

THE DESOLATION



A THOUSAND-YEAR JAIL SENTENCE AND THE LAKE OF FIRE

IS GOD REALLY LIKE THAT?

How could a God of love burn people forever and ever? Why would I want to trust a God who delights in torturing human beings? What does the Bible say about **heaven and hell**?

These questions have bothered men and women throughout the centuries. If "**God is love**," how could He possibly **take pleasure in keeping people alive in eternal torment** (**1 John 4:8**)? The popular **idea of hell** as a place where God punishes His enemies without end has caused many people to turn away from a belief in God at all. They would rather believe that a person just **ceases to exist** rather than imagine them suffering **conscious torment** for the eons of eternity. For countless others, the worship they give to God comes from a place of fear and a desire to avoid pain and torture. The **love of God** does not motivate them to serve Him; rather the motivation is a deep fear of experiencing **eternal punishment**.

What does the Bible really say about the **concept of hell**? The answers may surprise you.

TWO RESURRECTIONS?

Before we delve into the **nature of hell**, let's look at the events that will happen right after Christ's second coming. We know that at Christ's coming, the righteous will all be caught up in the clouds "*...to meet the Lord in the air*" (**1 Thessalonians 4:17**). In **John 5: 28-29**, Jesus says, "*The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*" Here are two resurrections: one where those who have "done good" will receive the "resurrection of life," and the other where those who have "done evil" will receive the "resurrection of damnation." But does the "resurrection of damnation" happen at the same time as the "resurrection of life"?

In **Revelation 20**, after talking about those who are saved, **verse 5** tells us, "*But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.*" In verse 6, it reads, "*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*" Not only will there be two resurrections, they will be a thousand years apart!

THE MILLENIUM

A lot of confusion surrounds the millennium: What will the saved be doing for a thousand years? Will there be a chance for sinners to repent? Where will Satan be during the thousand years? Let's explore what the Bible says about these questions.

For one thousand years, the earth will be quiet. There are no people alive on earth. It will be a dark, desolate place. Those who chose not to follow Christ will be lifeless on earth, awaiting the second resurrection.

This will not be a time to repent and turn to Christ. All those decisions will have already been made. Just as in Noah's day, the door of the ark was shut and no one could get in; similarly, after Christ's second coming, there are no more chances to repent and follow Christ.

Since the devil deceived Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, his constant work has been to deceive mankind. Now, chained by the circumstances of a desolate planet, with no one to deceive, he is sentenced to one thousand years of idleness.

What a punishment! The devil, who for thousands of years has worked tirelessly to deceive and destroy, is confined to an empty planet for the millennium.

In the meantime, **Revelation 20** tells us that the righteous will have an opportunity to judge the world. This judgment is only for those who did not take part in the first resurrection. This judgment is for those whose names were not found "**written in the Lamb's book of life**" (**Revelation 21:27**).

When the righteous get to heaven, there will be questions: "Why is he here?" "Where is my Aunt Mildred?" "What happened to my best friend?" God will give everyone the opportunity to look over the records of each person's life so that they can see the eternal results of the decisions they made. Not only will they have an opportunity to look over the record books to see how just and fair God is, they will help decide the punishment that will be given out to all who chose against God and His government. In **1 Corinthians 6:3**, the Apostle Paul asks, "**Know ye not that we shall judge angels?**" The devil and the angels who fell with him will be part of the judgment that saints will conduct.

"I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW"

In **Revelation 21**, the Apostle John details his vision of what would happen after the thousand years are finished. He writes, "**I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven . . .**" **Revelation 21:2**.

At the second coming, Christ rescued His children and brought them home to heaven. After the work of judgment, He gathers all the redeemed, and they return to earth in the holy city. At this third, glorious coming, God begins the work detailed in His promise, "**Behold, I make all things new.**" **Revelation 21:5**.



AN ETERNAL END TO SIN

During the devil's thousand years of confinement, he has had a chance to perfect his strategy to try one last time to overthrow God's government. As the holy city descends from heaven, the life-giving power of God raises all those who through all ages chose against God's gracious invitation to follow Him.

The devil begins his last work of deception. **Revelation 20:7-8 tells us,** "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea."

The multitude of those who did not choose God are "as the sands of the sea" (Revelation 20:8).
The devil will convince all these people that it would be easy to overthrow this city and forever be rid of God, His rules, and His people.

The saga continues in **Revelation 20:9:** "*And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.*"

ETERNAL FIRE

In the **Hebrew Bible**, the Old Testament book written by the prophet Isaiah categorizes this fire as **God's "strange act" (Isaiah 28:21)**. A God of love, who gave His only Son to save men from the eternal fire of hell, brings fire from heaven to destroy all who have finalized their choice against His government. A God– who "**is not willing that any should perish**"– allows those who have chosen against Him to experience the consequences of their choice (2 Peter 3:9). Truly, it is a strange and agonizing act for God– who gave all of His resources– to give men an opportunity to choose Him.

The final result of **hell is eternal**; it is an **eternal punishment**, but does not entail eternal, ongoing punishing. Fire "**came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them**" (**Revelation 20:9**).

When an item is devoured, it is gone. It is no more. The eternal punishment is not being burned for eternity. It is being eternally separated from God and the joys of Heaven. It is the punishment of being no more. Revelation tells us "**this is the second death**" (**Revelation 20:14**).

The popular **doctrine of hell**– as a place of **eternal, conscious torment**– is yet another deception of the devil; his desire is to make God look as unfair and unjust as possible.

God will make sure that there is not one doubt in any person's mind about His fairness and His love. He promises, "**Affliction shall not rise up the second time**" (**Nahum 1:9**). Sin and suffering, disease and death will be forever vanquished. There will be no corner of the universe in which God will provide **conditional immortality** to sinners. This would only keep them alive and torture them forever. God's gift is eternal life; those who choose against Him will experience eternal death, eternal extinction.



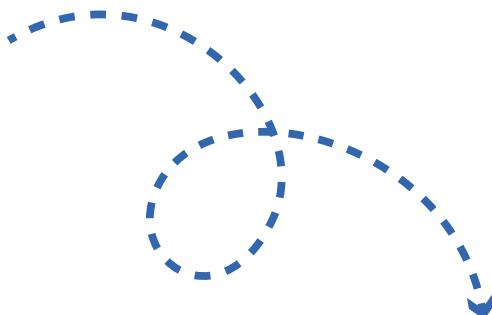
WHICH SIDE WILL YOU BE ON?

It is up to us to choose on which side of the Holy City's walls we will be found. Just like in Noah's day, God has given the opportunity for every single person to be saved. It is our **free choice** to accept the **love of God** and stand with Him through eternity, or to choose against Him and be forever **separated from God**. When we accept Jesus as our Savior, there is nothing but our own choice that can take us from His hand. **The gates of hell cannot prevail against the weakest person who puts their trust in Jesus Christ.**



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

Will you accept His gift of life? Will you yield your heart to Him so that He can make you new; so that He can give you peace and joy?



NEED PRAYER?

HAVE
QUESTIONS?

VISIT US AT
AWR.ORG/BIBLE