

What is the Truth about Hell fire? - <http://www.thetruthabouthell.net>

What and where is hell? Is hell burning right now and does hell burn forever? Would a God of love really torture people throughout all eternity? Views on the truth about hell vary greatly. Some say "Hell" burns now below us, others say "Hell" is in the future (at the end of the world), while still others say, "Life is Hell." Some of the greatest theological confusion centres around the biblical topic on the truth about hell fire. As always, the truth about hell can only be found in the Bible.

Hell in the Bible

The word "hell" is used 54 times in the Bible. It is translated from several different words with various meanings as indicated below:

In the Old Testament:

31 times from the Hebrew "Sheol," which means "the grave"

In the New Testament:

10 times from the Greek "Hades," which means "the grave"

12 times from the Greek "Gehenna," which means "a place of burning"

1 time from the Greek "Tartarus," which means "a place of darkness"

"Tartarus" is used once, in 2 Peter 2:4, and means "a place of darkness or restraint." "Tartarus" is where Satan and his demons reside now. It isn't a place of punishment or flames.

"Gehenna" means a place of fire, brimstone, and punishment (see Matthew 5:29-30, described in Matthew 13:40-42 and 2 Peter 3:7.) Note these flames are still in the future at the end of the world.

"Hades" means "the grave" (Acts 2:31; 1 Corinthians 15:55; Revelation 20:14). The body of Jesus rested there and His saints are resting there now awaiting the resurrection.

The Greek word "Hades" is translated as "Hell" in many English Bibles such as the King James Version. In Revelation 6:8, the King James Version refers to "Death and Hell [*Hades*]." It does the same in Revelation 20:14. Yet some English Bibles use the word "Hades" itself, such as the New International Version, which translates both Revelation 6:8 and 20:14 as "Death, and Hades." Now here is the point; In Revelation 20:14 "Hades" ("Hell") is eventually "cast into the lake of fire." So as you can therefore see, "Hades" itself is not a fiery place, but is cast into "the lake of fire" (hell fire). (*Italics added*)

So Biblically speaking, Hades means the grave. This is easy to prove from 1 Corinthians 15:55, which in the King James Version states, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave [*Hades*], where is thy victory?" If you look in the Strong's dictionary, you will find that the Greek word here translated "grave" is "Hades." By looking at the context, it is obvious that "Hades" means "the grave" because it is God's saints who rise out of "Hades" when Jesus Christ returns. See 1 Corinthians 15:50-55. Therefore, "Hades" cannot mean a place of burning, for who can imagine God's people writhing in flames as they await the resurrection? That would be absolutely ludicrous! Additional proof that "Hades" means "the grave" is the fact that "Hades" was the place Jesus Christ's body rested in immediately after His death. Acts 2:31 reads, "His [*Christ's*] soul was not left in hell [*Hades*] neither [*did*] his flesh see corruption." (*Italics added*.)

Does Hell burn forever?

To discover the truth about hell, we must accept what the Bible says above the opinions of men. I hope you agree. That said, this subject requires close examination for some texts appear contradictory. In Matthew 25:41, Jesus Christ warned that unsaved sinners will enter "the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Many read this and say, "*The lost will sizzle forever. Don't even try to convince me otherwise.*" But in [John 3:16](#) Jesus also declared, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." So which is it? Will the damned roast eternally in "everlasting fire" or finally "perish," and thus cease to exist?

[Revelation 20:9](#) says, "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." This verse describes the "actual event" of hell fire and is NOT symbolic, and like John 3:16, it declares that the wicked will be devoured and perish, yet the very next verse appears to totally contradict which says, "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." Note that this verse has symbolism and says that "the devil" and "the beast" (beast is symbolic) will "be tormented ... forever" in the lake of fire. But Ezekiel chapter 28 reveals a totally different picture. While initially discussing the ancient "king of Tyre" (Ezekiel 28:12), God's prophet then looks behind the scenes and identifies Lucifer himself, "the anointed cherub" (verse 14), who inhabited "Eden the garden of God" (verse 13), and who was originally "perfect in [his] ways from the day [he] was created," until "iniquity was found in [him]" (verse 15) Moving on to Satan's final fate, God declares, "I bring forth a fire from the midst of you, it shall devour you, and I will bring you to ASHES upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold you... You have become a horror, and shall be no more forever" (verses 18 and 19.) So which is it? Will Satan be "tormented day and night" throughout endless ages, or will he become "ashes" and "be no more forever"?

The Bible DOES NOT contradict itself. These are only APPARENT contradictions. The solution is to examine what the whole Bible says about the fate of the lost, discover its overall teaching, and then to closely analyse the difficult verses until you understand them correctly. Once you do, you will find that everything fits and makes perfect sense and that God is NOT an unmerciful tyrant that tortures the lost forever.

First we will look at a breakdown of all the relevant verses and passages and conclude with a summary.

Hell Fire Is Real

Matthew 13:42 Jesus Christ said the lost will finally be cast "into a furnace of fire."

Matthew 3:12 John the Baptist said the lost will end up in "unquenchable fire."

Punishment for Sin and "Hell Fire" Is Future - Not Now

Matthew 13:40 "As the weeds are gathered and burned in the fire, *so will it be at the end of this world.*"

Matthew 25:41 Jesus Christ sends the lost into the fire *after His Second Coming.*

2 Peter 2:9 God will "reserve the unjust *unto* the day of judgment *to be punished.*"

Revelation 20:11-13 The day of judgment occurs at the end of the 1000 years.

Revelation 20:5a, 13-15 The "lake of fire" occurs at the end of the 1000 years.

The Final Hell Fire Will Be On Planet Earth

2 Peter 3:7 "The heavens and *the earth* which are now ... are reserved unto fire."

2 Peter 3:10 "The *earth* and the works that are in it will be burned up."

Revelation 20:8-9 At the end of the 1000 years, "They [the lost] went up on the breadth of *the earth* ... and fire *came down* from God out of heaven and devoured them."

Hell Fire Will Totally Destroy All the Wicked, Even Satan!

Psalms 37:20 "The wicked shall perish ... they shall consume; into smoke shall they *consume away.*"

Psalms 37:38 "Transgressors will be destroyed together."

Ezekiel 28:15, 18-19 Even Satan will become "*ashes*" on the "earth" as a result of the fire.

Malachi 4:1, 3 The "day cometh" when the lost "*burn up*" and become "*ashes.*"

John 3:16 Those who are lost will "perish."

Romans 6:23 The wages of sin is "death," not eternal life in hell fire.

Matthew 3:12 "Unquenchable fire" will totally "*burn up*" the wicked.

Matthew 10:28 "Fear Him who is able to *destroy both soul and body in hell.*"

Revelation 21:8; 20:14 "The lake of fire ... is the second death."

Even The Lake of Fire Will "Pass Away"

Revelation 20:7-9 At the end of the 1000 years, the lost are "the earth."

Revelation 20:9 God's fire falls on them, and they are "devoured."

Revelation 20:14-15 The earth becomes one big "lake of fire" as God purifies it from sin. The lost suffer the "second death" in that lake.

Revelation 21:1 Then there is a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and first earth (where the lake of fire was) has *passed away.*

Revelation 21:4 In the New Earth, there will be no more pain, suffering, sorrow, or death.

Note: If the lake of fire burned forever, there would always be pain and sorrow somewhere in the universe and Revelation 21:4 could never come true. But it is true. Sin will be gone forever and pain will cease to exist throughout God's entire universe!

Where Did The Doctrine Of Eternal Burning Originate?

Genesis 3:4 The doctrine of souls burning forever is rooted in the idea that "the soul can't die." That idea originated with the serpent who told Eve that if she sinned, she would "not surely die." But God said she would die (Genesis 2:16-17). God of course told the truth.

1 Corinthians 15:51-55 Only true Christians receive "immortality" at the Second Coming.

1 Timothy 6:16 God "alone has immortality."

Revelation 20:11-15 The lost finally suffer the "second death" at the end of the 1000 years.

The Character and Justice of God Will Be Vindicated

1 John 4:8 "God is love." He is not a tyrant who will burn people forever.

Revelation 20:13 Each person will be judged fairly, "according to his works."

Revelation 20:14-15 After God's just judgment, the lost will suffer the "second death."

Revelation 15:3 Then the universe will say of God, "*Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!*"

**And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,
And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying,
neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things
[including the lake of fire] have passed away.**

**And He that sat upon the throne said,
"Behold, I make all things new."**

And he said to me, "Write: for *these words are true and faithful.*" Revelation 21:4-5

So far we have discovered Bible passages which teach that the lost, instead of consciously suffering in fiery flames throughout eternity, will "burn up" (Malachi 4:1), become "ashes" (Malachi 4:3), "perish" (John 3:16), "consume away" (Psalms 37:20), and finally suffer "the second death" (Revelation 20:14) at the end of the world. But what about other passages describing "eternal fire" (Jude 1:7) and "torment day and night forever and ever" (Revelation 20:10)? It's time to closely examine these latter verses, comparing Scripture with Scripture.

Luke 16:19-31 - The Rich Man And Lazarus?

Special Note: This is the only place in the entire New Testament that seems to teach the doctrine of lost souls descending into fire at the moment of death. Shockingly, this concept is not taught anywhere in the writings of Matthew, Mark, John, James, Peter, or Paul. A careful analysis of the Luke 16:19-31 reveals it is actually a parable which, while teaching many powerful truths, is not meant to be taken literally in every detail.

Luke 16:19 "There was a certain rich man." This is exactly the way Jesus often started His parables (see Luke 12:16; 13:6; 14:16; 15:11; 16:1; 19:11-12; 20:9 (KJV).

Is it possible for anyone who is literally burning in fire to carry on a normal conversation?

Luke 16:22 The beggar went "to Abraham's bosom." Did he enter his chest? This is obviously symbolic.

Luke 16:23 Can the "lost" and the "saved" literally see and talk to each other?

Luke 16:24 The rich man is described not as a "disembodied soul," but rather as "in the body" with eyes and a tongue. Was he therefore not in his grave? Again, this reveals this is a parable.

Luke 16:24 Can a tiny drop of water on a tormented man's tongue bring real comfort?

The context of this parable reveals Jesus Christ was talking to the Pharisees who were "lovers of money" and who "derided him" with their tongues (verse 14). The reason why Jesus spoke of the rich man asking for water on his tongue was to teach the Pharisees that their "tongues" were going to lead them into hell-fire. These Pharisees also believed riches were a sign of God's favour while poverty represented His curse. Jesus exposed this false theory. The story also counteracts the idea of a second chance after death. At death there is "a great gulf fixed" (verse 26) which cannot be bridged. Our destiny will be decided by our decisions in this life. Many want to see a miracle before they will believe. Jesus said, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead." (verse 31). Why did Jesus use the name Lazarus? This story was a prophecy. Jesus did raise a real man named Lazarus (John 11), yet the Pharisees were not convinced and chose to "put Him to death." John 11:53.

Revelation 20:10 - "Tormented ... Forever"?

Revelation 20:9 says the lost are "devoured" by the fire that "came down from God out of heaven" at the end of the 1000 years. Yet then verse 10 speaks of "torment" forever. Which is it? If you look closely, verse 9 uses no symbolism, yet verse 10 does. Verse 9 is a literal account of what happens to the lost, while verse 10 speaks symbolically of the "beast." In fact, every time the book of Revelation speaks of the lost burning "forever," those verses are ALWAYS connected with symbolism (see Revelation 14:11 and 19:3). The word "forever" in the Bible doesn't always literally mean forever. 57 times the word is used for a period of time that *comes to an end*. Jonah was in the fish "forever" *before he came out* (see Jonah 2:6). Samuel's mother wanted him to serve God in the temple "forever" which really meant "as long as he lives." 1 Samuel 1:22, 28.

Jude 1:7 - "Eternal Fire"?

In Jude 1:7, the city of Sodom is described as being destroyed by "eternal fire." Is Sodom burning today? No. Therefore the "eternal fire" has gone out. The phrase, "eternal fire," means it was a fire from God with eternal consequences. It was "unquenchable" by man (see Matthew 3:12; Jeremiah 17:27; Isaiah 66:24). The destruction of Sodom was also an "example" of what will happen to the wicked at the end. According to the Bible, God's eternal fire turned Sodom into "ashes" (2 Peter 2:6) "in a moment." Lamentations 4:6. This is similar to what will happen to all the lost at the end of the 1000 years when they are cast into the lake of fire, "which is the second death." Revelation 20:14.

Matthew 25:46 - "Everlasting Punishment"?

Jesus warned that He will someday declare to lost sinners, "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" Matthew 25:41. Is this fire the same type of fire mentioned in Jude 1:7, which is one that destroys completely? We know it is because five verses later Jesus clarified that "everlasting punishment" would come upon the lost, not "everlasting punishing." This is the same as "everlasting destruction" 2 Thessalonians 1:9. Matthew 25:46 contrasts everlasting punishment with "eternal life" which is given only to those who *believe in Jesus*. John 3:16; 1 John 5:12. The wicked will not live forever, but will finally die the "second death." Revelation 20:14. See also Ezekiel 18:4. Hence we can see that the lost experience "everlasting punishment," not punishing, just like the Sodomites.

"Behold, the day is coming, that will burn as an oven.

**And all the proud, yes, and all who do wickedly, shall be stubble,
and the day that is coming shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts,
That it shall leave them neither root nor branch. Malachi 4:1**

Summary and Conclusion on the truth about hell

It would normally be considered bad practise to take into account feelings when it comes to studying the Word of God, however there is one area involved in this topic where feelings cannot be avoided. Take for instance this example: You had a dearly loved family member, whether brother, sister, son or daughter, who had lived an extremely righteous life. They devoted their time to the sick and the poor and the needy. They gave most of their wages to help others in need and when they weren't productively earning their wages, their life was devoted to loving and helping others. If this person ever accidentally wronged anyone their first response would be to apologise and ask for forgiveness. Their love was so great for others that they could not bear the thought of hurting another person in any way, shape or form. However this person had seen other family members hurt severely by Christians that were not walking the Christian walk and as a result this person never accepted Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Revelation 21:4 "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

The above verse refers to the time when a new Heaven and Earth are created, which takes place after the millennium at which time judgement and the lake of fire occurs. So just prior to this the wicked have just been burnt up or by some people's misunderstanding of this topic, the eternal burning of the wicked has just commenced. How will this eternal burning be? God would have to make the wicked immortal, so that they could burn and burn, but never burn up. If a person was burning in the excruciating pain of fire how long would it take before they would pass out from shock, or would God make it so they couldn't pass out from shock so that they could be suffering excruciating pain for every second of every minute of every hour for billions of years, and even then their suffering would be barely beginning. Since some believe this is for all eternity then a trillion years would not even be a microscopic spec on the time scale. Would you consider it just and merciful punishment to have your loved one burn for all eternity like this in horrendous never ending excruciating pain just because they chose not to accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour? Take into account that they never deliberately wronged anyone and if they ever accidentally did, they repented and apologised and asked for forgiveness? In other words they did the best they could to live a sin free life and love others with all their heart, might and soul as the Bible teaches we should.

If it was at all possible for this person to live a sin free life they would have, but since the fall of Adam and Eve we have taken on their sinful nature and so now there is only One that is perfect. I don't believe that anyone would consider even for a moment that for ever burning in excruciating pain is just and merciful punishment. The question is: Is anyone on the face of this planet more just and merciful than God, who is Himself love? The following scriptures are just a few of hundreds that could be quoted to answer this.

1 John 4:8 "He that loveth not knows not God; for God is love."

Nehemiah 9:31 "Nevertheless for your great mercies' sake you did not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for you *are* a gracious and merciful God."

Ephesians 2:4 "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,"

Psalms 86:15 "But you, O Lord, *are* a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."

Psalms 136:26 "O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy *endureth* for ever."

Now let's consider this dearly loved family member again. This is where human feelings unavoidably come into the equation. Is it humanly possible for us to now go through eternity with "neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain:" (Revelation 21:4) I personally would find this utterly impossible to do knowing that every second of my eternal existence that my loved one is burning in agonizing pain. How can there be "no more pain" if all these people are burning in the unbearable pain of hell fire? Also, the latter part of Revelation 21:4 says, "for the former things are passed away." How can they be all passed away if they are still burning and burning and forever burning, but never burning up?

There have been many people through history who have chosen to reject God and Christianity as they claimed they did not want anything to do with a God who could be so cold, cruel and heartless in His punishment. They cannot accept the thought of eternal punishing even for the smallest of crimes just.

Which of the following pair of scriptures is correct? Note very significantly also, that the true meaning of the Greek word for "perish" (apollumi) in John 3:16. The Strong's Dictionary says the word means to "destroy fully" (reflexively to *perish*, or *lose*), literally or figuratively: - destroy, die, lose, perish.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not have everlasting life in hell fire, but have everlasting life."

Romans 6:23 "The wages of sin *is* eternal life in hell fire; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Romans 6:23 "The wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The following verse is extremely significant as firstly it says Sodom and Gomorrah suffered the vengeance of "eternal fire" and secondly, we are told this is "an example" of what is going to happen in the end. Did you hear the media reports about Sodom and Gomorrah being a tourist attraction because they are still burning? No, neither did I. That is because Sodom and Gomorrah are not burning today. So why does it say they are burning with eternal fire? Clearly this eternal fire is NOT forever and neither is hell fire.

Jude 1:7 "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth **for an example**, suffering **the vengeance of eternal fire.**"

In the following two verses Jesus gives an example of hell fire and what is meant by eternal fire. Three times in this chapter we are told that the fire will not be quenched, i.e., it will not be extinguished and will burn until everything is burned up. There are fifty seven things in the Old Testament that were said to last forever but have all ended. Forever in these cases was for as long as those things should last. Forever for fire is as long as fire lasts, which is when it has burned itself out. This is consistent with other scripture.

Mark 9:43-44 "And if your hand offend you, cut it off: it is better for you to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell [*gehenna*], into the fire that never shall be quenched: **44** Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

So what is the example of hell fire we are given with Sodom and Gomorrah and what was the final result?

2 Peter 2:6 "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into **ASHES** condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly."

Fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them with eternal fire, that is, they burnt until they were totally devoured and nothing was left but ASHES. When something is devoured it is gone. Have you ever devoured a piece of chocolate cake? What was left? Keeping this in mind, the next verse describes the final and ACTUAL event of hell fire that happens after the judgement when the unsaved are burnt in the lake of fire (hell fire). This next verse is NOT symbolic and alone describes the truth about hell.

Revelation 20:9 "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and **devoured them.**"

We are told that Sodom and Gomorrah are an example of hell fire and as we can see from the above verse, it is indeed a perfect example and the lake of fire is exactly the same situation, except everything on earth is totally burnt up except for the saints who are safe in the "beloved city" of the New Jerusalem.

With Sodom and Gomorrah, fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them, and with the lake of fire (hell fire), fire also comes down out of heaven and devours them. Exactly the same thing! We are told that after the eternal fire burns Sodom and Gomorrah, only ashes are left. So what is left if the wicked are devoured in the lake of fire and this is the perfect example? The same as what was left after Sodom and Gomorrah. Ashes! This is undoubtedly confirmed by Malachi 4:1-3 which informs us that the wicked are totally devoured in hell fire that is not quenched and burns until there is nothing left but ashes.

Malachi 4:1-3 "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, **shall be stubble**: and the day that cometh shall **burn them up**, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. ... And **you shall tread down the wicked**; for they shall be **ashes under the soles of your feet** in the day that I shall do *this*, saith the LORD of hosts."

The truth about hell is indeed a very hot topic and one that is grossly misunderstood. I am not at all surprised that so many struggle here, especially if one puts all their emphasis on one of the symbolic verses that say forever burning, or eternal fire as it says in Jude 1:7 speaking of Sodom and Gomorrah.

When one truly searches for the truth about hell with an open mind, one will find that in fact eternal fire is fire that burns forever in the sense that it is not quenched and so the results of the fire are eternal. We are told that the unsaved are in fact devoured, and that they are ashes under the soles of our feet.

The Bible does not contradict itself. We do indeed serve a merciful God that burns the wicked only according to his or her works and both body and soul are destroyed in hell. Matthew 10:28. In regards to the example of the loved one that lived a righteous life but did not get around to accepting Christ, they would be burned in an instant. If all the wicked burned forever then there would be no point in judging them on their works as to what the consequences would be, as burning forever would be the same for all.

Revelation 20:12 "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and **the dead were judged** out of those things which were written in the books, **according to their works.**"

The truth about hell is that the unsaved are judged and fire comes down from heaven and devours them in times according to their works and they shall then be ashes under the soles of our feet. I feel so blessed to know that God is far more merciful and loving than us and His justice is in fact just and fair.

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