

## EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT.

One who has read, evidently with care, the articles "About Hell" which appeared in the Jan., Feb. and March TOWERS of this year, and who seems convinced of the falsity of the ideas generally attached to the translations where the word *hell* occurs in our common versions of the Bible, writes to us thus: –

Suppose that you are right in all that you say about the meaning of the original Greek and Hebrew words translated hell in our English Bibles; suppose that, as you show, those original words never meant, nor were intended to convey the idea of a place of everlasting torment, is there not proof of such a punishment for the wicked in other Scriptures aside from this word hell entirely? For instance, consider the statement of our Lord in Matt. 25:41 and 46. Even if we shall admit that, as you claim, that parable of the Sheep and Goats applies to the Millennial age, "when the Son of man shall come in his glory and sit upon the throne of his glory," and even though we admit your claim, that the separating between the sheep and goats is a gradual work which progresses throughout that thousand-year-day of Judgment, or trial; after admitting all that, as we must, does it not seem evident from verses 41 and 46 that the *finally incorrigible* will be *tormented forever*, some place? No matter how much our finer sensibilities might revolt at the thought, must we not in candor admit that our Lord taught this in these verses, and also in Rev. 20:10?

I am acquainted with the Greek, and know that the words rendered "everlasting" and "eternal" in Matt. 25:41,46 are from the Greek root *aion*, and I admit that it does not always mean *never ending* like our English word *everlasting*, but rather has the meaning of *lasting* without the ever: but, in this case, verse 46 shows the *lasting life* of the righteous or sheep class in contrast with the *lasting punishment* of the wicked or goat class; and the contrast seems to teach that the *punishment* of the one class will be *as long lasting* as the

reward of the other. If I fail to reason correctly in this, I pray you in God's name help me: for I desire the truth and the truth only, and fain would if I could, see that *everlasting torture* is no part of the divine plan and that it is not taught in the Word of God. Your articles on hell are powerful and almost convincing; and if this my last objection, can be cleared away *thoroughly*, I shall praise God and worship Him as never before.

### **OUR REPLY.**

It affords great pleasure to answer one so evidently honest; and seeing you are hungering and thirsting after truth, we make no doubt that the answer to your questions will be satisfactory and conclusive, God helping us.

We are glad to note that the Brother has the correct understanding of the Greek word *aionios*, that it means *lasting*; but we shall take no advantage of this and for arguments sake shall treat it as meaning *everlasting*, – unending punishment to the one class and unending life to the other.

The everlastingness of the punishment being thus quickly disposed of, it leaves only one point open for discussion, namely, of what sort or kind will the punishment be? Take your Concordance and search out what saith the great Judge regarding the *punishment* of willful sinners who despise and reject all his blessed provisions for them through Christ? What do you find? Does God there say, – All sinners shall *live in torture forever*? We do not find a single text where *life* in any condition is promised to that class, but on the contrary, we do find scores of passages which in so many words declare that the *punishment* of this class will consist in the blotting out of their existence in the second death. Those who, after the full opportunities of the Millennial Kingdom, fail to conform themselves to the law of the spirit of life, cannot have life at all. God's declarations assure us that he will have a clean universe, free from the blight of sin and

sinner, when the plan of redemption has separated the sheep from the goats.

But while we do not find one verse of the Bible to say that this class can have *life* in torment or in any other condition, we do find hosts of passages teaching the reverse. Of these we merely give a few as samples – "The wages of sin *is death.*" (Rom. 6:23.) "The soul that sinneth *it shall die.*" (Ezek. 18:4,20.) "All the wicked will God *destroy.*" (Psa. 145:20.) The wicked shall "perish," shall be as though they had not been, etc. (Psa. 37:20; Job 10:19.) Thus God has told us plainly of what sort the everlasting punishment of the wicked shall be – that it will be death, destruction; and He never said one word about a *life* of punishment.

The false ideas of God's plan of dealing with the incorrigible taught us from our cradles, ever since the great "falling away" came, which culminated in Papacy, is alone responsible for the view generally held, that the *punishment* provided for willful sinners is a life of torture, in the face of the many clear statements of God's word that their punishment is to be *death*. Hear Paul state very explicitly what the punishment is to be. Speaking of the same Millennial Day, and of the same class, who despite all the favorable opportunities and the fullness of knowledge then, will not come into harmony with Christ, and hence will *know not God* and obey not, He says – "Who *shall be [R1040 : page 3] punished.*" Ah yes! but *how* punished? pray tell us Paul. And Paul does tell us how: They "shall be punished with *everlasting destruction* from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." – 2 Thes. 1:9.

Thus the meaning and reasonableness of this statement concerning everlasting punishment, is readily seen when we look at it from the correct standpoint. The fire of the parable by which the punishment [destruction] is to be accomplished, will not be literal fire, for it is as much a symbol as the sheep and the goats are symbols. Fire here as

elsewhere symbolizes *destruction*, and never in any sense *preservation*.

We might well leave this subject here and consider that we have fully shown that the everlasting punishment of the goat class will be destruction; but we must not fail to direct attention to one other point which clinches the truth upon this subject. We refer to the Greek word *kolasin* translated "*punishment*" in verse 46; its signification is, – *to cut off*, or prune, or lop off, as in the pruning of trees, and a secondary meaning is – *to restrain*. Illustrations of the use of *kolasin* can easily be had from Greek classical writings. The Greek word for torment is *basinos*, a word totally unrelated to the word *kolasin* used in this case.

*Kolasin* the form of the word used in Matt. 25:47, occurs but one other place in the Bible, viz., 1 John 4:18, where it is improperly rendered *torment* in the common version, whereas it should read, "Fear hath restraint." Those who possess a copy of Prof. Young's Analyt. Concordance will see from it that he [a ripe scholar and a Presbyterian] gives as the definition of the word *kolasis* (page 995) "pruning, restraining, restraint." And the author of the *Emphatic Diaglott*, that valuable translation of the New Testament, after in Matt. 25:46 translating *kolasin* by the words "*cutting off*," says in a foot note: "The common version and many modern ones render *kolasin aionioon*, EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT, conveying the idea as generally interpreted of *basinos*, torment. *Kolasin* in its various forms only occurs in three other places in the New Testament: – Acts 4:21; 2 Pet. 2:9; 1 John 4:18. It is derived from *kolazoo* which signifies, **1. To cut off**; as lopping off branches of trees, to prune. **2. To restrain, to repress**. The Greeks write, – "The charioteer (*kalazei*) restrains his fiery steeds." **3. To chastize, to punish**. To cut off an individual from life, or from society, or even to restrain, is esteemed as a *punishment*; hence has arisen this *third* or metaphorical use of the word.

Now consider carefully the text, and note the antithesis or contrast shown between the reward of the sheep and that of the goats, which the correct idea of *kolasin* shows; – the one class goes into everlasting *life* while the other is everlastingly *cut off* from life – forever *restrained* in death. And this exactly agrees with what the Scriptures everywhere else declare concerning the wages or penalty of willful sin.

Consider for a moment the words of verse 41: "Depart from me ye cursed [redeemed by Christ from the Adamic curse or condemnation to death once, but now condemned or cursed, as worthy of second death, by the one who redeemed them from the first curse] – into everlasting fire [symbol of *perpetual destruction*] prepared for the devil and his messengers" [servants]. This "everlasting fire" is shown in Rev. 20:14 to be the second death, destruction.

Remember that this is the final sentence at the close of the final trial – at the close of the Millennium. And none will then be *servants* of Satan ignorantly or unwillingly, as so many now are; for the great Deliverer, Christ, grants a Jubilee, and sets all free from the weaknesses and besetments within and without, which now prevail as a result of Adam's fall, – from which he has redeemed all by his own precious blood. These "goats" who love evil and serve Satan, are the messengers ["angels"] of Satan, for whom with him, and for no others, God has prepared the everlasting destruction – the second death, here symbolized by fire.

Turn next to Rev. 20:8-10. This is another symbolic presentation of the same cutting off from life mentioned above; it applies to the same class of wilfully wicked, at the close of the thousand years of instruction and restitution under Christ's government while evil is bound. At the close of that reign of righteousness evil will be *permitted* to again break loose in the world in some form, to *test*\* the multitudinous population of that time and to lead into *outward* opposition all who at *heart* are rebellious toward God.

The fate of these is clearly shown in verse 9: – Fire will come from God out of heaven and *consume them*. Consuming fire and devouring fire all can appreciate, except their eyes be holden by *false* doctrine and prejudice; and no one ever knew of a *preserving fire*; and as fire never preserves but always *consumes*, God so uses it here as a symbol of utter destruction, the second death.

\*The statement of [verse 8](#) should be understood to apply to the testing of *all*. How many will follow, as servants of Satan, we are not informed, but we may presume they will be comparatively few.

Verse 9 settles the matter concerning the goat class: they will not be preserved, but *devoured* or *consumed* in fire. This being the case, verse 10 cannot refer to *these human beings*. Hence the question narrows down to this, Will Satan and a false prophet and a beast be tortured forever? and does this verse teach this?

We answer in God's own words, "*All the wicked will He destroy.*" Concerning Satan, the arch enemy of God and men, God expressly advises us that he will be *destroyed*, and not preserved in any sense or condition. – See Heb. 2:14.

About this wonderful Beast, and the False Prophet which wrought miracles before him, the account of whose doings is so prominent in this book of symbols, (Rev. 19:20; 16:13,14; 13:11-18 and 20:14.) we can now only say that they are *symbols*, and not really a beast and a man.

The Beast and Prophet are symbols of *false systems*, which during the Gospel age have deceived and led astray. These systems will be cast into a great consuming trouble in the close of this Gospel age. The torment of those systems will be *aionoin i.e.* LASTING. It will continue as long as *they* last, until they are utterly consumed. So at the end of the Millennial age the *system of error* which will then manifest and lead to destruction the "goats" will also be consumed. That deceiving system, (not specified as to kind, but merely called Satan,

after its instigator), will be cast into the same sort of trouble and destruction in the *end* of the Millennial age, as the Beast and False Prophet systems are now being cast into, in the end of the Gospel age.

We hope at some time to present the interpretation of these symbols of Revelation so that all may see clearly that the systems represented by the Beast and False [R1040 : page 4] Prophet, are *now* going into the fire of trouble which shall torment and ultimately destroy them. But, meantime let us say to those who cavil, that it illy becomes them, after the whole Bible is shown to be against them, to attempt to support the doctrine of *everlasting torture* by a few words in a verse, the remainder of which they do not pretend to understand, and in a chapter whose other verses are confessedly dark to them, and in a book of symbols, which they *claim is so sealed* by God, that *they* cannot understand it.

Our Brother does not mention Rev. 14:9-11, but concerning it we here incidentally remark, that all will at once concede that if a *literal* worshipping of a beast and his image are meant in verse 9, then few if any in civilized lands are liable to the penalty of verse 11; and if the beast and image, and worship, and wine, and cup are symbols, so also are the *torments*, and *smoke*, and *fire*, and *brimstone*.

Permit us to express the hope that our Brother may be freed from the bondage of fear, and more fully acquainted with the gracious designs of our Heavenly Father as portrayed in his Plan of the Ages: and that he may not only be brought into closer fellowship and sympathy and love, but also quickened and energized as an ambassador for him, realizing the grandeur of the "ministry of reconciliation" which he hath committed unto us. – 2 Cor. 5:18,19.

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