



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume IX
Issue 210

Total Victory over Sin!

Part 1

by – Bill Petri

PREFACE

Over the next three issues of the *Bible Student's Notebook* we will be running this work by Bill Petri.

It is going on 20 years ago that I first meet my dear brother Bill. I immediately found in him such a kindred spirit, and the true bond-of-a-lifetime. The effects of the life of Christ in him have been a sheer joy to me over these past two decades.

Bill has endured many difficulties and trials in his walk with the Lord, but he has nevertheless remained a true and faithful minister of Jesus Christ for all of these years, diligently studying the Scriptures and love-laboring with saints in the Buffalo, NY and St. Catharines, Ontario areas.

Over the years – independent of each other – we found that our walk with the Lord took both of us on a journey of finding and embracing the glorious truth of the Father's *salvation of all*. We now rejoice together in the victory of Christ's cross-work, and the rich fullness of Father's love and grace.

Bill has authored 9 books, is the editor of the *Universal King James Version*, and the *Grace Reigns Study Bible*, he is also the editor of the quarterly periodical, *Victory Magazine*. – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever heard anyone say, "How could a Loving God throw me in Hell forever and ever and ever? What kind of God is this!!! If that's the way He is I don't want anything to do with Him!"

Or, have you ever had trouble explaining to someone, after they lost a loved one, that if that person didn't know Jesus prior to death, they would be in Hell "forever and ever" and they would never see their loved one again?

What a horrible thing to say to someone. Yet with the current theology and thought on the doctrine of Hell, this is presented as truth, and if you don't believe this way of thinking then you, too, are going to burn "forever and ever."

It was this sort of question and comment that finally caused me to look at the doctrine of hell again.

This study is to be used as a guide, not only to learn why most of the Church believes the way it does about this subject, but hopefully to dispel some of the myths and contradictions that the orthodox damnation/torture doctrine presents as truth.

This study is my attempt to put into words how I came to the conclusion I did about hell. It is by no means exhaustive, and really only scratches the surface; however, it should prove to be an informative expedition into what the Bible actually teaches on this issue. May the Lord bless you for having an open and willing heart to look into things you have probably never considered. ►

A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT VIEWS

It may surprise most of you as much as it did me to see that all the different views of reconciliation begin the same way. The difference is the conclusions reached about what the gospel accomplishes. In other words, all three major views start from the same gospel, as illustrated thus:

The Saving Gospel: What It Accomplishes (I Corinthians 15:1-4)

Non-ending Punishment View

- Salvation for those who respond by believing the gospel.
- Non-ending torture for those who reject the gospel.
- Christ saves very few. Most are lost.

Annihilation View

- Salvation for those who respond by believing the gospel.
- Cessation of existence for those who reject Christ.
- Christ saves very few. Most are lost.

Ultimate Reconciliation View

- Christ saves all; those who believe experience a transformation process during their life.
- Those who reject Christ undergo their transformation during the Great White Throne Judgment.
- Eventually all are saved.

The remainder of this study will really focus on the Non-Ending Torture view compared with the Ultimate Reconciliation view, and how I came to embrace the latter view.

THE SUPERIOR NEWS OF CHRIST'S ABSOLUTE TRIUMPH!

– God will restore *ALL* things (Acts 3:21).

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

Bible Student's Notebook[™]

PO Box 265, Windber, PA 15963

Office: (800) 784-6010

bsn@studyshef.com

www.BibleStudentsNotebook.com

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor

André Sneidar – Managing Editor

Rick Lemons – Associate Editor

Department Managers

Clyde L. Pilkington, III – Office

Nathan H. Pilkington – Shipping

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– ALL of Earth's families will be blessed through Christ, Abraham's seed (Genesis 12:3; Psalm 72:17; Acts 3:23; Romans 4:13; Galatians 3:8).

– ALL of Earth's families will remember the Lord, and will turn to Him and Worship Him (Psalm 22:27-28).

– ALL flesh will bless His name forever and sing His Praise (Psalm 145:21; 66:3-4; Revelation 5:13).

– His tender mercies are over ALL of His works, and all of His works shall praise Him (Psalm 145:9-10).

– God's anger is momentary, but His mercy is everlasting (Psalm 103:8-10; 136; Micah 7:18).

– EVERY knee will bow and EVERY tongue will confess, and they will swear to Him an oath of allegiance (Isaiah 45:21-24; Philippians 2:9-11).

– His will, good pleasure and purpose are to unite ALL creation in Christ (Ephesians 1:10; 2:9-10).

– His Word will not return void, but will accomplish His desire, pleasure and purpose (Isaiah 45:23; 46:11; 55:11).

– God has given Christ ALL things (Matthew 11:27; 28:18; Luke 10:22; John 3:35; 13:3; 17:2; Ephesians 1:22; Hebrews 1:2; 2:7-8; I Peter 3:22).

– Christ will accomplish His Father's will and lose nothing of All He has been given (John 6:37, 39; 17:2; Hebrews 10:7, 9).

– Through Adam's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through Christ's obedience the many will be made righteous (Romans 5:18-19; I Corinthians 15:22).

– God is the Savior of ALL people, especially (not exclusively) of those who believe (I Timothy 4:9-11).

– Christ, the Lamb of God, has put away sin – the sin of *the world* (John 1:29; Hebrews 9:26; II Corinthians 5:19).

– In the last days ALL nations shall flow into the Lord's house (Isaiah 2:2).

So where did the doctrine of eternal torture initiate? Why do we have all this confusion and perplexity, when we have such comprehensible biblical details for ultimate salvation?

HISTORY

As I began studying this topic I came across the 3rd century Christian writer and theologian Origen, who proposed that punishments were purgatorial, that they were balanced to the culpability of the creature, and not unending. In due course all creatures would be purified. Eventually everyone would be restored to bliss and in a correct condition with God. However, the Second Council of Constantinople damned the doctrine of universal salvation in 553. The Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church adopted the belief in the *eternity of punishment* and hell became a mainstream doctrine used to instill fear and supremacy over parishioners.

Where, and how, did the popular belief about hell as a place of never-ending torture originate? Many sources speculate that the doctrine of eternal torture and punishment for the wicked originated from *Hindu, Persian, Egyptian and Grecian* religions. In fact, the ancient Egyptian concept of Hell as a place of burning fire and gruesome tortures is more or less indistinguishable from the conventional Christian belief about Hell. The feelings and patterns of this pagan Hell have biased Christian dogma and doctrine ever since.

Writers of the Middle Ages such as Augustine and Dante Alighieri fueled the imaginations of professing Christians, shaping a Hellish belief system. The influence of these writers and the teachings of Church leaders have instilled consent to the point that one is viewed a heretic if one does not accept as true these pagan concepts of Hell. "Believe or burn" is the customary party line. Allowing no room for God's love, it nullifies the cross and Jesus's sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

In 553 A.D. the Second Council of Constantinople, in an endeavor to keep Pagans and Christians under control by mixing pagan philosophies of a rancorous wrathful god with Christian truth, declared Eternal Punishment as mainstream doctrine. Does this sound like the Gospel of Hope to you? Does this sound like the God you know? I always believed Christianity was different. I thought God was Love, I thought Jesus died for the sins of the whole world.

*Behold the Lamb of God, **Who takes away the sin of the world** (John 1:29).*

I thought Jesus won it all on the cross.

*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, **will draw all men unto Me** (John 12:32).*

Why is the Egyptian Doctrine of Hell the same as the teaching of modern day Christianity? If it is Egyptian in origin, then is eternal torture of God? Is it biblical?

Consider Moses

And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds (Acts 7:22).

Moses was perhaps the greatest prophet of the Old Testament, the man who spoke with God.

And the LORD spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaks unto his friend (Exodus 33:11).

Moses does not once mention any of this Egyptian folklore about Hell. Why? Because he, of all people, knew that they were just *myths*, pagan in origin. He did not once mention any of these Egyptian myths in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The Greatest Prophet of the Old Testament failed to mention Eternal Hell to anyone. If these Egyptian myths were true, then surely he would have warned of this impending doom lurking over the souls of all Israel and the world; but there is not one mention of these fables in the Torah. The Jews, for the most part, do not

believe these doctrines today because they are not gleaned from the Hebrew Scriptures. The Old Testament is totally silent about a place of non-ending torment!

COMMON OBJECTIONS

So why should we believe in the Lord Jesus now for salvation?

*For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, **Who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe** (I Timothy 4:10).*

Why “especially” of believers? There is a benefit to knowing the Lord now prior to physical death.

But refuse profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profits little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come (I Timothy 4:7-8).

When we first came to the Lord, many of us did not realize the path ahead. The Christian walk is something we all grapple with now. Yet this walk is crucial for our transformation: It is better to go through the fire *now* and die to sin [by God’s purging process in our lives] so that we can grow more into the image and likeness of God’s Son on this side of heaven, than to have to give account for that sin directly before the Lord on the other side [wood, hay, stubble]. Hoping for [depending on] the presence of God *now* through trials so that later we gain more from God as reward [gold, silver, precious stones], we should be,

Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprovved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever makes manifest is light. Wherefore He says, “Awake you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.” See then that **you walk***

circumspectly, not as fools, but **as wise, redeeming the time**, because the days are evil (Ephesians 5:10-16).

This is the burden we must bear. God raises us up from the death, the hurt, the pain, the fire, the fight, the trial, the temptation, the battle and the attack of the enemy. [We are dead to sin (Romans 6:2); therefore we shouldn't live in sin]: we must not give in to it.

What about willful sin?

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for **whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap**. For he who sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but **he who sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting** [age-long life] (Galatians 6:7-8).

The wages of sin is still death.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23).

To whom was this letter to the Romans written? Christians. We should die to sin, turning away from things that keep us from growing in God. Many have used this verse as an evangelism tool, but its context is not talking about Eternal Damnation and Hell-Fire. Rather, its context is death to sin so that we can be made more like Christ.

*Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that **the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body**. For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus's sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh (II Corinthians 4:10-11).*

SUFFERING AND JUDGMENT

Body of Christ:

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it

shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If **any man's work abides** which he has built thereupon, he shall receive **a reward**. If any man's **work shall be burned**, he shall **suffer loss**: but **he himself shall be saved**; yet so as by fire (I Corinthians 3:13-15).

Israel:

*That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it **is tried with fire**, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ (I Peter 1:7).*

What is this fire? It is the judgment of God, burning away the sin:

For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God (Deuteronomy 4:24).

For **our God** is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29).

*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** (Revelation 21:8).*

All of these sins will be burned up, and all of those who are in the lake of fire [those who have died without Christ] will be purified. This fire is a divine cleansing, the very presence of God himself. The purpose of the second death is to destroy people's sins and purify those very same creatures, not to torture people forever.

The pagan doctrine of Hell paints God as a merciless and unforgiving monster. Many are in the Church today because of these terrifying fables. Have you ever heard a Christian say, "We have fire insurance"? This takes away from the purpose of the judgment; this takes away and steals the love of God from the hearts of the brethren, and robs the process of being made into the image ►

and likeness of His Son Jesus Christ (see Genesis 1:26 on the creation of man in the divine image). Christ is the visible manifestation of the invisible God. If we are to become like Christ and mirror the image of God in which we were formed, our sins must be destroyed. This is the purpose of fire and brimstone and God's judgment. Consider what God says to Israel:

For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives (Hebrews 12:6).

Israel must go through this fire and accept the judgment of God in their lives, and be willing to go through it for the sake of submission to God.

*And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, **being made conformable unto His death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead** (Philippians 3:9-11).*

All will be saved, so all will have to go through the fire at one time or another. Why not get it over with and become like Christ *now*, and be in the Kingdom of God *now*, rather than prolonging the purifying (conforming) process?

*For since **by man came death**, by man **came also the resurrection of the dead**. For as **in Adam all die**, even so **in Christ shall all be made alive**. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward **they who are Christ's at His coming**. Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, until He has put **all enemies under His feet**. **The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death** (I Corinthians 15:21-26).*

So if death will be abolished, then how can there be eternal torment? In the Scriptures, death refers to the fallen state of Adam, whereas life refers to the resurrection in Christ. When death is abolished, there can be only life! All will be conformed to Christ, and no one will remain in the fallen state forever.

The passage above goes on to say,

*And when **all things shall be subdued unto Him**, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him Who put **all things under Him**, that **God may be All in all** (I Corinthians 15:28).*

MISUNDERSTANDING OF IMPORTANT WORDS

What's in a word? How can a slight twist in understanding of a few key words in the Bible skew the faith of the majority of Christians, causing them to believe that the punishments of Hell are eternal? Believe it or not, this is precisely what has come to pass. Let's study these words in Scripture and how their meaning has been skewed in most mainstream Denominations.

Aion and the Ages

Here is only one example of the 197 times Strong's Concordance Greek word #165 and #166 occur in the New Testament:

*And these shall go away into **everlasting** punishment: but the righteous into life **eternal** (Matthew 25:46).*

The words "everlasting" and "eternal" here are defined by Strong (G166):

aiōnios (ahee-o'-nee-os); From G165; perpetual (also used of past time, or past and future as well): – eternal, for ever, everlasting, world (began).

G165, aiōn (ahee-ohn'); From the same as G104; properly an age; by extension perpetuity (also past); by implication the world; specifically (Jewish) a Messianic period (present or future): – age, course, eternal, (for) ever (-more), [n-

Jever, (beginning of the, while the) world (began, without end).

Thus, the word that Bible translators have rendered “eternal” or “everlasting” is the Greek word *aionios*. Since this is the adjective form of the noun *aion*, which means *an age*, *aionios* can mean *age-lasting, age-abiding, etc.*, not eternal or forever as we commonly understand it. In fact, to understand this Greek word in English implies a definitive length of time. The *King James Version* of the Bible renders *aionios* in the New Testament as all of the following in different verses: age, course, eternal, forever, evermore, forever and ever, everlasting, world, beginning of the world, world began, world without end.

What is the meaning of *aion*? It is the word in which we get our English word *eon* which, according to Webster’s Dictionary, means *a long period of time*. *Aion* simply means *age, a period of time*. *Aionios* simply means *lasting for an age (or ages), periods of time*. So why are we forced to believe that these Greek words mean anything different? It’s because of incorrect Bible teaching caused by pagan-influenced Church doctrines about Hell.

Kolasis and Reformatory Punishment

Let’s look at that one important verse about eternal punishment again:

*And these shall go away into everlasting **punishment**: but the righteous into life eternal (Matthew 25:46).*

The word for *punishment* here is:

Strong’s G2851, kolasis (kol’-as-is); from G2849; penal infliction.

G2849 kolazo (kol-ad’-zo); from kolos (dwarf); properly, to curtail, i.e., (figuratively) to chastise (or reverse for infliction).

To curtail means to restrain, as a person is restrained in jail or a child is restrained when he is grounded for some disobedience. To *chastise* has one simple meaning according to *Webster’s New*

World Dictionary: to punish in order to correct, usually by beating. It should be clear that this is not meaningless, unending, sadistic torture, but PURPOSEFUL CORRECTION.

How should Matthew 25:46 then be understood? “... *Age lasting correction* ...” and “... *age abiding life*.”

So the accurate *biblical doctrine of judgment* in terms of duration is, however long it takes to purify a heart (see John 3:15; Acts 2:21).

Imperishable/Age-Abiding Life in Christ

Age-abiding life? I thought we had *eternal life* in Christ? Well, how do we know that *age abiding life* lasts forever? Christ Jesus, Who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel (II Timothy 1:10; I Corinthians 15:52-55), has come to us in the power of endless life, and because He lives, we also live in Him (Romans 6:1-11). Because we *have* Greek words in the Bible in the New Testament that mean *immortality* and *deathlessness*, *we know our life is non-ending*. For example:

*So when this corruptible shall have put on **in-corruption**, and this mortal shall have put on **immortality**, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, “**Death is swallowed up in victory**” (I Corinthians 15:54).*

Here are *Thayer’s* definitions for the Greek words used:

G861, *aphtharsia* (af-thar-see’-ah) – 1) *incorruption, perpetuity*; 2) *purity, sincerity, incorrupt*. [See Romans 2:7; I Corinthians 15:42, 50, 53-54; Ephesians 6:24; II Timothy 1:10; Titus 2:7]

G110, *athanasia* (ath-an-as-ee’-ah) – *undying, immortality, everlasting*; from a compound of #1 (as a negative particle) and G2288 (deathlessness). [See Romans 2:7; I Corinthians 15:50, 53; II Timothy 1:10]

A person's immortal and happy existence after resurrection is taught in the New Testament by words which, in the Bible, are *never* applied to anything that is of limited duration. They are applied to God and a person's happy existence only. In addition to the two words shown above, here are three more:

G179 (Thayer) *akatalutos* (ak-at-al'-oo-tos) – from G1 (as a negative particle) and a derivative of G2647; indissoluble, *i.e.*, (figuratively) permanent: *KJV*, *endless*. [Hebrews 7:16]

G262 *amarantinos* (am-ar-an'-tee-nos) – from G263; “amaranthine,” that is, (by implication) *fadeless*: *KJV*, *that fadeth not away*. [I Peter 5:4]

G862 (Strong) *aphthartos* (af'-thar-tos) – from G1 (as a negative particle) and a derivative of G5351; *undecaying* (in essence or continuance): *KJV*, *not (in-, un-) corruptible, immortal*.

Here are some Bible verses which show that life in Christ is non-ending:

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an **inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away**, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (I Peter 1:3-5).*

*And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that **fades not away** (I Peter 5:4).*

*Now unto the King eternal, **immortal**, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen (I Timothy 1:17).*

*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the **uncorruptible** God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things (Romans 1:22-23).*

*And every man who strives for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an **incorruptible** (I Corinthians 9:25).*

*To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and **immortality**, eternal life (Romans 2:7).*

*But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, Who has **abolished death**, and has brought **life and immortality** to light through the gospel: whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles (II Timothy 1:10-11).*

*Who only has **immortality**, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; Whom no man has seen, nor can see: to Whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen. (I Timothy 6:16).*

*Now this I say, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the **dead shall be raised incorruptible**, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on **incorruption**, and this mortal must put on **immortality**. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, **“Death is swallowed up in victory”** (I Corinthians 15:50-54).*

These words would have been used to describe punishment had the Bible intended to teach endless punishment – but they **weren't!** To sum up: Greek words in the Bible show that life in Christ is non-ending, but punishment is only temporary, although it can last a long period of time.

(to be continued)