

WHY THE WICKED ARE NOT PUNISHED IN HELL-FIRE WHEN THEY DIE!

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NOTE: - All Bible texts are taken from the King James Version; and the compiler has supplied the emphasis throughout this article.

▪ THE ISSUE TO BE EXAMINED: -

It is commonly believed by most Christians, that when an ungodly person dies, at the very moment of their death, their soul is cast into the fires of hell to be punished and tormented for all eternity.

The story that Jesus' related concerning the "rich man and Lazarus" as recorded in Luke 16:19 - 31, is offered as "absolute and incontrovertible proof" that the above teaching is the truth of the Bible.

▪ THE OBJECTIVE: -

To establish from the Scriptures the following truths: -

1. The Lord reserves the ungodly until the Day of Final Judgment as the time when they shall be punished.
2. Jesus plainly taught repeatedly as recorded in the gospels, that the ungodly with their whole bodies including the individual parts of their bodies, would be cast into the fires of hell, to receive eternal punishment. This fact therefore requires the **bodily** resurrection of the unjust to take place, **before** they can be cast into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, to receive their eternal reward.

▪ THE BIBLICAL EVIDENCE: -

1. The apostle Peter has taught us concerning the wicked (including the fallen angels), that they have been reserved by the Lord to the Day of Final Judgment to be punished.
2 Peter 2:4: - "**For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast [them] down to hell, and delivered [them] into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.**"

2 Peter 2:9: - "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 3:7: - "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, **reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.**"

The godly patriarch Job knew this same truth concerning the fate of the wicked.

Job 21:29 & 30: - "Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their tokens, **that the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath.**"

2. Jesus plainly taught that the ungodly with their whole bodies and bodily parts, would be cast into hell-fire. They will be cast **bodily** into the fires of hell.
Matthew 5:29 & 30: - "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast [it] from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, **and not [that] thy whole body should be cast into hell.** And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast [it] from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, **and not [that] thy whole body should be cast into hell.**"

Matthew 10:28: - "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: **but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**"

Matthew 18:9: - “And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast [it] from thee: **it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.**”

Mark 9:43 - 48: - “And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, **than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched**: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, **than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched**: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, **than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire**: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

Therefore the wicked **cannot** be cast into the fires of hell at the time of their death. For them to be **bodily** cast into the fires of hell **necessitates** a **bodily** resurrection of the unjust, to receive their eternal fate.

John 5:28 & 29: - “Marvel not at this: for 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.**”

Acts 24:14 & 15: - “But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, **that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.**”

Paul has plainly stated that the saints shall judge the world and the fallen angels.

1 Corinthians 6:2 & 3: - “**Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?** and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? **Know ye not that we shall judge angels?** how much more things that pertain to this life?”

This judging by the saints of the ungodly and the fallen angels, takes place during the period of 1, 000 years described in Revelation 20, **after** the 1st Resurrection – the resurrection of the just has taken place. During this period of 1, 000 years, the rest of the dead (i. e. the ungodly) are not alive.

Revelation 20:4 - 6: - “**And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and [I saw] the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received [his] mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This [is] the first resurrection.** Blessed and holy [is] he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

☞ As the saints are to sit with Christ in judgment upon the ungodly and the fallen angels, during the 1, 000 years of Revelation 20:4 - 6 **after** the 1st Resurrection has taken place (that is, the resurrection of the just, which occurs at the 2nd Coming of Jesus - See 1 Corinthians 15:20 - 23 & 50 - 55; 1 Thessalonians 4:15 - 17); the wicked cannot receive their punishment **before** they have been judged. This teaching is Scriptural, logical and consistent with our understanding of true justice. To believe that the wicked are cast into the fires of hell before they have been judged is a foul blot upon the righteous and just character of our Lord and Judge. Or to believe that the wicked are cast into the fires of hell at death, and then bodily resurrected in Revelation 20:11 - 13, then to be judged, and then to be cast back into the fires of hell, is illogical and makes a mockery of our understanding of God as a righteous and just Judge. Those who hold to this popular tradition unwittingly bring reproach upon our righteous and just God.

At the end of the 1, 000 years the **bodily** resurrection of the unjust takes place, and God sits on his throne in Final Judgment upon the ungodly and fallen angels, who are **then** cast alive into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone – into the fires of hell, to suffer the 2nd Death.

Revelation 20:11 - 15: - “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. **And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God**; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is [the book] of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. **And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.** And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

- In the following passage from the book of Revelation, the saints of the Lord who have been martyred for their faith throughout the ages, are **personified** as pleading with the Lord, beseeching him **to judge** their ungodly persecutors, and **to avenge** their shed blood upon their murderers. In other words, they call upon God to execute punishment upon their murderers. This question by these slain saints, who are **personified** as being under the Altar, is positive proof that the ungodly are **not** judged and then thrown into the fires of hell as soon as they die. If this was the true teaching of the Bible, then these saints would not be pleading with the Lord for justice to be done, as the wicked dead would already be writhing in the fires of hell as soon as they had breathed their last. Revelation 6:9 - 11: - “And when he had opened the fifth seal, **I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held**: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, **How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?** And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, **that they should rest¹ yet for a little season**, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they [were], should be fulfilled.”

- **CONCLUSION: -**

The teachings of Scripture are plain concerning **when** the ungodly are cast into the fires of hell. Jesus has repeatedly informed us, that the wicked will be **bodily** cast into the fires of hell to be punished. This requires a **bodily** resurrection of the unjust. At the end of the 1, 000 years of Revelation 20, this **bodily** resurrection of the unjust takes place, and God then sits upon his Great white throne in executive Judgment, casting the ungodly into the fires of hell to receive their eternal fate, which is the 2nd Death.

Therefore, Jesus' relation of the story of the “rich man and Lazarus” in Luke 16:19 - 31, is **not** teaching that the wicked are cast into the fires of hell at the moment of death. For to so understand the words of Jesus, would make him contradict his own teaching that the wicked will be **bodily** cast into the fires of hell. Christ is either stating a **parable** in Luke 16:19 - 31. Or if it is to be taken literally, Jesus is referring to the **bodily** resurrection of the unjust, when the ungodly are finally cast into the fires of hell. While Jesus portrayed the “rich man” as being in “hell” - “hades”², with torment and flame after he had died and had been buried in Luke 16:22 - 24; it must be borne in mind that it is **only** at the final scene of the **executive** Judgment, **after** the resurrection of the unjust has taken place, at the **end** of the 1, 000 years of Revelation 20, that “hell” – “hades” is cast into the Lake of Fire.

Revelation 20:14: - “**And death and hell (hades) were cast into the lake of fire.** This is the second death.”

With this understanding, all the Scriptures concerning the fate of the wicked harmonize perfectly without contradiction. Without this understanding, the popular traditions of the churches have the Bible writers contradicting themselves on this vital subject.

¹ The fact that these martyrs of the Lord are told to “**rest**” for a little time until the remaining saints who are to be martyred for their faith are put to death, harmonizes perfectly with the truth that the dead saints are portrayed repeatedly in the Scriptures as sleeping in the grave – See Job 14:12 - 14; Daniel 12:2; John 11:11 - 14; 1 Corinthians 15:20 & 23, 50 - 55; 1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 18.

² The Greek word that is used for “hell” is “hades” – Strong's Concordance, Greek, No. 86.