

RESURRECTION TO DEATH

There is a tremendous difference between what the Bible actually says and what is popularly believed and taught by most professing Christians today concerning the fate of wicked humans.

The popular teaching today is that people who are not found worthy to enter into heaven, will live on into eternity and suffer some kind of eternal torture by God. The future punishment of the wicked is a Biblical fact; however, ongoing eternal punishment is fiction, which cannot be substantiated by scripture.

If you want to know what the Bible actually says will happen to those whom God considers to be wicked and unworthy of eternal life in the Kingdom of God, pay careful attention to the information contained in this broadcast. Because, you will not find very many people who know or understand what I am about to tell you about the punishment of the wicked.

The Bible reveals that God has great mercy toward those who repent and reserves a final punishment for those who will not. The prophet Ezekiel was instructed to record how God feels about having to punish the wicked. God told Ezekiel:

"Say to them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezk.33:11 KJV). See also 2.Pet.2:1-22; 1.Cor.6:9-10; Jms.5:19-20.

The First Lie

The first lie recorded in the Bible was told by Satan when he told Eve that she would not die if she ate the forbidden fruit. Since then, Satan has deceived most of humanity into thinking they have an immortal soul. However, humans do not have an immortal soul and will not escape the death penalty for disobedience to God. All sinful humans will be put to death, and this death is final and eternal.

Jesus said, "For the hour is coming in which all that are in the tombs will hear his voice. . . . the ones having done good, into the resurrection of life; and the ones having practiced evil into a resurrection of judgment" (Jn.5:28-29 Para.). See also Dan.12:2; Heb.9:27; 2.Pet.2:9; 2.Thes.1:5-9.

Jesus spoke of two final and separate resurrections: one is to life and the other is to judgment. The resurrection to judgment is for the purpose of punishing wicked individuals who have practiced evil and have been judged unworthy of life; therefore, they will be put to death.

Concerning the two paths that one can choose in life, the apostle Paul said this:

"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom.6:23 KJV).

The Creator God told to prophet Ezekiel "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sins, it shall die" (Ezk.18:4;20 KJV).

Clearly, by any definition, when something is dead it is not alive. But what is Sin? And why should one be put to death for one's sins

There has been much debate and confusion as to what sin is and what the penalty for committing it is.

The Bible defines sin as follows:

The apostle John said, "Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1.Jn.3:4 KJV).

John also said, "All unrighteousness is sin: . . ." (1.Jn.5:17 KJV).

The apostle James said, "To him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin" (Jms.4:17 KJV).

Paul said, "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom.14:23 KJV).

The Bible defines sin as the violation of the physical and spiritual law of God—sin is lawlessness. The scriptures are very clear that the penalty for the violation of God's law is death, and death is the absence of life.

The Baptism of Fire

John the Baptist said the following in reference to those called to salvation during this age and their fate is they do not live a righteous life:

John said, "I indeed baptize you with water; but he who is stronger than I comes, of whom I am not fit to loosen the latchet of his sandals. He will baptize you in the holy spirit and fire; whose sifting fan is in his hand; and he will fully purge his threshing-floor, and will gather the wheat into his barn—but he will burn the chaff with fire that cannot be put out" (Lk.3:15-17 Para.).

Here, John refers to three kinds of baptism—water, holy spirit, and fire—and the separating of wheat from the chaff. The baptism with fire indicates severe trial and testing. The separation of the wheat from the chaff refers to the righteous being given access to the Kingdom of God and the wicked having their existence terminated forever—death by fire. See Matt.13:19-30; Isa.28:24-29.

A Warning to the Elect

In his second letter the apostle Peter exhorts the elect of God to continue in righteousness so that they can escape this final death and enter into the new heaven and new earth:

2.Peter chapter 3, beginning in verse 3:

"Know this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:" (vs.3-6).

Peter reminds the Sovereign Father's earthy children of the first worldwide destruction of the earth and its unrighteous inhabitants by the great flood of Noah's time. Peter also foretells the future destruction of the earth by fire, which will destroy all evil humans:

Continuing in verse 7:

"But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved to fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, . . . one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (vs.7-8).

God is very merciful and does not want anyone to perish; however, there is a point in time when the next phase of his plan will begin. At this time, the physical creation that housed humanity will vanish in flames:

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; In which the heavens and the earth shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (vs.9-10).

Again, Peter warns of this future destruction and the importance of being found righteous when this day arrives:

Continuing in verse 11:

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting to the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" (vs.11-12).

Righteousness is a condition for existence in the new order of things. Nothing evil will exist in the

new heavens and earth; all that is evil will be purged away with fire:

Continuing in verse 13:

"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (vs.13-14). See also Matt.3:10-12; 7:19; Rev.21:27.

The Rebellious Elect

In order to more clearly understand what is said about the punishment of the wicked, it is important to examine a few scriptures and parables that give stern warnings to the Sovereign Father's earthly children who decide to rebel against God and depart from the faith.

Notice what the writer to the Hebrews says that their fate is the same as the incorrigible wicked:

The writer says:

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy spirit, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. . .But that which bears thorns and briars is rejected and is nigh to cursing; whose end is to be burned" (Heb.6:4-6;8 KJV). See also Heb.2:1-3, 2.Pet.2:20-21; Ezk.18:24,26.

"For if we are willfully sinful after receiving the full knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice concerning sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and zealous fire being about to consume the adversaries. Anyone not regarding the law of Moses dies without pity on the word of two or three witnesses: How much worse punishment do you think he will be thought worthy to receive having trampled on the Son of God, and having counted the blood of the covenant

in which he was sanctified common, and having insulted the spirit of grace?" (Heb.10:26-29 Para.).

Once a person fully understands what God requires of them and refuses to accept his will in their life, there is no more hope of life after death:

The writer to the Hebrews says "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb.10:31 KJV).

And indeed it is a fearful thing to know that one's life will be extinguished forever.

Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats gives us some insight into just what is store for those who refuse to live a righteous life and come into conformity to God's laws, precepts, and principles:

Matthew chapter25, beginning in verse 31 Jesus says:

"But when I, the Messiah, shall come in my glory, and all the angels with me, then I shall sit upon my throne of glory. And all the nations shall be gathered before me. And I will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and place the sheep at my right hand, and the goats at my left" (vs.31-33 Para.).

Notice that Jesus mentions three distinct events:

- Jesus returns to the earth in his glory.
- Jesus begins to rule on earth.
- The shepherd separates his flock into two distinct groups.

Continuing in verse 34:

"Then I, the King, shall say to those at my right, 'Come, blessed Of my Father, into the Kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world. For I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me water; I was a stranger and you invited me into your homes; naked and you clothed me; sick and in prison, and you visited me,'" (vs.34-36).

This scripture shows the Father's righteous children being welcomed into his kingdom, which was prepared for them. This great event will happen at the time of the first resurrection and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth.

Continuing in verse 41:

"Then I will turn to those on my left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons' (v41).

Those who will be punished with the same punishment that has been prepared for the devil and the demons are mentioned in verse 41. These people will be punished with death by fire at the end of the age of mankind's existence:

Continuing in verse 42:

"For I was hungry and you wouldn't feed me; thirsty, and you would not give me anything to drink; a stranger, and you refused me hospitality; naked and you didn't clothe me; sick, and in prison, and you wouldn't visit me" (vs.42-43).

Notice that these wicked individuals will be punished because they refused to love God and his people:

Continuing in verse 44:

"Then they will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you? And I will answer, 'When you refused to help the least of these my brothers, you were refusing to help me.' And they shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into everlasting life" (vs.44-46).

The primary reason for the punishment of these people is that they refused to help the brothers of Christ; therefore, they were refusing to help him. The criteria for being a sheep in the shepherd's flock is having love toward Christ's brothers. God will only put to eternal death those people who refuse to repent of evil; therefore, the goats are those who understood God's truth and refused to live their lives accordingly.

The Bible is very clear in stating that the wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of God. The apostle Paul said this about these wicked individuals:

"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the Kingdom of God" (1.Cor.6:9-10 NIV). See also Pro.10:30; Gal.5:21.

It is also clear that the wicked will not be tortured with fire forever; the wages of sin is death (Rom.6:23), not eternal life in torment. God is a God of love, understanding, and mercy, and those who willfully disobey and reject him will receive an eternal punishment, not eternal punishing.

The wicked will be cast into a fire that will terminate their existence forever (Rev.20:15):

Jesus said:

"The kingdom of heaven is compared to a drag net thrown into the sea, and gathering together of every kind; which when it was filled, drawing it up on the shore and sitting down, they gathered the good into containers, and they threw out the rotten. So it will be in the end of the age: The angels go out and will separate the wicked from the midst of the righteous; and will throw them into the furnace of fire; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt.13:49-50 Para.).

People not found worthy of life are to be erased for the Book of Life and cast in to the lake of fire:

While beseeching God to spare the Israelites who had rebelled at Mount Sinai, Moses said, "Yet now, if you will forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray you, out of your book which you have written. And the Lord said to Moses, Whosoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book" (Ex.32:32-33 KJV). See also Psa.69:28; Rev.3:5; 22:19.

The apostle John records this in the Book of Revelation:

"And death and hell were cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev.20:14-15 KJV).

Under the terms and conditions of both the Old and New Covenants, those who live righteously in obedience to God's laws are granted eternal life in his kingdom (Matt.25:31-34). Moreover, the disobedient and the unrighteous who are not written into the Book of Life, must be destroyed because of their wickedness and unwillingness to obey his law (Matt.25:41-46).

Those who qualify will be given immortality and will rule with Christ here on the earth. Those who refuse to obey God will simply have their existence terminated in the Lake of Fire. There will be no eternal pain and torment, just eternal non-existence. See Psa.72:7; 37:9,11,22,29,34; Ezk.18:4; 20:25.

Only those who are found to be righteous become sons of God. All others will have their life terminated as prophesied by Malachi. See Mal.4:1-3.

The Second Death

In the Book of Revelation, there are the following four references to the second death. By carefully reviewing these references we can understand what the second death is.

Revelation chapter 2, verse 1: "He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches; he that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death:"(Rev.2:11 KJV)

Revelation chapter 20, verse 6 ; "Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev.20:6 KJV).

People who participate in the first resurrection will be immune to the second death because they will have become immortal beings in the Family of God—only immortal beings cannot be destroyed.

Revelation chapter 21, beginning in verse 7:"He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:7-8 KJV).

An alternate translation of verse 8 is: "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murders, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." (Rev.21:8 NIV)

Those who are mentioned as being punished by the second death are those who are disobedient to God's law; therefore, they deserve the death penalty.

Revelation chapter 20, verse 14:"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (Rev.20:14 KJV).

The English word 'death' that is used in all four of the scriptures I just quoted is translated from the Greek word 'thanatos', which means 'death'. The concept of a total cessation of existence is difficult for most to believe, because of Satan's deception concerning life and death; however, this is exactly what all four scriptures document as the final punishment of wicked people.

After the resurrection to the second death, both death and hell (That is, the grave) will be destroyed and cease to exist. A condition of deathlessness will then exist for the following reasons:

All things pertaining to physical life will no longer be relevant to the spirit dimension of existence. Therefore, death and the grave will cease to have a function and will vanish. See Rev.21:4; 1.Cor.15:54.

Those who die the second death will be the incorrigible wicked of all ages. After these people die the second death, the only beings who continue to live will be composed of spirit. See Rev.20:15; 1.Cor.15:35-50; 2.Thes.1:7-9.

Termination of Existence

The Bible shows beyond a shadow of doubt that God the Father and Jesus Christ have absolute control over life and death, and that sometime in the future they will completely eliminate all wicked humans from their presence:

The Israelites were told the following in reference to the Creator God's power over life and death:

In Deuteronomy chapter 32, we read:

"See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to the heaven, and say, I live for ever" (Deut.32:39-40 KJV).

The prophet Samuel said, "The Lord kills, and makes alive: he brings down to the grave, and brings up" (1.Sam.2:6 KJV).

In Matthew chapter 10, verse 28, Jesus said, "Do not fear 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" (Matt.10:28 Para.).

The English word 'body' in this verse has been translated from the Greek word 'soma', which means 'a physical human or animal body' or a 'corpse'. The Greek word for 'soul' is 'psuche', which means 'breath', 'life', or 'mind'. Here, we see two distinct elements of physical and non-physical life that can be completely destroyed by God. There is nothing in either of these two words that would indicate anything immortal.

The Greek word translated 'destroy' in this verse is 'apollumi', which means to 'destroy fully', 'kill', 'to perish', 'to completely do away with', 'to die.' 'Appollumi' is used many times to describe the utter destruction of individuals and places (Matt.12:14; 21:41; Lk.17:29). In every scriptural context where appollumi is found in the New Testament, it means to completely destroy and is used to convey the thought of utter and complete destruction.

There is no doubt as to the meaning of the words used in Matthew 10:28; it is clear that God has the power to completely destroy all aspects of human life.

It is the second death that Jesus speaks of in Matthew 28. The Sovereign God does indeed have the power to destroy humanity, which he has cause to come into existence. Human beings should fear God who has the power to completely terminate and eliminate the totality of their existence in the second death. The second death is the death from which there is no return. All of God's prophets, apostles, and servants continually gave very strong warnings about the finality of this punishment.

Chronology of Events

There will come a time in God's plan when all evil will be eliminated. Moreover, nothing evil will be allowed to coexist with God's righteous kingdom. The Book of Revelation gives us a partial chronology of the events that will take place after Christ returns and the government of God rules the earth.

Revelation chapter 20, verses 11 through 15 speak of a time when people will be either judged worthy of life or death:

Beginning in verse 11:

"And I saw a great white throne, and the One sitting on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled; and a place was not found for them. And I saw the dead, the small and the great, standing before God. And books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And

the dead were judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works" (vs.11-12).

Verse twelve speaks of the resurrection of the dead of all ages who have not had an opportunity for salvation.

Continuing in verse 13:

"And the sea gave up the dead in it. And death and hades gave up the dead in them. And they were each judged according to their works. And death and hades (that is, the grave) were thrown into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death. And if anyone was not found having been written in the book of Life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire" (vs.13-15).

Verses 13 through 15 speak of the time at the end of this phase of God's plan for physical humanity. This is the time that all of those not found in the Book of Life will die for their disobedience to God, and all things pertaining to life will no longer be relevant to the spirit dimension of existence; death and the grave will cease to have a function and will vanish.

Job tells us of the finality of God's punishment of wicked humans, Job said:

"The lamp of the wicked is snuffed out; the flame of his fire stops burning. The light in his tent becomes dark; the lamp beside him goes out. . . . He is torn from the security of his tent and marched off to the king of terrors. Fire resides in his tent; burning sulfur is scattered over his dwelling. his roots dried up below and his branches wither above. The memory of him perishes from the earth; he has no name in the land. he is driven from light into darkness and is banished from the world" (Job 18:5-6;14-18 NIV). See also Job 15:20-30; Psa.106:16-18.

Job has powerfully captured the essence and meaning of what it means to have one's life terminated by God in the Lake of Fire:

There are dozens of scriptures that describe in great detail the future punishment and destruction of evil humans and evil spirits by fire. Fire is the most

destructive force known to man, because it can reduce a physical thing to its lowest form and destroy it.

The prophet Malachi foretold a day that would burn as an oven and consume the wicked but not the righteous:

Malachi said:

"For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, says the Lord of hosts" (Mal.4:1-3 KJV). See also Ps.37:20; 97:3-5; 112:10; 119:119; 145:20; Pro.2:22; Isa. 47:14; Nah.1:2-6; 2.Thes.1:6-10; Matt.3:10-12; 13:36-46; 49-50.

The prophet Malachi was inspired to show that the fate of the wicked will be complete and utter destruction, without a continuance of life. Malachi does not say whether or not these wicked are humans or spirit-beings. He merely states that the wicked will be destroyed by fire and cease to exist.

SUMMARY

God the Father has provided a way for each individual to be forgiven for their sins through the sacrifice of his son, Jesus the Christ. However, in order to reap the rewards of obedience, a person must avail themselves of this sacrifice by repenting of their evil and beginning to live according to God's Law. If there is no repentance and sustained effort to live according to God's ways, God will not grant eternal life; instead, he will destroy the wicked person with fire: "For the wages of sin is death" according to the apostle Paul (Rom.6:23 KJV).

God has always offered life instead of death to those who want to live in harmony with his and conform to his laws, precepts, and principles. The prophet Isaiah records this offer in chapter 1 verse 18 and 19 of his prophecy: God says to any who wants to live

for ever and avoid the second death:

"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land:" (Isa.1:18-19 KJV).

The Sovereign Father's call to salvation is very clear. He will reward obedience and forgive sin. He is patient and merciful. He will not cause the irrevocable termination of a human life unless there is no hope of redemption. God the Father will not allow the incorrigibly wicked to have eternal life and become a disruptive force to happiness and joy in the Family of God.

God is righteous and will not cohabit with evil, which is repulsive to him. In order for there to be harmony, unity, and eternal happiness in the Kingdom of God, only righteousness can be allowed to exist. The choices for each individual are clear; either one conforms to that which produces happiness and joy, or one will cease to exist.

God the Father and Jesus Christ want only peace and harmony to exist in their family, and the only way to accomplish this is to eliminate all evil. This is the reason that the second death is necessary.

The scriptures prove that, when wicked humans are punished with the second death, they will cease to exist in all dimensions of God's creation. Death is the absence of life; it is not existence in another form. When God administers the second death to the unrepentant, they will die for eternity and simply cease to exist.

The teaching of eternal punishing of evil humans cannot be substantiated by God's word. Nowhere in the entire Bible is there any proof showing that the final fate of wicked humans is to be tortured by fire for all eternity. The Bible shows just the opposite—the second death is total death, it is an irreversible and total destruction from which there is no return. God will not torment wicked humans

forever; he will simply terminate their existence.

I see that my time is up, but if you want to know more about the four major resurrections recorded in the Bible or more about the other subjects that I have briefly touched on in this in this broadcast, write to me at the address given in the following announcement. Until next time this is Bud Cocherell for Bible Research .org.

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