

The Bible says in several places that the wicked will be burned up and completely destroyed in hellfire. The wicked will not burn forever. **Malachi 4:1-5** says that on the day of the Lord, "All the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," Says the Lord of hosts, 'That will leave them neither root nor branch' ... "You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet." **Psalms 37 verses 10 and 20** also state that the wicked will be no more, they will be carefully looked for but not found.

**Verse 20** adds that the enemies of the Lord will die and vanish away into smoke. All that is left of the wicked is smoke and ashes, there will not be any part of them left to be tortured forever. All wickedness will be removed from the earth. The root (Satan) as well as the branches (his followers) will become ashes with no more life left in them.

Often it is just as important to see what is **not** written in the Bible as it is to discover what is written in the Bible. In **Romans 6:23**, the Bible says that "the wages of sin is death." The Bible does not say that the wages of sin is eternal punishment. Also take a look at **John 3:16** which says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

This verse talks about two options. One option is to perish, which means to be destroyed or to cease to exist. The other option is everlasting life. Neither of these two verses talks about everlasting torment.

### **Will the fires of hell go out or burn forever?**

On the face of the earth there will be utter destruction. Nothing with a taint of sin will be left. **2 Peter 3:10** says, "Both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." **Isaiah 47:14** describes this fire in the following way, "Behold, they [the wicked] shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it."

The fire will be so complete that it will burn itself out, not even leaving a glowing coal. According to science, fire needs three things to continue burning: fuel, oxygen, and heat. If any of those three are removed the fire goes out. The fires of hell will go out because, as we read in Isaiah, there will not even be left one coal of combustible material to keep the fires going.

The Bible says that hell will only last as long as it takes to destroy the wicked completely, **Malachi 4:1** "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, 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."

Everything must burn completely, because after the earth is destroyed by fire, God will re-create the earth just as it was originally supposed to be. **Isaiah 65:17** "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." **Revelation 21:1** "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

In the New Testament, we're told that God first cleansed the world with a flood and that when He comes again He will cleanse the earth with fire. **2 Peter 3: 5-7** "For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Now can you see that hell is an event that will take place in the future and not a place of torment that is going on right now?

### **Why is hell and its destructive forces necessary?**

The cleansing fire brings about a complete eradication of sin. **Ezekiel 28:18-19** speaks the following about Satan, "Therefore I brought fire from your midst; it devoured you, and I turned you to ashes upon the earth...And [you] shall be no more forever." With Satan and all wickedness burned up the Bible says that sin and affliction will not ever arise a second time **Nahum 1:9**.

### **Does the devil rule hell?**

There isn't one place in the Bible that describes hell as a place to be ruled by anyone. And Satan's banishment from heaven landed him on earth, and not to a specific location, see **Revelation 12:9**.

When it comes to who would have control over the flames of hell, that would have to be God Himself **Matthew 10:28**. In fact, hell's flames are to be "prepared for the devil and his angels" (**Matthew 25:41, CSB**). So Satan probably wouldn't choose to live in a place that is meant to burn him up.

The idea of hell as Satan's dwelling place was made popular by literature such as *Paradise Lost*, in which Milton describes hell as a dark, twisted parody of heaven that has a throne for Satan at the center of it.

### **What is the purpose of hell?**

Why would God allow for all this destruction to happen? **2 Peter 3:10-14** explains that the earth being on fire will melt, but that we should look forward to a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells. The fire purifies the earth and establishes a place of righteousness for the saved to live. **Isaiah 65:17** adds, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind."

This righteous place is described in **Revelation 21:1-5** in the following way: "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away...Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.'"

Have you considered the following? If people were tormented forever in hell how could all things be made new? Additionally, how could all tears be wiped away if you were saved and happily living in an earth recreated, but could still see loved ones burning in hell for eternity? Eternal life for you in heaven would be eternal torment as you continually saw those you loved suffering in unending agony and pain.

### **How can I avoid hell? - Jesus' invitation**

If you were an all-powerful God who ruled the universe how would you deal with sin? How would you remove pain and heartache fairly for eternity? God wants to destroy sin, but at the same time lovingly save the sinner. If we continue to hold on to sin, we will be destroyed along with sin. If we confess and repent of sin, sin alone will be destroyed. If sin is not completely eradicated it will infect every part of earth. There can be no peace with sin in existence.

Let's look again at **Ezekiel 33:11**, which says, "Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'" After all, God is "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" **2 Peter 3:9, ESV**. God is calling you, because He loves you. He is pleading with you to get rid of every sin in your life so someday you can enjoy an everlasting heavenly home where no pain or suffering exists. Why not listen to a fair, compassionate God who loves you and doesn't want anyone to suffer, but come unto Him? The choice is yours.