

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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God's Great Redemptive Desire

"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Timothy 2:4-6).

The plan of God is often viewed through an exceedingly narrow lens. If the commonly accepted view of salvation were correct, the majority of humanity would either be lost forever or, even more troubling, condemned to eternal torment. Such a perspective misrepresents God's loving character and is among the adversary's most effective distortions of His divine purpose. The Scriptures reveal a far different picture — one of justice balanced by mercy and love, a plan designed ultimately to bless all the families of the earth.

JOB'S COMFORTERS

The three men who attempted to comfort Job in his afflictions also misrepresented the heart of God. Their response to Job's misery assumed that suffering is always the direct result of personal sin. Therefore, Job must have committed serious wrongdoing. Bildad, the third comforter, emphasized mankind's utter insignificance and impurity before God and said that no man can claim to be righteous, as Job did. Though much of what his comforters said was true, they failed to consider the possibility that Job suffered for a different reason.

Although he was a sinful man, his trials were permitted by God to demonstrate the genuineness of his faith. After listening to God's detailed response to the various reasonings presented (chapters 38-42), Job finally understood the true goodness and superiority of the one he had questioned. He came to recognize his own unworthiness and repented. Job's family was then restored, and his wealth was multiplied twofold. "So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning" (Job 42:12).

The life of this ancient patriarch is a meaningful illustration of how the permission of evil will guide mankind to

the same realization of God's goodness. He is not a far-off, uncaring god as many see Him, but a wise and merciful father. His interest in the human family is genuine as He works to plant righteousness as a fundamental principle in the heart of man. In the end, God's wisdom and love will finally be understood and appreciated. A spiritually educated race is the goal of God's plan of salvation.

THE REDEMPITIVE PRICE

Although the personal lessons of sin are essential for man's eternal welfare, they would be meaningless if their past and future sins were not atoned for. Justice must be satisfied before everlasting life can be granted to any. But atonement is multifaceted. It includes not only the ransom that provides redemption from Adamic condemnation, but additional offerings for mankind's future sins, including those that go beyond the inherited effects of Adam's transgression.

TABERNACLE OFFERINGS

The wide scope of salvation is wonderfully illustrated in Israel's annual sin offerings. For ancient Israel, the Day of Atonement was the basis of their ongoing relationship with God. To provide atonement, three animals were brought to the Lord: a young bull and two young goats. As the primary offering, the bullock represents our Lord's sacrificial life. His sacrifice accomplished two vital things. It first guaranteed his own resurrection as a reward for fulfilling his covenant of sacrifice. It also provided an offering for the future sins of both spiritual classes of this age, as well as the world in the kingdom.

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In practical terms, his life as a man helped Jesus relate to the human experience. Although personally sinless, he saw the effects and challenges that man has faced and was “touched with a feeling of our infirmities” (Hebrews 4:15).

THE LORD’S GOAT

The second offering consisted of a young goat. It was treated exactly as the bullock had been, with its blood also sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. Paul explains the intended symbolism.

“For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Hebrews 13:11-14).

This important explanation reveals that the followers of Christ are represented in the Lord’s goat. They bear the reproach of Christ by following his example of personal sacrifice. Paul also explains that his own sufferings added to the overall experiences of the body of Christ. “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church” (Colossians 1:24, ASV).

Along with the apostle, each body member then adds their own afflictions to the body of Christ, making it more rounded and complete. Their experience of bearing his reproach will leave a legacy of how to serve and be faithful despite the many challenges of this life.

The apostle elaborates further on the role of the church. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

In His wisdom, God understood that selecting each church member from the sinful race would tell the world that the great Mediator is comprised of those who also dealt with sin. Previously beset with human weaknesses, these believers will have learned to rely on God’s Spirit and the principles established in His word. Their practical life experiences will add an essential tool for the rehabilitation of mankind. The world will then know that former sinners are available to help them overcome their own sinful tendencies. Along with Christ, the church will be part of a merciful and faithful high priest that will help guide the world up the Highway of Holiness (Hebrews 2:17, Isaiah 35:8).

THE SCAPEGOAT¹

“And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering ... And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and



The bullock for a sin offering

confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and

he shall let go the goat in the wilderness” (Leviticus 16:5, 20-21).

The scapegoat was a unique feature of the Day of Atonement. Unlike the bull and Lord’s Goat, it was not killed, so its blood was not sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. Lacking these two essential elements means that it was not an offering for sin (See Hebrews 9:22).

The symbol of the scapegoat is understood by its association with the Lord’s goat. Both were presented to the high priest as part of the sin offering (verse 5). However, once lots were cast, only the Lord’s goat was offered on the Brazen Altar and its blood sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. As described earlier, Paul associates this with the saints who faithfully follow the Lord’s example of sacrifice.

The scapegoat, however, was released into the wilderness presumably to die. The only class closely associated with the church is the Great Company, scripturally identified as the “foolish virgins” of Matthew 25. They are described by the Revelator as those who come out of great tribulation and wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14). They are not members of the bride of Christ but attend the wedding feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9). The class has heavenly aspirations and is eventually an overcoming group. It is described in Ezekiel 44:10-14 as Levites that had gone astray but were cleansed and returned to the service of God. These various associations help identify the anti-typical scapegoat as the Great Company, an eventual overcoming class.

After laying his hands on the head of the scapegoat, the high priest confessed on him all the iniquities, transgressions, and sins of Israel. Confession is an acknowledgment of guilt, which rightly calls for punishment. This action then describes punishments that should have been administered to Israel being taken, in measure, by the scapegoat. It is not atoning for their sins but bearing a portion of Israel’s merited punishments.

This suggests that the Great Company bears a measure of punishment on behalf of the world. While their tribulation is necessary for their own spiritual development, God also appears to regard it as bearing a portion of the punishment justly due the sinful world.²

Bro. Russell indicates that the sins deserving additional

punishment refer to “other sins of measurable willfulness committed against light and knowledge” (Reprint 4015). History bears witness to countless acts of extraordinary wickedness that rightly deserve severe punishment. Yet in many instances, it is difficult to conceive of a penalty fully proportionate to the gravity of such crimes. If this understanding does indeed reveal a means by which some measure of well-deserved punishment may be borne, it beautifully reflects the goodness and compassion of the God who “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Such is the desire of His loving heart, and we gladly entrust all final judgments to Him.

HUNG ON A TREE

The Apostle Paul explains that Israel came under an additional condemnation because they failed to meet the righteous requirements of the Mosaic Law. Even if they had been released from the Adamic curse, they would have remained condemned under the Law covenant, which they had willingly agreed to obey but could not keep perfectly. Therefore, their complete release required an additional offering. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, ‘Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree’” (Galatians 3:13).

The law being referred to is found in Deuteronomy 21. “And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he is to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance” (Deuteronomy 21:21, 23).

Under this law, a condemned individual was first stoned to death. His body was then hung on a tree as an added mark of disgrace. It was reserved for only the vilest offenders. The Romans, however, did not follow this procedure in crucifixion. Instead, humiliation and suffering were inflicted before death, making crucifixion a prolonged and agonizing execution.

Deliverance from the Adamic curse required only the death of a corresponding perfect life. It did not demand suffering. However, Israel’s additional condemnation under Law required one more offering. The crucifixion of a truly innocent man was the atoning price that would release Israel from the Law’s additional curse. His death on a wooden cross satisfied the Law’s penalty of being hung on a tree. It was an extraordinary commentary on the lengths to which God was willing to go to redeem His chosen people.

Applying this same principle to mankind suggests that the Lord’s cruel death

at the hands of the Romans provided atonement for even the most hardened sinner, whose guilt extended beyond the inherited effects of Adam’s transgression. In this, God demonstrated that no one is beyond the reach of His redeeming grace.

Jesus withheld nothing of Himself and willingly gave all He could give. One day, every grateful heart will fully comprehend the depth of His love and the extraordinary lengths to which He was willing to go to secure mankind’s salvation. Heartfelt praise will then rise to Him in appreciation for His magnificent sacrifice.

IN CONCLUSION

The multi-faceted work of atonement reveals God’s genuine desire for the redemption of our race. Every form of sin will be addressed in the atoning work of Jesus and the Church. Assigning a measure of punishment to the Great Company further reveals the wisdom and love of God. The Father’s pain in watching the suffering of His beloved Son shows His great desire for the redemption and blessing of the human family.

Even the Father’s temporary forsaking of Jesus (Matthew 27:46) was designed to impress upon His beloved Son, in the fullest measure, the loneliness, anguish, and separation of an alienated world, thereby deepening His compassion for those He came to redeem. What a joy to consider the time when mankind will understand the love and wisdom of God and finally see Him as their Father.

“It is in Him, and through the shedding of His blood, that we have our deliverance — the forgiveness of our offences — so abundant was God’s grace, the grace which He, the possessor of all wisdom and understanding, lavished upon us, when He made known to us the secret of His will. And this is in harmony with God’s merciful purpose for the government of the world when the times are ripe for it — the purpose which He has cherished in His own mind of restoring the whole creation to find its one Head in Christ; yes, things in Heaven and things on earth, to find their one Head in Him” (Ephesians 1:7-10, Weymouth).

— Br. Tom Ruggirello



Jesus on the cross.

(1) Leviticus 16:10 suggests that the scapegoat was part of the sin-offering. “But the goat, on which the lot fell for departure, shall be set alive before Jehovah, to make atonement over him, to send him away for departure into the wilderness.” The RVIC suggests that the phrase “over him” should be read “for him,” i.e., for the benefits of the scapegoat. In other words, being released into the wilderness will be the instrument God will use to restore the Great Company and help them finally be faithful to their covenant of sacrifice.

(2) Comparing Leviticus 16:21-22 with Ezekiel 44:10-14 suggests that after bearing a measure of man’s punishment, the Great Company will be used to minister to the world.

At That Time, Daniel 12:1

In Daniel 12:1, “at that time” encompasses a broader time span than being solely the moment of Christ’s return. The basic premise being suggested is that the phrase incorporates a preparatory period commencing with “the time of the end” mentioned in Daniel 11:40. It encompasses the prophetic dates ending the 1260, 1290, and 1335 days. These periods were not only preparatory for the Lord’s return but were for the regathering and establishment of the Jewish homeland.¹

To begin, the Archangel Michael mentioned by Daniel represents Jesus at his return in 1874. He stood for Israel as their chief protector, guide, and judge. His work was prophesied in Exodus 23:20-21 as God said of him: “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for **My name is in him.**”

This discussion links the last five verses of Daniel 11, labeled “the time of the end” (Daniel 11:40), with historical applications. It highlights the time just prior to Christ’s return. The prophetic date pointed to by the 1260 days not only began preparations for the Harvest Message but also laid the foundation for Aliya and the creation of a homeland for the Jews, starting in 1799 with the Napoleonic era. This is beautifully supported by the parallel dispensations, leading to 1878 and the establishment of Petah Tikva, the first Jewish settlement.

“THE TIME OF THE END”: NAPOLEONIC HISTORY

Immediately following chapter 11, the Lord provided a major clue in Daniel 12:1 with the phrase “at that time.” Daniel 11 is a long chronological history leading up to Napoleon. Verses 11:40-45 (the ending period of chapter 11) refer to the “king of the north” (Napoleon, the emperor of France and most of Europe), and the “king of the south” (the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire). The following displays a remarkable correlation between Daniel’s prophecy and Napoleon, “king of the north.”

- **Verse 40:** describes Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt with his large French fleet, using the best military tactics and equipment of the day, with which he easily overpowered the Ottoman Mamelukes and took control of Egypt.

- **Verse 41:** From Egypt, he formed an expedition to the Promised Land (“beautiful land”) along the Mediterranean coast, yet not eastward towards the other nations.

- **Verse 42:** Napoleon’s efforts in this northern direction were halted at the siege of Acre.

- **Verse 43:** While he confiscated treasures of Egypt (including archeological items), many regions were sympathetic to the French due to previous Mameluke persecutions.

- **Verse 44:** But Napoleon had to return to France (the north) to protect a threat to his political position. He succeeded in overthrowing the Revolutionary Government in 1799, thus ending the 1260 years prophetic period and transitioning to a post revolution Napoleonic rule.

- **Verse 45:** Napoleon had encamped in his large and elegant (by military standards) tent between the Mediterranean Sea and Jerusalem; he ended up isolated and dying lonely on a remote island at the age of 51 after his downfall.

With the establishment of Napoleon’s supreme authority in 1799, the 1260 days prophecy was fulfilled, and the time proceeded to the ending of 1335 days. At the end of the French Revolution, the power of Papacy over European governments evaporated. The Papal power that was once uplifted and sustained by France was also dethroned by it. Persecutions of both Jews and Christians were greatly reduced in Europe, and Napoleon provided much help for the Jews. Wherever he conquered, he broke down ghetto walls and removed Jewish stigmas. Politically, he integrated Jews into society with legal reforms. In April 1799, during his siege of Acre, Napoleon Bonaparte also offered a proclamation offering Palestine as a Jewish homeland under French protection.

Daniel 12:7 states that the end of the 1260 years marked the end of scattering the “power of the holy people.” The saints’ persecution in Revelation 13:7 also ended at the 1260-year prophetic terminus. This ending was significant to **both** of God’s people. But the emphasis in the Daniel prophecy is for Daniel’s people, i.e., the Jews. However, the saints can be considered in this context as well, since both were scattered in the wilderness (Revelation 12:14).

The KJV phrase “**power** of the holy people” is translated by other respected translations as: “the **dispersion** of the **part** of the holy people” (Rotherham), “when the dispersion is ended” (Brenton Greek Septuagint). Taking these translations and Daniel’s prayer together, an emphasis is placed on the ending of the **Jewish scattering** or Diaspora² as a fulfillment of the 1260-year prophecy.

The 1800’s post-French Revolution, with the Catholic Church’s dissolution of political power, was a very formative, transitional phase for the Kingdom of Heaven. The 1800’s laid the groundwork for worldwide Bible exposure, rich academic material creation, and Br. Russell’s ministry in deeper spiritual understanding. It also laid the seeds for the institutional, cultural, and political dynamics resulting in the current dystopia, during which the “unclean spirits” had engendered the increasingly unstable and sinful society we now experience.

Daniel said that Michael that would “stand up.” In reviewing the Old Testament usage of this phrase, it appears to simply mean be **recognized as in favor of**, such as in Numbers 9:5, “Stand up, bless Yahweh” (Rotherham), or Ezekiel 44:24, “They shall stand up for justice” (Rotherham). In this sense, the returned Lord is

to be both **recognized** and **identified in favor** of Israel's establishment.

"At that time" can be taken as the period between the ending of 1260 and 1335 prophetic years. This time was not only rich in preparation for the Church's final development but also for the formation of the Jewish homeland. Adding to this, seeds of civil and spiritual destruction were being sown by the "unclean spirits" (Revelation 16:13) and assaults upon "the remnant seed of the woman" (Revelation 12:17), this having occurred after the French Revolution — a beautiful season for the

saints also occurred during the sixth stage of the Church. It was a very fruitful and formative time indeed.

— Br. Robert Davis

(1) An editor suggests that Daniel 12:1 does commence with 1874, that "stand up" in Daniel 11 several times refers to a king ascending the throne, and that Jesus took regal authority at his return, as mentioned also in Revelation 11:15 (David Rice).

(2) As used in the Greek Brenton Septuagint: *Diaskorpizo* (verb, the word in use) emphasizes the action of scattering, while *diaspora* (noun) focuses on the condition of a group that has been scattered, often retaining connections to their original culture or homeland (Bible Hub Wikipedia).

All the Torments of Revelation

Revelation's symbols both confuse denominational Christians and arm them with scripture texts seemingly unanswerable in challenging Present Truth. The fearsome creatures with their unnatural assemblage of body parts arising from *the pit* are empowered with *the torment* (*Basanidzo*) of a scorpion when it stings a man (Revelation 9:5). How does this relate to the original sense of *Basanidzo* (G928), which had nothing to do with scorpions, but was linked to commerce? In the original sense, the market used a tablet of black *basanite* for testing of gold coins and precious metal trade items for quality.¹ Is Revelation 9:5 merely *testing*? Do Revelation 14 and 20 set forth *eternal torment*?

To develop a comprehensive view, *testing* needs to be understood in the context of the *judicial* process as it was practiced in classical Greece. Following a judicial challenge, magistrates would oversee proceedings where slaves of the litigants, both male and female, were brought to court and beaten or even put on the rack to elicit *yes* or *no* answers to questions.^{2,3} Such justice now is appalling to us. Because this coerced testimony involved torture, *Basanidzo* came to be linked with the idea of *torment* and is so translated in King James with a few exceptions.

Following the ascendancy of Rome, the judicial process became even crueler. In the Book of Acts, we find the record of standard practice that was a miscarriage of Roman law. The uproar of Phillipi's citizenry from Paul's preaching Christ was quelled only with the non-judicial beating and imprisonment of Paul and Silas in the inner prison. (Acts 16:23) Paul, a Roman citizen, never should have been beaten. "The use of torture was routine. Then as now the use of torture was justified by the public interest."⁴ For extreme cases, the torture was followed by execution.

BROAD USE OF BASANIDZO

The Septuagint translation (LXX) of the Old Testament into Greek shows a broader use of *Basanidzo*. 1 Samuel 5:6 translates *Basanidzo* as *smote*, and 1 Samuel 6:3 uses the related noun *Basanos* (G931) for *divine plague*. In the New Testament, the King James Bible for Matthew 14:24 renders it as *tossed*, Mark 6:48 as *toiling*, and 2 Peter 2:8 as *vexed*.

Revelation also uses *Basanidzo* in a broad sense, ranging from the pangs of childbirth, the sting of scorpion-tail, to a *judicial* proceeding before the lamb and his angels. Linking to the culture of the 1st century, that is, a *judicial* process seeking the truth through torment of false systems. As the book closes, there is the final execution of the sentence of annihilation. (Revelation 20:10)

We have helpful guidance in such a highly polarized debate. Pastor Russell sets forth, "Until we have a view of the matter in which every Bible statement finds a reasonable representation, we should not feel sure that we have the truth on the subject" (B144).

FIRE AND BRIMSTONE, EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION

Fire always indicates destruction. Brimstone (sulfur) with acrid fumes of highly toxic sulfur-oxides symbolizes desolation and purification following the fire.⁵ Destruction and desolation from fire and brimstone appear throughout the Old Testament.

Genesis 19:24, "Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven" (see Luke 17:29)

Deuteronomy 29:23, "And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah."

Psalms 11:6, "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone."



Paul and Silas in prison

Isaiah 30:33, “For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.”

Isaiah 34:9, “And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch.”

Ezekiel 38:22, “And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.”

Since ancient times world cultures aside from the Bible have recognized fire and brimstone as purifying agents. Together they purge both literal and moral pollution. In Homeric literature, Odysseus returns home and bloodshed ensues. After cleaning up the blood, a cleansing of the moral pollution follows:

“Bring sulfur nurse to scour out all this pollution — bring me fire too, so I can fumigate this house.”

“Fire first.” The good soldier answered.

“Light me a fire to purify this house.”

The devoted nurse snapped to his command.

Brought her master fire and brimstone.

Odysseus purged his palace, halls, and court, with cleansing fumes.

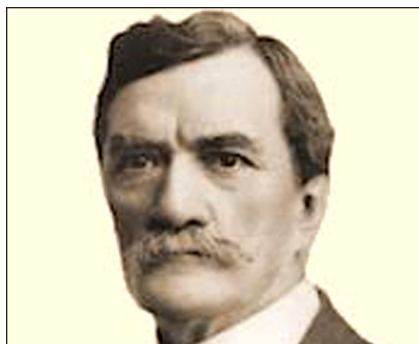
— *Odyssey 22:509-521 (Robert Fagles, translator)*

CHURCH FALSE TEACHING THAT SOULS ARE TORMENTED

One of the earliest written accounts of Hell-fire torment come from ecclesiastical polemicist Tertullian (c. 160-220 AD). “How vast a spectacle then bursts upon the eye! What there excites my admiration? What my derision? Which sight gives me joy? Which rouses me to exultation? — as I see so many illustrious monarchs, whose reception into the heavens was publicly announced, groaning now in the lowest darkness with great Jove himself, and those, too, who bore witness of their exultation; governors of provinces, too, who persecuted the Christian name, in fires more fierce than those with which in the days of their pride they raged against the followers of Christ.”⁶ Such views dominated church thinking both Catholic and later Protestant with few exceptions.

In the late 19th century, James Moffat, commenting on Revelation 14:10, said “It is impossible for us to understand how such a sight could be compatible with heavenly happiness,” but he adds, “the psychological basis of the ghastly expectation can be verified in the cruder types of primitive and modern religion”⁷

On the fringes of the Evangelical Christian community there has been a full-scale assault on the doctrine of



James Moffat, Bible translator

eternal torment, “Since the publication of its first edition in 1982, Edward Fudge’s book *The Fire that Consumes* has been the fullest and most thorough exposition and defense of the view that the fate of the unsaved will be *final destruction*, not (as in the traditional doctrine of hell) eternal torment ... the issue has been more widely discussed among Evangelical Christians than ever before.”⁸ Responding to Edward Fudge’s thesis, there is backing for Hell fire in

the evangelical church. Christopher Morgan, supported by an erudite team, argues strongly for traditional dogma; *Basanidzo* should be understood as “God’s punishment involving a real, ongoing, eternal, conscious torment.”⁹

BASANIDZO AS JUDICIAL PROCESS WITH TORMENT

Revelation teaches that systems of error holding forth that they are God’s mouthpiece will continue their culture of deception to the very end when brought to judgment. Symbolically, they are cast alive into the lake of fire and brimstone. They will not confess their sins out of troubled moral conscience. They will only confess through *Basanidzo*, the touchstone of truth forced by tortured inquiry.

As a specific example, we see the Catholic church’s cover-up of wide-scale pedophilia scandal within its priesthood. After identifying priests who were perpetrators, the Catholic church’s response has been to shift the priests to other parishes where they repeated their abuses. The public confession of these crimes has been extracted only during the tormenting *Basanidzo* process in US and European civil courts. Painfully large financial settlements have been paid.

Committed members of the Catholic Church tolerate these abuses, envisioning them as the consequence of fallible men serving a divine purpose. Ross Douthat a Jesuit-educated former columnist for the New York Times, cites the history of Israel in defense. “We’re [Israel] the chosen people of the one true God, and to prove it to you here’s a long story about how awful and promiscuous and murderous and fallible we are, how terrible our leaders often turned out to be, and how we deserve every exile and punishment we received. If you don’t find that message credible, well, I understand. But if you find it strangely compelling, then you’re close to the case for remaining Catholic at a time when the corruption of the church is driving a number of very public defections from the faith.”¹⁰

Saul of Tarsus serves as a case study to show that there is an opportunity, although not a guarantee, that supporters of these systems who repent and convert may be rehabilitated. Torment and annihilation are not the points we should focus on. Our focus should be the eternal remembrance (*smoke*) the heavenly Father has shown in

the permission of evil, experienced both by mankind and the members of Christ's body. This permission of evil has been allowed in the wisdom of the heavenly Father. *Basanidzo* will bring these works of darkness to light.

THE BEAST AND HIS IMAGE ARE SYMBOLS

No Christian nation has ever worshiped either a literal beast or an image of such a beast (Revelation 14:9, 10, 11). Today, however misguided might be the adulation for politicians, mega-billionaires, entertainers, social media influencers, and sports figures, few would engage in worshipping the epiphany of a literal beast, nor in worshipping an image of such a beast. The beast and his image are symbols representing great religious systems (HG305:3, Q225:5), the wine of wrath is a symbol, as are the fire and brimstone, which symbolize complete destruction. Yet, all of these symbols have a reality.

WHEN IS THE JUDGMENT OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE?

Since this judgment will be before the holy angels and before the Lamb, it clearly must take place following the Second Advent of Christ. This is elaborated in the Revelation 19:20. In Revelation 14:9-11, statements that they shall be in judicial judgment are best understood as a parenthesis, warning the reader of the certainty of this future judgment, but not that the judgment takes place at that time. The smoke that goes up forever would be the remembrance of the crimes, the confusion, and every God-dishonoring legacy of the beast and his image and every vestige of sin, including the devil, his angels, the willingly disobedient, and Hades (the state of the dead), even Death itself.

CAN THE BEAST AND HIS IMAGE FEEL PAIN?

Can the beast and his image feel pain? Before hastily answering no, before thinking these are symbols, and symbols cannot feel pain, consideration must be given to the question of *corporate* culture. Cultures presented in the symbols of the beast and his image can feel torment and distress from *Basanidzo*.¹¹ The thousands of men and women who keep the enterprise running, serving the culture, the *ethos*, even when it may be at odds with their conscience.

A reasonable counter-argument may concede that the beast and its image clearly are symbolic of great religious systems with their culture. Yet, holding that these systems are composed of living people, and these people shall receive the promised torments. This builds upon "Come out of her my people, have no fellowship in her sins, that you receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).

Here we have direct guidance from

scripture. While the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was an assured fact; the people return from captivity! Even the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah have an opportunity, although not a guarantee, to return to their former estates.

Ezekiel 16:53, "When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them: (54) That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them. (55) When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate.

Every use of *Basanidzo* that appears in Revelation will now be considered. All texts are based on the readings in the Codex Sinaiticus and all of the translations from the Greek have been made by the author. Because of a significant textual issue affecting the understanding, Revelation 14 will be considered following Revelation 20.

Revelation 9:5, Torment of the Scorpion Sting.

"And they were charged not to kill them, but that they should torment them five months, with the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man." *Basanidzo* is exceedingly painful, like a scorpion sting, but not fatal. This torment is from the power, or authority given to these scorpion tails.

Revelation 11:10, Torment of the Two Witnesses.

"And those dwelling upon the earth rejoice over them, and are glad, and send one another gifts because [of the deaths] of these two prophets who plagued those dwelling upon the earth."

The two witnesses hold the power both to torment and kill. Specifically, they kill with fire from their mouths (Revelation 11:6). The images are based on the two olive trees of Zechariah, symbolic of the Old and New Testaments. The martyrdom of the two witnesses, followed by dishonoring their bodies, is celebrated by those *dwelling on the earth*. Those celebrating are clearly quite alive and no longer fearing the torments and fire from the Bible's judgments.

Revelation 12:2, Distress of Childbirth. "And being with child, she cried out in the pangs and distress of childbirth." *Basanidzo* is the pain of childbirth. While *Basanidzo* is distress, it should not be understood to be torment from an external force; clearly it is not torture.

Revelation 18:7, Torment and Tortured Inquiry.

"By however much she glorified herself and luxuriated, by so much give her torment and sorrow, because in her heart she says, 'I sit a Queen and am no widow, and I shall never see sorrow.'" Babylon is brought into *Basanidzo*, here setting forth judi-



Jesus will administer proper judgment.

cial inquiry, by the saints who were persecuted by her (Revelation 18:6). In contrast to Revelation 14, the total destruction and desolation phase of this judgment is yet future.

Revelation 18:10, Torment and Tortured Inquiry. “(9) And the kings of the earth who committed fornication with her will weep and wail over her when they shall see the smoke of her downfall. (10) Standing afar off, fearful because of her torments, saying, ‘Woe, Woe, the great city Babylon! The strong city! Because in one hour thy crisis came.’” The *Basanidzo* of Revelation 18:7 is observed by the kings of the earth who are keeping their distance because of fear, as do the merchants of these things. This clearly is not a torment after death.

Revelation 18:15, Torment and Tortured Inquiry. “The merchants of these things who became rich from her will stand afar off from fear of her torment.” The *Basanidzo* of Revelation 18:7 is also observed by the merchants of these things who, like the kings, are keeping their distance because of fear and are not dead.

Revelation 20:10, Torment and Tortured Inquiry. “The Devil deceiving them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the Beast and the False-Prophet are. And they shall be tried day and night for the Ages of Ages.”

In Revelation 20:14, John defines this lake of fire by adding, “which is the Second Death.” The Lake of Fire and Brimstone is a symbol of eternal extinction.¹² Casting the devil, the beast, and the false prophet into the Lake of Fire shows that they will never exist again. This passage adds that they will be tormented, that is, “put to judicial test,” day and night forever. Their confession under duress, and testing on the touchstone of truth, demonstrated failure and their example will serve an eternal purpose.

Revelation 14:9, 10, 11, Judicial Judgment, Fire and Brimstone for Destruction, Desolation, and Purifying. “And a third angel followed them, saying in a great voice, ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives a mark upon his forehead or upon his hand, (10) Even he shall drink from the wine of the fierceness of God that shall be mingled undiluted from the cup of his wrath. (And they shall receive judicial judgment in fire and brimstone before the holy angels and before the lamb. (11) And the smoke of their judgment shall ascend forever.) And the ones worshipping the beast and his image shall have no rest day or night, and so it shall be for anyone who receives the mark of his name.’”

“Before the holy angels and before the lamb” (verse 10) firmly places the action within the framework of *Basanidzo* as used in a judicial trial, “**They shall be tried** (*Basanidzo*) with fire and brimstone.” (*Basanidzo* is the active voice future 3rd person plural i.e., *they shall*). The sense of *Basanidzo* sets forth the execution of a final sentence of eternal destruction on these systems, not individuals as implied by the verb tense in the usually accepted reading, “**he shall**.” Recognizing the Sinaitic

text, “**they shall** receive judicial judgment,” adding with fire and brimstone makes clear that this refers to a future judicial judgment of destruction. This promised judgment is of the systems, and not the misguided worshipping individuals. To provide a workable translation, “judicial judgment” is used because judgment is “before the holy angels and before the lamb.” For the worshippers of the beast and image who receive an obviously symbolic mark, their portion will be drinking unmixed drafts of the wine of God’s wrath and having no rest day or night.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Throughout, the underlying failure bringing torment is *pride*, a quality inherent in many of those who fail the test when rubbed on God’s *Basanite* touchstone. If persisted in, the final result will be second death. God has given us a touchstone as well. The touchstone is Christ and the Bible’s holy word. By understanding Bible principles and our Lord’s life, we have a standard by which to compare our own lives. In the decisions we make and the course in life we take, he provides the guiding principles. When his guidance results in spiritual growth, then the tests we face will reveal a genuineness of character. The touchstone will have done its work.

— Br. Richard Doctor

(1) Lord, Louis E., “The Touchstone,” *The Classical Journal*, Volume 32, No. 7 (April 1937), page 428.

(2) Gagarin, Michael, “The Torture of Slaves in Athenian Law,” *Classical Philology*, Volume 91, No. 1 (January 1996), pages 2, 4.

(3) Germain, Louis R. F., “Chronique de Droit Hellénique Ancien (III),” *L’Antiquité Classique*, T. 48, Fasc. 2 (1979), page 664.

(4) Moore Jr., Barrington, “Cruel and Unusual Punishment in the Roman Empire and Dynastic China,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* (Summer 2001), Volume 14, No. 4, pages 737-739.

(5) Sulfur oxides are an acute health hazard at 10 ppm, and life-threatening at 100 ppm.

(6) Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*, C.30, trans. *New Advent* citing *Catholic Encyclopedia*.

(7) Moffat, James in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, W. Robertson Nicoll, editor, (1897) reprinted by Wm. B. Eerdmann Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan (1981), Volume 5, James Moffat, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, page 438.

(8) Fudge, Edward William, *The Fire that Consumes* (3rd edition), Cascade Books, Eugene, OR (2011), page 1.

(9) Morgan, Christopher et al., *Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment — Hell under Fire*, Zondervan, (2004), page 117.

(10) Douthat, Ross, “Staying Catholic at Christmas,” *New York Times*, December 22, 2018. As quoted in JD Vance, *Communion*, Harper (2026), page 167. Then, adding in his own words, Mr. Vance writes, “But if the Titanic is going down I’d rather be on board than hop on a lifeboat.”

(11) Galbraith, John Kenneth, *The Age of Uncertainty*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston (1977), pages 261-279.

(12) Ruggirello, Thomas, “Rubbed Upon the Touchstone,” *Beauties of the Truth*, (August 2021) Volume 32, No. 3.