

## Lesson 14 - Revelation's Hell-Fire, Revealing God's Love

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The story is told of a young man born in New York, the son of a Christian minister. And as a preacher's son, he often found himself in a position of hardship due to meeting his father's stern requirements. Every time he would err or do something wrong, his father would sit him down and sharply reprimanded him. He threatened, "Robert, if you keep committing these sins, Almighty God is going to put you in hell and burn you forever and ever! " After years of this, the young man finally had enough. In in his desperation one day, he couldn't take it any longer. He retorted, "Dad, if that's the kind of God you serve, I don't want anything to do with Him." and he got up and left home. He soon became known as Mr. Robert Ingersall, the world renowned atheist who hated the Bible and defied God. All because of this one teaching: hell-fire.

The devil has confused people so much on this subject. And through the ages, a lot of money has been raised over this subject as people were led to fear God as a cruel, hateful being who loved to roast people in the fires of hell. So on the onset, let's ask two questions. 1. What kind of God do we serve--loving or cruel? **John 3:16** answers that, God is love! 2. Is God in partnership with the devil? Is the devil God's hired superintendent to keep people roasting and toasting through eternity? *No!* God has nothing to do with the devil! The Bible will make this subject very clear and simple as we go through all the texts.

Truly, friends, in every subject of the Bible, God`s love and desire to save is revealed. Even in this twisted truth, you will see we serve a God of love, and we will see His love in Hell-fire. There are three basic questions in this subject. WHEN, WHERE, and HOW LONG will hell-fire burn? We will address them in this order. In our previous lesson, we studied that there would be only two groups when Jesus comes--the righteous and the wicked. One is saved and taken to heaven, the other is lost and destroyed in hell.

The word hell is used 55 times in the Bible, but this word has several meanings. In the Old Testament and New Testament the word "Sheol" or "Hades" is used 42 times meaning the *grave*. Then in the New Testament, we also find the word "Gehenna" is used meaning a place of *burning*. It is used 12 times. So every time you read "hell" it does not always mean "fire." One must look at the context to see if it is referring to "the grave," or "the place of fire." Let's begin with our first question.

### **WHEN WILL HELL-FIRE BURN?**

In **Matthew 13:36- 43**, Jesus gives the parable of the tares. **"Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."** He says the harvest is at the end of the world. The Bible never contradicts itself. Remember we studied that the dead sleep in their graves until Jesus comes? That's in perfect harmony. Notice **verses 49-50**, **"So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked From among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there**

**shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."** Let's get another text, **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."** God reserves the wicked until the day of judgment. That should raise an intelligent question in your minds. How many people are in hell today? *Not one.* When will God judge? Let's establish this. **Second Timothy 4:1, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom."**

Let's read **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."** All are judged at the second resurrection at the end of the world. When we go to heaven, we will see God's justice as we judge, and after the millennium. God will pronounce judgment and fire. He then devours the wicked. **Revelation 20:9, "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them."**

Below is an illustration of these events.


### **WHERE IS HELL?**

**Revelation 20:9** added some light. It said they would be on the "breadth of the earth" when fire comes down from God. **Proverbs 11:31** says, "**Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.**" The wicked are rewarded on the earth. Deuteronomy even says the mountains will be set on fire! **Deuteronomy 32:22**, "**For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall *consume the earth with her increase*, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.**" Hell is right here. Hell will burn over this whole earth. **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 heavens and earth are *reserved* unto fire! **Verse 10**, "**But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be *burned up*.**" The elements will melt with heat. All will be burned up! **Verses 11-13**, "**Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according**

to his promise, look for *new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*" Then God can create a new heaven and earth! **Revelation 21:1, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."** There will be a new heavens and a new earth, the first is passed away. Hell-fire will be wonderful; for this earth, all sin, and all sinners will be burned up and God will make all things *new!* There is only one way to thoroughly destroy something. That is by fire! God will purify this earth with fire and sin will never exist again! Praise the Lord!

### **HOW LONG WILL HELL-FIRE BURN?**

Here is where most people stumble. Here too is where the devil has distorted a few verses to cause many people to hate God, and to look at Him as a cruel tyrant. First let's follow the Bible rule and get a complete picture by going through many verses on the subject. Then we will deal with a few of the seemingly difficult texts.

Though the Bible does not give the exact length of time. we do know it will *not* be through all eternity. Here are three reasons why.

1. If God says hell is going to burn on earth, and then says He will recreate a new heavens and a new earth here, how could He make a new earth if hell was burning throughout eternity?
2. God is just and fair. Let's say that Cain who killed one man was sent to hell 6,000 years ago, and then Hitler who killed millions joined him. Would it be fair for Cain to burn 6,000 years longer than Hitler? Absolutely not! Would it make any sense of justice for a short life of sins to be punished for eternity?

3. We studied that man is not immortal, and only those who love Jesus will be given immortality, when He comes (**1 Corinthians 15:51**)! But if the wicked burned through all eternity, would they not also have eternal life? To be tormented forever, you must live forever.

You see, reason alone tells us hell will not burn through eternity.

Let's go to the Word now and see. **Romans 6:23**, "**For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**" The wages of sin is *death*. Another text that is famous around the world, **John 3:16**, "**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**" Jesus said Himself in **Matthew 7:13**. "**Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.**" David way back in the Old Testament said it the same way. **Psalms 37:9- 11**, "**For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.**" "The wicked shall not be," but the meek shall inherit the earth. Then read **verse 20**, "**But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.**" The wicked perish, as the fat of lambs, into smoke they consume away. Isn't that plain? David wrote of it again in **Psalms 68:2**, "**As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.**" "As was melteth ... so the wicked perish." One last text, **Malachi 4:1- 3**, "**For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly,**

shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for *they shall be ashes* under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts." The wicked will be stubble, turned to ashes. And after God rains fire down to cleanse the earth, we can go out, and the wicked will be ashes under our feet. That's clear! Let's go back to **Revelation 20:9**, "**And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.**" As they try to capture the city, God puts an end to it. Verse 14 says it's the *second death*. "**And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.**" And chapter 21 goes right on as God then creates a new heaven and earth. The first is passed away. **Verse 4**, "**And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.**" There will be no pain or crying. If hell were burning through eternity, there would be! But no, in **verse 5**, God makes all things new. "**And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.**" Do you see it now? Hell-fire is really wonderful! This earth with its corruption, movie houses, hospitals, jails, and all the things sin has caused, is going to be burned up, and all sin will *forever* be removed! And friends, the devil will be the kindling for the fire! **Ezekiel 28:18-19**, "**Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst**

of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more." He will never be anymore! Praise the Lord! You see, the real issue in hell is not the "fire." The fire is the quickest, most merciful way God can destroy sin and all sinners who love sin more than righteousness. The real "hell" is going to be the realization that we missed heaven and an eternity of joy because we counted the pleasures of sin more important than eternal life.

God will make an end of sin and sinners forever. Never again will we have to know sin, for all things will be new. **Nahum 1:9, "What do ye imagine against the LORD' he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time."** Sin shall not arise a second time! Let's all choose to be in that group that will live forever and never again know what sickness is, or anything that has to do with sin. We can all be in that group if we so choose. Hell isn't for people. God has prepared it for the devil and his angels (**Matthew 25:41**). And God wants to save you. Ezekiel 33:11, "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD. I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Thank God, we can look forward with great joy to spending a sinless eternity with Him. What a God of love!

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**\*A BRIEF HISTORY OF HOW THE DOCTRINES OF ETERNAL  
TORMENT AND THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL ENTERED  
THE CHURCH:**

Some have wondered how the doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul (the belief that when a man dies he goes immediately to heaven) and the doctrine of the eternal torment of the wicked (the belief that the fires of hell never go out) ever became a part of the Christian Church--especially in view of all that the Bible teaches concerning the sleep of the dead, and the utter destruction of the wicked. Again, let it be repeated that the testimony of Scripture is clear, convincing, and complete. We now wish to trace the history of how the Christian Church apostatized from the truth on this doctrine.

The doctrine of man's natural immortality had its origin, not as a revelation from God, but in a revelation to man by the old serpent among the beautiful trees of the garden of Eden. There the tempter suggested to Eve: "Ye shall not surely die." **Genesis 3:4**. Thus, the testimony of Scripture is clear as to whom the originator of this doctrine of man's natural immortality is. It is none other than that great deceiver, the devil himself. This alone should make us very cautious about accepting a doctrine originated by the deceiver.

Its rise can also be traced in the Oriental religions of the past. Many of the beliefs were rooted in pantheism, pre-existence of the soul, and reincarnation. Next, it was revealed in the Egyptian version of the immortality of the soul, and then in the terrible delusion of the Persian dualism (eternal existence of good and evil: neither good nor evil could defeat each other: thus both must always exist). From there it entered into the pagan Greek religions.

It found its greatest period of acceptance and expansion during the fourth century B.C. under the pagan Greek philosopher, Plato. During these years, the Bible record stood almost alone in

presenting man as a candidate for immortality, but not possessing it naturally. Then the Old Testament canon closed with the book of Malachi about 425 B.C. It was during this period, between the writing of the Old and New Testament, that Judaism became penetrated by the pagan teaching of the immortality of the soul. During this time, two schools of thought developed in Judaism: 1. A group that continued to hold to the Old Testament picture of man as a candidate for immortality who rested in the grave until the resurrection. 2. A new group arising around 150 B.C. who introduced the Platonic philosophy of the immortality of the soul into the Jewish Church.

Therefore, Judaism stood divided on this issue. Then Jesus came and reaffirmed the Old Testament teaching that death is a sleep and man will receive immortality at the second coming. This was amplified and expanded by most of the New Testament writers, so that the early Christian Church was brought back to the original teaching of the Old Testament before the writing of the New Testament ended. Thus we find the early Christian Church for over 150 years held to the true biblical position of death as a sleep and the annihilation of the wicked.

Notice the testimony of Justin Martyr who died in A.D. 165 and was one of the leaders of the Christian Church in the early centuries. "If you have fallen in with some who are called Christian, but who do not admit this (truth of the resurrection), and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob: who say there is no resurrection of the dead and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven: do not imagine that they are Christians." Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter 80, in *Ante Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I, p. 294.

So strong was the feeling of the early church that they would not even call a person a Christian who believed that the soul went to heaven at death. Strange as it may seem, it was shortly after Justin Martyr that the pagan concept of the immortality of the soul was first introduced into the Christian Church. Remember there were two different teachings regarding death:

1. The immortality of the soul. Its pagan origin stemmed from Plato, and incorporated elements of Persian dualism to form a doctrine of eternal torment. Again, Persian dualism taught that good and evil were both eternal and could never be destroyed. Hence the evil power must always exist somewhere, and since it could not be found in heaven, the pagans devised a place of torment for all evil, since even God could not destroy it.
2. The biblical picture of death, as a sleep, and the wicked as eternally destroyed and annihilated.

These two different theories existed side by side through the centuries--one held by the pagans, the second held by those who believed in the one true God. Then, one of the greatest tragedies of Christianity occurred when this pagan concept was introduced into the Christian Church.

It was Athenagoras, about 188 A.D. who became the first Christian Father to use the term "immortal soul." He contended that the soul is immortal and imperishable. Thus, within 25 years of the death of Justin Martyr, who would not even regard a person as a Christian who believed in an immortal soul, we find another church father making the bold pagan suggestion that the soul of man is immortal and cannot die.

A few years later, Tertullian, who died in A.D. 230, further developed the doctrine of the immortality of the soul into a system, adding the dreadful corollary of eternal torment. His argument was that since souls are immortal, the punishment of the wicked must be eternal. He stressed a sacred fire that never consumes, but renews as it burns, eternally killing, but never terminating. This is simply the old pagan doctrine of Persian dualism, stated now in Christian terminology, but still with the inevitable conclusion that even God cannot put an end to sin and sinners. Now Tertullian had brought Christianity down to a par with paganism by saying God couldn't conquer evil. He must consign sinners to an eternal hell.

The doctrine of natural immortality and eternal torment was further popularized by Jerome and Augustine. In fact, Augustine added such great prestige to the doctrine that it became the predominant faith of the church for over 1,000 years.

When the Reformation began, some of the Reformers, such as Martin Luther, recognized the origin of the teaching of natural immortality, but through the influence of John Calvin and others, the bulk of the Protestant reformers continued to hold to the pagan teaching of the immortality of the soul and eternal torment of the wicked.

In summation, let us quote from the Methodist-Congregationalist clergyman, Amos Phelps (1805 - 1874): "This doctrine (of natural immortality) can be traced through the muddy channels of a corrupted Christianity, a perverted Judaism, and pagan philosophy, and a superstitious idolatry, to the great instigator of mischief in the garden of Eden. The Protestants borrowed it from the Catholics, the Catholics from the Pharisees, the Pharisees from the pagans, the

pagans from the old serpent who first preached the doctrine in the lowly bowels of Paradise to an audience all too willing to hear and heed the new and fascinating theology: 'Ye shall not surely die.'"

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## **BIBLE PASSAGES ABOUT HELL EXPLAINED**

### **TORMENTED FOREVER AND EVER**

**Revelation 20:10**

FOREVER in the Bible is a period of time, limited or unlimited, depending upon what is being described. The word FOREVER in the Bible is like the word TALL. Tall has different meanings depending on what is being described, such as a dog, or house, or a mountain. The word FOREVER is used 56 times in the Old Testament in connection with things already ended. In the case of man, the Bible teaches that FOREVER means MAN`S LIFETIME or AS LONG AS A MAN LIVES. In the case of Samuel, FOREVER meant, "AS LONG AS HE LIVETH," **1 Samuel 1:22, 28**. In **Psalm 48:14**, FOREVER means until death. Burning FOREVER in the fire means that man burns until he dies.

### **FIRE UNQUENCHABLE**

**Luke 3:17**

Jerusalem was destroyed with unquenchable fire, **Jeremiah 17:27**, but it is not still burning today. **Second Chronicles 36:19, 21** says Jerusalem was burnt with fire to fulfill Jeremiah's prophecy. Unquenchable fire cannot be PUT out, but it GOES out when everything is burned up.

### **EVERLASTING OR ETERNAL FIRE**

**Matthew 25:41**

Jude 7 says God destroyed Sodom and Gomorraha with everlasting or eternal fire. And Peter says in 2 Peter 2:6 that the fire turned those cities into ashes as an example to those who live ungodly. So eternal or everlasting fire turns things into ashes and then goes out. It is everlasting in its EFFECT and not its DURATION.

**EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT**  
**Matthew 25:46**

Note that it is not everlasting PUNISHING but rather PUNISHMENT. Paul says that the punishment for sin is DEATH, **Romans 6:23**. And Revelation calls this death the SECOND DEATH which the wicked die in the fire, **Revelation 21:8**. That death or destruction will be eternal because there is no resurrection from it. \*(Used by permission of Revelation Seminars, P.O. Box 66, Keene, Texas 76059. An excellent resource of Bible study and prophetic material.)