

Do The Wicked Burn In Hell?

In the last two lessons we've seen that the dead "know not anything". We've seen that the saints don't go to heaven, but are now dead waiting for their resurrection at the return of Christ, and will then reign with Christ on the Earth. We've also read that the unsaved dead have hope in their near future – that they are not presently writhing in agony, but are unconscious awaiting the resurrection of judgment.

But what happens after that? Jesus spoke of hell-fire, when does that happen? And what is it like, exactly? Is the popular teaching true? Do the unsaved go to an ever burning hell – a place of eternal torment? Are they doomed to suffer the endless torture of being on fire, yet never being consumed?

LESSON 8: DO THE WICKED BURN IN HELL?

Let me start by asking you a few simple questions...

Did Jesus Christ pay the penalty for your sins? Yes, you say? He paid for your sins so you don't have to – He completely and utterly removed the penalty for your sins, and HE took the payment Himself, bearing the punishment in YOUR place, right? Yes?

Then I have to ask you this question... is Jesus Christ in hell right now, suffering and writhing in agony? Why not? Why isn't Jesus Christ in hell at this very moment?

That's a rather shocking question... but I'm serious!

If what you already believe is true, He MUST be! Because If YOUR penalty for being an unsaved sinner is to burn in hell **for all eternity**, and if Christ TOOK that penalty upon Himself and paid it IN FULL IN YOUR PLACE, then HE MUST BE IN HELL RIGHT NOW!

Well? I want you to REALLY think about that, because it is the only logical conclusion! He couldn't suffer in hell for a only few hours and bear your penalty; He would have to be there FOREVER, because your penalty was that you would LIVE FOREVER with NO HOPE in a flaming torture! **To pay that penalty for you, He would have to STILL BE THERE TODAY!**

I'm sure you'd never thought about it like that before. It just doesn't make sense – Christ can't be in hell! Surely not! But what other explanation is there? The only way out of this confusion is to go back to the SOURCE of this knowledge, to skip over the massive accumulation of opinions and speculations by men of various disagreeing denominations and see what the BIBLE ITSELF says about this question!

To start with, your Bible *does* say that Jesus Christ was in hell! Did you know that? Read it for yourself in **Acts 2:31-33!** Now you can see right there in your own Bible, it says that Jesus' soul WAS in hell. But now He has been raised up and sits at the right hand of God in heaven!

How can that be! If He was to pay the penalty for your sins, which as you know is an ETERNAL punishment, He can't have gotten a reprieve after a few days – otherwise, He isn't paying your penalty anymore and you don't have a Savior!

So what can all this mean? How can we explain this? As with any contradiction in logic, the answer is simple; challenge your assumptions. Challenge all assumptions, yours, mine, everyone's. That's a command directly from your Bible, "*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good*" (**1 Thessalonians 5:21**).

I will challenge the first assumption for you: Did you personally ever read in the Bible that the penalty for sin is to live forever burning in hell? No, you heard it from someone or read it in a book and just assumed the scripture was "in there somewhere".

As it happens, it DOESN'T say the penalty for sin is an eternal, ever-burning hell. Ask anyone who believes otherwise to show you the exact scripture where it says the penalty for your sins will be burning forever in hell. They won't be able to, because IT DOESN'T SAY THAT!

Here is what it *does* say:

Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death; ...*

That scripture doesn't say sinners earn eternal suffering; it says sinners earn death. Simple, clean, death. Not fiery torture, or pushing a rock uphill for eternity. Just death.

Ezekiel 18:4 *Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*

This is an Old Testament scripture, but also inspired by God and it agrees completely with Romans where it says the soul that sins earns DEATH. It does *NOT* earn eternal punishment in hell, IT EARNS DEATH! And THIS explains why Christ was able to pay the penalty for your sins in your place – He DIED, once, for all of mankind. He paid your penalty, because *death* WAS the penalty!

But if the penalty had been to burn in hell forever, and if He was to pay the penalty IN YOUR PLACE, He would have to *still* be in hell – and since the Bible clearly says He isn't, THAT MUST NOT HAVE BEEN THE PENALTY IN THE FIRST PLACE!!

I know these things may come as a shock to you, but let's face it, if the Bible doesn't teach it, should you believe it?

SO THEN, WHAT IS HELL?

Did you know 400 years ago, when the King James Bible was translated, it was common for people to put their potatoes in "hell" for the winter?

The word hell means simply "a concealed place" in Old English, from which many of the modern translations took their cue. It is a hole in the ground where things, such as potatoes or dead people, are stored. The literal meaning is "a place where things are covered up and not seen". You can verify that in any good encyclopedia or anywhere on the internet. And in Bible language, because a grave IS a place where the dead are "concealed" and "unseen", the word "hell" is almost always interchangeable with "the grave" – as an example, let's look at that verse in Acts again...

Acts 2:31 (KJV) *He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.*

Compare that with another translation....

Acts 2:31 (Murdoch) *And he foresaw, and spoke of the resurrection of Messiah, that he was not left in the grave, neither did his body see corruption.*

Doesn't that make sense now? We KNOW Christ was in the grave for three days and three nights, as He said in **Matthew 12:40**, and we know God did not LEAVE Him in the grave, and His body did not begin to decay, because God RESURRECTED IT!

But at no time was He in an ever-burning hell! Doesn't that make it CLEAR, and simple? Let's push on and prove once and for all what the Bible says the reward of the unrepentant sinner actually is! Is it an ever-burning hell, or is it nothing more than death? Hopefully in light of what you've already seen, you'll concede the answer might not be what you've always thought!

But before I can go any farther, I need to stop and explain a bit more about the word "hell". In the Old English it usually refers to a hole, cellar, or more commonly, "the grave". But the Bible wasn't written in Old English, it was translated from the original Hebrew and Greek.

There are three different Greek words, *Tartarus*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna*, and one Hebrew word, *Sheol*, all of which are translated as "hell" in the King James Bible. Each has a different meaning, which is why God used several different words in the original languages, instead of just one. Unfortunately, men chose to translate all four of these distinct words as one word, "hell", in most English translations. Let's look at each of them and see what they really mean.

TARTARUS

2 Peter 2:4 *For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell [Tartarus], and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;*

This word appears only once in the entire Bible. It means a place of confinement pending judgment. However, the word is used *strictly* in context with fallen angels, and not fallen men, so it isn't relevant to this lesson. We'll talk about it at length in a later lesson, when we study the history and future of the devil.

HADES

Next is the word *Hades*, used 11 times. This, in all cases, should be translated as "the grave". Even the King James authors translated it this way in one case.

1 Corinthians 15:55 *O death, where is thy sting? O grave [Hades], where is thy victory?*

The word "hades" in Greek literally means "the unseen". For this reason it was used to apply to graves because bodies were placed in a dark "unseen" place – a grave, or a crypt – to languish until the afterlife. In Greek mythology this grew into an "unseen" underworld complete with guards and boatmen and a god of the underworld named Hades, who determined who should go to the blissful Elysian fields, and who deserved the fires of eternal suffering.

It should be noted this mythology was written many centuries before Jesus, strikingly similar though it is to modern "Christian" ideas of purgatory, heaven, and hell. And long before the concept of the Christian hell came to be applied to the word "Hades".

Online Etymology Dictionary says "The English word [hell] may be in part from [the] Old Norse *Hel* ... in Norse mythology [the name of] Loki's daughter, **who rules over the evil dead** in Niflheim, the lowest of all worlds ... **Transfer of a pagan concept and word to a Christian idiom**, used in the KJV..."

Notice carefully! The word "hell" was used by pagans to refer to THEIR idea of the afterlife of the wicked dead long before they became Christians! And that word **and concept** was TRANSFERRED into Christianity's Bible! Encouraged by books such as Dante's "Inferno" and Milton's "Paradise Lost".

SHEOL

The Hebrew word *Sheol* corresponds directly to the Greek word *Hades*, and it is the only word translated as "hell" in the Old Testament, and again refers exclusively to the grave, usually literally and occasionally symbolically.

1 Samuel 2:6 (BBE) *The Lord killeth and maketh alive, he bringeth down to hell [Sheol], and bringeth back again.*

IF hell was an ever-burning punishment from which there was no hope of escape – as the vast majority of Christianity believes – then there is no HOPE that God could “bring back again” from “hell”! Yet other scriptures also testify that God CAN save “from hell” – **Psalms 49:15** (see KJV margin), **Psalms 86:13**, **Jonah 2:2**.

But if hell is a place of *eternal* punishment without hope, why does God “bring back again” from hell? **The answer is simple: if it were a place of eternal punishment, He wouldn't. Again, challenge the assumptions.**

God can “bring back again” from hell simply because “hell” means “the grave”. This verse is speaking of the second resurrection we studied in the previous lesson, when the rest of the dead “live again”. These scriptures all say the Lord kills (sends to the grave) and He makes alive (calls back from the grave). Just as Jesus Himself died, went to “hell” (the grave) and was “made alive” (resurrected) and called back “from hell”. The KJV here correctly translates “Sheol” as simply “the grave”:

1 Samuel 2:6 (KJV) *The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave [Sheol], and bringeth up.*

So as you read the Bible, and see the word “hell”, in nearly all cases the word “grave” should be substituted as a more clear modern translation. As a few examples, try the words “grave” and “hell” in the following verses and see which one makes more sense: **Isaiah 38:18**, **Revelation 20:13**.

GEHENNA

That covers *Sheol*, *Hades*, and *Tartarus*, which together comprise the vast majority of the verses which mention “hell” in the Bible, leaving us with only one word translated “hell” in the New Testament; Gehenna. This word is used 11 times in the Gospels, and once in James. And Gehenna should never have been translated as “hell” – or translated at all!

“‘Hell’ is the place of the future punishment called ‘Gehenna’ or ‘Gehenna of fire’. This was originally the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the filth and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned; a fit symbol of the wicked and THEIR FUTURE DESTRUCTION.” (Online Bible Greek Lexicon, “Gehenna”)

Gehenna is the proper name for a place – just like Jerusalem, Rome, or New York. Let’s say you translated an article on the Brooklyn Bridge into some other language – but supposing every time you saw the word “Brooklyn” you translated it as “hell”. Would it be hard to understand the article when you were done?

Translating *Gehenna* as “hell” is the exact same thing. It’s simply a proper name and should have been left untranslated, like “Armageddon”, “Antioch”, and “Thessalonica” were. But that aside, Jesus chose this place as a physical example to make His point – not because *Gehenna* referred to some special region of the underworld, but because it described *the conditions* in that “lake of fire” which awaits the incorrigibly wicked dead.

Mark 9:47-48 *And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell [Gehenna] fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

Gehenna was a convenient site for a landfill, and in time it became the city dump where all the refuse of Jerusalem and the leftover carcasses of animal sacrifices were dumped and then burned. Naturally, as in any landfill, flies and other insects thronged the animal carcasses. And the biological cycle being what it is, they laid eggs in the carcasses, which soon hatched into larval maggots. Which the Bible calls “worms”.

That’s what the place was like, according to all historical accounts. But when most people read this verse, they imagine a fire which burns forever, always paining but never consuming its victims, who are all the while being eaten by fireproof immortal worms. But remember we must get ALL the scriptures which bear on this subject before we draw our conclusion!

Matthew 10:28 *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to DESTROY both soul and body in hell [Gehenna].*

What does that say? Fear Him who is able to TORTURE for ETERNITY in hell? No! It says fear Him who is able to DESTROY the soul and body!

This is a type – a pattern – of the fate of the wicked. Everyone agrees on this. But most people, after reading this scripture, continue to believe the wicked are cast into this hellfire alive and *then continue to live, writhing in agony forever!*

But that isn't what the scripture said! It said they would be DESTROYED in that hell fire – not kept alive in pain! Furthermore, just pursue the metaphor Jesus gave us; LIVE animals were NEVER cast into Gehenna fire by the Jews! They were not tortured alive for years in that pit, only the dead CARCASSES were cast into the pit of fire!

In addition, the carcasses were cast into the pit *and they were consumed! They disappeared, burned to ashes by the flames!* They didn't stay intact in an ever-increasing pile – they were CONSUMED by the flames!

People assume the fire burns people forever simply because it says the fire is not *quenched*; can the fire be quenched? Of course not! No man can quench a fire God starts! But what does quenching mean? Webster says “*to put out the light or fire of ... i.e., quench glowing coals with water*” – and no one will be able to PUT OUT this fire!

Can you quench a grease fire with water? Any cook knows that a grease fire cannot be quenched with water! And yet when the fuel is consumed, the fire goes out *by itself!* Never being quenched, but having consumed all there is to consume, it simply starves itself!

God speaks of another unquenchable fire in **Isaiah 1:30-31**; can anyone quench that fire? Of course not! But will that oak tree BURN to ashes, or remain perpetually ablaze throughout eternity? No one will quench it – but if it continues to burn, it will be CONSUMED and utterly DESTROYED! And after it is, the fire will *automatically* go out!

What will the wicked be turned into? **Malachi 4:3**. Will they be burned UP, or will some part of them be left? **Malachi 4:1**. When God uses fire to DEVOUR something, is it destroyed, or left alive? **Ezekiel 28:18-19**.

And that's the bottom line answer on hell. When God uses fire on the wicked, it devours them and “never shall they be any more”.

EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT

But if the wicked are simply killed by God, does it mean there is no everlasting punishment? On the contrary! The Bible speaks clearly of everlasting punishment!

Did Jesus teach everlasting punishment? **Matthew 25:46**. But does He speak of everlasting punishing? (Same verse).

There is a tremendous difference between everlasting punishment and everlasting punishing. Everlasting punishing is what most Christians believe hell is; burning forever, always conscious, always suffering, always being punished **over and over, again and again** pushing a rock uphill throughout ageless eternity.

But everlasting punishment is completely different – **it is simply a single punishment that lasts forever**. If you are dead FOREVER, that is an everlasting punishment. The punishment of the incorrigibly wicked will last FOREVER – it will never be repealed. But that punishment is eternal DEATH – not eternal *life* in hellfire!

Oh yes, regardless of what you call it, in the popular conception of hell, you are still alive. You are alive forever – you have ETERNAL life—not death! You are immortal! But God said that He was the ONLY one who had immortality! (**1 Timothy 6:16**).

Oh, but some would argue that “hell is a fate far WORSE than death” – well, why would God want to give anyone a fate WORSE than what He Himself says they deserve? (**Romans 6:23**). He says they deserve DEATH, why would He give them ETERNAL TORTURE instead?

More potential Christians are driven away from God by the doctrine of hell than any other; it doesn't make sense. Any level-headed person who tries to rationalize a “loving God” with someone who tortures Chinese babies in hell walks away believing – correctly – that the God who was just preached to him is a monster.

The scriptures are full of “*the meekness and gentleness of Christ*” (**2 Corinthians 10:1**). The exact phrase, “*His mercy endures forever*” is used 41 times in the Old Testament alone. Would a merciful God give them a punishment He Himself said they don't deserve? A punishment so cruel and vicious it would make all the Hitlers and Stalins and Inquisitors pale in comparison?

And would this merciful God who claims to be the embodiment of love then design heaven in such a way that saved mothers get to *watch* their unsaved children writhe in agony in flames for all eternity – while they rest blissfully in paradise, saying “praise God” and “holy, holy, holy” for forty forevers as their lost children shriek in the background?

Does that sound like heaven to you? Watching unsaved loved ones enduring unspeakable torment in hell, begging for death – FOREVER – never having their pleas answered? What sort of monster thought up this idea, anyway?

Long before Christianity was developed, way back in the days of the Greeks and Egyptians and Babylonians, churches learned that hell is a useful tool for frightening people. After all, a simple peaceful death isn't nearly as terrifying as the thought of your immortal soul burning in flames throughout eternity!

And let's face it, frightened people obey their witch doctor/priest/preacher better and pay better tithes! So naturally, the doctrine of hell has prospered for thousands of years directly contrary to the many clear scriptures in your Bible.

Yet those same preachers and their (often well-intentioned) modern descendents have crafted objections to plain scriptures like **Romans 6:23**; some from scripture, some they just made up. So now we'll discuss the objections to those clear scriptures, and see how the Bible answers each of them.

THE IMMORTAL SOUL

Many will ask, “But how can God destroy an immortal soul?” And to answer, I need only ask a simple question: “Can you show me a verse where it says you *have* an immortal soul?”

Every religion on Earth believes in the immortality of the soul. Plato taught it; Buddha built his religion around it. Catholicism teaches it and even the American Indian believed in the happy hunting ground. With all this weight of opinion, it's natural you grew up believing this – but did you ever look in the Bible and see if IT teaches that your soul is immortal?

Many of the doctrines you were taught are the result of preachers starting from the **assumption** of an immortal soul *and forcing the Bible to fit their assumption*. What they should have done is to humbly approach the word of God seeking to understand what it does say... and gladly rejecting anything not found written there.

The fact is, the words “immortal soul” are not in the Bible. This alone should make you suspicious of this doctrine. The word “immortal” is there only once, where it speaks of God being immortal in **1 Timothy 1:17**. The word “immortality” is there only five times, two of them in the same passage; see for yourself if any of them speak of an immortal soul:

Do you have immortality? **1 Timothy 6:16**. Must you, at the first resurrection, PUT ON immortality – meaning you don't already have it? **1 Corinthians 15:53-54**. Did Jesus bring immortality TO LIGHT – that is, make it possible to attain it? And HOW did Jesus make it possible for us to attain immortality? **2 Timothy 1:10**. Do we already HAVE immortality – or must we patiently SEEK for it, with WELL DOING? **Romans 2:7**.

That is EVERY verse on immortality in the Bible. Do ANY of them even HINT that everyone's soul is ALREADY immortal? If your soul is immortal, then why didn't God say so? What exactly did He say?

What will happen to your soul if you sin? **Ezekiel 18:4**. Who gave Man a soul? **Genesis 2:7**. Can God make anything He can't destroy? Can God make a rock so big He can't move it? (**Logic alone answers those questions**). So with those answers in mind... can God make a soul He can't destroy? **Matthew 10:28**.

God plainly says He CAN destroy the soul – not torture it or banish it to oblivion, but DESTROY it! What did God say to Adam and Eve in the Garden, the very first command He gave? **Genesis 3:16-17**. And what was the penalty for disobedience to that command? **Verse 17**. And what was the very first lie the devil told them? **Genesis 3:4**.

The devil said “You won't die!” – directly contradicting God's previous command (**Verse 3**). So you see, *the immortal soul was the very first lie the devil told to mankind!* Which is why to this day, ALL pagan religions around the world teach it!

I would spend more time talking about this immortal soul concept, but there just isn't anything to talk about! There aren't any other verses that speak of immortality, so there is nothing to explain; you inherited this belief from your parents and preachers and they got it from the seminaries who got it from Protestant commentaries who learned it from the Catholic Church who borrowed it from PAGAN PHILOSOPHERS like Plato! And at NO POINT along this path did ANYONE stop to think “Does the Bible teach this?”

What they DID ask was, “Can I make the Bible FIT this doctrine?” and “Are there scriptures in the Bible that could be used to SUPPORT this?” They discovered yes, they can and yes, there are. But they *didn't* ask “**Does the Bible teach it!**”! *The Bible is a complete recipe for salvation!* It doesn't need any extra help from men – no commentaries or opinions or traditions are required to save you! If a doctrine isn't taught there, and taught clearly, you don't need it – and it almost certainly isn't true!

And that is the mistake so many have made! They took what they already believed and used the Bible as a mere SECONDARY source – while using their superstitions, preconceptions, and traditions as the primary source. To nearly every Christian religion in history, the Bible was a place to look for support for conclusions they already held, not the place to find ALL true doctrine!

It's time for YOU to stop listening to men and dig the truth out of your Bible for yourself and BELIEVE IT, believe the ONLY primary source of truth and stop basing your hopes for eternity on the traditions of men!

Ironically, the most famous scripture in the Bible, if really believed, REQUIRES you to reject the false notion of the immortal soul! So many millions recite this scripture every day and never realize it teaches *against* the immortality of the soul!

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.*

God sent His son to this Earth to GIVE men an immortal soul... BUT ONLY **IF** THEY BELIEVED ON HIM! He did this so **those** men would not PERISH! It's time to thoroughly understand this verse and that word PERISH!

BBE version says “*so that whoever has faith in him may not come to destruction but have eternal life.*” This means if God had NOT sent His son, all men – righteous and wicked alike – would have been DESTROYED! Jesus came so they might have another option, the OPTION of eternal life, IF they had faith in Him!

If they'd already POSSESSED eternal life, inherent within them, why would Jesus have bothered to come? Or why didn't God just say... “*that whosoever believeth in him SHOULD NOT GO TO HELL, but go to heaven*” – that's what nearly all of modern Christianity believes He meant, but it simply isn't what the Bible says!

It says Jesus came so they COULD have eternal life, meaning they did NOT already possess it! And if they didn't have eternal life, what is the opposite of eternal life? Eternal DEATH!

What is the gift of God? **Romans 6:23**. If eternal life is the GIFT of God, then how can those who have not yet received that gift have eternal life? Is it possible?

Why did God put Adam out of the Garden of Eden? **Genesis 3:22-23**. Does God say that there was a RISK that they MIGHT get eternal life? And doesn't that mean they *didn't have it already*? (Same verse). Why was the Angel placed at the gate of the Garden? **Verse 24**.

Most believe murderers will go to hell; to experience eternal *life* in hell fire. Does this scripture agree? **1 John 3:15**. Does ANY murderer – or even someone who hates his brother – have an immortal soul? (Same Verse). When God speaks of the destruction of the wicked, how does He describe it? **Obadiah 1:15-16**.

BBE renders the last part of the last verse “*they will be as if they had never been.*” This is what will happen to the wicked; a simple and complete nonexistence; just as they didn't exist before they were conceived, so after their death they become “as if they had never existed”. It isn't complicated at all – it's quite simple.

But I don't want to give you the wrong idea; the dead do not IMMEDIATELY become as though they had never been; all we've been reading so far speaks only of the *ultimate* reward of the **incorrigibly** wicked. Not the *immediate* reward of the unsaved dead! All this is describing the ultimate, final death of the un-savable. This does not describe the next moment after death for the unsaved in this life!

The previous lesson went into great detail about why you should have hope for the unsaved; about the second resurrection, the second life, the great white throne judgment; but this lesson is about what happens *after* that, if they *fail* that judgment! This lesson is talking about the nature of that “second death”. The final end of all those determined to reject God. And to understand that end, we have to ask and answer the question...

WHAT IS DEATH?

If you've noticed, there is a recurring theme through all these verses “the wages of sin is DEATH” – “*the soul that sins, it shall DIE*” – “*that whosoever believes on Him might not PERISH*” – “*able to DESTROY the soul*” – “*be as though they had NEVER BEEN*” – None of these verses speak of hell as the reward, but simply death.

Theologians are well aware of this, and rather than accepting it, they spend great effort trying to reconcile “death” with their idea of an immortal soul. So they have defined death, not as the Bible defines it, but as “eternal separation from the presence of God”. To prove this, they quote this verse:

2 Thessalonians 1:9 (BBE) *Whose reward will be eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his strength,*

“Obviously”, they reason, “since we have an immortal soul which cannot be destroyed, ‘everlasting destruction’ must mean *destruction from GOD'S presence!* For what could be worse”, they continue, “than to be eternally separated from God!”

And that sounds reasonable enough – if you don't stop and examine the scripture they brought to the table as proof! Here, as you read the scripture carefully, it says “*everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord*” Isn't that an odd phrase? If it said “everlasting REMOVAL from the presence”, “everlasting BANISHMENT”, those would make sense; but who would say something is “DESTROYED from your presence” when they meant simply exiled?

But there is a completely different way to understand that verse! One that makes perfect sense! It isn't that the destruction sends you AWAY from the presence of God... the destruction comes FROM the presence of God! Check how similar expressions were used elsewhere in the Bible to see what God meant:

Does God command Moab to hide His people FROM THE FACE of someone intent on destroying them? **Isaiah 16:4**. When Egypt was losing, what did they wish to flee from? **Exodus 14:25**. What does God threaten as

punishment for serving other Gods? **Leviticus 20:3-6**. What part of God's body will be "against them"? (Same verse). Now where does destruction come FROM? **Isaiah 13:6**. And in that "day of the Lord", what do men fear and wish to be hidden from? **Revelation 6:16**. And what part of God's face actually DOES the destruction? **Revelation 19:15, 21**.

So now you see this destruction comes FROM the Almighty! From before His FACE! And it doesn't in some incomprehensible way "destroy them from His presence" – but the POWER that comes FROM His presence literally DESTROYS them! Just as the other scriptures all speak of the reward of the wicked as being death, destruction, non-existence, permanent perishing! When you just let the Bible explain itself, all these verses agree! Their reward is "eternal destruction", which comes from "the face of the Lord."

You cannot take one awkwardly phrased scripture like this one, and use that one scripture to nullify the obvious meanings of dozens of clear scriptures. Well, you *can* – millions do – but you *shouldn't*, and you CAN'T if you want to truly understand God and His word!

But while this explains that eternal banishment is NOT the reward of the wicked... it doesn't really prove what death is. But then, we haven't established even what life is, or what the soul IS, so before we can talk about how it dies, we have to know...

WHAT IS A SOUL?

Of what materials is Man made? **Job 33:6**. And how did God make that clay statue ALIVE? **Genesis 2:7**. Was Man a living soul BEFORE that time, or did he, at that very moment, BECOME a living soul? (Same verse). Where is the life of a man? **Leviticus 17:11**.

So God breathed into Man this breath of life and Man became a living soul; and as long as the blood keeps moving, it continues to retain the life God gave it. But how does the Bible frequently describe death?

Is death described as an absence of the spirit? **Luke 23:46**. [Note: if your Bible reads "gave up the ghost", remember that "ghost" and "spirit" have the same meaning.] Does this happen to the righteous dead – they "give up" this spirit? **Genesis 25:8**. Does it also happen to the wicked dead? **Acts 12:23**.

So when the breath of God – the spirit of God – entered the body of Adam, it made him alive. Before that Adam did not exist! And when our bodies "give up the spirit", they die – we are not immortal, and *neither is our spirit*.

I must mention that the spirit and the soul are *very* similar; they seem to enter and leave the body at the same time, and are often used in similar contexts; for instance, read: **Isaiah 26:9, Psalms 77:2-3, Job 7:11**. But they are *not* exactly the same thing: **Hebrews 4:12**. However, for right now we will treat them as if they are, since at death the same thing seems to happen to both the spirit and the soul.

What happens to our body when we die? **Genesis 3:19**. What is the body without the spirit? **James 2:26**. What happens to our spirit? **Ecclesiastes 12:7**. And then what happens to our spirit? **Revelation 14:13**. So our spirit leaves, it "returns to God who gave it", then we "rest", and "sleep", then what happens? **Job 14:12-15**. When a person is resurrected, what happens to him? **1 Kings 17:21-22**. But does the same thing happen to the soul of righteous men, as to the spirit of wicked men? **Psalms 26:9**.

Get that! David did not want his soul to be gathered *with wicked men!* That means there is a place where wicked souls are **gathered** – a place, based on these other scriptures, where those souls rest, unaware of the passage of time, awaiting their resurrection.

Further, if there is a place where *wicked* souls are gathered, and David didn't want gathered to *that* place, there must be *another* place where righteous souls are gathered! And **John 5:28-29** says they come forth out of the graves – are resurrected – at two *separate resurrections*.

Lesson 6 showed that the saved dead are to be resurrected at the beginning of the Millennium; and we now know that the ULTIMATE end of the incorrigibly wicked will be death – not torture, nor eternal suffering, but simply death. Non-existence; identical to their state before they were first conceived.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It's time to recap now and lay it all out quickly in a proper time sequence, both the last lesson and this one. And the best place to do this is **Isaiah 29**, which gives the best overall summary of these events in the entire Bible. Go ahead and turn there now. **Verses 1-5** speak of the end-time trouble coming on the world, some of which is described clearly in Revelation. Then **verse 6** speaks of the return of Jesus. By now you should recognize many of the signs associated with that – thunder, earthquakes, great noise, devouring fire, etc.

In **verses 7-8** we read of the nations that were gathered about Jerusalem at Armageddon, the ones that wind up fighting against Jesus when He returns, and who will be thoroughly defeated. **Verses 9-10** talk about these nations being drunken (but not with wine!), and the prophets and rulers being blinded – compare that to **Revelation 17:2**. It's not a literal blindness, but a SPIRITUAL blindness, and a SPIRITUAL drunkenness! Because they listened to “the great whore” and based their doctrine on HER commands, and not God's – but much more on that in coming lessons.

Verses 11-12 tell us almost word-for-word the situation of so many Christians today; those who say “I just can't understand the Bible!” – so they give it to the preacher to read to them, and he can't explain it either – “it's sealed”, he says; and the person who isn't a preacher says, “I can't understand it, I am not a scholar!”

But God says in **verse 13** that the REAL problem is the people talk about how much they love God *but they don't obey Him, because they obey instead the doctrines men invented!* Doctrines like hell, heaven, purgatory, immortality of the soul, the Ten Commandments being done away, and many others you've yet to learn about! Today men obey THESE doctrines instead of what God plainly taught in the Bible. Not because it's sealed, or because they're not scholars, but because *they don't want to obey what they read in the Bible!*

And because of that, God prophesies dark times ahead for this world, before His return. **Verses 14-16**. But wait! There is hope after that! **Verses 17-19** say “in that day” – which day? That same “Day of our Lord Jesus” Paul spoke of in **1 Corinthians 5:5**, when “the spirit may be saved”! The second resurrection!

In THAT day the deaf – the ones Isaiah just wrote about, who were blinded and didn't understand – those deaf will HEAR the words of the book! The eyes of the blind shall SEE! Not just literally, but see the TRUTH! Hear the TRUE doctrine! But why only then? **Isaiah 29:20!** The terrible one is brought to nothing – who is the terrible one? When will he be brought to nothing? **Revelation 20:3, 7-10**. The devil will be silenced before the second resurrection, and the prime mover behind the lies we've all been hearing all our lives will be gone!

And not only the devil, “the terrible one”, but also the scorner, those who encourage lawlessness, those who try to deceive the just; simply because God and the saints who then rule the kingdom won't permit such behavior!

And in that environment, the unsaved will find salvation! **Verses 22-23**. They will learn to fear God! And finally in **verse 24**, those who erred in spirit shall come to understanding! And those that grumbled and griped and hated God will learn doctrine – TRUE doctrine this time, not the doctrine of a few verses before, the one taught by the precept of MEN, but the doctrine plainly revealed in the Bible! The one you are having a chance to learn about NOW, today – so you can help others learn about it then!

This lays out clearly the pattern of end-time tribulation, Armageddon, the return of Christ, the binding of Satan, the second resurrection and the salvation of the unsaved dead. All in order, in one place – a rare treat in the Bible, a testament to how much God desires us to understand this glorious truth!

PLAY-BY-PLAY

One last quick summary to make sure you really grasp the order of the last three lessons! Soon, very likely in your lifetime, Jesus will return to rule all nations. When He returns, the saints rise to meet Him in the air, then go to the wedding supper of the Lamb to be accepted by the Father and given authority. Then they return with Christ to the Earth, win the battle of Armageddon and govern all nations.

But this government won't be a magical change. God plans to take His time in establishing direct rule over all nations – just as it took Israel time to inherit the physical promised land, even after they passed over Jordan (see

the book of **Joshua**). Then a thousand years pass, while the rest of the dead stay dead. During this time, all those left of the nations that battled at Armageddon will be living and dying and having children.

A future lesson will focus on this time period, for now suffice it to say at the end of the millennium the devil is loosed for a “little season”, then cast in the lake of fire. Afterward the rest of the dead are resurrected and given their first real chance at life.

The details of that period are not important right now; it is enough to say they are resurrected, live a full life in a better environment than any offered on this world today, and have a chance to know God without the massive deception that besets us all today. Then if they are saved in that life, they will also inherit immortality, but not the same office, honor, and authority as the first resurrection saints will have – which is only fair. The saints overcame in a MUCH more difficult time, so because their challenge was greater, their reward is greater. Twice as great, in fact.

But if they are not saved even in that easier time, then when they die a natural death the second time they are simply left dead. This time their soul is really allowed to be “*as water spilled on the ground*” (**2 Samuel 14:14**). Whether the unconscious soul is literally or metaphorically cast in a lake of fire designed to destroy souls doesn’t much matter – the point is they cease to exist forever.

This is what the Bible teaches. It does not teach that the saints go immediately to heaven when they die, it does not teach the unsaved burn in hell for eternity. Jesus said, “*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (**John 8:32**). This is a glorious truth, perhaps the greatest single truth a person can know. And this truth frees you of a great burden of worry.

We all have unsaved parents, grandparents, children, friends, loved ones of all sorts who have died. And while we loved them dearly, we know in our heart they weren’t saved and aren’t likely to be a part of the first resurrection.

To know the Bible reveals they are not forever lost, that they are not this moment agonizing in hell, but are resting comfortably awaiting a resurrection to a world of love and truth; what single piece of knowledge could be more comforting?

The Bible openly reveals such a world, clearly and simply. This truth is not hidden, cloaked in mystic symbolism or spiritual phraseology; it screams out from nearly every page of your Bible.

Unlearning a wrong idea is ten times harder than learning a correct one. But in this case at least, it is clear to anyone this is **a better way** than what you’ve always heard. The rewards for obedience are greater than you’ve ever dared hope, and the rewards for disobedience are first patient, then firm – but always merciful.

God wants all men to be saved – and while He may not get what He wants, you can be certain He won’t give up until He has tried with all His almighty might! And you know what – you can be there to help Him!

Romans 8:16-19 (Murdoch) *...we are the sons of God. And if sons, then heirs; heirs of God, and participators of the inheritance of Jesus Messiah: ...the sufferings of the present time, are not comparable with the glory which is to be developed in us. For the whole creation is hoping and waiting for the development of the sons of God.*

All creation is anxiously awaiting our salvation, our spiritual development into “just men made perfect”, **because WE are the next step in His plan to save mankind!** We, if we overcome in this life, will be the driving force that brings happiness, peace, prosperity and salvation to this Earth! And after we accomplish that... who knows?

Isaiah 9:7 *Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*

This work is completely non-denominational and is meant to fulfill Christ's great commission to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (**Mark 16:15**). **This publication is not to be sold;** "*freely ye have received, freely give*" (**Matthew 10:8**).

The Bible tells us to PROVE ALL THINGS, and The Simple Answers encourages people to do just that. If you cannot PROVE what you believe, you have no right to believe it! Many of the things we print are shocking because they are different from what you've heard, but if something we say offends or upsets you, we hope you will take the time to set aside your preconceived ideas and PROVE your point from the Bible to see if you truly have been right all these years.

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