
BIBLE REFUTES ANNIHILATION

By Kenneth N Higgs

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Dan 12:2)

“And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.” (Matt 22:31,32. cf: Exod 3:6,15,16; Acts 7:32)

The Bible makes it clear that, after death, each person is destined to a conscious “afterlife” in which they will personally experience divine judgement on their earthly life. Nevertheless, some people teach that there is no conscious existence of the wicked after death, or that the wicked souls are annihilated some time after death and therefore they no longer exist to experience punishment. Numerous Bible passages refute this false teaching.

Man is a spiritual being, comprising both body and soul. The human soul (spirit) is “immortal”: it comes from the breath of God and cannot be destroyed. The book of Genesis tells us: *“then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” (Gen 2:7)*

Solomon alludes to our immortal soul (spirit): *“the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.” (Eccl 12:7)*

Daniel wrote: *“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Dan 12:2)*

When King David’s and Bathsheba’s first son died from sickness, David declared: *“... Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.” (2 Samuel 12:23)* Clearly he believed that his dead son continued to exist and that he would see his son again in the afterlife.

When Stephen was stoned to death by a mob, he cried out to Jesus: *“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” (Acts 7:59)* Clearly he believed that Jesus would receive his spirit (soul) after death.

When Jesus was crucified, two criminals were crucified beside him. One mocked Jesus, but the other appealed to Jesus: *“And he (the thief) said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ And he (Jesus) said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.’” (Luke 23:42,43)*

John Blanchard notes: “The promise Jesus made to the dying thief rules out the idea that the soul becomes unconscious at death... the penitent, believing thief was to be in God’s blissful presence the moment crucifixion had done its deadly work”.¹

Jesus often alluded to our immortal souls:

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’” (Matt 25:41)

“And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matt 25:46)

“Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.” (John 5:29)

As Got Questions Ministries explains... the unmistakable teaching of the Bible is that all people, whether saved or lost, will exist eternally. The spiritual part of us does not cease to exist when our fleshly bodies pass away in death. Our souls will live forever, either in the presence of God in heaven or in punishment in hell. ⁱⁱ

WHAT ABOUT “DESTRUCTION IN HELL” ?

Jesus warned the wicked of: *“the judgment of the gehenna” (Matt 23:33 YLT)*, ie: punishment in the afterlife which would be worse than physical death:

“And be not afraid of those killing the body, and are not able to kill the soul, but fear rather Him who is able both soul and body to destroy in gehenna [Gk: ἀπολέσαι ἐν γέεννῃ].” (Matthew 10:28 YLT)

The Greek word *“ἀπολέσαι”* (apolesai) comes from *“ἀπόλλυμι”* (apollumi), meaning: “to devote or give over to eternal misery” (in this verse). It does not mean “to annihilate” or “to pass into non-existence” (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon).

Apostle Paul reiterated the same warning in his letter to the Thessalonian church:

“They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction [Gk: ὀλεθρον αἰώνιον], away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might” (2 Thess 1:9)

They will “suffer” (ie: feel conscious pain) of “eternal destruction” [Gk: ὀλεθρον αἰώνιον]. They will not be unconscious: Their punishment is not temporary: They will not be annihilated into non-existence.

The book of Revelation informs us that the wicked are “outside” the heavenly city. They still exist after death, suffering in the lake of fire.:

“But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.” (Rev 22:15)

“... their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death” (Rev 21:8 b)

CONCLUSION

Friend, don’t be deceived or led astray by false teachers who claim that the wicked are “annihilated” or unconscious after death, escaping eternal punishment. Such ideas are heresy which the Bible clearly refutes.

Eternal punishment in hell (Gk: *γέεννα* : gehenna) awaits the wicked who "loved darkness". Eternal life in heaven awaits those who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus. Why would you perish? Christ Jesus offers you a better hope: salvation and eternal life in him:

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." (John 14:3)

You can read more about the afterlife in our article: *The Fate of the Wicked*. And also about the "Second Coming" Parousia on the Biblical website: *ParousiaFulfilled.com*

See also Preterist articles refuting Soul Sleep/Annihilationism and Universalism at:
<https://www.preterist.org/get-answers/refuting-error/>

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ENDNOTES:

ⁱ **John Blanchard**, *Whatever Happened To Hell*: p100, EP Books, Darlington, England 2014.

ⁱⁱ **Got Questions Ministries** from <https://www.gotquestions.org/INTL/human-soul-mortal-immortal.html>