

# What About the Fire?

**Fire characterizes the end of all things, according to the Bible**, but the details have become murky through time. In our study of the fire(s) we will adhere tightly to principles of Biblical research called “hermeneutics.” The first is that Jesus died the sinners’ death; therefore, He is the absolute template for the deaths of the lost. Everything that will eventually happen to them happened first to Him.<sup>1</sup> It must be so, for the Father is too honest to have it otherwise, and if He were inclined to give His beloved Son an edge in the war, Satan would be there to point it out to the on-looking universe. No. We can be assured of much about the death of sinners by closely observing how Jesus died.

Another hermeneutic that we will apply is that God doesn’t change.<sup>2</sup> He does not spend the whole of sin-time proving He does not change, then alter Himself so as to snuff out the lost in the most inhumane way possible. Therefore, we should expect to see Him behaving through to the end exactly as He behaved at the beginning.

A third fact is recognizing how the Bible treats the subject of “forever.” Today that word means endless, for eternity, always; however, it did not always carry that meaning. When the King James Bible was translated it meant “until the end of the age.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, do not get sidetracked by such texts as Revelation 14:11 or Revelation 20:10. Maybe they just mean until the end, whatever the end turns out to be.

Last, let us begin to think of the fate of the lost by the more accurate nomenclature as “consequences,” rather than “punishment.” Then we can better understand that *sin kills*, God does not. “Punishment” requires a proactive God disciplining His children with a whip. But “the wages of sin is death.”<sup>4</sup> God has nothing to do with sin; He certainly does not pay its wages. We can then better understand events that unfold on Judgment Day.

## Blanket of Grace

Through the years God in mercy has covered this planet with a blanket of common grace—grace to all. “He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”<sup>5</sup> Thus no sinner has yet fully received sin’s wages. The sin has been tempered with God’s gentle hand holding back the worst of the torment and making it possible for offenders to live with their transgressions, while He does His salvation work. All that will change at the end, when God is obliged to remove His hand of mercy, and the sinner is confronted anew with every sin he/she has ever committed. Then the guilty will experience the full impact of that sin.

The Father will deal with the lost as He dealt with His own Son on the cross. He said, “I will strike the shepherd.”<sup>6</sup> “[I]t pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief”<sup>7</sup> Did the Father really strike Jesus, bruise Him, put Him to grief? No. This was a metaphor spoken in the modality of Biblical language. It occurred because of the great burden of sin Jesus bore on the cross. God lost jurisdiction over Him. God most emphatically did not harm Jesus in any way. His Father had the power to protect Him from every evil, but He did nothing. He could only stand aside and watch as His Son melted away to death. Because He had the power to prevent it, when Jesus suffered so greatly for our sins, God the Father says He caused it. As with the Sin-bearer, so with the sinner. Jurisdiction rules at the end.

Therefore, let us connect the dots to see what happens on Judgment Day, when the lost are arraigned before God.

## Second Resurrection

Revelation says the Holy City, New Jerusalem, descends to the earth, “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”<sup>8</sup> The lost awaken to resurrection and find a scene of contrasts before them—the beautiful City, sitting amid a shattered and jagged earth. Once more Satan bestirs himself, as the lost come back to life, again deceiving them that he resurrected them and that the City belongs to him. The lost resolve to help him “regain” the City; they set to work preparing great war weapons for this, the anticipated battle of the ages. “And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city.”<sup>9</sup> But something stops them in their tracks.

<sup>1</sup> Obviously, the circumstances (i.e., the cross) vary; the conditions that brought about the circumstances do not.

<sup>2</sup> Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17.

<sup>3</sup> See Jonah 2:6; 2 Peter 2:6 compared with Jude 9. Notice these last two are *examples* of the duration of the fire.

<sup>4</sup> Romans 6:23.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 5:45, NAS.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 26:31.

<sup>7</sup> Isaiah 53:10.

<sup>8</sup> Revelation 21:2.

<sup>9</sup> Revelation 20:9.

- “They have blown the trumpet and made everyone ready, but no one goes to battle.”<sup>10</sup>
- “When the kings joined forces, when they advanced together, they saw her and were astounded; they fled in terror. Trembling seized them there, pain like that of a woman in labor.”<sup>11</sup>

They see something that causes them to flee in terror. John the Revelator says, “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the [resurrected] dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades [the grave] gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”<sup>12</sup> Here sinners meet all their sinful deeds again.

### How the Lost Actually Die

This great white throne judgment is a pivotal event that settles the great conflict between Christ and Satan. The assembled intelligent creation will now view the destiny of all that is out of harmony with God. The lost are “thrown into the lake of fire.”<sup>13</sup> What does that mean?

What is a “lake”? A lake is a body of water. What does a body of water symbolize in prophecy? “The waters . . . are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the “lake” represents a multitude of people.

What does the “fire” represent? Fire can be literal in Scripture. Or it can be a metaphor, as in “Is not *my word* like a fire?”<sup>15</sup> Or “[T]he fire of *my jealousy*.”<sup>16</sup> Clinging to our Example, we find that in the day of God’s fierce anger, “he [God the Father] sent fire into [Jesus’] bones.”<sup>17</sup> Was it literal fire? No. The “fire” that Jesus endured was agony and torment caused by sin. Compounding His agony was the Father’s pulling away—*withdrawing*—from Him because of it. Therefore, the lake of fire is a multitude of the lost enduring loss, rage, agony, torment, and loss of the blanket of grace with which God in mercy had sheltered them throughout the years.

Acknowledging the choice of the lost to live without Him, God will at last, in essence, call to His guardian angels, “Release,” and they will “stand down” from the lost, who never authorized God to have a part in their affairs. Now the full weight of their sins overwhelms them. They look at the Holy City, hear the joyful voice of praise coming from it, and know they could never be happy there. God has won the great conflict in the minds of the intelligences of heaven, and there is now no place for them in the universe. Therefore, they choose to go away.

“Then death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of those who remain of this evil family.”<sup>18</sup>

“There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”<sup>19</sup> was a frequent saying of Jesus. Where did that saying originate? It most likely came from the Psalms: “The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall *gnash with his teeth*, and *melt away*: the desire of the wicked will perish.”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, Jesus can be seen to endorse this view of the destiny of the lost.

“Let them vanish like water that flows away; . . . like a slug *melting away* as it moves along.”<sup>21</sup>

No one comes out of the lake of fire, for it is the gateway to oblivion.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ezekiel 7:14, NAS.

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 48:4-7, NIV.

<sup>12</sup> Revelation 20:11-15, NAS.

<sup>13</sup> Revelation 10:15.

<sup>14</sup> Revelation 17:15.

<sup>15</sup> Jeremiah 23:29, emphasis supplied.

<sup>16</sup> Ezekiel 36:5, emphasis supplied.

<sup>17</sup> Lamentations 1:12, 13.

<sup>18</sup> Jeremiah 8:3.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew 13:42; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28.

<sup>20</sup> Psalm 112: 10, emphasis supplied.

<sup>21</sup> Psalm 58:7, emphasis supplied.

<sup>22</sup> See Obadiah 1:6; Psalm 59:13a; Ezekiel 28:19b.

## The Literal Fire

Up to now the only fire that the lost have encountered is a *metaphoric* fire. However, that metaphoric fire brings about the deaths of the lost, just as it did in the case of Jesus. Now dead bodies litter the ground. “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.”<sup>23</sup> Now the cleanup begins. Again God calls “Release.”

God and His agencies, in essence, step back from creation. Revelation 20:9 says, “[F]ire descended from heaven and consumed them.”<sup>24</sup> Immediately, fire descends from the sky—perhaps a comet, maybe a solar flare, possibly a volcano; we don’t know at this point. God does not intervene in any way to stop it. The bodies—demonic and human—, the wood, the rocks, the water, all matter itself catches fire until the entire earth is a molten mass, a vast, seething lake of fire,<sup>25</sup> with the righteous riding peacefully in the Holy City, as Noah once rode in the ark when waters covered the earth.

“[I]n Him we live, and move, and have our being.”<sup>26</sup> When we decide to live apart from God, by that decision we default into eternal death, because God cannot generate life to us when we choose to live separated from Him. By His blanket of grace He has suspended this rule for a season in order to save us, deriving His authority to do so from the death of Jesus upon Calvary. But the time finally comes when all decisions are final and sadly God says, Have it your way.

“Behold I make all things new,”<sup>27</sup> said the True Witness. “We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”<sup>28</sup>



## For More Information:

- [www.4Adventists.com](http://www.4Adventists.com)  
Two Books Titled: *Light Through the Darkness: A Vindication of God*, 157 pages, and an *Adventist Supplement*, 72 pages.
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBZfdgggyXw&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBZfdgggyXw&feature=youtu.be)  
(or) <http://youtu.be/hMaltpis72c>  
A Video Titled: *A New Look At the Character of God*
- [www.GodsCharacter.com](http://www.GodsCharacter.com)  
A Book Titled: *Servant God: The Cosmic Conflict Over God’s Trustworthiness*, 418 pages
- [www.TeachServices.com/as-he-is-4th-angel-publications-paperback-1si/](http://www.TeachServices.com/as-he-is-4th-angel-publications-paperback-1si/)  
A Book Titled: *As He Is: Issues in the ‘Character of God’ Controversy*, 334 pages (Contact [straub@direct.ca](mailto:straub@direct.ca) for alternate pricing.)

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<sup>23</sup> Malachi 4:1, emphasis supplied.

<sup>24</sup> Amplified.

<sup>25</sup> This symbol does double duty in Revelation. It first represents the metaphoric fire of torment and agony which ends in second or eternal death for all that is tainted by sin, and finally it represents the literal nuclear fire that consumes all things.

<sup>26</sup> Acts 17:28.

<sup>27</sup> Revelation 21:5.

<sup>28</sup> 2 Peter 3:13.