

PURPOSE OF STUDY: To show that Hell begins at the end of the millennium; it is a temporal and punitive judgment upon the ungodly and unrepentant.

TEXTS:

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| 1. REV 20:9-10, 14 | 6. JUDE 7; 2PE 2:6 |
| 2. MT 5:5; PR 11:31 | 7. MT 25:46 (10:28) |
| 3. 2PE 2:4-9 (JOB 21:30) | 8. MK 9:43-4; IS 66:24 (JE 17:27) |
| 4. MT 13:39-40 | 9. EZE 33:11 (2PE 2:9) |
| 5a. MAL 4:1-3 | 10. MT 25:41 (EZE 28:18-19) |
| 5b. IS 47:14 | 11. RO 6:10, 23 (JN 3:16) |
| 5c. PS 37:9-11, 20 | 12. IS 33:14-16 (HEB 12:29) |
| 5d. OB 16 | 13. 2PE 3:13 |

THE STUDY:

1. **What does the Bible call the fire that destroys the wicked? REV 20:9-10, 14**
In our last study, we learned that at the end of the millennium, the wicked dead will be raised to life and will unite with Satan in an attempt to overthrow the Holy City. At that time, God will rain fire upon them for destruction. This fire is referred to as the “lake of fire,” the “second death”. This is what is commonly referred to as “hell”.
2. **Where do both the righteous and the wicked receive their reward? MT 5:5; PR 11:31**
We have seen already that hell takes place on the earth, not in or under it. Is hell burning now; and if not, when?
3. **Is hell burning now? 2PE 2:4-9 (JOB 21:30)**
The wicked are reserved for a future day of punishment. How did Jesus portray this in the parable of the wheat and tares?
4. **When did Jesus teach that the destruction of the wicked would take place? MT 13:39-40**
Not now, but at the end of this age.
5. **How completely will the fires of hell destroy the wicked?**
 - a. **MAL 4:1-3**
The wicked will be burned up into ashes.
 - b. **IS 47:14**
They are like stubble; the fire will burn them up
 - c. **PS 37:9-11, 20**
The wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found; they will vanish away into smoke.
 - d. **OB 16**
They will be as though they had never been.

There are other terms in the Bible that upon first glance appear to support the idea of an eternally burning hell; however, a careful study makes it evident that sin and sinners will ultimately be destroyed; they will perish; they will “vanish away”; they will be burned up, turned into ashes, be as though they hadn’t been.

6. What effect did “eternal fire” have on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? Are they still burning?

JUDE 7; 2PE 2:6

Jude says Sodom suffered the vengeance of “eternal fire”. Peter says Sodom was turned into ashes. Clearly Sodom and Gomorrah are not burning today. Eternal fire brings eternal results – it burns until the job is done.

7. But doesn't Jesus speak of everlasting punishment? MT 25:46 (10:28)

Yes, Jesus speaks of everlasting punishment, not everlasting punishing. There is a difference. In everlasting punishment, the punishment lasts forever. In light of the texts we have already looked at, we have seen that the punishment is destruction, annihilation. This means that the destruction will last forever; the wicked will not be coming back. This is what Jesus meant when He said that the soul will be destroyed in hell.

8. Didn't Jesus teach that the fire of hell could not be quenched? MK 9:43-4; IS 66:24 (JE 17:27)

He did, and He was quoting from the prophet Isaiah, who speaks of those suffering from the “unquenchable fire” and calls them “corpses”. Jeremiah says that Jerusalem was burned with unquenchable fire, yet Jerusalem is not burning today. The point is that unquenchable fire cannot be put out until it's task is accomplished and there is nothing left to burn.

9. How does God feel about the destruction of the wicked? EZE 33:11 (2PE 3:9)

God longs for all to be saved. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

10. Then why is there a hell? MT 25:41 (EZE 28:18-19)

The fires of hell were prepared as a final punishment for the devil and his angels, not for you and me. The Bible says that the devil himself will be utterly destroyed. God has not put him in charge of hell!

11. What did God do so we wouldn't have to be destroyed in the fires of hell? RO 6:10, 23 (JN 3:16)

Jesus died the second death for every man, so that we would not perish, but have everlasting life.

12. How does the Bible describe living in eternity in God's presence? IS 33:14-16 (HEB 12:29)

We will live with the devouring fire and everlasting burnings! God's very being is a consuming fire to sin, wherever found. The sinner would not be able to live in His presence. Furthermore, sin has tarnished His creation and destroyed many of His creatures. Sin is an intruder, and must be destroyed wherever found in order to save the universe from its effects. Those who refuse to be separated from sin will be destroyed with it.

13. What is God's promise to us when sin has finally been destroyed? 2PE 3:13

He will create a new earth where there is no more sin, but all is righteousness and peace.

APPEAL:

God has done everything in His power that we may have life, yet He has a responsibility to the universe to get rid of sin. He pleads with us to come to Him, and He will wash us and cleanse us of our sin. But if we refuse to be separated from our sin, we must be destroyed with it. He promises us eternity in a new world where there will be no more sin, suffering and death. The ultimate choice is yours. Don't you want to be there?

DIFFICULT TEXTS/OBJECTIONS:

Rev. 14:10-11: “Doesn’t the Bible say the wicked will be tormented forever and ever?” Many who read Revelation 14:10-11 are puzzled at the language, which seems so clearly to say that the wicked will be tormented throughout eternity. There are two reasons for this. First, having been conditioned for much of our lives to believe in an eternal hell, it’s hard to see things any other way. Second, we forget to compare scripture with scripture. This passage in Revelation is almost taken verbatim from Isaiah 34:8-10, where the fire “shall not be quenched night or day” and “its smoke shall ascend forever.” However, if you continue reading vs. 11-14, the Bible goes on to say that owls, jackals, porcupines and ostriches shall live there! Much like the “unquenchable fire” that we studied earlier, this is a phrase referring to total destruction. Revelation 20:10 uses similar language.

Lk. 16:19-31: “Doesn’t the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus prove that there is an eternally burning hell?” The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is a classic example of a story proving more than intended. If we take this story literally, assuming this place of torment is the punishment of the wicked, we must also accept the fact that the saved will go to Abraham’s bosom, and not to heaven as planned; that the righteous and wicked will see and hear each other in Abraham’s bosom and hades (literally “the grave”), respectively; that people go immediately to the bosom or the place of torment in bodies (Rich Man has tongue, Lazarus has finger); and that a single drop of water will quench the thirst of the tormented ones. To urge this parable as an example of what happens when people die would prove far more than it is intended, creating an entirely new set of problems. It would be better to accept it as intended – a parable to teach the Jewish leaders their responsibility to the people around them who were far less privileged, that they may begin to be faithful in this life, because after this life, there will be no other opportunities.