

Surprising Facts Series 1

11. Is the Devil in Charge of Hell?

Well, What about it? Is the devil in charge of hell? Does God keep a demon on His payroll throughout all eternity and trust him with that all-important position, a General Superintendent of hell? The very reputation of God is involved in the answer to this question. This Lesson presents the answers to this vital question. You owe it to yourself to look it over carefully.

1. How many lost souls are being punished in hell today?

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." 2 Peter 2:9.

Answer: There is not one single soul in hellfire today. The Bible says that God reserves, or holds back, the wicked until the day of judgment to be punished.

2. When will sinners be cast into hellfire?

"So shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire." Matthew 13:40-42. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." John 12:48.

Answer: Sinners will be cast into hellfire at the great judgment day at the end of the world, not when they die. God would not punish a person in fire until his case was tried and decided in court at the end of the world. Nor would God burn a murderer who died 5,000 years ago 5,000 years longer than one who dies and deserves punishment for the same sin today.

The wicked will not be punished until after the judgment. Sinners will be cast into hellfire at the end of the world not when they die.

3. Where are sinners (who have died) now?

"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." John 5:28, 29. "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction." "Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb." Job 21:30, 32.

Answer: The Bible is specific. Both the wicked and the righteous who have died are in their graves "sleeping" until the resurrection day. All who have died, both good and evil, are in their graves awaiting the resurrection.

4. What is the end result of sin?

"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." James 1:15. "God ... gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

Answer: The wages (or payment) for sin is death, not everlasting life in hellfire. The wicked "perish," or receive "death." The righteous receive "everlasting life." Jesus died to save us from our sins. Those who do not accept His gift of salvation will receive death.

5. What will happen to the wicked in hellfire?

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Revelation 21:8.

Answer: The wicked die the second death in hellfire. If the wicked lived forever being tortured in hell, they would be immortal. But this is impossible, because the Bible says God **"only hath immortality." 1 Timothy 6:16.** When Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden, an angel was posted to guard the tree of life so that sinners would not eat of the tree and "live for ever." Genesis 3:22-24. The teaching that sinners are immortal in hell originated with Satan and is completely untrue. God prevented this when sin entered this earth by guarding the tree of life.

The Bible is Clear that the Wicked are Obliterated

The Bible says the wicked suffer "death" (Romans 6:23), will suffer "destruction" (Job 21:30), "shall perish" (Psalm 37:20), will "burn" up (Malachi 4:1), "shall be destroyed together" (Psalm 37:38), will "consume away" (Psalm 37:20), "shall be cut off" (Psalm 37:9), "shall be slain" (Psalm 62:3). God will "destroy" them (Psalm 145:20), and "fire shall devour them" (Psalm 21:9). Note that all of these references make it clear that the wicked die and are destroyed. They do not live forever in misery. At the end of the world, fire will fall from heaven upon the wicked and devour them. The wicked are not immortal. The Bible says they will "perish," "burn" up, and "be destroyed."

6. When and how will hellfire be kindled?

"So shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man ... shall cast them into a furnace of fire." Matthew 13:40-42. "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." Revelation 20:9. "The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner." Proverbs 11:31.

Answer: At the end of the world, God Himself will kindle hellfire. As the holy city comes down from God out of heaven (Revelation 21:2), the wicked attempt to capture it. At that time, God will rain down fire from heaven upon the earth, and it will devour the wicked. This fire is Bible hellfire. Hell will be the entire world on fire.

7. How big and how hot will hellfire be?

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Peter 3:10.

Answer: Hellfire will be just as big as this earth because it will be the earth on fire. This fire will be so hot as to melt the earth and burn up all "the works that are therein." The atmospheric

heavens will explode and "pass away with a great noise." Hell fire will be 25,000 miles in circumference, its heat so great that everything on earth will be "burned up".

8. How long will the wicked suffer in the fire?

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:12. "And then he shall reward every man according to his works." Matthew 16:27. "That servant, which knew his lord's will, and ... neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." Luke 12:47, 48.

Answer: The Bible does not tell how long the wicked will be punished before receiving death in the fire. God does specifically state, however, that all will be punished according to their deeds. This means some will receive greater punishment than others, based upon their works.

9. Will the fire eventually go out?

"Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it." Isaiah 47:14. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth." "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Revelation 21:1, 4.

Answer: Yes, indeed, the Bible specifically teaches that hellfire will go out and that there will not be left "a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it." The Bible also teaches that in God's new kingdom all "former things" will be passed away. Hell, being one of the former things, is included, so we have God's promise that it will be abolished.

Is God a Torturer? If God tortured His enemies in a fiery horror chamber throughout eternity, He would be more vicious and heartless than men have ever been in the worst of war atrocities. An eternal hell of torment would be hell for God also, who loves even the vilest sinner. Jesus will insist upon just treatment for the wicked. Their degree of punishment will be fair and according to their works, as He promised.

10. What will be left when the fire goes out?

"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." "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." Malachi 4:1, 3.

Answer: Notice the verse does not say the wicked will burn like asbestos, as many today believe, but rather like stubble, which will be burned up quickly. The little word "up" denotes completion. Nothing but ashes will be left when the fire goes out. In Psalm 37:10, 20, the Bible says the wicked will go up in smoke and be completely destroyed. The fires will burn until only ashes are left. Even the bones will be completely gone. God will recreate a new world where no trace of the former evils of this world will be seen. The fires will burn until only ashes are left.

11. Will the wicked enter hell in bodily form and be destroyed both soul and body?

"It is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." Matthew 5:30. "Rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matthew 10:28. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Ezekiel 18:20.

Answer: Yes. Real, live people enter hell in bodily form and are destroyed both soul and body. The fire from God out of heaven will fall upon real people and blot them out of existence, it will destroy them, both body and soul.

12. Will the devil be in charge of hellfire?

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:10. "I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.... And never shall thou be any more." Ezekiel 28:18, 19.

Answer: Absolutely not! The devil will be cast into the fire, and it will turn him into ashes. The devil will be completely destroyed by that fire.

13. Does the word "hell" as used in the Bible always refer to a place of burning or punishment?

Answer: No, the word "hell" is used 54 times in the Bible, and in only 12 cases does it refer to "a place of burning." The word "hell" is translated from several different words with various meanings, as indicated below:

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:

31 times from "Sheol," which means "the grave."

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

10 times from "Hades," which means "the grave."

12 times from "Gehenna," which means "the place of burning."

1 time from "Tartarus," which means "a place of darkness."

54 TIMES TOTAL

Note: The Greek word "Gehenna" (mentioned above) is a transliteration of the Hebrew "Ge-Hinnom," which means the "Valley of Hinnom." This valley, which lies immediately south and west of Jerusalem, was a place where dead animals, garbage, and other refuse were dumped. Fire burned constantly, as it does at modern sanitation dump sites. The Bible uses "Gehenna" or the "Valley of Hinnom" as a symbol of the fire that will destroy the lost at the end of time. The fire of Gehenna was not unending. Otherwise it would be still burning southwest of Jerusalem today. Neither will the fire of hell be unending. Fire smoldered constantly in the "Valley of Hinnom."

14. What is God's real purpose in hellfire?

"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matthew 25:41. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:15. "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be ." "The enemies of the Lord ... shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away." Psalm 37:10, 20.

Answer: God's purpose is that hell will destroy the devil and all sin and sinners and make the

world safe for eternity. One sinner, if left on this planet, would be a deadly virus forever threatening the universe. It is God's plan to isolate sin and blot it out of existence for all time.

Eternal Hell Would Perpetuate Sin: An eternal hell of torment would perpetuate sin and make its eradication impossible. An eternal hell of torment is not part of God's great plan at all. Such a horrible theory is slander against the holy name of a loving God. The devil delights to see our loving Creator pictured as such a monstrous tyrant, and he alone can benefit from such teachings. Destroying sin, sinners, and Satan is the only way to make the universe safe for eternity.

Eternal Hell a Man-made Theory: The "eternal hell of torment" theory originated not from the Bible, but from misguided people who were (perhaps inadvertently) led of the devil. And, incidentally, no one will be in heaven because he feared hell. People are saved because they love and obey Christ.

15. Isn't the work of destroying sinners foreign to God's nature?

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Ezekiel 33:11. "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Luke 9:56. "For the Lord shall rise up ... that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act." Isaiah 28:21.

Answer: Yes, the work of God has always been to save rather than destroy. The work of destroying the wicked in hellfire is so foreign to God's nature that the Bible calls it His "strange act." God's great heart will ache at the destruction of the wicked. Oh, how diligently He works to save every soul! But if one spurns His love and clings to sin, God will have no choice but to destroy the sinner with his sin when He rids the universe of that horrible, malignant growth called "sin" in the fires of the last day. Jesus will be deeply saddened when He must destroy those whom He died to save.

16. What are God's post-hell plans for the earth and His people?

"He will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time." Nahum 1:9. "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Isaiah 65:17. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." Revelation 21:3, 4.

Answer: After hellfire goes out, God will create a new earth and restore it to His people, with all the beauties and glories of Eden before sin entered. The horrors of sin and the past will be forgotten. Pain, death, tragedy, woe, tears, sickness, disappointment, sorrow, and all sin will be banished forever.

Sin Will Not Rise Again: God promises that sin will never rise again. His people will be filled with perfect peace, love, joy, and contentment. Their lives of complete happiness will be far more glorious and thrilling than mere words could ever describe. The real tragedy of hell is in missing heaven. A person who fails to enter this magnificent kingdom has made the saddest choice of a

lifetime. After sinners are destroyed, God will create a fantastic new earth for His people, where they will live in peace, joy, and love forever. Sin will never rise again.

17. Are you thankful to learn that God is not punishing the wicked throughout eternity in Hellfire? Your Answer: _____.

Your Thought Questions Answered:

1. Doesn't the Bible speak of, "eternal torment"?

ANSWER: No, the phrase "eternal torment" does not appear in the Bible.

2. Then why does the Bible say that that the wicked will be destroyed with unquenchable fire?

ANSWER: Unquenchable fire is fire that cannot be put out, but which goes out when it has turned everything to ashes. Jeremiah 17:27 says Jerusalem was to be destroyed with unquenchable fire, and in 2 Chronicles 36:19-21 the Bible says this fire burned the city "to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah" and left it desolate. Yet we know this fire went out, because Jerusalem is not burning today.

3. Doesn't Matthew 25:46 say the wicked will receive "everlasting punishment"?

ANSWER: Notice the word is punishment, not punishing. Punishing would be continuous, while punishment is one act. The punishment of the wicked is death, and this death is everlasting.

4. Can you explain Matthew 10:28: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul"?

ANSWER: The word "soul" has three meanings in the Bible: a living being (Genesis 2:7), the mind (Psalm 139:14), and life (1 Samuel 18:1), which here refers to eternal life that God guarantees all who reach His kingdom. No one can take this away. The last part of Matthew 10:28 says both soul and body will be destroyed in hell. **"And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."** Luke 12:4, 5.

5. Matthew 25:41 speaks of "everlasting fire" for the wicked. Does it go out?

ANSWER: Yes, according to the Bible, it does. We must let the Bible explain itself. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed with everlasting, or eternal, fire (Jude 7), and that fire turned them "into ashes" as a warning to "those that after should live ungodly." 2 Peter 2:6. These cities are not burning today. The fire went out after everything was burned up. Likewise, everlasting fire will go out after it has turned the wicked to ashes (Malachi 4:3). The effects of the fire are everlasting, but not the burning itself.

6. Doesn't the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 teach an eternal hell of torment?

ANSWER: No, indeed! It is simply a parable used to emphasize a point. Many facts make it clear that this is a parable. A few are as follows:

- A. Abraham's bosom is not heaven (Hebrews 11:8-10, 16).
- B. People in hell can't talk to those in heaven (Isaiah 65:17).

C. The dead are in their graves (Job 17:13; John 5:28, 29). The rich man was in bodily form with eyes, a tongue, etc., yet we know that the body does not go to hell at death. It is very obvious that the body remains in the grave, as the Bible says.

D. Men are rewarded at Christ's second coming, not at death (Revelation 22:11, 12).

E. The lost are punished in hell at the end of the world, not when they die (Matthew 13:40-42). The point of the story is found in verse 31 of Luke 16. **"And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."**

It is fascinating also that not long after Jesus told this parable, He did raise a man from the dead who had been dead 4 days whose name was Lazarus! Did the wicked religious leaders then believe on Him? No they held a meeting to plan how they could kill Jesus and Lazarus!

Parables cannot be taken literally. Notice this one: parable in Judges 9:8-15. **"The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon."** If we took parables literally, then we must believe that trees talk!

7. But the Bible speaks of the wicked being tormented "forever," doesn't it?

ANSWER: The term "for ever," as used in the Bible, means simply a period of time, limited or unlimited. It is used 56 times in the Bible in connection with things that have already ended. It is like the word "tall," which means something different in describing men, trees, or mountains. In Jonah 2:6, "for ever" means "three days and nights." **"I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God."** **"Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."** Jonah 1:17.

In Deuteronomy 23:3, this means "10 generations." In the case of man, this means "as long as he lives" or "until death." (See 1 Samuel 1:22, 28; Exodus 21:6; Psalm 48:14.) So the wicked will burn in the fire as long as they live, or until death. This fiery punishment for sin will vary according to the degree of sins for each individual, but after the punishment, the fire will go out. The teaching of eternal torment has done more to drive people to atheism and insanity than any other invention of the devil. It is slander upon the loving character of a tender, gracious heavenly Father and has done untold harm to the Christian cause. To check in a concordance, look up the word "ever."

Summary: Place a check by the correct answer.

1. Sinners are cast into hellfire:

When they die.

At the end of the world.

By the devil.

2. The reward that sinners will receive in hellfire is:

Death.

Eternal torment.

Being tortured by the devil, who is in charge.

3. Hellfire:

Will be the whole world set on fire by God.

Is burning now.

Burns throughout the endless ages of eternity.

4. Sinners who have died are in:

Purgatory.

Hellfire.

Their graves.

5. The population of hell today:

Is exactly zero.

Numbers in the millions.

Cannot be determined.

6. Hellfire:

Destroys only the body of the wicked.

Tortures the soul of the wicked throughout eternity.

Destroys sinners--both soul and body turning them to ashes, then goes out.

7. An eternal hell of torment:

Is a very important part of God's great plan.

Is the devil's doctrine and is slander upon the holy, loving name of God, who abhors seeing people suffer.

Gives Satan a job throughout eternity.

8. "Hell" in the Bible:

Always refers to a place of burning.

Has several meanings, one of them being "the grave."

Refers to Satan's subterranean torture chambers.

9. The purpose for hell is to:

Pay back and torture God's enemies.

Frighten people into being good.

Completely blot out sin and evil from the universe and make the righteous safe for eternity.

10. Destroying people in hell:

Will be a delight to the great God of heaven.

Is called God's "strange act," because it is so foreign to His loving plan of saving people.

Will be the devil's job, in cooperation with God's plan.

11. After hellfire goes out:

God will banish Satan to far outer space.

God will make a perfect new earth, where sin will never rise again, and give it to His people.

The righteous will live in fear of sin's rising again.

12. The story of the rich man and Lazarus:

Is a parable and should not be taken literally.

Is Bible proof for the teaching of eternal torment.

Proves that souls in hell can converse with souls in heaven.

13. The term "for ever" as used in the Bible in reference to a man's life:

Means "time without end."

Is mysterious and cannot be understood.

Usually means "a man's lifetime," or "until he dies."

14. I am thankful to learn that God does not punish the wicked eternally in the fire of hell.

Yes. No.