

Restoration of the Kingdom of God – 14

Last time we looked at the fate of those who will be rejected by God at the judgement seat of Christ - *“These will go away into everlasting [Greek, aionios] punishment” - Matthew 25:46.* We saw how **Jude 7** uses the same word to describe what happened to *“Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities... undergoing a punishment of aionios = eternal fire.”*

- That destruction was witnessed by Abraham, who saw *“the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace” - Genesis 19:28.* Those fires burned out after the flammable portions of the city structures were all consumed. None of the cities has been rebuilt on its site in the thirty-nine centuries since their destruction. Quite clearly Jude uses *aionios* to mean the **finality** of the destruction, and not the endless burning.

To insist on the never-ending torture of the ungodly is to besmirch the righteous character of God, which He has revealed in the Scriptures. God, *“who alone has immortality” - 1 Timothy 6:16,* and who *“is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. 9 ...will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever* against sinful mankind... *14 For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. 15 As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.* Apart from salvation through Christ, man passes away like the flower - *16 For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, And its place remembers it no more. 17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting On those who fear Him” - Psalm 103.*

- Clearly from this, while God’s anger against the ungodly **will end**, His mercy on those who fear Him never ends.

Jesus proclaims this mercy of God in **John 3:16**, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish = apollumi but have everlasting life”.* The alternatives are stark - belief in Jesus will bring everlasting = *aionios* life, when *“this mortal has put on immortality” - 1 Corinthians 15:54.* But those who reject Jesus will “perish” = *apollumi*, Strong 0622 = to destroy, to put out of the way entirely, abolish, put an end to, ruin. In other words, that which formerly existed has been annihilated. The same word is used when Jesus said of those who rejected the preaching of Noah, *“the flood came and destroyed = apollumi them all” - Luke 17:27.*

- Peter uses the same word for the same event - **2 Peter 3:6** *“the world that then existed perished = apollumi, being flooded with water”.* In both statements, if *apollumi* meant unending torture, then Jesus and Peter would have referred to the perishing still occurring, and not have spoken of it as a completed action. The people who *“then existed”* were annihilated in the flood and no longer exist.

How can anyone accept that “the finally impenitent shall go away into eternal punishment”, means that they will suffer torture forever? Taking into account the character of God which is revealed in the Scriptures, how much more appropriate is what will actually occur to those who *“sleep the sleep of death” - Psalm 13:3.* Of the ungodly they say -

- **1 Samuel 2:9** *“the wicked shall be silent in darkness.” Psalm 31:17* *“let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.”*

Of both godly and ungodly we are informed in **Psalm 115:17** *“The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.”.* More next time, God willing.