



[Revelation 20:10](#)

(10) And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

King James Version

This verse seems to describe the Lake of Fire as a place where [God](#) torments people forever. This raises a few questions: 1) If the Beast and [False Prophet](#) are mortal men, why are they still alive after the Millennium when [Satan](#) is cast into the Lake of Fire? 2) If they are mortals, how can they "be tormented day and night forever and ever" in an inferno that would soon consume them? 3) What kind of God would devise such a "cruel and unusual" punishment?

Before we answer these questions, we must briefly consider whether man has an immortal soul. Our understanding of the Scriptures compels us to maintain that he does not for several reasons:

» Job recognized that man has a spirit ([Job 32:8](#)), which Paul shows in [I Corinthians 2:11](#) endows humanity with intellect. This spirit in man comes from God ([Zechariah 12:1](#)) and returns to Him when we die ([Ecclesiastes 12:7](#); [Acts 7:59](#)). It records our experiences, character, and personality, which God stores until the [resurrection of the dead](#). However, the Bible never describes this spirit as immortal or eternal; in fact, [I Corinthians 2:6-16](#) explains that man needs yet another Spirit, God's, to be complete and discern godly things.

» The Bible flatly asserts that all people die: "It is appointed for men to die once" ([Hebrews 9:27](#)). Ezekiel says clearly that souls die: "The soul who sins shall die" ([Ezekiel 18:4](#), 20; see [Romans 6:23](#)). [Jesus](#) warns in [Matthew 10:28](#) that God can **destroy** both soul and body in Gehenna.

» In death, life and consciousness are gone. "The dead know nothing," says Solomon in [Ecclesiastes 9:5](#), and he later adds, "There is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going" (verse 10). In [Psalm 146:4](#), the psalmist writes about a man's death, "His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish" (see [Genesis 3:19](#)).

» Scripture also confutes the idea that people [go to heaven](#) or [hell](#) after death. Peter says to the crowd on the day of Pentecost, "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. . . For David did not ascend into the heavens" ([Acts 2:29](#), 34). Our Savior confirms this in [John 3:13](#): "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven." The biblical usage of *Sheol* and *Hades* simply

means "the grave."

» Men cannot have immortality unless God gives it to them. Paul writes, "For the wages of [sin](#) is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" ([Romans 6:23](#)). In [I Corinthians 15:53](#) he tells the saints, "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." At the [first resurrection](#) God will give "eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality" ([Romans 2:7](#)). If we already had immortality, why should we put it on or seek it?

» Only God has immortality. He is, Paul writes to Timothy, ". . . the blessed and only Potentate, the [King of kings](#) and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality" ([I Timothy 6:15-16](#)). John says of the Word, "In Him was life" ([John 1:4](#)), meaning as Creator of all things (verse 3), He had life inherent. Jesus affirms this in [John 14:6](#), "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Men must go through Him to receive eternal life.

With such overwhelming proof, the doctrine of the [immortality of the soul](#) proves false. Man is not immortal, nor does he possess any "spark of God" unless God has given it to him through the Holy Spirit ([Romans 8:11](#)). A Christian's [hope](#) of life after death rests in the resurrection of the dead ([I Corinthians 15:12-23](#)). Conversely, the wicked only await eternal death as recompense for their evil lives, not eternal life in torment.

To understand [Revelation 20:10](#) correctly, we must put it into its proper chronological context. Once we know when it occurs, much of the confusion about this verse clears up.

Though only twelve verses separate [Revelation 19:20](#) from 20:10, one thousand years pass between their respective events. The Beast and the False Prophet are cast into the Lake of Fire when Christ returns ([Revelation 19:11-21](#)). Soon thereafter, an angel imprisons Satan in the bottomless pit for the thousand years of the Millennium ([Revelation 20:1-3](#)). When the thousand years pass, Satan is released, and he gathers Gog and Magog to fight against the saints (verses 7-9). After God defeats this futile attempt, He casts Satan into the Lake of Fire (verse 10).

Obviously, the flames of the Lake of Fire totally consume the Beast and False Prophet. In no way could they survive a thousand years of burning! The laws of nature simply will not allow it.

The translators of the King James and New King James versions render the final clause of the first sentence as "where the beast and the false prophet *are*." The present-tense verb "are" is not in the Greek; it is an understood verb. In English grammar, such silent verbs take the same tense as the verb in the main clause of the sentence. The translators ignored this rule, however. The primary verb of the sentence, "was cast" (an aorist verb usually translated as simple past tense), demands that the silent verb should be "were cast" (past tense) to agree with the plural subject, "the beast and the false prophet."

Deceived by the false doctrine of the immortal soul, the translators had to deny nature and break the rules to make this verse fit their understanding! On the other hand, we can confidently assert that our teaching agrees with Scripture, nature, and grammar!

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

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