyss," "abussos," meaning unfathomable depth, is translated as "bottomless pit" and "deep" in the Authorised Version, it is the lowest part of "Hades" to which Christ went to pay the penalty of our sin. Rev.9v1,2,11. 11v7. 17v8. Lk.8v31. Rom.10v9.

"Sheol" and "Hades" are quite distinct from "qeber" and "mnaymion," a burying place, grave, tomb, or sepulchre.

This is clearly seen from the following facts. "Sheol" is never used in the plural, whereas both singular and plural are used with "qeber" and "mnaymion." The Hebrew "nephesh," soul, occurs over 770 times in the Old Testament, but is never said to be put into a "qeber," a grave. No corpse is ever taken to "Sheol," whereas many bodies are taken to "qebbers." In Numb.16v30,33., the casting of people directly into "Sheol" was looked

upon as "a new thing," and quite abnormal. Nobody is said to have seen or touched a "sheol" on earth, whereas many "qebers" have been seen and touched. No animal is ever said to go to "Sheol" at death, the comparison of Ps.49v14., is between men who are dying and going to "Sheol" as fast as sheep are slaughtered for eating, even though in their pride men think that it will never come; compare v15, the Psalmists hope.

The Scriptures constantly affirm that men go down into "Sheol," and that "Sheol" is in the lower parts of the earth, and is so deep that it is below the mountains and seas, and it cannot be dug into. Num.16v30,33. Deut.32v22. Ps.63v9. 68v18. with Eph.4v8-10. Ez.31v14-18. 32v18-31. Jonah.2v2-6. Job.11v8. Amos.9v2. {The task of digging into "Sheol" is looked upon as being as impossible as climbing into Heaven.} Mt.12v40. Phil.2v10. On 5 occasions in the Scriptures, "Sheol" is used for comparison with the height of Heaven, being put as the extreme opposite in depth. Job.11v7,8. Ps.139v8. Jonah.2v2,6. Mt.11v23. All this in sharp contrast to a grave, sepulchre and tomb, which men dig, make, hew and are laid in. The Septuagint of "Sheol" is never called grave.

"Sheol" is certainly not a place where people are unconscious.

The wicked are in Hades "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgement of the great day." Jude.v6,13. 2Pet.2v17. See Is.14v9-15. Ez.32v27-31. Ps.18v5. 116v3. Lk.16v19-31. Lk.20v38. Mk.12v26,27. As Jesus said, the rich man died, but in "Hades" he was tormented in soul, only wilful blindness can ignore such plain statements. Jesus was imprisoned in the Abyss to atone for our sins, while His body was in the grave, "qeber." Is.53v9. Ps.16v10. Acts.2v24,27. He preached to the dead who were imprisoned there. 1Pet3v18-22. 4v6. 2Pet.2v4. The Old Testament saints were among "the multitude of captives," that Jesus led out of Hades. Eph.4v8. Rev.1v18.

Hades has two parts between which a great gulf is fixed, which is impassable. Lk.16v26.

Before Jesus came all souls went to one side or the other, but the good side was not in God's presence, and though the Old Testament saints had the comfort of their faith in the resurrection, they lost their spirit at death, and none of them liked to die, they lived their lives in fear of death. Eccles.12v7. Is.38v1-3. Heb.2v15. Job.10v20-22. 19v25-27. Christians, unlike the Old Testament saint, we do not lose our spirits at death, and go to Hades, we go into the presence of God in paradise in Heaven. Mt.16v18. Jn.8v35. 11v24-26. 2Cor.5v1,6-8. 12v2-4. with Rev.2v7. 21v10. 22v2. Phil.1v21-23. Heb.12v22-24.

GEHENNA AND THE LAKE OF FIRE.

The name "Gehenna" is derived from a place in the valley of Hinnom where refuse and the dead bodies of animals and criminals were burned. Jesus uses it to describe the place to which evil souls and spirits will be sent, who are too dangerous be allowed to live and roam free, because they are given over to unrestrained selfishness and evil. They see and hate God and righteousness, and only find pleasure by causing suffering and pain. Jn.15v22-25. 1Pet.5v8. No one has, as yet, been cast into the lake of fire, Antichrist and his followers are the first people to be cast into Hell, and this occurs at Christ's second coming. In the New Testament "Gehenna" is used 12 times. Mt.5v22,29,30. 10v9. 23v15,33. Mk.9v43,45,47. Lk.12v5. James.3v6. However, it is also called the lake of fire in Rev.19v20. 20v10-15. 21v8.. Fire is associated with the judgement of the wicked in many places. Mt.7v19. 13v40,42,50. 18v8. 25v41. Mk.9v44,46,48. Is.30v33. Lk.16v24. Jn.15v6. 2Thes.1v8. Heb.10v27. Jude.v7. Rev.14v10. Deut.32v21,22. These Scriptures should be treated with the utmost gravity, it is no wonder that Paul said "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Phil.2v12. Hell was prepared for Satan and his angels, it destroys angelic as well as human bodies. Mt.25v41. It is called "the second death," because It destroys the bodies of wicked people for the second time. Rev.2v11. 20v14.

In Lk.16v14,19-31., Jesus warned the covetous Pharisees with two very striking metaphors, unquenchable flame and unquenchable thirst, that the consequences of their greed, would be confinement in Hades, and a fearful anticipation of judgement to come. Heb.10v27. There are flames in "Gehenna," "the Lake of fire," but no flames in Hades, the Bible states it is a dark prison, where the wicked are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgement of the great day." Jude.v6,13. 2Pet.2v17. 1Sam.2v9. Christ's parable reveals how mentally painful confinement in Hades can be if you have lived a selfish evil life. All who are in "Hades" will come out for the Great White Throne judgement, but no one is said to come out of "Gehenna." Rev.20v11-15. "Hades" is the temporary abode of the dead, "Gehenna" is the God's prison for unrepentant evil people and unclean angels. We read in Rev.20v14., that "Hades" is cast into "Gehenna," the lake of fire, after the Great White Throne judgement.

The feet of Asaph nearly slipped when he was overwhelmed with numerous difficulties and trials, and compared his situation with the prosperity of the wicked, they arrogantly rejected God, and mockingly cried, "How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?" Ps.73v11. Then Asaph saw their end. Psalm.73v16-20. The righteous have often cried out in great distress, "Yahweh, how long shall the wicked triumph?" Ps.94v3. Our Lord gives the answer, He said, "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds." Mt.16v27. When Jesus returns He "will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts." 1Cor.4v5. Eccles.12v13. In Rom.2v5,6., we again read of the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgement of God, "who will render to everyone according to their works." See Rom.1v18-22.

God longs to save people, He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Ezek.18v,23,32. 33v11.

Lk.15v20-32.

Jesus extolled the longsuffering kindness and mercy of God. He said in Luke. 6v35,36. "But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and evil. v36. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." Jesus repeats this thought in Mt.5v44,45., "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, v45. that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." In. Acts.14v15-17., Paul states how good God had been to Heathen idol worshippers.

Divine anger is mixed with grief. Mk.3v1-7. Mt.9v9-15.

Papias informs us that Mark's Gospel is Peter's recollections of Christ's ministry. In Mk.3v5., Peter vividly retells how Jesus was angry with the hypocritical Pharisees, and "looked round about on them with anger ("orge")." (See Lk.6v10. Mk.3v5,34. 5v38. 10v23. 11v11.) Jesus was not angry because of the murder that was in their hearts towards Him, and it was truly there, for after this miracle the Pharisees went out and plotted together with their hated enemies, the Herodians, how they might destroy ("apolesosin"), that is, kill Jesus. Mt.12v14. Mk.3v6. Lk.6v11. Jesus was angry at their ruthless hardness of heart, that denied mercy and healing for the sick and needy. However, our Lord's anger was mixed with grief at the Pharisees hardness of heart. "Grieved is "sullupoumenos," the present middle participle of "sullupeo," 4818, from "sun," with, and "lupeo," to make sorrowful, to cause grief, in the passive voice, "to be grieved together with," or "to sorrow on account of someone." Here, as in His broken-hearted weeping over Jerusalem in Lk.19v41-44., Jesus was grieved over the self-injury and spiritual suicide of the Pharisees, who criticised His healing of the man with the withered arm on the Sabbath day. That the anger of Jesus was momentary is shown by the use of the aorist participle "orges," His continuous state of grief and heart-pain over the hardness of heart of the Pharisees is revealed by the use of the present participle "sullupoumenos." They had seared their consciences and hardened their hearts until they always resisted God and His truth. Acts.7v51-60. Their impurity, false traditions, pride, prejudice, and bigotry had imprisoned them in a fortress of lies, from which even God's mighty works and truth could not release them. "Hardness," is the noun "porosis;" 4457, from "poros," a kind of marble, or a callus on hardened hands or feet, or the callus that forms to heal fractured bones. "Porosis," speaks of a dulled spiritual perception, stupidity, and hardening of the heart, it occurs in Mk.3v5. Rom.11v25. and Eph.4v18. The verb "poroo," 4455, to petrify, to make hard, to thicken the skin, to render stupid, to become dull of understanding, is used of the apostles in Mk.6v52. and 8v17., and the Israelites in Jn.12v40. Rom.11v7. and 2Cor.11v7.

There is coming a time in world history when God's amazing longsuffering and mercy are going to be replaced by "thumos" anger. However, we read in Is.28v21., that God's angry judgements at Christ's return, are God's strange {"zuwr," to be strange} work, and His strange {"nokriy," foreign, alien} act. Such judgements are difficult and foreign acts to a God of love. God longs to embrace sinners, not judge and condemn them, as Jesus made clear in Lk.15v20., "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." In 1Tim.2v3,4., Paul proclaims that, "God our Saviour, -- desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." And in 2Pet.3v9., Peter declares, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

2. THE MAJOR SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT ABOUT ETERNAL JUDGEMENT.

Eternal judgement and Divine retribution is an undeniable fact of Scripture.

Almost all schools of thought on eternal punishment believe that there will be some retribution on the wicked, it is the extent of that retribution that is the main area of controversy. We are now in the age of grace so the principal theme of the Gospel is one of mercy and forgiveness, nevertheless, the Scriptures also give the revelation of the wrath and righteous judgement of God, "who will render to each one according to his deeds." Rom.2v6. The solemn warning of Peter in 1Pet.4.17-19., cannot be watered down, "For the time has come for judgement to begin at the house of God: and if it first begins with us, what shall the end be of those who do not obey the gospel of God? v18. And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner? v19. Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

Our God is a faithful Creator, He loves His creation with all of His being, and we can completely trust His love and judgements. When Israel came under judgement from God, David chose to fall into the hands of God rather than the hands of men, we read in 2Sam.24v14., "And David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man." Abraham knew that the Judge of the whole earth always executes merciful, true, and righteous judgement. Gen.18v25. Rev.6v10. 15v3. 19v2. Repentant souls will always find that God's mercies are great, even when judgement is deserved, and Calvary supremely confirms this fact. When 1Pet.4v18., states that, "it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved;" it is because the human will frustrates God's efforts to save, not from any failure in the Divine desire and will to save. Lk.19v41-44. 2Pet.3v9.

Jesus warned us of the reality of eternal judgement and Hell, and we need to treat His words on this subject very seriously, and not to dismiss it as a theme just propounded by fanatics. Eleven of the twelve references to

"Gehenna" in the New Testament are directly from the mouth and teaching of our Lord, Mt.5v22,29,30. 10v28 18v9. 23v15,33. Mk.9v43,45,47. Lk.12v5., the other is in James.3v6.. The subject of eternal punishment is so important, that in Heb.6v1-3.,it is listed as a foundation truth of the Church. Our feelings about God's character and justice are greatly effected by what we believe about eternal judgement, so it is vitally important to interpret this doctrine correctly.

All the viewpoints here stated on eternal punishment have been believed by godly and sincere Christians, even the extreme and dark views of Augustine and Calvin, however, there are other kinder and more thoughtful views about eternal punishment, {even amongst those who would consider themselves as followers of Augustine and Calvin}, which have received acceptance by godly reformers and Christian leaders in Church history. Peter wrote in 1Pet.1v18,19., that we need to be delivered from the false and empty traditions handed down from our fathers or ancestors, "patroparadotos." However, Church history has shown that many church leaders have been unwilling to let the clear bright light of Scripture shine on their cherished traditions and doctrines, and have even used the most horrific persecution and murder to enforce them. This contentious murderous spirit is from the Devil, it is certainly not following Paul's instruction in 2Tim.2v25., to instruct and correct in meekness, gentleness and humility those who oppose our views. Let us remember the words of our Lord, "they that are for us, are not against us;" Mk.9v38-41. Lk.9v49,50.; for we too can imitate the apostles, and mistakenly think that a contentious unloving party spirit, is zeal for truth, when we are in reality resisting and fighting God. Ex.16v8. Acts.5v39. 7v51-60. 23v9. However, God has directed us to oppose dangerous heresy, and He has even executed those who were a danger to His Church. Acts.5v1-12. 12v18-25. 1Tim.1v18-20. 2Tim.2v16-19. 2Pet.2v1-3. Nevertheless, God also commands us not bite and devour good Christians. Gal5v13-15. In his earlier years Spurgeon strongly opposed the view of Conditional Immortality, but in his later years, he took a more charitable view, for Spurgeon is quoted as saying, "I have no quarrel with the Conditional Immortality doctrine." Let us imitate his magnanimous spirit.

Most Christians would agree that no being can exist for ever without the help of God, and also state that the God who created us can, if He so desires, withhold His sustaining power and so bring about our extinction. All agree that God can also cause the wicked to exist forever, if He chooses to do so. The question is whether the Scriptures teach that God will, or will not, sustain the wicked in everlasting punishment and painful existence, and if so, why? The following viewpoints have been held by Christians from many backgrounds and many diverse denominations.

1. The Traditional Western viewpoints.

There no such thing as a uniform Traditional orthodoxy, there is a wide divergence of view within the Traditional Western viewpoint of eternal punishment. Some followers of Augustine and Calvin have said that the atonement of Jesus extends to infants, others have taught the doctrines of their leaders, and have stated that all the heathen who have not even heard the Gospel, and all unbaptised babies will go to Hell for ever. Farrar and others state that such theology attacks the character of God, and has put a dark cloud over the Church, and has caused Christians to question in their minds, if not openly, the love and justice of God. Unbelievers also have attacked the double-minded inconsistency, that a God of love could descend to such levels of cruelty and injustice. It is certainly very difficult to understand, worship, and love a God who condemns all the heathen, and all unbaptised babies, to Hell forever without any opportunity of salvation. Thank God, this awful doctrine is not true, children are especially precious to our God of Love, Jesus stated that "of such is the kingdom of Heaven," and any doctrine that denies this is to be rejected as unscriptural and untrue. Mt.18v1-10. 19v13-15. Mk.10v13,14. Lk.18v15-17.

Some who believe in many of the doctrines preached by Augustine and Calvin have rejected their extreme views on eternal punishment, that all unbaptised babies, and the heathen will go to Hell for ever, and "that doom passes irreversibly at the moment of death on all who die in a state of sin." Like E. B. Pusey, in his work, "What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment?" (1880), they believe in "endless conscious existence for a relatively small number of the lost," and state that the atonement of Jesus extends to infants. They also say that the pain of Hell is not physical, but "a bare minimum of pain, caused perhaps only from being deprived of all good rather than by being inflicted from an external source." Other Traditionalists also support the viewpoint that eternal punishment does not necessarily consist of physical sufferings, or is not necessarily due to inflictions from God, but that their suffering may be due to a person's sense of loss, or accusing conscience. This is a far more compassionate and thoughtful view on eternal punishment than the dark theology of Augustine, however, those who believe in Conditional Immortality believe that this does not go far enough.

Some Traditionalists have stated that because we are made in the image of God our souls must be immortal, but this cannot be correct for our bodies die, and these are made in God's image too. Historians have stated, and it appears correctly, that the doctrine of immortality of the soul is a product of the Greek thought of Plato and Aristotle, who taught that the soul did not have a beginning because it was part of a pantheistic god. Some early Church fathers thought that some ideas of Plato on immortality of the soul would help to clarify Scripture truth, however, they rejected the idea that the soul was pre-existent, and said that it only came into existence at birth. Most of the expositors from the Reformation onwards, including Calvin, have said that immortality is a continual gift of God, and that God chooses to sustain for ever the existence of all beings, not only the righteous, but also the lost. T. F. Torrance writes on page 26f, of his book "Calvin's Doctrine of man," that Calvin taught that the "soul survives the death of the body only at the mercy of God, and has no durability in

itself.”

2. The Annihilationist viewpoint of Conditional Immortality states the wicked will be destroyed.

The Annihilationist school of thought is also known as the name of Conditional Immortality. These believe that God will not eternally punish the wicked, but will instead destroy them. The distinguished evangelical biblical scholar John Stott wrote in 1988, on pages 320f, in the book “Essentials,” {which he co-authored with D. Edwards}, that the ultimate annihilation of the wicked should at least be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment.” Other notable evangelical scholars have also supported this viewpoint. John W. Wenham in, “The Goodness of God,” published in 1974, and in “Universalism and the doctrine of Hell,” published in 1993, also states that he believes that Conditional Immortality is a biblical doctrine. Isaac Watts the famous hymn writer, wrote a book which strongly supported the viewpoint that the wicked would endure conscious eternal torment, then later wrote another book which stated why he had become an Annihilationist. Harold Ernest Guillebaud, who went as a missionary to Africa in 1925, took for granted that the Traditional viewpoint of eternal punishment was correct. When the Inter Varsity Fellowship asked Guillebaud to write a book on “Moral Difficulties of the Bible,” a chapter on everlasting punishment was omitted from the book when it was published in 1941, because he felt he had not answered the problems to his own satisfaction. However after intensive study he changed his viewpoint and wrote a book called “The Righteous Judge,” which was published in 1964 after his death, in this he set out the arguments for Conditional Immortality. He wrote that every soul survives the death of the body, but that both the bodies and souls of the wicked will finally perish at the second death.

In 2Thes.1v9., Paul writes that the wicked, “shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. In Luke.2v4,5., Jesus said, “And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. v5. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after {“meta”} he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.” In Matt.10v28., Jesus gives a similar very strong warning, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather **fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**” Here Jesus speaks of the soul being destroyed in Hell by God. What does He mean? Traditionalists say it means ruin of prospects rather than the annihilation and destruction of the soul, Conditionalists say it means destruction and annihilation of soul. If this destruction of soul does occur, and we know that it does not immediately take place when the wicked are cast into Hell, for we read in Rev.20v10., that Antichrist and the False Prophet are still in the lake of fire 1,000 years after being cast in there. This definitely proves that they exist and are conscious after they are put in the lake of fire. That some do suffer conscious confinement in Hell for a period of time is also confirmed by Rev.14v9,10., here we read that Jesus and the holy angels examine the souls of the followers of Antichrist after they have been cast into the lake of fire. Conditionalists would say that the soul would cease to exist after a period of time.

All the facts about Hell have not been revealed, as Paul, even with his unique apostolic revelation of New Testament truth, acknowledges in 1Cor.13v12., “Now we see but a dim and blurred reflection in a mirror, as in a riddle or enigma (“en ainigmata”), but then face to face (“prosopon prososopon”). Now my knowledge is partial and incomplete, but then I shall fully know, even as I am fully known.” We will not have full knowledge about eternal punishment until God’s kingdom comes, so we need humility of mind, not dogmatism.

N. B. The soul sleep viewpoint.

These teach that those who die are not conscious and do not exist until the resurrection, and if this were true, depriving a person of their body would be in fact annihilation. However, the dead are certainly not unconscious, they all live to God, as Jesus pointed out to the Sadducees, who believed in soul-sleep, and also in His parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Mk.12v26,27. Lk.16v19-31. 20v38. The doctrine of soul sleep is believed by Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah’s Witnesses, however, great Christian reformers and leaders like William Tyndale and Martin Luther, have believed this doctrine, as well as other good orthodox Christians. When Luther’s teaching of soul sleep was attacked by Sir Thomas More, William Tyndale defended Luther’s theology, he wrote, “The true faith putteth the resurrection, which we be warned to look for every hour. The heathen philosophers, denying that, did put that the souls did ever live. And the Pope joineth the spiritual doctrine of the Christ and the fleshly doctrine of philosophers together, things so contrary that they cannot agree, no more than the Spirit and the flesh do in a Christian man. And because the fleshly minded Pope consenteth unto heathen doctrine, therefore he corrupteth the Scripture to establish it.”

Some Conditionalists have stated that Conditional Immortality was believed and preached by Clement of Rome, died 100 A.D.; Ignatius, died 110-115 A.D.; Polycarp, died 156 A.D. {or 166 A.D. Eusebius}; and Irenaeus, died 202 A.D. However, others dispute this and say that Conditionalists have overstated their case by claiming that these early Christian writers support them. Dean Plumtre feels that Irenaeus agrees with the Conditional Immortality viewpoint, on page 133 and 134 of his book, “The Spirits In Prison, he quotes Irenaeus, “And he who shall reject life and prove himself ungrateful to his Maker deprives himself of continuance for ever.” 2. 34. 3. And again in 5. 27. 2. “ Good things are eternal, and without end in God, and therefore the loss of them is eternal and never ending.” 5. 27. 2.

The Liberal or Modernistic, “No after life,” viewpoint.

Many of these, like the Sadducees, do not believe in an after life or resurrection, they believe death is

annihilation. Like the unbeliever, which they really are, they believe the eternal realities of Heaven and Hell do not exist, and that death is the end.

3. The universal ultimate reconciliation viewpoint.

These, like Origen, Gregory Thaumaturgus, Eusebius, and other Eastern early Church leaders, and some in more modern times, state that God would finally reconcile all the lost and allow them into the kingdom. Some, like Maurice, in his "Theological Essays," and Farrar, in his books, "Eternal Hope," and "Mercy and Judgement," look upon ultimate reconciliation, not as a theological certainty, but only as a "hope," and admit that human beings may continue to resist God's efforts for ever. Some use the phrase, "the restoration of all things," to justify the doctrine of ultimate reconciliation. However, it must be noted that in Mt.19v28., Jesus states that "the restoration of all things," "palingenesia," will occur at His second coming, in the context of this verse He also points out that it is extremely difficult for rich men to enter the kingdom of God. At this "restoration," our Lord is forced to send the goats of Mt.25v31-46., into everlasting punishment in order to preserve the happiness of the new earth, so "restoration" here, certainly does not mean ultimate reconciliation. When Peter speaks in Acts.3v21., of "the restitution of all things," he uses "apokatastasis," which means "reconstitution," this "reconstitution" is the remaking of a new Heaven and earth that takes place at the second coming of Christ. Is.65v17-25. The last judgement , which decides the eternal destinies of all created beings, does not occur until a thousand years after our Lord's second coming. We read in Revelation 21 and 22, that another "reconstitution" of Heaven and earth occurs after the last judgement.

4. The second probation viewpoint.

These believe in a second probation after death, at which God gives the full light of the truth to all mankind, and that only those who are irreconcilable will go to Hell. They state that the Scriptures teach that Jesus has already preached to all the dead. The refusal of the wicked to repent of their evil ways makes eternal judgement inevitable. This second probation viewpoint is certainly not ultimate reconciliation, it recognises that the God of love is forced to send some of His creatures into eternal punishment, because their determination to commit eternal sin would forever ruin the happiness of His creation, if they were at liberty to put their desires into action. We read in Is.32v1,17., that righteousness is the means of producing and preserving eternal happiness. God takes away the bodies of angels and men so that they cannot injure anyone any more. Mankind's first death occurs primarily because of the loss of the tree of life, the second death occurs because of Divine judgement. Gen.3v22. Rev.22v2. 21v8. We will consider this at greater length later on.

5. There are those who say we cannot definitely know the final outcome of eternal judgement.

Some outstanding theologians have not committed themselves to any definite conclusion on the subject of eternal punishment. Professor F.F. Bruce, in his introduction to E. W. Fudge's book, "The Fire That Consumes," has written concerning the choice between the viewpoints of eternal conscious torment, or annihilation after a period of suffering, that he would not be regarded as a Traditionalist nor a Conditionalist, and that his thoughts on these issues, would be very much in line with that of C. S. Lewis; for just as Lewis did not systematise his thoughts on the subject, he had not done so either. F. F. Bruce probably has some definite opinions on eternal judgement, but has possibly refused to disclose them because he does not want to give ammunition to unloving, critical and judgmental theologians, who use truth to shoot people down and divide up the body of Christ, rather than build it up in love and faith.

Billy Graham, is quoted as saying in Time 74, November 15th. 1993, "The only thing I could say for sure is that hell means separation from God...When it comes to a literal fire, I don't preach it because I'm not sure about it." End of quote. I believe the fire is real, but the nature of that fire is not fully revealed to us, for it is a fire that consumes the bodies of angels as well as the bodies of men, and acts as a prison.

It is certainly true that all the details about eternal punishment are not known to us, as Paul states in 1Cor.13v12., "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall fully know even as also I am fully known." Our knowledge of eternal realities is only partial, and we should acknowledge it; there are facts about eternal punishment, "which are secret and belong to the Lord." Deut.29v29. We should avoid aggressive dogmatism for we do not know all the facts. 2Tim.2v25.

God often speaks in ambiguous puzzles, and even the finest prophets were at times extremely troubled, because they had great difficulty in understanding and interpreting WHAT God had told to them, and WHEN the events they prophesied about would take place, and they had to spend a considerable time in intense prolonged prayer and earnest waiting upon God to obtain the correct interpretation of their revelations, it was not a purely intellectual exercise. See Numb.12v6-8. Dan.7v15,28. 8v15-27. 9v21-0-27. 10v21. 1Pet.1v10-12. Even the peerless prophet Daniel had to be instructed by angels to understand God's purposes and revelation to him, and at times even he did not understand what was told to him. Some prophecies have been sealed until an appointed time. Dan12v4. Rev.10v4. God's prophetic words have puzzled and tested the greatest of the prophets, and God's revelations about eternal punishment certainly sift, test, and expose our characters, love, and theology. We can be quite sure that eternal punishment should never be confused with eternal punishing, for God certainly does not eternally inflict pain on the wicked, our God of love is definitely not a sadist. We read in Hos.11v8., "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboim? My heart churns and is turned over within Me; all My repentings and compassions are kindled together."

World history has abundantly demonstrated the misery and carnage that is produced in the world by power hungry worldly and religious leaders who have acted out Satan's cruel, evil and selfish plans, and soon the world will experience the greatest blood-bath it has ever known through following Satan's evil plans. The choice is either war and misery without end, or a Divine judgement on evil, and the rule of love and righteousness that produces peace. Is.32v12,17. After the judgement of the Great White Throne, God will make sure that there will be no more sorrow through sin, or any kind of sorrow at all, God will sadly and reluctantly commit to eternal judgement those whose desire to sin forever makes them a positive menace to the peace and happiness of His kingdom. Then He will place before His children those treasures which will forever satisfy and rejoice our hearts; endless variation, expansion, "creations beyond imagination", and above all the revelation and all-pervading presence of God our Father and our Saviour. Our eternal joy and delight will be in our God and Saviour. Will you be in that kingdom of light and love? Repent of your sins and accept Jesus as your Saviour, and enjoy life forever more.

3. IS THERE A CHANCE OF SALVATION AFTER DEATH?

In 2Pet.3v9., Peter declares, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." God is not slack, powerless, or unwilling to bring His promises to us to fruition. "Not willing," is, "me boulomenos," the present middle participle of "boulomai," 1014, "to will deliberately, to wish, to desire," it usually expresses the deliberate exercise of the will more strongly than "thelo." So God strongly and definitely wills and desires that no one should perish, but people's wills frustrate this divine will and desire, just as Jesus said when He wept over Jerusalem, in Mt.23v37., "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!" See. Lk.13v34.. In 2Pet.3v9., "Perish, is "apolesthai," the aorist infinitive of "apollumi," and sadly, as 2Pet.3v7. states, some will perish, but that is not God's desire. It is God's will and desire for "all" ("pantas, all, everyone) to come to repentance. "Come," is "choresai," the aorist active infinitive of "choreo," to make room, to have room for, that is, have opportunity for repentance and salvation. Jn.1v7. 12v32. Rom.4v16. Eph.2v4-9. 1Tim.2v4-6. 1Jn.2v2. Rev.5v9.

There can be no doubt that evil enemies of God, like Jezebel, Antichrist, and Satan and his angels, will not enter the kingdom of God in the next life, for they have refused to repent of their wickedness. However, Augustine taught that there will be no chance of salvation after death for those who have never heard the Gospel, and said that they will go to Hell forever. He also proclaimed the monstrous doctrine, that babies who die unbaptised, go to Hell forever, like the very worst sinner.

The Dean of Wells, E. H. Plumptre D.D., writes on pages 152 and 153 of his book, "The Spirit's in Prison:-

"And so the dark shadow of Augustine fell on the theology of the Western church, and condemned its thoughts of the love of God to many centuries of disastrous twilight. It started from the assumption that the whole human race was, through the sin of Adam, 'one mass of perdition.' From this Divine grace elected some to salvation. But none are elected outside the range of those who believe and are baptised. The whole heathen world, therefore, was left to eternal torments: its virtues were but 'glittering vices {de Civ. Dei, 19.25}}. Even for unbaptised infants dying before they had done good or evil there was but the 'levissima damnatio' of the alienation from the life of God, which was the common lot of all the lost, and compared with the eternity of which, any torments enduring for ages and then ceasing, would be a light thing to bear {Enchirid. C. 29}. And baptism, though indispensable, was yet not sufficient. To hold the true faith, to live a holy life, these he rightly saw were conditions of eternal blessedness, and these were possible only for those who came under the decree of God's electing grace. The narrowness of mediaeval scholasticism, the hardness of Calvinistic Protestantism are each of them traceable to the influence of the great bishop of Hippo. And to that influence also, it must be added, is traceable the whole scholastic and Tridentine doctrine of purgatory with all its practical corruptions. The instincts of mankind led them to turn to the one mitigating feature in the terrible theology that shut out ninety-nine hundredths of mankind from all hope of escaping hell." End of quote.

1. Peter clearly states that Jesus has ALREADY preached to the dead in Hades. 1Pet.3v18-20. 4v6.

It is difficult to understand why Christians refuse to accept that there will be a chance of salvation after death, when Peter, in 1Pet.3v18-20. and 4v6., declares that Jesus has already preached to the dead. Jesus did this preaching after His soul was made an offering for sin in Hades, and He had won salvation for us. Is.53v10. Mt.12v40. Acts.2v24,31. Rom.10v7. Eph.4v8-10. In 1Pet.4v6., Peter uses "euangelizo" to state that Jesus preached the good news of the Gospel to the dead, that is human beings who had died. We read in 1Pet.4v5,6., "They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. v6 For this reason the Gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." "Euangelizo" is always used of the preaching of the good news concerning Jesus. Mt.11v5. Lk.3v18. 4v18,43. Acts.8v4,12,25,35,40. 17v18. Rom.10v15. Gal.1v8,9. 1Pet.1v12,25. Rev.10v7. 14v6. In 1Tim.2v5,6., Paul states that God will give a full opportunity of salvation to all, for He has no pleasure in the death of anyone. It is inconceivable and unscriptural to say that a God of love will put people into an eternal Hell without a chance of salvation, because, due to no fault of their own, they were not fortunate enough to hear the Gospel.

Peter also informs us in 1Pet.3v19., that Jesus preached to the wicked angels imprisoned in the Abyss by God, who had taken upon them human flesh in the time of Noah. Gen.6v1-7. Jude.v6. Here "preached," is "kerusso," to publish, to proclaim, to preach the Gospel as a herald, a "kerux." For "kerusso," see Mt.3v1. 4v17,23. 10v7. 11v1. 24v14. Acts.8v5. 9v20. 28v31. 1Cor.1v23. 2Cor.4v5. 2Tim.4v2. etc. Jesus proclaimed like a herald His great victory to the wickedest beings that have ever lived, the evil angels who were expelled from Heaven with Satan for choosing evil while living with God in Heaven. We know from 2Pet.2v4,17. and Jude.v6,12., that they are so hardened by evil, that they are beyond repentance and redemption, and are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgement of the great day." Some say these sons of God who were disobedient in Noah's time, were the sons of Seth, however, the whole tone of Gen.6v1-7., is of angelic beings who came to live as men. "Sons of God," not sons of men, are married to "daughters of men," the result was "giants," and great wickedness. Job.38v4,7. Jude.v6. It is foolish to say that men only began to realise that women were good looking well over 1,000 years after the creation. Peter says that these beings that were in prison were "spirits," and only an angel could be imprisoned as a spirit in Hades, for when a man dies who is unsaved, his spirit goes back to God who gave it. Eccles.12v7. It is the souls of men that are in Hades, not spirits. Christians retain their spirit, and go into God's presence at death. Mt.16v18. Jn.11v24-26. Phil.1v21-23.

We know that angels are sexless, but God appears to have allowed these evil angels to take upon themselves human bodies, they certainly have the power to do this, for we see that the magicians of Egypt were able to change matter and create physical bodies by the power of evil spirits. Exod.7v11,12,22. 8v6,7,18,19. One thing cannot be disputed, these beings lived, and then died like men, and then after death Christ personally preached to them. Ps.82v6,7. We know they did not respond to Christ's message, they are so hardened in evil that they are beyond repentance, and so they are still imprisoned in Hades in everlasting chains of darkness. 2Pet.2v4,17. Jude.v6,13. In Col.1v20., Paul tells us that Christ's blood bought the opportunity for salvation for "all on earth and all in Heaven alike," however, whether people repent and accept His sacrifice is another matter, both angels and men can refuse to repent and accept the Divine mercy.

N.B. The early Church fathers also testify that Jesus preached to the dead.

In 1Pet.3v19. and 4v6., Peter gives sufficient proof for an honest person, that the early Church believed and preached that Jesus proclaimed His glorious atonement and victory to the dead in Hades. There are, however, other reliable witnesses that testify that this was the widespread belief of the Church until around 400 A.D., when Augustine changed the doctrine of the Church on this and other important subjects. Luther, being an Augustinian monk, unfortunately brought Augustine's new theology into the Reformation. The great spiritual leaders of the early centuries of Church history, many of whom were martyrs for Christ's sake, proclaim with one voice that Jesus preached to the dead. We will now give a synopsis of some of the evidence given by the Dean of Wells, E. H. Plumptre D.D., in the 1886 edition of his, "The Spirits In Prison," from page 83 onward. Plumptre states that the evidence of our Lord's descent into Hades and His preaching to the dead includes all the leading familiar names which are consulted when the early faith and practice of the Church are examined. The weight and authenticity that is attributed these witnesses on vital truths such as the Incarnation, baptism, the Eucharist, and the authenticity of the Gospels, must also be granted to the facts they give on the doctrine of our Lord's preaching to the dead.

1. Irenaeus says explicitly that the Lord "descended into the regions beneath the earth, preaching His advent there also, and the remission of sins ready for those who believe in Him," and he also states that remission of sins was received by, "all who had hopes towards Him, who proclaimed His advent and submitted to His dispensations." Irenaeus 4.27,2.

2. Justin accused the Jews of mutilating a prophecy of Jeremiah's, which had read, "The Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, remembered those His dead who slept in the dust of the grave, and descended to them to proclaim to them His salvation."

3. Clement of Alexander preached that the souls of the Heathen as well as Jews benefited from the revelation of Christ to them in Hades. The Jews being in bonds to the burden of the Law, and the Heathen being "those in darkness," received the proclamation of the truth of the Gospel from Jesus. This proclamation involved the offer of salvation, and the possibility of repentance and forgiveness of all the sins that a man had committed in ignorance, when not clearly knowing God.

4. Origen, Clement's pupil, as we have already stated, believed that Jesus preached to the dead. A famous infidel named Celsus was speaking with Origen and ridiculed this widespread belief of the Church, he said, "I suppose Christ, when He failed to persuade the living, went down to Hades to persuade those who live there?" Origen answered him, "Whether it please Celsus or no, we of the Church assert that the soul of our Lord, stripped of its body, did there hold converse with other souls, that were in like manner stripped, that He might there convert those who were capable of instruction, or were otherwise in ways known to Him fit for it." Origen c. Celsum, 2.43.

5. Tertullian also stated that the belief that Jesus descended into Hades and preached there, had been held in the Church since the days of the apostles, his testimony is of great value since Tertullian censured anything that was new.

6. Cyril of Jerusalem states, in beautiful picturesque language, that: "The holy prophets ran unto Him {Jesus}, and Moses the lawgiver, and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob; David also and Samuel, and Isaiah and John the Baptist, who bore witness when he asked, Art thou He that should come, or look we for another? All the just were ransomed whom death had devoured, for it behoved the King who had been heralded to become the redeemer of His noble heralds. Then each of the just said, O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? For the Conqueror hath redeemed us." Cyril Hieros., Catech. 14. 9,10.

7. Athanasius said that more than the Patriarchs and prophets were delivered from Hades, he extended the circle of those who Jesus delivered from Hades through His preaching, "and thinks of the souls of Adam as held fast under sentence of death, and crying to his Lord ever more, and of those who had pleased God, and had been justified by the law of nature, as mourning and crying with Him till the mercy of God revealed to them the mystery of redemption." More evidence could be given, but these quotes will suffice to show that the early Church believed that Jesus preached to the dead.

2. In Rev.20v15., "And whosoever," "kai ei tis," should be translated, "And if anyone."

We read in Rev.20v15., "And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." As someone has said, if there was a crowd at a railway barrier, and it was said that those who had no ticket would not be allowed to pass, it would be taken for granted that some would have tickets. So Rev.20v15., strongly infers that some who are raised at the second resurrection are saved. If Rev.20v15., meant that none of those who were raised at this resurrection were saved, it would have to read, "since none of them were found written in the book of life, they were all cast into the lake of fire." The people in Rom.2v6-16., are judged at this resurrection, the Gentiles who have tried to live righteously even without having the Law or the Gospel, and so Rom.2v 7., promises them eternal life.

3. In 2Cor.6v2., Paul is addressing the Corinthians, who have had their opportunity of salvation.

These people were already saved, they had received the grace of God, and in 2Cor.6v1., Paul implored them not to receive the grace of God in vain. Paul does not use the definite article in 2Cor.6v2., when he writes, "in a time acceptable," "kairo dekho;" and "in a day of salvation," "en emera soterias." There is also no definite article in, "Behold, now a time acceptable," "idou nun kairos euprosdektos," and "Behold, now a day of salvation," "idou nun emera soterias." Paul quotes 2Cor.6v2., from Is.49v8., which reads, "In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee." As there is no definite article either in the original Scripture in Is.49v8., or in Paul's Greek quotation, we should accept the translations of Young and Rotheram, and others, who read, "now a day of salvation.

For those who have the opportunity of salvation, like the Corinthians, it is indeed the day of salvation for them. However, one cannot make this Scripture mean that there is no opportunity of salvation after death for those who have never had an opportunity of salvation. The whole age of grace is a day of salvation, but it is not the only time of salvation, and there is no Scriptural evidence to limit the day of salvation to this life, for those who have had no opportunity of salvation. Jesus Himself said that there is forgiveness in the world and age to come for all sin, except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Mt.12v31,32.

Some say that Heb.9v27., "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement," is teaching that there will be no opportunity or day of salvation after death, and no second probation for those who have had no real opportunity of hearing and perceiving the fullness of the Gospel. However, all that Heb.9v27. teaches, is that there will be judgement after death, but this is just as true for Christians as it is for unbelievers. 1Cor.3v10-15. 2Cor.5v8-11. The whole context of this verse teaches that Jesus died to save mankind, it is certainly not teaching that death closes the door of salvation. There is judgement after death, but the final judgement takes place at the end of the Millennium, and 1Pet.3v18-20. and 4v6., state that Jesus has already preached the Gospel to the dead after death.

4. In 1Tim.2v5,6., Paul tells us that the Christ who died for all, will give the testimony to all in due times.

The Revised Version reads, "the testimony to be borne in its own times." Rotheram reads, "The testimony in its own fit times." They correctly render "kairois," in the plural as "times." "Kairois," is used in the Scriptures in the sense of divinely ordained epochs, times, and appointments. The vast majority of people who have lived on the earth, have known little or nothing about either the Law or the Gospel, and those who have, have often been put off by the disgraceful lives of Israelites and Christians, who did not obey the Word of God that they preached. Rom.2v17-24. The God who so loved the world will make sure that everyone will hear the good news about His Son's atoning death. How could the Christ who died on Calvary to redeem mankind, conceal from people the fact that He died to save them, or tell them that His death no longer availed for them? Jesus will never cast out those who come to Him in repentance, sincerity and truth. Jn.6v37. "The mercy of Yahweh is from everlasting to everlasting." Ps.103v8,17.

5. The Judge of the whole earth will do right. Gen.18v25. Rev.6v10. 15v3. 19v2.

a. No one will be able to point an accusing finger at God, every mouth will be stopped. Rom.3v19.

The ways of God are far higher and better than our ways, not far worse; God abundantly pardons the repentant sinner. Is.55v7-9. It is very wicked to attribute to God what we would condemn in a man as injustice, cruelty,

hardness of heart, and lack of love. Some people take great interest in human welfare, they have laboured to abolish slavery, others care for the sick and old; it cannot be true that the creature pursues such things with greater zeal than God pursues the more important eternal salvation of the souls of men. Therefore, how can a person's salvation depend on whether they are lucky enough to hear the Gospel? Job.4v17-19. 33v12. The only thing that makes Hell tolerable at all, is the fact that it is unavoidable, because the wicked love evil and resist all God's attempts to save them. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, He desires all to come to repentance and be saved. Ezek.18v23,30-32. 2Pet.3v9. "His mercy endures for ever." Ps.136v10-26. Jer.33v11..

b. In Mt.12v31,32., Jesus said there is forgiveness in the next age for all sin but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, is the unrepentant hardness of heart that rejects Jesus and ascribes the mighty works of the Holy Spirit to Satan. The Judge of the whole earth will do right concerning those who have not heard the Gospel.

c. Jesus said that there was even hope for people who in limited light had come under Divine judgement.

In Mt.11v20-24., Jesus said that the people of the cities of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom, which had come under Divine judgement, would have repented if they had seen the mighty miracles that were seen by the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, who had refused to repent and had rejected Jesus in spite of His mighty works, and so were doomed to Hell. Jesus was saying, therefore, that on judgement day God will take into account the limited light that the people of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom had received in their lifetime, and also how they would have responded to His ministry; and because of this it will be more tolerable for the people of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom on judgement day, than for the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Mt.10v15. Mk.6v11. Lk.10v12-15. This must mean that some of them will be saved, as there are no degrees of tolerability in Hell.

The principle of judgement according to light is a fact of Scripture. Lk.12v47,48. As Paul states in Acts.17v30., "Therefore having winked at and overlooked {"hupereido"} the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent." God has overlooked and taken no notice of the times of ignorance until the full light of the Gospel was revealed. Jesus Himself gave this full light when He preached the Gospel to the dead in Hades, this must have included the people of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom. 1Pet.3v18-20. 4v6.

Augustine's followers make the following objections against the dead having an opportunity of salvation.

1. Followers of Augustine falsely believe that if an opportunity was given to people to repent, that all would repent.

Augustine's followers fail to comprehend the repeated warning in Scripture that sin and persistent rebellion against God can so harden a person that they cannot repent, their decision to sin is irrevocable and eternal. Heb.3v7,8,13,15. 4v7. Those who have rejected the Gospel preached in fullness of power and confirmed by mighty miracles will not alter their mind before the throne of God. They fear God's judgement and sorrow over their fate, but they hate God, and will wail and gnash their teeth in bitter anger, and blaspheme Him to His face. Heb.10v26-30. Mt.8v12. 13v42,50. 22v13. 24v51. 25v30. Lk.13v28. Acts.7v54. Ps.2v1-3. Rev.19v19. Confinement in the Abyss for 1,000 years will not make Satan repent, he comes out of the Abyss totally unrepentant, full of rebellion and evil, and with an implacable hatred of righteousness, God, and His children, and the wicked in Hell have the same evil unrepentant characters. Rev.20v7-10. 21v8.

Christians forget that angels have sinned after living in the presence of God in Heaven, and Satan makes repeated trips into the very presence of God to malign God's people and slander the character and works of God. Job.1v6-12. 2v1-7. Rev.12v10. Evil angels are now beyond repentance, and are irrevocably hardened by sin, and men can take the very same attitude to sin and God as these evil angels, and become totally unreconcilable, and even blaspheme God to His face. Rev.16v9,11,21. Christ called these people the children of the Devil, they have the same impenitent hearts, and as the sin is eternal, the punishment cannot be less. Jn.8v44. Mk.3v29. Jesus said that seeing mighty miracles would not make people repent, who were determined to sin. Jn.5v36-38. 15v22-25. Even the open vision of God may not make the wicked repent, indeed, while living in God's presence in the Millennial kingdom, the wicked are harbouring in their hearts the sin that in the end shows itself in open rebellion. The Scriptures state, that those who have seen and known the truth about Christ and His Gospel in a full and clear light and rejected it, will not change their minds about it after death. Heb.6v1-6. 10v26-31.

A person can wilfully reject the truth about Jesus in a very determined and definite way, just as they have rejected the revelation of God through creation. Rom.1v8,21,32. The truth about creation and Christ can be very firmly held down. Those of us who teach that there is a chance after death for those who have never heard the Gospel, or never heard it properly, do not teach ultimate reconciliation. We state that a merciful and just God, will give all an equal opportunity to be saved. The theory of ultimate reconciliation is contrary to the Scriptures, for the Scriptures teach that souls and spirits can be irrevocably hardened by the evil they love. Some Traditionalists say that Lk.12v47,48. and 2Cor.5v10., teach that there are varying degrees of punishment for the wicked, but surely these verses are speaking of the judgement of believers. God will render

to both sinner and saint according to their works." Rom.2v5,6. 2Cor.11v15. Rev.2v23. 18v5,6.

2. Followers of Augustine say that people have already had adequate light for salvation through the light of creation.

Augustine said that people who have not responded to the light of creation go to Hell forever. He ignored the fact that nobody except Jesus has obeyed the light that they have received from creation. Rom.1v18-20. 3v9-23. We preach the Gospel to people, because we know that they need more than the light of creation to be saved. In Jn.15v22-25., Jesus said that it is only those who see and hate Himself and His Father, who commit the sin that makes Hell their only possible end. Acts.17v23-31. N.B. v30. Rom.10v11-15.

3. They say "Why should we preach the Gospel to people now, if they have a chance of salvation after death."

Jesus has put the responsibility of the preaching of the Gospel upon His Church, and it is for us to give light in the darkness of this world. It is not all right to leave men in the kingdom of darkness, blinded by superstition and ignorance and in the grasp of a merciless Devil, when they can have the light of the Gospel. The eternal death of a soul cannot depend upon whether a missionary goes or not, or if they arrive a day late, but the heathen's enjoyment of the Gospel does depend on this. What possibility of happiness would there be for any Christian, if they thought that thousands of people were in Hell because they were not competent to preach the Gospel properly, or they had failed to reach people in time. If there is no chance after death for the heathen who have never heard the Gospel, God would be duty bound to make sure that all heard the Gospel properly before they died, and if men failed to give the Gospel properly, then God must of necessity send an angel, and put the powers of darkness in prison, to make sure that all had a full and proper chance of hearing the Gospel.

Some will say that the second probation doctrine will make us lazy and complacent over the fate of the lost, to this we answer.

a. Any Christian who has the love of God in their heart, is broken over the needs of the world, and does something about it.

b. The revelation in the Scriptures of the fate and shame of the lazy and disobedient Christian, is enough to spur the laziest Christian on, even if the love of Christ does not constrain them. Lk.12v42-48. Mt.25v26-30. 2Cor.4v3-6. 5v14-16.

c. The writer has seen a great number of Christians, who believe that people who never hear the Gospel go to Hell for ever, as complacent and unconcerned over the state of the lost as it is possible to be.

Christians cast a slur on the character, love and grace of God, when they teach that people who have never heard the Gospel go to Hell forever. The death of a person cannot change the desire of God to save them. God could never say to those who had no opportunity of salvation, "I am sorry that the preacher did not arrive in time, I know that you are repentant, but it is too late now and so you are going to Hell forever." Can we really believe that the God of love would say this? Such beliefs put a cloud between Christians and their God. Thank God that this awful lie is not true, death cannot alter God's love, or the efficacy of the sacrifice of Calvary. God will never conceal the fact of Calvary from those who have never heard the Gospel, if He did there would be no possibility of Heaven starting on a happy footing, we would always be thinking that something could have been done and it was not. The eternal destiny of a person cannot depend on the chance of a person hearing the Gospel, it is too important a matter for chance to come into it at all.

The need for balance in Biblical interpretation and exposition.

Error often occurs by emphasising Scriptures revealing one aspect of a truth to the exclusion of other Scriptures on the same subject. The statement by Peter in Acts.4v12., is absolutely true, that there is none other name given under Heaven whereby men must be saved, save only the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts.4v12. It is also beyond dispute that no man comes to the Father but by Jesus. John.14v6. All mankind have sinned and have become children of disobedience and wrath. Eph.22v3,12. 4v18,19. Rom.3v9-23. Some emphasise these Scriptures to the exclusion of other vital Scriptures on the subject of salvation. In Rom.2v7,14., Paul tells us that even amongst the Gentiles, who have not possessed either the Law or the Gospel, there can be a desire for honour, glory and immortality, and the reward is eternal life. God emphasised to Peter that He is no respecter of persons, and that Gentiles "who fear God and work righteousness are accepted with him." Paul also states in Acts.17v30., that "the times of this ignorance God winked at." "Winked at," is, "hupereido," 5237, it means, to overlook, to take no notice of, to not attend to, i.e. not punish; it only occurs here in the New Testament.

The prayers and alms of Cornelius came up as a memorial to God, BEFORE he was a Christian, for God had already cleansed him on an Old Testament basis. Acts.10v1-4,14-16,22,34,35. Paul also tells us in 1Tim.2v4., that God wills ("thelo," to will) all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. In 1Tim.4v10., Paul states that God is the Saviour of all men, specially of those who believe. In 2Pet.3v9., Peter states that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. God states in Lam.3v33., that He "does not afflict willingly, or grieve the sons of men." Indeed, God "plans ways so that the banished one may not be cast out from him." 2Sam.14v14. Please note, 1Tim.2v5,6., "For there is one God

and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, v6. who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in its own due times," ("kairois," plural). Peter asserts that Jesus even preached the good news of His atonement in Hades to the dead! 1Pet.4v6. 3v18-20. The Scriptures must be taken in balance together, to arrive at the truth.

4. IS THE SOUL IMMORTAL?

The Scriptures state as a fact that only God has self-existent immortality. 1Tim.6v16.

The noun "athanasia," is used by Paul in 1Tim.6v16., to state that only God has self-existent immortality, he writes, "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." The word for "immortality," "athanasia," 110, is derived from the negative "a," and "thanatos," "death," and so means "deathlessness." It is used to describe the derived immortality of the glorified body of the believer in 1Cor.15v53,54., however, it suggests a fullness of life, and not just deathlessness; for a believer, mortality is to be "swallowed up of life." 2Cor.5v4. Only God has life in Himself, even in His humanity Jesus could say, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." Jn.5v26. No one could take His life from Him, He had to willingly give it up. Jn.10v15-18. Adam's immortality depended on him eating the tree of life, and the believer's immortality is also continuously derived from God. Gen.2v17. 3v22,24. Rev.2v7. 22v2,14.

The noun "aphtharsia," 861 from 862, "incorruptibility," is translated as "immortality," in the KJV of Rom.2v7. and 2Tim1v10., probably because the translators thought that incorruptibility is essentially linked with immortality. It is used to describe the incorruptible resurrection body of believers in 1Cor.15v42,50,53,54. and 2Tim.1v10.. Paul tells us in Rom.2v7-14., that some Jews and Gentiles are judged worthy of eternal life even before they hear the Gospel, because they live good lives and seek for glory and honour and incorruption. In Eph.6v24., Paul pronounces a benediction of grace upon all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, "aphtharsia," that is, in incorruptness.

The adjective "aphthartos," 862, means incorruptible, not subject to corruption or decay, both in the sense of nature or time. It is derived from the negative "a," and "phthartos," corruptible. It is used to describe the incorruptible nature of God in Rom.1v23. and 1Tim.1v17.; and the seed of the incorruptible and eternal Word of God in 1Pet.1v23.. It also describes the incorruptible crown and rewards of saints in 1Cor.9v25., and their incorruptible undying resurrected bodies in 1Cor.15v52.; and their Heavenly inheritance in 1Pet.1v4.. In 1Pet.3v4., Peter uses it to describe the almost priceless incorruptible meek and quiet spirit of a good woman.

The Biblical idea of immortality is an immortality of the whole person, body, soul and spirit; not just a disembodied existence of the soul in "Sheol-Hades," or Heaven, after the death of the body. It is deliverance from death, and the possession of a glorified body by resurrection. This sharply contrasts with the views of the Greek philosophers, who, with Plato, taught that spirit was everything and despised the body and called it an embarrassing nothing, and on Mars Hill at Athens they mocked Paul when he spoke about a resurrection. Acts.17v32.

The doctrine of immortality is not declared as much in the Old Testament as the New Testament.. However, the declarations about the future life are clearly seen in the Old Testament Scriptures, the prophets speak on many occasions of the glory and beauty of the Millennial and eternal kingdom. Is.11v1-10. 65v17-25. Ps.73v23,24. Peter and Paul also quote from Ps.16v8-11. and Ps.68v18.. Act.2v27. 13v35. Eph.4v8-11. See Isa.26v19. Dan.12v2,3. In His confrontation with the Sadducees Jesus affirmed that the Old Testament taught the truth of survival of the soul at death, resurrection, and a future deathless life for God's people. Lk.20v27-38.

Jesus is the author and fountainhead of the immortality of believers.

Through His redeeming death and resurrection, Jesus has "abolished death, and brought life and immortality ("aphtharsia") to light through the Gospel." 2Tim.1v10. "Brought --- to light" is "footisantos," the aorist active participle of "photizo," 5461, to illuminate, to bring to light, to render evident; Jesus has illuminated and shed light on the doctrine of immortality; He said that the soul survives death, and warned us of the eternal consequences of choosing good or evil, and illustrated this with many parables. Mt.5v11,12. 8v11,12. 11v20-27. 12v31,32. 13v39-43,47-52. 18v7-10,34,35. 19v23-30. 22v1-14. 23v29-33. 24v29-31. 25v1-46. Mk.8v34-38. Lk.12v16-21,42-48. 13v1-5,24-30. 14v24. 16v19-31. 17v33. 18v28-30. Jn.3v5,16,17. 4v13,14. 5v28,29,39,40. 6v39,40,44,47,54-58. 10v27-30. 11v23-27. 14v1-6. 15v5,6. etc.

The certainty of God's promise to us of the immortality of believers was confirmed and manifested in our Lord's glorious resurrection, and because He lives we shall live also. Jn.14v19. Mt.28v1-20. Lk.24v1-53. Jn.20v1-31. 21v1-25. However, as yet, only Jesus has received a glorified body, Old Testament saints and Christians have to wait until the first resurrection for their glorified bodies. The redeeming work of Jesus guarantees the resurrection, glorification and immortality of our bodies; Jesus will "transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body." Phil.3v21. See 2Cor.5v4., "For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life." The unclothing that Paul is referring to here, is death of the body; the clothing upon, is the gift of an immortal glorified body at the resurrection. 1Cor.15v50-53. 1Thes.4v13-17.

IS THE SOUL OF THE WICKED IMMORTAL?

Some Theologians have stated that some Church fathers have questioned whether the souls of the wicked are immortal. F.W. Farrar informs us on page 236 of his book, "Mercy and Judgement," that Justin Martyr, said, "Such as are worthy to see God die no more, but others shall undergo punishment as long as it shall please Him that they shall exist and be punished. I must confess – that these words still seem to me to imply an opinion on the part of St. Justin that at the end of a certain time, defined by the will of God, the punishment of souls shall cease either by the cessation of their existence or the removal of their punishment." End of quote.

On page 239 and 240, Farrar suggests that there may be a difference between eternal "aionios," and endless, "ateleutetos," he writes: - "Now St. Irenaeus {of course} uses the phrase 'eternal punishment,' or 'eternal fire,' as all use those phrases who accept the Bible; and in one passage he says that 'the good things of God, being eternal and endless, the privation of them also is eternal and endless.' Certainly this passage shows his opinion that the 'pain of loss' {as we all believe} may be eternal and endless; though if 'eternal' {aionios} meant endless {ateleutetos}, then the latter word is pure tautology. That phrase inclines me to believe that St. Irenaeus adopted the high Johannine sense of the word "aionios," taken alone, though he added to it the connotation of endlessness."

On page 241 and 242 Farrar states, "Irenaeus meant {as he expressly says} that immortality is not an inherent quality of souls, but the gift of God; and he therefore clearly held that He who gives could also take it away." End of quotes.

In these quotes Farrar suggests that that God may simply withdraw His gift of immortality, and the soul may cease to exist. Many have had difficulty in accepting this theology, but it is certainly to be preferred to the dark and cruel viewpoint of Augustine, which put all unbaptised infants, and all the heathen who had not heard the Gospel, into Hell forever. The fact that thoughtful Church leaders have said that God may withdraw His gift of immortality of soul, means that we should not dismiss them, or their theology, without considering it. This theology has obviously been put forward in order to defend the character of God, and we can admire their desire to do this.

The Scriptures reveal that there is no annihilation of the soul at death, or even when people are put in the lake of fire, for we read that the false prophet and the Antichrist will still be in the lake of fire 1,000 years after they are put in there. Rev.19v3,20. 20v10 21v8. However, it is certainly not unreasonable, and many think not unscriptural, for theologians like Farrar to ask the question, "Will God, at some time in the future, refuse to sustain the existence of evil people and wicked angels?" This is not quite the same as direct annihilation, even if the result is the same. Will God will sustain forever evil and destructive beings, whose reason and personality are being destroyed by the gnawing worm of evil within them? Mt.9v44,46,48. Our concluding thoughts in this study may shed some light on this subject.

CAN THE SOUL BE DESTROYED AS WELL AS THE BODY?

Some have said that because we are made in the image of God our souls must be immortal, but this cannot be correct for our bodies die, and these are made in God's image too. Most expositors, from the Reformation onwards, have said that immortality is a continual gift of God, and that God chooses to sustain for ever the existence of all beings, not only the righteous, but also the lost. Does God allow the souls of the wicked to cease to exist? What do the Scriptures say on this subject?

In Mt.10v28. Jesus speaks of destruction of soul as well as the body in Hell.

Jesus said in Matt.10v28., "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy ("apollumi") both soul and body in hell." Does this mean that the soul can be annihilated in Hell as well as the body? We know that the lake of fire destroys the bodies of both wicked men and evil angels. Vine states that "apollumi" and "apoleia," which are translated "destroy, destruction, perdition, perish, lose, waste, lost," do not mean that the thing or the person is disintegrated into nothingness, but that it is rendered useless and is of no more value for its original design or purpose. This is true. Vine also writes that the idea is not extinction, but ruin; loss, not of being, but of well-being, and that this is made clear from its use. This is also true, but is it the whole truth? Is extinction and annihilation totally excluded? Or is Vine influenced by his desire to protect his traditional viewpoint of eternal punishment? Can death of the body mean destruction, but destruction of the soul only mean ruin? Let us examine the evidence.

The verb "apollumi." 622, is a strengthened form of "ollumi," "to destroy," it signifies "to destroy fully;" in the middle voice, "to perish." "Apollumi," is used to describe a withered skin, Mt.9v17.; the marring and bursting of wine skins, Lk.5v37.; a lost sheep, Lk.15v4,6.; a lost son. Lk.15v24.; perishing food, Jn.6v27.; and even gold that loses its purity. 1Pet.1v7. It seems in 2Cor.4v9., that Paul uses "apollumi," to speak of destruction of faith and confidence, and emotional devastation and ruin, he writes, "Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." "Apollumi," is used of persons whose souls are defiled, injurious, and destructive, because of their love of evil, and who are lost and will perish because of that. Mt.7v13. 10v28. Lk.13v3,5. 10v28. 17v12. Jn.3v16. Rom.2v12. 2Cor.2v15,16. 4v3. 2Thes.2v3,10. James.4v12. 2Pet.3v9. etc. The most striking Scripture is Mt.10v28., where Jesus said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy ("apollumi") both soul and body in hell."

"Apollumi," is used to describe physical death, we read of the execution of the Israelites by Divine judgement, when they went into evil. 1Cor.10v10. Jude.v5,11. "Apollumi," is used to describe the plans of Herod and Israel's leaders to kill Jesus, Mt.2v13. Mk.3v5. Lk.19v47.; and the people's decision to choose Barabbas and destroy Jesus. Mt.27v20.; and their destruction by God on judgement day. Lk.20v16. In Lk.15v17., it is used to describe the prodigal's fear of death by starving. It is used in Lk.9v25., to show the folly gaining the world and losing our souls. In Lk.13v3,5., Jesus warns that unless we repent we shall perish. The demons feared that Jesus had come to destroy them, Lk.4v34.; and the disciples feared that they would die by drowning in the storm in Mt.8v25. and Lk.8v24..

The noun "apoleia," 684, is translated in the K.J.V. as "perish" in Acts.8v20.; as "damnable" in 2Pet.2v1.; as "damnation" in 2Pet.2v3.; as "destruction" in Mt.7v13. Rom.9v22. Phil.3v19. 2Pet.2v1. and 2Pet.3v16.; as "waste" in Mt.26v8. and Mk.14v4.; as "perdition" 8 times in, Jn.17v12. Phil.1v28. 2Thes.2v3. 1Tim.6v9. Heb.10v39. 2Pet.3v7. Rev.17v8. and 17v11.

"Apoleia," means ruin, loss, or destruction. It is used of the waste of ointment in Mt.26v8. and Mk.14v4.; of money and Simon perishing in Acts.8v20.; and the ruin and destruction of a person's soul in Mt.7v13. Jn.17v12.. In Jn.17v12. and 2Thes.2v3., Judas and Antichrist are described as "the son of perdition," and Rev.17v8,11., states that Antichrist will go on to destruction. In Rom.9v22., it describes Pharaoh and the like as "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction," the middle voice indicates that these "vessels of wrath" fitted themselves for "destruction." In Phil.1v28., the foes of Christians have their destruction proved to them by the way that Christians face them. In Phil.3v19., Paul warns that some professing Christians are enemies of the cross of Christ, and their end is destruction. In Heb.10v39., we read, "But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul." In 2Pet.2v1,3., Peter warns of the destructive heresies and destruction of false teachers, and in 2Pet.3v7., of the destruction of ungodly men on the day of judgement. In 2Pet.3v16., Peter warns that ignorant unstable people can wrest Paul's writings and the Scriptures to their own destruction.

All these Scriptures show that "apollumi" and "apoleia," can be applied to various situations and events, and vary in their emphasis and meaning. However, the use of "apollumi" and "apoleia" certainly does not exclude the destruction of a person's soul. We ask again, Can "apollumi" and "apoleia" be used to state that death of the body mean destruction, but destruction of the soul only mean ruin? There can be no doubt that the answer must definitely be in the negative. We have to scrutinise other evidence from the Scriptures to find out whether God sustains the souls of the wicked in Hell forever. The verb "olothreuo," 3645, from "olethros," means, to destroy, is used of the angel killing Egypt's firstborn in Heb.11v28.."

Paul also speaks of the everlasting destruction of the wicked.

In 2Thes.1v9., Paul writes, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Here "destruction," is the noun "olethros," 3639, which means destruction, death, (it is also derived from "ollumi," to destroy). "Olethros," is always translated as destruction in the A.V., it occurs four times in the New Testament. It is used in 1Cor.5v5., of "the destruction of the flesh," by the discipline by Paul and the Corinthian Church of the man who had committed incest. In 1Thes.5v3., of "sudden destruction" coming on the wicked at the return of Christ; and in 2Tim.1v9., of their being "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." In 1Tim.6v9,10., Paul warns of the ruin and destruction of those who love money, and states that the ambitious and greedy rich "fall into temptation and a snare ("pagis," a snare, trap, or noose 2Tim.2v26.), and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction ("olethros") and perdition ("apoleia")." Paul warns that lust after wealth in this world leads to total bankruptcy and destruction in the next world, Paul stresses the eternal nature of that ruin.

Joseph Agar Beet, in his book, "The Immortality of the Soul, A Protest," writes on page 31:- "In awful contrast to this blessed life stands, throughout the New Testament, the destruction of the wicked: olethros, apoleia, apollumi. These words are found in the New Testament in this technical theological sense more than thirty times. They are rendered in the R.V. destruction and destroy, perdition and perish, lose and lost; and convey in Greek the combined significance of these English equivalents. They denote neither suffering nor extinction, nor do they exclude these ideas, but simply ruin, the loss of all that gives worth to existence, whether the ruined object ceases to be or continues in a worthless mode of existence."

Does the choice of evil by the wicked, result in the self-destruction of their own being and personality?

Is it possible for an evil personality to survive forever? God may not even have to destroy the wicked, the evil that the wicked have embraced may well in the end completely ruin and destroy their personality and being. We know that Satan and his angels have existed for a considerable period of time, even though they have embraced evil. However, the disintegration of the personality of an evil person is a fact, evil does destroy both personality and mind. Jesus said in Mark.9v44,46,48., that evil is a gnawing worm that torments and eats away at a person. This gnawing worm of evil is part of the being, mind, and personality of the wicked. What a companion to have in the mind and personality! Living in isolation with this gnawing, tormenting and destructive evil within themselves will be unbearable. Can they live with it and survive mentally? Is this why Jesus and the holy angels examine the souls and spirits of the lost in Hell? Jesus and the Holy angels cannot be

gloating over the death of the wicked, for God has no pleasure in their death, or their suffering. Ez.18v32. 33v11. Are they waiting for the time when being, mind and personality of the wicked are totally destroyed by the evil within them, and they cease to exist as a conscious being and personality? Does the evil within those who are in Hell so utterly ruin and totally destroy personality, that in the end reason, their being and personality no longer exist? If this is true it gives great meaning to Peter's words in 2Pet.3v9., that God is "longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Are there any reasons why God may sustain the wicked?

We read in Ps.19v9. "The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgements of the LORD are true and righteous altogether." And Rev.16v7., declares, " true and righteous are thy judgements." In Rev.19v2., all the inhabitants of Heaven again unanimously declare that God's judgements are true and righteous. Are there any reasons, then, why God could justly sustain the wicked in Hell forever?

a. Some say that people would say, "let us drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

Some Traditionalists have stated that there will be many people in Heaven who repented because of fear of going to an eternal Hell, who would not have fought the fight of faith and love, if they had thought that annihilation lay at the end of a wicked life. There may be some truth in this, for many have repented and turned to God because of a fear of going to Hell. However, this is certainly not true of Satan and his angels; God made the lake of fire to destroy them, and has shown them that this is their end, but even though they have seen the lake of fire, and have been always conscious of its threat, they have not repented. Mt.25v41,46. I believe that the final choice and eternal destination of the souls of men, women and angels depends on love for truth, people and God, rather than fear of Hell.

It is certainly true that in no place in the Bible is the annihilation of the soul said to take place immediately after the destruction of the body in the lake of fire; the Beast and the False Prophet are still in the lake of fire 1,000 years after they are put there. Rev.19v3,20. 20v10. 21v8. The words, "for ever and ever," which are used in regard to certain evil people in Hell in Rev.14v9. and 20v10., are the translation of the same Greek phrase that is used of the life of Christ and the throne of God. Rev.1v6,18. 4v9,10. 5v13. 7v12. 10v6. 11v15. Ps.45v6. with Heb.1v8. It occurs 11 times in the book of Revelation and it refers to the life, glory, sovereignty and worship of God and the Lamb, and it cannot mean anything other than unlimited duration. It is also used 7 times in the epistles to ascribe glory, honour, praise and dominion to God. Gal.1v5. Phil.4v20. 1Tim.1v17. 2Tim.4v8. Heb.13v21. 1Pet.4v11. 5v11. Hell endures as long as the throne of God, it lasts forever. Traditionalists say that the wicked are in it forever, whereas Conditionalists state that God does not sustain the wicked in Hell forever.

b. Does God use certain beings as an eternal example and warning to all of the end of evil?

We read in Jude.v7., that the judgement of Sodom and Gomorrah was an example and warning, "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Will God sustain the existence of a limited number of evil beings like Satan, Antichrist and the False Prophet, to give a perpetual warning and example to all of what evil can do to a person? Traditionalists say that the wicked will survive forever in Hell. Conditionalists state that destruction of the soul is at some time after people are put in Hell is a possibility and likely. The Scriptures proclaim again and again the everlasting mercy of God and His justice, however, a time comes when people will not receive mercy, and so God cannot give it. We are warned in Heb.5v10 to 6v13., of a lack of spiritual growth and knowledge through being spiritually lazy. Our conclusions should not be reached on the basis of intuition, tradition, or clerical pressure, but on the basis of ALL the truth revealed in God's Word.

5. HOW LONG ARE PEOPLE IN HELL? FOREVER AND EVER?

I know we must build our doctrine on the Scriptures and not upon revelations, but the following vision has lived with me for over 50 years, and so I repeat it for your consideration. On two occasions, between the age of about eight to twelve, God gave me the same awesome vision of a person in Hell and on both occasions He let me feel the mental torment that they were in. This torment came from the evil that the person had chosen and loved, and it tormented their mind in the most dreadful way. As I watched this vision God enabled me to feel a great period of time passing by; how long I do not know, I was not informed of the time scale, but I was given the impression of many centuries, or even ages passing by, and felt the hopeless future of this person, because of the evil within them. I am certainly not saying that this vision was teaching the traditional view of eternal punishment, for this vision did not exclude annihilation, but it conveyed with tremendous force, the determination of the unreconcilable wicked to sin eternally, and the pain that evil inflicts on those who embrace it. Now after considering these visions for over 50 years, I realise that God was revealing to me the way that the evil in evil beings, will torment, and in the end devours and destroys their mind, personality and being.

The lake of fire had already destroyed the body of the person I saw, and they were in the mists of eternal darkness spoken of in 2Pet.2v17. and Jude.v13.. There was no torment from God, the torment was caused by the gnawing worm of evil within their mind, as Jesus stated three times in Mk.9v44,46,48., (in most Greek Texts). In spite of the torment their evil was causing them, the person showed no signs of any desire for repentance and righteousness. After over 50 years, this twice repeated vision still lives with me, and I am full

of gratitude to God for sending Jesus to save us from our sins, and the horrific end of the wicked.

We, like those who beheld it, stand in open-mouthed wonder and astonishment at the sight of our Lord's anguished weeping over the awful fate of Jerusalem at the hands of Satan and the Romans. Lk.19v41-44. His sobbing shaking frame reveals, far better than any words, the great sorrow of God over the self-generated suffering and pain of those who reject His love, and miss the opportunity of their day of visitation and salvation. We read in 1Jn.4v8,16., that God is love, and in this study we will show that this is true in relation to eternal judgement, and that God is true and righteous in all His judgements, and not guilty of injustice or torture. All of the inhabitants of the kingdom of Heaven are totally satisfied with His justice; they all cry, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honour and power to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgements." Rev.19v1,2. 16v7. The Scriptures abundantly prove that when people repent, God's mercy always exults in triumph over judgement. (James.2v13. "katakauchaomai," 2620,- to glory against, to exult in triumph over, to rejoice victoriously over.)

The Canon of York, the Rev. Fausset, states on page 281 of His "Critical and Expository Bible Cyclopaedia." "The phrase "for ever and for ever" {eis tous aionas aionon} occurs 20 times in the New Testament: 16 times of God, once of the saints future blessedness, the three remaining of the punishment of the wicked and the evil one: is it likely it is used 17 times of absolute eternity, yet three times of limited eternity? The term for "everlasting" {"aidios"} in Jude.v6, "The angels who kept not their first estate He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgement of the great day," is from a word meaning absolutely "always" {"aei"}. Gehenna is used by our Lord in Matt.5v29,30. 10v28.23v15,33. Luke.12v5.; with the addition "of fire," Matt.5v22. 18v9. Mark.9v47.; and by James {3v6}."

However, the answer is not quite as simple as Fausset makes out, for the following reasons.

a. "For ever and ever," is used to describe the perpetual effect of judgement, when that judgement has ceased.

This is shown in Rev.19v3., in the judgement of "Babylon," that is, Jerusalem under Antichrist. See Rev.11v8. 18v24.

We have a valuable insight in Rev.19v3. of how, "to the ages of the ages," can speak of the perpetual effects of judgement, when that judgement has been carried out and ceased. We read in Rev.19v3., that after the Divine judgement on Jerusalem, her smoke rises up forever and ever. We know that the millennial Jerusalem becomes the joy of the whole earth, Ps.48v1,2., for from there the Lord Jesus rules the millennial earth. There are certainly no everlasting funeral pyres arising into the air from Jerusalem, or any other cities on earth, during our Lord's millennial and eternal kingdoms. The language describes the lasting effect of the Divine judgement on the harlot city.

Similar language is used over the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Similar language is used when God rained down burning sulphur out of heaven and totally destroyed these evil cities, and the smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace. Gen.19v24,28. Deut.29v23. We read in Jude.v7., that Sodom and Gomorrah "are set forth for an example suffering the vengeance of eternal ("aionios") fire." The fire is called "eternal," but it probably burnt up the city in a matter of hours, and only lasted until these cities were destroyed, but the result was lasting. See 2Pet.2v6. Their judgement is an example and warning to all. Is.13v19-22. Jer49v18. 50v40. Lam.4v6. Amos.4v11. The destruction was almost instantaneous, but the fire went out on completion of that destruction, but the desolation continues and is perpetual. The fire is said to be eternal because of its eternal effects.

In Is.34v5-17., similar language is used over the judgement of God on Edom and its capital Bozrah.

Bozrah at one time was part of Moab, but Edom seems to have extended its borders and brought it within its dominion. Is.63v1. Jer.48v24. 49v13,20,22. Petra was the capital of South Edom, and it also came under God's judgement. When Judah was taken captive to Babylon, the Edomites killed many of the Jews who were left, and God looked upon it as fratricide, for Edomites were sons of Esau, Jacob's brother, the prophets prophesied judgement on them for this evil. Is.63v1-6. Jer.49v7. Ez.25v12-14. 35v3-15. Joel.3v19. Amos.1v11-12. Obad.1v8-18. Mal.1v3,4. Nebuchadnezzar was part of this judgement. Jer.25v15-21. We read in Is.34v10., that "its smoke shall go up forever; from generation to generation it will lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever." However, God states that birds and animals will live there, so the picture of smoke ascending forever portrays a judgement that has perpetual effects, not perpetual judgement.

b. Even "everlasting (aidios) chains" only last until judgement day.

James Strong defines "aidios," 126, (from 104, "aei," meaning "ever," "always"), "as ever-during (forward and backward, or forward only)." Thayer defines "aidios" as eternal or everlasting. Vine feels that, "aidios," should always be translated as everlasting, and "aionios," as "eternal." Vine quotes Cremer as stating, "While aionios... negatives the end either of a space of time or of unmeasured time, and is used chiefly where something future is spoken of, aidios excludes interruption and lays stress upon permanence and unchangeableness."

However, we read In Jude.v6., "And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has kept in **everlasting** chains under darkness for the judgement of the great day." In Jude.v6.,

"everlasting," is "aidios," which is translated as eternal and everlasting, it only occurs here and in Rom1v20., where we read, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." These angels are said to be kept in everlasting ("aidios") chains in darkness in Hades until the great day of judgement. These chains, therefore, cannot be as everlasting as the power and being of God, for they only last until judgement day. We read that these evil angels come out of these chains of darkness in Hades for judgement, and then both they and Hades are cast into the lake of fire. Rev.20v12-15.

c. The Hebrew "olam," and the Septuagint "aion" and "aionios" are used of limited time in the Old Testament.

The Hebrew Old Testament uses "olam," and the Greek Septuagint uses "aion," and "aionios," for things that have a limited duration, as well as things that last for a long time, or forever. In Deut.15v17., they are used of the length of a slave's life. In 1Kings.3v12ff, of the time that the Temple of Solomon would stand. In 2Kings.5v27., of the length of time of Gehazi's leprosy. In Exod.12v24., we read that the blood of the Passover Lamb was an "everlasting" ordinance, but it has been superseded by the blood of Christ. The "everlasting" ordination of Aaronic priests has been replaced by Christ's Melchizedek priesthood. Exod.29v9. 40v15. Lev.3v17. Heb.7v11-28. We read in Gen.49v26., of "the everlasting hills," but they do not last forever. The "everlasting" ordinances of the Law were annulled and set aside by the New Covenant. Heb.7v18. 2Cor.3v7,11. Gal.5v4. However, as Paul makes clear in Rom.3v21., we must realise that the moral Law of God abides forever, this is the basis of the welfare and happiness of society.

d. The Greek New Testament uses both "aion" and "aionios," to speak of a limited period of time.

The Greek adjective "aionios" occurs some 70 times in the New Testament, it is usually translated as "eternal" and "ever," it is from the noun "aion," which properly means "age." Scholars tell us that "aion" has three main meanings in classical Greek.

- 1). "Aion," literally speaks of an age, in the sense of this present age, or the age which is to come.
- 2). "Aion," could speak of a very long period of time, which is much longer than a single age.
- 3). "Aion," could speak of the life span of a person, and Herodotus and others use it in this sense. People at public meetings said, "The Emperor for ever," "eis ton aiona." They said they wished the Emperor to live forever, but of course he did not.

The A.V. translates "aion" as "world," 36 times, and as "ever," 68 times, and the plural as "ages," twice. Eph.2v7. Col.1v26.

Barclay says that it was probably Plato who first used "aionios" in the sense of eternity in contrast to time, however, Plato said that eternity was the possession of gods, not men, and that there was no past, present or future, but only an eternal "is." However, Plato is not to be relied upon for truth regarding theology, his idea of heaven was endless feasting and being forever drunk. It is not the use of "aionios," by heathen Greek philosophers, but its use in the Scriptures that decides its true meaning.

"Aionios" is used to describe things and persons which are everlasting, such as the being, power, and glory of God, Rom16v26. 1Tim.6v16. Heb.9v14. 1Pet.5v10. It is also used of the rule of Jesus, Lk.1v33., and his redemption. Jn.3v16. 10v28. Titus.1v2. Heb.5v9. 9v12., and of the everlasting fire of Hell, Mt.18v8.25v41,46., which Jesus said was "unquenchable." Mk.9v44,46,48. (Jesus uses fire to destroy the wicked at His return. 2Thes.1v9. 2Pet.3v9-13.) "Aionios" is also contrasted with short periods of time, in 2Cor.4v18. it is contrasted with "proskairos," which literally means, "for a season."

Vine states that "aionios," speaks of a time which is not endless in Rom.16v25. 2Tim.1v19. and Titus.1v2., and says that it describes a duration of endless time in Rom.16v26., and in sixty-six other places in the New Testament. We ask, "How can we decide when "aionios" means unlimited time, and when it means limited time? Is it just a matter of opinion? Is it a matter of Scripture context?" Most people would opt for the Scripture context, but even the context of Scripture does not always give the answer to the question, for Paul in one context in Rom.16v25,26., uses "aionios" to describe both limited and unlimited time, this warns us not to be dogmatic about its use. The derivation of "aionios" is obscure and disputed. **Moulton and Milligan** say that in their sources, "it never loses the sense of perpetuus," however, they say the roots for "aionios" are too deep to dig for, but that in general it "depicts that of which the horizon is not in view, whether the horizon be at an infinite distance,-or whether it lies no farther than the span of a Caesar's life."

Augustus H. Strong, in his "Systematic Theology," pages 1029 to 1056, vigorously defends the traditional viewpoint of endless eternal punishment in the section, "Final States of the Righteous and the Wicked." However, on page 1044, he states that "the condition that is denoted by "aionios" "lasts as long as the object of which it is predicated." He concedes that "aion" and "aionios" "do not etymologically necessitate the idea of eternity," and that in expressing the idea of age-long, they "are sometimes used in a limited or rhetorical sense." He admits that in the following Scriptures "aionios" "can speak of a limited period of time. The comments are mine, unless otherwise stated.

1. In Rom.16v25,26. "The mystery which has been kept secret since the ages began ("chronois aioniois"), v26. but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal ("aionios") God." Strong admits that "aionios" is used in these verses in two senses," of both limited

time regarding the ages, and unlimited time regarding the eternal being of God. The NAS and NIV translate "chronos aionios," as, "for long ages past." The NAS reads, "according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past." The NIV reads, "according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past."

2. 2Tim.1v9. "His own purposes and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the times of the ages ("aionios") began, ("pro chronon aionion," as in Titus.1v2).

3. Titus.1v2. "In the hope of eternal life ("zoes aioniou," "life age-during"), which God, who cannot lie, promised before the times of the ages began, ("pro chronon aionion")." This has been variously translated as "before time began," "long ages ago," and "before times eternal," but the translation which gives the clearest meaning is Robert Young's, "before times of ages." In this verse Paul uses "aionios," to describe both the unlimited time of future eternal life, and the limited time of past ages.

4. Heb.9v26. "Now once at the end of the ages ("aiones") has He been manifested." Strong notes that "the ages," have an end.

Strong quotes Arthur Chamber's, "Our Life After Death," to confirm that "aion" and "aionios" are used in the sense of limited time as well as unlimited time, particularly in the light of "aion" being translated so many times as "world" by the translators. Chambers states: - "In Mt.13v39., 'the harvest is the end of the 'aion',' and in 2Tim.4v10., 'Demas forsook me, having loved this present 'aion',' - the word 'aion' clearly implies limitation of time. Why not take the word 'aion' in this sense in Mk.3v29., 'hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin'? **We must not translate 'aion' by 'world,' and so express limitation, while we translate 'aionios' by 'eternal,' and so express endlessness which excludes limitation.**" End of quote.

I also add the following Scriptures which use "aion" in the sense of limited time.

In Mt.12v32. Mk.10v30. Lk.18v30. and 20v34,35., Jesus speaks of this age, "aion," and that which is to come. And in Mt.13v22. and Mk.4v19., of the "cares of this age." In Mt.13v39,40,49. 24v3. and 28v20., Jesus informs us of "the end of the age," "aion," and events which will take place at His return. Paul writes in Eph.2v7., of "the ages to come." In Eph.3v11. of God's, "plan of the ages." In 1Cor.10v11. Paul states, "the ends of the ages have come," "ta tele ton aionon katenteken." In Heb.9v26., "at the completion or consummation of the ages," "epi sunteleia ton aionion." In 2Tim.4v10. 1Cor.1v20. 2v6-8., Paul writes of "this age."

N.B. Jude.v7. We read, "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Here the fire that destroyed Sodom is called "eternal ("aionios") fire," but the fire only lasted until Sodom was destroyed, however, the judgement on the city was permanent.

From these quotations we see that "aionios" can speak of the limited span of human existence, and Philemon.v15. confirms this, for Paul uses "aionios," to describe the life-span of Philemon, or his slave Onesimus, he writes, "For perhaps he departed for a while ("hora") for this purpose, that you might receive him for ever." Jesus used "aion" in Mk.11v14, to speak of the life of a fig tree, "And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever ("aion"). And his disciples heard it."

N. B. THE FAILURE TO TRANSLATE "AION" AS "AGE," CAN BE MISLEADING AND OFTEN HIDE VITAL TRUTH.

Some scholars say that in the following phrases, it can be misleading to translate "aion" and "aionios" literally as "age," or "ages," because they are idiomatic. However, the failure to recognise the literal meaning of "aion," or "aionios," can also mislead us, and hide essential truth. Many theologians and translators seem to have failed to recognise the theological importance, significance, and meaning that God desires us to see in "aion" and "aionios," and because of this have not comprehended God's wonderful plan of the ages. The translation of "aion," as "world," or "ever," has often obscured some of the truth that God wanted us to understand from His Scriptures. Consider the following.

(a). "en touto to aion." literally, "in this age," is translated in the A.V. as "in this world." Mt.12v32. The A.V. translates "aion" thirty six times as "world," and it often fails to carry the significance that God intended."

(b). "eis aiona." literally, "unto an age," translated in A.V. as "for ever." Jude.v13.

(c). "eis ton aiona." literally, "unto the age," is translated as "for evermore," or "for ever," or, with a negative, as "never." Mt.21v19. Mk3v29. 11v14. Lk.1v55. Jn.4v14. 6v51,58. twice in Jn.8v35., Jn.8v51,52. 10v28. 11v26. 12v34. 13v8. 14v16. 1Cor.8v13. 2Cor.9v9. Heb.5v6. 6v20. 7v17,21,24,28. 1Pet.1v25. 1Jn.2v17. 2Jn.v2.

(d). "eis tous aionas." literally, "unto the ages," is translated as "for ever," or "for evermore." In Mt.6v13. in Majority Text, lacking in Aleph and B, Lk.1v33. Rom.1v25. 9v5. 11v36. 16v27. 2Cor.11v31. Heb.13v8.

(e). "eis pantas tous aionas." literally, "unto all the ages," is translated in NKJ as "both now and forever." Jude.v25.

(f). "eis hemeran aionos," literally, "unto a day of an age," is translation in the A.V. as "for ever." 2Pet.3v18.

The Greek constructions of our "for ever and ever," occur in the following places."

(g). "eis tous aionas ton aionon," literally, "unto the ages of the ages," is translated as "for ever and ever," or "for evermore." Gal1v5. Phil.4v20. 1Tim.1v17. 2Tim.4v18. Heb.13v21. 1Pet.4v11. 5v11. Rev.1v6,18. 4v9,10. 5v13. 7v12. 10v6. 11v15. 15v7. 19v3. 20v10. 22v5.

(h). "eis ton aiona tou aionos," literally, "unto the age of the age," is translated in A.V. as "for ever and ever." Heb.1v8.

(i). "eis aionas aionon," literally, "unto ages of ages," is translated in the A.V. as "for ever and ever." Rev.14v11.

(j). "tou aionos ton aionon," literally, "of the age of the ages," is translated in A.V. as "for ever and ever." Eph.3v21.

These Greek constructions are used eight times to state that Jesus and the Father will live forever. Heb.1v8. Rev.1v18. 4v9,10. 5v14. 10v6. 11v15. 15v7.

They are used ten times to describe the glory, and worship that belongs and is given to God forever. Gal.1v5. Phil.4v20. 1Tim.1v17. 2Tim.4v18. Heb.13v21. 1Pet.4v11. 1Pet.5v11. Rev.1v6. 5v13. 7v12.

It is used once in Rev.22v5., to state that the saints will reign forever and ever.

They are used three times in respect of God's judgement on the wicked. Rev.14v11. 19v3. 20v10.

GOD'S PLAN OF THE AGES. Eph.2v7-21. 3v11.

As we have seen an age, "aion," is a period of time having specified and clearly marked characteristics of its own, a period of time of significant character; it primarily speaks of an age or era, and the events that mark out and characterise that age or era. In Heb.11v3., and Eph.3v11., we are told that God had His "plan of the ages," before He started any of His creation. From the start of Creation, age has followed age in a clearly marked sequence. By His foreknowledge God was able to map out His "plan of the ages," and has revealed to us the outline of His plan. Rom.8v28. In Eph.1v10. and 3v2,9. "dispensation," "oikonomia," 3622, signifies the plan of administration which a head of a family, or a steward, establishes for the management of his house. See Lk.16v23,4. 1Cor.9v17. Col.1v25. 1Tim.1v4. In Eph.3v11., Paul uses "aion" when he speaks of, God's "plan of the ages." When in 1Tim.1v17., Paul describes God as, "the King eternal," it can also mean that God is the architect and planner of the ages, He is the "king of the ages," Basilei ton aionon."

When the Trinity dwelt together eternally, before the creation of Heaven and Earth, and their inhabitants, no ages are recorded. This period of time before the creation, or the ages, is referred to in the Scriptures, as "before the ages of time." 1Cor.2v7. Titus.1v2. The Scriptures also reveal other ages which took place before the creation of man, the details of which are not given. The following broad outline of the ages is revealed in the Scriptures.

a. THE HEAVENLY AGES. This is referred to in Gen.1v1. and Job.38v4-7.. In this period the heavens were created and filled with angelic beings, referred to as Sons of God. It appears the angels were trained in this period for the next age. Ez.28v12.

b. THE EARTH AGE UNDER LUCIFER. In this age the earth was created and filled with inhabitants, and put under the rule of Lucifer, one of the greatest and wisest of the angelic creation, God says that he was "Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." The age ended, when Lucifer filled heaven and earth with pain, division and violence, through a lust for greater prestige, power and authority, he wanted to be as great as God, he said, "I will be like the Most High." Is.14v12-15. His ruthless ambition corrupted and destroyed his character, beauty and wisdom, and Lucifer, the light-bringer, became Satan, the prince of darkness, and he corrupted the earthly creation and so the earth was judged, and Satan and others were cast out of Heaven for their sin, and the suffering and havoc they had caused. Gen.1v2. Jer.4v23-28. Ez.12v19. Is.14v12-19. Job.38v8-15.

c. THE AGES OF CHAOS OR JUDGEMENT. During this time the world lay without form and void of life, waste and desolate. Job.38v30. This appears to be the ice age. Mastodons, animals which live on "tropical" vegetation, have been found in the icy lands of Siberia frozen in ice, but fit to eat, this shows there has been a great judgement and that it happened in a few hours for the animals had not had time to go bad before they froze. These long ages of judgement were intended to bring home to all angels, both good and bad, the horrific consequences of evil, and to prove to all that even this kind of prolonged judgement would not make these evil angels repent. This judgement did, in fact, harden Satan and his angels, and made them even more determined to sin and corrupt, injure and destroy God's creation. The ages of judgement and chaos ended with the recreation of the earth as described in Gen.1v2..

The Scriptures reveal that there followed seven different ages of varying lengths, in which God deals with man in seven different ways leaving no method untried where by men might be induced to live righteously.

d. THE AGE OF COMMUNION. Here God deals with man in His own glorious loving person. This is ended by man's preference for Satan's path of disobedience and sin. The temptation to sin would have come some time apart from Satan, so Satan was allowed to tempt Adam and Eve with the intent of putting backbone into them and making them hate sin. 1Pet.1v6,7. James.1v12-17. The good and lovely desires God had given were the basis of the temptation, "good for food," a man loving his wife more than God. Gen.1v2 to 3v22. 3v6.

e. THE AGE OF FORBEARANCE. God left man to his own choice, after making a way to return to God, by offerings. This age is ended by universal violence and misery, which forces God to send the flood. Gen.3v23 to 8v19.

f. THE AGE OF STERN JUSTICE. God left man to live in memory of a fearful punishment, and gives them a law against murder. This is ended by rebellion at Babel. Gen.8v20 to 11v9.

g. THE AGE OF PROMISE. God ceases to deal with all mankind, and gives a glorious promise of universal blessing through Abraham and his in response to faith. Gal.3v6-9. This is ended by a family, now grown to a nation, forgetting and neglecting these promises, where upon the Lord gives them the Law.

h. THE AGE OF LAW. God gave a perfect code of Law to the Jews, such as the world had never seen, so that the heathen realising its superiority might desire to join themselves to Israel and enjoy its perfect happiness. Israel however, constantly rebelled and forsook God and broke His Law, and cast away their privileges and rights, and preferred the cruelty and emptiness of heathendom to God's Law.

i. THE AGE OF GRACE. When Israel rejected the guidance and Law of God. God revealed His sacrificial mercy and grace through the life and death of Jesus, the world has made grace an excuse to continue in sin without fear of punishment. Jude.v4. Those who continue in sin that grace may abound, end in Hell. Rom.6v1-4. 8v6-13. Gal.5v19-21. Forgiveness is only for repentant sinners. Acts.2v38. 3v19.

j. THE AGE OF STERN DIVINE GOVERNMENT. In the Millennium God will enforce compulsory righteousness with a rod of iron. After enjoying perfect government and ideal conditions, many of mankind will rebel and try to destroy God and the Holy City. Rev.20v7-10. This age will end with the passing of the present Heaven and earth. Ex.38v10-16. esp. v10,11.

k. THE AGES OF AGES. The Bible reveals to us a vast eternity stretching forward during which the redeemed will taste with exquisite joy, the infinite variety of God's love and wisdom and power. This begins with the judgement of the great White Throne. Through its portals the vast myriads of creation pass either to the endless ages of life and peace, or eternal judgement and darkness. Those who love righteousness and hate evil will enter God's kingdom, those who hate righteousness and love evil will be cast into God's prison.

N.B. 1. Better names might possibly be found for the ages, but the main thought is that in each age God has tried a new plan with mankind, but they have defeated His loving purposes by deliberate wickedness and rebellion against God and righteousness. By not immediately dealing with evil, God has allowed His creation to experience the terrible effects of evil, and so a real hatred of evil has been burnt into the minds of redeemed mankind and angels. The happiness of the ages of ages will be based on the secure foundation of the full knowledge of the destructive nature and end of evil, and the fullness of peace and joy that is produced by following righteousness and God. Everyone will fully realise that God has done all that He could to save and redeem mankind, even to the death of the cross. It is essential to note that those in Hell will be those who have rejected God's salvation on this, or the other side of death. These are people who are totally unrepentant, and who hate God when they see Him. Jn.15v23-25. Those who hate God love death. Prov.8v35,36.

N.B. 2. In the light of these facts, we can see that it is often theologically misleading to translate "aion" as "world," or "ever." In many cases "age" should be the preferred translation of "aion," if we are to give it the deeper significance that God intended. From the evidence that we have considered, we can also see that "aion," and "aionios," do not always speak of endless time. _

EVERLASTING AND ETERNAL.

It has been said that of the seventy times that "aionios occurs in the New Testament, some of them speak of an act or process that happens at a fixed time, which is then followed by a result that lasts for ever. This is certainly true regarding "eternal salvation," Heb.5v9., and "eternal redemption," Heb.9v12.; we are told in Heb.7v27. 9v25-28. 10v10., that Jesus offered Himself "once" for our salvation and that "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all." However, the efficacy of the redemption and salvation in Jesus is eternal, and His covenant with us is everlasting. Heb.13v20. Similarly concerning "eternal judgement," in Mk.3v29. and Heb.6v2., the act of judging takes place during a short and definite period of time, however, the result of that judgement lasts forever. In the same way the "eternal destruction" spoken of in 2Thes.1v9., the destruction of the wicked takes place in a few seconds or minutes at our Lords second

coming, but the effects of that destruction are eternal. We also see that the goats who are cast into the lake of fire and suffer "everlasting punishment" in Mt.25v46., their bodies are consumed in the twinkling of an eye, but the effects of that punishment are said to last forever. Those who believe in Conditional Immortality say that this indicates the possibility that these Scriptures can be interpreted as teaching that souls of the wicked cease to exist, and the effect of that punishment is eternal. Those who believe in the traditional view of eternal punishment reject this viewpoint. Consider the following Scriptures.

Jude.v7. "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of **eternal fire** ("puros aioniou")."

Matt.18v8. "Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast **into everlasting fire**, ("eis to pur to aionion")."

Matt.25v41. "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, **into everlasting fire** ("eis to pur to aionion"), prepared for the devil and his angels."

Matt.25v46. "These will go away into **eternal punishment** ("eis kolasin aionion"), but the righteous into **eternal life** ("eis zoen aionion")."

2Thes.1v9. "Who shall be punished **with everlasting destruction** ("olethron aionion") from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

Mark.3v29. "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of **eternal judgement** ("aioniou_kriseos")." We do not follow the minority text reading of "eternal sin." The vast majority of manuscripts read "kriseos," "judgement," which occurs in A, C, K, Pi, the massive Byzantine manuscript evidence, the Lectionaries, the Syrian Peshitta and Harclean and others. The reading "eternal sin," "hamartematos," is only in a few manuscripts, Aleph, B, L, Delta, Theta, 28, 33, and 565.

Heb.6v2. "the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of **eternal judgement** ("krimatos aioniou")."

Heb.5v9. "And being made perfect, he became the author of **eternal salvation** ("soterias aioniou") unto all them that obey him."

Heb.9v12. "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained **eternal redemption** ("aionian lutrosin") for us."

Heb.13v20. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the **everlasting covenant** ("diathekes aioniou")."

Heb.9v14. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the **eternal Spirit** ("Pneumatos aioniou") offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Heb.9v15. "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of **eternal inheritance** ("aioniou kleronomias")."

Adverbs which can indicate "always" and "ever." "**Pantote**," 3842, means "at all times, always," is translated "ever" in Lk.15v31. Jn.18v20. 1Thes.4v17. 5v15. 2Tim.3v7. Heb.7v25., and as "evermore" in Jn.6v34. and 1Thes.5v16. It can have the thought of "on all occasions," as, in 1Thes.1v2. 3v6. 5v15. 2Thes.1v3,11. etc. In 1Thes.4v17., "pantote," is used to describe the presence of Christians with their Lord, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." In Heb.7v25., "pantote" is used to describe the amazing continual intercession of our Lord for us,

"**Aei**," 104, means "ever," "always," it carries the thought of, "unceasingly," "incessantly," or "perpetually," see Acts.7v51. 2Cor.4v11. 6v10. Titus.1v12. Heb.3v10.. It can also mean "invariably," or "on every occasion," as in 1Pet.3v15. 2Pet.1v12.

6. ETERNAL JUDGEMENT AND ETERNAL TORMENT.

In 1Cor.1v18-25., Paul states that God has made foolish the wisdom of the world, and that Christian truth is contrary to Jewish man-made traditions and stumbles them, and that Gospel truth is foolishness to the Gentiles. In 1Cor.3v18-20., Paul again declares that in God's eyes the wisdom of the world is foolish and vain. As a result of my studies, I have become convinced that many translators have been badly influenced by the way that Greek philosophers, and the heathen in general, have used Greek words such as "aion," "aionios," "basanos," "basanizo," and "basanismos," in their connection with eternal punishment. I also feel that the

horrific ideas of the Middle Ages, concerning eternal punishment are still influencing the translation of "basanizo" and its associated nouns. A holy, loving and merciful God does not use these words in the same way as godless, evil, and demon-dominated Heathen, or tradition-bound Jews.

A. WHAT DOES THE VERB "BASANIZO" MEAN IN RELATION TO ETERNAL PUNISHMENT?

A key to understanding what the torment of Hell consists of is found in the use of the verb "basanizo," and its related nouns. "Basanizo," 928, means "to test metals by touchstone," from the noun "basanos," 931, a touchstone of black stone, "Lydian stone," which was used to test the purity of gold, silver and other metals silver by the colour of the streak produced on it by rubbing it with a metal, and so came to signify any test by which the qualities of a thing or person is tried, and is used of any testing and tormenting trial or difficulty.

"Basanos," a touchstone, is used three times, in Matt.4v24. of tormenting and testing serious physical diseases, and in our Lord's parable in Luke.16.v23,28., of the torment in the mind of the selfish and evil rich man through his confinement in Hades, and his "fearful future expectation of judgement." Heb.10v26,27.

The noun "basanismos," 929, occurs in Rev.9v5. 14v11. and 18v7,10,15., where it is used to describe divine judgements.

The noun "basanistes," is used in Mt.18v34., of a jailer, who confined prisoners for debt. It only occurs here in the N.T.

The verb "basanizo," occurs 12 times in the New Testament, in Mt.8v6,29. 14v24. Mk.5v7. 6v48. Lk.8v28. 2Pet.2v8. Rev.9v5. 11v10. 12v2. 14v10. and 20v10.. The papyri may use "dia basanon" for the ill-treatment and beating of slaves, and in classical Greek and the papyri "basanizo," is used with the secondary meaning of "to test or try by torture," however, a holy and merciful God does not use "basanizo," and its related nouns, in the same way in the holy Scriptures as the merciless unholy heathen. We read in James.2v13., "For judgement is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy, but mercy exults victoriously over judgement.." "Katakauchoimai," to glory against, to exult in triumph over, to rejoice victoriously over. Divine mercy exults in triumph over judgement. The cross proves it.

The following Lexicons show that God does not use "basanizo" in the sense of torture in regard to eternal judgement.

Arndt and Gingrich in their Greek-English Lexicon, state on page 134 that "basanizo" is used of:

"1. literally of torture in judicial examination. Thucydides 8,92,2; Charioto 4,3,2; The Oxyrhynchus Papyri 903,10; 2Macc.7:13.; 4Macc.6v5.al.; Josephus Antiquities. 2, 105; 16,232; The Martyrdom of Polycarp 2:2; used on slaves. {Antipho 2,4,8; The Oxyrhynchus Papyri 903,10} 6:1." **{N.B. Arndt and Gingrich give no Scripture quotations under the heading of torture in judicial examination. From here forward I omit all non-biblical references}**

2. figuratively, of any severe distress:- a} mostly physical: in diseases, Mt.8v6.: Of birth pangs, Rev.12v2.: 'Art thou come to torment us'; Matt.8v29.; cf. Mk.5v7. Lk.8v28.; Rev.11v10. 9v5. 14v10. 20v10. b} essentially mental; Lot felt his righteous soul tormented by the lawless deeds {of the Sodomites}. 2Pet.2v8.

3. generally harass; a boat harassed by the waves Mt.14v24. cf. Mk.6v48., unless it be preferable to translate here: 'they were straining at the oars'." **End of quote.**

Bagster's, "The Analytical Greek Lexicon," says, p67, of "basanizo," "properly to apply the lapis Lydius or touchstone; metaphorically, to examine, scrutinise, try, either by words or torture; **in the New Testament,** to afflict, torment; in the passive, to be afflicted, tormented, pained by diseases, Mt.8v6,29. et al; to be tossed, agitated as by the waves, Mt.14v24.."

These Lexicons state that in the New Testament "basanizo" speaks of the severe test, distress and torment that circumstances can bring upon people, and that there is no thought of torture by judicial examination or judgement. The nearest thing to judicial examination by torture in the New Testament is in Acts.22v24,25., when Paul was almost examined by torture in the form of scourging.

In Rev.14v10,11. and 20v10., "basanizo" is used in the sense of judicial confinement, not in the sense of judicial torture. God is the jailer of the wicked, and it was the confinement in Hades and Hell that the evil spirits feared when they met Jesus. Jesus has the keys of death and Hades. Rev.1v18. In Mt.18v34., a jailer, who confined prisoners for debt is called a "basanistes." If debtors were not sold into slavery, they were confined in workhouses until they paid off their debts. The heathen often cruelly tortured those who were imprisoned for debt, the Law of God forbade such cruelty; so in Matt.18v34. Jesus is certainly not saying that the God of love sinks to the level of the devilish cruelty and tortures of the heathen. Jesus was using the illustration, as He does in Mt.5v25,26., of working off a debt in prison until payment of the debt was completed. Lk.12v59.

N.B. God's kindness is revealed in His treatment of those who were in debt under the Law.

The law of God regulated loans and debts. In God's eyes loans were acts of mercy and kindness, not commercial transactions. Ps.37v21. N.B. Deut.23v19,20. "To a foreigner you may lend upon interest, but to your brother you shall not lend upon interest." Lev.25v35-38. Exod.22v25-27. Deut.24v6. Neh.5v1-13.

Hab.2v7. Ezek.18v8,13,17. 22v12. Is.50v1. Debts were cancelled after seven years during the Sabbatical Year, Deut.15v1-6., and property was restored at the Year of Jubilee. Lev.25v28. Our Lord went further and was kinder than the Law, He told us to forgive our debtors. Mt.6v12,19-24. He warned us that of love of money, and lack of caring love and mercy, would end in confinement in Hades like the selfish and evil rich man, who offended God by neglecting Lazarus. Luke.16v19-31. If God was so kind and thoughtful over financial debts, and commanded His people to cancel and forgive people's debts, we can be sure that He is even more desirous of forgiving and pardoning our debts of sin, and our Saviour's death on the cross proclaims and assures of the truth of this.

B. AN EXPOSITION OF THE SCRIPTURES WHERE "BASANIZO" IS USED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT."

The verb "basanizo," 928, occurs in Mt.8v6,29. 14v24. Mk.5v7. 6v48. Lk.8v28. 2Pet.2v8. Rev.9v5. 11v10. 12v2. 14v10. 20v10.

1. In Mt.8v6., "basanizo" describes the life-threatening trial by serious illness of the Centurion's servant.

In Mt.8v6., "Grievously tormented," is "deinos basanizomenos," the present passive participle of "basanizo," to test, from the noun "basanos," a touchstone, "Lydian stone," it here describes testing sickness. In his "Concise Critical Comments," Robert Young translates "grievously tormented" as "fearfully tried." The boy, "pais," slave, "doulos," Lk.7v2., was very ill and confined to a sickbed.

In Mt.4v24., "Holden with divers diseases and torments," is "poikilais nosois kai basanois sunechomenous," it literally means, "compressed (or crushed, see Lk.8v45. "sunecho," 4912) with many coloured sicknesses and trials." Here "torments" or "trials," is the plural of "basanos," it only occurs here in Mt.4v24., and in Lk.16v23,28., where it is used to describe the torment of the rich man in Hades. In his "Concise Critical Comments" Young again literally translates "in torments" in Lk.16v23., as "in trials;" and in v28 translates "place of torment," as "place of trial." Confinement in Hades is a great trial that severely tests and exposes people's souls. We also see that both "basanizo" and "basanos" are used to describe the severe test of character, that the pain and distress of severe sickness can cause, and its use in this context is most appropriate. Satan said that prolonged serious agonising illness was an even greater test of Job's character and faith than his loss of wealth and family, when he asked God for permission to put Job to this test. Job.2v1-13. Jesus healed them all.

2. In Mt.14v24. and Mk.6v48., "basanizo" describes the test and distress the apostles experienced in a storm.

In Mt.14v24., "distressed by the waves," "distressed," is "basanizomenon," the present passive participle of "basanizo." In his literal translation Young translates this as "distressed," but in his "Concise Critical Comments," he translates "distressed by the waves," as "tried by the waves or billows." In Mk.6v48., we read that Jesus came to them walking on the water when He saw that they were, "distressed in rowing." "Distressed," is "basanizomenous," which is also the present passive participle of "basanizo," which translators have rendered as "toiling," in the KJV; as "straining," in the NAS, NIV, and NKJ; as "distressed," in the ASV; as "troubled and tormented," in the Amplified Version; and as "constantly distressed," by Wuest. However, Young translates it literally in his "Concise Critical Comments," as, "tried." In Mt.14v24. and Mk.6v48., "basanizo" describes the test of faith the apostles experienced while rowing in a storm. We read in Jn.6v18., that "the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew," the ship was being tossed about in a dangerous storm. It was dark, and about the fourth watch of the night, that is, between three and six a.m., and they were making little progress because a strong head wind was against them. We read in Mt.14v24., "But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tried by the waves; for the wind was against it. We read in Mk.6v48., "Mark 6:48 "And seeing them tested and distressed in rowing, for the wind was against them, about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He would have passed by them."

Jesus had to constrain ("anagkazo," to compel, or to constrain by entreaties) them to make this trip on the lake, because the fishermen's experience of the lake and weather had taught them that a storm was sure to come. Mt.14v22. Mk.6v45. Satan was the thirteenth passenger on the boat and did his uttermost to undermine their faith in Jesus. He exploited this situation, and tempted them to murmur and grumble at Christ's direction into a life-threatening storm. There can be little doubt that Satan also suggested that Jesus was insane to have rejected His opportunity to be made king, and deliver Israel from the Romans, and that His judgement was not to be trusted. The storm was the final straw for Judas, he welcomed and was corrupted by Satan's slanderous lie, that Jesus was a fool who had missed His great opportunity. The eleven other apostles continued to trust Jesus and row in faith, and said in their hearts, "We will always trust Jesus, no matter what happens." Judas rowed in bitter criticism, slander and unbelief. The distress the apostles experienced was spiritual as well as physical and mental; it was a very definite fight of faith, and a real test of their faith, love, obedience and integrity, and so the use of "basanizo" could not be more appropriate. Jesus and the Father, as is always true, would not allow them to be tested above what they were able, so when Jesus saw and felt their distress, He walked to them on the water to strengthen them in their faith. 1Cor.10v13.

A series of outstanding miracles was planned and performed by the Father and Jesus to test and strengthen the faith and love of the apostles. The feeding of the 5,000, Christ's walking on the water, the calming of the storm, and the miraculous transport to the side of the lake, were a series of miracles, which were designed to

prepare the apostles for the dark events of the next day; when many disciples forsook Jesus because He refused to be made king, and made it quite clear that His emphasis was upon spiritual realities. Mk.6v45-52. Jn.6v21,60-71. God ordered these events, in order to defend the eleven apostles from making the same dreadful decision to apostatise in heart from Jesus, that Judas Iscariot made at this time. Surely, then, in Mk.6v48., "Idon autous basanizomenous en toi elaunein." should be translated as, "Seeing them tested in the rowing," for this trial not only tested the apostles to see if they had gold in them, it also produced gold in all of them but Judas, and strengthened and protected them from being injured and discouraged by the general apostasy from Jesus that was going to take place on the very next day. Jn.6v64-71.

3. In 2Pet.2v6-8., "basanizo" describes the testing and tormenting effect of Sodom's evil environment on Lot.

We read in 2Pet.2v7., that in every day that went by, Lot was continually "sore distressed" (ASV), through seeing and hearing the lawless and lascivious way of life of the people of Sodom. "Sore distressed," is "kataponoumenon," the present passive participle of "kataponeo," to wear down with exhausting work, to greatly trouble and distress, it only occurs here and Acts.7v24. in the New Testament. It is translated as "vexed" by the AV, as "oppressed" by NAS and NKJ; as "distressed " by NIV; and as "greatly worn out and distressed" by the Amp. V..

In 2Pet.2v8., "ebasanizen," is the imperfect indicative active of "basanizo," it means "kept on trying," and reveals how Lot's righteous soul was continually tried and tested by the wanton evil deeds of the Sodomites. "Ebasanizen," is translated as "vexed" by the KJV and ASV; as "tormented" by the NAS, NIV, and NKJ; and as "tortured" by the Amp. V. However, "basanizo" here indicates much more than the fact that Lot was distressed; the evil of Sodom was a serious threat to Lot's integrity and salvation, every day was a severe test of his spiritual standing in God. In 2Pet.2v7., "kataponeo," has already stated Lot's distress at the evil of Sodom, so surely in v8., God wants "basanizo" to convey that Lot was spiritually and morally tried and tested as well as tortured by the evil of Sodom.

Robert Young confirms this idea in his "Concise Critical Comments," by making, "was trying," his first suggestion for the translation of the imperfect active "ebasanizen." So again the use of "basanizo" could not be more appropriate, it means to test metals, particularly gold and silver, and Sodom and Satan had tested Lot to the limit of his endurance and faith. God calls him "righteous Lot," which shows that even after living in Sodom, there was still some gold in his character. Here again the test and the distress was in the mind, soul and spirit..

4. In Rev.12v2.. "basanizo" describes the testing circumstances and pain of Christians in the last years of this age.

John says the woman was "travailing in birth," "odinousa," (from "odin," birthpangs), the present active participle of "odino," it only occurs here and in Gal.4v27.. For "odin," birthpangs, see, 1Thes.5v3. Acts.2 v24. Matt.24v8. "And in pain," is "kai basanizomene," the present passive participle of "basanizo;" Robert Young in his, "Concise Critical Comments," translates, "and in pain to give birth," as "and tried to bring forth." This is the only place in the New Testament where "basanizo" is used in the sense of childbirth. It is used in this way here, because the woman represents a group of Christians, "who have the testimony of Jesus Christ," Rev.12v17., who suffer very severe persecution as they try to win people in Israel to Christ, and warn them that Antichrist has deliberately deceived them, and that his real intentions are to subjugate, oppress and destroy Israel. The witness of these Christians, and the manifestation of the power gifts of the Two Witnesses, and the fulfilment of their prophecies concerning the evil intentions of Antichrist, brings many devout Jews in Israel, and probably Gentiles too, into a saving knowledge of Jesus; this is the birth of the manchild.

Christians who heed our Lord's prophetic warnings in Mt.24v15-28 and Lk.21v20-24.; will flee from Jerusalem and Judea and escape from Antichrist. However, by the time the people who make up "the manchild" are converted, they will be surrounded by Antichrist's armies and will be unable to escape, and so they will be martyred almost immediately after becoming Christians. This is what is meant by Rev.12v11., "they loved not their lives to the death." The Christians who make up the manchild will be caught up to the throne of God by martyrdom, they are "promoted to glory" by death. 2Pet.1v14. 2Tim.4v6-8. 2Cor.5v6-11. Phil.1v21-23. These converts, with many others, are going to rule the world with Jesus in the Millennial age. Ps.2v9. Rev.2v26,27. 12v5. 19v15. This shows that you don't have to be a Christian of long-standing to rule with Jesus. The manchild, then, is a group of newly converted Christian martyrs, who are murdered by the Antichrist at the start of the last 3½ years of this age, at the instigation of the dragon, Satan. We see in Rev.12v17., that after Antichrist and his followers fail to kill the woman, they go to seek out and murder the other children of the woman "who keep God's commandments and hold the testimony of Jesus." These are Christians who have been converted through the mighty witness of the Christians that this woman represents, for they are spoken of as "the remnant of her seed."

The woman is not Mary, and the manchild is not Jesus, for these events are later than A.D. 95 or 96, when Revelation was written. Jesus states in Rev.1v19. and 4v1., that these events are "things which shall happen in the future." This woman represents a group of Christians, who are foreknown and specially prepared by God for the great tribulation. It is a group of praying people, with prepared hearts and special ministries for the last days, who will operate with awesome power as a prayer-warrior group behind the scenes. They are Christians who will operate in the fullness of Pentecostal power, clothed with the sun of New Testament experience, with

the moon of Old Testament prophecy and promise under their feet. The witness of the woman is not in word only, but in power with mighty manifestation of God's judgement gifts, as well as His mercy gifts of healing, protection and provision. Rom.15v18-21. 1Cor.2v1-5. 4v19-21. Rev.11v5,6,10.

Here again the use of "basanizo" is most appropriate, it perfectly describes the great trials and testing circumstances that the Church in the Middle East has to endure when Antichrist comes on the scene, and the opposition and suffering that they have to endure to convert and bring to birth the people who are called "the man child."

5. In Rev.9v5., we read of evil people being tried and tormented by evil spirits for five months.

We read in Rev.9v13-21., that at the sixth trumpet God commands an angel to set free a vast number of evil spirits, who have been confined in the abyss, and they are instructed to torment those who do not have the seal of God in their foreheads. These are the people who follow Antichrist, Satan and his evil angels into sin, and persecute, torture, torment, and murder Christians in the Great Tribulation. Those who choose evil will taste its bitter fruit, a suffering as great as that of the sting of a scorpion, they will find out how wicked and cruel evil spirits can be. God does not send good angels to torment the wicked, this is probably because it is not in the nature of holy angels, or a God of love, to torment people. God limits the attack of these evil spirits to a period of 5 months. They are directed to test and torment, but not kill, those who do not have the seal ("sphragida") of God on their foreheads, for five months near the end of the Great Tribulation. Rev.9v4,5. A scorpion sting, is very painful, but not necessarily fatal. These evil spirits are likened to a plague of locusts because of their number, and like scorpions because of the suffering they cause. This torment could be both physical and mental, or just mental.

In Rev.9v5., the A.V., "they should be tormented," is "basanisthesontai," the future passive indicative of "basanizo." The demons attack is said to be like the torment of a scorpion sting, "torment," on both occasions is the noun "basanismos," from "basanizo," it only occurs in the New Testament in Rev.9v5. 14v11. 18v7,10,15.. In his "Concise Critical Comments," Robert Young does not follow the other translators, as he does in his literal translation, but translates this, "literally: 'may not kill them utterly, but that they may be tried, -- trial as the trial - he may strike.'" In his "Concise Critical Comment," Young translates "basanismos," in Rev.14v11. and 18v7,10,15., as "trial." The use of "basanizo," is again very appropriate and significant; the wicked are both tormented and tested by these evil spirits, the depth of the evil within them is fully revealed by this trial and test of their hearts, and it will be revealed on judgement day. Antichrist's followers respond to the torment of these evil angels, in exactly the same way as they do to the judgements of God through of the vials. They refuse to repent of their evil lives, and the murder of God's dear children, and even blaspheme God to His face. Rev.9v20,21. 16v6,9-11,21

The star falling from heaven to earth, is surely the angel of Rev.9v2,11., "the angel of the bottomless pit," called "Abaddon," and "Apollyon," (both mean "destruction"). "Fallen," is "peptokota," the perfect active participle of "pipto," to fall, " which Rienecker says is the dramatic perfect and is like a highly dramatic historical present as in Rev.5v7., when Jesus takes a "book" out of the hand of the Father. The perfect indicates that the angel has already come down. "Pipto" is probably used to show the speed and force of the angel's descent. There is very little difference between falling, alighting and descending, and the angel of Rev.9v1., could descend like the angel of Rev.20v1..

"Given," is "edothe," the aorist passive indicative of "didomi," Rienecker states that this is the theological or divine passive and indicates that God gives the key, this refutes the idea that this angel is Satan, or another evil angel. The key of the Abyss belongs to Jesus, and He would certainly not entrust it to an evil angel. Rev.1v18. "The Abyss," is a part of Hades where unbelievers and evil angels are imprisoned, and where Jesus went to pay the penalty of our sins. Lk.8v31. Mt.8v29. See Rev.9v1,2,11. 11v7. 17v8. 20v1,3. Rom.10v7. Eph.4v9.

6. In Rev.11v10., we read that the followers of Antichrist had been "tormented" by the Two Witnesses.

The A.V., "tormented," is "ebasanisan," the first aorist active indicative of "basanizo." Robert Young in his "Concise Critical Comments" translates it as "tried." Again "basanizo," is most appropriate, God's judgements try and expose the hearts of Antichrist's followers. They rejoice that they no longer have to endure the plagues and judgements that these two great prophets have inflicted on them. The Two Witnesses, like Elijah, also stop it raining on Israel for the 3½ years of their ministry. 1Kings.17v1. Rev.11v3-6. These evil people stubbornly refuse to repent even after the continuous manifestation of God's mighty acts of judgement for the whole of the 3½ years of the Great Tribulation. When Jesus returns in power and glory the total hardness of heart and rebellion of these evil people is revealed when they turn their weapons on Jesus, and boast that they will destroy him. God derides their folly and quickly executes them. Ps.2v1-6. with Rev.19v19,20. Those who reject and oppose God's mightiest acts of judgements, and refuse to learn righteousness from them, are rebelling in full light, and there is little or no hope of their repentance and redemption. Is.26v9,10.

N.B. Rev.19v3. "And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever."

The conflict between the Two Witnesses and Antichrist takes place in Jerusalem. Here we see the effects of God's judgement on Jerusalem. As in Is.1v21., God calls Jerusalem, a harlot city, and He renames her,

Babylon, and in Rev.11v8., He calls her Sodom, because of the sins of the flesh, and Egypt, probably because her king claims to be God. Rev.17v3-6. 19v1-3. Ezek.16v48,49,56. In Rev.18v24., she is said to have shed "the blood of prophets and of saints," the very sin Jesus accused Jerusalem of in Mt.23v37-39.. The rulers, merchants, and all who have profited from the evil rule of Antichrist over Jerusalem, lament that the profitable harlot city has been destroyed. They are filled with anguish over the curtailment of their profitable and evil activities and pleasures. It is a terrible indictment of this city, and the wicked people who mourn over her, that the bodies and souls of men are placed last in their list of the things that this city traded in, even animals like sheep and cattle are counted of more value. The wicked look upon their soul as the cheapest and least important commodity. Rev.18v9-19

In Rev.18v7,10,15., the noun "basanismos," describes the effect of God's judgmental trial of Jerusalem. In his "Concise Critical Comments," R. Young translates, "torment and sorrow," "basanismon kai penthos," in Rev.18v7., as, "trial and suffering;" and in Rev.18v10. and 18v15., translates, "the fear of her torment," "ton phobon tou basanismou," as, "the fear of her trial."

From Rev.18v1 to 19v5., we see that all of Heaven's citizens rejoice that God has judged the harlot city Jerusalem, and proclaim the justice of that judgement. In Rev.18v6., the word for "reward" is "apodote," which speaks of a just requital, and not of revenge. Likewise in Rev.18v20., the word for "avenged" is "ekrinen," which also speaks of justice and not vengeance, the RSV reads "God has given judgement for you against her." Heaven praises and worships God for His judgement on the wicked. Rev.19v4. A voice from the throne, summons all God's servants to join in praise to God over these issues of judgement. In Rev.19v1-6., we have four tremendous Alleluias over the judgement of the wicked and Jerusalem, and because "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Rev.5v11. Heb.12v22.

All of the righteous rejoice that the sufferings of God, and the suffering of His people at the hands of the wicked, is finished forever. God's kingdom has been set up on earth. Is.34v10. 42v13-17. 63v1-6. 66v24. There will be heartfelt rejoicing and thankfulness when Satan and his angels and the rest of the wicked are confined in God's prison. This, is, of course, quite a different kind of rejoicing to that which takes place when a sinner repents, for there can be no pleasure over the death and eternal confinement of the wicked in Hell. Lk.15v7. Ezek.18v23,32. They rejoice that the pain and suffering caused by evil are forever banished from the creation. We also see in Rev.19v2., that all the redeemed are perfectly satisfied at the "true and righteous" judgements of God. They are "saying," ("legonton," the present active participle of "lego"), "Allelouia," this only occurs in the New Testament in Rev.19v1,3,4,6., and means, "Praise ye the Lord."

When our Lord's feet touch the Mount of Olives, a great earthquake takes place and shatters the city, and divides it up into three parts, according to Rev.16v19.; some of the old city is then covered with the waters of the new river of Ezek.47v1-12.. According to Ps.48v1,2., the new Millennial city of Jerusalem will be built upon the new mountain that is formed to the north of the present site. The prophecy of Dan.9v26., also confirms that the end of the present city of Jerusalem will be with a flood. This is quite impossible at the moment, it takes the colossal earthquake of Zech.14v4-8., which is also mentioned in Rev.16v17-20., and the consequent massive earth movements to make this possible. The Hebrew word for "flood," in Dan.9v26., is "sheteph," and is translated as "flood," in Ps.32v6. Dan.11v22. and Nahum.1v8. This flood is the reason why neither music nor voice shall be heard in the streets, and no work will ever take place in her again.

7. In Mt.8v29. Mk.5v7. and Lk.8v28, "basanizo" describes the fear demons have of confinement in Hades and Hell.

In Mark.5v7., the demons scream out ("krazo"), "What have we in common with thee, Jesus thou Son of the Most High God?" The demon then, amazingly, beseeches Jesus, and adjures Him in the name of God, "torment me not," which in both Mk.5v7. and Lk.8v28., is "mê me basanises," (the 2nd. person singular aorist subjunctive of "basanizo"), which Young, in his "Concise Critical Comments," translates as, "mayest thou not try (or test) me!" We also see from Mt.8v29., that the demons ask Jesus, "Are you come here to torment (or try, Young) us ("basanisai," the aorist infinitive of "basanizo") before the time?" Don't try me before the appointed time ("pro kairou") of judgement." From Lk.8v31., we also see the demons feared a test and trial of their lives before the appointed time of judgement, and, in their eyes, a premature time confinement in God's prison, the Abyss, for they implored Jesus not to send them into the Abyss, but to allow them to enter into a herd of pigs. Jesus allowed this, and all the pigs immediately rushed into the lake and were drowned. Jesus almost certainly knew that this would happen, and probably allowed it to teach both the apostles and ourselves, that we must not listen to the requests of demons, but should always dispatch them into the Abyss. Again "basanizo," is most appropriate here, for it surely speaks of a test and trial of the lives, works, and characters of the demons before the time of their final judgement, when they will be cast into Hell.

The demons recognised Jesus, but this is not surprising for He was their Creator, and before they followed Satan into evil, they, with all the angelic hosts, sang and shouted for joy when the foundations of the earth were laid. Job.38v4-7. That once beautiful angels have become totally malicious demons, is shown by the way that they continually and sadistically inflicted physical and mental pain on the poor man that they possessed. These demons forced him to cut himself, and the anguished cries that poured from his lips night and day, shows how grievously they afflicted his mind. God will certainly not descend to similar sadistic methods in His punishment of the wicked. The demons were filled with fear and terror when they thought that Jesus would

restrict their evil activities and imprison them in the Abyss long before the appointed time of their future confinement in the Lake of fire. This fear tormented them, but they still would not repent.

8. In Rev.14v9-11. "basanizo" is used in connection with the eternal judgement of Antichrist's followers.

The judgement on the wicked is said to last forever.

In Rev.14v9-13., a third angel proclaims to the world the warning that if anyone worships and follows Antichrist from this time forward, they will come under eternal judgement. This third angel tries to turn people to the way of righteousness by arming men against the fear of the Beast by warning them of the greater fear of Hell. At this stage of events people will see the terrible destruction about them caused by the wickedness of Antichrist. They will also hear about God's wonderful plans through the preaching of these mighty angels, so at this time, anyone who turns their back on God will have made up their minds in full light to sin for ever, and so are unreconcilable, and when Jesus returns, they defiantly fight Him, and blaspheme Him to His face. Rev.16v21. 19v19. Ps.2v1-5. When people see the misery that their sin has caused and say, "I love evil, and I am still going to be evil, and I hate God and righteousness," God cannot show mercy. It would be wicked to be merciful and forgive those who love evil and will not repent, and who are determined to sin forever. Jn.9v41. 15v22-25.

In Rev.14v10. God warns Antichrist's followers that they will be forced to drink. "Of the wine of the wrath of God."

God warns that He will lay aside the strong restraint of many ages and blaze out in hot "thumos" fury against the evil followers of Antichrist. God also warns of His more settled determined judicial "orge" anger, "the cup of his anger." In Rev.16v19. and 19v15., we have both "thumou" and "orges," the wrath of the anger of God. The strength of God's anger is said to be "prepared unmixed," "tou kekerasmenou akratou," literally "the mixed unmixed," it speaks of strong wine unmixed with water, but mixed with spices to make it still stronger, the wicked followers of Antichrist will drink of God's fury and anger, and will not escape.

N.B. Rev.14v9-11., is a vital key to the correct interpretation and understanding of eternal punishment.

This is one of the most critical Scriptures about eternal punishment, and a careful examination of it will bring considerable enlightenment. In Rev.14v10., "he shall be tormented in fire," is "basanisthesetai en puri;" Young, in his "Concise Critical Comments, says it literally means he shall be "tried in fire," which shows that the thought of being tested or tried can definitely apply here. "Basanisthesetai," is the third person singular future passive indicative of "basanizo," the singular emphasises that each individual will have to answer personally to God for their decision to follow Antichrist into evil. Also note that "with fire, "en puri," should read "in fire." Rev.19v20. 20v10. 21v8. Similar imagery is used in Gen.19v24. Is.30v33. and Ezek.38v22.. "Basanizo," can definitely here have its basic literal meaning of testing.

"In the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb;" "in the presence," on both occasions," is the adverb "enopion," 1799; a compound of "en," "in," and "ops," "the eye." "Enopion," is derived from "optomai," 3700, which means, to see, to look at, in the passive sense, to allow oneself to be seen. "Enopion," means literally "in the sight of," and is used in connection with both God and men, as in 2Cor.8v21., "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." See. Acts.4v19. 10v31. Rom.3v20. 12v17. 1Tim.6v13. In this sense it can mean "before," or "in the presence of." So Rev.14v9-11., states that the eyes of the Lamb and the holy angels examine the souls of Antichrist's followers in the lake of fire, and their reaction to their confinement there, and it also appears that the wicked are conscious of their presence.

What are Jesus and the holy angels looking for? Why are they examining the wicked?

1. Has justice got to be seen to be done, and proved beyond any doubt?

It is as true in Heaven as on earth, that justice has not only to be done, it has also to be seen to be done. The inhabitants of God's kingdom need to know beyond any shadow of doubt, that no one in Hell is repentant.. As Jesus and His angels examine the reaction of the wicked to confinement in Hell, they look for any trace of repentance; however, all they find in them is a bitter hatred of God, His children, and righteousness, and a love of evil, and a determination to sin for ever. The attitude of the wicked before the throne of God and in Hell will reveal to all the determined impenitence of the sinner and his hatred of righteousness. The wicked fearfully look forward to the day of judgement. Heb.10v26-30. However, though they wail over their confinement, they will gnash their teeth in bitter anger, and blaspheme God to His face. Rev.19v19. 16v9,11,21. Ps.2v1-3. Mt.8v12. 13v42,50. 22v13. 24v51. 25v30. Lk.13v28.

2. Is the revelation of this evil necessary to preserve the eternal happiness of God's kingdom?

Has the destructive effect of evil on the personality got to be manifested to all in the kingdom? We know that when Paul states in 1Cor.3v15., "If anyone's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire;" he is not speaking about Hell, but the judgement of the lives and works of Christians by Jesus, at His judgement throne, at His second coming. The context of 1Cor.3v15., is speaking of the loss of reward, as in 2Jn.1v8., not of loss of soul. However, the Scriptures do speak of people being saved out of the fire, we read in Zech.3v2., "And Yahweh said to Satan, Yahweh rebuke thee, O Satan; yea, Yahweh who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee! Is this not a brand plucked out of the fire?" And we are told in

Jude.v23., that fear can motivate people to salvation, we read, "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment polluted by the flesh." Will those who are saved purely on the grounds of fear of punishment need the sight of the end of the wicked to keep them from going into evil in the kingdom? Those who object to this thought, should remember that a third of the angels of Heaven went into evil in the presence of God, and have continued in evil, even after God made the lake of fire, and revealed their end in it. Both angelic and human history prove that the lessons of history are quickly forgotten and ignored. Eternity is a long time, do people have to be reminded of the effect and end of evil?

In Rev 14:11., "the smoke of their torment," "torment" is the noun "basanismos."

In Rev.14v11., "torment." is, "basanismos," 929, it is akin to "basanizo," it only occurs here in Rev.14v11., and in Rev.9v5. and 18v7,10,15., where it is used to describe the effects of divine judgements. Bloomfield states that "the smoke of their torment," "ho kapnos tou basanismou auton," in Rev.14v11., means, "the smoke of the fire in which they are consumed." In contrast, Robertson says that in Rev.9v5., "basanismos," is used in the sense of a limited penalty, here it is "for ever and ever," "eis aionas aionon," "unto ages of ages." I prefer Young's statement in his "Concise Critical Comments, that "basanismos," here means literally "trial," and says that "torment goes up for ever and ever," literally means, "trial goes up to ages of ages."

"Basanismos" speaks of a testing by the touchstone, a "basanos," a black stone which was used to test the purity of gold or silver by the colour of the streak produced on it by rubbing it with either metal; it is the act of testing, or the state or condition of those who are tested. It is used in both the active sense of testing, and in the passive sense of being tested. Here the smoke of the torment is said to ascend forever, it does not say that the torment continues forever as it does in Rev.20v10..

Christ and the holy angels are certainly not reduced to the level of the inquisitors, who put their victims through the most dreadful tortures in the name of God. In Rev.14v11., "basanizo" would be best translated in the passive sense, "to be tested or tried." Jesus and the holy angels test the souls of the wicked and their reaction to having their bodies taken away by the lake of fire, and being in chains of darkness. 2Pet.2v17. Jude.v6,13. Rev.20v10. Their tests reveal how the wicked still desire to practice evil, and how the evil within them torments them. This Scripture informs us that all who follow Antichrist and Satan will end in the lake of fire. Rev.20v14,15. 21v8. The lake of fire does not gradually roast people forever, it destroys the body in the twinkling of an eye, so physical suffering cannot occur.

There are two important things that we need to note about Rev.14v9-11..

a. This Scripture is not speaking of the heathen who have never had the Gospel preached to them.

It is referring to people who have seen the ultimate in prophetic ministry through the Two Witnesses, and the ministry of mighty angelic beings, and have rejected the truth in spite of all of this. It is extremely unreasonable and thoughtless to say that because a person has never had the opportunity to hear the Gospel they will go to Hell forever, and will never have the opportunity of salvation, even though they are crying for mercy and repentant when they stand before God. If this were true it would be impossible for anyone in Heaven to be happy, for they would realise that there were millions in Hell who had no need to be there. The only thing that will make Hell bearable is that all God's people know that it is absolutely unavoidable and that all those who are confined in Hell are determinedly unrepentant and totally evil, malicious, pernicious and injurious in their intentions. God will certainly not put people into Hell who are repentant, for this would be wicked and equally as diabolical as the murder of millions of people by Hitler and Stalin.

b. It is speaking of people who are irrevocably hardened after full light.

It is a terrible fact that evil can so destroy a person's character that even God cannot do anything to make them repent. The impenitence of the wicked causes all the righteous, not only to realise that the wicked must go to Hell, but also to rejoice that earth and Heaven will be freed from their evil influence forever. Rev.19v1-6. They realise that this is the only way which Heaven and earth can be free from sin and sorrow, and that if the wicked were set free, happiness would be impossible. God's eternal prison, "Gehenna," will ensure that God's kingdom will be free from sin and sorrow, God has chosen to put the wicked in Hell because life with the wicked would be a continual misery. If the wicked were put in a kingdom of their own it would be utterly destroyed in a very short space of time, and the suffering that they would inflict on each other would be worse than the isolation of Hell. Thus we see that social life, or community life of any kind, becomes impossible to the wicked, it is only mutual love and faith that makes community life a blessing.

When people wilfully continue in evil after God has confirmed His truth by mighty miracles, they become so hardened that it is impossible for them to repent. Jer.13v23. 17v1. Heb.6v4-6. 10v26-31. 3v6-19. Antichrist and his followers, like Satan and the powers of darkness, are hardened unrepentant unreconcilables. Even the prospect of confinement in Hell fails to bring the wicked to repentance, they have made an irrevocable decision to eternally love evil, and their imprisonment in Hell proves this. Rev.21v8. They are eternally determined to be wicked, their character in Hell is the same as when they lived. Even the Lamb and the holy angels as they examine and scrutinise the wicked find it impossible to find any trace of repentance, or any grounds for their release, they are proved unreconcilable.

The greatest torment of the wicked is a torment that they have chosen themselves.

It is the torment of a mind that is so twisted and deranged by evil, that it only desires and knows the lie and is

devoid of the truth. They have chosen, as Jesus says in Mk.9v44,46,48., to have an eternal gnawing worm of evil in their souls. Only those who have had a revelation from God about this can appreciate the suffering which a soul or spirit inflicts upon itself through loving evil. Even the prospect of the lake of fire, and eternal isolation and confinement, fails to bring the wicked to repentance, they have made their final decision to be wicked, as Rev.21v8. shows, the character of the wicked in Hell is the same as when they lived. Even the Lamb and the holy angels as they examine them find it impossible to find any trace of repentance, or any grounds for their release, they are proved unreconcilable.

There is no contradiction between the hymn-writers words, "For the love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind; And the heart of the eternal, is most wonderfully kind," and the words in Rev.14v11., where the angel states that the followers of Antichrist, "shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; And the smoke of their torment ascended up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night." The angel is certainly not saying that Christ and His holy angels are reduced to the level of the Roman Inquisitors, who put their victims through the most dreadful tortures in the name of God, and enjoyed doing it. This Scripture states that all who continue to follow Antichrist and Satan after the warning of the third angel, will end in the lake of fire, and this will destroy their bodies for the second time. Rev.20v14,15. 21v8. God is not saying that a person will be tortured and roasted alive forever. The lake of fire will consume the bodies of angels and men in the twinkling of an eye, so physical suffering cannot take place. Such revelations make us realise why God says, "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Phil.2v12.

No rest day or night. "They have no rest," is "ouk echousin anapausin," This is exactly the same language that is used in Rev.4v8., to describe the continuous praise of God by the four living creatures. Scholars say that "day or night" here in Rev.14v11., is in the genitive case form, the same as when Paul said in 1Thes.2v9., that he worked "day and night, and in 1Thes.3v10., that he prayed "day and night." The genitive case informs us that Paul sometimes worked both day and night, and sometimes prayed both day and night, but he did neither continuously without a break. Paul's instruction in 1Tim.5v5. for godly widows to pray "day and night," is also in the genitive case. In Revelation John uses the genitive "day and night," to describe the Living Creatures praise of God in Rev.4v8.; the accusations of Satan of the children of God in Rev.12v10.; and the torment of Satan, Antichrist and the False Prophet in Rev.20v10.. The genitive construction also occurs in Mk.5v5. Lk.18v7. Acts.9v24. and 2Thes.3v8.. Guillebaud concludes on page 24 of "Righteous Judge," that the genitive construction of this phrase suggests there will be "no break or intermission in the sufferings of the followers of the Beast, while it continues; but in themselves they do not say that it will continue for ever." End of quote. The words of Rev.14v11., "they have no rest day nor night," reveal that the wicked not only exist, but that they are conscious as well, at least for some time after being put in the lake of fire.

Scholars say that "day and night" continual action is expressed in Greek by the accusative case, as when in Mk.4v27., Jesus says a seed springs and grows up in both day and night.; and in the continuous fasting and prayers of Anna in Lk.2v37.; and of Paul's continual tearful warnings to the Ephesians in Acts.20v31.; and of Paul's prayers for Timothy in 2Tim.1v3.. Some of these may be a case of hyperbole, that is, an obvious exaggeration designed to produce a vivid and compelling impression, but they reveal the almost continuous nature of the prayer and concern that these great Christians had for other people.

The dreadful end of the wicked is compared with the blessedness of the dead that die in the Lord. The angel says they "rest from their labours," "kopon," and that "their works, "erga," do follow them" into the heavenly kingdom. The angel says that these Christians who die for their Lord are blessed. This is the second of 7 beatitudes in the book of Revelation. Rev.1v3. 14v13. 16v15. 19v9. 10v6. 22v7,14.

Jesus warns us that many Christians will die for the faith through dreadful persecution, and that we will need patient endurance to win through, when Antichrist is at the height of his power and fury. Rev.6v9-11. 13v10. Mt.10v22. 24v13,44-51. 25v35-40. "Patience," is the noun "hupomone," which speaks of triumphant fortitude and courageous steadfastness rather than the long patience of "makrothumia." It is worth noting that the Greek word translated "labour," can have the meaning of trouble, vexation, pain and suffering as well as the meaning of labour and toil. Mk.14v6. Lk.11v7. 18v5. Glory and blessing awaits those who are prepared to labour and suffer for Christ.

8. In Rev.20v10., "basanizo" describes the eternal judgement of Satan, Antichrist and the False Prophet.

We read in Rev.20v10., "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented {"basanisthesontai," the third person plural future passive indicative of "basanizo"} day and night for ever and ever." "eis tous aionas ton aionon." "to the ages of the ages." "They shall be tormented," is "basanisthesontai," the future passive indicative of "basanizo." For "day and night," "hemeras kai nuktos," see 4:8; 7:15; 12:10; 14:11.. "For ever and ever," is "eis tous aionas ton aionon," "to the ages of the ages." see 1:6,18; 4:9,10; 5:13; 7:12; 10:6; 11:15., etc. The devil will be cast down from heaven at the start of the Great Tribulation, Rev.12v9., then he will be imprisoned for a season in the Abyss, and in Rev.20:2,3., he receives his final doom.

God takes no pleasure in judgement, we read in 2Pet.3v9., "The Lord is not slack about His promise, as some

count slackness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. In Hosea.11v5-9., we see God's great distress over Israel's backsliding and wickedness, and His reluctance to allow the cruel nation of Assyria to conquer and dominate apostate Israel.

C. THE NATURE AND CAUSE OF THE TORMENT OF THE WICKED IN HELL.

We will now examine again the use of "basanizo," translated as "tormented" in Rev.14v10,11. and 20v10., for misinterpretation of these Scriptures causes doubts about the justice of God to arise in Christian's minds. It is important to realise that "basanizo" is used of severe distress of mind. In 2Pet.2v6-8., it describes the distress caused in Lot's mind by the wicked people of Sodom. Our God of love is certainly not guilty of torture. We must make sure that we are not influenced in our interpretation of "basanizo" from the usage of it by the heathen, we can only find its true meaning from the men of God who had a revelation of God and His character, and who were "carried along and inspired by the Holy Spirit," to write the Scriptures. 2Pet.1v21. We will now consider what is the nature and cause of the torment of the wicked in Hell.

1. The wicked are tormented by confinement in chains of darkness.

The demons in the man at Gadara implored Jesus not to imprison them before their appointed time. They feared the confinement and darkness of the Abyss, and being, "reserved in chains of everlasting ("aidios") darkness for the judgement of the great day." Jude.v6. We read in 2Pet.2v4., that the wicked angels who polluted the earth in Noah's time, "are delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgement." After the destruction of their bodies by the lake of fire, wicked angels and men are "silent in darkness." 1Sam.2v9. Peter also tells us in 2Pet.2v17., that apostates and evil men "are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever ("eis aiona). Jude echoes these solemn words when he says that evil people and apostates are, "Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." Jude.v13. When Jude.v13, states that the wicked are in chains of darkness "for ever," it uses, "eis ton aiona." Conditionalists would note that Jesus used this exact phrase, "eis ton aiona," in Mk.11v14, to speak of the life of a fig tree, "And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it." The tree was not immortal, the judgement lasted as long as the tree existed.

The demons in the man of Gadara preferred the darkness of the tombs,; this could well be because they were filled with terror when they saw the Deity and glory of God that is manifested in His creation, and wanted to avoid looking at it. Mk.5v1-20. N.B. v 2-5. Rom.1v18-20. Ps.19v1-4. Those who hate God's wisdom love death. Prov.8v36. The demons within the demoniac of Gadara sadistically enjoyed mercilessly tormenting him, and caused him to continually injure himself by cutting himself with stones. We can only rejoice and thank God for His permanent removal of such evil beings from society. The great Hallelujahs in Rev.19v1-6., are for God's judgement on the wicked. God's love for His children compels Him to confine the wicked to Hell, a prison from which the impenitent cannot escape.

God uses words which show His judgement on the wicked consists of curtailment of their evil activities.

The verb "kolazo," 2849, from "kolos," docked, means to dock, curtail, and prune as trees, and so to curb, check and restrain, and to chastise, correct, and punish. "Kolazo," only occurs twice, once in the middle voice in Acts.4v21., which reads, "So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish ("kolazo," curtail and restrain} them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done." "Kolazo," occurs once in the passive voice in 2Pet.2v9., "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgement to be punished ("kolazo," curtail and restrain)." God once and for all curtails and restrains the activities of the wicked so that they cannot harm anyone any more.

The noun "kolasis," 2851, is derived from the verb "kolazo," means, correction, punishment, and penalty. In classical Greek, "kolasis" has the thought of punishment for the betterment of the offender., in contrast to "timoria," which has the thought of outraged justice upholding the law and defending the oppressed. "Kolasis," only occurs twice., it is used in Mt.25v46., for "eternal punishment," and many think that "kolasis" has much the same meaning as "timoria" here in the New Testament.. In 1John.4v18., "kolasis" is used by John to describe the torment of fear, which is expelled by perfect love. The experience of God's forgiveness and love drives away all fear of correction and punishment. There may be a holy awe of God, but not a slavish fear, which destroys the enjoyment of His love. Heb.2v15.

In Rom.2v9., Paul states the wicked will experience "Tribulation and anguish," "thlipsis kai stenochoria."

The noun "thlipsis," means "a pressing, pressure," from the verb "thlibo," to crush, press, as a person in a crowd. It is used of the pressure of financial need. 2Cor.8v13. Phil.4v14.. It is used in Mt.13v21. 24v9. Mk.4v17. Acts.11v19. 14v22. 20v23. 1Thes.3v3,7. 2Thes.1v4. Heb.10v33. Rev.2v10., of Christians being persecuted, and of the Great Tribulation in Mt.24v21,29. Mk.13v19,24. and Rev.7v14.. It is even used of the pressures that come on married people in 1Cor.7v28., and of the distress of a women in childbirth in Jn.16v21.. The noun "stenochoria," is from "stenos," narrow, and "chora," space, so Rom.2v9. means, "pressure and confined space." These words describe the limitation of action that confinement in Hell brings on

the wicked, they will no longer be free to corrupt or injure anyone.

2. The wicked are tormented by their own total emptiness of soul.

In the end the wicked completely destroy their own happiness. In James.1v13,14., we read, "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. v15. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." Full-grown sin produces death, not life. True joy and happiness can never be produced by evil, only righteousness and "agape" love based relationships with God and people can produce true eternal joy and peace, "The work ("ma`aseh," 4639, work, effect, product) of righteousness will be peace, and the effect ("abodah," 5656, work, effect, result,) of righteousness, quietness assurance and confidence forever." Is.32v17. God demands righteousness because it is the only way to produce peace, and permanent tranquility of mind and security. "There is no peace for the wicked, saith the Lord," they destroy their own happiness. Is.48v22. 57v21. Satan and his angels have ruined their own peace, they only find satisfaction through sadism, and opposition to all that is good. When they are confined in Hell and restricted from all their activities, they have to live with the total emptiness of their own beings. People who try to find happiness through ruthless selfishness and possessions, have nothing when their possessions are gone. The wicked in the end have the torment of a totally empty soul. The opposite is true of the children of God, like the persecuted Christians at Smyrna, who were rich when they were totally destitute of material possessions. Rev.2v9.

3. The wicked are tormented by their unfulfilled desire to do evil.

The wicked in Hell can no longer do the evil things they got pleasure from, for the lake of fire has destroyed their bodies and eternally confined them. Satan and his angels only get pleasure from corrupting people and sadism, they cannot injure or harm anyone any more, and their evil pleasures are finished forever. The whole of the kingdom of God rejoices that the wicked cannot ruin the happiness of God's creatures any more, and that sin is banished, and love reigns supreme. However, it pains God to confine His creatures to the isolation and confinement of Hell.

4. The wicked are tormented and destroyed by the evil they love.

It is a striking fact that the Hebrew word "avon," means both "iniquity," and "the guilt, consequence of, or punishment for iniquity." When in Gen4v13., "Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear;" he was saying "My iniquity is greater than I can bear." His iniquity became his punishment. This is true of those in Hell, the iniquity within them is their greatest torment. We read in Prov.8v36., "But he who sins against me injures himself; all those who hate me love death." Those who sin against the wisdom and ways of God injure and ruin their own personality, and have an affection ("aheb" 57) for ruin of soul, death, and confinement in Hades. The torment of Hell goes far beyond eternal boredom, the evil that the wicked love is within them, and is their fearful tormenting companion.

The wicked have to live with the evil they have within them, Jesus describes it well when He speaks of the gnawing worm of evil within the soul. In Mark.9v44,46,48., He repeats three times, the solemn words, "Where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched." "Worm," is "skolex," 4663, a worm which specifically preys upon dead bodies. In Is.66v22-24., "worm," is, "towla," 8438, (from 3216 "yala," to blurt out and speak rashly, to talk wildly, to swallow, devour); a voracious maggot, Jonah.4v7., or the crimson-grub, which was used for dying cloth red. Though Mk.9v44,46., are lacking in Aleph, B, C, L, W, Delta, and some other manuscripts, they are in the vast majority of Greek manuscripts, A, 5th. cent.; D and N, 6th. cent.; Theta and Pi, 9th. cent.; most minuscules, 9th. to 14th. cent.; the Vulgate, 4th. cent.; the Syriac Peshitta, 2nd. cent., (according to Scrivener); and the Harkleian, 6th. or 7th. cent.; the Gothic, 4th. cent.; the Ethiopic, 6th. century; Augustine. Dean Burgon on page 510 of his "The Revision Revised," writes, "but we entirely miss many a solemn utterance of the SPIRIT, -as when we are assured that verses 44 and 46 of S. Mark 9 are omitted by 'the best ancient authorities,' whereas, on the contrary, the manuscripts referred to are THE WORST."

Eternal punishment springs out of the love of God for His creation, the torment of the wicked is all self-inflicted, they have chosen evil and it is the evil they have chosen that is their greatest torment and scourge. This is the last thing that a God of love desires, but even He cannot change the minds or desires of the wicked, because they have their own free will. God warns us in Jer.13v23., that those who habitually learn and practice evil, can no more change their ways than an Ethiopian can his skin, or the leopard its spots.

D. GOD'S VENGEANCE, RECOMPENCE, AND ANGER.

In Rom.12v19. and Heb.10v30., we read of "vengeance," and "recompence.

In Rom.12v19., as is Heb.10v30., Paul reminds us that vengeance belongs to God, "Dearly beloved, never take your own revenge ("ekdikao"), but leave room for the wrath {of God,} for it is written, "Vengeance {"ekdikesis"} is Mine, I will recompense," says the Lord."

a. In Heb.10v30., "vengeance," is the noun "ekdikesis," 1557, {from the verb "edikeo," 1556}. "Edikesis," speaks of the meting out of justice to all parties, and is used for vindication as well as retribution, punishment and vengeance, it occurs in Luke.18v7,8. 21v22. Acts.7v24. Rom.12v19. 2Cor.7v11. 2Thes.1v8. Heb.10v30. 1Pet.2v14. It is used in 1Pet.2v14., of the judgements and justice of worldly rulers and

magistrates. In Lk.21v22., Jesus uses "ekdikesis" to describe the angry Roman justice, vengeance and retribution in A.D. 70, and probably a preview of Antichrist's vengeful holocaust on Israel and the Church in Palestine in the last days. "Ekdikesis" can also include the idea of the acquittal and vindication of the innocent and righteous, as in 2Cor.7v11., where Paul uses it to describe the acquittal and vindication of the Corinthians, See NKJ. "Ekdikesis" is used in Lk.18v7,8, of just Divine retribution on Antichrist and his followers for persecuting Christ's Church in the great tribulation, "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? v8. I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" In 2Thes.1v8., we read of the manner of God's judgement on the wicked at Christ's coming, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:"

Moses defended an Israelite from an Egyptian who was oppressing him, and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. Acts.7v24. "And seeing one of them being treated unjustly {"adikeo"}, he defended him and took vengeance {"ekdikesis"} for the oppressed by striking the Egyptian down." In Rom.12v19., as is Heb.10v30., Paul reminds us that vengeance belongs to God, "Dearly beloved, never take your own revenge {"ekdikeo"}, but leave room for the wrath {of God,} for it is written, "Vengeance {"ekdikesis"} is Mine, I will recompense," says the Lord."

The verb "ekdikeo," 1556, is derived from "dike," justice, and so means that which proceeds out of justice; it speaks of the justice which vindicates a person's right, and avenges and protects the innocent and oppressed and punishes the oppressor. It is used in regard to the widow's cry for justice and vengeance, and her vindication in Lk.18v3,5., a type of Christians who are persecuted by Antichrist. It is also used twice in Revelation, in Rev.6v10., of Christians who have been martyred, praying in Heaven for judgement on those who had killed them, and in Rev.19v2., to speak of the vengeance of God on the wicked. God's vengeance speaks of strict punishment for a deserved penalty by outraged justice, it does not give any thought of the judgement improving the offender. See 2Thes.1v6.. Some have tried to say that the use of "kolasis" for "punishment" in Mt.25v46., carries the thought of punishment for the improvement of the offender, however, many scholars say that this idea of "kolasis" had little usage in classical Greek, and none in Hellenistic Greek. We are told that both "kolasis" and "timoria" are used interchangeably by leading classical Greek authors, including Aristotle, and "kolasis" is often employed where there is no thought of betterment. In any case in Heb.10v29., "timoria" is used of the punishment of the sinner.

The noun "timoria," 5098, means primarily help, it denotes vengeance and punishment, in Classical Greek it had a sense of vindictiveness, and outraged justice, it only occurs in Heb.10v29.. The verb "timoreo," 5097, means primarily "to help," then, to avenge, from "time," value, and "ouros," a guard, properly, to be a guardian or avenger of honour, and so to avenge, to punish on the behalf of someone, to vindicate. to avenge by redressing injuries, and inflicting a penalty. "Timoreo," only occurs in Acts.22v5. and 26v11., where Paul uses it to describe the bitter memories of his own vindictive ruthless anger against Christians before his conversion. While addressing the Jews in the Temple Paul states in Acts.22v5., "I went to Damascus to bring in chains those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished." In Acts.26v11., Paul states in his defence before king Agrippa , "And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities." The judgement of God has the anger of outraged justice, but none of the malice and vindictiveness that were manifested in Paul's persecution of the Church.

b. In both Rom.12v19. and Heb.10v30., "recompense," is "antapodoso" 467.

"Antapodoso," is the future active indicative of "antapodidomi," 467, to pay back, to give back in return for something received, and can mean either to reward and recompense good, or to repay and bring retribution upon evil with a penalty, and so to avenge. We read in 2Thes.1v6., "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense {"antapodidomi," repay requite by either reward or retribution} affliction to them that afflict you." Even worldly rulers can be "the minister of God, a revenger {the noun "ekdikos,"1558, an avenger, a punisher} to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." In 1Thes.4v6., God is said to be the "avenger, "ekdikos," who takes the part of those who are wronged, God is angry on the behalf of the oppressed, a God of Love does not enjoy judging His Creation. We read in Is.28v21., that Jesus and the Father's angry judgements at Christ's return are God's strange {"zuwr," to be strange} work, and His strange {"nokriy," foreign, alien} act.

Our Lord gave us the assurance of Divine justice when He stated in Mt.16v27., The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then shall He render unto every man according to his deeds." In Rom.2v9-11. Paul emphasises the impartial justice of God, he writes, "Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; v10. But glory, honour, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile: v11. For there is no partiality with God."

We read in Heb10v26-31., "For if we go on wilfully sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, v27. but a certain fearful expectation of judgement, and a fiery punitive zeal which will consume the adversaries. v28. Anyone who rejected and violated Moses' law died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. v29. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has contemptuously trampled the Son of God underfoot, and counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified an unclean and unholy thing, and insulted and outraged

the Spirit of grace? v30. For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The Lord will judge His people." v31. It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Those who are wilfully evil, and despise and reject God's great mercy manifested in the atonement of Jesus, will find that it is a terrifying experience to fall into the hands of a just Almighty God. Heb.10v28-31,38,39.

THE "ORGE" AND "THUMOS" ANGER OF GOD.

The anger of God and His punishment of the wicked is as much a fact of Scripture as the love of God. The two Greek words for anger, "orge" and "thumos," are applied to God's anger and justice, however, none of the evil characteristics of anger, which are seen in the works of the flesh, can be applied to God's anger, His anger is the anger of perfect justice and springs from love for His creation. Gal.5v19-26. Eph.4v26,31,32.

God's "orge" anger simmers, His "thumos" anger blazes.

"Orge" anger speaks of the anger that arises out of a settled disposition, and describes the simmering anger of God at injustice and evil in the world. "Orge" is used to describe God's weighed judicial verdict; His anger of justice. Rom.1v18. Eph.5v6. Col.3v6. Rev.6v16,17. 11v18. etc.. "Orge" describes the resolute habit of mind and attitude that God manifests in dealing with the sinner before the great day of His wrath. "Orge" occurs in the following places. Mt.3v7. Mk.3v5. Lk.3v7. 21v23. Jn.3v36. Rom.1v18. 2v5,8. 3v5. 4v15. 5v9. 9v22. 12v19. 13v4,5. Eph.2v3. 4v31. 5v6. Col.3v6,8. 1Thes.1v10. 2v16. 5v9. 1Tim.2v8. Heb.3v11. 4v3. James.1v19,20. Rev.6v16,17. 11v18. 14v10. 16v19. 19v15. The verb "orgizomai," is used in, Mt.5v22. 18v34. 22v7. Lk.14v21. 15v28. Eph.4v26. Rev.11v18. 12v17.

"Thumos" is a more passionate, and yet a more temporary anger, a "great but transient anger," "like fire in straw," quickly blazing up, and as quickly extinguished. "Thumos" occurs 18 times in the New Testament, 10 of which are in the Revelation, it is used to describe the wrath of God 8 times, Rom.2v8. Rev.14v10,19. 15v1,7. 16v1,19. 19v15., and it well describes the tremendous outburst of God's wrath on the day of the Lord, at the second coming of Christ. Everywhere else the word "thumos" is used in a bad sense. Lk.4v28. Acts.19v28. 2Cor.12v20. Gal.5v20. Eph.4v31. Col.3v8. Heb.11v27. Rev.12v12. 14v8. 18v3. In Rom.2v8., both "orge" and "thumos" are used to speak of the anger that those who will not obey the truth, will experience on the day of judgement. John the Baptist warned that the wicked chaff would be burned up with unquenchable fire. Mt.3v7. His uncompromising words to those who came to be baptised by him warn of the reality of the wrath come, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come." Lk.3v7. In Rev.14v10. 16v19. and 19v5., God uses both "orge" and "thumos" anger, to emphasise the strength of His anger on the day of the Lord.

GOD'S ANGER ARISES FROM HIS POSITION AS CREATOR AND JUDGE.

a. As a loving Creator. God's wonderful plans have been continually frustrated by wicked angels and evil men, who for totally selfish reasons have been willing to destroy the happiness of both Heaven and Earth. They have defied and hated God because His love and justice manifested their unrighteousness, and failing to repent, they could only see and hate Him. Jn.15v22-26.

b. As a just Judge. God's love drives Him to champion and avenge those who suffer injustice. The cries of the oppressed rise up to His ears. He watches and records all actions and thoughts in the world, and those who wrong the righteous and oppress the weak will receive the justice and judgement they deserve. God will release His pent-up anguish and anger at the suffering of the righteous and innocent, and will destroy both wicked angels and evil men in blazing anger and judgement. Is.34v1-8. N.B. v5 "My sword shall be bathed in Heaven." Is.42v13-17. 63v1-6. Amos.2v6-16. Rev.6v17. 16v5-7. 19v11-21. 20v1-3. Mt.13v36-43,47-50. 25v41,46. 2Thes.1v4-10. 2v8. God's anger is not the bad temper of a despot, but the reasoned righteous anger of a loving judge. It is aroused, not by His own sufferings, but by the sufferings of others. See our Lord's anger towards the Scribes and Pharisees, and His angry judgement on the wickedness of the Antichrist. Mt.23v1-39. Rev.6v17. The wrath and judgement of God mentioned in Rom.2v5-11., spring from His love of the righteous, and His determination to provide eternal happiness for them. The wages of sin is death, because the sinner is too dangerous to be left at large. God made the plan of redemption before the foundation of the world, and He Himself has paid the penalty of sin for those who repent, the Creator dying for the creature. Unrepentant eternal sin can never be paid for, that demands eternal judgement.

The result of people seeking their own happiness and pleasure regardless of the cost to others has been universal misery. One of the signs of the last days is that people will be "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." 2Tim.3v4. God's plan is that everyone will seek other people's happiness, for true happiness is a by-product of love for other people. Pursue happiness and it will elude you, pursue the good and happiness of others, and you find real happiness. The pursuit of ones own happiness, makes one indifferent to the happiness of others; the pursuit of other people's happiness brings as a by-product ones own happiness and satisfaction.

In essence there is no difference between God's problem and that of any ruler. Rulers have to preserve the peace and happiness of society, they have to face the opposition of those who would try to defeat this purpose, and in the end they have to liquidate malicious and malignant enemies. God has to confine to Hell those who oppose His loving purposes, for with the selfish unrepentant wicked at large there would only be pain, distress, and war forever, and happiness would be quite impossible. The only response that God can make to eternal sin is eternal judgement, otherwise happiness would be impossible for rest of creation. Mt.12v31,32. Mk.3v28-30.

We should thank God that He has saved us, by His great grace and love, from the sins and evil that make such a dreadful fate inevitable.

God does not use words which are used for the torture of His people by the wicked, for judgement on the wicked.

God does not use the Greek words which are used to describe the torture of God's people by the wicked, to describe His punishment of the wicked. In Heb.11v37. and 13v3., Paul uses "kakoucheo," 2558, from "kakos," evil, and "echo," to have, and so means to treat badly, to oppress, to plague, to torment, it is used in the passive voice to speak of the torture and persecution of God's people." "Katadunasteuo," 2616, to rule down oppressively with power, to exercise dominion against.. Acts.10v38. James.2v6,7. "Lumainomai," 3075, to mistreat, insult, make havoc. Acts.8v3. "Dero," 1194, to scourge thrash, smite. Acts.5v40. 16v37. 22v19. "Pascho," 3958, to suffer, to vex. Acts.3v18. 9v16. 1Thes.2v14. In Heb.11v35. "Tumpanizomai," 5178, literally means, to beat a drum, "tympanum." God's children were stretched like the skins of a drum over a wheel-shaped instrument of torture, and were then horribly beaten to death with clubs or thongs as it revolved, it is similar to our "to break upon the wheel." God never lords against, "katakurieuo," 2634; or exercises authority in a tyrannical manner, "katexousiazoo," 2715, and warns Christian leaders not to do so. Mt.20v25-28. Mk.10v42. 1Pet.5v3.

CONCLUSION.

As we have stated before, all the facts and evidence about God's truth have not been revealed, as Paul, even with his unique apostolic revelation of New Testament truth, acknowledges. He states in 1Cor.13v12., "Now we see but a dim and blurred reflection in a mirror, as in a riddle or enigma, but then face to face. Now my knowledge is partial and incomplete, but then I shall fully know, even as I am fully known." Our present knowledge of eternal realities is only partial, and we should acknowledge it; there are facts about eternal punishment, "which are secret and belong to the Lord." Deut.29v29. So we should be gentle and avoid aggressive dogmatism. 2Tim.2v25. ("prautes.") We shall only "fully know" all the facts when God's kingdom comes, and we too are "fully known." The Conditional Immortality view that in the end God will refuse to sustain the souls of the wicked, and so they will cease to exist, could be true; for it is certainly a better reflection of the character of God than the traditional viewpoint of Augustine and Calvin. However, both Traditionalists and Conditionalists may have failed to realise that by embracing evil, the wicked may have committed a spiritual "hara-kiri," and that the evil they have embraced, will in the end devour and destroy their own beings. Mk.9v44,46,48. It could be that Rev.14v9-11., is telling us that Jesus and the holy angels examine the wicked in Hell until the evil within the wicked destroys their being and personality. When we get to the Heaven, our heavenly Father will reveal the whole truth to us. Until that wonderful day there is one thing that both Traditionalists and Conditionalists can full agree upon, and proclaim with total confidence, that God's love is perfect, and His judgements are always true and righteous. In the light of the Cross of Jesus, we are even more convinced than Abraham, that the Judge of the whole earth will do right. Gen.18v25.

God's prophetic words have puzzled and tested the greatest of the prophets. God often speaks in ambiguous puzzles, and even the finest prophets were at times greatly troubled, because they found it difficult to understand and interpret WHAT God had told them, and WHEN the events they prophesied would take place, and they had to earnestly seek God for the interpretation of their revelations, it was not a purely intellectual exercise. Numb.12v6-8. 1Pet.1v10-12. Even the great prophet Daniel had to be instructed by angels to understand the revelations that God gave to him, and even he could not understand some of his prophecies, for they were sealed until an appointed time. Dan.7v15,28. 8v15-27. 9v21-0-27. 10v21. 12v4. Rev.10v4. God's revelations about eternal punishment also sift, test, and expose our prayerfulness, love, and theology. Eternal punishment should never be confused with eternal punishing, for God will certainly not eternally inflict pain on the wicked, both Traditionalists and Conditionalists would heartily agree that our God of love is definitely not a sadist. We read in Hos.11v8., "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboim? My heart churns and is turned over within Me; all My repentings and compassions are kindled together." Doctrines on eternal punishment that deny this longsuffering mercy, amazing love, and righteous justice of God, must be rejected.

The righteous know that the wicked must go to Hell because of their determined impenitence, because if they were free happiness would be impossible. In Rev.19v1-6., God's children rejoice that the pain caused by evil is finished. If the wicked were put in a kingdom of their own, it would be a repeat of the great tribulation, and the suffering that the wicked would inflict on each other would be even be worse than the isolation of Hell. So we see that social life of any kind, never mind a happy life, in the end becomes impossible to the wicked.

The Great White Throne Judgement will disclose the wonderful grace of God, His innumerable strivings and pleadings with the souls of men and angels, for God does not want any souls to perish. 2Pet.3v9. There is nothing strange about eternal judgement, it is common sense, Hell safeguards and preserves the happiness of Heaven from the malice of the wicked. The Law of God is given to preserve the happiness of society, and just as human societies have prisons to preserve society from criminals, God is forced to have His prison for those who will not repent and are determined to be eternally wicked.

Most people do not realise that habitual sin can harden and eternally set the will in evil, and many think that the doctrine of confinement in Hell is strange, evil and cruel, and cannot be true of a God of love. However, if

you asked these same people if it was strange, evil and cruel to imprison unrepentant hardened criminals and murderers, they would say, "Certainly not, it is the only way to preserve society." Hell is the only possible end for those who have determined to sin eternally. Hell is not an act of cruelty by God, it is a place where cruel, hate-filled, evil people are confined to preserve the happiness of others. For a time God has allowed the wicked to make the world a misery, and this has made it obvious to all that the wicked must be put in Hell before there can be any hope of security and happiness.

Jesus said that those who reject Him, and see and hate both Him and His Father, have decided to sin forever, and would be eternally selfish and wicked if they had the opportunity. Mk.3v28-30. Jn.15v22-27. If an earthly judge were to let off unrepentant hardened criminals and murderers, because he said that he loved them, society would be enraged and they would say that the judge was unjust and wicked; yet how many think that a God of love must let off those who have rejected His salvation and are determined to sin for ever, regardless of how it would effect society. People forget that love is a desire for the well being and happiness of others, therefore, a just God of love must preserve the happiness of His subjects by removing from society those who would forever destroy any hope of happiness.

Jesus not only died to obtain forgiveness for us, and reveal to us His wonderful love, He also died to show that God is absolutely just and will uphold the law, and that only by Jesus paying the penalty of our sin could there be any hope of forgiveness. The Cross of Christ establishes the Law, and enables God to be just and yet forgive the repentant sinner. Rom.3v26,31., However, it warns us that God cannot forgive the unrepentant sinner. God sends people to Hell because they are determined to sin forever. God is perfect in His love, meekness, and gentleness, He is a perfect gentleman, but He is also the perfect judge and custodian of the happiness of His creation.

Mankind has already seen the effects of Satan's cruel and evil plans, and soon the world will experience the greatest blood-bath it has ever known, as a result of following Satan, and rejecting God's way of love. The choice is either war without end, or a Divine judgement on evil, which is followed by God's rule of love and righteousness, that produces peace. Is.32v12,17. After the judgement of the Great White Throne, God will make sure that there will be no more sorrow through sin, or any kind of sorrow at all, God will reluctantly commit to Hell, those whose desire to sin forever makes them a positive menace to the peace and happiness of all creation and His kingdom. Then He will place before His children those treasures which will forever satisfy and rejoice our hearts, endless variation, expansion, "creations beyond imagination", and above all the glorious revelation and presence of God our Father and our Saviour, who will be our eternal joy and delight.

NOTE:

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