

WHAT IS HELL-FIRE REALLY ALL ABOUT?

John 3:16 God is a God of love (1 John 4:8). All Bible teaching must reflect this characteristic of God.

Matthew 5:30 Jesus taught that it is the whole body that will be cast into hell-fire--not an invisible, immortal soul.

WHEN WILL HELL-FIRE BURN?

Matthew 13:36-43; 49 The wicked are punished at the *end* of the world.

Matthew 16:27 No one is rewarded according to their works until Jesus returns.

2 Peter 2:9 The punishment of the wicked is “reserved” until the judgment day.

John 5:28, 29 The wicked are “reserved” in the grave until they are brought forth in the “resurrection of damnation” (see also Job 21:29-32).

WHERE WILL HELL-FIRE BURN?

2 Peter 3:7 The atmospheric heavens and the earth are reserved by God and will be used to destroy the wicked in the final judgment.

Revelation 20:11-15 The final phase of the judgment will occur at the second resurrection where the wicked will be sentenced and receive their final “reward” in the lake of fire at the end of the world.

Revelation 20:9 As the wicked try to overtake the holy city, fire comes down from God out of heaven and devours them (vs. 14). This is the *second* death. The second death is never called a “sleep” as the first death is because there will never be a resurrection from it. It will be an eternal annihilation.

HOW LONG WILL HELL-FIRE BURN?

1 John 3:15 No murderer (wicked person) has eternal life abiding in him.

Romans 6:23 The wages of sin is *death* (not everlasting life in hell-fire).

John 3:16 God gave His Son that we should not “perish” which means “to be destroyed.”

Psalms 37:9-11 The wicked shall not be any more. They will cease to exist.

Psalms 37:20 The wicked shall perish and consume into smoke.

Isaiah 1:28 All of the wicked receive their final destruction *together*.

Malachi 4:1-3 The wicked will be as stubble. The fire shall burn them up, and they will be ashes under our feet, in the day that God does this.

- Matthew 7:13** Jesus stated that the gate the wicked enter through leads to destruction—not to eternal life in hell-fire.
- Obadiah 1:15** After the wicked have drunk of the “cup of the wrath of God” (Rev. 14:10), they shall “be as though they had not been.”
- Ezekiel 28:18, 19** The devil will also be devoured in the lake of fire. He will be brought to ashes and will never be any more.

A FEW PERPLEXING TEXTS:

REVELATION 20:10 - FOREVER AND EVER.

Revelation 20:9 says the fire devours the wicked. Verse 10 seems to say the fire goes on and on. How long is forever and ever? The word that is translated “forever” in the English is a word that becomes relative to that which it is describing. For example, in Jonah 2:6, “forever” was only for three days and three nights. First Samuel 1:22, 28 shows us that “forever” means “as long as Samuel lived.” In Psalm 48:14, “forever and ever” means “until death.” Isaiah 47:14 says, when the fire burns the wicked as stubble and goes out, there won’t be a coal to warm yourself or any fire at all. The word literally means “for an age.” Therefore, the word in the original Greek and Hebrew translated as “forever” is a term that is to be understood in the context of what is being described. Fifty-six times in the Old Testament the term “forever” was applied to someone or something that had a definite end. Always study the context around the word “forever” to determine its meaning.

MARK 9:43, 44 - UNQUENCHABLE FIRE.

In Jeremiah 17:27, God said if the people refused to obey, He would burn Jerusalem with unquenchable fire. It happened in 2 Chronicles 36:19-21! But is Jerusalem still burning? No! “Unquenchable” simply means that when God sets something on fire, it's beyond anyone's power to quench it while it burns, and it will accomplish the purpose that God has determined for it.

MATTHEW 25:41-46 - EVERLASTING FIRE AND PUNISHMENT.

Jude 1:7 says Sodom and Gomorrah burned with eternal fire. They are not burning now though. 2 Peter 2:6 says these cities burned to ashes *as an example* of what will happen to the wicked at the end of the world. The punishment is everlasting in its *effect* or *consequences* but not in the duration of the time of the burning. (Compare the usage of the word “eternal” in Jude 7 with the same word in Hebrews 5:9 and Hebrews 6:2). It is obvious that word “eternal” is referring to the *result of the act* rather than the duration of the act itself.

LUKE 16:19-31—THE STORY OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

This story is a parable. It begins with the same words with which Jesus began many of His parables, i.e. “a certain man.” It follows in the line of a list of parables. Parables are not meant to be taken literally in every point of detail. (Example, Judges 9:6-15, in Jotham’s parable where the trees and brambles are talking to each other.) There are always one or more points through which the parable is meant to demonstrate. If every word of the parable in Luke 16:19-31 was meant to be taken literally, it not only would make little sense, but would contradict other passages of Scripture and words of Jesus. The main point that Christ was making with this story is the duty we have of giving the gospel message to those who are in need of it. To whom much is given, much is required. The story was not meant to be a thesis on the state of the dead or on hell-fire.