

Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
and shew my people their transgression,
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

Vital Biblical Topics

Study Prayerfully & Study Carefully

Hell-fire & Purgatory

Will sinners burn forever in the fires of hell?

This is a question that has been on the minds of billions of souls since time began. Answers to this question vary, but here are some which you will hear were you to question a dozen or more people.

Answer One:

'Yes, unbelievers and blatant sinners will burn in hell-fire for eternity.' Isn't that what the Bible teaches? Doesn't it mention everlasting punishment, everlasting, eternal fire?

Answer Two:

'After death unbelieving sinners will go to hell to burn forever.' But believers (all except the very good) are first purified in a place called **'Purgatory'** and when their sins are purged away - possibly by fire in some cases - they will then be free to enter heaven. The dictionary defines the word **Purgatory** as a Roman Catholic belief in a place or condition in which souls undergo purification by temporary punishment.

Answer Three:

Yes, unbelievers and blatant sinners will burn in hell-fire, but it will not be for eternity. The Bible does not teach that anyone - including Satan - will burn for ever and ever and ever - endlessly!

Answer Four:

Listen, there are no such places as **hell, purgatory** or even **heaven**. When people die, that is the end of them. There is no hereafter for us humans. All that Bible teaching about a God in heaven is also **pure superstition!**

You may of course come across other answers; but ones similar to the four above are the most frequent. We will only examine the first three answers. The fourth is that of an atheist who is entitled to his opinion.

ANSWER ONE - Everlasting Fire!

Bible texts which are given in support of **Answer One** are as follows:

Isaiah 66: 24: *"And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, **neither shall their fire be quenched**; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."*

Matthew 18: 8: *"Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into **everlasting fire.**"*

Matthew 25: 41: *"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into **everlasting fire**, prepared for the devil and his angels:"*

Mark 3: 29: *“But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.”*

The words **eternal** and **everlasting** are dealt with under **Answer Three**.

ANSWER TWO - Purgatory!

Believe it or not, the word **‘Purgatory’** does not appear in the Bible. Nor is there any Scriptural backing for the belief that souls are **purified by punishment, in any place**, before they enter heaven. **Believe it or not the doctrine concerning Purgatory is Pagan!**

In his famous book **The Two Babylons**, Alexander Hislop says this about **Purgatory** on pages (167-168:) In **Greece** the doctrine of purgatory was inculcated by the very chief of the philosophers. Thus **Plato**, speaking of the future judgment of the dead, holds out the hope of final deliverance for all, but maintains that, of “those who are judged. “some” must first “proceed to a subterranean place of judgment, where they shall sustain the punishment they have deserved.” (p 167)

In **Egypt**, substantially the same doctrine of purgatory was inculcated. But when once this doctrine of purgatory was admitted into the popular mind, then the door was opened for all manner of priestly extortions. **Prayers for the dead ever go hand in hand with purgatory; but no prayers can be completely efficacious without the interposition of the priests; and no priestly functions can be rendered unless there be special pay for them.** Therefore, in every land we find the Pagan priesthood **“devouring widows houses,”** and making merchandise of the tender feelings of sorrowing relatives, sensitively alive to the immortal happiness of the beloved dead... (p 168)

The doctrine of Purgatory is purely Pagan and cannot for a moment stand in the light of Scripture.

For those who die in Christ no purgatory is, or can be, needed; for the **“blood of Jesus Christ, God’s son, cleanseth from ALL sin.”** If this be true where can there be any other need for cleansing? ... Thus the whole doctrine of purgatory is a system of pure bare-faced Pagan imposture, dishonouring to God, deluding men who live in sin with the hope of atoning for it after death, and cheating them at once out of their property and their salvation. (p 169)

Since the word **Purgatory** doesn't even appear in the Bible and, more importantly, since it is a purely **Pagan doctrine**, we will not consider it any further.

ANSWER THREE - Everlasting Death!

A Voice In The Wilderness - Canada holds to this opinion; that the effect of hell-fire is everlasting death. It is the ‘death’ that is everlasting, not the flames. The flames of hell will go out as soon as everything that can be burned is totally consumed. We base our belief on the following Scriptures:

Malachi 4: 1: *“For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall **burn them up**, saith the LORD of hosts, **that it shall leave them neither root nor branch...***

3: *And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall **be ashes** under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.”*

The phrases **‘burn them up,’ ‘leave them neither root nor branch,’ ‘they shall be like ashes under the soles of your feet’** etc. are terms meaning **‘eternal death, eternal destruction, total annihilation.’** They cannot possibly mean: **eternal life in hell-fire!** Why not? Because **eternal life** in eternal fire is still **eternal life**. It may not be a comfortable life, but it is still eternal life. It is not death. It is simply **very painful life**. Whereas the Bible plainly teaches that

“the wages of sin is death!” (Romans 6: 23)

This cannot possibly mean eternal life in hell. The Scriptures also tell us in (John 3: 16)

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him **should not perish**, but have everlasting life.”*

That word **perish** means **to destroy, to put out of the way entirely, to put to an end**. Believe it or not even **Satan**, the most sinful being in the universe, will also **perish**. He will not live forever. He will be **‘put out of the way entirely.’ He will be reduced to ashes!** He will die! **Satan’s** eternal annihilation is foretold in these

words.

Ezekiel 28: 18: *“Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, **and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.***
19: *All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and **never shalt thou be any more.**”*

We are told in Scripture that the ancient city of **Sodom** was burned with ‘**eternal fire,**’ which meant, Sodom was burned till there remained nothing left to burn. In other words, **Sodom was burnt to ashes!** I quote:

Jude 1: 7: *“Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of **eternal fire.**”*

2 Peter 2: 6: *“And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha **into ashes** condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;”*

Were you to visit the site of ancient Sodom, by the Dead Sea, you will not see any fires still burning there. Yet the fire that destroyed Sodom was described as ‘**eternal fire!**’ It’s obvious that the term ‘**eternal,**’ in that context, meant that the **effect of the fire was eternal, not the flames.**

FOREVER is another word which must be used with regard to the context. We read in Scripture the following passage where the word ‘**forever**’ is used to mean ‘**all his life**’ or ‘**until death**’

Exodus 21: 5: *“And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free.
6: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him **for ever.**”*

In other words, this slave was to serve his master ‘**all the remaining days of his life, not throughout eternity!**’ So we can see that words such as ‘**eternal**’ and ‘**forever**’ must be understood with regard to the context in which they are used. Life can be eternal, love can be eternal, death can be eternal. But slavery cannot last throughout eternity. At most, slavery can continue till death.

Think about this

Could you, or any other true believer for that matter, enjoy eternal life in paradise, knowing all the while that many of your unbelieving friends and loved ones were **burning eternally in hell-fire?** We should imagine that after a few minutes, perhaps hours or days and most certainly within a few years, we’d all be screaming at God Almighty to put an end to their suffering and allow us to enjoy paradise in peace. **No, the God we serve is infinitely more merciful than we are and I am certain that:**

- **Eternal life** means eternal life
- **Eternal death** means eternal death, and
- **Eternal fire,** as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrha, means fire that will have an eternal effect; fire which cannot be put out as long as there remains **(in it)** something to burn!

Summary

- **Will sinners burn for ever in hell-fire?**
 - The answer is: **No they will not.** To be sure, after the Day of Judgment - they will be cast into hell-fire and be burned to ashes. **But they will not burn forever and ever and ever.** The **(effect)** of the flames **(death)** will be eternal; but no one is going to twist and turn in hell-fire for endless ages. **Thank God that is what the Scriptures teach.**
- **There is no such place or condition as Purgatory.**
 - As Alexander Hislop wrote at the beginning of this century: **“The doctrine of purgatory is a system of pure bare-faced Pagan imposture, dishonouring to God, deluding men who live in sin with the hope of atoning for it after death, and cheating them at once out of their property and their salvation.”**

For further information concerning salvation and what happens after death see: **Faith Death The Resurrection The Judgment Immortality** in the HTML files.

AMEN!

In the Son's Name - For the Father's glory.

Elder: Max W. Mader

A Voice In The Wilderness - Canada
Home

www.avoicethewilderness.org
www.avitw.ca