

## The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment (SN 52)

### God's Wrath (*Revelation 14: 10-11*)

- The wrath of God – poured out ‘full strength’
- God's indignation (violent passion) – against sin and rebellion
- Torment – with fire and brimstone (sulphur)
- Torment – in the presence of the Lamb and the holy angels
- Torment - for ever and forever
- No rest, day nor night

### Universalism

- Universalism is the philosophical and theological concept that some ideas have universal application or applicability.
- A belief in one fundamental truth is another important tenet in universalism. The living truth is seen as more far-reaching than the national, cultural, or religious boundaries or interpretations of that one truth.
- A community that calls itself *universalist* may emphasize the universal principles of most religions, and accept others in an inclusive manner
- In the modern context, Universalism can also mean the Western pursuit of unification of all human beings across geographic and other boundaries under Western values, or the application of really universal or universalist constructs, such as human rights or international law
- Universalism has had an influence on modern-day Hinduism, in turn influencing modern Western spirituality
- Christian universalism refers to the idea that every human will eventually receive salvation in a religious or spiritual sense, a concept also referred to as universal reconciliation
  - Christian universalism is a school of Christian theology; emanating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, focused around the doctrine of universal reconciliation – the view that all human beings will ultimately be saved and restored to a right relationship with God
  - "Christian universalism" and "the belief or hope in the universal reconciliation through Christ" can even be understood as synonyms
  - Opponents of this school, who hold that eternal damnation is the ultimate fate of some or most people, are sometimes called "infernalists"
  - As a formal Christian denomination, Christian universalism originated in the late 18th century with the Universalist Church of America
  - There is currently no single denomination uniting Christian universalists, but a few denominations teach some of the principles of Christian universalism or are open to them
  - Christian Universalists disagree on whether or not hell exists – however, they do agree that if it does, the punishment there is corrective and remedial, and does not last forever.
  - In the academic world, theologians such as Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann are typically held to have supported a theology of universal reconciliation

### The Heresy of Universalism

- Ignores the Biblical separation between humanity, described in a series of contrasts: those in Christ and those in Adam, sheep and goats, and so on
- The New Testament stresses an urgency of decision in this life while it is still possible—or else face exclusion in the age to come - the parables of the wheat and tares, good fish and bad fish, wise and foolish virgins, and sheep and goats are spoken in stark terms
- There is no hint that destinations can be reversed “at the end of the age” (*Matthew 13: 40*)

- Universalism ignores many scriptures which speak of the doctrine of eternal punishment – see *Psalm 75: 7-8; Daniel 12: ; Matthew 7: 21-23, 22: 11-13, 25: 41-46; Luke 13: 23-30; John 5: 28-29; 2 Thessalonians 1: 6-10; Revelation 14: 9-11, 20: 10-15*
- Universalism blots out the attribute of retributive justice
- Universalism transmutes sin into misfortune and turns all suffering into chastisement
- Universalism relegates the sacrifice of Christ into simply moral influence
- It makes Christ's death a debt due to man, instead of an unmerited boon from God
- The church becomes a social institution rather than the Body of Christ declaring the true gospel

### **Yeshua's Teaching**

- The doctrine of hell (that is Hades and the Lake of Fire) ultimately derives from Yeshua – He uses images of darkness and separation to communicate God's rejection of unbelievers and their exclusion from his blessed presence (see *Matthew 7: 23, 8: 12, 22: 13, 25: 30; Luke 13: 27-28*)
- Yeshua's fire imagery signifies the horrible suffering of the unrighteous (*Matthew 13: 40-42, 47-50; Matthew 18: 8-9, 25: 41; Mark 9: 42-48; Luke 16: 22-28*)
- It is significant that Yeshua uses the "weeping and gnashing of teeth" image to qualify other images: "the fiery furnace" (*Matthew 13: 42, 50*), "darkness and separation" (*Matthew 8: 12, 22: 13, 25: 30; Luke 13: 28*); and being "cut into pieces" (*Matthew 24: 51*)

### **God's Extravagant Sacrificial Love**

- Throughout the Bible, we see God's love and grace freely available to all who will accept it
  - The entire Bible is a record of the extremes to which He has gone in order to allow us to avoid the destiny of our fallen state
- Peoples' responses
  - 'No, God, I do not want to love you'
  - 'I want to run things my own way'
 OR
  - Faith and Love for God

### **God's Options re Man's Rebellious Responses – Three Alternatives**

- He can indulge it and allow it to go on forever
  - In which case the cruelty, suffering and pain will continue
- He can force man to comply
  - Man becomes an automata – a robot
  - A contradiction – one cannot 'force' genuine love
- He can withdraw Himself
  - Abandonment judgement

OR

- He can deal with sin and restore man

### **Two Deaths**

- Physical death – the separation of the soul from the body
- Spiritual death – the separation of the soul from the Spirit of God Himself  
*Jude 1: 12; Revelation 2: 11, 20: 6, 20: 14, 21: 8*

### **Judgement**

- Ultimately, it is we ourselves who decide whether God will judge us
- It is we ourselves who decide either to accept or refuse His grace, love and forgiveness
- It is we ourselves who choose everlasting life – or everlasting death