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Torment and Tormented.

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Torment and Tormented.

Topics.

- Lazarus and the rich man tormented in hades.
- The resurrection and the place of torment.
- The smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever.
- They are tormented in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb.
- Smoke ascending forever and ever.
- The devil, the beast and the false prophet, tormented forever and ever.
- The lake which burns with fire and brimstone is the second death.

NOTE: the purpose of this study is not to do an in depth study on each topic, but simply to put the words torment and tormented into their context to discover whether the Bible teaches eternal death (i.e., total extinction) or teaches that the dead who do not know God will be condemned to a place of fiery flames in some form of eternal conscious spirit body to be tortured by demonic spirits and suffer extreme, torment, agony and pain for all eternity (as many believe).

The following are the only three Scriptures that imply eternal torment:

1. The rich man and Lazarus.
2. Torment and lake of fire.
3. The devil, the beast and the false prophet being tormented forever and ever.

LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN TORMENTED IN HADES

- **Luke 16:19-26:** There was a certain *rich man* who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. ²⁰“But there was a certain *beggar* named *Lazarus* full of sores, who was laid at his gate, ²¹“desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the *rich man*’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²“So it was that the *beggar* died, and was carried by the angels to *Abraham*’s *bosom*. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³“And *being in torments in hades (hell in the KJV)* he lifted up his eyes and saw *Abraham* afar off, and *Lazarus in his bosom*. ²⁴“Then he cried and said, ‘Father *Abraham*, have mercy on me, and send *Lazarus* that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for *I am tormented in this flame*. ²⁵“But *Abraham* said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise *Lazarus* evil things; but now he is comforted and *you are tormented*. ²⁶“And besides all this, *between us and you* there is a *great gulf fixed* so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.’

NOTICE: both the rich man and Lazarus are buried in hades (the grave).

Hades: (hell in the KJV) is from the Greek word *haides*, from Strong’s Concordance it means unseen and refers to the grave as the abode of the dead.

Torment: means suffering extreme agony, pain and torture.

Sadly because the Greek word *hades* meaning the grave has been translated to the English word *hell* many have been taught that it means those outside of Christ will exist in some form of conscious spirit state and be painfully and cruelly tortured by eternal evil spirit creatures called

demons in a place full of fiery flames which will forever burn their bodies for all eternity so that they will never be free of the most extreme agony. This is a gross misunderstanding of the Hebrew word sheol and the Greek word hades and a gross miss-representation of the nature and character of God. Following are four reasons this theory of hell (the grave) may have come about:

1. In the 325 A.D. when the Roman papal church had power over the state and certain bishops at the Council of Nicea determined what the official doctrines of the Christian faith would be they then set about aggressively enforcing them onto society by torturing, imprisoning and burning at the stake those who held a different view to the doctrines they had officially stamped to be the only true doctrines of the Christian faith. One of these doctrines is the traditional teaching of hell that many believe today (i.e., eternal torture in hell for all eternity).
2. This sadistic teaching of hell that proclaims all who die outside of Christ will in some form of conscious spirit state suffer eternal torture, pain and extreme agony in a place full demons and fiery flames for all eternity may have been introduced to scare people into the church. It is almost certain this is one of the reasons it has continued throughout history and very rarely been questioned by ministers and leaders of certain churches.
3. Those who formed this inhuman brutal and extremely violent teaching of eternal agony in flaming fire had a total lack of the meaning of the Greek word hades, but also had a total lack of understanding the nature and character of God.
4. When the bishops of the Roman papal church established the doctrine of eternal torment, they were influenced by the teachings of pagan religions that existed amongst them at that time.

Whatever the reason and there are no-doubt many other possible scenarios the reality is that the Greek word hades refer to mortal death in the grave. For further information see the title:

- Hell or the Grave (Final destination of Humans)

In Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Consider for a moment: if this story of Lazarus is to be taken literally then it means that those who are resurrected to eternal glory will literally be able to look upon those outside of Christ who have been buried in their graves (including loved family members and friends) and see them in absolute torment because they are surrounded by flames of fire. It is hardly likely that those who are dwelling with Christ in glory will be so sadistic that they will want to view the terror of people being tormented by fire this would be more like a horror movie than glory. Added to this the rich man was extremely thirsty and all he asks for is a tiny drop of water on the end of Abraham's finger surly if this was a literal story the man would have asked for a glass of water at the very least. Therefore, we can conclude that Jesus is using lofty and graphic language to not only teach, but engrave into our minds a moral that he considers enormously important for us to learn.

INTRODUCTION

Prior to this parable Jesus told the Pharisees it is impossible to serve God and money; no-one can serve two masters because they will favour one over the other. In response to this the Pharisees ridiculed him because they were lovers of money. Jesus told them that their exaltation of money is revulsion in the sight of God and though they justify themselves before men God knows their heart (v13-15). After this conversation with the Pharisees and rebuking them for their love of money he now tells this parable of "The Rich Man and the Poor Man" which clearly shows how God views money.

The rich man: is a symbol of the Pharisees.

The gate: refers to the gate of the temple.

Lazuras: is a symbol of the poor and suffering.

The rich man (the Pharisees) never lacked for anything whereas Lazarus lacked everything, but even though he had nothing he daily sat at the gate of the temple (the House of God). The Pharisees who had an abundance of everything never once offered Lazarus any kind of help. They most likely considered him unclean and certainly not worth giving any of their time too. Lazarus desire to be close to the temple shows his heart felt passion for God so in this sense, though by worldly standards he was poor he was nevertheless rich toward God. (No-doubt he was also sitting at the temple gate to collect alms, but there were many other places in the city of Jerusalem that he could have chosen to beg).

The importance of Abraham to the Jewish nation: God made the promise of an eternal Kingdom to Abraham and his seed, Abraham gave birth to Isaac who gave birth to Jacob who had the twelve sons who became the twelve tribes of Israel thus the nation of Israel came from the loins of Abraham, he is the father of the Jews. Jesus has not yet been resurrected to eternal glory so he uses Abraham as the example of those who will be in eternity because all Jews love Abraham and look up to him as the head of the Jewish race and the father of faith.

The Poor man is carried by angels to Abraham's side: the rich man is buried in hades (the grave) while Lazarus is carried to Abraham's bosom. To be carried to Abraham's bosom would be considered the greatest honour a Jew could attain to. Jesus is using the phrase, Abraham's bosom as a metaphor to show how delighted God's heart was toward the poor man Lazarus and he uses the phrase torment and flames to show God's absolute disapproval toward the rich man. Figuratively the angels carrying the poor man to Abraham's bosom is a symbol of the faithful being resurrected to eternal glory (v22).

A great chasm has been fixed: the great gulf between Abraham and the rich man refers to the Pharisees (symbolised by the rich man) rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the great chasm without faith in Christ no-one can enter into his eternal Kingdom. Added to this everyone's eternal destination is determined while they are alive once a person has died, they cannot alter their eternal fate.

SEND LAZARUS TO MY FATHER'S HOUSE

- **Luke 16:27-31:** And he said, 'Then I beg you, father to send him to my father's house²⁸for I have five brothers —so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment²⁹But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'³⁰And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'³¹He said to him 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'

The majesty beauty and brilliance of Jesus: how fabulous and majestic is this; Jesus drops Abraham's name from this verse, so it reads, "The rich man begs the Father to send Lazarus to his brothers (v27)." God the Father did send a man named Lazarus to the rich man's brothers (the Pharisees) and Jesus raised him from the dead and the Pharisees still refused to believe not only that, from that day on they made plans to have Jesus put to death. How true were the words of Jesus, "They will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead." (v21). (Read John chapter eleven and see how absolutely prophetic Jesus words were).

They have Moses and the prophets: Abraham told the rich man, "His brothers have Moses and the prophets (v29)." Moses spoke of the law of love this is because each one of the Ten Commandments concerning mankind protects the innocent from harm (i.e., do not steal, do not

commit adultery and do not murder etc.). The rich man's brothers did not listen to Moses, but instead had Jesus killed and those who followed the Lord put in prison, beaten and slaughtered. The rich man's brothers did not listen to the prophets since they clearly spoke of the coming of the anointed one, Israel's Messiah and the rich man's brothers blatantly rejected him.

It is interesting to notice: Christ spectacularly raised Lazarus from the dead and still the Pharisees did not believe in Christ proving miracles as amazing as they maybe do not bring a person's heart to repentance, people may believe in the miracle, but that does not always translate into repentance.

THE RESURRECTION AND THE PLACE OF TORMENT

Some who believe in hell as an eternal place of torment use the rich man's words, "Lest they also come into this place of torment" to support their mistaken theory that those who deny God will be tormented in flames and fire by evil eternal creatures called demons, but it must be remembered this is a parable that Jesus is using to teach an enormously important moral principal. The place of torment will be when Jesus returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth. Those who belong to Christ will be gathered together to be with Christ to rule and reign with him as kings and priests to God (1 Thess. 4:15-18) (Rev. 1:5-7) (Rev. 5:10), but there will be others who will be rejected (in this story of Lazarus it is the Pharisees who will be rejected) (i.e., prideful and hypocritical religious leaders) when they see the poor and those they despised and looked down upon as being worthless sitting with Abraham in the Kingdom of God that will be the moment of their mental torment (especially since they believed they were the holy ones before God).

The Pharisees were so full of pride, loved money more than God and were in the ministry not to serve God, but for their own selfish ambition and gain. They were full of self-righteousness and believed they deserved they were worthy of entry into God's eternal Kingdom, but Jesus rejects them saying that they were workers of iniquity. The place of torment (v28) is standing before Christ and being rejected especially if a person is so self-righteous, they believe they are far more worthy than others. The eternal torment is being cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal death (i.e., total extinction) this is why it is referred to as eternal torment their judgment is sealed it cannot be changed they are eternally cast away from the glorious light of the eternal Kingdom of God by the darkness of eternal death.

It is interesting to notice: that there is no mention of heaven in the entire parable it simply states that the rich man saw Lazarus in a far-off place. This parable cannot be used to teach doctrine as that is not the purpose of a parable. A parable is mostly a short fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude or teaches a religious lesson or principle. To build doctrine from a parable will only lead to false teachings.

THE MORAL OF THE PARABLE STORY

Jesus is speaking to the very rich Pharisees who were the religious leaders of Jesus generation they had enormous authority and power over the entire nation of Israel, but were consuming their abundant wealth on themselves, oppressing the people for their own gain and never offering any help to the poor and needy. Jesus is using biblical lofty and graphic language to teach the following two things:

1. That the prideful, self-righteous and hypocritical religious leaders, who believed they were right with God, were in reality an absolute offense to Him.

2. To teach and comfort all the faithful in Christ who like Lazarus are less fortunate and suffering hardships that they are worthy in God's eyes and will be highly exalted at the return of Christ.

The practical application of the principal taught in the parable is that no matter how famous, powerful or successful a person's ministry appears they themselves will be cast down to the grave if they have used their ministry to fulfil their own selfish ambition and oppressed their follows to increase their own wealth. On the other side the story is a tremendous comfort to the faithful in the Lord who are lacking the riches of this world and in deep grief, suffering extreme sickness or agonizing famine and hunger because Jesus in this parable is clearly teaching that they will be resurrected to eternal glory and everlasting life. Following are other verses that picture people weeping and gnashing their teeth because they have been rejected entry into the eternal Kingdom of Christ.

(Matt. 8:10-12) (Matt. 13:40-43-50) (Matt. 22:11-14) (Matt. 24:45-51)
(Matt. 25:29-34).

SUMMARY OF THE PARABLE STORY

Jesus is using this parable and story to illustrate the fact that it is not money, nobility, religious authority or status that will determine what a person's final destination will be, but a person's heart felt love and faith they have toward him and toward his heavenly Father and encouraging those that follow him, who happen to be poor in this world, not to despair while here on earth, as they will be exalted in the life to come. It is dangerous to establish doctrine, from a story or parable, because parables are stories that often use lofty language to highlight a moral or principle they are not designed to teach theology or doctrines, but principals and concepts and to make a moral point this story cannot be used to teach that the dead who do not know God will be condemned to a place of fiery flames in some form of eternal conscious spirit body to be tortured by demonic spirits and suffer extreme, torment, agony and pain for all eternity (as many believe).

This is the only mention of this parable in the Bible.

THE SMOKE OF THEIR TORMENT ASCENDS FOREVER AND EVER

- **Revelation 14:9-12:** Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone *worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark* on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be *tormented with fire and brimstone* in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹"And the *smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever* and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever *receives the mark* of his name." ¹²Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

This group of people give themselves over to the beast they believe the beast is the saviour of the world and mistakenly believe he will solve all the worlds' problems; they are seeking peace and give their worship to the beast believing he is the answer to their troubles. The beast promises peace but brings only war, the beast cannot deliver what he promises and the world spirals out of control, bringing only fear it is in this sense that these people who trusted and worshipped the beast have no rest day or night.

THEY ARE TORMENTED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY ANGELS AND THE LAMB

Notice this torment is not in gehenna, hades, the underworld or the grave this group of people come before God for judgment when God descend on a great White Throne at the end of Christ's millennial reign as King of kings and Lord of lords on earth. The sea, death and hades give up the dead and they stand before the throne of God. The Book of Life is opened and whoever name is not found in it is cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal death (i.e., total extinction) this is also called the second death. For those whose names are found in the Book of Life other heavenly books are opened and those standing before God's throne are judged according to what is written in these books according to what they had done. At this judgment there will be mental torment since those who have acted like the self-righteous prideful, hypocritical religious leaders of Jesus generation and served the Lord for their own selfish ambition and used their followers for their own selfish gain will be cast into the Lake of Fire with death and hades (Rev. 20:11-15). This judgment will bring torment to the Pharisees (and others like them) because they were so self-righteous, they believed they were worthy of God.

SMOKE ASCENDING FOREVER AND EVER

The verse says, "It is the smoke of their torment that is ascending forever," (v11) not the people themselves. Smoke is used in connection with the Lake of Fire, because smoke symbolizes the end of a fire everything has been totally consumed and utterly destroyed leaving only ashes which are blown away in the wind never to be seen again, which shows that the Lake of Fire and smoke ascending out of it is a perfect picture of eternal death (i.e., total and utter extinction). The Lake of Fire is also called the second death they are symbolisms of the wicked being utterly destroyed forever from the entire universe.

THE DEVIL, THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET, TORMENTED FOREVER AND EVER

6

- **Revelation 20:9-10** --- ⁹They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the *lake of fire* and *brimstone* where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be *tormented day and night forever and ever*.

The words, "They will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (v10) are the only words in the entire Bible that could be taken to mean that people will be tormented forever and ever (especially if a person already has a preconceived mindset that this is what the Bible teaches). Before we look further at this verse it will help to consider the following five golden rules in establishing Bible doctrine:

1. Doctrine should never be established on one or two verses (especially if they contradict the majority of other verses).
2. Doctrine should never be built from Scriptures that are full of figurative language and extreme symbolism.
3. Single verses should always be kept in the context of the surrounding verses, the chapter and the overall picture of the Bible.
4. Doctrine should never be established from parables since they are a story that teaches a moral or principal of life.
5. Scriptures should never be lifted out of their context and united with other verses that have also been lifted out of their context.

It is not only a very dangerous exercise to build doctrine when these five rules are ignored, but it is also how most false teaching throughout history has been established. In verse ten we are told that when the devil, the

beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone they are tormented day and night forever and ever.

Forever: comes from the Greek word (aion) and from Strong's Concordance can refer to an age, a period of time; an eternal age without end or to the Jewish Messianic period (present or future).

Brimstone: comes from the Greek word (theiodes) and from Strong's Concordance is sulphur it is used in the Bible and classical records, because of its flammability this is because fire throughout the Bible is a symbol of total destruction and total extinction since fire destroys everything in its path until it is utterly consumed. When the word brimstone is added to the word fire, (i.e., fire and brimstone) it magnifies two things, firstly God's utter disdain for those in focus and secondly it magnifies their utter destruction.

NOTICE: John says only the devil, the beast and the false prophet are tormented day and night forever. This is the only Scripture in the entire Bible that could be taken to imply eternal torment, and it only mentions the devil, the beast and the false prophet being the tormented ones, not all mankind.

THE BEGINNING OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter begins with John seeing an angel descending from heaven holding a key and a great chain and seizing a dragon and binding him up in prison for a thousand years, obviously angels do not need literal keys and chains to lock a dragon up in a prison. This chapter is full of very symbolic language even the thousand years symbolize a long period of time and a new age to come. Therefore to view the words, "The devil, the beast and the false prophet will be tormented day and night forever and ever literally when eternal torment is not taught anywhere else in the Bible and doctrine should never be built on one or two verses at the expense of the multitudes of verses that teach a different idea or concept is a very dangerous excise especially when the verse sits amongst such symbolic and figurative language to accept it as a literal statement. It is more fitting and harmonizes far better with all other Scriptures concerning the fate of the wicked to view this in the following two ways:

1. As biblical lofty language to graphically highlight the extreme disdain, disgust, wrath and anger God has against everything that is evil and brings harm to other humans.
2. As illustrative and pictorial language to strikingly highlight and depict the absolute and utter destruction of everything that is evil and that opposes God and His will, His plans and His purposes.

For further information see the titles:

- Lofty and Figurative Language of the Bible.

In, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

THE LAKE WHICH BURNS WITH FIRE AND BRIMSTONE IS THE SECOND DEATH

- **Revelation 21:5-8:** Then *he who sat on the throne* said, "Behold, I make all things new." And he said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." ⁶And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. ⁷"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. ⁸"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which *burns with fire and brimstone* which is the *second death*.

The expression, "He who overcomes shall inherit all things" (v7) does not mean, "He who overcomes sin shall inherit all things." If we could reach that glorious state of perfection and sinlessness Christ died for no reason, rather it means that, "Those who hold fast their faith and faithfully follow Christ until he returns shall inherit all things." They shall inherit all things means that they will inherit eternal life and everlasting glory in contrast to the those who deliberately and consciously deny God and the Lord Jesus Christ and those who are corrupt being cast into the Lake of Fire which burns with fire and brimstone meaning they will be judged to eternal death (i.e., utter destruction and total extinction).

The Lake of Fire is also called the second death so the focus is death not wicked people living in some form of eternal body in a lake of eternal fiery flames being fully conscious while they not only suffer the pain of the flames constantly burning their flesh, but also suffer torture and extreme agony which demonic creatures called demons cruelly inflict upon them for all eternity (as many believe).

Fire utterly consumes everything in its path and will continue burning until everything is totally destroyed, when the word brimstone (i.e., sulphur which dissolves to nothing anything put into it), is added to the word fire it expresses the following two things:

1. Absolute annihilation, destruction and extinction.
2. God's utter disdain for this group of people.

SUMMARY OF TORMENT AND TORMENTED

We began this study not to do an in-depth study on each topic, but simply to put the words torment and tormented into their context to discover whether they symbolise eternal death or everlasting torment, agony and suffering for all eternity. We have found that these verses do not teach that the dead outside of God's Kingdom survive death as conscious eternal beings who dwell in a lake of eternal flaming fire and suffer the most extreme agony and pain of the flames burning their flesh and are cruelly tortured by eternal spirit creatures called demons for all eternity (as some believe), but rather that they present a symbolic picture of eternal death (i.e., total and utter extinction).

The Bible says:

- God is love (1 John 4:8).
- God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1 John 4:16).

These verses shine a brilliant spotlight that the truth that God is not a God of torture (especially eternal torture), but that He is a God of love and being a God of love, He is also a God of justice and for this reason He has given mankind the following two choices:

1. Choose God and receive eternal life and everlasting glory.
2. Deny God and eternal death waits (i.e., total and utter extinction).

For further information see the titles:

- Hell or the Grave (Final destination of humans without Christ).
- Lake of Fire.

In, Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

Bible House of Grace