

Hell At The Cross

Some people believe that Christ went to hell after He died. This would be true in the sense that hell is sometimes properly interpreted as the grave both in Hebrew and Greek, and Christ went to that grave. But hell has another biblically proper interpretation by which Christ went to hell before He died. In fact, when He gave up His spirit and died, it was a sweet release from the torment of that living hell.

Sound confusing? Let's examine the different usages of hell from the Scriptures. The first usage simply refers to the grave.

Definitions of Hell:

Hell: Strong's Hebrew 7585. *l̄wəʾāḅv sh)ōwl*, sheh-ole'; or *l̄Oaḅv shol*, sheh-ole'; from 7592; Hades or the world of the dead (as if a subterranean retreat), including its accessories and inmates:—grave, hell, pit.

Hell: Strong's Greek 86. *α,δhβ haides*, hah'-dace; from 1 (as negative particle) and 1492; properly, unseen, i.e. "Hades" or the place (state) of departed souls: — grave, hell.

The second usage we will examine refers to the eternal punishment of the wicked also known as hell fire, the wrath of God, the cup of His indignation, outer darkness, being cut off, torment, fire and brimstone, weeping and gnashing of teeth, the winepress and the second death.

Hell: Strong's Greek 1067. *ge=enna geena*, gheh'-en-nah; of Hebrew origin (H1516 and H2011); valley of (the son of) Hinnom; *ge-henna* (or *Ge-Hinnom*), a valley of Jerusalem, used (figuratively) as a name for the place (or state) of everlasting punishment: — hell.

Biblical Interpretations:

Many assume that hell fire is purely a physical fire that equates with the lake of fire, which they regard as simply the literal location of that literal fire.

Revelation 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15) And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Notice that two non-physical entities, death and hell, were thrown into the lake of fire. If the lake were a physical place considered only to be the place of a fiery hell, how could non-physical concepts such as death and hell be thrown into hell? Can hell be thrown into itself? For insight into such perplexities created by too casually assigning literal meaning to complex spiritual terms notice how the following verse reveals the distinction between spiritual meaning, or that "which spiritually is called," as opposed to calling something by its literal meaning. It serves as a compelling example of the impossibility of applying literal meaning to that which is intended to be understood through its spiritual meaning.

Revelation 11:8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which **spiritually** is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

Was Jesus literally crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem, or in the city of Sodom, or in the distant country of Egypt? As you can see, to resolve gross misinterpretations of literally taken Bible terms, definitions must be derived from the language of Scripture, as Scripture defines them, sometimes literally, sometimes spiritually, sometimes both ways, which requires we learn how to properly determine which definition applies. Hell and hell fire are such terms. We'll discover in this study how it could be said that Christ suffered the torment of hell fire while He yet lived. By the other usage, once He died, His body was laid in hell, that is the grave.

Christ's Body Lay in the Grave:

Of Christ it is written:

Psalm 16:10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Acts 2:31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption.

Christ Experienced the Torment of Hell Fire:

Christ suffered the anguish of the second death before He died and when He breathed His last, it released Him from the anguish and suffering of the hell the wicked experience in their second death. Tasting that death is one of the reasons He came to this earth.

Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste **death** for every man.

What death did Christ taste for every man? The death that is described as hell fire, eternal and everlasting, the second death. If we believe in Him we can choose between everlasting life or everlasting death, the death that is described in the following verse as, **perish**.

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.

What does **perish** mean? To destroy fully.

Perish Strong's 622. ajpo/llumi apollumi, ap-of'-loo-mee; from 575 and the base of 3639; to destroy fully (reflexively, to perish, or lose), literally or figuratively: — destroy, die, lose, mar, perish.

Christ Experienced the Torment of Hell in our Place:

If we were destined by sin to eternal death, then to be called our substitute Christ would need to experience some substituting aspect of that destiny, eternal death. Most of humanity experience the first death for which there is a promised resurrection when all will live again, some to continue in everlasting life and some to die again, the death that will be eternal. But it is from the certainty of that second, eternal death that our substitute delivered us.

2 Corinthians 1:9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: 10) **Who delivered us from so great a death**, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us;

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. 25) Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

John 5:28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, 29) 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.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul makes it abundantly clear that the only reason we have a hope of a resurrection and life eternal is because Jesus died and rose again.

1 Corinthians 15:17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. 18) Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

The Torment of Hell Causes the Death that is Eternal:

So how is it then that we can say Christ died the death that is eternal when we know that He resurrected and is alive today? Not only was Christ human, but He was Deity as well. As a human, He endured the torment of hell, He was victorious over every temptation, the plan of salvation was successful. It was finished!

Acts 2:24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.

As we shall discover, one must be alive to suffer the second death and it is this suffering that causes one to cease from living, to die, and that death is eternal. There will not be another resurrection from that death. It may sound confusing to suggest that one can experience an eternal death while alive, an experience that causes the death which is also eternal, but I believe it will make sense to you as we continue to unravel these mysteries by a close examination of Bible definitions. We will be examining the terms, eternal and everlasting, later on in this study.

Ultimately, the Wicked Become Ashes:

The object of this study is to wipe away the misconceptions of hell fire. We are going to discover that the wicked will also experience hell before they die and once they are dead they are then consumed into ashes by the cleansing flames, when the rocks and the elements of the earth will be burned up. This death is eternal in the sense that it is final and irreversible.

2 Peter 3:6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 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.... 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.

Malachi 4:1 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.... 3) 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 Wrath of God:

The Bible describes the judgment of the wicked as the wrath of God. It is often associated with cup, fire, smoke, or fire and brimstone.

John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Psalms 21:9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them.

Revelation 14:10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: 11) And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

The Wrath of God is Described as the Hiding of His Face:

Isaiah 54:7 For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. 8) In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. 9) For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.

Deuteronomy 31:17 Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? 18) And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.

Christ chose to give His life for this world. But God so loved the world that He **gave** His Son as a ransom for the fallen race.

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.

Paul, in explaining the wrath of God in Romans 1 and 2, describes it as, “God also gave them up” (Rom 1:24), “God gave them up” (Rom 1:26), and “God gave them over” (Rom 1:28). What did God give them up or over to? Their reprobate mind also described as their hard and impenitent heart (Rom 2:5).

Christ was not spared but delivered up to the cross:

Let us begin looking at the passage in Romans describing the fact that Christ was not spared from the torment of hell but was delivered up by His Father.

Romans 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 32) He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

The same language of not sparing is used in describing what happened to the evil angels and what happened to the whole world at the time of the flood.

2 Peter 2:4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; 5) And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

Here's another example of what happens when the Lord delivers or gives up. These cities were near Sodom and Gomorrha and were also destroyed.

Hosea 11:8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

Jude expresses this destruction visited upon Sodom and Gomorrha as suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Jude 7 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.

The Cup of the Wine of the Wrath of God:

As we continue to unfold these mysteries, let's consider the **cup** we find in the verses quoted below.

Psalms 75:8 For in the hand of the LORD there is a **cup**, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and He poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.

Psalms 11:6 Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their **cup**.

Revelation 16:19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the **cup** of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.

Christ Drank the Cup of the Wrath of God:

We shall see that Christ drank the cup of that wrath in order to deliver all who would accept Him as their Saviour from having to drink of it.

1 Thessalonians 1:10 And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which **delivered us from the wrath to come**.

It was in the Garden of Gethsemane, meaning *oilpress*, that Jesus began drinking of that cup, began experiencing the wrath of God, the suffering of hell or the second death, even before anyone had laid a hand on Him.

What was this suffering? We find it described as, "**sorrowful and very heavy**," "**exceeding sorrowful, even unto death**," "**being in agony**" to the point where He sweat great drops of blood. Had not an angel come to strengthen Him, He would have perished there in the garden.

Matthew 26:36 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. 37) And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and **began to be sorrowful and very heavy**. 38) Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, **even unto death**: tarry ye here, and watch with me. 39) And He went a little further, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this **cup** pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. 40) And He cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? 41) Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. 42) He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this **cup** may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

Luke 22:44 And **being in an agony** He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Isaiah 52:14 As many were astonished at thee; His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men:

Drinking the Cup was Bearing our Guilt & Shame:

We get a little picture of what Christ suffered when we read Isaiah's account of the cross. Repeatedly we are told that He bore our sins, and along with those sins came the shame and guilt that accompanies sin, though He Himself never sinned. How could that be?

In His humanity He so passionately identified with us and what sin would do to all whose rejection of Him would reap eternal death, that He suffered such severe stress and anxiety as to sweat blood and would have died in the Hell At The Cross

garden had not an angel come and strengthened Him. He took the death that was ours in order to give us the life that was His.

Isaiah 53:4-12 Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:... But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities:...and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.... for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken....for He shall bear their iniquities....because He hath poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

These expressions, "sorrowful and very heavy," "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," "being in agony," all describe the weight of guilt from the sins of the world that Jesus chose to bare in our place. Speaking of His life, Christ affirmed that it was indeed His choice to die in the sinners place.

John 10:18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Christ also Suffered the Separation that Results From Sin:

But was that all that Christ suffered? Recorded in Scripture are the words Christ cried in anguish while on the cross,

Matthew 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

This moment of anguish was prophesied by David in the Psalms.

Psalms 22:1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

Psalms 22:11 Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. 12) Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. 13) They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. 14) I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. 15) My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. 16) For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. 17) I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. 18) They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. 19) But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

Christ who knew no sin was made sin for us and consequently felt the separation that sin brings between the sinner and God.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Galatians 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.

Contemplating the fate of the wicked, Christ vicariously felt the same shame and self condemnation that they who reject Christ will feel about themselves at the judgment of the wicked, not as one who had committed sin, but as one who so loved and identified with our destiny that He felt the pain of sin and guilt as if it were his own. Such is the mystery of love. It was this "passion" and the sense of the Father's separation from Him that took the life of Christ.

Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Being separated from His Father was part of the agony He suffered which began in the Garden of Gethsemane continuing until He died, when His thoughts perished as do those of everyone who dies.

Psalms 146:4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

Ecclesiastes 9:5 For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. 6) Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.

Cherishing Sin Brings Wrath:

Christ suffered in our place providing a way of escape, but if we refuse to repent and be cleansed, we must suffer the penalty of our own sins.

Romans 2:5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6) Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Wicked Drink of the Same Cup of Wrath, Shame and Guilt:

It stands to reason that if the sinner refuses to repent and receive a new heart, he too must drink of the cup of wrath against transgression, he must endure the hiding of the Father's face. He must be filled with shame and condemnation that will crush out his life. Does the Scripture teach us that death is the effect of such shame?

Psalms 11:6 Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.

Revelation 14:10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

Job 8:22 They that hate thee shall be clothed with **shame**; and the dwelling place of the wicked shall come to **nought**.

Psalms 83:13 O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. 14) As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; 15) So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. 16) Fill their faces with **shame**; that they may seek thy name, O LORD. 17) Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to **shame, and perish**:

Isaiah 1:28 And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed. 29) For they shall be **ashamed** of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. 30) For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. 31) And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.

Psalms 31:17 Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be **ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.**

Jude 13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own **shame**; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the **blackness of darkness for ever.**

The Wicked Experience Gethsemane—They are Thrown into the Winepress:

We've learned that Christ's suffering began in the Garden of Gethsemane. We've learned that He drank the cup of the wine of the wrath of God, which was filled with our guilt and shame and the sense of separation from One whom He also loved more than His own life. We have also observed that the wicked drink of the cup of the wine of the wrath of God. Christ trod the winepress alone and we shall see that the wicked also are cast into the great winepress, the difference being that the wicked are not filled with selfless love, but with self love.

Isaiah 63:3 I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.

Revelation 14:19 And the angel thrust in His sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great **winepress of the wrath of God.** 20) And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

Revelation 19:15 And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Psalms 73:19 How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.

Is the Term Hell Fire Literal or Figurative, or Both?

Let's now examine the Bible usage of the term **fire**. Is it always referring to literal fire, or will we learn that it too can have a figurative meaning? In the beginning of this study, we noticed a perplexing verse.

Revelation 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15) And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Then the comment was made. Notice that two non-physical entities, death and hell, were thrown into the lake of fire. If the lake were a physical place considered only to be the place of a fiery hell, how could non-physical concepts such as death and hell be thrown into hell? Can hell be thrown into itself?

Let's look at some verses that will clearly reveal that fire is not always to be taken literally.

Hebrews 12:29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Deuteronomy 9:3 Understand therefore this day, that the LORD thy God is He which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire He shall destroy them, and He shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the LORD hath said unto thee.

Revelation 19:12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself.

Revelation 10:1 And I saw another mighty Angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon His head, and His face was as it were the sun, and His feet as pillars of fire:

Revelation 2:18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass;

Isaiah 30:27 Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far, burning with His anger, and the burden thereof is heavy: His lips are full of indignation, and His tongue as a devouring fire:

Psalms 18:8 There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

James 3:5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! 6) And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

Jeremiah 23:29 Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

Jeremiah 5:14 Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.

Zephaniah 1:18 Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy: for He shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

Isaiah 30:33 For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

Tophet was a city outside of Jerusalem also known as Gehenna, or hell where fires were continually burning to destroy things that were hurtful and offensive, and there the idolatrous Jews caused their children to pass through the fire to Moloch.

Hebrews 1:7 And of the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.

Romans 12:20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

The term, fire in my bones describes the affliction or torment of the wrath of God. This passage describes the judgment that came on Jerusalem during the days of captivity to Babylon.

Lamentations 1:12 Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger. 13) From above hath He sent fire into my bones, and it prevaieth against them: He hath spread a net for my feet, He hath turned me back: He hath made me desolate and faint all the day.

The Wicked are Totally Destroyed:

Psalms 59:13 **Consume** them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be: and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah.

Isaiah 13:9 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and He shall **destroy** the sinners thereof out of it.

Zephaniah 1:18 Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be **devoured** by the fire of His jealousy: for He shall make even a speedy **riddance** of all them that dwell in the land.

John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Revelation 11:18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest **destroy** them which destroy the earth.

Job 20:7 Yet he shall **perish for ever** like his own dung: they which have seen him shall say, **Where is he?**

Psalms 52:5 God shall likewise **destroy** thee for ever, He shall take thee away, and **pluck thee out of thy dwelling place**, and root thee **out of the land of the living**. Selah.

Psalms 92:7 When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be **destroyed** for ever:

Ecclesiastes 9:6 Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now **perished**; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.

Isaiah 66:24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the **carcases** of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

Psalms 112:10 The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and **melt away**: the desire of the wicked shall perish.

Psalms 37:10 For yet a little while, and **the wicked shall not be: yea**, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.

Job 8:22 They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame; and **the dwelling place of the wicked shall come to nought.**

Psalms 31:17 Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them **be silent in the grave.**

Psalms 104:35 Let the sinners be **consumed** out of the earth, and **let the wicked be no more.** Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

1 John 5:12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God **hath not life.**

Obadiah 15 For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head. 16) For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and **they shall be as though they had not been.**

We would be tempted to think that if anyone should burn forever for their sin, it would be the devil, but even he will totally disappear.

Ezekiel 28:18 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. 19) 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.**

The Wicked are Dead Before Burning in the Literal Fire:

Stubble and chaff are both dead. The fire burns up the dead, cleansing the earth and heavens preparatory to the creation of the new heavens and the new earth. The stubble and the chaff are burned up, representing the total destruction of the wicked.

Job 21:17 How oft is the candle of the **wicked put out!** and how oft cometh their **destruction** upon them! God distributeth sorrows in His anger. 18) They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away.

Isaiah 33:11 Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall **devour** you.

Isaiah 40:24 Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the **whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.**

Isaiah 5:24 Therefore as the fire **devoureth** the stubble, and the flame **consumeth** the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 47:14 Behold, they shall be as stubble; **the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame:** there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.

Malachi 4:1 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.

Psalms 83:13 O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. 14) As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; 15) So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. 16) Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD. 17) Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:

Nahum 1:10 For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.

Matthew 3:12 Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

The Wicked are Burned Together with Literal Fire:

Isaiah 1:28 And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed.

Isaiah 1:31 And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.

Isaiah 27:4 Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together.

Isaiah 43:17 Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.

Isaiah 66:17 They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the LORD.

Job 17:16 They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when our rest together is in the dust.

Job 34:15 All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.

Job 40:13 Hide them in the dust together; and bind their faces in secret.

Psalms 37:38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off.

All That will be Left is Ashes and Smoke:

Malachi 4:1 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. 2) 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. 3) 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.

In prophesying the destruction of the devil, Ezekiel alludes to two fires. Notice that iniquity's figurative fire within of ultimate shame and guilt that comes from the midst of Satan is what ultimately "shall devour" him, then when he is dead, the literal fire that cleanses the earth and the heavens from sin and sinners brings him to ashes.

Ezekiel 28:18 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. 19) 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.

It will not be the wicked who live in eternal fire, but the righteous.

Revelation 6:16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17) For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Isaiah 33:14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? 15) He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;

Psalms 37:20 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.

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.

Isaiah 51:6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

Death and Destruction are Attended with Hell, the Grave:

Psalms 55:15 Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.

Proverbs 9:18 But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.

Proverbs 15:11 Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?

Job 26:6 Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering.

Isaiah 28:15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

The Terms Eternal, Everlasting and For Ever:

What about the verses that seem to describe perpetual smoke, torment, fire, punishment using the words eternal, everlasting, and forever, as in these?

Matthew 25:41 Then 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:

Revelation 14:11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up **for ever** and **ever**: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

Revelation 19:3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up **for ever** and **ever**.

Revelation 20:10 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**.

One source of confusion about eternal, everlasting and for ever revolves around differences in the properties people assign to those words. Some believe the primary property of those words is "to be perpetual, continuing indefinitely." Others believe the primary property is "final, irreversible." Others assign the property "perpetual as long as the conditions of its perpetuity remain satisfied."

For example, God promised Levi that he and his sons would minister as priests for ever.

Deuteronomy 18:5 For the LORD thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons **for ever**.

Notice that the promise of Deuteronomy 18:5 does not explicitly state any conditions for "for ever." Yet, in 1 Samuel 2:30 God reveals the implied conditions of Levitical priesthood is that they honour Him, in which case He would honour them.

1 Samuel 2:30 Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me **for ever: but now the LORD saith**, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

Apparently the property God had assigned to "for ever" in this instance was that when **the condition of that which was declared to be for ever ceased, "for ever" would cease**.

Consider what property is being assigned the word "eternal" regarding Sodom and Gomorrha.

Jude 7 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.

Luke 17:29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and **destroyed** them all.

2 Peter 2:6 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;

Which property does "eternal fire" in Jude 7 represent? Perpetual fire or final, irreversible fire until rendered to ashes?

In Mark 3:29, "eternal damnation" is used. Does this describe a perpetual process of being constantly damned, over and over, or permanently damned once and irreversibly for eternity?

Mark 3:29 But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of **eternal** damnation:

Notice the Bible uses the term "eternal life" but not the term "eternal death." Romans 6:23 simply states,

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is **eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Could there be such a thing as death continuing to be dying in the perpetual sense?

The properties we assign to for ever, everlasting, and eternal determine the doctrines we develop about them. Our goal is to assign properties to words correctly based on all we can gather about the context of the authors' usage of these terms.

Let's consider the following verses again in the light of what we have learned. Can there be "**everlasting fire**" and "**everlasting destruction**" at the same time?

Matthew 25:41 Then 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:

2 Thessalonians 1:9 Who shall be punished with **everlasting destruction** from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power;

In order to make complete sense of the verses above, we need to apply the property, "final, irreversible" to the term "everlasting." In the verse below, Matthew describes the effect of the "everlasting fire" as "everlasting punishment." Notice that he does not say everlasting punishing (perpetual) but "everlasting punishment" (final).

Matthew 25:46 And these shall go away into **everlasting punishment**: but the righteous into life eternal.

What are the properties of "for ever" in Revelation 14:11.

Revelation 14:11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up **for ever and ever**: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

The following verses, because they also refer to the end of the wicked, shed light on which property of "for ever" applies to Revelation 14:11.

Psalms 37:20 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**.

Job 7:9 As the cloud is **consumed and vanisheth away**: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more.

Which property is represented in the above verses by the words "perish," "consume away," "vanisheth," "no more." Is it not "**perpetual as long as the conditions of its perpetuity remain satisfied**." In other words, if the wicked are brought to ashes and ashes cannot burn, it must mean **the condition of burning has ceased to exist**.

Malachi 4:3 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.

In harmony with the many verses we have already examined, we find again that it is the **destruction** of the wicked that is "for ever" not the **destroying**.

Psalms 92:7 When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be **destroyed for ever**:

Let's take a look at some other verses that will help us understand that "for ever" is a term relative to the maximum limit of time possible for that which is declared to be for ever. A thing is declared to be for ever with the understanding that when **the circumstance or person to which for ever has been applied ceases to be, then for ever ceases to apply.**

Jonah referred to being in the belly of the great fish "for ever" or until he was vomited out.

Jonah 2:6 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.

The following verse referring to servitude "for ever" could only mean until the servant died.

Deuteronomy 15:17 Then thou shalt take an aul, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever.

In 1 Samuel we find Hannah, Samuel's mother lent him to the Lord "for ever," which later is described as, "as long as he liveth," in verse 28.

1 Samuel 1:22 But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide **for ever.**

1 Samuel 1:28 Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; **as long as he liveth** he shall be lent to the LORD.

Hell Fire Happens at the End of the World:

When does the Bible teach that this hell fire is experienced? When a person dies? The Lord Himself taught that it would be at the end of the world.

Matthew 13:37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; 38) The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; 39) The enemy that sowed them is the devil; **the harvest is the end of the world**; and the reapers are the angels. 40) As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the **end of this world.** 41) 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; 42) And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43) Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Quench, Unquenchable Fire:

Doesn't the term, "the fire that never shall be quenched," suggest that the fire is everlasting? The word "**never**" is not in the original Greek. Is there a difference between a **fire that no one can quench** and a **fire that never goes out**?

Mark 9:43 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**: 44) Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 45) 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: 46) Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 47) 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: 48) Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Matthew 3:12 Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

The same unquenchable fire is also described as what happened to Jerusalem in the Babylonian siege. Yet that fire is not burning today.

2 Kings 25:8 And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: 9) And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.

Jeremiah predicted this event in the following verse.

Jeremiah 17:27 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.

If we allow Jeremiah to define, "it shall not be quenched," we discover its meaning, "that none can quench it."

Jeremiah 21:12 O house of David, thus saith the LORD; Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

Where Their Worm Dieth Not:

When Christ's referred to the "worm that dieth not," does it not suggest that there will always be something for them to feed on? To what worms was He referring? Maggots, and maggots feed on dead carcasses.

Worm, Strong's 4663. skwꞫlhx skolex, sko'-lakes; of uncertain derivation; a grub, maggot or earth-worm: — worm.

Isaiah 66:24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

The Whole World Has Been Deceived Regarding Death and Hell:

We are told that Satan was a liar and a murderer from the beginning.

John 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

We also know that his wily deceptions have been so extensive they deceive virtually "the whole world." It's interesting to note that not only is the Christian world deceived, but many other religions, if not all, have a misconception of death and hell.

Revelation 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

However, we read that if we do not cherish sin and have received a love of the truth we will not be deceived.

2 Thessalonians 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they **received not the love of the truth**, that they might be saved. 11) And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12) That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Satan's Deceptions Unmasked:

To know God is to love Him. The only way to know the truth is to seek it with your whole heart and soul. A mere surface reading and understanding of the scriptures will not reveal to us the deep truths of God which unveil the deceptions of Satan.

Isaiah 55:6-9 Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: 7) 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. 8) For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9) For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

“We should study the Scriptures more earnestly; for their **treasures of wisdom and knowledge do not lie upon the surface for the superficial reader.**” RH, February 4, 1890 par. 6

Knowledge of God Brings Eternal Life:

Do we grasp from such language how much higher are God's ways and thoughts than ours? Yet life eternal is contingent on our knowing and understanding God and His ways! His express desire is that not one should perish but that all would have everlasting life.

John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

This knowledge will bring us into such a close relationship with our Saviour as to enable us to implicitly trust Him and allow the work of salvation to be accomplished in us. Satan realizes the way of salvation depends on our correct understanding of God and His ways, so his best efforts have been to cast darkness upon God's character.

“**The earth was dark through misapprehension of God.** That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. **To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan.** This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, ‘with healing in His wings.’” Malachi 4:2. DA 22.1

Misunderstanding the Nature of Sin:

Satan would also have us misunderstand the nature of sin and its results. Satan's reign of terror will continue as long as he continues to deceive us about these two very important things, **1) the character or nature of God**—that He rules His kingdom without using any force or coercion as we read in the above quote, and **2) the nature of sin**—as with any law, the inherent cause and effect is responsible for the death that comes in consequence.

“The people of God should awaken to a keen perception of the grievous **character of transgression**. Sin is disguised, and **many are deceived in regard to its nature**. Satan has planned it thus, that the understanding may be clouded, the spiritual vision obscured, the perceptive faculties of the soul blunted. But God would not have one of us to be ensnared, therefore the nature of sin is faithfully portrayed in the inspired pages,—its offensive character before God, its corruption, its shame, and its results. Everything has been done that God could do to save man from the power of sin, which defaces the divine image, frustrates God's purpose in man's existence, degrades his God-given powers, narrows his capacity, leads to unholy imaginations, and gives loose rein to unsanctified passions. Sin! how hateful in the sight of God! Holy angels look upon it with abhorrence.” RH, June 3, 1880 par. 9

Satan Misrepresented the Government of God:

As we biblically examine God's wrath, we more compellingly grasp that God's ways are nothing like Satan's ways. Satan was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. Not so with God, who avoids setting any deceitful or violent precedence for man to follow. Satan's misrepresentation of the harmless innocence of God is one of the main issues in the great controversy between Christ and antichrist. It reveals how God rules His universe—by selfless love and liberty, and how Satan rules—by self-exaltation and force. In order to win this controversy, God must prove that His ways are superior, that the principles of love and liberty alone can secure the universe from sin and its effects.

“**Satan's representations against the government of God**, and his defense of those who sided with him, were a constant accusation against God. These murmurings and complaints were groundless. Yet God allowed Satan to work out his theories. He could have handled Satan and all his sympathizers as easily as one can pick up a pebble and cast it to the earth. But by this He would have given a precedent for the violence of human beings that is so abundantly shown in our world in the compelling principles.

“The Lord's principles are not of this order. All the compelling power is to be found under Satan's government. God would not work in this line. He would not give the slightest encouragement for any human being to set himself up as God over another human being, and cause him mental or physical suffering. This principle is wholly of Satan's creation. . . .

“In the councils of heaven it was decided that principles must be acted upon that would not at once destroy Satan's power, for it was His [God's] purpose to place things upon an eternal basis of security. . . . God's order must be contrasted with the new order after Satan's devising. The corrupting principles of Satan's rule must be revealed. The principles of righteousness expressed in God's law must be demonstrated as unchangeable, eternal, perfect.”—Manuscript 57, 1896 (Manuscript Releases, vol. 18, pp. 360, 361). CTr 13.4-6

Understanding the Wrath of God More Perfectly:

We are promised in Jeremiah that in the latter days we shall consider the “anger” or wrath of God “perfectly.”

Jeremiah 23:19, 20 Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. 20) The **anger** of the LORD shall not return, until He have executed, and till He have performed the thoughts of His heart: **in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.**

Christ will come when His character is fully reproduced in His people. (COL 69) This reproduction of His character can only happen as we correctly understand the nature of God and the nature of sin, no longer attributing to God the destructive effects of sin.

James argues that it is not God that is responsible for temptation, sin or death. He then cautions us, “do not err my beloved brethren, every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights....” In verse 20, James states that the wrath of man is nothing like the righteousness, or wrath of God.

James 1:13-20 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: 14) But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. 15) Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. 16) Do not err, my beloved brethren. 17) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. 18) Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. 19) Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: 20) For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

Paul also states similarly,

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Has fear of torment or promise of reward motivated us to cease from sin? No, nor will it ever because it is only “the goodness of God that leads us to repentance.” (Romans 2:4)

Is punishment for sin inflicted by God as an arbitrary act or is it really true that “the wages of sin is death?” Was the punishment of the Jews by God? Carefully read the following two quotes.

“It was generally believed by the Jews that **sin is punished in this life**. Every affliction was regarded as the penalty of some wrongdoing, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law, but this truth had become perverted. Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God,—**as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin**. Hence one upon whom some great affliction or calamity had fallen had the additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner.” DA 471.1

“Their sufferings are often represented as **a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God**. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work. By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, the Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will. The horrible cruelties enacted in the destruction of Jerusalem are a demonstration of Satan's vindictive power over those who yield to his control.” GC 35

Wrath, the Anquish of Guilt and Shame:

“We should not try to lessen our **guilt** by excusing sin. We must accept God's estimate of sin, and that is **heavy** indeed. Calvary alone can reveal the terrible **enormity of sin**. If we had to bear our own **guilt, it would crush us**. But the sinless One has taken our place; though undeserving, He has borne our iniquity.” MB 116

Notice above that guilt can crush us. This addresses a much disputed mystery. How has our guilt crushed Christ? How has Christ, the sinless One, “borne our iniquity,” and how does Calvary’s revelation to us of “the terrible enormity of sin” spare us from the depth of guilt that would otherwise “crush us?” What has changed? Why does our knowledge of our sins no longer burden us with guilt, much less crush us? What process in our minds will “allow Him to take away [our] guilt?” Is there a magical divine law that accomplishes this mysterious transfer of our guilty identification with sin to Christ? In the following quotes we find compelling answers to this mystery.

“They will call on the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. ‘The wrath of the Lamb’—One who ever showed Himself full of tenderness, patience, and long-suffering, who, having given Himself up as the sacrificial offering, was led as a lamb to the slaughter, to save sinners from the doom now falling upon them because they would not allow Him to take away their **guilt.**” RH June 18, 1901

Notice how the above seems to describe “the wrath of the Lamb” as the wicked perceiving the fullness of His goodness in contrast to their yet guilty characters, which still identify with their sins.

“‘I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance,’ said John; ‘but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.’ Matthew 3:11, R. V., margin. The prophet Isaiah had declared that the Lord would cleanse His people from their iniquities ‘by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.’ The word of the Lord to Israel was, ‘I will turn My hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy sin.’ Isaiah 4:4; 1:25. To sin, wherever found, ‘our God is a consuming fire.’ Hebrews 12:29. In all who submit to His power the Spirit of God will consume sin. But if men cling to sin, they become identified with it. Then the glory of God, which destroys sin, must destroy them. Jacob, after his night of wrestling with the Angel, exclaimed, ‘I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.’” Genesis 32:30. DA 107.4

Notice above, in contrast to the guilt of the unrepentant, who “cling to sin” and thus “become identified with it” that the Lord’s people are cleansed “by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.” The repentant, because they do not “cling to sin” but “submit to His power,” allow “the Spirit of God [to] consume sin.” They no longer feel the guilt that comes with identifying with sin because they have allowed God to reveal it to them and “take away all [their] sin,” not magically but through an overcoming surrender of sin and re-identification with the sinless “light of glory” of their Savior. Ironically the abrupt revelation of God’s character to those who “willfully cherish sin” “will slay the wicked” while it “imparts life to the righteous,” who embrace the process of having “sin purged” from their lives as “the spirit of judgment, and the spirit of burning” progressively reveal it to each surrendered conscience. We have this choice. We can allow the fires of the refiner to purge us now or burn with guilt later.

Malachi 3:3 And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

In the next quote, for example, we see how Jacob’s willingness to go through the process of repentance, forgiveness, and purging allowed him to endure God’s consuming presence.

“Jacob had been guilty of a great sin in his conduct toward Esau; but he had repented. His transgression had been forgiven, and his sin purged; therefore he could endure the revelation of God’s presence. But wherever men came before God while willfully cherishing evil, they were destroyed. At the second advent of Christ the wicked shall be consumed ‘with the Spirit of His mouth,’ and destroyed ‘with the brightness of His coming.’ 2 Thess. 2:8. The light of the glory of God, which imparts life to the righteous, will slay the wicked.” DA 107. 4

We see in the following quote that only “through the surrender of our will to God” is it possible for hidden sins to be overcome. Conversely, we see that without such depth of self-surrender “it is possible [to] bury...and conceal them.” Can we “stand in God’s presence” if we have not, through “communion with Him,” allowed Him to lead us to separate from the sin and subsequent guilt that would eventually lead to death?

“God is the fountain of life, and we can have life only as we are in communion with Him. Separated from God, existence may be ours for a little time, but we do not possess life. ‘She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.’ 1 Timothy 5:6. Only through the surrender of our will to God is it possible for Him to impart life to us. Only by receiving His life through self-surrender is it possible, said Jesus, for these hidden sins, which I have pointed out, to be overcome. It is possible that you may bury them in your hearts and conceal them from human eyes, but how will you stand in God’s presence? MB 61.2

“If you cling to self, refusing to yield your will to God, you are choosing death. To sin, wherever found, God is a consuming fire. If you choose sin, and refuse to separate from it, the presence of God, which consumes sin, must consume you.” MB 61.2, 62.1

Is sin a substance that ignites in the presence of a divine, consuming fire? How does the guilt of sin really affect us? Note in the quote below it refers to “the punishment *of* their guilt” not “*for* their guilt.” Are people punished *for* their guilt or *by* their guilt? It would appear that it is guilt that punishes when exposed by holy righteousness, that the consuming fire, because it does not hurt the righteous, is the reaction of the unrepentant sinner. If we are in denial of our sins and “bury them in [our] hearts and conceal them,” then is it direct punishment of God that punishes us or our shame ridden identification with sin, resulting in a second, everlasting, death from which “God cannot save the sinner in [the guilt of] his sins.” If it is the effect of guilt that punishes, even unto death, that would explain why “they suffer punishment varying in duration and intensity according to their works,” based on the depth and extent of rebellious attachment to sin.

“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ [Romans 6:23.] While life is the inheritance of the righteous, death is the portion of the wicked. The penalty threatened is not merely temporal death, for all must suffer this. It is the second death, the opposite of everlasting life. God cannot save the sinner in his sins; but He declares that the wicked, having suffered the punishment of their guilt, shall be as though they had not been. Says an inspired writer, ‘Thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.’ [Psalm 37:10.] In consequence of Adam’s sin, death passed upon all mankind. All alike go down into the grave. But through the provisions of the plan of salvation, all are to be brought forth from their graves. Then those who have not secured the pardon of their sins must receive the penalty of transgression. They suffer punishment varying in duration and intensity according to their works, but finally ending in the second death. Covered with infamy, they sink into hopeless, eternal oblivion.” 4SP 364.2

The Cross Reveals the Truth of the Wrath of God:

In order to understand the Father where can we look but to Jesus who came to glorify Him by revealing His character? Similarly, to understand the “wrath” of God then, where would we look but to the cross, for Christ is the only one who has suffered the wrath of God known as the second death? The cross reveals the truth about the character or nature of God as well as the nature of sin with all its consequences, both contested by the serpent’s original arguments to Eve in Genesis 3.

“The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. **In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the word of God, from**

Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary.” GW 315.2

“The mystery of the cross explains all other mysteries. In the light that streams from Calvary, the attributes of God which had filled us with fear and awe appear beautiful and attractive. Mercy, tenderness, and parental love are seen to blend with holiness, justice, and power...” 4SP 469

“If those who today are teaching the word of God, would uplift the cross of Christ higher and still higher, their ministry would be far more successful. If sinners can be led to give one earnest look at the cross, if they can obtain a full view of the crucified Saviour, they will realize the depth of God's compassion and the sinfulness of sin...” AA 209

“The death of Christ was to be the convincing, everlasting argument that the law of God is as unchangeable as His throne. The agonies of the Garden of Gethsemane, the insult, the mockery, and abuse heaped upon God's dear Son, the horrors and ignominy of the crucifixion, furnish sufficient and thrilling demonstration that God's justice, when it punishes, does the work thoroughly. The fact that His own Son, the Surety for man, was not spared, is an argument that will stand to all eternity before saint and sinner, before the universe of God, to testify that He will not excuse the transgressor of His law. Every offense against God's law, however minute, is set down in the reckoning, and when the sword of justice is taken in hand, it will do the work for impenitent transgressors that was done to the divine Sufferer. Justice will strike; for God's hatred of sin is intense and overwhelming.” MS 58, 1897

Where was the Literal Fire at the Cross?

What was it that killed our Saviour? What was the “wrath” that He suffered? Where was the “fire?” What thoughts comprised “the inexpressible agony of Jesus?” In the below quote notice the emphasis on the source of His “inexpressible agony.” Notice that in six successive, reinforcing phrases it tightly ties Christ’s suffering, described as “the guilt of sin,” “the guilt of every descendant of Adam” to His agonizing reflections on the condition and fate of humanity, “a sense of the malignity of sin, a knowledge that *man* had become so familiar with sin...so deeply rooted in the *human* heart...how *few* would be willing to break...*humanity* must perish...He saw *multitudes* perishing.” We learned earlier in this study, guilt itself ultimately punishes, even unto the second death those “covered in infamy” because they “identify” with their unrepentant sin and apprehend its consequence. If Christ loves them with a perfect love could He care any less than they, and suffer the effect of their guilt any less than they in apprehension of the consequence of their sin and the second death their guilt would induce? This quote opens our eyes to how “the guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart?” Is this what “was crushing out His life,” His abandon love for us?

“And now the Lord of glory was dying, a ransom for the race. In yielding up His precious life, Christ was not upheld by triumphant joy. All was oppressive gloom. It was not the dread of death that weighed upon Him. It was not the pain and ignominy of the cross that caused His inexpressible agony. Christ was the prince of sufferers; but His suffering was from a sense of the malignity of sin, a knowledge that through familiarity with evil, man had become blinded to its enormity. Christ saw how deep is the hold of sin upon the human heart, how few would be willing to break from its power. He knew that without help from God, humanity must perish, and He saw multitudes perishing within reach of abundant help.

“Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every

descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.

"Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that their separation was to be eternal. **Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race.** It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God." DA 752, 753

"It was not the dread of death which caused the inexpressible agony of Jesus. To believe this would be to place Him beneath the martyrs in courage and endurance; for many of those who have died for their faith, yielded to torture and death, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. Christ was the prince of sufferers; but it was not bodily anguish that filled Him with horror and despair; it was a sense of the malignity of sin, a knowledge that man had become so familiar with sin that he did not realize its enormity, that it was so deeply rooted in the human heart as to be well-nigh impossible to eradicate. **It was the guilt of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that broke the heart of the Son of God.** Every pang that He endured upon the cross, the blood-drops that flowed from His head, His hands, and feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father's face, speak to man, saying, It is for love of thee that the Son of God consents to have these heinous crimes laid upon Him; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise and immortal life. He who stilled the angry waves by His word, and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble, and disease flee from His touch, who opened the eyes of the blind, and raised the dead to life,--offers Himself upon the cross as the all-sufficient sacrifice for man." PrT, February 4, 1886 par. 1

"When Herod heard of the works of Christ, he was exceedingly troubled. He thought that God had raised John from the dead, and sent him forth with still greater power to condemn sin. He was in constant fear that John would avenge his death by passing condemnation upon him and his house. Herod was reaping that which God had declared to be the result of a course of sin,-- 'a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: in the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.' Deuteronomy 28:65-67. The sinner's own thoughts are his accusers; and

there can be no torture keener than the stings of a guilty conscience, which give him no rest day nor night.” DA 223.3

“The conflict was terrible. Its measure was the guilt of His nation, of His accusers and betrayer, the **guilt** of a world lying in wickedness. The sins of men weighed heavily upon Christ, and the sense of God's wrath against sin was crushing out His life.” DA 687.1

“How dark seemed the malignity of sin! Terrible was the temptation to let the human race bear the **consequences of its own guilt**, while He stood innocent before God. If He could only know that His disciples understood and appreciated this, He would be strengthened.” DA 687 .3

Was the Father responsible for Christ's death?

Isaiah 53:4 ... yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

The Wicked Suffer the Same Wrath as Christ:

The sinner who refuses salvation will experience the “wrath” of God, the very same wrath that Christ suffered, for He took our place, the only difference being that Christ suffered because of His selfless love for them, and the wicked suffer because of self love.

“Those who reject the mercy so freely proffered, will yet be made to know the worth of that which they have despised. **They will feel the agony which Christ endured upon the cross** to purchase redemption for all who would receive it. And they will then realize what they have lost —eternal life and the immortal inheritance.” RH Sept. 4, 1883

“From the fall of Jerusalem the thoughts of Jesus passed to a wider judgment. In the destruction of the impenitent city He saw a symbol of the final destruction to come upon the world. He said, “Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” By the green tree, Jesus represented Himself, the innocent Redeemer. God suffered His wrath against transgression to fall on His beloved Son. Jesus was to be crucified for the sins of men. What suffering, then, would the sinner bear who continued in sin? All the impenitent and unbelieving would know a sorrow and misery that language would fail to express.” DA 743.2

“What suffering, then, would the sinner bear who continued in sin?” (DA743.2) “They will feel the agony which Christ endured upon the cross to purchase redemption for all who would receive it.” (RH Sept. 4, 1883) “The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation.” (DA 753.1) “If we had to bear our own guilt, it would crush us.” (MB 116)

What is the “fire” that devours the wicked?

Jeremiah 5:14 Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make **my words in thy mouth fire**, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.

Can the above quote refer to literal fire any more than words can be literal fire, or people be literal wood. No, we rather observe a figurative or symbolic biblical definition of fire as the devouring effect of words on the people exposed to the truth those words convey.

Ezekiel 28:18 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.

“Christ was ‘despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.’ By wicked hands He was taken and crucified. Speaking of His death, the psalmist writes: ‘The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears. Then the earth shook and trembled: the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was wroth. There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, He did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.’” RH, July 17, 1900 par. 11

On page four of this study we learned that the wrath of God is the “hiding of His face,” the “giving up” or “giving over,” allowing the sinner to reap the consequences that come when his life’s record will be laid open to him. That “wrath,” that giving them up respectfully honors the will of those who reject God’s mercifully warning of the “error” of their ways.

Romans 2:26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections:... and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

“The **guilt** is upon the soul that sinneth. He is accountable for all the evil arising through his influence, conscious or unconscious, that works disaster in the world. **By his unfaithfulness he prepares himself for the second death.** Unless he repents, confesses his wrongs, and becomes qualified through the grace of Christ for service in his cause, he is a lost man. It is not safe to take a single false step.” YI, Dec 21, 1893 par. 1

The fire is the guilt and shame of his nakedness, which will destroy him.

“As the Holy One upon the throne slowly turned the leaves of the ledger, and His eyes rested for a moment upon individuals, **His glance seemed to burn into their very souls, and at the same moment every word and action of their lives passed before their minds as clearly as though traced before their vision in letters of fire.** Trembling seized them, and their faces turned pale. Their first appearance when around the throne was that of careless indifference. But how changed their appearance now! The feeling of security is gone, and in its place is a nameless terror. A dread is upon every soul, lest he shall be found among those who are wanting. Every eye is riveted upon the face of the One upon the throne; and as His solemn, searching eye sweeps over that company, there is a quaking of heart; for they are **self-condemned** without one word being uttered. **In anguish of soul each declares his own guilt** and with terrible vividness sees that by sinning he has thrown away the precious boon of eternal life.” 4T 385.2

Even their own words “will one day burn into their guilty souls like molten lead.”

“Riches, power, genius, eloquence, pride, perverted reason, and passion are enlisted as Satan’s agents in doing his work in making the broad road attractive, strewing it with tempting flowers. But every word they have spoken against the world’s Redeemer will be reflected back upon

them, and will one day **burn into their guilty souls** like molten lead. They will be **overwhelmed with terror and shame** as they behold the exalted One coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Then shall the bold defier, who lifted himself up against the Son of God, see himself in the true blackness of his character. **The sight of the inexpressible glory of the Son of God will be intensely painful to those whose characters are stained with sin. The pure light and glory emanating from Christ will awaken remorse, shame, and terror.** They will send forth wails of anguish to the rocks and mountains, ‘Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?’” Con 87.1

“As soon as the books of record are opened, and the eye of Jesus looks upon the wicked, **they are conscious of every sin which they have ever committed.** They see just where their feet diverged from the path of purity and holiness, just how far pride and rebellion have carried them in the violation of the law of God.” GC 666.2

“We read of chains of darkness for the transgressor of God's law. We read of the worm that dieth not, and of **the fire that is not quenched.** Thus is represented the experience of every one who has permitted himself to be grafted into the stock of Satan, who has cherished sinful attributes. **When it is too late, he will see that sin is the transgression of God's law. He will realize that because of transgression, his soul is cut off from God, and that God's wrath abides on him. This is a fire unquenchable, and by it every unrepentant sinner will be destroyed.**” ST 4-14-1898

Notice in the above quote that “the fire that is not quenched” is said to represent “the experience” of the sinner when “he will see,” when “he will realize...,” “when it is too late.” Or as quoted further above, when he shall “see himself in the true blackness of his character” in contrast with “the inexpressible glory of the Son of God.” “This is a fire unquenchable, and by it every unrepentant sinner will be destroyed.”

“Then the end will come. God will vindicate His law and deliver His people. Satan and all who have joined him in rebellion will be cut off. Sin and sinners will perish, root and branch, (Mal. 4:1),--Satan the root, and his followers the branches....” DA 763.4

“This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and **when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life.** He is ‘alienated from the life of God.’ Christ says, ‘All they that hate me love death.’ Eph. 4:18; Prov. 8:36. God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them.” DA 764.1

“Zechariah 5:1 Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a **flying roll.** 2) And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. 3) Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to **it**; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to **it.** 4) I will bring **it** forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and **it** shall enter into the house

of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and **it** shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.' Against every evildoer God's **law** utters condemnation. He may disregard that voice, he may seek to drown **its** warning, but in vain. **It** follows him. **It** makes itself heard. **It** destroys his peace. If unheeded, **it** pursues him to the grave. **It** bears witness against him at the judgment. **A quenchless fire, it consumes at last soul and body.**" Ed 144.5

God Purposed that we Might Understand the Result or Nature of Sin:

"At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. **Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin.** A doubt of God's goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe." DA 764.2

God's Strange Work:

What about the verse that suggests that God will work in a different way when it comes to the final destruction of the wicked than He has in the past?

Isaiah 28:21 For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, He shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that He may do His work, His strange work; and bring to pass His act, His strange act.

Many suppose "strange" a reference to an unprecedented act of lethal aggression, yet when we consider the original language in which it was written, we find similar language suggesting the hiding of His face or His turning away.

Isaiah 28:21 For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, He shall be wroth [Strong's 7264; to quiver (with any violent emotion, especially anger or fear)] as in the valley of Gibeon, that He may do His work, His strange [Strong's 2114; a primitive root; to turn aside] work; and bring to pass His act, His strange act.

Is it "strange" because it is strangely destructive or strange because God has never turned away so far from mercifully intervening to protect us from a knowledge of the enormity of our sin and from Satan? Could "strange" be rationally considered strangely destructive to those who already believe God has been actively involved in aggressively and directly executing destructive judgments since the flood? God's "strange act" must be consistent with who He is, for He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Hebrews 13:8) Finally, we must not assume that His "judgments" and their "execution" are one and the same.

"God has given to men a declaration of His character and of His method of dealing with sin. 'The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.' Exodus 34:6, 7. 'All the wicked will He destroy.' 'The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off.' Psalm 145:20; 37:38. The power and authority of the divine government will be employed to put down rebellion; yet all the manifestations of retributive justice will be perfectly consistent with the character of God as a merciful, long-suffering, benevolent being.

"God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love. He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and

benevolence. And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes.” GC 541.2, 3

God is the Judge, but not the Executioner:

“We cannot know how much we owe to Christ for the peace and **protection** which we enjoy. It is the **restraining** power of God that prevents mankind from passing fully under **the control of Satan**. The disobedient and unthankful have great reason for gratitude for God's mercy and long-suffering in **holding in check the cruel, malignant power of the evil one**. But when men pass the limits of divine forbearance, that **restraint** is removed. **God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner** of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, **to reap that which they have sown**.” GC 36

Wicked Destroyed by Fire:

How are we to interpret the following two passages from Early Writings and Great Controversy in the light of what we have learned about two fires? Which fire is figurative and which literal? How do we distinguish one from the other in the language quoted? If we attempt to interpret them as one fire then we are forced into an inconsistency. They cannot be “consumed together” yet suffer different durations of consuming unless two fires are being identified.

“Satan rushes into the midst of his followers and tries to stir up the multitude to action. But fire from God out of heaven is rained upon them, and the great men, and mighty men, the noble, the poor and miserable, are **all consumed together**. I saw that **some were quickly destroyed, while others suffered longer**. They were punished according to the deeds done in the body. Some were many days consuming, and just as long as there was a portion of them unconsumed, all the sense of suffering remained....

“Satan and his angels suffered long. Satan bore not only the weight and punishment of his own sins, but also of the sins of the redeemed host, which had been placed upon him; and he must also suffer for the ruin of souls which he had caused. Then I saw that Satan and all the wicked host were consumed, and the justice of God was satisfied; and all the angelic host, and all the redeemed saints, with a loud voice said, ‘Amen!’

“Said the angel, ‘Satan is the root, his children are the branches. They are now consumed root and branch.’” EW 294, 295

“‘Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire.’ ‘The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and His fury upon all their armies: He hath utterly destroyed them, He hath delivered them to the slaughter.’ ‘Upon the wicked He shall rain quick burning coals, fire and brimstone and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.’ Isaiah 9:5; 34:2; Psalm 11:6, margin. **Fire** comes down from God out of heaven. The earth is broken up. The weapons concealed in its depths are drawn forth. Devouring flames burst from every yawning chasm. The very rocks are on fire. The day has come that shall burn as an oven. The elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein are burned up. Malachi 4:1; 2 Peter 3:10. The earth's surface seems one molten mass--a vast, seething lake of fire. It is the time of the judgment and perdition of ungodly men--‘the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.’ Isaiah 34:8.

“The wicked receive their recompense in the earth. Proverbs 11:31. They ‘shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts.’ Malachi 4:1. **Some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days.** All are punished ‘according to their deeds.’ The sins of the righteous having been transferred to Satan, he is made to suffer not only for his own rebellion, but for all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit. His punishment is to be far greater than that of those whom he has deceived. After all have perished who fell by his deceptions, **he is still to live and suffer on. In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch**--Satan the root, his followers the branches. . . While God is to the wicked a consuming fire, He is to His people both a sun and a shield.” Revelation 20:6; Psalm 84:11. GC 672, 673

If we are to understand these quotes correctly, we must distinguish between the two fires, one figurative or symbolic and one literal. Of the first we earlier read, “he will realize that because of transgression, his soul is cut off from God, and that God's wrath abides on him. This is a fire unquenchable, and by it every unrepentant sinner will be destroyed.” (ST 4-14-1898) Our God is a consuming fire and this figurative fire is the one that causes the wicked to suffer the result of sin which is guilt and death. This is how all will suffer according to their works, some destroyed as in a moment, others taking many days. When all have perished—destroyed by the fire that comes from within (the guilt of their own sins), then the literal cleansing fire consumes them “together,” all at the same time, root and branch. This is the only way we can make sense of “some are destroyed as in a moment,” “while others suffer many days,” and “after all have perished,” Satan “is still to live and suffer on,” and “all are consumed together,” “in the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch.”

Final Comments:

We've read that the first hell is simply the subterranean grave. While some suppose the second definition of hell, a state of everlasting punishment, to be a subterranean, physical, locale characterized by ever-burning physical fire that induces perpetual suffering, we have explored compelling evidence that hell is the fatal consequence of guilt when abruptly confronted with the wretched unfitness of the sinner to share the harmless innocent society of eternity. Because Christ loves the unrepentant no less than the sinless righteous who will share eternity with Him, He suffered in Gethsemane and on the cross the same hell the wicked will experience when they become aware in the final judgment of what Christ apprehended through His heart of perfect love would be their destiny, so closely identifying with them as to feel the same guilt and sense of separation He foresaw. Their guilt, with its grief-struck, soul-wrenching, death-inducing contemplation of eternal loss and unworthiness, crushed Him as it will crush them in the final judgment, with an eternal, everlasting death, followed by a cleansing physical fire preparatory to the recreation of the earth, which renders the wicked ashes under the feet.

We have discovered, using biblical definitions, that wrath, and God's “strange act” are in no way harmful initiatives by God but rather the expression of divine respect for our God-given freedom of choice, which obligates Him to turn His face away, to hide His face, to turn aside when He is fully rejected, allowing the wicked to reap a horrible awakening to the full consequence of sin, when they experience the life-consuming, teeth-gnashing, fiery torment of guilt in the face of the purity and holy righteousness of God, causing great suffering proportional to the guilt of each, eventually producing the final effect of sin, an “everlasting punishment,” that is an eternal, (irreversible) second death.

We apprehend that the effects of the eternally fatal nature of sin and the eternally life-giving nature of God have been so reversed by Satan, that humanity has long attributed to God, the effects of sin while continuing in sin, unaware of its cancerous malignity and its destructive consequences, which God has expended every resource to prevent, even allowing His Son to become a human suitor, with such a “crush” on the object of His affection that it crushes Him as He gives His life in a desperate initiative to save her from the guilt she would not allow Him to discharge in betrothal to His righteousness.

Can we continue to teach the “wrath” of God expresses “a strange act” of harmful aggression, a tortured fiery execution of sinners for transgression of God's law, or rather as God's reluctant “turning aside” in deference to the rejection of His merciful interventions, as the wicked are consumed by their own guilt. Christ will return when the truth regarding the nature of sin and the nature of God is shared world wide resulting in a paradigm shift from

regarding God as the source of eternal death to regarding sin as the source of death and His laws as the eternal expression of life-giving love.

We must teach this truth to all who have ears to hear it from the Word of God. God's Plan is perfect and He is glorified by it. We must not teach the lie that God cannot rely on the guilt of sin to destroy us, as it destroyed Christ. The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life. That gift is awarded to those who love righteousness and "the Lord our Righteousness."

"The people of God should awaken to a keen perception of the grievous character of transgression. Sin is disguised, and **many are deceived in regard to its nature**. Satan has planned it thus, that the understanding may be clouded, the spiritual vision obscured, the perceptive faculties of the soul blunted. But God would not have one of us to be ensnared, therefore **the nature of sin is faithfully portrayed in the inspired pages,--its offensive character before God, its corruption, its shame, and its results**. Everything has been done that God could do to save man from the power of sin, which defaces the divine image, frustrates God's purpose in man's existence, degrades his God-given powers, narrows his capacity, leads to unholy imaginations, and gives loose rein to unsanctified passions. Sin! how hateful in the sight of God! Holy angels look upon it with abhorrence." R H, June 3, 1880 par. 9

"To fallen man was revealed the plan of infinite sacrifice through which salvation was to be provided. Nothing but the death of God's dear Son could expiate man's sin, and Adam marvelled at the goodness of God in providing such a ransom for the sinner. Through the love of God, a star of hope illumined the terrible future that spreads before the transgressor. Through the institution of the typical system of sacrifice, the death of Christ was ever to be kept before guilty man, that he might better comprehend the nature of sin, the results of transgression, and the merit of the divine offering. Had there been no sin, man would never have known death. But in the innocent victim slain by his own hand, he beheld the fruits of sin,--the death of the Son of God in his behalf. He sees the immutable character of the law he has transgressed, and confessing his sin, relies upon the merits of the 'Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'" BEcho, July 15, 1893 par. 6