

17) The Wicked (Unrepentant) Destroyed

I've heard some people say that God is too loving to actually destroy the wicked (unrepentant sinners). Some people think the wicked will be punished forever, instead of being destroyed, in a place called hell. Some think that neither of those options would be the actions of a loving God. So what is the ultimate fate of the wicked, the unrepentant sinners?

Lets discover what the Bible teaches us about the destruction of the wicked ...

2 Peter 3:9-13. God certainly is loving. He does not want anyone to perish (be destroyed). That is why He patiently works to draw sinners to repentance and to Himself. But make no mistake, this sin-laden world, sin, Satan, his fallen angels, and the wicked will all eventually be destroyed. God will never try to frighten, bully, or coerce someone into submission with this message. That is inconsistent with His character of love. But He is trying to warn people of what will happen, so they will turn to Him before it is too late.

1 Timothy 2:4. While it is God's desire that everyone accept salvation, He will not force that on anyone. Any good relationship, including a saving relationship with God, is based on love. While the Holy Spirit works to draw every heart, an actual loving, saving relationship with God is based on each person's own personal decision.

Romans 6:23. Eternal life is a gift God gives to those who repent, accept God's gift of salvation, and have a surrendered heart, The result of cherished and unrepented sin is death, the second death. It is total destruction, not eternal life in a place of eternal torment

Ezekiel 18:4,20,21. The Hebrew word here translated "soul" means a person or living being. The person who sins, and does not repent, will die, the second death, an eternal death! Not because of someone else's sins, but for their own personal sins. But if a sinner truly repents they will be given salvation and eternal life. Each person will receive the reward, or results, of their own personal choices.

Ezekiel 33:11. God does not take any pleasure in the death of any of His creation, not even the wicked. His character is one of love (see John 3:16-17). He would prefer that sinners would repent and turn from their wickedness and accept salvation.

Matthew 13:40-42. In Matthew 13, Jesus shared several parables about the end of this world. Later, in verse 36, the disciples asked Him to explain the parable of the tares, which He did in verses 37-43. He said that at the end of this age or world, the wicked would all be gathered together and destroyed by fire. We often think of this as "hell fire", which we will study more in another lesson. It is important to understand that hell does not yet exist. It is a future event, at the end of this world, whose purpose is simple. It is God's means to

utterly destroy sin, Satan, fallen angels, the wicked, and cleanse the earth of the effects of sin.

Revelation 20:7-15. The actual gathering and separating of the wicked and righteous happens at Christ's second coming. This event begins the 1,000 year period known as the millennium. The final "hell fire" does not occur till the end of the millennium, At that time, Christ returns again (His third coming) to the earth. This time He brings with Him the New Jerusalem and all the redeemed. This is when the resurrection of the wicked will occur. All the wicked who have ever lived will all be resurrected, and led on by Satan, and his host of fallen angels will try to conquer the holy city. This action by the wicked demonstrates that their hearts have not and can not be changed; they have made their choices for eternity. God will not permit this attack and brings fire down from heaven. Satan and all the fallen angels along with all the wicked, and sin and death itself, will be utterly destroyed in this "hell fire". It will be so hot that nothing and no one can quench it or put it out, until it has finished its work. Everyone who did not choose a saving relationship with Christ will be cast in this fire, utterly consumed and turned into ashes. Satan is not in charge of hell, rather, he is destroyed, consumed, devoured, in it! The fire is a means of purifying this earth of sin and its effects. Even death and the grave will be destroyed. Afterwards, when the unquenchable fire has finally consumed all that can be, it burns out. Then God will create a new heaven and earth as discussed in a previous lesson.

Ezekiel 28:18-19. This prophecy foretold Satan's destruction, as well as all who would follow him. The fire will turn everything it burns into ashes. When speaking of this final fire, the Bible uses words like "ashes", "devour", and "destroy". It is trying to help us understand clearly that the wicked do not burn endlessly, but until there is nothing left to burn. It is the punishment or the result that is eternal, not the actual punishing (in the fire)! God is not a cruel torturer. Once sin and sinner are consumed the fire will go out.

Revelation 20:10. Some people get confused by a term the Bible uses, "forever and ever". Lets let the Bible itself explain what this means

Revelation 14:11. Here is another text that uses this term that people misunderstand. Its interesting that even today people make statements like "I had to wait in line forever!" when what they actually mean is something different than a literal forever (eternity).

1 Samuel 1:10-11,22,28. In this story we learn that Hannah was barren. So she went to the Lord's tabernacle where she wept and pleaded with God for a son. She promised God that if He would give her a son she would give the son back to serve God for as long as he lived. Now please note that point – "as long as he lived"! In time, God answered her prayer and she gave birth to a son, Samuel, who would become a prophet. Please notice what she said to her husband, that she would not go with him back to the tabernacle until Samuel was old enough to be left there for the purpose of serving the Lord "forever". She kept her vow to God and when the child was old enough, she took Samuel to the tabernacle and left him with Eli to be trained to serve the Lord "as long as he lives". The

Bible is teaching that “forever”, or “forever and ever” can simply mean as long as a person is alive.

Exodus 21:6. The Israelites had a law that if a servant wanted to remain in the employment of his master even after his time of serving was up, in this example it was to remain with his family, he could. Through a process of having the master bringing him before the judges and an obvious outward mark was made to note his decision. He was then allowed to stay and serve his master “forever”. He did not continue serving for a literal eternity, but rather until he should die, until his life had ended and there was no more life left in him.

Psalms 37:20. The Bible makes it clear that in time, after the fire has finished its work, the wicked will no longer exist. They cannot be found. That is because the fire burned until there was nothing left to burn and no life left. They were turned to ashes!

Matthew 25:41,46. Only the righteous receives the gift of eternal life. Have you considered this? ... If the wicked burned for all time they would have eternal life, certainly it would be a horrible quality of life but it would be eternal life none-the-less. If Satan and his fallen angels burned for all time, sin would still exist. But God makes it clear that sin, Satan, his angels, the wicked, even death and the grave, will be destroyed and cease to exist!

Jude 1:7. God destroyed the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with an “eternal fire”. Yet, they are not still burning today. That is because the fire lasted until there was nothing left to burn. It will be the same with the final fire, “hell fire”. Its effects are eternal, not the flame itself. It will be “unquenchable” meaning nothing can stop it or put it out, but once there is nothing left to burn the fire will go out on its own.

Revelation 21:1. Once the fire, the “hell fire” that is called down by God from heaven, finishes its work of destroying sin, Satan, fallen angels, the wicked, death, and purifying this earth, it goes out. Then, on the ashes that remain, God will create a new heaven and earth. He takes the wasteland of destruction that is left and makes it into something brand new; the eternal home for the redeemed. A home that is perfect, where sin will never exist again!

John 3:16,17. God gave His Son, Jesus Christ, so that anyone who puts their trust in Christ as Savior and Lord will have eternal life. God does not condemn us for being sinners; sin, our sins, have already condemned us to death. God sent/allowed Jesus Christ to come to seek and save the lost.

Some may wonder how God, who is love, could destroy any of His creation. Isaiah 28:21 even refers to this final destruction as God’s strange act. Friend, keep in mind, God is the Author, the giver and source of life. He gives the gift of eternal life to all who will accept it. But those who reject the gift have also rejected the Giver. The most merciful thing God can

do for someone who rejects Him, His love, His truth, His gift, will be to allow them to experience the result of their choice even if it means the end to their existence. It would be cruel of God to force someone who rejects and hates Him to live in a perfect world where they will always experience His presence and where they are not allowed to sin, as they would of course desire to do. It could not and would not be a perfect world if sin and sinners continued to exist. To exist in God's presence and perfect universe for eternity would be a cruel punishment for the wicked. It would also be breaking God's promise that the wages of sin is death, the second death. The most merciful thing a loving God can do is to end their existence. He sadly grants their request to be apart from Him. But the result of being apart from the source of life means certain death. The purpose of using fire is to fully eliminate all trace, residue, and consequence of sin, and to purify what remains.

My friend, there are only two rewards from which you can choose: eternal life in Jesus or eternal destruction. God is not trying to frighten or bully anyone into loving Him by telling of these two rewards, including the final destruction of the wicked. He is trying to warn you and save you, because He loves you! Please choose life. Please, today, accept His love, accept His gift of salvation through His Son Jesus!