# THE PATHFINDER

...Studies concerning Christ and the ages...

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## THE VOICE OF THE SON OF GOD

(Part 11)

#### FIRE AND BRIMSTONE

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in **the lake which burneth with FIRE and BRIMSTONE:** which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

Long-held doctrines and established tradition have veiled many of the radiant truths recorded between the covers of the great book we call the Bible. One thousand years of the Dark Ages was especially cruel to the meaning of the *Lake of Fire*. All the gems of God suffered greatly in the soiled hands of religious hierarchy. The Romish scenario of this verse, and handed down to her many Protestant daughters, ever looms heavily over the imprisoned souls of the teeming masses. It is sad to see how they are so easily victimized by such carnal reasoning; but what is worse, they are often heard gleefully rejoicing when these age-old precepts of roasting flesh are taught.

Like swelling thunderclouds filled with lightning bolts of blistering brimstone, the ominous teachings threaten not only those listed above, but all who fail to bow to their systematic religions and deep rooted beliefs. The hapless souls are led to believe that once they die, if they fail to meet the criteria of their church's dogma, that the infernal *flames of brimstone* will be angrily licking the skin and flesh from their wretched rack of bones — forever. Screams, wails, and vanquished cries, like the searing torrents of a blasting furnace, will all rise in agony's anthem, to race perpetually through the annals of eternity in a fire-burning hell — as it is told with pounding conviction.

We should not be surprised to hear such searing sermons as this, for all through the Dark Ages, and some time beyond, this was the type of foundation that was laid concerning the teachings of "hell" to the church. The world of Rome's religion was the mother of the concept of what is usually taught today, as it was borrowed from various pagan beliefs. These early church teachers, however, had help in its growth. The "Hollywood" producers of that day was also responsible for shaping it into the grotesque thing that is presently with us. Until the end of the 16th century public plays depicting hell were the primary source of weekly entertainment for the common people, with the religious leaders and the rich being the primary subjects of the beckoning pit; and the more bizarre the plays were the more the people liked them. The authorities of the church and state would have normally opposed such blatant acts of disrespect; but since they seemed to help in relieving the pressures of the people's hard lives, and served in keeping the people from getting too restless and

uncontrollable, the writers and producers of the plays were pretty much left alone.

The carnal mind was apparently no different then than now. If a situation is created for some evil soul that is humanly intolerable, a large number of people will feel good about it. The reason, I suppose, is because they deem themselves less evil than those who "deserve" unprecedented retribution, and can't imagine that they could be the ones helplessly caught in the suffering pain of torment. Viewing horrendous conditions for others, even if they are make-believe, for some reason make it somewhat easier for some to endure their own hardships of reality. Whether the ongoing saga of the plays were believed to be fact or fantasy, or whether they really helped to ease the hardships of their lives, the end result was that the tradition of much of today's concept of "hell" was firmly establish. In this short study we will discard men's fabled fantasies and overgrown imaginations as we peer into some waiting chambers of truth.

### **UNQUENCHABLE FIRE**

John the Baptist broke open this seal of understanding when he said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: 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: 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" (Mt. 3:11-12).

Let us now give our minds to some thought. Do we suppose

John believed Jesus would be tending a huge furnace, shoveling coal into it and fanning the blaze forever, while a writhing mass of flesh churned every which way due to the scorching flames? Of course not, for clearly the element with which every soul shall be baptized is the Holy Ghost — even fire. The word and in this phrase is kai in the Greek, and is just as accurately translated even, which some scholars feel is more accurate. Using the word even rather than and does one thing to the meaning of John's statement — that the *Holy Ghost* is not a separate thing from the *fire*, but they are one and the same. Such word usage and grammatical structure clarifies the thought. The second word, *fire*, emphasizes the first, the Holy Ghost. It is used like an adjective which tells something about the word or words it is associated with. The truth remains regardless of which word, and or even, is used, but when even is the choice, we understand that the character of the Spirit of Christ is like that of fire, especially when it encounters the wood nature of the carnal mind; it will burn and purge His floor. Simply stated, the adamic nature is consumed, and once His Spirit ignites the wood, or chaff, who can put it out? No one! Absolutely no one! for the fire of His Spirit is unquenchable as long as there is a splinter of wood or hull of chaff remaining; and what is not consumed by the flames on this side of the veil certainly shall be on the other side in the lake of fire and brimstone.

FIRE is an element like none other. It must be the most amazing thing in the universe. Life, all life, would cease in a matter of minutes without fire, days at the most. Should the star of our solar system, the Sun, flicker and die, so would we. All life would plunge into the icy grip of absolute zero. No warmth could be found, no vibration of molecules would remain, no motion of

electrons in an atom would be — everything would wane and die. Fire is the source of life to every living thing, but there is more. This strange substance has the ability to change things. Without a continual regeneration, over a period of time the rays of that fireball in our heavens would eventually eat away at all matter: first bringing it to dust, then reducing it to molecules, and finally the molecules would be broken down to atoms, and this would be accomplished at nominal temperatures from 93 million miles away.

With a concentration of fire the process speeds up. Apply a flame to a bundle of straw and it ignites. Place wood upon the burning straw and it begins its process of change. When fire touches anything there is a change. The change may not be measurable, nevertheless, it will not remain the same. The amount of change depends, of course, on the intensity of the fire. The flame of the Sun produces a relatively slow rate of change, a torch to a bundle of straw is somewhat faster, but the flaming blast of an atomic bomb is instant, and the change is extreme, very extreme, to even breaking apart the atoms themselves.

Fire changes a condition to good or bad, depending on the view point. The change of wood into heat inside a stove is good, but changing the wood into flames from which a house is constructed is not so good. It matters not, though, whether it is for good or not, it still produces change, and destruction. The wood that burns in the stove is destroyed, but it is for good; and the wood in the house is likewise destroyed, yet this is not good. A simple example, yet necessary for our study.

The point is, when change comes as a result of fire, what

determines if the change is good on not is whether the viewer wants the change or not. The wood in the stove is wanted, so it is good, but the change in the wood frame of the house is not wanted, so it is not good. When fire is not wanted it can be a thing that is greatly feared, for it changes and destroys things that people want to keep unchanged, such as the carnal mind and works of the flesh.

Another change that fire makes is that it purifies. We have various words in the English that speak of this, which incorporate the Greek word for fire, i.e. PUR. PUR is the root of the words: PURe, PURity, PURify, PURge, PURification, PURitan, etc. Hebrews 12:29 uses this word (pur) to describe this same purifying character of God: "For our God is a consuming FIRE (PUR). God, a consuming fire — what self-willed human stick of wood can stand in His presence and not be consumed and purified? Let us also be reminded of what Malachi prophetically penned concerning the fire of Christ, "... The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple...But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like A REFINER'S FIRE...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" (Mal. 3:1-3).

Can we see the similarities of the natural fires and those of the Spirit? Mainly that they both change and purify. The natural flames change the form of natural things while purifying them in the process, and so does the spiritual fire of the Holy Spirit of God. In the natural there was a valley near Jerusalem called, Hinnom,

the Greek name was Gehenna, and the garbage was dumped there to be burned. The trash heap burned perpetually, as long as there was garbage to be burned. Likewise in the spirit, as long as there is the filth of carnal garbage to be burned, God, the consuming fire, will be there to burn it.

Let us keep in mind that almost every literal thing we read about in the Bible has its parallel counterpart in the spirit. With this understanding, we will be less apt to literalize those things that should be spiritualized, especially in the book of Revelation; for the first verse of that book tells us that all John saw and wrote were signs of spiritual realities. "...And He sent and SIGN-i-fied it by his angel unto his servant John."

Some verses we should consider in this light of signs are Psalms 104:4, and Revelation 14:10: "Who maketh His angels spirits; <u>His ministers</u> a flaming fire." (Psa. 104:4). "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, 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: 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" (Rev 14:9-11).

Some additional verses follow that speak of this holy fire as being God's WORD: "... His word was in mine heart as a burning

fire shut up in my bones..." (Jer. 20:9). "Is not My word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23:29). "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" (Jer. 5:14). Do we suppose that the word of God in Jeremiah's heart was literal, and its flames were searing his cringing bones? His word that was as a fire, can we assume that it danced as a flame around in the heavens or swept through the earth, burning and scorching everything in its blazing path. And can we be so daring to believe that the people turned into walking sticks of wood, and the words of fire in the weeping prophet's mouth were akin to the fabled fire-breathing dragon, which burned them to ashes when he spoke? Absolutely not! The answer is a confident NO to all the questions!

We have enough understanding to know that the fire and wood referred to were figurative symbols that pointed to spiritual realities. No one but the very simplest of carnal minds could believe such things were literal. It doesn't take brilliance to know that *the fires of God, His ministers, and His word* are not natural fires; and neither should we suppose the fire is natural in other verses that deal with spiritual matters.

In the Revelation verses (14:9-11), what do we suppose this is saying? Whatever our views might be, let us with unveiled faces look closer and see: "...If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand...he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: 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." Sounds severe, doesn't it? And it is! Anytime flesh is judged, it is severe, but it may not be as one supposes.

# TWO MARKS — OF THE BEAST AND OF THE FATHER

This should be common knowledge in the Church, but I know it is not, so we will touch upon the subject of "the beast and its mark." The first reference is found in the previous chapter (Rev. 13:14-18), which gives us the number of the mark of the beast—666.

This mark, is it a physical mark? Or is it, like the fire, spiritual? Remember, the first verse of Revelation states that it is spiritual, that *the entire book is a book of signs*. Revelation 1:1 is the key verse to understanding the rest of the symbolized prophecies of the book; but even without considering this verse, it is still easily seen that the *mark of the beast* is not a literal mark in the skin of the foreheads or hands of men. The verse that follows 13:18, the one mentioning the number (666) of the mark, is Revelation 14:1. Verse 1 begins a new chapter in our modern translations, which in turn, usually initiates a break in the readers thought and begins a new one. The original manuscripts, however, did not contain chapters, punctuations, there were no spaces between the words, and all the letters were written in capitals. Punctuations, small letters, paragraphs, and chapters were added hundreds of years later. Without the chapter break, the reader would more easily keep

the train of thought in this passage, especially in the sense of *the* writings in the foreheads of people.

We will do away with the chapter break and see what has always been there, but gone unnoticed by most: "And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six. And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, HAVING HIS FATHER'S NAME WRITTEN IN THEIR FOREHEADS" (Rev. 13:16-14:1).

What do you think? Do those who follow the Lamb, the 144,000, do they have the name of their Father written in the skin of their foreheads? Do we suppose that Jesus has a little tattoo parlor set up in the foothills of mount Sion, and before those following Him can go up with Him, do they have to receive their mark? We know better than that, don't we? Even the babes in Christ understand that the Father's name written in the foreheads speaks of having the Spirit of Christ, the mind of Christ, and the works of Christ (777), as obedient Sons would naturally have.

If this is so, then what about those who have the number of the name of the mark of the beast? Can it be dealing on the same level? Or is the first part of these verses speaking of literal things, while concluding with things spiritual? Again, we think not! If

one is literal then the other must be as well. If the mark of the beast is an inscription of some sort on the natural skin of sweaty foreheads, then so is the Father's name a literal name written in the foreheads of the those following the Lamb. On the other hand, if the name of the Father is spiritual, then the number of the name of the beast is also spiritual. You can't have one without the other. Either both are physical marks or they are both spiritual. Now, which are they? Spiritual, of course!

When those of Christ have the Father's name in their foreheads, they carry every aspect of His nature; and when those of the world have the mark of the beast (666) in theirs, they carry every aspect of the beastly nature. The number six (6) is understood to represent man, it is the number of MAN. Even the above verse (18) tells us this, especially in the Greek. The seemingly insignificant article, "a", is not in the Greek manuscripts. With its omission it would read: ...it is the number of man; and his number (man's number) is Six hundred threescore and six. SIX is simply MAN'S NUMBER, and when people have three sixes in their foreheads speaks clearly that their **SPIRIT** is not of Christ but is that of MAN (6), that their SOUL (their mind, will, intellect, desires, motivations, etc.) is that of MAN (6), and their DEEDS are that of MAN (6) — 666, the HUMAN BEAST. These creatures can be said to be made of three things — wood, hay, and stubble — 666. Their spirit is not that of the gold of God, but wood that burns. Their soul cannot bear the golden fruit of God, it is hay that burns. And their deeds are not the golden works of God, but that of worthless stubble that burns. WOOD, HAY, and **STUBBLE** — 666 — and they all burn in the presence of fire.

"And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand...he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels (messengers, Grk.), and in the presence of the Lamb" (Rev. 14:9-10). Now the light is beginning to shine. Those whose lives find their roots in the carnal beast of humanity, are tormented in the presence of those whose lives are found in the fire of God. Those who follow the Lamb are the same holy angels/messengers of Revelation 14:10, and they possess the nature of their Father from above — FIERY SPIRIT — For our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). Those with the mark of the beast possess the nature of their father who is from beneath — CARNAL CLAY — and God will make those people wood, and His fire shall devour them (Jer. 5:14).

You see, dear friends, neither Christ nor those who go on to know Him set around the lake of fire and joyfully watch the sinners burn. Their mere presence is what torments them. When a person of the world of *wood* comes in contact with even a single *flame of fire, one messenger, one saint of God,* he is tormented. Anytime those of woody, carnal minds see the Lamb of God in a son, they begin to burn. It is the simple nature of things, wood burns in the presence of fire. The Lamb is not overjoyed when sinners suffer, and neither are His messengers of truth, but the very presence of truth torments liars and those who work deceit. Immoral people of the world do not have to be lambasted and told of their wicked and corrupt ways to be tormented, just let them stand in the presence of holiness. Bringing accusations against the hateful of having hardened hearts do not grieve them, it only intensifies their condition, but in the presence of love they are

greatly tormented. And is not the proud and boastful tormented in the presence of those who are humble? The presence of the Prince of Peace always brings torment to those who are violent and live by the sword. All those whose names are written in the book of Adam, rather than the Lamb's book of Life, are also tormented, because they are in the midst of the fire of their holiness. They will continue to be tormented until the presence of the Lamb overcomes them, until there is nothing carnal remaining in them to burn, and they too will then rejoice in His presence. A process despised by some, no doubt, but the process will come.

How long will this process take? *Until the work Jesus was sent to do is finished* (i.e. I Jn. 4:14). Their torment nor its smoke will ascend *for ever and ever*, as the unlearned believe, but only as long as there is the garbage of Gehenna in their valleys to consume. And please, do not suppose that I am disagreeing with what John recorded in the 11th verse of the 14th chapter of Revelation, along with other areas of the Bible, for I am not. I am disagreeing, however, with how it has been translated. Since we have dealt with this point at length in the past (literature free upon request), suffice it to say that the phrase "*for ever and ever*" come from the Greek root word "aion" and in its truest thought means "AN AGE." An age has a beginning and an end — it does not go on "forever" as our English word implies.

Although *God's fiery judgments* work a permanent work, the fire itself is not permanent. Jesus said this about His judgment that is sent forth: "A smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment UNTO VICTORY." (Mt. 12:20). And let the words of Isaiah complement our Lord's: "When Thy judgments are

in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9). Why, we wonder, do the people who serve the omnipotent, omniscient, infinite loving God relegate Him to such failure as leaving the majority of humanity in a never ending, inescapable torment of "hellfire?" Just because the fire is unquenchable has nothing to do with God's judgment being "everlasting-eternal-never ending, as some may think. Noticing only one verse should be sufficient today to see the fallacy of equating unquenchable with time without end: "But if you will not hearken unto Me...then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched" (Jer. 17:27). That prophecy was given more than 2000 years ago, and was fulfilled a few years afterwards (Jer. 52:13); but what happened to the fire? The "UNQUENCHABLE (everlasting ?) fire has long gone out. While it was doing the work of God's judgment upon His rebellious people it was unquenchable, nothing and no one could extinguish it; but once the judgment accomplished its mission, it ceased; and so it goes with the other things that the *unquenchable fire* is applied to, as well as the *worm* that dieth not. Even though they seek death to avoid the painful judgment they will not find it. They will not die, but they will be changed.

#### **BRIMSTONE**

Of *FIRE and BRIMSTONE* — let us recall our brief lesson concerning the word "and," that in the Greek (kai) it is just as accurately, or sometimes more so, translated "even." Hence the fire and brimstone are one and the same, with the second word, brimstone, emphasizing the first, fire. It helps by telling something

about the character, or nature, of the fire. In this case the *fire* is not common, such a candle or the flames to warm by on a cold winter's night — it is *BRIMSTONE FIRE*. John the Baptist spoke of the *FIERY HOLY GHOST*, and so did John the beloved on the Isle of Patmos. They both spoke of the same *SPIRIT OF FIRE*. The Spirit referred to by John the Baptist that Jesus would be baptizing with can be none other than *the lake of fiery brimstone* that John saw and recorded in Revelation 21:8 — **both are** *FIRE* **and both are** *HOLY***.** 

To clarify this thought, that both *fires* are one and the same, we will extract a segment of **J. Preston Eby's** book (Just What Do You Mean...THE LAKE OF FIRE). He quotes the scholarly work of Charles Pridgeon's on the subject of BRIMSTONE: "The Lake of Fire and Brimstone signifies a fire burning with brimstone; 'the 'brimstone or sulphur defines the character of the fire. The Greek word **THEION** translated 'brimstone' is exactly the same word **THEION** which means 'divine.' Sulphur was sacred to the deity among the ancient Greeks; and was used to fumigate, to purify, and to cleanse and consecrate to the deity; for this purpose they burned it in their incense. In Homer's *Iliad* (16:228), one is spoken of as purifying a goblet with fire and brimstone. The verb derived from **THEION** is **THEIOO**, which means to hallow, to make divine, or to dedicate to a god (See Liddell and Scott Greek-English Lexicon, 1897 Edition). To any Greek, or any trained in the Greek language, a 'lake of fire and brimstone' would mean a 'lake of divine purification.' The idea of judgment need not be excluded. Divine purification and divine consecration are the plain meaning in ancient Greek. In the ordinary explanation, this fundamental meaning of the world is entirely left out, and nothing but eternal

torment is associated with it." — End Quote.

John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptized, not with water that cleans on the surface, but with *THE SPIRIT OF GODFIRE* that cleans clear through. Jesus Himself said, that everyone would be *SALTED WITH FIRE* (Mrk. 9:49), and at the end of the Book we see the remainder of humanity, everyone except the overcomers, being cast into the *LAKE OF GODFIRE*.

Those who have the mark of the beast, everyone in the world except those who have the mark of the Father, will find themselves in the *Holy Lake of Godfire*. They shall be tormented in the presence of *GOD*, *WHO IS FIRE*, they shall be tormented in the presence of the *LAMB OF GOD*, *WHO IS FIRE*, they shall be tormented in the presence of the *HOLY MESSENGERS OF GOD*, *WHO ARE FIRE*, and they shall be tormented in the presence of the *WORD OF GOD*, *WHICH IS FIRE!* This is what the Lake of Fire is made of — *GOD!* 

A lake by definition is a body of water. **THE LAKE** of burning brimstone is a body of *Godfire*. He makes His angels spirits and *His ministers flames of fire* (Psa. 104:4). The Body of Christ is a many-membered body consisting of those who have been baptized into that Body (not water but His Body). The spirit of each member is a candle of the Lord (Prov. 20:27), and when they all burn with the flaming brightness of God's Spirit, *GODFIRE*, and they cover the earth as the waters cover the seas, you have *THE LAKE OF FIRE even BRIMSTONE*, *THE LAKE OF GODFIRE!* His Body, **THE BODY** OF THE SON OF GOD, composed of the flaming Sons of God, is what those with the mark

of the beast (wood, hay, and stubble) will be cast/baptized into. It matters not whether it was yesterday, today, tomorrow, or in the age to come, or even beyond, Jesus will baptize every soul with the Spirit of His Holy Fire; every soul shall be thoroughly salted with it; He will purge the floor of His earth — the earth that "...is the Lord's, the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein!" (Psa. 24:1). Oh, children of this age, what a baptism, what a purging! And in the end, each and everyone will joyfully say — "I needed that."

Fire was given to us in the natural so we can comprehend what God is, as well as His ministers, and also to know what His word is. It is the same with practically everything, before we can understand anything about God we must first grasp it in the natural. When we have learned about sowing wheat, we begin to understand the death of Jesus; when the reaping of the firstfruits of barley is no longer a mystery, it finally dawns more clearly on us what the resurrection is about; and once we have loved and lived in the wonderful thing called marriage, we can know more about our union with Christ. That which is natural is first, as Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, and then that which is spiritual — and so it is with *FIRE*. Like all symbols, it is a useful tool and very necessary for teaching, for getting a message across, but after the reality arrives of what the symbol points to, the symbol is put aside. Once the fire of Christ came, and that age ended (at the siege of Jerusalem in 70 a.d.) the fire in the temple ceased to burn, as did the flames in the Valley of Hinnom. Those natural flames, and very useful for the time, died, to never be kindled again; for the fire of the Holy Spirit of God came, fulfilling the shadowy symbol in shining reality.

This, dear saints of God, we can count on, that the FIRE OF GOD will break us, now or later. It will bring each of us to the cross. The fire is painfully hot, but it will work a change, and the change will be unto righteousness. It may take long ages of God's tormenting, fiery judgment to work on some, but it will work and then come to an end. The great fire of God will only last until it has melted all arrogance into humility, and all that is of self has died in the bloody sweat and all-conquering cross of Jesus Christ. Never believe the fire cannot bring every soul to the cross, nor think it will last forever. Once the fire is kindled, the passion of His love will never withdraw His redeeming power of fire short of all sin and sinners having no more a name nor place among His creatures. But for sure, once the unquenchable fire has consumed every thing flammable, and has worked its marvelous work, and the cross has drained the blood of all wanton flesh. Beauty shall rise from the ashes, and life shall bloom from the earthen tomb of death — for they too shall hear the Voice of the Son of God!

To be continued...

— Elwin R. Roach