

Matthew 25:46

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Analysis

The final verdict 'And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal' establishes two eternal destinies. 'Everlasting punishment' and 'life eternal' use the same Greek word (aiōnios—eternal), proving hell and heaven are equally eternal. This refutes annihilationism—punishment is ongoing, not mere cessation of existence. The parallelism underscores finality—no second chances, purgatory, or universalism. Every person faces one of two eternal outcomes.

Historical Context

This concludes Jesus' teaching on final judgment. The symmetry of 'everlasting' applied to both punishment and life emphasizes permanence. 'Punishment' is ongoing penalty, not corrective discipline leading to restoration. 'Life eternal' isn't mere existence but knowing God (John 17:3). These represent qualitatively different eternal states—torment versus joy.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the equal duration of punishment and life refute false hopes of universalism?
2. What does this dual destiny teach about the urgency of gospel proclamation?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἀπελεύσονται	οὗτοι	εἰς	κόλασιν	αἰώνιον	οἱ	δὲ
And	shall go away	these	into	punishment	eternal	G3588	but
G2532	G565	G3778	G1519	G2851	G166		G1161
δίκαιοι	εἰς	ζωὴν	αἰώνιον				
the righteous	into	life	eternal				
G1342	G1519	G2222	G166				

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 12:2 (Eternal Life): And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

John 3:36 (Eternal Life): He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

John 5:29 (Parallel theme): And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Revelation 21:8 (Parallel theme): But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Revelation 20:15 (Parallel theme): And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Romans 6:23 (Eternal Life): For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

2 Thessalonians 1:9 (Eternal Life): Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

Romans 5:21 (Righteousness): That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Revelation 20:10 (Parallel theme): 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.

Matthew 25:41 (Eternal Life): Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: