

# The Biblical Testimony Concerning Hell

## A very brief historical case for traditionalism

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### I. Summary

- A. The Old Testament (OT) testimony concerning the afterlife is relatively limited. It does however, contain some significant seeds for the ideas that would later sprout and expand to form the traditional Christian beliefs of the afterlife.
- B. Although there is some variety within Jewish belief during the intertestamental (IT) literature, as well within the pharisaical and rabbinic Judaism of the period, it is here that we find many of the ideas that were somewhat latent in the Old Testament having sprouted to form the very specific and distinct Jewish view of the afterlife that was commonly accepted in Jesus' day.
- C. Not only do Jesus and the New Testament (NT) writers carry on, reiterate, and validate the Jewish views of the afterlife that took such clear form after the close of the OT canon, with specific regard to the question as to whether or not punishment for the wicked in hell was temporary or eternal, they take the position that it was eternal.
- D. Although we do find some variation within the Early Church Fathers, the consensus of their views also reflect the traditional NT biblical witness on these issues.
- E. Since the IT period, there have been various minority voices who have argued for conditionalism, at no time in Church history have these views ever been accepted as the orthodox view of the Church.
- F. The trending toward conditionalism (annihilationism) among some segments of Christianity today represents a departure from the witness of Jesus and the Scriptures.

### II. The Witness of the Old Testament

- A. The witness of the Old Testament concerning the afterlife is relatively limited.

1. The OT is primarily focused on judgment of the unrighteous (most often involving ruin, death, and destruction) and blessing of the righteous—specifically in this life.
2. The OT for example, says absolutely nothing about the righteous going to heaven after they die.
3. Although the OT says very little about the experience of the soul in the intermediate period (in Sheol) between death and the resurrection, there are indicators that there is an ongoing consciousness of the soul during this time.
  - a) See for example, **I Samuel 28:13-18** where the spirit of Samuel the prophet is brought up from Sheol by Saul and the medium.
4. The OT references the concept of the resurrection at least four times:
  - a) **Job 19:25-26**: “As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; Whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes will see and not another.
  - b) **Isaiah 26:19**: “Your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as the dew of the dawn, and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.”
  - c) **Ezekiel 37:4-6**: Again He said to me, “Prophecy over these bones and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.’ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, ‘Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the LORD.’”
  - d) **Daniel 12:2**: “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.”
5. The OT speaks twice about ongoing conscious suffering in the afterlife for the wicked:
  - a) **Isaiah 66:23-24** “And it shall be from new moon to new moon and from sabbath to sabbath, all mankind will come to bow down before Me,” says the LORD. “Then they will go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. ***For their worm will not die and***

**their fire will not be quenched**; and they will be an abhorrence to all mankind.”

- b) Under normal circumstances, maggots eventually exhaust their food and fire normally burns out of fuel. What Isaiah describes here however, is not normal.
  - c) **Daniel 12:2**: “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others **to disgrace and everlasting contempt.**”
  - d) The disgrace and contempt inherited by the wicked is intended to be contrasted with that which the righteous inherit, which is eternal life. Those who do not exist cannot experience or inherit anything, never mind disgrace or shame.
  - e) Efforts by conditionalists to explain these passages away simply fall short.
- B. The OT introduces the idea that the Valley of Hinnom (Gr: *Gehenna*) south of Jerusalem will be the place of punishment for the wicked.
- 1. **Isa. 30:33**: For Topheth has long been ready, indeed, it has been prepared for the king. He has made it deep and large, a pyre of fire with plenty of wood; the breath of the LORD, like a torrent of brimstone, sets it afire.
  - 2. **Isa. 31:9**: “...declares the LORD, whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.
  - 3. **Isa 66:24**: “Then they will go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched and they will be an abhorrence to all mankind.”
  - 4. **Jeremiah 7:32; cf., 19:6**: “Therefore, behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when it will no longer be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of the Slaughter; for they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place.

### **III. The Witness of the Intertestamental Period**

- A. During the intertestamental (IT) period between the close of the Old Testament canon and the coming of Jesus, Jewish theology and thought concerning the afterlife crystalized quite significantly.

- B. The ideas are recorded largely in the Deuterocanonical Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, the Qumran scrolls, and Rabbinic literature. As protestants, we do not affirm any of these works these as authoritative, but some certainly held a place of sacred importance among the Jews, and they certainly serve as important records of history, helping us to understand the ideas that were common to Judaism during the day.
- C. The Ideas concerning the afterlife articulated during the IT period represent the blossoming and crystallization of the somewhat under-articulated or in some cases, latent ideas expressed in the OT. These texts often state explicitly what the OT states implicitly.
- D. Despite the claims of some, the ideas concerning the afterlife do not necessarily represent the intermingling of Greek ideas with Jewish thought, rather they more often represent the fuller expression of that which was simply not as thoroughly articulated in the OT.
- E. The IT ideas (ie., the expansion of OT truths) concerning the afterlife thus form the backdrop for the New Testament teaching concerning the afterlife.
- F. Any careful historical-grammatical analysis of the NT teaching concerning the afterlife demands an acknowledgment of the IT influence and backdrop.
- G. The IT ideas concerning the afterlife are part of the larger worldview referred to as Second Temple Jewish Apocalypticism.
- H. Second Temple Jewish Apocalypticism, while having some variety, tended to affirm the following beliefs:
  - 1. Belief in Angels,
  - 2. Belief in Demons,
  - 3. Belief in an afterlife in Sheol, immediately following death:
    - a) the punishment of the wicked,
    - b) rest for the righteous,
    - c) a third group who did not deserve heaven but likewise did not deserve eternal torment in hell, would go to hell temporarily only to be released.
  - 4. Belief in a cataclysmic period at the end of the age,
  - 5. Followed by the Day of the Lord,

6. Which included the opening of heaven in flaming fire,
  7. The Lord's coming down in fire with His Holy angels,
  8. To execute vengeance against his enemies,
  9. Followed by the resurrection of the dead,
  10. The judgment of all mankind,
  11. The wicked are cast into Gehenna, the Valley of Hinnom, (ie., Hell),
  12. And the righteous inherit the Kingdom of God on the earth.
- I. All of these things are affirmed by Jesus and the larger NT teaching.
  - J. Ideas concerning the afterlife which found a more crystalized expression include:
    1. After death, but before the judgment, Sheol (Gr: *Hades*) is the place the soul goes to experience conscious torment or rest.
    2. Sheol / Hades is also portrayed as both compartmentalized and multi-tiered. The wicked go there and experience conscious suffering and degrees of punishment, while the righteous experience rest in a paradisaal compartment of Sheol / Hades.
    3. The Valley of Hinnom (Gr: Gehenna) south of Jerusalem will be the actual place where the wicked go after judgment, to be punished with conscious torment and suffering.
    4. There is a direct continuity between what one experiences in Sheol / Hades and what one experiences after judgment. At times, Sheol and Gehenna are even used interchangeably.
    5. While conditionalists point to some comments in the literature of the IT period that speak of annihilationism, these passages fall under the following two categories:
      - a) Eventual annihilation after an extended period of conscious torment in Gehenna. (Logically however, this concept violates the most common technical definition of "conditional immortality" which holds that after judgment, life and immortality are conditional upon being in Christ.)
      - b) Passages that are debatable as to their actual meaning, or are unclear.

K. IT scholarship acknowledges that the overwhelming consensus of IT literature communicates conscious torment for the wicked, (either eternally or for an extended period of time).

L. The NT language and imagery reflects the language of the IT literature.

M. Example Passages:

- a) **4 Ezra 7:32-38**: The earth shall give up those who are asleep in it, and the dust those who rest there in silence; and the chambers shall give up the souls that have been committed to them. The Most High shall be revealed on the seat of judgment, and compassion shall pass away, and patience shall be withdrawn. Only judgment shall remain, truth shall stand, and faithfulness shall grow strong. ***Recompense shall follow***, and the reward shall be manifested; righteous deeds shall awake, and unrighteous deeds shall not sleep. ***The pit of torment shall appear, and opposite it shall be the place of rest; and the furnace of hell [Gehenna] shall be disclosed, and opposite it the paradise of delight.*** Then the Most High will say to the nations that have been raised from the dead, 'Look now, and understand whom you have denied, whom you have not served, whose commandments you have despised. ***Look on this side and on that; here are delight and rest, and there are fire and torments.***'
- b) **2 Baruch 59:2**: For at that time the lamp of the eternal law shone on all those who sat in darkness, which announced to them that believe, the promise of their reward, ***and to them that deny, the torment of fire which is reserved for them.***
- c) **2 Baruch 64:7-10**: On this account Manasseh was at that time named "the impious", and finally his abode was ***in the fire***... For he had not lived perfectly, for he was not worthy—but that thenceforward he might know by whom finally he should be ***tormented. For he who is able to benefit is also able to torment.***
- d) **2 Baruch 85:13**: There there is ***the sentence of corruption, the way of fire, and the path which bringeth to Gehenna.***
- e) **1 Enoch 27**: Then said I: 'For what object is this blessed land, which is entirely filled with trees, and this ***accursed valley*** between?' Then Uriel, one of the holy angels who was with me, answered and said: '***This accursed valley is for those who are accursed for ever: here shall all***

**the accursed be gathered together** who utter with their lips against the Lord unseemly words and of His glory speak hard things.

- f) **1 Enoch 10:13-14:** In those days they shall be led off to **the abyss of fire: and to the torment and the prison in which they shall be confined for ever.** And whosoever shall be condemned and destroyed will from thenceforth be bound together with them to the end of all generations.
- g) **1 Enoch 100:4-9:** And the Most High will arise on that day of judgment in order to execute a great judgment upon all the sinners... 7 Woe unto you, sinners, when you oppress the righteous ones, **in the day of hard anguish, and burn them with fire!** You shall be recompensed according to your deeds. 8 Woe unto you, you hard of heart, who are watchful to devise evil! **Fear shall seize you, and none shall come to your aid.** 9 Woe unto you, sinners, because of the words of your hands! On account of the deeds of your wicked ones, **in blazing flames worse than fire, it shall burn.**
- h) **1 Enoch 108:3-6:** As for you, wait patiently until sin passes away, for the names of the sinners shall be blotted out from the Book of Life and the books of the Holy One; **their seeds shall be destroyed forever and their spirits shall perish and die; they shall cry and lament in a place that is an invisible wilderness and burn in the fire**—for there exists ground there as upon the earth. I also saw there something like an invisible cloud; and though I could see that it was completely dark yet I could not see the flame of its fire because it was burning brightly; and there were some things like bright mountains which formed a ring around it and which were tossing it to and fro. Then I asked one of the holy angels who was with me, saying to him, “What is this bright thing? For it is not a heaven but merely the flame of a fire which is burning—**and a voice of weeping, crying, and lamenting as well as strong pain.**” 6 And he said unto me, “This place which you see, into it shall be taken the spirits of sinners, blasphemers, those who do evil, and those who alter all the things which the Lord has done through the mouth of the prophets, all of which have to be fulfilled.”
- i) **3 Enoch 44:1-6:** **The souls of the wicked are brought down to Sheol by two angels of destruction**... Zaphiel is appointed by the Holy One,

blessed be he, from judgment of the Shekina to Sheol **to punish them with fire in Gehinnom, with rods of burning coal.**

- j) **Sibylline Oracles 1:100-103:** They [the second generation of men] were mighty, of great form, but nevertheless they went under the dread house of Tartarus guarded by unbreakable bonds, to make retribution, **to Gehenna of terrible, raging, undying fire.**
- k) **Sibylline Oracles 2.283-310:** Then, in the dead of night, they will be thrown under many terrible infernal beasts **in Gehenna**, where there is immeasurable darkness. But when they have inflicted many punishments on all whose heart was evil, then later a fiery wheel from the great river will press them hard all around, because they were concerned with wicked deeds... **They will all gnash their teeth, wasting away with thirst and raging violence. They will call death fair, and it will evade them. No longer will death or night give these rest. Often they will request God, who rules on high, in vain,** and then he will manifestly turn away his face from them.
- l) **Assumption of Moses 10:9-10:** And God will exalt thee, and He will cause thee to approach to the heaven of the stars, in the place of their habitation. And thou shalt look from on high and shalt see **thy enemies in Gehenna**, and thou shalt recognize them and rejoice, and thou shalt give thanks and confess thy Creator.
- m) **4 Maccabees 9:8-9:** "For we, through this severe suffering and endurance, shall have the prize of virtue and shall be with God, on whose account we suffer; but you, because of your bloodthirstiness toward us, **will deservedly undergo from the divine justice eternal torment by fire.**"
- n) **4 Maccabees 10:9-11:** When he was about to die, he said, 10 "We, most abominable tyrant, are suffering because of our godly training and virtue, 11 but you, because of your impiety and bloodthirstiness, **will undergo unceasing torments.**"
- o) **4 Maccabees 12: 11-12:** You profane tyrant, most impious of all the wicked, since you have received good things and also your kingdom from God, were you not ashamed to murder his servants and torture on the wheel those who practice religion? Because of this, **justice has laid up**



**for you intense and eternal fire and tortures, and these throughout all time will never let you go.**

- p) **4 Maccabees 13:14-15:** Let us not fear him who thinks he is killing us, for great is the struggle of the soul and the danger of **eternal torment lying before those who transgress the commandment of God.**
- q) **2 Enoch 10:1-3:** And those men carried me to the northern region; and they showed me there a very frightful place; and **all kinds of torture and torment are in that place, cruel darkness and lightless gloom. And there is no light there, and a black fire blazes up perpetually,** with a river of fire that comes out over the whole place, fire here, freezing ice there, and it dries up and it freezes; and very cruel places of detention and dark and merciless angels, carrying instruments of atrocities torturing without pity.
- r) **Jubilees 36:10:** And on **the day of turmoil and execration and indignation and wrath, then with devouring burning fire** just as he burned Sodom so too he will burn up his land and his city and everything which will be his. And he will be wiped out from the book of the discipline of mankind, and he will not be written on high in The Book of Life for he is written in the one which will be destroyed and pass on **to eternal execration so that their judgment will always be renewed with eternal reproach and execration and wrath and torment and indignation and plagues and sickness.**
- s) **1 Enoch 51:1-3:** And in those days shall the earth also give back that which has been entrusted to it, in those days shall the earth deliver up from her womb, and **Sheol** also shall give back that which it has received, and **Gehenna** deliver up from hers, that which it has received; and **Gehenna** shall give back that which it owes.

#### **IV. The Witness of Pharisaical and Rabbinic Judaism**

- A. The ideas expressed within IT literature are all also reflected among the Pharisaical schools of Second Temple Judaism.
- B. Josephus informs us that the Pharisees believed that mankind possessed some kind of immortality.
  - 1. **Flavius Josephus, The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged**  
Now, for the Pharisees... when they determine that all things are done by

fate, they do not take away the freedom from men of acting as they think fit; since their notion is, that it hath pleased God to make a temperament, whereby what he wills is done, but so that the will of men can act virtuously or viciously. (14) **They also believe that souls have an immortal vigor in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards or punishments, according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life; and the latter are to be detained in an everlasting prison, but that the former shall have power to revive and live again.**

2. Jesus rebuked the hypocrisy of the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, yes, but He most often reflected their theological worldview:
  3. **Matthew 23:2-3:** The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, **so practice and observe whatever they tell you**, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice.
- C. Talmudic/Rabbinic literature informs us that some Pharisees said the suffering of the wicked in Gehenna will be eternal and some said it will be temporary (a period of 12 months is a time frame commonly expressed). Others said that some would eventually be purged there and ultimately escape.
1. **Alfred Eldersheim's The Life of Jesus the Messiah, Appendix on the rabbinic views of the afterlife:** "It is assumed in general that sinners go to hell immediately after their death. The famous teacher Johanan b. Zakkai wept before his death because **he did not know whether he would go to paradise or to hell** (Ber. 28b). **The pious go to paradise, and sinners to hell** (B. M. 83b). To every individual is apportioned two shares, one in hell and one in paradise. At death, however, the righteous man's portion in hell is exchanged, so that he has two in heaven, while the reverse is true in the case of sinners (Hag. 15a). **Hence it would have been better for the latter not to have lived at all** (Yeb. 63b). **They are cast into Gehenna to a depth commensurate with their sinfulness.** They say: "Lord of the world, Thou hast done well; **Paradise for the pious, Gehenna for the wicked**" ('Er. 19a). "There are three categories of men; the wholly pious and the arch-sinners are not purified, but only those between these two classes (Ab. R. N. 41). A similar view is expressed in the Babylonian Talmud, which adds that those who have sinned themselves but have not led others into sin remain for twelve months in Gehenna; **after twelve months their bodies are destroyed, their souls are burned, and the wind strews the ashes under the feet of the pious. But as regards the heretics, etc., and Jeroboam,**

**Nebat's son, hell shall pass away, but they shall not pass away"** (R. H. 17a; comp. Shab. 33b). ... **The sinners in Gehenna will be filled with pain when God puts back the souls into the dead bodies on the Day of Judgment,** according to Isa. xxxiii. 11 (Sanh. 108b).

## V. The Witness of the New Testament

A. Scholarly consensus holds that Jesus and the NT authors reflected the IT and Pharisaical view of the afterlife.

B. Summary:

1. Jesus affirmed the consciousness of the soul in the interim period between death and the judgment, either through rest in paradise for the righteous or punishment / torment / suffering of the wicked.
2. Jesus affirmed the consciousness of the soul in the interim period between death and the judgment, either through rest in paradise for the righteous or punishment / torment / suffering of the wicked.
3. Jesus affirmed the eternity of the punishment of the wicked in Gehenna.
4. Paul also confirmed the dualism of the body and soul.
5. Peter confirmed the view that the experience of the dead in Sheol or Hades is a prelude of their eternal condition, whether suffering or paradise. There is a direct correlation to the experience during the interim state and the experience after judgment.
6. Peter and Revelation affirm that the destiny of wicked angels is the same as the wicked humans: Eternal torment.

C. Textual Basis:

1. Jesus affirmed the consciousness of the soul in the interim period between death and the judgment, either through rest in paradise for the righteous or punishment / torment / suffering of the wicked.
2. **Luke 23:43:** "And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, **today you shall be with Me in Paradise.**"
  - a) The phrase "Truly I say to you" is used by Jesus 76 times.
  - b) Luke 23:43 is the only case where he just so happens to unusually add the word "today."

- c) The conditionalist argument very nonsensically paraphrases Jesus's words to essentially mean, "Today is the day that I am telling you that someday you will most assuredly be with me in paradise."
3. **Luke 16:** Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. ***In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment,*** and \*saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus ***so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.***' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; ***but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.*** And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.' And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come ***to this place of torment.***' But Abraham \*said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"
- a) Consistent Conditionalism (physicalism) often argues that this is merely a parable based on an Egyptian or Jewish fable.
- b) Thus they claim that Jesus used an unbiblical and possibly pagan fable that specifically teaches an unbiblical and untrue reality (conscious suffering) concerning the afterlife in order to *actually* convey soul sleep.
- c) This is simply unacceptable.
- d) Jesus was simply affirming the common conservative Jewish views of His day.
4. Jesus affirmed conscious torment after the final judgment:
- a) **Matthew 8:12:** "but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; ***in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.***" (cf. Matthew 13:42, 50; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28)

- b) Jesus was simply mirroring the most common conservative Jewish view of his day:
  - c) **Sibylline Oracles 2:283-310:** Then, in the dead of night, they will be thrown under many terrible infernal beasts *in Gehenna*, where there is immeasurable darkness... **They will all gnash their teeth, wasting away with thirst and raging violence. They will call death fair, and it will evade them. No longer will death or night give these rest. Often they will request God, who rules on high, in vain,** and then he will manifestly turn away his face from them.
  - d) **Mark 9:47-48:** If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell, where **THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.**
  - e) Jesus was giving us His interpretation of and commentary on Isaiah 66.
  - f) Under normal circumstances, maggots quickly run out of food and either pupate or die, and fire exhausts its fuel source and goes out. But what Jesus describes here is not normal.
  - g) But Jesus is speaking of undying, eternal maggots and fire.
  - h) Jesus was simply affirming the common conservative Jewish view of his day that Isaiah 66 entailed conscious suffering:
  - i) **Judith 16:17:** “Woe to the nations that rise up against my people! The Lord Almighty will take vengeance on them in the day of judgment; **he will send fire and worms into their flesh; they shall weep in pain forever.**”
  - j) **Sirach 7:17:** Humble yourself to the utmost, **for the punishment of the ungodly is fire and worms.**
- D. Jesus affirmed the eternality of the punishment of the wicked in Gehenna:
- a) **Matthew 25:41-46** “Then He will also say to those on His left, **‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;** for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or

naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ **These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.**”

- b) Understanding that in Jesus day, the question concerned whether someone was punished and suffered temporarily or eternally in Gehenna, it is clear that by repeatedly using “eternal,” Jesus was taking a clear stance on this matter.
  - c) Nowhere in the Gospels does Jesus ever even hint at temporary punishment in Gehenna.
  - d) If immediate annihilationism were true, Jesus words would make no sense. While the implications of the judgment/punishment would be forever, the punishment itself would be a one time event resulting in one no longer existing. Simply stated, one cannot punish someone who does not exist, and thus the only way punishment can truly be “eternal punishment” is if one actually exists to experience it.
  - e) Conditionalists seek to have it both ways. They affirm that the “punishment” Jesus speaks of is eternal, but deny that this eternal punishment involves torment. The IT literature knows no such formula. Eternal punishment is always referenced with regard to torment.
  - f) Is it possible that Jesus taught *Terminal Punishment* after a period which is often described as eternal? I would hold that it is possible, though the evidence seems to weigh against this.
- E. Paul also confirmed the dualism of the body and soul:
1. **2 Corinthian 5:6:** “Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that **while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord**”
  2. **2 Corinthians 12:2-4:** I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago— **whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know**, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man— **whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know**, God knows—was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

- a) The consistent conditionalist (physicalist) argument that dualism is not possible expect us to believe that they know the biblical worldview better than Paul. Paul understood the Hebrew / biblical worldview. The fact that he allowed for the chance that he was in “paradise” while outside of the body means that it is possible.
  - b) Consistent conditionalism (physicalism) holds that “life” and thus any form of consciousness entirely is conditional upon being in Christ. The problem is that Jesus affirms consciousness for the wicked, thus annihilating the very foundational premises of “conditional immortality.”
  - c) The fact that dualism is biblical and Jesus clearly taught consciousness for the wicked soul during the interim state proves that this condition of consciousness (whatever one may wish it call it) after the judgment fits well within the biblical metaphysical worldview.
- F. Peter taught that the experience of the dead in Sheol or Hades is a prelude of their eternal situation, whether suffering or paradise. There is a direct correlation to the experience during the interim state and the experience after judgment.
1. **2 Peter 2:9: *the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment.***
  2. Peter was simply affirming the Jewish view of his day on this matter. Various IT texts use Sheol and Gehenna interchangeably, affirming the continuity of punishment from the interim state to the final state.
  3. **1 Enoch 51:1-3:** And in those days shall the earth also give back that which has been entrusted to it, in those days shall the earth deliver up from her womb, and ***Sheol*** also shall give back that which it has received, and ***Gehenna*** deliver up from hers, that which it has received; and ***Gehenna*** shall give back that which it owes.
  4. **3 Enoch 44:1-6:** The souls of the wicked are ***brought down to Sheol*** by two angels of destruction... Zapiel is appointed by the Holy One, blessed be he, from ***judgment of the Shekina to Sheol to punish them with fire in Gehinnom, with rods of burning coal.***
- G. Peter affirmed the fact that the destiny of the wicked angels is the same as the wicked humans:

- H. **2 Peter 2:4**, For if **God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment**... then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to **keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment**, and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority.
- I. The Book of Revelation, concluding and sealing the matter, quite obviously affirms the common conservative Jewish view that Gehenna involves conscious eternal torment:
1. **Revelation 14: 9-11**: “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and **he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night**”
  2. **Rev. 20:10**: “And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and **they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.**”
  3. **Rev. 21:15**: “And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, **he was thrown into the lake of fire.**”
  4. Because the question within the 1st century Jewish community concerned the duration of conscious torment for the wicked, it is clear that Revelation takes a very strong stand on the eternity of that torment.
  5. Conditionalists hold that the clear language of eternal conscious torment here is merely a symbol for “the second death” (which they impose their view of annihilationism upon)
  6. This is nonsensical. This view would have us believe the best way the Lord could have conveyed the end of existence was by using the clear, emphatic language of eternal conscious torment, which as we have repeatedly shown, was very commonly embraced by many conservative Jews during this period.
  7. Instead, we should view eternal conscious torment as defining exactly what “second death” actually means. What the cryptic term “second death” infers implicitly is made explicit by the appositional language of eternal conscious torment.



8. "Second death" does not describe nor interpret the aforementioned passages, rather those passages which speak of eternal torment in the lake of fire explain and interpret, "the second death."
  9. Far too many verses affirm the nature of "the second death" as entailing an awakening to judgment and not merely awakening from sleep in order to be immediately put back to sleep.
    - a) **John 5:29 (cf. Acts 24:15):** "an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment."
- J. The IT literature gives historical context to texts frequently misunderstood and misapplied by conditionalists.
1. As just one example, conditionalists sometimes cite 2 Peter 2 as a "proof text" that the wicked will simply be incinerated and cease to exist:
  2. **2 Peter 2:6 (ESV):** if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly.
  3. In context however, the extinction is only from the face of the earth. Jews of Jesus day (including within the same passage here in Peter) understood that the inhabitants of Sodom went to Sheol to experience ongoing torment:
  4. **Jubilees 36.10:** And on ***the day of turmoil and execration and indignation and wrath, then with devouring burning fire just as he burned Sodom so too he will burn up his land and his city and everything which will be his.*** And he will be wiped out from the book of the discipline of mankind, and he will not be written on high in The Book of Life for he is written in the one which will be destroyed and pass on ***to eternal execration so that their judgment will always be renewed with eternal reproach and execration and wrath and torment and indignation and plagues and sickness.***
  5. The punishment of Sodom was to be incinerated and removed from the earth, and then burned eternally with renewed torment in the afterlife.

## VI. Conclusion

- A. When we consider the crystallization of the Jewish view concerning the afterlife, we find that traditionalism (hell as eternal conscious torment) is consistent with

the view of Jewish Apocalypticism, Jesus, and the authors of the New Testament.

- B. Conditionalists want to take the good from the Jewish apocalypticism of the second temple period, (the doctrine of resurrection), while rejecting the bad (doctrine of conscious torment in Gehenna).
- C. Yet the two (resurrection unto life for the righteous, resurrection unto torment for the wicked) clearly shared a symbiotic relationship and were mutually embraced by the conservative Jews of Jesus's day.
- D. Second Temple Jewish Apocalypticism is a package deal. It included belief in angels and spirits and demons, the consciousness of soul, the afterlife, the resurrection, eternal reward or damnation, the coming of the Lord from heaven in flaming fire with His angels to judge the living and the dead, and the reestablishment of the Kingdom of Israel.
- E. If one wishes to show that Jesus and the NT writers rejected eternal conscious torment, they must first show why Jesus would have rejected one specific component of this worldview, while affirming every other component.
- F. Ultimately, conditionalism seeks to syncretize Sadduceeism and Phariseeism/ Jewish Apocalypticism, something that Jesus and the New Testament clearly reject.
- G. Pharisees became Christians (while remaining Pharisees), but one will not find references to Christians called Sadducees after salvation (cf., Acts 15:5, Phil 3:5).
- H. Traditionalism is the view taught by Jesus and the New Testament.