

We cannot learn anything about the actual state of the afterlife from a made up story like this. It serves a very different purpose. Let's respect Jesus' purpose.

Summary of the 1000 Years

Start of the 1000 years	During the 1000 years	End of the 1000 years
<p>Jesus returns in power (visible, personal, audible)</p> <p>The Wicked are slain by the brightness of his coming</p> <p>The Righteous are resurrected or translated</p> <p>The Righteous are taken to heaven</p>	<p>The Righteous are in Heaven</p> <p>The Earth is desolate</p> <p>Satan is bound (no one to tempt)</p> <p>The Righteous judge and evaluate the actions of everyone</p>	<p>New Jerusalem comes down to earth</p> <p>The Wicked are resurrected</p> <p>Satan rallies the wicked for one last attempt to destroy God</p> <p>God judges and destroys the wicked, Satan and his angels, sin, and then death itself.</p> <p>God then makes a new earth</p>

Prophecy Guide

Daniel 2

Daniel 7

Daniel 9

Daniel 8

Revelation 12

Revelation 13

Revelation 14a

Revelation 14b

Revelation 20

Revelation 20

The Millennium

Putting an End to Suffering

We all long for the present age of suffering and hardship to end. Like Jesus we want to live lives that ease present suffering. God also wants all suffering to end and he is the only one who can end it. But God must do so in a way that is just and completely thorough.

Getting Rid of the Cause

Before God can renew all things he has to put an end to the cause of all suffering. To do this he must end what causes suffering: sin and evil. To do this he must, unfortunately and sorrowfully, put an end to all the beings who have chosen to identify themselves with sin. This is not something God is looking forward to, but it is the only way. People who have chosen the way of death must eventually reap what they have sown. Because life is only found in God, when someone ultimately says, 'God I don't want you or your ways', then they have cut themselves off from the source of life. In the end sin is a form of spiritual and physical suicide.

Final Judgment

We have already studied quite a bit about God's Judgment. Earlier we learn from Daniel that there is a heavenly judgment that precedes Christ's return. This judgment vindicates God's people, his salvation of them, and brings the current historical age of rebellion to an end. This heavenly judgment prepares for the final judgment of the whole history of sin and unrepentant sinners and the complete end of sin. This final judgment is linked to the millennium or 1000 years of Revelation 20.

Beginning of the 1000 Years

What does Revelation say begins the 1000 years? Rev 19:11-21

These verses are a symbolic description of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

- The meaning of the word “forever” is often misunderstood. The word in Greek *aionion* literally means ‘age lasting.’ It allows for the meaning equivalent to our ‘eternity’ or ‘forever’ in English but is not identical to it and can mean an indefinite (limited, non-eternal) period of time. The context of a passage and the rest of Scripture is needed to guide us in interpreting. Thus the English ‘forever’ has a narrower and more restrictive range of meaning that excludes some of the potential less absolute meaning found in the Hebrew and Greek equivalents.

Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)

These are a few examples but there are many others in which people can ignore the overall teaching of scripture. A major passage that is misused is Jesus’ parable about “The Rich Man and Lazarus” in Luke 16:19-31.

Have a read of the passage to understand the following discussion.

Some people claim Jesus is trying to teach people about the actual physical condition of the after life. This totally misuses Jesus story and fails to note the real punch line and purpose for the story given in verse 31.

Jesus’ point is this: If people don’t follow God’s Word in Moses, they will not even respond to someone who rises from the dead. *An unwilling heart is not changed by miracles.* Notice Jesus does not say this is a literal description. That completely misses the point. Jesus was speaking to Pharisees who didn’t like his view on money (see Luke 16:14,15 just before this passage). What Jesus does is adapt a widespread but fanciful idea that many Pharisees had of a place called Abraham’s bosom where the ‘good’ and usually ‘rich’ person would go, and a place of fire where ‘bad’ people went. Jesus takes their story and reverses everything by placing a poor despised beggar with Abraham and the rich person in torment.

Jesus never intended this made up folk story to be taken literally (imagine if people took Goldilocks and the three bear literally and not for its main point). In fact Jesus (being a good story teller) tells the story with vivid and very graphic embellishments (consider the dogs who lick the beggars wounds, yikes!). Imagine if we took it literally: Abraham must have an enormous bosom if everyone goes there; There is a chasm between Lazarus and the rich man that is *so close* they can talk, yet *so far away* that no one can cross over it; The rich man is in a fiery pain that supposedly will be helped by some cool water on his tongue (and do disembodied spirits really have tongues and bodies anyway?).

What will Eternal Life be like?

No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for his people. Eternal life will include all of the wonderful things in this world and much, much more! Relationships will be formed and never broken by death. There will be countless billions of people and angels and other unfallen creatures to get to know. The whole field of creation on this planet and the vast universe itself will dwell in a new harmony and be open for our exploration and learning. *“The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. They neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,” says the Lord*” Isaiah 65:25. Best of all we will be able to know the infinite God more directly – a relationship that will be impossible to exhaust. We will even see God face to face.

A Future that Inspires Hope

These promises resonate with all human hearts. How we long for a world under the peaceful reign of God! It will happen. Through Jesus we have confidence and assurance of being part of the New Heavens and the New Earth. In relationship with Jesus we learn how to increasingly live the life of kingdom right now and share it with others. This is the destiny of the Disciple.

Examples of Bible verses misused regarding Hell

There are several verses that can be carelessly misread or misinterpreted to support the traditional view of ‘Hell’, but we must always take the whole testimony of Scripture as our guide. Here are just a few.

- Some people misuse Jesus comment in Matthew 10:28 about the body and soul, to say there is a separate entity within us that is an immortal soul. Jesus is not giving a technical description of the components that make up a person. He merely teaches whom we are to fear based on the fate they may inflict. Note Jesus doesn’t say anything about an ‘immortal’ soul. In fact he says the opposite. He says the soul, just like the body, can be destroyed!
- Some misuse 2 Thess 1:9 “eternal destruction” and Matt 25:46 “eternal punishment” to imply a ‘hell.’ These are eternal destruction and punishment – not eternal destroying or eternal punishing. The end effects are eternal (death) but the means or activity that leads to them (fire) is not.

Summary of Second Coming

Below is a quick summary of the teachings of Scripture that we have looked at previously concerning the Second Coming.

- Jesus returns in power to the earth with innumerable angels (visible, personal, audible)
- The wicked who are alive are slain by the brightness of his coming
- The righteous who are dead are resurrected to eternal life
- The righteous who are alive are translated (given resurrection bodies without seeing death)
- The glorified righteous are then taken to heaven (John 14:1-3)

The Bottomless Pit or 'Abyss'

Rev 20:1-3 tells us something else that happens as a result of the Second Coming. What is it?

Satan is bound and thrown into the bottomless pit or 'abyss'. The reason given why he is bound is so that he cannot deceive the nations anymore (at least until the 1000 years are up, at which time he will be released for a short time).

What does this mean? The word abyss is based on the description of the earth before God created any life on it (Gen 1:1,2). At that time it was a watery place of nothing and chaos. The Second Coming of Jesus will destroy all human life and will leave the earth in a chaotic state of 'abyss.' This is why Satan will not be able to deceive the nations. They are either all dead or resurrected. Only Satan and the demonic host who are confined to the planet will dwell on the earth.

What Happens During the 1000 years?

As we have seen, as a result of the Second Coming, the earth will be desolate and uninhabited except for the imprisoned demonic host. This marks the beginning of the 1000 years. Things are very different for the righteous. The Second Coming is the beginning of an eternal life. What are they doing during the 1000 years?

1000 Years

How does Rev 20:4-6 describe the saints and their activity?

What is the resurrection of the righteous called? What has no power over them as a result?

When do the “rest of the dead” (the wicked) come to life?

The righteous are taken to heaven at the Second Coming. They reign with Christ as kings, priests and judges.

Judging Who?

What is this work of judgment and whom do they judge (see 1Cor 6:3,4)?

Why this Judgment and Review by the Saints?

Have you ever wanted to know and understand why things happened as they have? Why God allowed certain things? Why some people will not be in heaven? These 1000 years of judging the world and fallen angels will allow time and opportunity for human beings to review what God has done and see the perfection of his mercy and justice. It is a very important process for the redeemed to go through. God is sensitive to our questions and our need for time and involvement to process the difficult experience of a painful and bewildering history. Seeing the love, unselfishness, and sacrificial suffering of Jesus for all people assures us currently that it is right to trust God. But during the 1000 years, God will allow us to see all the details. This will immeasurably reconfirm our trust in him.

- The Greek New Testament uses the word '*Hades*' which means 'the grave', 'place of the dead', or the netherworld of Greek mythology. The New Testament writers only ever use Hades to refer to the grave.
- The Greek word *Gehenna* is also used in the New Testament. This refers to the Valley of Hinnom, a much loathed 'rubbish dump' outside Jerusalem where waste (including animal remains and even criminals who had been executed) was disposed of and burnt. It conjures up images of unstoppable fire and worms that completely destroy. It is a fitting but chilling symbol and byword of complete rejection and total annihilation. A frightening fate to be avoided at all costs.
- *Tartarus* is used once in the New Testament and refers to a 'place' of confinement and punishment for fallen angels (2 Pet 2:4). It is a figure of speech borrowed from Greek mythology. Tartarus was an abyss deeper than Hades into which the Titans, who fought against the gods, were placed. It is best read as the expulsion of fallen angels from heaven, and their confinement to earth until their judgment. One cannot read a traditional hell into the verse.

For more information have a look at the end of this study where there are some examples of Bible verses misused regarding hell.

What Happens after the Destruction of the Wicked?

Read Revelation 21: 1-8 to find out what happens after the 1000 years have finished? What does John see in vs. 1,2?

What is the promise of vs. 3?

What tender thing does God do in verse 4?

At last!

Compare with Ezekiel 18:4, Luke 13: 3 and 2 Pet 2:12.

None of these verses imply an unending torment, but rather an unending death.

Immortal soul

Where did this unbiblical teaching come from? As ancient Jewish and Christian thinkers came in contact with Greek philosophy many of them took up the Greek idea (though not unique to them) of an immortal soul. Thus a false teaching was infused within Christian thinking. As a result the fires that speak of the destruction of the wicked were now reinterpreted as a place where flames burn people forever but do not consume their victims.

Effects of the False Teaching

Unwittingly these sincere but misguided theologians made God into a cosmic tyrant. This teaching is the saddest in the history of Biblical interpretation. It paints God in the worst light possible, attributing to him the very attributes of Satan himself. It has turned many people off Christianity. Fortunately, there have always been Christians who have studied the Bible and rejected this teaching. Thankfully their numbers are increasing and the true light of the Bible is being allowed to shine unhindered by misappropriated Greek philosophy.

The Word 'Hell'

Older versions of the Bible used the word 'Hell', but few modern versions do, because it is a bad and inaccurate translation, which injects foreign meaning.

- The word often used in Hebrew for the abode of the dead, good or bad, is '*Sheol*'. The nearest English equivalent is the 'grave.' It is sometimes pictured as a kind of shadowy non-world. A 'place' with 'inhabitants' called 'shades.' But this is only in a poetic or metaphorical sense and is not to be read literally as an empirical description.

What Happens at the End of the 1000 years?

Earlier verses hinted to us that after the 1000 years two things would happen:

- 1) The wicked dead (all of them from the very beginning) will be resurrected
- 2) Satan will immediately deceive the nations again

They Haven't Changed

What do Satan and the recently resurrected wicked do in Rev 20:7-10?

At the end of the 1000 years the New Jerusalem, with God, the angels and the righteous, descends to earth. This is the City that the wicked attack.

The Logic of the 1000 years

Have you ever thought why God might have this 1000-year period? Apart from allowing the saints time to process all that's taken place, there is another main reason. God is about to completely destroy Satan, fallen angels and the wicked. People may think, "Maybe they will change if given another chance." Here God shows that, even with a 1000 years to weigh up what he has done, Satan will not change, and the wicked join his rebellion as soon as life enters back into them. Their characters are solidified in rebellion. Thus God shows that he is just in destroying the wicked. In fact, God is merciful even in destroying the wicked. Because, given life, the wicked would only grow and increase in rebellion, hatred, degeneration and its accompanying suffering and misery.

Fire from Heaven Devours Them

Following the attack of the wicked, God sends fire that devours them. To 'devour' means to completely destroy. If I devoured an apple that means I ate the whole thing and now it is gone. This phrase in verse 9 is then followed by a restatement of the same point but this time in more deeply symbolic terms. It says the devil is cast into a lake of fire and is tormented forever and forever. Is this symbolism a contradiction of the fire that devours completely?

Actually the Greek literally reads and “they shall be tormented day and night from aeon to aeon” or ‘age to age.’ These words allow for the possibility of ‘forever’ but do not require it. The words ‘aeon’ more specifically mean, ‘for time indefinite’, though it usually is of length. The devil will definitely burn longer than the others, but he won’t burn forever. The following verses (vs. 11-15) explain the symbolism of the lake of fire. It is very important to let the following verses explain what is happening and not misuse the symbols. We must read this passage as a symbolic narrative and not some literalistic eye-witness description.

The Lake of Fire

Rev 20:11-15 tells us how sin and sinners are ultimately destroyed. It leaves out the attack on the Holy City and focuses on the very last judgment by God.

Read Rev 20:11-15. What are the dead judged from in verse 12,13?

Verses 14,15 are the key verses. What and who are thrown into the lake of fire?

First the wicked are resurrected (sea, death and Hades give up the dead), then the wicked are judged, and then Death, Hades (Greek for the grave), and the wicked are thrown into the Lake of Fire. This is called the *Second Death*. Notice death and the grave are destroyed as well as the wicked! What this is saying is that the wicked are destroyed forever. Even the grave is destroyed! Death itself is ended forever! The lake of fire is a symbol of complete annihilation. The lake completely destroys sin and sinners. The elimination of sin, death, sinners, evil, pain and suffering is total and complete. *The Second Death refers to a death from which there is no resurrection.* Neither Satan, nor sin, nor death, nor suffering shall ever exist again.

The Truth about Hell

The Biblical teaching of what happens to the wicked conflicts with the widespread but unbiblical teaching of hell. It comes as a surprise (but often a welcome one) to learn that the Bible does not teach that God will torture people forever. People instinctively feel God would not do such a thing. The Bible helps us to see the truth about God. You may recall in an earlier study we established several things.

- When you die you cease to be. Your body returns to the earth and your ‘breath/spirit of life’ returns to God. There is no consciousness in the grave.
- Death is likened to a *sleep* because you can be awakened (resurrection) yet you have no consciousness while you are asleep/dead.
- Humans do not have an immortal soul or spirit in them. Rather humans have only the potential for immortality. 1 Tim 6:15 tells us that God “*alone is immortal.*” Immortality is a unique divine attribute and humans only share in it as a gift that comes by the gospel of grace.
- Eternal life is not based on an eternal soul within us. It is a gift of grace found *only* in Jesus. This grace “*has been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*” (2 Tim 1:10). Those who reject the gospel do not live forever, whether in heaven, hell or elsewhere.
- Jesus resurrects the righteous to eternal life at his Second Coming and not beforehand (John 6:40,44).

What of those who Reject God?

Romans 6:23 plainly states “the wages of sin is *death*, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Notice the wages of sin is not eternal torment in a fiery hell, but death. And the word death means death! Quite simple.

What does Malachi 4:1-3 describe the wicked becoming in the day of their destruction? How complete is the destruction?