

An Overview on the Subject of the End of the Wicked from the Old Testament

1. Some Christians view hell as the fire that torments forever.

This is the view of the majority of evangelicals. It has been the main view Christians since the days of Augustine. The traditional view is based on Scripture verses that use the phrase “everlasting destruction,” and “eternal fire” and “unquenchable fire.” The important question for the traditionalist to answer is not “Does God, who in love for sinners gave us His Son, keep billions of sinners alive to torment without end in hell?” as much as “Does the Scripture teach eternal torment for the lost?”

2. Some Christians view hell as the fire that purifies.

This is called universal restoration or universalism. This view emphasizes that God is not willing to let anyone perish, and the blood of Jesus covers every sin. He is the Savior of all, especially believers, therefore He will reconcile the world to Himself, including those who go to hell and will eventually see the beauty of Jesus. This is the view of Paul Young (Author: The Shack) and Pastor/Evangelist Rob Bell as well as former Tulsa Pastor Carlton Pierson.

3. Some Christians view hell as the fire that consumes.

This view emphasizes that God is a consuming fire and premise of this study is that this is the most consistent view when compared to the teachings of the Bible. The wages of sin is death. God can destroy both body and soul in hell. There are many Bible-believing scholars who hold to this view today. Some include F.F. Bruce, John Stott, Michael Green, E. Earle Ellis, Phillip E. Hughes, Thomas Olbricht, John McRay, John Stackhouse, Dale Moody, John Franke, Homer Haley, Thomas Robinson, Clark Pinnock, John Wenham, Richard Bauckham, and N.T. Wright.

What does the Old Testament say about hell? Nothing. There are no passages on hell. Let me say that again: There is not any Scripture text that uses the word hell and discusses the subject of hell. However, **the Old Testament says a great deal about the end of the wicked.** The OT is divided into three parts. (1). **The Law** (2). **The Prophets**, and (3). **The Writings** (Psalms). Jesus says in Luke 24:44. “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the **Law** of Moses, the **Prophets** and the **Psalms.**”

Dr. Edward Fudge divides the teaching of the Old Testament on the end of the wicked like this:
From the Law (Torah), there are **Prototypes of Divine Judgment** - (We’ll look at two in this lesson).
From the Prophets, there are **Predictions of the Final End of the Wicked** - (We’ll look at four).
From the Writing (Psalms), there are **Principles of Final Judgment** – (We’ll start our lesson here).

I. PRINCIPLES IN THE PSALMS

Turn to Psalm 37 for examples of this Principle of Divine Judgment on the Wicked.

“Do not fret because of evildoers, be not envious toward wrongdoers. For they will **wither** quickly **like** the **grass** and **fade like the green herb.**” (Psalm 37:1-2)

“For evildoers will **be cut off**, but those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land. Yet a little while and the wicked man will **be no more**; and you will look carefully ... he will **not be there.** (Psalm 37:9-10)
But the wicked will **perish**...They vanish—like smoke they **vanish** away. (Psalm 37:20)

Wait for the Lord and keep His way, and He will exalt you to inherit the land; **When the wicked are cut off, you will see it.** (Psalm 37:34).

The Psalms also say go God will: “break the wicked in pieces” (Psalm 2:9); “slay them” (Psalm 139:19); “cut them off” (Psalm 94:23); “blot out of book of living” (Psalm 69:28); “rain fire and brimstone on them” (Psalm 11:6) and that **The wicked will be like:** “chaff that is blown away” (Psalm 1:4); “a snail that melts” (Psalm 58:8); “grass that is cut down” (Psalm 37:2); “wax that melts” (Psalm 68:2); “a clay pot that is broken” (Psalm 2:9); “water that flows away” (Psalm 58:7); “smoke that vanishes” (Psalm 68:2); “stubble before the wind” (Psalm 83:13). There are at least 70 metaphor and similes in the OT that are not literal descriptions, but create a consistent impression that the wicked disappear.

II. PROTOTYPES FROM THE LAW

Now we will look at some prototypes from the Torah (Law). There are two examples in particular.

1. The Flood - This is a picture of what it will be like for the wicked at the end of the world.

(Genesis 7:21-23) “All flesh that [a]moved on the earth **perished**...all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, **died**. Thus He **blotted out** every living thing that was upon the face of the land.”

(2 Peter 3:5-7) “For the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water through which the **world** at that time **was destroyed**, being flooded **with water**. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for **fire**, kept **for** the Day of Judgment and **destruction of ungodly** men.

2. Sodom (Genesis 19:24-25) Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah **brimstone and fire** from the Lord out of heaven, and He overthrew those cities, and all the [a]valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground...

(2 Peter 2:6) He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to **destruction by reducing** them to **ashes**, having **made** them an **example to** those who would live **ungodly** lives thereafter. (Jude 7) just as Sodom and Gomorrah are **exhibited as an example** in undergoing the punishment **of eternal fire**.

III. PREDICTIONS FROM THE PROPHETS

1. Broken like pottery... (Psalm 2:7-9) “I will surely tell of the [a]decree of the Lord: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession. ‘You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall **shatter them like earthenware.**”

2. Corpses on the battlefield... (Psalm 110:5-6) The Lord is at Your right hand; He will **shatter** kings in the day of His wrath. He will judge among the nations, He will **fill them with corpses**, He will **shatter** the chief men over a broad country.

3. Corpses consumed... (Isaiah 66:24) “Then they will go forth and look on the **corpses** of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their **worm** will not die and their fire will not be quenched; And they will be an **abhorrence** to all mankind.”

4. Ashes underfoot ... (Malachi 4:1-3) For behold, the day is coming, **burning like a furnace**; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be **chaff**; and the day that is coming will **set them ablaze**,” says the Lord of hosts, “so that it will **leave them neither root nor branch.**” ...“the wicked, ... will be **ashes under the soles of your feet** on the day which I am preparing,” says the Lord of hosts.

What is said of End of Wicked in INTERTESTAMENTAL TIME PERIOD?

There are the same three views of hell: 1. Tormenting Fire; 2. Purifying fire; 3. Consuming fire

There were four types of Jewish Literature during this time period:

Apocrypha- a picture of consuming fire...(except in Judith 16:17 where it talks about tormenting fire)

Pseudepiagrapha- shows pictures of both tormenting fire and consuming fire

Dead Sea Scrolls- total picture of consuming fire

Rabbinical- pictures of tormenting, purifying and consuming fire

To sum up the Intertestamental period, the Jewish people at some point held all three views.