

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

for *Absolute Truth*

Question: Is hell truly forever?

Biblical Answer: “[those who] know not God...shall be punished with everlasting destruction...” (2 Thess. 1:8, 9).

Comments: Even those who claim to believe the Bible often offer varied explanations hoping to prove that hell is not eternal. One, that a good God would never cruelly torment men, albeit sinners, without end. Two, that the Bible refers to hell as the “second death,” and death means to cease from living, rather than suffering eternally. Three, the word “ever,” *aión*, as in “for ever and ever” (Rev. 14:11), actually means “age,” referring to a time frame that has an end. Do these points have any biblical merit?

God is indeed “good” (Mk. 10:18). However, this does not mean He tolerates the sin and the sinner, dealing with man without law and structure. He is “just and right” (Deut. 32:4), and His justice states that “anguish” (Rom. 2:9) is good and right for the sinner, while to “punish the just is *not* good” (Prov. 17:26). Because He is good, He cannot “behold evil, [nor] look on iniquity” (Hab. 1:13). As long as God Himself and those who have eternal life are to exist, His just fury is to remain upon the unsaved “without” (Rev. 22:15).

The expression “second death” could not be equivalent to the first, physical death, since a great many people will still be alive upon the Lord’s return (1 Thess. 4:15). Surely these will not first have to die in order to then experience the “second death.” Saved or no, people die physically. This, then, cannot be the *punishment* for sin. The fact that God refers to the physically alive unsaved as being now spiritually dead (Col. 2:13) means that having some form of life while being dead is not a contradiction. Yes, the “second death” refers to dying in the burning wrath of God “day and night for ever and ever” (Rev. 21:10), and knowing it.

Finally, God uses the word “age” to refer both to that present, as well as that to come (Mt. 12:32). Since this age is finite, will the one to come also not be for “ever” for those in hell? Not so. God states that His reign is “for ever” (for the duration of the age) and His kingdom shall have “no end” (Lk. 1:33). That is, God will rule for the duration of the age *that has no end*. Can we now accurately understand this statement? “And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever,” “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Rev. 14:11; Mk. 9:44).