



THE TRUTH ABOUT HELL



A SAVED TO SERVE STUDY GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

The Wages of Sin

We let the Bible interpret itself, comparing Scripture with Scripture and rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). The study runs in one continuous sequence — from Point 1 through Point 25. Read each reference in your Bible and write your answers on the lines provided.

- I. PURPOSE** In this series of doctrinal lessons we will study hell's fire and see how God's consuming fire affects the wicked and the righteous — and what the Bible truly teaches about the soul, death, and the destiny of the lost.

In This Study

1	The soul and the breath of life	<i>Genesis 2:7</i>
2	Can the soul die?	<i>Ezekiel 18:4, 20</i>
3	Is hell's fire burning now?	<i>Matthew 13:40-42</i>
4	Where the wicked dead are now	<i>Job 14:10-13</i>
5	"For ever" & unquenchable fire	<i>1 Samuel 1; Jonah 2</i>
6	The second death	<i>Malachi 4:1-3; Jude 7</i>
7	God's love & the burning bush	<i>Song of Solomon 8:6-7</i>
8	The rich man and Lazarus	<i>Luke 16:19-31</i>

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

"For our God is a consuming fire."

HEBREWS 12:29 (KJV)

Keep your Bible open and let each text speak for itself. Lay aside tradition, weigh every passage in the light of the whole of Scripture, and answer honestly. Ask the Spirit to make you a wise and watchful Berean — from Point 1 to Point 25 — that you may know the truth about death, the soul, and the fire of God.

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. This idea teaches that mankind has natural or intrinsic immortality, but it is not scriptural. What two elements comprise a soul according to Genesis 2:7?— *Read: Genesis 2:7*
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- a) Write down scriptures which prove that a soul represents a living person.— *Read: Exodus 1:5*
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3. Does the Bible teach us that a soul is immortal, or can it die?— *Read: Ezekiel 18:4, 20; Matthew 10:28*
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4. Matthew 10:28 teaches us that the soul can die, but it separates the body and the soul. In this scripture, what does the word “soul” mean in the Greek?

ANSWER The number in the Strong’s Concordance is 5590 and it means “breath.” Based on the Bible, when a person dies their breath returns to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Job 27:3). God has resurrection power, and He also has the power to end life to prevent a person from living again.

5. As you study the Bible, you will discover it teaches that the wicked will perish (i.e. Psalm 37:20). Why did God bar Adam and Eve from the Tree of Life after they sinned?— *Read: Genesis 3:22*
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6. Is hell’s fire burning now?— *Read: Matthew 13:40-42; 2 Peter 2:9; Revelation 20:7, 9, 10*
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7. Where will hell’s fire be?— *Read: 2 Peter 3:10-12; Revelation 20:9*
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8. Where are the wicked dead right now? Are they in hell?— *Read: Psalm 31:17; Job 14:10-13*
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9. Is the devil in charge of hell?— *Read: Matthew 25:40, 41; Revelation 20:10*
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- a) Why must sin, and those who hold on to their sins, be destroyed?— *Read: Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:56*
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10. 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; Revelation 20:10; Matthew 25:46; 2 Thessalonians 1:9). Let us study this concept throughout Scripture to see if hell’s fire will burn without coming to an end.

11. When the Bible says the wicked will be tormented “for ever and ever,” what does this mean?— Read: 1 Samuel 1:22, 28; Jonah 2:6, 10; Jonah 1:17

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

13. 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.

14. 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?— Read: 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.

15. Based on question 12, what is the understanding of Jesus saying that the wicked shall be burned with unquenchable fire?— Read: Matthew 3:12; Luke 3:17

16. How long will the wicked suffer in hell’s fire?— Read: 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.

17. 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?— Read: Ezekiel 33:11; Isaiah 28:21

18. Some people use the account of Moses and the burning bush as an example of the wicked in eternal hell fire because the bush was not consumed (Exodus 3:1-4). However, this account teaches a different lesson. What does Song of Solomon 8:6-7 compare to a fire which cannot be quenched?

— Read: Song of Solomon 8:6-7

- a) Who is love?— Read: 1 John 4:8

19. Who does Isaiah say will dwell with devouring fire and everlasting burnings?— Read: Isaiah 33:14-15

20. What must we do to dwell with God?— Read: John 3:16

21. Since all have sinned, what must we do to receive mercy and pardon from God?— Read: Proverbs 28:13

22. **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 assume 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.

23. Read Luke 16:19-31. Is this passage literal or figurative?— Read: Luke 15:1-3

ANSWER It's a parable. Luke 15 begins a series of parables that Jesus explains, continuing into Luke 16 with the account of the rich man and Lazarus. Jesus was showing them how they treated sinners and how sinners are treated by our loving God. The final point is that once we die, our decision for Christ or against Him is fixed and cannot be changed 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.”

CHRIST’S OBJECT LESSONS, P. 263 {COL 263.2}

“The conversation between Abraham and the once-rich man is figurative.”

CHRIST’S OBJECT LESSONS, P. 265 {COL 265.4}

24. **What is one lesson being taught in this parable?**— *Read: 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.”

CHRIST’S OBJECT LESSONS, P. 260 {COL 260.1}

25. **What is another lesson being taught in this parable?**— *Read: Luke 16:27-31; John 11:43-45, 53; John 12:37*

ANSWER If we, like the Pharisees, harden our hearts 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).”

CHRIST’S OBJECT LESSONS, P. 265 {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.”

CHRIST’S OBJECT LESSONS, P. 265 {COL 265.2}

Notes



The Gift of God Is Eternal Life

The Bible does not teach an ever-burning hell where the lost suffer without end. Sin and sinners will be consumed — that is the second death — and the earth made new. Yet the same fire that consumes the wicked is the fire of a God who is love, who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and who longs to give us life. The choice is set before every soul: everlasting life in Christ, or to perish. God so loved that He gave His Son that we need not be lost.

ROMANS 6:23 (KJV)

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Will you choose life, and dwell with the consuming fire of His love?

REFERENCES

Sources & Notes

A WORD OF CAUTION

“How repugnant to every emotion of love and mercy, and even to our sense of justice, is the doctrine that the wicked dead are tormented with fire and brimstone in an eternally burning hell.”

ELLEN G. WHITE · THE GREAT CONTROVERSY, P. 535 {GC 535.1}

SCRIPTURE & STUDY HELPS

- 1 Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 260, 263, 265 {COL 260.1; 263.2; 265.1–4}.
- 2 Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 535 {GC 535.1}.
- 3 Strong's Exhaustive Concordance — Greek #5590, “psuche,” breath / soul / life. biblehub.com/greek/5590 ↗

All Scripture is quoted from the King James Version (KJV). Spirit of Prophecy references are cited for study and comment.