

## LANDMARKS AND LANDMINES-PT 2 (HELL FIRE)

Last month I began a series of sermons titled “Landmarks and Landmines” and we talked about **the non-immortality of the soul landmark** the Bible teaches, and we also talked about **the immortality of the soul landmine** the devil planted in the Garden of Eden when the serpent directly contradicted what God plainly said; and ever since that time the devil and his cohorts have buried **so many landmines to blow up the truth** that the spiritual field is virtually covered with them, making it very difficult to avoid stepping in the wrong place.

Today I want to uncover another landmine that’s closely associated with the immortality of the soul that was planted as a result of the lie that that old serpent called the devil and Satan told Eve when he said, “ye shall not surely die.”

As I mentioned last time, if the soul were immortal, then there has to be a place for the soul to go to if it doesn’t go to heaven when one dies. Does that make sense? If there’s a part of a person that lives on after death, and it doesn’t go to be with the Lord where all is peace, and love, and eternal bliss; then there **has to be** a place of punishment, and pain, and suffering where the soul is tortured for all eternity.

And really, isn’t it a contradiction of terms to say that one lives on after they’re dead? It’s still eternal life, isn’t it? Only in a different form and place? I mean, if death really isn’t death, and life really isn’t life, then we have no solid foundation to stand upon. And don’t you know; that’s just **how** the devil tries to confuse the issue.

The devil is a master at turning things around, and he’s had thousands of years to perfect his art. You see; that’s the reason he’s called the great deceiver, and the father of lies. He knows how to convince people that black is white and white is black; he’s a better spinmister than the best politician, and it’s no different with the landmine of an eternally burning hell where supposedly bad people go to spend eternity.

Anyway, does it even make sense that a person will burn forever and ever, and feel the intense pain that that would cause, simply because they didn’t accept the salvation God offered? How does the average age of 70 something, if we’re fortunate enough to live even that long, compare with eternity? Is it fair that a person lives **a few short years here on earth**, and then because of bad choices suffers forever and ever without end? Would that be a loving thing for a God of love to do?

I have to tell you friends; I could not love and serve a God that is that unjust. It goes against everything in my being to believe that our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ were willing to sacrifice all to save humanity, and then turn right around and torture those that didn’t accept their sacrifice. Something is just wrong with that picture; in fact, it makes human beings more merciful than God; and that can’t be! Even in man’s faulty justice he would never sentence even the vilest criminal to such a fate as an eternally burning hell, yet many accuse a loving, merciful God of just such unspeakable cruelty.

In some States we still have the death penalty for those who commit the worst of crimes, and throughout the history of this country we’ve used several different methods of execution. We’ve used hanging, firing squads, the electric chair, and lethal injection.

And some people consider any and all of these methods to be inhumane; but wouldn’t it be even more inhumane to torture criminals for the rest of their lives, rather than just put an end to their miserable existence? And yet many sincere Christians assume that God will do worse than that to the sinner. That He will sustain their lives in the fires of hell that they might suffer on and on and on for all eternity. And

because this is so unacceptable to many rational thinking people, there has to be a reasonable answer to these questions this morning.

Most of us have probably grown up hearing about a place where sinners burn in eternal flames that never quite consume them. You don't hear about it as much today as you used to, but back in the 1800's and into the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, preachers used to vie with each other to see who could preach the hottest hell; because they thought the hotter their hell, the more converts to Christianity they could make.

And no doubt **it was** a strong incentive to refrain from evil, but the problem is, that kind of preaching can't change the heart. There won't be one single person in heaven because they were scared into it, but because they saw the love of God in giving Jesus to die for the sinner and providing a way of escape from the penalty of sin.

When we truly understand that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life", then we will have an experience that will turn us into a new person and give us the opportunity then to inherit the earth made new. You see, we can't live in a new earth without first becoming a new creature, and so we want to make sure we don't slight the proffered mercy of God.

Before we allow the Bible to uncover the devil's landmine of an eternally burning hell, I want to give you a few examples of how this false teaching has influenced many people, and even changed the course of history.

The famous skeptic, Robert Ingersoll, who lived during the 1800's when all this hottest hell preaching was going on, said that he hated God because his father told him that little infants would burn forever in hell. Perhaps the father told Robert this to scare him into being an obedient boy, but if that was the reason, it had the opposite affect, because he became known as the *Great Agnostic* and Bible skeptic.

"I insist," he said, "that the discoveries of Darwin do away absolutely with the inspiration of the Scriptures—with the account of the creation in Genesis, and demonstrate not simply the falsity, not simply the wickedness, but the foolishness of the sacred volume." As you study further into this man's life, we find that he fought to establish atheistic concepts in American thinking, and it had a "profound influence" on this nation, and the world over during his day and even down to our own time.

And speaking of Charles Darwin, who formulated the theory of evolution; being a little older than Ingersoll, he also became a Bible skeptic because of the devil's landmine. He said, "If Christianity is correct and there is an eternally burning hell, my father, mother, and siblings are going to be there and suffer forever because they aren't Christians."

And because he couldn't believe that, he came up with a theory that not only did away with an eternally burning hell, but also did away with God altogether! And of course, today we have the majority of the world and the American school system that indoctrinates students from kindergarten through the university level with this man's false theories. And it was all because Darwin stepped on the devil's landmine.

I have a dear friend who's now in his 80s, and he lived in Germany as a youth, and he filled me in on a little history regarding Hitler's upbringing and hatred for the Jews. (I should say that there are several theories about Hitler's true nationality, but I prefer to get it straight from someone who lived it). It seems that Adolph's mother, as a young servant girl, became pregnant with him by a Jewish boy of a well to do family, and the young man's family would have nothing to do with her and her baby and thrust her out to fend on her own, and this is one of the reasons that Hitler hated the Jews and tried to exterminate them.

And there's a whole lot more to the story, and I wish I had time to share it with you; but Hitler, I found out, also idolized Darwin, who taught "natural selection" which, to put it simply, is survival of the fittest.

You see, Hitler envisioned a pure German race that would be the fittest, and in order to accomplish his goal, he exterminated six million Jews along with what he considered other undesirables of society. In other words, he got rid of those he thought were the weakest.

Besides the Jews, he did his best to get rid of homosexuals, the homeless, gypsies, the sick, the elderly, and so on, in order to create a super race. You see, Hitler was simply living out what Darwin taught, and the result was the horrific scenes of the Holocaust.

I would say Charles Darwin has a lot to answer for, don't you think? And so do those who planted the landmine of an eternally burning hell that led him, and Ingersoll, and Hitler down this path to begin with. And I wouldn't want to be in any of their shoes on judgment day, would you?

Do you see how one error leads to another, and what adverse affects it had on history? Truly, every action has a reaction. And we need to think of this as we live our lives, that good reactions might come from our actions, especially if we've been given the task of raising children. Because we don't want to be responsible for raising little Hitlers or perpetuating evil.

The fact is; many sincere people have turned from Christianity because they could not harmonize the two contrasting pictures of a God of love on the one hand, and on the other the kind of false justice He hands out by torturing people in an eternally burning hell.

However, the real question to be answered is, where in the Bible is such a doctrine of eternal fiery torment to be found? And the amazing answer is, it simply isn't there! It's just another one of the devil's landmines that have been buried beneath the distorted traditions of man.

As we open our Bibles this morning we're going to discover that, yes, it speaks of a literal fire that's going to burn up the rejecters of God's grace, but it's not the kind often portrayed to scare people into becoming Christians.

To begin with we're going to turn to the New Testament and read what Jesus Himself taught about the fate of the wicked. But before we open God's holy book, let's ask for the Holy Spirit to be our teacher. [PRAYER]

One day as Jesus was teaching by the Sea of Galilee, a crowd gathered and pressed against Him so much so that He had to get into a boat and push out a little from shore so the people could see and hear Him. And as He was speaking, He noticed that there were men sowing seeds in a field near by, and as He directed the attention of the multitude to these men as they worked, He began to speak several parables, one of which concerned the fate of the wicked. It's found in **Matthew 13:24-30**:

"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say

to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”

Then later on when the disciples were alone with Jesus, they asked Him to explain the parable. And He did so in **Verses 37-40**.

“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.”

According to what Jesus said, the tares, or the children of the wicked one, will be burned up when? “In the end of the world!” And so, this is at a future time, is it not? That means the fires of hell are not burning now, and all the wicked who have died in ages past are not being punished in eternal flames that never go out.

Notice also what the apostle Peter wrote in **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:”

You see, according to the Bible, when people die, they do **not** go immediately to their reward. They must first be judged and then sentenced. Doesn't that make sense?

Would God be just in sending a person to suffer in hell, and then centuries later call him to stand trial to see if he deserved that punishment? What kind of justice would that be?

And what if somehow a mistake was made, and come to find out it was a case of mistaken identity and they were actually wrongly sentenced? I realize I being a little facetious here, because God doesn't make mistakes, but you get my drift. Something just doesn't add up, to think that people go immediately to heaven or hell when they die, when they haven't yet stood before the judgment seat of Christ.

Notice what else Jesus said in **Matthew 16:27**. “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”

“Every man” would include both the righteous and the wicked, wouldn't it? Absolutely! And so, once again we see that God is just.

Notice also what Jesus says about His second coming in **Revelation 22:12** “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

This landmine of the devil that teaches an eternally burning hell does exactly what it's intended it to do, undermine the love and justice of God. No wonder God is so misunderstood, and feared, and even hated by so many!

Now don't get me wrong, the Bible does teach that unrepentant sinners will be punished; how could it be otherwise? Everyone that does not come to Jesus in true repentance and accept His sacrifice in their behalf will get what's coming to them in the end in relation to what they have done, but we need to understand that God does not enjoy punishing disobedience any more than a loving parent enjoys punishing their child.

Regarding the punishment of the wicked, **Isaiah 28:21** says it's a “strange work” and a “strange act” for God to punish and finally destroy the wicked, because He truly is a God of love; it's not natural for Him

to destroy what He has created. But even though this is true, justice must be carried out, because sin has consequences, it has a penalty.

And the penalty is very clearly defined in **Romans 6:23**. “For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Notice: the death here mentioned is not eternal life in hell, is it? Because as terrible as that would be, it’s still life!

And so, the Bible is clear, eternal death is the reward of the wicked, and that’s exactly why God’s heart of love goes out to disobedient mankind; He doesn’t want them to be lost. Notice what **2 Peter 3:9** says. “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

You see friend, Jesus died in your place to satisfy the claims His broken 10-commandment law, and for this reason, you don’t have to be lost; that’s the good news. However, in God’s government, everyone has the freedom to accept or reject His forgiveness and salvation.

Notice how tenderly God spoke to ancient Israel; and please realize that His attitude is the same toward you today. Turn with me in your Bibles to **Deuteronomy 30:19, 20**. “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: . . .”

God truly is wonderful, but nevertheless, those who refuse salvation in the exact way prescribed in God’s word must one day forfeit the gift of eternal life that God freely offers to everyone. They will die for their sins, and both sin and sinners will finally be utterly destroyed. But we can rest assured this morning that no one is suffering in a fiery pit somewhere in the bowels of the earth right now, or in some other dimension writhing in pain.

In fact, this might be a good time to suggest that you write or e-mail for free information about where the idea of an eternally burning hell first originated. You may be surprised to know that its origin is pagan and was incorporated into the Christian church about 300 years after Jesus walked the earth. And so none of the Bible writers believed in an eternally burning hell. And so if you would like more information about this, the contact information is on the CD your listening to.

I would like to suggest to you for a minute that the worst punishment sinners will suffer, is not that their going to **burn** in the fires of hell, but that they will lose eternal life and immortality.

More than any physical pain, it’s to realize they chose a few short years here on earth, often filled with worry, heartache, and tears, instead of **life everlasting** in a glorious earth made new. The real punishment will be seeing what could have been theirs, and knowing that there’s nothing they can do to reverse their sentence.

Earlier we read about the parable of the wheat and tares, and that the tares, or the wicked, will be gathered together and then finally burned up at the end of the world. And you might ask, isn’t that speaking of a burning hell? Indeed it is, but it’s interesting to note that the Bible says that hell was not originally prepared for human beings.

Notice what it says in **Matthew 25:41** (This is in reference to what Jesus will say to the goats, or to the wicked when He returns) “Then (at His coming) shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:”

Now, there are a couple things I want you to notice here:

- First of all, how could the wicked be called from their torment to receive the sentence, “Depart from me, ye cursed,” into everlasting fire if they already went to burn in the fires of hell when they died?
- And secondly, what did Jesus mean when He said “everlasting fire”? Isn’t that speaking of a fire that lasts forever?

Notice too what it says down in **verse 46**. “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

Words are very important in the Bible, and I want you to notice that the word punishment is not punishing. It’s the punishment that is everlasting, not the punishing. The punishment of the wicked will be eternal in its results, because the state of being dead will never end. Once punishment is executed, the wicked will be no more because they will never live again. In fact, **Obadiah 16** says the wicked “shall be as though they have not been.”

There are a couple ways you can look at what “everlasting fire” means.

- Number one; the fire is kindled by God who is everlasting, and so you could say that the wicked are being destroyed by God fire.
- And number two; the idea of something lasting forever doesn’t always mean what we think the Bible means. Forever **can** mean forever without end, or it can mean something that lasts for a certain period of time.

A Biblical example of this is found in **Exodus 21:5, 6** where it speaks of a servant bonding himself to his master forever, and it simply means for the period of his life “And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.”

Also in the book of Jonah it says that Jonah was in the belly of the fish forever. Let’s read that too, because I don’t want you to take my word for it. **Jonah 2:1, 5, 6** “Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, . . . The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.”

In fact, the Bible uses the term “for ever” 56 times in connection with things that have already come to an end.

Now let’s look at a couple more instances in the Bible that have contributed to this false idea that hell fire is going to burn forever and ever without end. Turn with me in your Bible to the little book of Jude—just before Revelation. **Jude 7** (only one chapter) “Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in

like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

You’re probably familiar with this story so I won’t go into detail about it now, but Jude said these two cities were destroyed by “eternal fire.” And so the question to be asked is, Is Sodom and Gomorrah still burning today? And of course the answer is no! That fire went out many centuries ago. When all combustible material was consumed by the flames, the fire went out.

Now let’s look at **2 Peter 2:6**, because Peter said the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is an example of what’s in store for those who live ungodly lives in the last days. Peter here gives a short list of the various times in this earth’s history when God had to punish wickedness to keep it from spreading like a cancer, and in **2 Peter 2:6** he says— “And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;”

Question: Can ashes burn? No! This is an example, we are told, of what will happen to all the wicked.

One day Jesus called His disciples together to talk with them about what would happen if someone offended someone else and failed to make things right. This conversation is recorded for us in **Mark 9:43-48**. “And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

In these verses the word “hell” is translated from the Greek word “gehenna,” which is another name for the valley of Hinnom located just outside the walls of Jerusalem. It was like a garbage dump where refuse and the bodies of dead animals were cast into an ever-smoldering fire to be consumed, and what might escape the flames was constantly being consumed by maggots that fed on the dead bodies. And so, Gehenna symbolized a place of total destruction.

But what did Jesus mean when He said that this fire could not be quenched? Lets look at another text that will help answer this question—**Jeremiah 17:27**. Here in this verse Jeremiah is predicting what would happen to the city of Jerusalem if the kingdom of Judah continued to violate the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. “But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.”

And sadly, rather than heeding the warning, Judah continued to rebel against God until this prophecy was fulfilled. The Babylonians came in and set fire to the city and it was destroyed with unquenchable fire. But did that mean that the fire would never go out? NO! Yet as the fire burned, no one could put it out! Only after the flames completely destroyed the city did the fire go out of its own accord.

We use the same terminology today. If a fire breaks out in a building and can’t be contained, we say that it’s unquenchable. We don’t mean it will never go out! We simply mean it will burn until there’s nothing left to burn. That it can’t be put out.

In fact, the Bible says something very similar about the destruction of the wicked in **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.”

This fire that will consume the wicked will be unquenchable, and the wicked will cease to be. The effects of the fire will be eternal or everlasting, because there will be nothing left of the wicked, and they will never live again.

Also king David was a prophet, and what he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in **Psalm 37:20** agrees with what we just read in Malachi. “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.”

Over the years I have found that most people are thankful when they learn that the teaching of an eternally burning hell is not biblical, and that no one is burning in its flames today. However, some people just can’t understand how a God of love could permit anyone to be destroyed, regardless of how wicked they’ve been. But friends, the Bible teaches that even a God of love will do what He says, but He urges everyone to be saved. Notice how God pleads for the sinner to return to Him in **Isaiah 55:6, 7**. “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

You see, the God of heaven is not a God of force; He will not twist anyone’s arm into submitting to Him. We all have a choice, and God honors that choice. He wants all to be saved, but that choice is not His to make, it’s yours!

He made His choice 2000 years ago to save you from the penalty of sin by dying upon the old rugged cross. He took your place and died the death that all the wicked who do not accept that sacrifice will experience, but you must come to Jesus in repentance and confession if you would avail yourself of the free gift of salvation.

The reason God can’t take the wicked into the perfect atmosphere of heaven is because heaven would soon become like this sin cursed earth; that’s why the devil and his angels were cast out of heaven in the first place as it says in **Revelation 12:7-9**. We won’t take the time to read that, you can read that on your own.

But friends, sin is like a cancer that, left unchecked, would ravish the whole body; and so it must be totally rooted out. **Hebrews 12:29** says, “Our God is a consuming fire.” What that means is, wherever sin is found, it will be consumed; it will be eliminated, because it can’t survive in God’s presence. And so, if we cling to sin, rather than allowing the blood of Jesus to cleanse us from it, we become identified with it. And if that’s the case, then the glory of God, which destroys sin, must consume us as well.

And so, sin and sinners must be destroyed; it’s the only safe and merciful thing God can do if sin would not arise again in the earth made new.

But the question is; when will all this take place?

The Bible tells us that the righteous who have died will be raised from the dead during the first resurrection when Jesus returns, and they will dwell with Him for a thousand years, and at the end of that time, the wicked from all ages will be raised in a second resurrection. Notice how it explains this in **Revelation 20:4-6**. “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which



had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead (the wicked) lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

The second resurrection is the “resurrection of damnation” spoken of by Jesus in the gospel of John, **John 5:28, 29**. Let’s look at that also. “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

So, according to what we just read in Revelation 20, those two resurrections are separated by a thousand years.

For the sake of time we won’t read it, but when Jesus comes, according to **1 Thessalonians 4:13-17**, the righteous dead will be raised with glorified bodies and will join the living saints who have not died, and together they will meet the Lord in the air. But the wicked who were destroyed by the brightness of His coming (according to **2 Thessalonians 2:8**) and all the rest of the wicked from all ages who have died, will be raised with the same decrepit bodies as they had when they went into the grave when the thousand years are finished.

Then **Revelation 21:2** tells us what happens next. “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

What a contrast will be seen as the holy city descends from God out of heaven with all the saved safely inside. And what a sense of loss must sweep over the multitudes of the unsaved as they come forth from their dusty beds to see what might have been theirs.

In the end the wicked will realize that God has been just, and that they have beaten back many attempts by the Holy Spirit to convict them of sin and draw them to repentance, but alas, their eternal destiny has been fixed by their own choices.

**Romans 14:10, 11** says everyone will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and acknowledge, by bowing the knee and confessing with the tongue, that God has been just in rendering their sentence.

But even though the wicked acknowledge God’s justice, they do not repent; like Judas, they will regret the results of their sin and rebellion against God, but it’s forever too late to change because probation’s door has closed.

No doubt Satan and his angels **and all the wicked that they’ve been able to tempt and deceive** will tremble at the thought of their sentence of doom, but the Bible tells us they will not give up their hopes of being able to lay siege to the holy city as it descends. **Revelation 20:9** tells us what happens next. “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.”

We might also want to read what it says in **2 Peter 3:10**. “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.”

When fire comes down from God out of heaven, it will not only burn up all the wicked who have ever lived on this earth, but it will also purify the earth from every trace of sin, and even all the junk that's floating around in space from mans technologies. The whole universe will be clean

But what about the devil and his angels? Lets see what happens to them. Back to **Revelation 20:10, 14-15**. "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. . . . 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."

Now I know that **verse 10** makes it sound like the devil and his cohorts will burn forever and ever without end, but I want you to remember what we discussed earlier about the word "forever" being as long as one lives. **Verse 14** says that even "death and hell" will be "cast into the lake of fire"; which signifies that there will be a complete annihilation of all wickedness and rebellion along with those who committed it. No doubt the devil and his angels who are responsible for sin in the first place will suffer longer than those they deceived, but even they will be blotted out of existence when their sentence is fulfilled.

After the fire has "devoured" the wicked as it says in **verse 10**; the devil, the author of sin, survives to see the destruction of all his wicked works. Satan himself, after receiving his punishment, will cease to exist, we can be sure of that; because Christ did not die in vain, He died that He might "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil", as it says in **Hebrews 2:14**.

Satan is the "root" from which all wickedness springs; and according to **Malachi 4:1** that we read earlier, "the day that cometh shall leave neither root nor branch." Satan the root and all his followers the branches will ultimately be gone, never to return. And they will become ashes under the feet of the righteous. And then God's going to remake this earth.

There's no doubt in my mind that the final destruction of the wicked will be earth's saddest day, and I'm sure too that the tears will flow freely; how could it be otherwise?

**Revelation 22:2** tells us that the tree of life will be restored to the saved and that "the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations"; that tells me that grief and sorrow will not last, that there's a glorious day coming, because God has a plan to restore this earth to its Edenic beauty.

**Revelation 21:1-5** further explains what we have to look forward to. "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. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 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. 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."

We can rest assured that once God restores this earth, we will never have to worry about anything like sin happening again, because God has promised it. Notice what it says in **Nahum 1:9** in closing. "What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time."

Friends, Jesus wants to spend eternity with you. He wants to share the beauty and pleasures of the holy city and the earth made new with all of us. And He, and He alone, paid the price for our redemption on Calvary, and He invites you personally to accept that sacrifice. But as always, the choice is yours to make.

Let's pray. [PRAYER]