

What the BIBLE Says

As you read this study, I encourage you to study the corresponding scriptures for yourself to develop a personal, confident understanding of biblical truth. Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Study like the Bereans, who listened to Paul but did not take his word for it. They studied the scriptures for themselves so they would know for sure.

Acts 17:11 “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” I ask that you do the same with this study. Please pray before you begin.

Is there eternal torment?

The Bible says in several places that the wicked will be burned up and completely destroyed in hellfire. The evil will not burn forever.

Read Malachi 4:1-5. Here, God describes that all who do wickedly are burned to stubble and burned up, not burning forever. They will also be ashes under the soles of our feet. **In Psalm 37:10 and 20**, it also states that the wicked will be no more; they will be sought but not found.

Turn to Psalm 37:20, which explains that the Lord’s enemies will perish and dissolve into smoke. The only remnants of the wicked will be smoke and ashes; nothing will be left to suffer eternal torment. All wickedness will be removed from the earth. Both the root (Satan) and the branches (his followers) will turn to ashes, with no life remaining. Sometimes, it is equally important to notice what is not written in the Bible as it is to see what is written.

See Romans 6:23, here it states that “the wages of sin is death.” The Bible does not say that the wages of sin is eternal torment.

Also, let’s look at John 3:16, a verse you are probably familiar with, 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 presents two options. One is to perish, meaning to be destroyed or to cease to exist. The other is everlasting life. Neither option speaks of eternal torment. Will the fires of hell go out or burn forever? On the face of the earth, there will be utter destruction. Nothing tainted by sin will be left.

Read 2 Peter 3:10: "Everything will be burned up." **Isaiah 47:14** describes this fire as so complete that it will burn itself out, leaving no glowing coal. According to science, fire needs three things to continue burning: fuel, oxygen, and heat. If any of those three elements is removed, the fire goes out.

The fires of hell will go out because, as we read in Isaiah, not even a coal of combustible material will remain to keep them burning. The Bible says hell will last only as long as it takes to destroy the wicked completely. **Let's look at Malachi 4:1.** Everything will burn completely because, after the earth is destroyed by fire, God will re-create it as it was originally intended.

Turn to Isaiah 65:17 and Revelation 21:1. In both passages, we see God creating a new heaven and a new earth. 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.

Let's find this **in 2 Peter 3:5-7.** As we look at history, we see that the flood was an event, and the fires of hell are also scheduled for the future. Now, can you see that hell is an EVENT that will take place in the future, not a place of torment that exists or is happening right now?

Why are hell and its destructive forces necessary?

The cleansing fire brings about the complete eradication of sin. **Read Ezekiel 28:18-19.** It speaks of Satan and all wickedness being burned up. The Bible says that sin and affliction will never 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 governed by anyone. And Satan's banishment from heaven landed him on earth, not in a burning place (**see Revelation 12:9**).

Who would control the flames of hell?

That would have to be God Himself (**Matthew 10:28**). In fact, **in Matthew 25:41**, hell's flames are prepared "for the devil and his angels." The idea of hell as Satan's dwelling place was popularized by literature such as Paradise Lost, in which Milton describes hell as a dark, twisted parody of heaven with a throne for Satan at its center. What is the purpose of hell? Why would God allow such destruction?

Read 2 Peter 3:10-14. These passages explain that the earth will be on fire and melt, yet 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** as follows: "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 on a recreated earth, yet 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 suffer in unending agony and pain.

How can we 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 while lovingly saving the sinner. If we continue to hold on to sin, we will be destroyed along with it. If we confess and repent of sin, sin alone will be destroyed. If sin is not completely eradicated, it will infect every part of the new earth. There can be no peace as long as sin exists.

Let's look again at **Ezekiel 33:11**, which says that the Lord God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked and wants the wicked to repent and live. After all, God is "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (**2 Peter 3:9**).

God is calling you because He loves you. He is pleading with you to remove every sin from your life so that someday you can enjoy an everlasting heavenly home where there is no pain or suffering. Why not listen to a fair, compassionate God who loves you and doesn't want anyone to suffer, and come to Him? The choice is yours.