

DISCOVER PROPHECY



Jesus- A Tyrant?

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A Vengeful God?

Is Jesus Christ vengeful? Does He look for opportunities to seek and destroy people? And what of those who will not choose to follow Him? The Bible says the righteous will inherit eternal life. Will the lost be bound to eternity in the pits of hell in agonizing torment? Many picture Jesus and God as vengeful. Actually delighting in the torment of the lost.

Samuel Hopkins, a prominent pastor and writer from a few years back wrote extensively on the character of God and eternity. Note what he says the punishment of the wicked is like. "The smoke of their torment shall ascend up forever in the sight of the blessed. There before their eyes this display of divine character and glory will be in the favor of the redeemed and most entertaining, and will give highest pleasure to those who love God." *The Works of Samuel Hopkins*, p. 457,458.

A picture of God is displayed that causes many to wonder whether God could be a loving God. How can a loving God torture people in the fires of the earth and find pleasure in it? This picture has caused many to turn away from Him believing that He is no longer real. Or if He is, not worth serving.

Robert Ingersoll, the son of a Baptist preacher use to listen to his father preach on the topic of hell as he grew up. Later as an adult, he heard his father again preach on the subject of the unrighteous wailing in unreserved pain and having no hope of ever finding a pause in the punishment and turned away from God. This is what he wrote of that day. "If God is like that, if God would burn millions and trillions of people, men and women, children and babies, I don't believe He exists. I believe He is a figment of a human imagination."

How unfortunate so many people have come to the same conclusion. They see God as a tyrant and conclude that He either can not exist or choose not to serve Him.

A Loving God

The truth of the matter is, God is not a vengeful God, looking forward to the punishment of the wicked in the pain of hell. He longs that all will come to Him and find salvation. "...not wishing for any to perish but

for all to come to repentance" 2 Peter 3:9.

What does the Bible say will happen to the wicked. It is clear that there will be a different reward for the wicked and the righteous. We know that the righteous will receive eternal life, but what will happen to those who choose not to follow Christ?

Burned Up

Jesus gave a parable to His disciples in Matthew chapter 13 on what will happen to the wicked in the last day. "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprang up and bore again, then the tares became evident also. And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this! Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

What are the tares and wheat in this parable? And what will eventually happen to them? Jesus goes on to explain. "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of man, and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one. And the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels."

Jesus said that both plants represent the people of the earth; those who follow Him and those who don't (essentially following the devil). They are to stay together until the harvest. The harvest, we know, is at the second coming of Jesus Christ. Notice what happens to the wicked at that time. "Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age" Matthew 13: 24-40.

Is hell fire? Yes, it is, but the fire only burns them up until they are gone. Not a place of torture throughout eternity. Notice Jesus Himself said that the tares (or wicked) will be burned up.

When Destroyed?

There are many other verses also that say the lost will be ultimately destroyed by fire rather than experiencing eternal torment in it. Note also the timing of that judgment. “For the wicked is reserved for the day of doom; they shall be brought out on the day of wrath” Job 21:30. Are the wicked being punished now? No, according to the Bible, that will occur later. And at that time, they will be destroyed.

“For the Son of man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His Angels; and will recompense every man according to his deeds” Matthew 16:27. When? When Jesus comes! “The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment” 2 Peter 2:9.

Eternal Punishment

The Bible says that the punishment of the wicked is eternal. However, it does not say that the punishment is eternal torment. The punishment is death and destruction, and that will be for eternity. Eternal death!

The Bible uses Sodom and Gomorrah in many places to explain the final destruction of the wicked. The angels, encouraging Lot and his family to flee from the city said, “Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, lest you be swept away” Genesis 19:17. If they did not leave the city, they too would be destroyed. Once they fled from the city, judgment fell upon the wicked city. Notice what happened. “Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven” Genesis 19:24. At that moment the city and the people were destroyed.

And the destruction of these two cities are an example of what the final destruction will be like. Note Jude 7. “Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them...are exhibited as an example, in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.”

Was it that the fire was eternal in Sodom and Gomorrah or the punishment of death? Is there a region in the middle east today that is still blazing in flames or has the city been ultimately destroyed; the result eternal? The result of the fire was death and that is eternal.

“And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” Matthew 25:46. What is the punishment? Death! If it were eternal life in hell, then the wicked would have eternal life too, though not at all pleasant. But the Bible contrasts the two. The righteous receive eternal life, the wicked, eternal death!

“He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes” 2 Peter 2:6. Just the same, the wicked will be reduced to ashes.

“And death and hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and first earth passed away” Revelation 20:14,15; 21:1. The burning in the lake of fire is destruction and death. The Bible calls it the second death!

Unquenchable Fire

“If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off, it is better for you to enter life crippled, than having your two hands, to go into hell, into unquenchable fire” Mark 9:43. Is this verse telling us that the fire will not be quenched and that it will burn throughout eternity? Are people screaming in pain and the lava of fire burns them only to prevent death and prolonged pain? What does it mean for a fire to be unquenchable? Let’s let the Bible define that!

In the book of Jeremiah the Lord was instructing the people to return to Him and seek Him in all the ways of their life. Instead of allowing the Lord to lead in their lives, they were following after their own desires, forsaking the law of God. He warns them that if they persist, He would withdraw his protection from them and the result would be the destruction of the city. Note how the city would be destroyed. “But if you do not listen to Me to keep the Sabbath day holy by not carrying a load and coming in through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I shall kindle a fire in its gates; and it will devour the palaces of Jerusalem and not be quenched” Jeremiah 17:27. As foretold, the people did not follow after the will of God. He left them to their own ways and in AD 70 Jerusalem was destroyed. There was a fire so big, history tells us, that the melted gold of the sanctuary ran down the streets. The city was engulfed in flames.

Is the city still blazing in fires today? No, of course not. Did the Lord lie? Absolutely not. Rather the fire could not be quenched. It was of such a large and enormous magnitude that no man could put it out. It had to burn until all that was burnable was consumed.

Today firemen still have fires that cannot be quenched. And when they come to a fire that cannot be put out, they just step back and prevent it from moving beyond the building and allow it to continue burning until it goes out with nothing left to burn.

Completely Destroyed

Instead of eternal torture in the flames of hell's pit, the people will be ultimately destroyed as if they never were. Here are just a few of the verses that teach this; notice the finality each gives on the final destruction of the wicked.

“For behold, the day is coming; burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff, and the day that is coming will set them ablaze.’ says the lord, ‘so that it will leave them neither root nor branch’” Malachi 4:1.

“Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more” Psalm 104:35.

“But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” 2 Peter 3:7.

“Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” Matthew 3:10.

“Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more” Psalm 37:10.

“But the wicked will perish; and the enemies of the Lord will be like the glory of the pastures, they vanish - like smoke they vanish away” Psalm 37:20.

“But transgressors will be altogether destroyed; the posterity of the wicked will be cut off” Psalm 37:38.

“The soul who sins will die” Ezekiel 18:4.

The Bible is very clear, “The wages of sin is death” Romans 6:23. Those who do not accept the saving grace of Jesus Christ will die! This final death is called the second death; of which there is no resurrection! “And death and hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire” Revelation 20:14.

Forever and Ever

How long is forever? Eternity? Well, that all depends on how its used. “...he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of his anger; and he will 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 goes up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night” Revelation 14:10,11. Is the torment for eternity? How long is forever? Let's let the Bible define forever!

Speaking of the custom of free slavery, we find a definition of forever. As in early American history, a person could choose to be another's servant or slave in order to gain a trade and financial security. This period of slavery lasted seven years. After that time, he was free to go, by then, possessing his own land, money and

a trade. However, if he enjoyed being the servant of his master, he could stay with him longer. Notice how long forever is here! “But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man,’ then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever” Exodus 21:5,6. Was the slave going to be with his master for eternity or forever? Forever in the Bible is until death! The servant would serve his master until he died. Not for all eternity!

Talking about Samuel and his dedication to the Lord at a young age the Bible defines again forever. “But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, ‘I will not go up until the child is weaned; then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord and stay there forever’” 1 Samuel 1:22. How long was Samuel going to serve the Lord? For eternity or forever. How long is forever? “So I have also dedicated him to the Lord; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the Lord” verse 28. Samuel was going to serve the Lord forever. And in Biblical language, that is as long as life shall last.

If the smoke of the people's torment was to go up for ever, how long are they to burn and suffer? Until they die! Until there is no longer life in them.

Forever is not as absolute as it sounds in biblical language. Jonah, speaking of the length of time he was in the belly of the whale said that he was in there forever. “I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, but Thou hast brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God” Jonah 2:6.

Destruction of Souls

Remember that according to the Bible, mankind is made up of both the body and breath of life. This combination makes the soul. Take either away and the result is death! “Then the Lord formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” Genesis 2:7. But in the end, God will destroy the soul. He will destroy the people. And this destruction shall be complete, not partial. “Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both the body and the soul in hell” Matthew 10:28.

The result of that destruction will be a complete death, with nothing left to consume. “Behold, they have become like stubble, fire burns them; they cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame; there

will be no coal to warm by, nor a fire to sit by” Isaiah 47:14. Once the people are consumed and burned, having nothing left, the fires of hell will go out. They cannot be quenched, but once the substance of the flame is gone it will die too.

Death Is Justice and Mercy

You’ve heard some reports of Mad Cow Disease that over the past few years seems to be running throughout a great deal of the cattle. This disease, causing the cows to go mad spreads from cow to cow. If we as humans consume the meat, we too would become greatly sick and mentally impaired with the possibility of death.

The cattle then becomes useless. To keep infected cattle around that are now carriers of the disease will only allow it to spread to others. So, in the best interest of those who do not contain the disease, the ranchers destroy the cattle.

Once the infected cattle are killed, they must rid themselves of the carcasses. Usually they dig a massive pit and throw the bodies of the animals into it. After dousing the creatures with fuel they ignite them in flames. The bodies are then consumed in the flames and the result, though very sad, is for the best interest of others on the ranch.

God, just the same is a God of justice. He is warning the people today of the outcome of the decision they make. However, He will not torture them throughout all eternity and find pleasure in so doing. God is a God of love, loving both the righteous and the wicked. Therefore being a God of Justice, He will punish the wicked. This punishment is death and it will be for eternity. Eternally dead!

But God is also a God of mercy. Instead of being a tyrant, finding pleasure in the pain of others, He will simply end their lives of sin for the best interest of the universe. There will be no trace of sin.

Because the people have identified themselves with sin and because God will destroy the sin, the people will be consumed along with it! I can assure you, He will find no pleasure in the destruction of the wicked! Instead, it will pain him a great deal that these people, whom He sent his Son Jesus Christ to die for, did not take advantage of salvation.

In time the wicked will die and will be as if they never were. “Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more” Psalm 37:10. “For the day of the Lord draws near on all the nations...and become as if they had never existed” Obadiah 15-16.

The Destruction of Satan

What a sad picture of God people present. They have Him working hand in hand with the devil. Once the people are lost, He sends them into the pits of hell where the devil can torture them throughout eternity.

The devil is the one that started this whole mess and yet he’s the one finding pleasure in the eternal pain of the wicked? I don’t think so! If this were the true image of the Bible, I would understand why so many choose to leave God.

God delighting in the pain of sinners! Satan the cause of sin but not being held accountable for it! Is this what the Bible says hell is like? Of course not! Satan will get his!

“Therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering Cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; it has consumed you, and have turned you to ashes on the earth in the eyes of all who see you. All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have become terrified, and you will be no more” Ezekiel 28:16,18,19.

That sounds more like it! Rather than the devil running around the caves of hell with a pitch fork and finding great pleasure in the torture of the wicked, neither being punished or held accountable for his own actions, we see God destroying him too. There really will be no trace of sin in the entire universe; even Satan will be destroyed!

Forsake your Ways

Isn’t God good? He is indeed a God of mercy and justice! Rather than serving him out of a motivation of fear, let us serve and worship Him because of the salvation that he has offered to us. Don’t fall for the fear tactics of others. God doesn’t want you to follow Him out of a motivation of fear, but rather out of a love for Him. Though the wicked will be destroyed, focus instead upon the salvation offered. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and I will have compassion on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” Isaiah 55:7.

Jesus wants you to be eternally saved! Whether you are or not, is entirely up to you. The choice is yours. Now that you understand that the love of God extends even to the destruction of the wicked, doesn’t it draw you closer to Him? And doesn’t it make the Bible’s most famous verse really make sense?

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only

begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not *perish*, but have eternal *life*” John 3:16.

For additional information concerning the subject of death and hell, check out the websites:

www.helltruth.com

www.truthaboutdeath.com