

Immortality

“Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.” 1 Timothy 6:16

Intro:

One of the questions that has been debated over the years in Christianity is concerning the soul of man. Not so much as to its composition, but is it eternal? It is widely held by many that the soul is eternal, yet there are those who state that it isn't. Perhaps we can shed some light on the subject by bringing out what the Word has to say on the matter and where the doctrine of the eternality of the soul came from.

There were three views on this matter in the early Church. The Restorationist, (the minority view), the Traditional and the Conditional. All three positions held to the fundamentals of who Jesus Christ is, his atoning death and resurrection from the dead, salvation through faith in Christ, etc.. They also held to the return of Christ to the earth, judgment and the lake of fire for the damned. Where they differed is what happened to the soul in the second death.

The Restorationists believed that, in time, the soul that was not saved could be restored after spending an indefinite period of time in Hell. The Traditionalists held to the position that once the unsaved soul was raised up out of Hell, it would be then be thrown into the lake of fire where it would burn in everlasting conscience torment. John Calvin held to this position. While the Conditionalists believed that once the unsaved soul was cast into the lake of fire it would be totally and eternally consumed. It was the position that other good men in the Church Age held to as well.

A. “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.” 1 Timothy 6:16

We begin with a very dramatic and bold statement in 1 Timothy 6:16, which says, in speaking of God, “Who alone is immortal” – ‘ο μονος εχων αθανασιον. This is as bold a statement as saying that Yahweh is the only God and Jesus is his only begotten Son! And this follows upon the statement that God is the only Potentate, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, that He lives in unapproachable light, and that no man has seen him or can see Him!

The word **monos** means one, or only, the sole person, the only one, the only one of its kind. The word for **hath** (has) is the present active participle of *echo*, to have or to hold, or to possess something. The word for immortality is *athanasin* and it means not being subject to death. It brings our attention to the fact that **God is the only one, who in this case, possesses immortality**. “[*God*] the only one who possesses immortality”.

Immortality is a condition that God has possessed for all eternity. God has existed forever and will continue to exist forever because He cannot die, but not so with man. There isn't one reference in the Bible that states that man is immortal, or that he has an immortal soul. To the contrary the only reference to immortality is to something that God possesses! And it states that **He is the only one who possesses that quality**. Now some will bring out the idea that the body is mortal while the soul is immortal and when we receive a new body, then it will match our immortal souls.

B. “And fear not 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.” Matthew 10:28 - καὶ μὴ φοβηθῆτε απὸ τῶν ἀποκτεινοντῶν τὸ σωμα τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν μηδ δυναμενῶν ἀποκτείναι φοβηθῆτε δέ μαλλον τὸν δυναμενὸν καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ σωμα απολεσαι εν γεεννῃ

One of the arguments brought in to support the immortality of the soul is that soul life existing past physical death proves the point, but soul life continuing on past physical death does not prove the immortality of the soul. It only proves that soul life continues on past physical death. Soul life begins at physical birth, it continues on through physical life, and it continues on past physical death. **But that does not prove that the soul is immortal!**

Another argument is that there has to be an eternal lake of fire to be able to continue burning an immortal soul. Both of these arguments are dealt with in Matthew 10:28, “*And fear not 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.*”

When Christ was sending the twelve out to the House of Israel, the descendants of the ten northern tribes, Matthew 10:6, “*But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*” he gave them some instructions. One of them was to not fear the people they would be running into along the way and then he explains why. He said don’t fear those who are able to destroy the body, but are unable to destroy the soul. **Rather fear the One who is able to destroy both the body and the soul in Gehenna!**

Now he says that man has the power, δυναμενῶν – present participle of *dunamai*, to destroy the body, but he does not have the power to destroy the soul! He then says that they are to fear the One who has the power, δυναμενῶν – present participle of *dunamai*, to destroy **both the soul and body in Gehenna!** And here’s the point that one needs to understand, if the soul is destroyable, then it is not immortal!!

The concept of immortality is that something cannot die or be destroyed. But here it is very clear that Christ himself stated that **the soul can be destroyed!** And to clear up any confusion in the issue he ties it to an idea that we are all familiar with, the death of the physical body. We understand what death and destruction are for the physical body giving us a basis for understanding what he’s talking about in regards to the soul. If the body can be destroyed, and we all understand that concept, then know full well that the soul can be destroyed as well.

Now we’ve seen that the soul can be destroyed, and that God is the only one who can destroy the soul, and that the fires of Gehenna are what God uses to destroy the soul. Now we need to look at the concept of fire, the fire of God’s judgment, God being a consuming fire, etc..

We see in the end time judgment in Daniel 7:9,10 that a fire proceeds forth from the throne of God, “*I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.*” And what we’ve assumed that this river of fire, which will end up in a lake of fire, is a physical fire. But have we ever considered the idea that this will be a fire that has different properties than we’re familiar with? Have we ever considered the fact that this fire will not only be able to destroy the body, but the soul as well? God’s judgment that pours forth from his throne as a river ending in a lake of fire that totally consumes everything thrown into it – both the body and the soul?

C. “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” Daniel 7:9,10

Perhaps we should first think about this picture that is set before us. God’s throne, which refers to his rulership over the universe, now ablaze with fire, the wheels of his throne ablaze with fire, and a river of fire proceeding from his throne. Contrast this river of fire, which speaks of God’s judgment, with the scene in the New Jerusalem after his judgment, where you now have a river of water of life that proceeds from the very same throne. “*And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*” Revelation 22:1

Now when we talk about fire we need to see that there are three aspects found in it: 1) there is the power of the fire. 2) there is the action of the fire. And 3) there is the result of the fire. The **power** of the fire is the heat and light that it produces. The **action** of the fire is its burning, which would be the flames. And the **effect** or results of the fire is its scorching, burning or consuming.

Pur, from which we get the words pyre and fire, looks at the action of the fire burning. Kauma looks at the power of the fire, that is, the heat and light it produces. And kaio looks at the effect or result of the fire where the material that has been burning is reduced to ashes. As we stand a distance from the campfire we see the flames and the light it produces. As we get closer, we feel the heat it produces. And as the night goes on the campfire consumes the material burning it down to ashes.

Fire was used as a means of judgment, for it purified, (from the root – *pur*), everything by burning up that which was bad. In both the OT and the NT fire is always seen to be accompanying God, in his person, around his throne, and in his judgment. Ezekiel 1:27 describes him as being like glowing metal from his waist up and fire from his waist down. “*And I saw as the colour of amber; as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.*”

Fire is the manifestation of *Yahweh*’s power, glory and holiness. It is also the means by which he judges sin and purifies all things. In other passages, when they describe God’s presence, the fire is always there in his person, around the throne, etc., but not a river of fire proceeding from his throne. But with this reference to a river of fire, it indicates that the final judgment is now in progress. God is always holy and righteous, the fire is always there, but now judgment begins and the fire proceeds from his throne, like lava, sweeping away all sin and evil with it.

But this is not an ordinary fire that proceeds from the combustion of physical material, but it is the very fire of God himself! Fire that proceeds, not from the combustion of matter, but fire that proceeds from his power, his glory and his holy essence! It may remind us of a scene of lava flowing from a volcano, but that’s all. We are not talking about molten rock, or burning grass or wood. We are talking about something altogether different.

Most have their own ways that they perceive how God is, but we tend to forget, or maybe we don’t even know, how God truly is! **Our God is a consuming fire.** Deuteronomy 4:24 says, “*For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.*” And Hebrews 12:29 states, “*For our God is a consuming fire.*”

The scene of Daniel 7:9,10 is one of judgment. The throne of God is based upon his righteousness and justice. “*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.*” Psalm 89:14 The fire that proceeds from his throne is the manifestation of his holiness judging all sin and iniquity. His holy fire is the means by which all sin and evil are judged and removed eternally; purification is accomplished by the fire burning everything that defiles and offends God. In the case of believers, his fire removes the dross of our human good works; **our works** are burned up. In the case of unbelievers, his fire removes them eternally; **they** are burned up.

In 1 Corinthians 3:13-15, “*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 abide which he hath 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.*” . We have the example of the Christian whose human good works will be totally and utterly burned up by this same fire, which proceeds from God. But we also have him personally escaping through the fire unharmed. And the reason for this is because he is righteous. It is his righteousness, through faith in Christ that qualifies him to not be harmed.

Which tells us that believers in Christ will have to go **through** the fire! Even the word through, *dia*, is used in the passage. If God is going to judge all things by fire, is it so unreasonable to accept that this will include men and angels as well? God is a consuming fire; his throne is ablaze with flames; a river of fire proceeds from his throne; he judges using fire that consumes all that offends his righteousness; our works shall be judged by fire; and we will escape **through** the fire!

If you say that's only for unbelievers, then how do you explain the believer's works being burned up as he passes through it, but he himself is saved? Besides, going through the fire will not pose a problem for the believer who is identified with Christ through faith in him. For every believer in Christ is not only righteous, but eternal. And being eternal he or she cannot be harmed in any way. Some of their works might be burned up, but they will not be harmed in any way. Not so with the unbeliever.

Personally, I believe that all believers will have to go through this river of fire proceeding from the throne of God. For one is going from a position of no fire, to into the fire, and then through the fire out to the other side. Hopefully our works will fare as well, but we will be just fine.

But the unbeliever will not make it through the fire to the other side. He would be consumed by the fire. That's probably the reason why the angels will have to literally throw them into the lake of fire. They know that they will not survive the fire of God's righteous judgment; they are terrified of what awaits them; they will not volitionally pass through it, so they will have to be thrown into the lake of fire and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Remember that Jesus Christ, the only man to enter into heaven and be accepted by God, entered into heaven, ascended the holy mountain of God, and faced the God who dwells in unapproachable light and who is a consuming fire! He stood there in the face of God the Father's fiery presence and was accepted by him and was seated at his right hand.

The river of fire is the final judgment that consumes all things that are offensive to an holy God, but will not pose a threat or problem to the people of God. The reason why is because we have the righteousness of Jesus Christ and therefore are viewed by God as being righteous. So the fire of God's judgment will not harm us in any way, but not so with the unsaved!

D. The Nature of the fire.

“For our God is a consuming fire.” Hebrews 12:29 “If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” 1 Corinthians 3:15 “And fear not 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.” Matthew 10:28

We have seen that the fire of the last judgment is a fire, but a different form of fire that we are familiar with. Fire, as we know it, is subject to the laws of physics and is brought about by the combustion of materials. And combustion is normally brought about when the heat is brought up to a certain point where the material bursts into flames.

But the river of fire that proceeds from the throne of God is not started by any combustion of materials in the eternal state, but proceeds from the very person of God. It is a fire, but different than anything we are familiar with and is able to totally consume things in its flames; something that no ordinary fire could do.

If a man dies in a fiery crash his body is consumed (to a degree) by the fire, but not his soul! Now some say that this is probably because his soul is immortal. But maybe the truth lies in the area that the physical combustion of fire on the earth can only consume the body, which is governed by the laws of physics, but is not able to consume the soul, which is spiritual in nature and the laws of physics do not apply to it.

We have seen that God has the power to destroy the soul in the fires of *Gehenna*, which shows that the soul is destroyable! And if the soul is destroyable, then it is not immortal. Which raises the questions of will it be destroyed, and if so, how? As to the question of **how**, it would be the consuming fire that proceeds from the throne of God.

There are two words that can help us in this matter. The first one is found in *1 Corinthians 3:15*, “*If any man’s work shall be **burned**, (katakaio - to burn completely and utterly), he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*” And in *Hebrews 12:29*, “*For our God is a consuming (katanalisko – to be totally consumed) fire.*”

In the matter of burning there are three concepts involved: 1) *puromai*, where something glows with the heat, like molten metal or rock; 2) *kaio*, where something breaks out and catches fire. This is where you see the fire and the thing itself burning; 3) *katakaio*, is the most complete and final stage of all. This is where the thing catches on fire and continues to burn to the point where there is nothing left. No coals, no ashes, nothing. The intensive use of *kaio*, with *kata* prefixed to it, shows it is totally consumed with absolutely nothing left at all. *Katakaio* and *katanalisko* looks at the action from the beginning, where the object catches on fire. Next there is the action of its burning. And finally to the result or end of it all where it is totally burned up – nothing left.

All of our works, if they are not in accordance with the righteous nature of God will be totally consumed by the fire of his judgment. Now does this also apply to unrighteous souls? Will the righteous fire of God’s judgment totally consume the unrighteous souls so that there is nothing left? Some say yes, and some say no. But once again remember that if the soul is destroyable, then it is not immortal in its own right. That its existing on into the eternal state is dependent upon God granting it eternal life.

In Hebrews 12:29 we saw that our God is a consuming fire and that the word used for **consuming** is *katanalisko*, which is the intensive use of *analisko* the word for consume, which gives us the idea that something is so thoroughly consumed that there is nothing left of it. The point it's bringing out is that the fire of God's judgment is not just a fire that burns, but a fire that consumes!

In Galatians 5:15, “*But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed (analisko) one of another.*”, Paul is talking about them bickering and fighting and he uses a little sarcasm and tells them that they better watch out because, if they keep on biting and eating each other, they will eat each other up so there's nothing left! They will be consumed!

The word Paul uses here for **consume** is *analisko*, which talked about the consuming of food where after one eats it there is nothing left. Now if *analisko* is used to denote that something is consumed to the point that there is nothing left of it, how much more total and emphatic is the idea of consuming when using the intensive *katanalisko*?

Our God is a consuming fire; a fire that totally consumes its enemies. And fire is also associated with the Lord when he returns to earth. “*In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:*” 2 Thessalonians 1:8

Why all the emphasis on this? Because it's telling us that **this fire that proceeds from God, from his person, from his throne, is not just a fire that burns, but a fire that consumes!** And not one that just consumes, but one that utterly consumes! One that so thoroughly consumes that there is nothing left! Hebrews 12:29 does not just say that our God is a burning fire, but a **consuming fire**!

Another point to consider is that many are not aware of the fact that ever since the flood the mystery religion of Babylon, and that includes the Gnostics and all free masonry, all held to the idea of the immortality of the soul. And that there were many believers who held to the position that this doctrine crept into the Church over the years, but was not originally accepted by it.

If the soul is immortal, then why do we need God to grant us eternal life? Some will say so we can live in eternal peace, instead of eternal torment. But what that is saying is that we're being granted where we will spend our eternal existence! But the passages dealing with that talk about being granted the privilege of existing forever and not just about where we will exist.

At the end of it all, God is going to destroy the existing heavens and the existing earth and create new heavens and a new earth. And how God is going to destroy the heavens and the earth is by the use of fire! It is a fire that will totally and permanently destroy the entire universe. A fire that will totally consume the known universe! “*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt (luo – be loosened) with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (katakaio – utterly consumed).*” 2 Peter 3:10

Some things are certain in the matter. 1) God alone is immortal; 2) the soul is destroyable; 3) God judges with fire; 4) the fire is not like physical fire; 5) the fire proceeds out of God's holiness; 6) the fire does not just burn, but consumes that which offends God's holiness; 7) the results are permanent and eternal; 8) Sodom and Gomorrah, which were burned to ashes, were used as examples of what is going to happen to the unsaved; 9) and they were also used as examples of the eternal fire. 2 Peter 2:6,9; Jude 7

E. The examples of Sodom and Gomorrah.

“And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes (tephroo) condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample, hypodeigma, unto those that after should live ungodly;” 2 Peter 2:6 “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:” 2 Peter 2:9 “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, deigma, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” Jude 7

Both Peter and Jude are talking about the subject of the angels, who sinned against God, and the ungodly and what is going to happen to both groups in the fire at the judgment of God. And they both use, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as examples, but not just examples of what is going to happen to them, but also examples of the eternal fire.

An example is something that is brought up for the purpose of comparison and illustration. It is used to explain something that we might not normally be able to grasp. But by bringing in an example to illustrate the point, then we can understand it better.

OK, we know that the ungodly are going to be thrown into the fire of God's judgment at the end of time, but then what is going to happen? Are they going to continually burn forever? Or are they going to be totally consumed by the fire? Many fine believers hold to both positions. So how can we answer this question in a way that we can understand?

And here is where Sodom and Gomorrah are brought in as examples of, not just the judgment of God, but also of the eternal fire of God that he uses to judge! God judged Sodom and Gomorrah, and the other three cities of the district, for their wickedness and he used fire from heaven to do it. *“Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;” Genesis 19:24* So we have to step back and ask ourselves exactly what happened? One moment the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were walking around in their towns and villages, then the next moment the fire of God's judgment rained out of the skies. What was the result? The people, and all they owned and had built, were reduced to ashes. The wind carries the ashes and there is nothing left.

You say, that was in the physical realm for their souls existed on past death! Quite true. But in the final judgment of God we are not just talking about physical fire with physical properties, but we are talking about a fire that is able to destroy not just the physical body, but the **soul** as well! *“And fear not 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.” Matthew 10:28*

Another example of something being totally consumed by fire is where the wood, hay and stubble works of believers, that are not of the quality demanded by God's righteousness, will be judged by fire, with the fire consuming everything which is not according to the divine nature of God. *“Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 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 abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, (katakaio), he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” 1 Corinthians 3:12-15*

As we have noted, the word for **burning** here, *katakaio*, tells us that something has caught on fire and continued to burn until it was completely burned up, as we would say. And that's what will happen to the believer's works that are not in conformity to the nature of God. Their works will be totally consumed by the fire; they will not continue to burn forever.

Now in this passage it is talking about ordinary fire that burns at a certain temperature; a temperature that will burn things such as wood, hay and stubble, but not hot enough to consume gold, silver and precious stone. It is in the inherent quality of gold, silver and precious stones that resists being consumed by the fire, but not so with wood, hay and stubble. Six items passing through the same fire with different results. Three of the items pass through unharmed, the other three are totally consumed.

It says that, "*Every man's work shall be made manifest:*" Or the activity of every individual will become plainly seen [to all], ‘εκαστου το εργον φανερον γενησεται. *Ergos* in the singular lumps up the entire life of an individual, his activity in life. *Ginomai* signifies a change of condition telling us that the true nature of a man's works, whether good or bad, can be hidden from all, but on the day of judgment they will be plainly seen by all as to what their true nature is, whether good or bad.

Then it says that, "*the day shall declare it*", that is, the day of God's judgment will declare it, 'η γαρ ημερα δηλωσει. *The day*, with the definite article, tells us that there is something special about this day which sets it apart from any other day, which we know will be the day of the judgment. And it is this day of judgment that will make clearly plain to everyone the nature of our activity here on earth.

Then it goes on to tell us how this will be done, "*because it shall be revealed by fire;*" , 'οτι εν πυρι αποκαλυπτεται. *Apokalupto* has the idea of revealing something that was previously hidden or unknown. Combined with the other two words we have the idea that something had been hidden or unknown, but now is being revealed to all. And **the active agent by which all this happens is the fire!**

It is the fire that tests the quality of every believer's activity here on earth and reveals its true quality. "and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." και 'εκαστου το εργον 'οποιον εστιν το πυρ δοκιμασει. *Hopoiros* denotes what kind of work, or what sort of work as to its nature and quality. The word for **test** is *dokimazo* and has the idea of refining ore for the purpose of extracting the gold and at the same time getting rid of the dross. At one time the fire brings out the good, the gold, and gets rid of the bad, the dross.

What Paul is talking about in this matter of judging a man's works is that which pertains to Christ's Church here on earth! The planting, the watering, the foundation that has been laid, building upon this foundation, etc., all deal with the idea of the Church here on earth, which is the temple of God. So what it's saying is that if our activity here on earth has been centered around the building up and edification of the people of God, which is God's temple, then we will be rewarded for that. **But if our time here on earth has been spent doing things that further ourselves in life, then we will suffer loss!**

In those days gold, silver and precious stones were used to adorn the ancient temples. While wood, hay and stubble were used to build the common man's huts. If a Christian's activity here on earth is spent to further his own agenda, to build up his own house, to further his own cause in life, then he will not be rewarded for that; it will be burned up in the fire. But if his time has been invested in furthering the true things of Christ, in building up the Church of Christ, of investing his time and life for the things of Christ, then he will be rewarded for that; his works will not be burned up. **So, shall we be working on our mud huts? Or working on the temple of God?**

The fire will test the quality of each man's works. If it is of a certain quality, then the fire will not harm it in any way. But if it isn't, then the fire will totally consume it! Just as the fire would totally consume the hay and the stubble until there is nothing left. The righteous, perfect, all consuming fire of a holy God will totally consume anything that offends his righteousness. This has been the view of, not all believers, but of Conditionalism ever since the first century.

And **fire** has been a prevalent theme both in the OT and the NT. Daniel 7:10, “*A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him.*” 2 Thessalonians 1:7,8, “*And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:*” Hebrews 12:29, “*For our God is a consuming fire.*” 2 Peter 3:7, “*But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*” Jude 7, “*Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*” Jude 23, “*And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.*”

Now 1 Corinthians 3:15 says, “*If any man's work shall be burned, (katakaio), he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*”, where we saw the intensive katakaio denoting that some believer's works will not be just burned, but be **totally consumed by the fire**. But the believer himself will be **saved, sozo**, that is, the fire will not harm him in any way.

Then it says, “*yet so as by fire*”, ‘ουτως δε ως δια πυρος, *houtos de hos dia puros*. We have here an interesting word, the preposition dia, which means through something. If we had **en**, it would mean in the fire. And that would not be the case here. If it were **apo**, it would mean from the fire. No contact with the fire at all, which has the idea of avoiding the fire. If it was **ek**, it would mean out of the fire. Showing that one originated in the fire and then came running out of it, like running out of a burning house. If it was **huper**, then it would mean above the fire. Which would show an avoidance of the fire by going over it. If it were **eis**, then it would mean that he went into the fire and didn't come out. Which wouldn't be much help either. If it were **hupo**, then it would mean that he went under the fire, which would be like **apo** and **huper** to avoid the fire, which isn't the case either. But it uses **dia**, which means to go through the fire. Showing that the believer will begin from a position where he is not in the fire, go into the fire, and then come out the other side!

As we have seen, there are three aspects to the fire. 1) there is the **burning** of the fire, *pur*, with its visible flames. That would be the **action** of the fire. 2) then there is the **heat and light** the fire produces, *kauma*, which one can see and feel. That would be the **power** of the fire. 3) then there is the effects or **results** of the fire, *kaio*, where the material, or whatever it is, is reduced to ashes or nothing at all. That is the **effect** of the fire.

What this indicates is that all believers in Christ will have to pass through the fire of God's judgment. I know that most believe that their works will be judged in the fire, some maybe burned up, others will be fine, but how else does one explain that they will go **through**, *dia*, the fire themselves? Probably the reason why, when unbelievers are facing the same fire, they will refuse to pass through and have to be thrown into the lake of fire.

F. Eternal life is a gift, not an inherent quality.

“And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master; what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” - καὶ επηρωτησεν τις αυτὸν ἀρχῶν λεγὼν διδασκαλε ἀγαθε τι ποιησας ζωην αιωνιον κληρονομησω - Luke 18:18

A certain ruler, who was familiar with the concept of the eternal state, asked the Lord what he must do to inherit it. There was a discussion on the various things that he had done in his life, but the end of it all was where the Lord brought out the idea that it was impossible for man to live forever based upon his works.

But it was not impossible with God, for he alone **grants** immortality. And God grants eternal life only to those who believe on Christ as their Savior. To grant is to bestow a gift or favor upon someone not based upon their works or person and without any form of compensation.

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” - καὶ γὰρ ζωὴν αιωνιον διδῷμι αὐτοῖς καὶ οὐ μη ἀπολονται εἰς τὸν αἰώνα καὶ οὐχ ἀρπασει τις αὐτα εκ τῆς χειρὸς μου. John 10:28

This passage gives us tremendous insight into Christ, his Word, who his sheep are and eternal life. And there are several characteristics mentioned concerning his sheep: 1) they believe on Christ as their Savior. 2) they know his voice, and the sound of his voice is the teaching of Bible Doctrine; 3) Christ knows them personally; 4) they follow him; 5) he gives them eternal life; 6) they shall never perish; 7) they can never be separated from him or his Father.

What a contrast we have here. On the one hand we have many Jews, who were trying to acquire eternal life by their self righteousness, good deeds and religious observances in the temple, **and at the same time trying to murder the only one on earth who could give them eternal life!**

But once again we see that entrance into the eternal state is not an automatic thing that one possesses because he has an eternal soul, nor something that one can attain to by his own activity. Rather it is something that one must be permitted or allowed permission to enter into it. This means that eternal life must be given, or granted, to that individual.

And God is the only one who can grant us permission to enter into his eternal state and qualify us for it. And he has vested this in his Son. And if one rejects the Son, then he is rejecting the only one who has the authority to grant us eternal life! We must remember that the eternal state belongs to the Son and the Father. Only God has existed forever and only God is immortal, not man, nor the angels. To live eternally is not something that man possesses intrinsically in his own nature, or is it something that he holds the rights to, or that he can work to attain. God must grant it.

“As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” - καθὼς εδῶκας αὐτῷ εξουσιαν πασῆς σαρκὸς ἵνα παν ‘ο δεδωκας αὐτῷ δωσῃ αὐτοῖς ζωὴν αιωνιον. John 17:2

We see that God the Father, who is over all, has conferred on his Son, the Lord Jesus, the authority over all people so that Christ can grant eternal life to the ones that the Father has given him. Again the emphasis is on being granted the right to exist forever, not on where one will spend their eternal existence.

As he said in John 6:37-40, “*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*”

“*And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*” - ακούοντα δε τα εθνη εχαιρον και εδοξαζον τον λογον του κυριου και επιστευσαν ‘οσοι ‘ησαν τεταγμενοι εις ζωην αιωνιον. Acts 13:48

What's interesting here is that these people had been appointed to eternal life. The word for **ordain** or appoint is *tasso* and was a military term where someone in authority would direct, station, or post someone to a certain position or task. Here it's eternal life.

But *tasso* is found in the perfect passive participle. Now the action of the **future participle**, which is to **appoint**, occurs at a time future from the main verb, to believe. The action of the **present participle** occurs at the same time as the main verb. The action of the **aorist participle** occurs before the main verb. But the action of the **perfect participle** had come into existence a long time ago before the action of the main verb, with the results continuing right on up to the time of the main verb.

So what does all this mean? It means that God had appointed certain people to eternal life long before they were ever born and long before they ever believed on Christ as their Savior. And he did this back in eternity past. As Christ referred to in John 6:65, “*And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.*”

“*In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;*” επ' ελπιδι ζωης αιωνιου ‘ην επιγγειλατο ‘ο αφευδης θεος προ χρονων αιωνιων. Titus 1:2

Here we see that eternal life in the eternal state had been promised to us by God in eternity past. And because of God's promise it becomes our hope. Now **hope**, *elpis*, is the confident expectation that something good is awaiting us in the future. And it can be viewed from two perspectives.

Subjective hope looks at the believer's soul being confident toward the future because he or she believes that something good awaits them. While **objective hope** is separate from our immediate experience and looks solely at what God is going to do for us, regardless of how we may feel at any given moment. Believers have the hope of eternal life constantly awaiting them, **objective hope**, but they can let themselves get discouraged, or get into a state of feeling hopeless, by not living the faith rest life, that's the idea of **subjective hope**.

The **hope** that all believers in Christ have awaiting them is the day we receive our resurrection body for in that day we become immortal. “*For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*” 1 Corinthians 15:53 I know it is the body that is in view here, but remember, if the soul is immortal, then even God cannot destroy it! But the Scriptures say, “*And fear not 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.*” - Matthew 10:28 If God can destroy the soul, then the soul is destroyable. And if the soul is destroyable, then it is not immortal.

G. The eternal state.

“And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever:” - καὶ ὁ καπνὸς τοῦ βασανισμοῦ αὐτῶν αναβαίνει εἰς αιωνας αιωνων. Revelation 14:11

“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet [are], and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” καὶ ὁ διαβόλος ὁ πλανῶν αὐτοὺς εβληθῇ εἰς τὴν λιμνὴν τοῦ πυρος καὶ θειου ὃπου τὸ θηριόν καὶ ὁ ψευδοπροφῆτης καὶ βασανισθησονται ἡμερας καὶ νυκτος εἰς τους αιωνας των αιωνων. Revelation 20:10

Both of these verses are translated as *forever and ever*, but in the original we have *into the age of the ages*. Which is saying, into the Age that is characterized by unending ages. Now there are two ways of looking at **age**, *aion*, qualitatively or quantitatively.

If it were **quantitatively**, then it would be bringing out the idea of days without number, existence unending, etc.. But if it were **qualitatively**, then it would be bringing out the idea of the quality of this type of existence, in that, it would be like the state of existence that God has always possessed.

This is why many have tended toward the idea that eternity, or the eternal state, is another form of existence, one that only God possesses, and when one is granted eternal life, God is allowing him to enter into and exist in this eternal state. Which is also saying that man does not possess this existing in the eternal state intrinsically and must be granted it by God.

Another thing about these two verses is that in Revelation 20:10, where the clause has been translated as, “*where the beast and the false prophet [are]*”, the word “*are*” has been italicized in the translation to show that the translators have added it, for it is not in the original. But in the context we find that the passage only brings out the fact that the devil was cast into the lake of fire and a point could be easily made that it could also read, “*And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet [had been cast]*.”

The point of this study is to let the students of the Word know that there have been two views on the lake of fire and eternal death from the first century to this day. One view, the **Traditionalist**, believes that the unsaved and fallen angels are thrown into the lake of fire, where they will burn in everlasting conscience torment. The other view, the **Conditionalist**, of which both G. Campbell Morgan and Charles Haddon Spurgeon said that they had no problem with it, holds to the position that both the unsaved and fallen angels will be thrown into the lake of fire, where they will burn for an indeterminate time, but be ultimately consumed body and soul by the fire.

The important issue for all mankind is not which view is the correct one, but avoiding this altogether. This is definitely something that one does not want to have happen to them. The “*weeping and gnashing of teeth*” that the Lord described when facing this punishment speaks of the unsaved’s unbridled rage and their overwhelming sadness. Life as they have known is gone forever and now they have to face the flames of judgment of an holy God. But the good news is that it is totally avoidable by placing their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior. “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*” Romans 10:9,13

Pastor Mike