



SAVED TO SERVE
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IS HELL'S FIRE ETERNAL?

1. In this Sabbath School Lesson, we will study hell's fire from scripture. We will learn when hell will occur and if it is eternal.

2. There is a popular belief among professed Christians that we have a "soul" or a separate living entity within us that continues to live on after we die. The idea teaches that mankind has natural or intrinsic immortality, but it is not scriptural. What does the Bible tell us about a soul? Can it die? Ezekiel 18:4, 20 (Note: We will study what happens after death in a future lesson).

3. Why did God bar Adam and Eve from the Tree of Life after they sinned? Genesis 3:22

4. Is hell's fire burning now? Matthew 13:40-42; 2 Peter 2:9; Revelation 20:7, 9, 10

5. Where will hell's fire be? 2 Peter 3:10-12; Revelation 20:9

6. Based on the Bible, where are the wicked dead now? Are they in hell? Psalm 31:17; Job 14:10-13

7. Is the devil in charge of hell? Matthew 25:40, 41; Revelation 20:10

- a) Who is in charge of executing the punishment of hell? Revelation 1:18

- b) Why must sin and those who hold on to their sins be destroyed? Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:56

8. **Note:** There are a few passages of scripture that describe hell as 'forever', 'eternal', and people being 'tormented day and night' (read Revelation 14:9-11; 20:10; Matthew 25:46; 2 Thessalonians 1:9). Let us study this throughout scripture to see if hell's fire will burn without coming to an end.
9. When the Bible says the wicked will burn "for ever and ever," what does this mean? 1 Samuel 1:22, 28; Jonah 2:6, 10; 1:17

10. After the wicked have been consumed, what will remain? Malachi 4:1, 3; Jude 7; 2 Peter 2:6

11. **Note:** These scriptures clearly show us that the wicked will not be burning continually without end. They will be burnt up, and **the result of this fire is eternal**. The wicked, including Satan and his angels, will cease to exist. This is the second death.
12. For an additional example, what did God say about the fire that He would kindle in Jerusalem because of their sins in the time of Jeremiah? Jeremiah 17:27

- a) What does it mean that the fire will not be “quenched”? **Answer:** Read 2 Chronicles 36:19-21. It is the fulfillment of the prophecy made by Jeremiah that Babylon would destroy and burn Jerusalem. The fire not being “quenched” means that no man would be able to avoid or stop the destruction that God was going to send upon His people.
13. Read Matthew 3:12 and Luke 3:17. Based on the question 12, what is the understanding of Jesus saying that the wicked shall will be burned with unquenchable fire?
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14. The false idea of an eternal hell assumes that the wicked will suffer without an end. Who only has immortality, and to whom will He give it? 1 Timothy 6:14-16; John 3:16
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15. How long will the wicked suffer in hell’s fire? Matthew 16:27; Luke 12:47, 48 **Answer:** They will burn according to their sins. Some will last longer than others, but ultimately all will burn up and cease to exist.

Rebuttal

16. **Note:** The account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 has perplexed many people on the subject of hell and what happens after death. Based on this parable, some make the assumption that when you die, you immediately go to heaven or hell and if you end up in hell, you will burn for all eternity. Let us analyze this passage to get the proper understanding.
17. Read Luke 16:19-31. Is this passage literal or figurative? Luke 15:1-3 **Answer:** It’s a parable. Luke 15 begins a series of parables that Jesus explains which continue into Luke chapter 16 with the account of the rich man and Lazarus. Jesus was trying to show them how they treated sinners and how sinners are treated by our loving God. The final point of the parable is that once we die, our decision for Christ or against Him is fixed and we cannot change afterwards (Luke 16:26-31).

“The doctrine of a conscious state of existence between death and the resurrection was held by many of those who were listening to Christ’s words. The Saviour knew of their ideas, and He framed His parable so as to inculcate important truths through these preconceived opinions.” {COL 263.2}

“The conversation between Abraham and the once-rich man is figurative.” {COL 265.4}

18. What is one lesson being taught in this parable? Luke 16:25, 26; Revelation 22:11, 12; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10 **Answer:** We will be judged according to what we do in this life and there is no repentance when in the grave. Our decisions are final.

“In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Christ shows that in this life men decide their eternal destiny. During probationary time the grace of God is offered to every soul. But if men waste their opportunities in self-pleasing, they cut themselves off from everlasting life. No after-probation will be granted them. By their own choice they have fixed an impassable gulf between them and their God.” {COL 260.1}

19. What is another lesson being taught in this parable? Luke 16:27-31; John 11:43-45, 53; 12:37 **Answer:** If we, like the Pharisees, have our hearts hardened to God’s Word and truth, then no miracle done for us will change our hearts.

‘Christ’s last and crowning miracle was the raising of Lazarus of Bethany, after he had been dead four days. The Jews were given this wonderful evidence of the Saviour’s divinity, but they rejected it. **Lazarus rose from the dead and bore his testimony before them, but they hardened their hearts against all evidence, and even sought to take his life** (John 12:9-11). {COL 265.1}

“The law and the prophets are God’s appointed agencies for the salvation of men. Christ said, Let them give heed to these evidences. **If they do not listen to the voice of God in His word, the testimony of a witness raised from the dead would not be heeded.**” {COL 265.2}

20. As we close, let us look at the love of God which should lead us to repentance and a saving relationship with Him. Does God long to destroy the wicked? Ezekiel 33:11; Isaiah 28:21
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21. What is God’s desire for us all? Luke 9:56; 2 Peter 3:9
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22. What is God’s appeal to us? Jeremiah 3:21-23

23. Once sin is destroyed, will it ever rise again? Nahum 1:6, 9; Revelation 22:3

FURTHER STUDY: The word "hell" mentioned in the Bible is translated from different words with various meanings.
It is mentioned 54 times total in the Bible:

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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

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

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