

Eternal Fire

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The Ancient of Days Reigns

Daniel 7:9-10 “While I was watching, thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His attire was white like snow; the hair of his head was like lamb’s wool. His throne was ablaze with fire and its wheels were all aflame. 10 A river of fire was streaming forth and proceeding from his presence. Many thousands were ministering to him; many tens of thousands stood ready to serve him. The court convened and the books were opened.” NET

Here we see described the beginning of the great day of Judgement, the Great Day of Atonement. The Eternal God who is called the Ancient of Days takes the throne and the court room is convened before Him. It's interesting that the eternal throne is ablaze with fire with a river of fire running in a torrent from his presence. The fire of judgement is called eternal fire because it comes from the throne of the eternal God.

God Destroys Sodom and Gomorrah

Genesis 19:23-28 “The sun had just risen over the land as Lot reached Zoar. 24 Then the Lord rained down sulfur and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah. It was sent down from the sky by the Lord. 25 So he overthrew those cities and all that region, including all the inhabitants of the cities and the vegetation that grew from the ground. 26 But Lot’s wife looked back longingly and was turned into a pillar of salt. 27 Abraham got up early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before the Lord. 28 He looked out toward Sodom and Gomorrah and all the land of that region. As he did so, he saw the smoke rising up from the land like smoke from a furnace. NET



speaking of the destruction of the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah describe how the lost are going to share in a similar fate by being burned to ashes by eternal fire.

Jude 7 “just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.” NASB

2 Peter 2:5-6 “and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter;” NASB

Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed by eternal fire of God as an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly. By comparing both verses we discover that eternal fire burns its victims to ashes. The cities aren’t burning today so eternal fire must eventually burn itself out. The fire is called eternal because it comes from the throne of judgement of the eternal God and it is eternal in its results. The eternal fire that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah was so effective that to this day nothing remains of these wicked cities. So it will be with the wicked after the day of judgement.

After the second coming of Christ Satan is bound in the prison of a desolated earth for 1000 years. After the 1000 years the wicked dead are raised to life in the second resurrection. Satan leads the wicked to the outside wall of the New Jerusalem and there he and the lost are destroyed by the eternal fire of God and are reduced to ash in the same manner that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. The smoke will rise up like a furnace.

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Satan Freed, Doomed

Revelation 20:7-9 “Now when the thousand years are finished, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to bring them together for the battle. They are as numerous as the grains of sand in the sea. 9 They went up on the broad plain of the earth and encircled the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and devoured them completely” NET

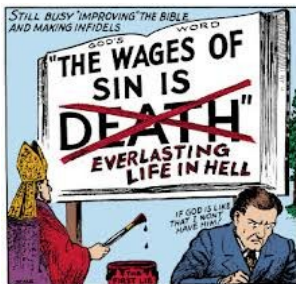
Hebrews 12:28 “So since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us give thanks, and through this let us offer worship pleasing to God in devotion and awe. 29 For our God is indeed a devouring fire.” NET

Hebrews 10:26-27 “For if we deliberately keep on sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth, no further sacrifice for sins is left for us, 27 but only a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire that will consume God’s enemies.” NET

Satan and the enemies of God are devoured by the eternal fire of God and are turned into ashes. Jesus spoke of this event as recorded in Matthew 25.

Matthew 25:41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels!...’ NET

Matthew 25:46 “And these will depart into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” NET



Notice that in the words of Jesus quoted here he compares eternal punishment with eternal life. But what does the bible mean by 'eternal punishment'? Eternal punishment is not eternal life burning in fire. Eternal punishment is eternal death,

Romans 6:23 “For the payoff of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” NET

Here the Apostle Paul, as Jesus did, compares eternal punishment with eternal life. The pay for sin is death, eternal death. The penalty for sin is not eternal life in the lake of fire.

eternal punishment = eternal death

God's own eternal fire being the method of execution. The eternal fire is prepared for the devil and his angels and it was originally only intended for them. No human being was meant to be destroyed there. But we find a large class of humanity side with Satan and his angels in rebellion against God therefore they must meet the same end. The devil does not live in hell as is commonly taught. It is future one off event where Satan and his followers are to be destroyed.

FOREVER IN ETERNAL FIRE.

Revelation 20:10 “And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet are too, and they will be tormented there day and night forever and ever.” NET

The expressions “Forever and ever” and “eternal fire” are found in the bible when discussing the end of the ungodly. Misunderstandings of the way in which the bible uses these expressions has led many to misunderstand the doctrine of hellfire. In the book of Revelation we have the expression “*forever and ever*” used to describe the duration of the end of the wicked.

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Revelation 14:11 “And the smoke from their torture will go up *forever and ever*. ”

Revelation 19:3 “The smoke rises from her *forever and ever*.”

Revelation 20:10 “they will be tormented there day and night *forever and ever*.”

The imagery of smoke rising forever as used in the book of Revelation is taken from the Old Testament book of Isaiah. It is interesting to see how the prophet Isaiah uses the illusions of “not be quenched” and “smoke rising forever” when prophesying about the destruction of Edom, an enemy of Israel.

Isaiah 34:8-11 “For the Lord has a day of vengeance, A year of recompense for the cause of Zion. 9 Its [Edom] streams will be turned into pitch, And its loose earth into brimstone, And its land will become burning pitch.10 It will not be quenched night or day; Its smoke will go up forever. From generation to generation it will be desolate; None will pass through it forever and ever.11 But pelican and hedgehog will possess it, And owl and raven will dwell in it; And He will stretch over it the line of desolation And the plumb line of emptiness.” NASB

The destruction of Edom fortold here is a permanent destruction. The whole land will be burning pitch that will not be quenched. The smoke rises forever. It will be desolate for generations. Yet the prophecy states that the pelican, hedgehog, owl and raven will live in the land. But how do these animals and birds live in the midst of smoke and burning pitch? Obviously they cannot. The unquenchable fire will burn out like the unquenchable fire that burned the palaces of Jerusalem. The ascending smoke will only last as long as the smoldering ruins continues to burn. The purpose of the fire is to consume not to preserve.

Other usages of the word “forever” in the Old Testament

1 Samuel 1:22 “But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, “I will not go up until the child is weaned; then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord and stay there forever.” NET

Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel, did not go up to offer the annual sacrifice to the Lord. Instead she chose to remain with her new born child Samuel until he was weaned and then she planned to give the child to God as an offering so that Samuel would remain in the service of the Lord forever.

1 Samuel 1:28 “So I have also dedicated him to the Lord; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the Lord.” And he worshiped the Lord there.” NET

A comparison of these two verses indicates that the word “forever” to the Hebrews means ‘as long as he lives’. Samuel was to remain in the Lords service forever, he was to remain in the Lords service as long as he lived.

Jonah 1:17 “The Lord sent a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights. ” NET

Jonah 2:1&6 “Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the stomach of the fish 2 and said, “I called out to the Lord from my distress, and he answered me; ...I went down to the very bottoms of the mountains; the gates of the netherworld barred me in forever.” NET

Jonah says he was inside the fish 3 days and 3 nights. That he was there *forever*.

2 Kings 5:27 “Therefore Naaman’s skin disease will afflict you and your descendants forever!” When Gehazi went out from his presence, his skin was as white as snow.” NET

Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, is struck with the disease of leprosy for his deceitfulness. His descendants also are affected. ‘Forever’ here simply means that the leprosy should continue only as long as Gehazi and his descendants exist. Which was only a short time. Therefore the word ‘forever’ in the mind of a Hebrew has an end. The word can be understood to mean “for as long as it lasts”.

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Doom for Worshipers of the Beast

Revelation 14:9-11 “A third angel followed the first two, declaring in a loud voice: “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and takes the mark on his forehead or his hand, 10 that person will also drink of the wine of God’s anger that has been mixed undiluted in the cup of his wrath, and he will be tortured with fire and sulfur in front of the holy angels and in front of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke from their torture will go up forever and ever, and those who worship the beast and his image will have no rest day or night, along with anyone who receives the mark of his name..” NET

It seems that the above was scripture is written in the Hebrew grammatical form of a 'chiasm'. ie Repetition with parallel. Even though the book of Revelation was written in the Greek language the author John was a Hebrew and thought in Hebrew. He writes:

- (A) “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and takes the mark on his forehead or his hand,
- (B) that person will also drink of the wine of God’s anger that has been mixed undiluted in the cup of his wrath,
- (C) and he will be tortured with fire and sulfur in front of the holy angels and in front of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke from their torture will go up forever and ever,
- (B1) and those who worship the beast and his image will have no rest day or night,
- (A1) along with anyone who receives the mark of his name” NET

Here we have a dire warning about receiving the mark of the beast. Those people who choose to take this mark of rebellion against God will be cast into hell to be destroyed along with Satan and his rebellious angels.

A and A1 mentions the mark of worship of the beast.

B and B1 describes the misery felt day and night by those who receive the mark of the beast and the suffering they will have to endure. The day and night refers to the time they are still alive on earth during the outpouring of the seven last plagues poured out on the worshippers of the beast as mentioned in Revelation 16.

C describes the ultimate fate of the worshippers of the beast when on the day of Judgement they will be burned to ash in the presence of Christ and the holy angels. The smoke of their torment rising forever evokes a picture of the land of Edom that also suffered a similar end as mentioned in Isaiah 34:8-11 and explained above on page 3.

DIFFERENT DEGREES OF GUILT AND PUNISHMENT.

The bible teaches that there are different degrees of guilt and punishment for each person who is to be cast into the lake of fire. If all people were to suffer in the fire of hell forever then that would mean that all people receive the same penalty even though the record of each persons life is different. This is foreign to all justice. Commenting on the judgement the Revelator says -

The Great White Throne

Revelation 20:11-14 “Then I saw a large white throne and the one who was seated on it; the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne. Then books were opened, and another book was opened—the book of life. So the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each one was judged according to his

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deeds. 14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death—the lake of fire. 15 If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, that person was thrown into the lake of fire.” NET

Here we have a picture an investigative judgement where the deeds of the lost are examined to determine the guilt of each person and penalty for sin for each person. Each person is to receive a penalty according to his deeds. We are not to be cast into the fire to suffer the same penalty forever. Below are recorded other verses of scripture that teach that the lost are punished differently as God determines, each according to the sins committed in this mortal life.

More guilt, more punishment.

Luke 12: 47-48 “That servant who knew his master’s will but did not get ready or do what his master asked will receive a severe beating. 48 But the one who did not know his master’s will and did things worthy of punishment will receive a light beating. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.” NET

Who will render to each one according to his deeds.

Romans 2:5-8 “But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourselves in the day of wrath, when God’s righteous judgment is revealed! 6 He will reward each one according to his works: 7 eternal life to those who by perseverance in good works seek glory and honor and immortality, 8 but wrath and anger to those who live in selfish ambition and do not obey the truth but follow unrighteousness.” NET

Rewards and punishments according to what we have done.

2 Corinthians 5:10 “we make it our ambition to please him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be paid back according to what he has done while in the body, whether good or evil.” NET

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